



Vineland, CCIA pitch reboot of expansive sports complex

Anthony V. Coppola, May 12, 2017



Portion of Lincoln Avenue where the proposed sports complex would be constructed.

VINELAND - The Cumberland County Improvement Authority and city of Vineland have teamed up with hopes of revitalizing a defunct project that would bring an expansive sports complex to a 280-acre site near Lincoln and Sheridan avenues.

CCIA Executive Director Gerald Velazquez III briefly mentioned the plan Friday during the Cumberland County Bankers & Realtors Roundtable held at Cumberland County College.

The idea might sound familiar to some.

Developers for the now dead Magic Sports

Complex of New Jersey originally pitched to Vineland in 2012 a \$350 million plan for the same location that eventually fizzled because of a lack of funding. Those developers no longer have any affiliation with the project.

“Magic Sports contemplated a lot of infrastructure, a lot of buildings, a lot of very expensive components,” Velazquez told The Daily Journal on Friday. “So, we’re taking another look at it, scaling it down, taking a different perspective on what can be done and how we can accomplish that mission.”

Vineland and the CCIA purchased the tract of land for a little more than \$3 million. How the cost was split between the city and CCIA was not immediately available. Vineland Economic Development Director Sandy Forosisky could not be reached for comment Friday.

Velazquez laid out various possibilities for the site should the project’s vision be realized, including approximately 20 baseball fields, other athletic facilities, entertainment and lodging. “So, you’re going to have the recreation piece, which is the ball fields, you’re going to have hotels, you’re going to have restaurants, you’re going to have, hopefully, breweries, wineries, other attractions folks can have while they’re there,” Velazquez said.

The goal, of course, is for the site to be an economic anchor in the county.

“So, the parents bring the kid, obviously they play today, they play tomorrow, what do they do in the meantime?” Velazquez continued. “Hopefully they’re going to go to the mall, they’re going to shop, they’re going to eat, they’re going to go to the movies.”

The Magic Sports proposal was met with mixed feelings when introduced in 2012. The complex would be an obvious job-producer, but nearby residents voiced concerns over the traffic impact of such a large facility.

The land is located just off Route 55 and abuts the Millville border. “We’re confident that we can put some things together a little differently, make it more manageable, make it more affordable and still produce something that makes sense for the city,” Velazquez said.

Velazquez mentioned a bowling alley and an adventure-type park with zip lines as other potential amenities included in the project. Velazquez said the CCIA will lend its construction and development expertise for the project.

“The city still controls it, the city is still the redevelopment entity, provides us with direction, but that frees their time up to allow us to build the project on their behalf,” Velazquez said.

Velazquez noted developments are still in the infancy stages, but that the CCIA has started working with contractors to garner cost estimates.

There are no guarantees this project won’t go the way of the Magic Sports proposal, but that didn’t factor into the CCIA and Vineland’s decision to purchase the land.

“We believe that it was the right thing to do, even if this project doesn’t succeed,” Velazquez said. “This is the last large parcel in the city that can be redeveloped for economic development. So, from the city’s perspective and the authority’s perspective, it made sense for us to control the site and then determine what the best next step was for us collectively.”