

Oakland A's owners: Downtown San Jose ballpark is only way

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 11/24/09

An article published in the December issue of San Francisco magazine reinforced the desire and motivation of the A's ownership group to move the team to San Jose.

The lengthy piece includes quotes not only from A's co-owner and managing partner Lew Wolff — the public face of the A's efforts to move to the South Bay — but also from majority owner John Fisher, who rarely talks publicly about the team he bought in 2005.

"From the moment we bought this team, the most important thing for Lew and I was to build a new ballpark to keep the A's in the Bay Area," Fisher is quoted as saying in the article. "Our conclusion is that the best opportunity to build a ballpark is in downtown San Jose."

The city of San Jose reportedly has purchased land on which a proposed 32,000-seat downtown ballpark could be built. Wolff and San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed both shared their enthusiasm for the proposed move in a Bay Area News Group story in September.

The San Francisco magazine story reports that Cisco would sponsor the stadium, just as the tech company was prepared to sponsor a proposed A's stadium in Fremont before that project fell through. But the San Jose plans remain in a holding pattern. A panel appointed by Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig continues investigating the A's stadium options throughout the Bay Area.

Panel members reportedly toured San Jose recently, but an MLB spokesperson said there's no timetable for

when the committee will conclude its work. The committee is expected to offer to Selig a recommendation on a stadium site.

The Giants hold territorial rights to San Jose, and major league owners would have to waive those rights before the A's could move there. It would figure that any ruling on territorial rights won't come until the committee's findings are known.

Fisher said in the magazine article that he doesn't believe the A's moving to San Jose would hurt the Giants. The A's ranked last in the majors in attendance in 2009, the sixth straight season their attendance has decreased.

An A's official said Monday the team had no comment on the article.

The story details how Wolff, going back decades, has felt strongly about the business potential in downtown San Jose and details the projects with which he's gotten involved in San Jose as a real estate developer.

Wolff and A's general manager Billy Beane both comment in the article about the A's need for a new stadium in order to increase revenue and give the team a better chance to retain star players.

"We need revenue," Wolff says. "We need to have a fan experience that allows us to attract 25,000 people, rather than 4,000."