

**San Jose presents land deal for A's ballpark**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The city of San Jose has released plans to allow the A's an option to purchase six parcels of land, about 5 acres in all, for a downtown stadium - and at a reduced rate.

Mayor Chuck Reed suggested Thursday that this arrangement is one more piece of the puzzle to convince Major League Baseball that an A's ballpark in San Jose is a viable proposition and that it could proceed with few impediments if approved.

"This option allows Lew Wolff one more thing to tell the commissioner that has been done," Reed said, "and that San Jose is still able to move forward."

Wolff, the A's co-owner, said that the option to buy downtown land, located near the Diridon Caltrain station, was not tied to any requests by Major League Baseball, but it does help dot some i's.

"It's just a piece of getting it done, if we are fortunate enough to get it done," Wolff said. "But Major League Baseball had nothing to do with this. We're in no different position than we were before."

The final purchase price, were the A's to exercise the option, would be \$6.98 million. The city paid \$25.1 million for the proposed ballpark site, including relocation costs, and the value of the entire site, according to an appraisal conducted last September, would be \$13.97 million if the area were to be developed for "highest and best use."

Reed said that the city's offer to the A's is below the market value because the team still would have to spend \$400 million to \$500 million to build a stadium. In addition, Reed said, the option stipulates that the land would go to the A's only to build a stadium. In other words, the team couldn't snap up cheap land to put up an office tower or condos instead of a ballpark.

"It's a favorable price based on the fact that it's restricted to a baseball park," Reed said. "What San Jose is getting out of it is that we're taking land that is generating almost nothing and we'll be generating revenues."

If the proposal is passed by the San Jose City Council on Nov. 8, the A's would have the right to pay \$50,000 for a two-year option to purchase the land, plus a \$25,000 option for a third year. The A's owners will not buy the site outright, however, unless Major League Baseball decides to grant the team the right to move to San Jose, which is considered part of the Giants' territory.

The sale and ballpark also must be approved by San Jose voters, possibly in the June election. MLB, which has dragged out its decision on any potential A's stadium for nearly three years, has promised to help fund a special election, if one is required.

Simply buying land is no assurance of anything. The A's owners already have purchased a large quantity of land for one failed stadium endeavor, 143 acres in Fremont. The team still owns that property, according to Wolff, and is seeking to sell it.

There are three remaining privately-owned parcels needed to complete the San Jose site, but Reed said he does not believe the city would use eminent domain to acquire them. "We think we'll arrive at a reasonable price," he said. "It's a real-estate deal."

It is unlikely baseball owners would consider the A's stadium at their meetings in Milwaukee next month because the Dodgers' ownership situation is expected to dominate the agenda. Meetings scheduled for January might be more likely.

### **Inbox: Why is stadium impacting team building?**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

**Why would the A's brass continue to "wait" for a decision on a stadium? Seems to me that no matter the result of that issue, wouldn't it be prudent to always work toward building a winner?**

-- Dave M., Palm Desert, Calif.

Of course. But building a winner means spending money, and the A's won't be doing much of that if the club's San Jose plans are approved, as they would rather then turn their focus to the Draft, player development and international signings -- all of which would, hopefully, equate to a contending team just in time for the opening of a new ballpark. However, if they're denied such plans, the A's would likely open the checkbook in an effort to not only draw bigger crowds to the Coliseum, but make the franchise appear attractive to potential buyers.

**What is the plan for the A's regarding third base? Scott Sizemore can be OK, but we definitely want more offensive upside from a corner infielder. Can Stephen Parker be a legitimate candidate for the everyday third-base job?**

-- Hiroshi K., Tokyo

Though Sizemore's numbers at the plate will never be overwhelming, the A's were pleased with his offensive performance (.249/.345/.433) this year and equally impressed with the strides he made on defense in such a short amount of time. That makes him the front-runner for the job, at this point. But general manager Billy Beane has always noted the corner-infield slots, as well as the designated-hitter role, as positions of long-term concern -- making an upgrade possible, if doable.

Few names -- think Aramis Ramirez and Wilson Betemit -- stand out as potential options in the free-agent market, and clubs like the Rockies, Angels and Tigers are likely to pursue a third baseman than the A's. But a fun trade name to consider if the A's forego the youth route? Boston's Kevin Youkilis.

As for Parker, expect him to continue to be groomed in the Minors for at least another full season.

**Why did Bob Melvin not give Jai Miller a legitimate chance to play after being called up late? Miller is hungry and will hit better than Chris Carter, and he can hit for power.**

-- Eddie C., Diggins, Mo.

It was a tough juggling act for Melvin during the final month of the season, as he was trying to keep free agents-to-be Josh Willingham, Coco Crisp and David DeJesus on the field, while also awarding his September callups -- namely Carter, Miller and Michael Taylor -- a handful of playing time.

Considering the hype and expectations surrounding Carter and Taylor, who have long been pictured together in Oakland's future outfield, I don't think it was any surprise they saw their names in the lineup more times than Miller, a 26-year-old veteran of 948 Minor League games. But after Miller homered in Seattle on the final night of the season, Melvin acknowledged his talent and noted he'd be in the mix come Spring Training.

If the team loses both Willingham and Crisp and decides to look in-house for replacements, count Miller as a strong starting candidate.

**What free agents are the A's most likely targeting this offseason?**

-- James D., Pinole, Calif.

Considering the fact Oakland's spending decisions are temporarily on hold until a stadium decision comes through, the current answer is none. The A's are more concerned about losing players like Willingham and Crisp to free agency than they are about grabbing hold of others on the market.

## **I read that the A's are interested in David Ortiz. Do you think he would make a good DH for Oakland?**

**-- Amanda C., Easton, Mass.**

I'm sure Ortiz's buddy, Gio Gonzalez, loves this idea. There's no doubt Ortiz would provide more offense for the A's, but he'd also be significantly more expensive than what they're willing to spend. I'd still assume the team is leaning toward bringing back fan favorite Hideki Matsui on a one-year deal, considering his strong second-half performance and the fact he won't command more than, maybe, \$2 million.

### **Choice starring among A's putting in overtime**

Mychael Urban, csnbayarea.com

If you're playing beyond the regular season as a professional baseball player, it generally means one of three things.

1) You're new to the pro game with much to learn.

2) You've been around for some time but haven't learned (or shown) enough, so you need to stay on your grind and try to open some eyes to ensure an invite to spring training the following year.

3) You're what those inside the game affectionately call a "yard rats" -- someone who loves the game with such passion you can never get enough.

A's outfield prospect Michael Choice is a combination of Nos. 1 and 3, and his talent level is such you don't often find in yard rats. A 21-year-old center fielder selected out of the University of Texas-Arlington with the 10th overall pick in the 2010 draft, Choice appears to have quite a steep learning curve, too.

Among the 20 or so Oakland farmhand putting in organized overtime this offseason, Choice is -- by far -- enjoying the most success.

Choice, who belted 30 home runs with 82 RBIs, a .376 on-base percentage, 28 doubles and a .916 slugging percentage while batting .285 for the Single-A Stockton Ports this season, hasn't cooled off a bit while playing in the desert sun for Phoenix of the Arizona Fall League.

In 15 games and 39 official at-bats through Wednesday, Choice was batting at a .359 clip and a .444 OBP, five homers, three doubles and nine RBIs.

Another of Oakland's top prospects, 24-year-old shortstop-turned-outfielder Grant Green, also plays for the AFL's Desert Dogs. Selected 13th overall out of USC in the 2009 draft, Green batted .291 with a .343 OBP and 43 extra-base hits at Double-A Midland this season, and through Wednesday he was batting .276 with a .317 OBP, four doubles, a triple, two homers, eight RBIs and 12 runs scored in 14 games in the AFL.

Also playing in the AFL for Oakland are shortstop Dusty Coleman, catcher Ryan Ortiz, and pitchers Anthony Capra, Andrew Carignan, Murphy Smith and Tyson Ross.

Ross, a 6-foot-6 righty out of Cal who spend part of the past two season with the A's but missed most of last season with an oblique injury and shoulder issues, has made four appearances for the Desert Dogs, allowing four runs on 10 hits and two walks while striking out eight over eight innings.

Another Athletics who spent time in the bigs this year, first baseman Brandon Allen, is playing in the Dominican Winter League, batting .115 through his first 10 games, while utilityman Adam Rosales, who was limited by injuries to 24 games with Oakland this season, has played in seven games in Mexico.

Catcher Eliezer Mesa and pitchers Graham Godfrey, Lenny DiNardo, Jordan Norberto, Jonathan Ortiz, Jose Guzman and Polin Trinidad also are among Oakland farmhands listed on DWL rosters. Ortiz, a righty who posted a 4.02 ERA while striking out 60 against 24 walks over 42 outings at Midland this year, has pitched in six games thus far for the Lacey Tigers and has a 1.80 ERA.

Pitchers Andres Aviles and Carlos Hernandez are playing in Mexico.