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## Goodyear has added a big slugger to the team

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GOODYEAR - Goodyear has added a big slugger to the team vying for major-league baseball.

City officials, who have been working for years on landing a spring training facility, have announced that the team behind San Diego's baseball-inspired downtown renaissance is on board to bring the major leagues to Goodyear.

"We've come a long way on this subject," said Goodyear Mayor Jim Cavanaugh. "This isn't over. Not to be trite, but we are rounding first base. . . . We need to slide into home in the next month."

The Goodyear team includes JMI Sports, the development firm for the San Diego Padres. The creation of Petco Park helped revitalize downtown San Diego.

In a unanimous vote Monday night, the Goodyear City Council chose a 240-acre parcel for the proposed 10,000-seat spring-training stadium. The land, one of three options, sits near proposed major freeways and just south of the planned Goodyear City Center, which will eventually act as a "downtown" combining shops, homes and government and office buildings.

The land is owned by the Wood family, West Valley farmers for four generations. Terms of the public-private partnership haven't been determined. Goodyear officials declined to elaborate, saying it's premature.

Glendale and Casa Grande also are working on pitches to expand the Cactus League in their cities. But the latest development may indicate that Goodyear is a run ahead in the game.

A few years ago, Goodyear voters approved \$10 million in bonding to help fund a spring training site.

The proposed facility is expected to cost roughly \$65 million, said John Ruggieri, managing director for Goodyear-based Rose Properties Southwest LLC. Rose is the developer working with JMI Sports and HOK Sport to craft the Goodyear proposal.

Ruggieri expects the Goodyear spring training facility to spur development of "the preeminent urban village of the West Valley," he said.

Also Monday night, the council directed Goodyear staff to proceed in negotiations with two Major League Baseball teams, which city officials refused to identify.

But it's no secret that teams in Florida's Grapefruit League are near the end of a lease or are looking for better deals. They include the Cincinnati Reds, Cleveland Indians and Baltimore Orioles.

Goodyear officials want the development to be more than just a baseball stadium. They envision a "mixed-use stadium village" designed for year-round use.