

## TOP TEN REASONS NOT TO BUILD A \$43 MILLION REGIONAL SPORTS COMPLEX WITHIN A KNOWN FLOODPLAIN ON THE LARGEST BLOCK OF UNDEVELOPED, UNPROTECTED, PUBLICLY OWNED RIPARIAN OPEN SPACE ON THE JORDAN RIVER

### 10. Because Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker passionately supports the preservation of open space.

From Ralph's "Blueprint for a Green City" campaign platform, 2007

**"Without a Big Picture plan for preserving and acquiring our precious open spaces, our green spaces will 'suffer death by a thousand cuts' as they are slowly nibbled away. A long-range plan for both retaining our current open spaces and for acquiring additional ones is critical to our health and quality of life from both a recreational and an ecological standpoint."**

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***"I will begin a comprehensive open-space planning effort for Salt Lake City."***

"This plan will include proposals to create green infrastructure with interconnected natural and urbanized open spaces that are protected places for people as well as for wildlife. "

***"I will develop a strong open-space acquisition program.***

"This will use conservation easements and other conservation techniques to fund greenways and open-space connections between the Great Salt Lake, downtown, neighborhoods, business districts, and the foothills. "

From Ralph's State of the City Address, December 2008:

**"I will ramp up action on...restoration of the river corridor...We need to think long-term about making the Jordan River watershed a model for ecological**

**restoration**...volunteers have flooded my office and I'm excited to leverage our City resources with actions by other communities along the Jordan River..."

**9. Economic value of open space and outdoor recreation.** *Incidentally: **why should one sport be subsidized at the expense of another?*** Why should our politicians be allowed to annihilate the largest remaining block of open space and riparian wildlife habitat on in Salt Lake City, if any other viable alternative exists? Don't they know that **the sport of "wildlife viewing"—not to mention the sport of outdoor recreation—is vastly more popular than ANY other sport including soccer?** According to the [Outdoor Industry Association](#) and the U.S. Fish and Game Service, wildlife viewing:

Is currently enjoyed by an estimated 562,000 participants in Utah annually

Contributes \$5.8 billion annually to the state economy

Supports 65,000 jobs across the state

Generates nearly \$300 million in annual state tax revenues

Produces nearly \$4 billion annually in retail sales and services across Utah, accounting for almost 5% of gross state product

The biannual Outdoor Retailer Association trade shows pump some \$40 million into the economy of Salt Lake City annually—far more than regional soccer tournaments have in any year since the construction of the existing Regional Soccer Tournament Facility in West Jordan.

**8. Flood risk and cost.** It's hard to believe that, post-Katrina, any city in America would build a huge commercial facility, with taxpayer dollars, within a known flood plain. The site has been inundated repeatedly—for periods of up to 2 years-- throughout recorded history. Flood fortification and mitigation costs, flood insurance, and future flooding bailout costs have driven estimated project construction costs through the roof (it's 71 percent over budget) and will also drive operational costs through the roof. **Your tax dollars will fund two thirds of the initial construction cost and will pay again and again to bail it out each time the site floods in the future.**

**7. Breach of fiduciary duty and taxpayer outrage.** Because building on a river floodplain is far more expensive than building elsewhere, this project is now **71 percent (\$17 million) over budget.** And even if taxpayers pony up an **additional \$17 million**, as Mayor Becker proposes—more than doubling the initial taxpayer obligation--they will STILL get **30% less play field capacity than they**

**were promised** when they voted to allocate just \$15.3 million for this project in 2003. While comparable soccer fields in sports complexes around the country currently cost about \$500,000 per field, on this site they will cost over \$1.2 million per field!

**6. Alternative sites.** At least **four viable alternative sites for the proposed sports complex have been identified** by environmental groups—and at least two of these have been extensively studied by the city itself. Sports Complexes can be anywhere, but in any urban area, rivers are hemmed in by residential and industrial development, and lowlands riparian habitat can exist right where it is and nowhere else. Once obliterated it's gone forever.

**5. The existing soccer complex they never told you about.** **An existing soccer complex 25 percent larger than this one can ever be (on this awkwardly shaped river bank site) already exists in West Jordan.** It was built at taxpayer expense in 1994 with the promise that it would be the largest soccer complex in the region and that as such it would host all major regional tournaments, thus serving as a huge economic engine for West Jordan City. Like the proposed Salt Lake City Sports Complex, the West Jordan facility was built at the demand of the Youth Soccer Association, which underestimated its cost by over 300% percent (sound familiar?) and whose overutilization has now left the playing fields badly degraded. Now the YSA wants taxpayers to build a second, redundant tournament-hosting facility because the first one is supposedly too ragged for tournament play. Ironically, Salt Lake City owns the airport clear space upon which the West Jordan facility was built. **THERE IS NO REASON THAT THE EXISTING SOCCER COMPLEX COULD NOT BE UPGRADED TO SERVE ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE AT A FRACTION OF THE COST OF BUILDING A NEW ONE.**

**4. Deception and exploitation of soccer players.** The proposed facility is being designed and will be reserved primarily for the hosting of regional soccer tournaments—NOT for use by local players, except if their teams qualify for tournament play. **THIS FACILITY WILL BE STRICTLY OFF-LIMITS FOR "PRACTICE" AND WILL BE "PAY-FOR-PLAY ONLY"—MEANING THAT POOR KIDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO USE THE FIELDS UNLESS THEY CAN AFFORD TO FIELD RENTAL FEES OF \$50 PER HOUR OR MORE** (city officials have never revealed what the fee will be, but \$50 per hour is typical elsewhere and may be a conservative estimate .)

**3. Social justice.** At a recent City Council hearing city consultants and Youth Soccer Association lobbyists revealed for the first time that **a primary financial driver of the project is** to provide facilities for a **proposed Youth Soccer Academy /Charter School** to be co-located within or near the site. Taxpayers were NEVER told about this secret plan. According to Sports Complex consultants and lobbyists **tuition for such a school would be \$20,000 to \$40,000 per student per year. We taxpayers will subsidize a Cadillac soccer experience for rich kids at the expense of poor kids who may never be able to use the facility at all.** Consider it an object lesson for the poor families in the American tradition of fierce competition and survival of the fittest.

**2. Cumulative wildlife habitat loss.** "Wildlife viewing" includes hunting as well as watching migratory birds. Don't our elected officials know that **you can't hunt migratory birds ANYWHERE**

**once their critical habitat has been annihilated** by developments just such as this? Don't they know that over 90 percent of wildlife habitat has already been destroyed throughout Salt Lake Valley? Don't they know that Salt Lake City residents wish to honor, revere, protect and restore what little remains of their own natural heritage—our precious remaining links in a 10,000 mile migratory bird flyway running across two continents?

**1. Precedent for the future.** Not only is this the largest remaining block of natural landscape and riparian habitat along the Jordan River in Salt Lake City, but is also an object lesson for all other such lands up and down the Jordan River. No less than 18 huge commercial centers have been proposed for future construction within the flood plain of the river—most of them bringing 3-5 story buildings right down to water's edge, or with nothing more than a thin strip of green between shopping centers, office buildings and condo blocks and the river. The proposed Sports Complex site at 2200 North is public land—a former state park. We don't need to buy the land to protect it because we already paid for it (twice). **If we don't stop this proposed commercial center in its tracks, there will be no stopping the other 18 and the entire river will be lost to intensive commercial development.**

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