



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: AUGUST 19, 2025

FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT WARD: 1

SUBJECT: EXCLUSIVE NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT WITH GCS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A 56-ACRE CITY-OWNED PARCEL (APN 246-060-001) FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE RIVERSIDE SPORTS COMPLEX & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT FOR PROPERTY WITHIN THE NORTHSIDE SPECIFIC PLAN

ISSUE:

Approve the Exclusive Negotiating Agreement with GCS Development for the acquisition and development of a 56-acre city-owned parcel (APN 246-060-001) for development of the Riverside Sports Complex & Entertainment District for a property within the Northside Specific Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Approve the Exclusive Negotiating Agreement with GCS Development for the acquisition and development of a 56-acre city-owned parcel; and
2. Authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to execute the Agreement with GCS Development, including making minor and non-substantive changes and executing the first six-month extension.

BACKGROUND:

The Northside Specific Plan (NSP) is the policy document developed by the City, in conjunction with the local community, to guide future development in the Northside neighborhood. The NSP is a community-driven vision that concluded with the City Council adopting both the Specific Plan and the Program EIR in 2020. The Specific Plan sets the vision, principles and goals for future land use decisions to improve the area's physical and economic environment while meeting City goals for the Northside community. The NSP has been designed to accommodate a safe, healthy, and balanced community celebrating the history and culture of the greater Riverside area. Significant community outreach was done to ensure the community's vision and priorities were included in the NSP. This included a total of three community workshops from June 2017 to June 2018. Below is a partial listing of the robust public outreach plan that occurred, including key dates and deliverables:

- June 7 and June 10, 2017 – The project team held public workshops to explain the project objectives, process, and obtain feedback from the community. Approximately 80 community members attended these events. To provide more opportunity for one-on-one conversations, the team held a “meet the planners” event on Monday, June 12.
- June to July 2017 – A draft “baseline” analysis of the Northside Neighborhood was completed in May and revised in June/July 2017 to be more responsive to comments received at the first community workshops. The Draft Baseline Analysis was posted on-line for public viewing in late July.
- September 11, 2017 – A status update was provided to the Board of Riverside Public Utilities.
- October 11, 2017 – The project team held a second public workshop to share three potential options of the Northside Neighborhood, with focus given to the of City/RPU owned properties. Approximately 32 people attended this event. A second presentation was provided on October 13 at the Breezewood Apartments; a “meet the planners” event was held on October 14; and a booth was set up at the Northside’s Halloween Carnival event on October 27.
- November 3, 2017 – The project team compiled the data received from an on-line survey, which asked for community comment on the three concepts.
- February 2018 – The project team completed a single draft land use concept for the NSP. The draft concept was presented to the economic development sub-consultant (Keyser Marston) to evaluate. The draft concept consolidated community input, discussions with city staff, and existing City Council policies. The draft “Consolidated Concept” was subsequently refined based on Keyser Marston’s initial feedback.
- June 25, 2018 – A Draft Framework Plan and Draft Land Use Concept were presented at a community workshop (Workshop #3). The workshop had 110 attendees, including leaders from 14 distinct community organizations.

In April 2015, City Council directed staff to develop a Specific Plan and Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Northside Neighborhood.

Between June 2017 to June 2018, a series of Community workshops and public outreach efforts were held to engage the local community in the development of the NSP and the PEIR.

On November 17, 2020, The NSP and the Final Program Environmental Impact Report was approved at City Council.

In 2023, the City issued Request for Proposals #2314 for a master developer for the three city-owned sites within the NSP area including the Property. RFP #2314 assumed disposition of the Property in a manner consistent with an applicable California Surplus Lands Act (“SLA”) exemption which includes a requirement that the developer that buys and develops the property provide no less than 25% of the residential units constructed be leased or sold to lower-income households as defined under state law with required deed restrictions to maintain affordability. The proposals were due to the City no later than October 12, 2023. The City did not receive any responsive proposals.

On April 23, 2025, the City received an unsolicited proposal from GCS Development for the 56-acre City-owned parcel for the proposed Riverside Sports Complex & Entertainment District.

On June 11, 2025, Staff presented the proposal to City Council at closed session. Staff recommended the City enter into an Exclusive Negotiation Agreement (ENA) with GCS Development, to negotiate terms and conditions including the price and terms for sale of the property and inclusion of performance measures, milestones and remedies in the subsequent

disposition and development agreement and related land use entitlements. City Council approved Staff's recommendation and directed staff to return with the ENA for City Council consideration, ensuring off-ramps and performance measures.

DISCUSSION:

The Northside Specific Plan is an inter-jurisdictional plan covering approximately 2,000 acres within the City of Riverside, the City of Colton, and the unincorporated County of Riverside. The NSP focuses on future development of both publicly and privately-owned properties and identifies future development potential to create a balanced community. The Ab Brown Sports Complex (Project site) and former Riverside Golf Course, which includes approximately 179-acres of vacant or underutilized City-owned property in the heart of the Northside Neighborhood, are an important feature of the Northside Neighborhood. Residents recognize these properties are an opportunity to define the future of the Northside Neighborhood and promote investment on nearby properties.

The 56-acre project site is known for the former Ab Brown Sports Complex, which previously served as an 18-field soccer facility that opened in 1985. The site was home to the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) Region 47, where they hosted league games and tournaments until 2018, when they decided not to renew their lease at Ab Brown due to lack of enrollment and participation. Since then, the site has remained vacant and underutilized. The Northside Specific Plan envisions a revitalization of Ab Brown Sports Complex that will draw participants from throughout the region and reactivate the Northside. The proposed Riverside Sports Complex & Entertainment District has provided a conceptual design that aims to activate the property and meet the policies and objectives of the NSP while adding tremendous economic development opportunity to the City.

Riverside Sports Complex & Entertainment District Overview

The proposal envisions a regional sports complex and a destination for local residents, visitors, and organizations to gather, dine, shop, and live. The development is anchored by a professional expandable multi-use stadium, and is integrated with six soccer fields, an indoor sports and game complex, housing, retail, recreation, and community programming. The project features a pedestrian-oriented central park where individuals can participate in passive leisure activities such as jogging, dog walking, and biking.

More specifically, the site plan consists of the following key components:

- 5,005-seat (expandable to 15,000 seat) stadium for soccer, rugby, football and lacrosse;
- Stadium Hotel with 108 rooms;
- Indoor and outdoor Riverside Live venue for festivals and concerts;
- Sports and Game complex for sports such as pickleball, padel and gaming (approximately 130,000 sf);
- Two (2) full-size multisport fields and four (4) youth-size soccer fields;
- Four mixed- use buildings with 1,148 residential units (of which 25% would be required to be affordable to lower income renters or buyers consistent with an applicable SLA exemption);
- 193,000 square feet of retail;
- Central park area and a dog park; and
- 3,498 parking stalls, along with approximately 100 EV charging stations.

Summary of Exclusive Negotiating Agreement (ENA) terms

The purpose of the ENA is to establish a framework for the negotiation of the Disposition and Development Agreement ("DDA"). The term of the ENA shall be twelve months with one possible 6-month option to extend upon request of the developer and approval by the City Manager. Within fifteen business days following execution of the ENA by Developer and City, Developer is required to provide a \$75,000 deposit for use by the City for costs incurred by the environmental/land development and financial/economic consultants and outside counsel expenses as well for dedicated planning staff assistance by a senior planner. The ENA requires that the deposit amount be replenished through subsequent deposits in the amount of \$50,000 whenever the amount on deposit with the City falls below \$25,000 due to payment of authorized expenses. The City shall deposit such funds in an interest-bearing account. Within forty-five days of the effective date of the agreement, the Developer is required to provide a timeline of all relevant milestones for the Potential Project, including obtaining entitlements, utility permitting, and construction phasing. If the Developer is unable to perform, there are off-ramps listed in the ENA which may result in the termination of the agreement. The ENA also provides a process for the exchange of information between the City and Developer during the negotiation process so that the City and Developer have access to relevant necessary information during the negotiation process.

The ENA authorizes the Developer to access the property during the ENA period to conduct necessary studies as part of the Developer's due diligence process and also requires that the Developer indemnify the City for damage or claims arising from the Developer's due diligence actions.

The ENA reserves to the City to either approve or deny the proposed DDA and related land use entitlements and likewise does not obligate the Developer to accept the terms of the proposed DDA. Any such determinations will only occur after completion of CEQA and City Council consideration of the proposed project and DDA.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the City as a result of approving this action. The Exclusive Negotiating Agreement (ENA) with GCS Development will require a \$75,000 deposit from the Developer team to be placed in a special deposit account identified by the City's Finance Department. The deposit will be used to offset any costs incurred by the City.

Prepared by:	Regine Kennedy, Senior Planner
Approved by:	Jennifer A. Lilley, Community & Economic Development Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by:	Mike Futrell, City Manager
Approved as to form:	Rebecca McKee-Reimbold, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Exclusive Negotiating Agreement
2. Riverside Sports Complex & Entertainment District Proposal
3. PowerPoint Presentation