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## [Almost Official: Stadium Will Go Downtown, Not Near Bellaire](#)

Tue, Mar 30, 2010

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Bellaire residents and officials may soon be able to breathe a sigh of relief knowing there will not be a 20,000-seat soccer stadium on the city's outskirts. The massive protests that arose from the community may have helped push the Houston Dynamo Stadium back to its original location, just east of downtown Houston.

On Wednesday, the Houston City Council will vote on an interlocal agreement that would form a partnership between the city of Houston, Harris County and the Houston-Harris County Sports Authority to work on building the stadium on the downtown site just east of U.S. 59. The Sports Authority agreed to participate on March 25, and the county will consider the contract on April 13.

"I'm very excited about the Dynamo team getting a new stadium, and I think it's the

right decision for them," said Bellaire Mayor Cindy Siegel, who lead the charge to oppose a Bellaire-area stadium. "I think it's a win for the Dynamo and their fans, which I'm one of. And I think it's a win for Bellaire."

If approved, the interlocal agreement would require the city of Houston and the county to each contribute \$10 million for the stadium, while the Houston Dynamo would pay \$60 million. The city and county would pay for their portions through tax increment reinvestment zones, which allow them to issue bonds and repay them with increased taxes from future developments, assuming the stadium spurs more development.

The Sports Authority would help negotiate a lease with the Dynamo, serve as a construction manager while the stadium is being built, and serve as the property manager for the stadium during its 30-year lease.

The agreement charts out a number of tasks that must be completed by Sept. 30, or the parties must reconsider what to do about the stadium, said Houston Chief Development Officer Andy Icken.

"We've defined a path to get us to a deal by September 30," he said. "A number of things need to happen along the way. The interlocal itself is just an agreement to agree."

If the agreement is approved, it could put to rest the protests that erupted from Bellaire when news leaked in late January that the soccer team was considering a tract at Westpark Drive and South Rice Avenue.

David Turkel, director of Harris County's community services department, said that stakeholders did seriously consider that 30-acre tract near Bellaire, which is owned by Midway Companies.

"The other one was a better idea, we felt, and the Dynamo felt it was the area that would be better for them," Turkel said. "Plus there was a lot of push back from the local residents over there, and the city of Bellaire. I think the city and county felt obliged to listen to them."

Icken said in the end, the downtown Houston location was more attractive because it's centrally located, the site already has good parking and street infrastructure, and two light rail lines are planned for the area.

Icken said negotiations began progressing again after Houston Mayor Annise Parker visited county officials. Her visit had the most weight behind steering the stadium back downtown, but Icken said he's glad the Bellaire community voiced its opposition.

"Frankly, we shared some of the same concerns on the access and mobility of people being able to get to it," he said.

When news broke that the Dynamo was eyeing the site near Bellaire, Mayor Cindy Siegel protested the idea in front of the news media. Bellaire residents showed up at city council meetings in force to complain the stadium would bring too much traffic, noise, parking

issues, and generally decrease their quality of life.

Siegel worked on an official resolution opposing the stadium, and the Bellaire City Council passed the resolution in mid February. Afterwards, the mayor said Dynamo President Oliver Luck called her to say he understood the difficulties of the Bellaire-area location.

Dynamo President Oliver Luck told InstantNewsWestU that he thinks Houston and Harris County officials did listen to Siegel's protests, and it helped move the stadium proposal forward.

"She made very strong points, and it was clear a majority of citizens really backed her up," Luck said. "That underscored the fact that the vast majority of people in the east end wanted the stadium there."

Over the next few weeks, Luck said the Dynamo will work to refine its stadium budget and talk with Metro about future light rail lines and train stops near the downtown site.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed, and we think we may have all this done at some point in April," he said.

Sports Authority Executive Director Janis Schmees said if the city and county approve the interlocal agreement, the sports authority will begin negotiating the lease with the Dynamo.

"The goal would be to turn over the land to the Dynamo for construction by October 1st of this year," she said.

The Dynamo would try to complete construction by April 1, 2011, Schmees said.

### **This post was written by:**



[Angela Grant](#) - who has written 303 posts on [InstantnewsBellaire.com](http://InstantnewsBellaire.com).

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## **2 Responses to "Almost Official: Stadium Will Go Downtown, Not Near Bellaire"**

1.



*Tina Cohen Says:*

[March 30th, 2010 at 11:04 am](#)

Bravo!!!!!!

2.



*Elaine Riquelmy Says:*

[April 3rd, 2010 at 10:17 am](#)

The only "massive protests" I heard were the Mayor's shrill comments trying to tell the owners of property in Houston what to do with their property there.

And, as a Bellaire resident, I can vouch for the fact that nobody made any survey of the residents to see what the majority of them wanted.

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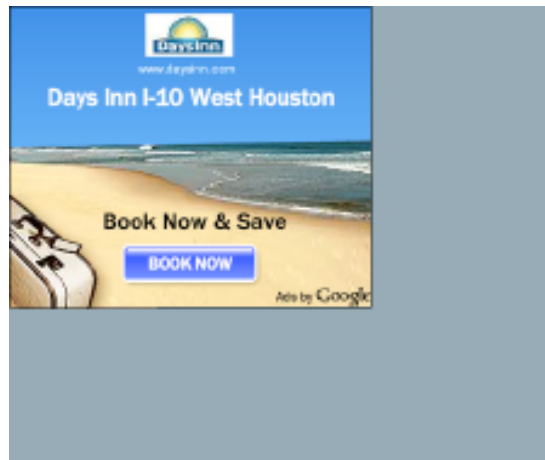
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