

# County agrees to transform 70 acre-portion of Downey hospital into a sports complex

By City News Service

Posted: 08/09/16, 6:03 PM PDT

The Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday to transform a portion of a hospital campus in Downey into a community sports complex.

Supervisor Don Knabe has pushed for the redevelopment of Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center's long-abandoned 70-acre South Campus, which is just south of the working hospital at 7601 Imperial Highway. The plan is now set to include headquarters for the Probation and Internal Services departments, as well as a sheriff's crime lab.

Knabe focused Tuesday on the sports center.

"Playing fields are a sorely needed amenity in the southeast communities," Knabe said. "I know these facilities will be used by kids and adults of all ages for years to come."

Soccer players said they were tired of having practices cancelled because of a lack of space at area schools. One coach told the board he often had to rent a field in another city for Downey players.

A 13-year-old soccer player named Jessica said the sports complex "would help the community and stop kids from being on the streets and doing bad things and have them in sports ... earning scholarships."

Knabe said a proposed Metro transit station would make the sports fields accessible to even more athletes.

Master planning for the site – once the home of the Los Angeles County Poor Farm – has been in the works for more than a decade, according to Downey Mayor Alex Saab.

Downey Councilman Sean Ashton characterized the 1950s buildings on the site as "boarded-up empty bungalows where you have a lot of feral cats" that draw coyotes.

The board Tuesday approved spending \$17 million on survey and planning work, including an Environmental Impact Report. Preliminary estimates of the overall project's cost total \$468 million.