

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

A21 OPINION

Friday, May 24, 2019 » MORE AT FACEBOOK.COM/OCREGISTER AND TWITTER.COM.

A new day for baseball in the city of Anaheim

By Harry Sidhu

It is a new day in Anaheim, Orange County's baseball city.

We are in the early stages of working with the Angels on the team's future in Anaheim. We want to build on the benefits baseball brings and extend a legacy that has helped make Anaheim Orange County's most exciting city.

In 53 years of baseball here, we have celebrated a World Series win, Nolan Ryan's no-hitters and Vladimir Guerrero's Baseball Hall of Fame induction. Now there is Mike Trout. Our stadium, Angel Stadium of Anaheim, is the only home field the game's greatest player has known, and we are looking to keep it that way.



KEVIN SULLIVAN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hopefully, the Angels will have more to celebrate when differences over the team's future in Anaheim are worked out.

There are no specifics to share yet. But one goal guides us — any agreement must first benefit our residents while also working for the Angels.

Yet, even this early, there is no shortage of speculation, not all of it productive. We welcome an honest conversation and pledge that when there is information to share, we will.

So let me recap where we are.

In early January, I met with Angels owner Arte Moreno about starting fresh in talks about a new lease.

Our City Council then approved a 14-month extension for the Angels, allowing time for both sides to work on a new lease. So far, the city has hired an appraiser to value stadium land, while the Angels have enlisted a development consultant to look at opportunities as part of any potential lease.

We expect to sit down in coming weeks with a goal of progress by late 2019.

One thing is clear: We are not revisiting 2013, when an early framework included a placeholder for a \$1 a year land lease that neither the city nor the Angels ever intended as an actual deal point.

Regardless, that was six years ago, and an entirely different time for our city. Today, we have a new City Council with fresh perspective and resolve to address a matter deferred for far too long.

Whether improving or building new, stadiums are big-ticket items. We start out knowing that the new model for sports venues is as part of larger economic developments.

Baseball is a key part of our vision for the Platinum Triangle, the area including the stadium, Honda Center and the ARTIC transit hub.

The Platinum Triangle is seeing \$1.5 billion in investment to create a downtown built around sports, entertainment, jobs and urban-style homes.

With more than 150 acres of stadium land, we can create the kind of excitement seen around other sports venues while keeping Angel Stadium's unrivaled fan convenience.

What plays out would be distinctly Anaheim. But examples can be found in Sacramento's Golden 1 Center basketball arena or San Diego's Petco Park.

We are also watching

baseball's newest stadium, Globe Life Field, going up outside Dallas. Next door is Texas Live!, a \$250 million entertainment complex built in partnership with the Texas Rangers, who will call Globe Life Field home in 2020.

In Anaheim, development could be the primary way to fund improvements or even a new stadium. For us, it would be economic development with a purpose. Our theme parks, sports venues and convention center are a matter of pride. But their real purpose is to serve residents with revenue for public safety, parks, libraries and community centers and by helping us keep taxes and fees low.

You can see this playing out in the Platinum Triangle now. Since 2009, redevelopment has doubled our sales tax revenue in the area to about \$8 million. That money goes directly to services for our residents.

We are not alone in seeing the value a stadium brings. Long Beach has approached the Angels with a proposal for a stadium in its downtown.

While we admire the ambition, we do not envy any city starting from scratch.

As a major league city for five decades, we are confident in the path, process and opportunity ahead of us in Anaheim.

There is no better Southern California location with access to three freeways, integrated public transit and worldwide exposure alongside Disneyland, Honda Center and the Anaheim Convention Center.

For 16 seasons now, the Angels have drawn 3 million-plus fans, an attendance milestone second only to the New York Yankees. That is no accident, and it happened right here in Anaheim.

Done right, a new Angels agreement will secure the next generation of baseball in Orange County while creating lasting economic benefit for Anaheim's neighborhoods for years to come.

Harry Sidhu is mayor of Anaheim.