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ANOTHER VIEW

North blimp hangar will be preserved

Located in Tustin are two of Orange County's most noticeable landmarks: The north and south blimp hangars at the former Marine Corps helicopter base.

Constructed to house blimps to patrol Southern California shores during World War II, the hangars are the largest freestanding wooden structures in the world. The south hangar is on a piece of property within the city of Tustin.

The north hangar sits on an 84-acre parcel which will eventually be conveyed to the county by the National Park Service. The original idea was to place a regional park on this parcel, however after its bankruptcy, the county could no longer afford to do so.

In 2002, the county began to seek an economically viable re-use of the north blimp hangar per a 1999 agreement among the Department of the Navy, the California State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The intent was to find a use that would preserve the hangar at no cost to Orange County taxpayers.

Recently, the Orange County Board of Supervisors voted to select Industrial Realty Group Inc. (IRG) as the entity that will develop the north blimp hangar and the surrounding property.

The IRG proposal is a large-scale sports, entertainment and recreation complex called "Play at Tustin Legacy," which would occupy both the blimp hangar and much of the balance of the 84-acre site.

IRG's proposal envisions an environmentally friendly venue that marries traditional athletics, passive green space and recreation and sports-related concessions. Key components include:

- Space for a veterans museum and memorial
- Outdoor sports and recreation fields
- Indoor sports and recreational uses
- A multi-purpose indoor action sports venue
- Sport-related retail stores inside the blimp hangar

This proposal has many positive factors going for it. Primarily, the project will come at no cost to the county with total development costs for IRG estimated at more than \$150 million.

Also, by refurbishing the blimp hangar, IRG's proposal allows us to preserve one of Orange County's few historical landmarks and will continue to remind everyone of the sacrifices of made by those who have served in our nation's military.

When complete, Play at Tustin Legacy will be a retail and athletic experience unique to anything else in Southern California, attracting both young and old alike.

As part of the process, the Board of Supervisors has directed county staff to work with the city of Tustin, the

National Parks Service and IRG to modify IRG's proposal, as necessary, to finalize a development plan acceptable to all parties, and return to the board for approval.

I look forward to helping to bring this great new recreational resource and monument honoring our nation's veterans to the people of Orange County.

Supervisor Campbell represents

the Third District, which includes Irvine, Tustin, North Tustin, Anaheim Hills, Brea, Cowan Heights, Lemon Heights, Orange, Villa Park, Yorba Linda and the

canyons.



BY BILL CAMPBELL OC SUPERVISOR