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Mayor: Downtown ballpark could drive development if done right

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San Antonio Mayor [Ivy Taylor](#) believes if local leaders swing for the fences they can help deliver a new downtown ballpark that could help drive new investment and development in the center city. But she warns that San Antonio could strike out in its effort to use baseball to stimulate urban economic development if backers don't insist on an ideal site for such a project.

"I think it's doable. But we've got to get everyone moving in the same direction," said Taylor in an exclusive interview about the prospect of a downtown ballpark.

But the mayor insists that a new stadium would need to be constructed in an area where it can attract maximum interest from developers and investors. And that's not a given considering San Antonio's track record when it comes to the site-selection process for pro sports facilities.

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"That is critical to me," said Taylor about the importance of location for a new downtown ballpark. "With our history in San Antonio, a lot of times where we place facilities has to do with something other than where is the best place to put them. We can't keep doing that or we will keep having lost opportunities. I am really focused on that."

[Pat DiGiovanni](#), president and CEO of Centro San Antonio, said on Monday his group has a signed letter of engagement with national stadium consultant **Brailsford & Dunlavey** to conduct a feasibility study that would help local leaders determine where such a ballpark should be located, how it can be funded and what level of economic impact it would have on the center city. He added that the firm will be in San Antonio this week conducting interviews with various stakeholders.

Taylor has a clearer picture of the impact a stadium can have on a downtown area. She was in Nashville last week for a League of Cities conference and visited First Tennessee Park, a \$65 million downtown baseball facility that opened earlier this year and is home to the Triple-A Sounds.

"I had a chance to take an extensive tour, and I was very impressed," Taylor told me. "There is a lot of other development going on near the new ballpark."

What especially caught the mayor's attention was the fact that Sounds ownership has committed to investing \$60 million in mixed-use development around the stadium.

"From my perspective, I am very interested in how a ballpark can serve as a catalyst for development downtown," Taylor said.

W. Scott Bailey covers health care, tourism, sports business, economic development; he also plans and edits some special reports.