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## Raiders make pitch for Las Vegas stadium

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Oakland Raiders owner Mark Davis walks past fans holding Raiders signs as he arrives at a Southern Nevada Tourism Infrastructure Committee meeting at UNLV on April 28, 2016 in Las Vegas. (Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

LAS VEGAS -- A move to Las Vegas is no longer a mirage for the Oakland Raiders.

To the dismay of loyal Oakland fans, team owner Mark Davis on Thursday personally presented plans to move his team to a \$1.4 billion stadium to be built off the Vegas Strip, potentially by 2020. And while observers say there are big obstacles to the move, he has some powerful backers.

During his pitch to a Nevada tourism committee, Davis sat next to soccer star David Beckham and appeared with billionaire casino mogul Sheldon Adelson of Las Vegas Sands Corp. Adelson and Majestic Realty Co. are partners in the proposed stadium.

"We're committed to this project if you're committed to us," Davis said, calling it a 'lifetime commitment.' "I'll do everything I can to make it happen."



**Oakland Raiders owner Mark Davis, left, and former soccer player David Beckham laugh as they attend a Southern Nevada Tourism Infrastructure Committee meeting at UNLV on April 28, 2016 in Las Vegas. (Ethan Miller/Getty Images)**

Later by phone, Davis said of his partners, "They are real people, that's why it's not a game. It's real. We'll give them an offer they can't refuse."

A 65,000-seat stadium in Las Vegas is Davis' latest attempt to leave Oakland, where negotiations have stalled, and the city and county have refused the \$300 million in public funding Davis wants to get a stadium built. Davis may also get the opportunity to move the Raiders to Los Angeles to share a stadium with the Rams, but only if the San Diego Chargers relinquish the option the NFL has given them for that facility.

In Las Vegas, Davis has powerful allies in Adelson and Ed Roski of Majestic Realty Co., said longtime sports executive Andy Dolich. Roski helped lead the development of the STAPLES Center in downtown Los Angeles and has an estimated net worth of \$4.7 billion.

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"As opposed to so many other names that have been thrown into this 'Raiders of the Lost Park' drama ... Majestic Realty and Ed Roski are a serious, professionally run organization that knows the complexities surrounding the business of sports," Dolich said.

The Las Vegas stadium group proposes the domed stadium would be financed by \$650 million in private funding, with the Raiders committed to chip in \$500 million -- the same as for the Oakland site -- \$200 million of which would come from an NFL stadium loan. There is still a \$750 million funding gap, which backers believe could be filled through hotel tax revenues.

The group also is asking to create the Clark County Stadium Authority, similar to the authority that oversees the Oakland Coliseum and Oracle Arena.

One potential location for the stadium is a 42-acre lot on Tropicana Avenue near McCarran International Airport, the Vegas Strip and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, which would also have use of the facility. Beckham, who has partnered with Sands on hotel projects, said the stadium would draw international soccer clubs. Beckham is the head of an ownership group of a Major League Soccer expansion team in Florida.

Moving a professional sports team to Las Vegas is tricky. Besides approval from 24 of 32 NFL owners and a blessing from state lawmakers, such a move would challenge the league's reluctance to have a franchise in proximity to legalized gambling. But NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell indicated in recent weeks that it would be up to owners whether a team could locate there.

Dolich said getting the vote to move is "as difficult as Mt. Everest built out of 100 dollar bills." If legalized gambling expands in the United States, the NFL could make more money off fees from an expansion team. And it's unclear if the \$200 million from the NFL that Davis is counting on will be offered for the Las Vegas stadium, he said. The NFL has offered to chip in another \$100 million if an Oakland stadium is built.

"I think this is still a gigantic uphill climb without oxygen," Dolich said.

Many members on the Southern Nevada Tourism Infrastructure Committee said they have been waiting for a team like the Raiders to come along. The committee is tasked with making a recommendation on the proposal to the state Legislature.

"This has been such a long time coming," Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman said. "We have been dreaming of this for 17 hard years because this city is ready."

John Boyd Jr., a corporate site selection expert who has worked with clients in Las Vegas, said the differences in the Bay Area and Las Vegas markets might dampen the Raiders' chances.

"The NFL owners will not want to see the Raiders leave the lucrative, high-tech, Cadillac market of the Bay Area," Boyd said. "You see that market in a new stadium for San Francisco, the success the Giants have had, and the Golden State (Warriors) basketball team is having."

Back in Oakland, officials dropped negotiations with the Raiders over a long-term stadium deal while they discussed a lease extension at the Coliseum. That agreement is awaiting approval

from NFL owners after local officials and the Raiders agreed to a one-year lease to play in Oakland for the 2016-17 season, with options to extend the lease for two additional seasons.

A negotiator for Oakland plans to meet next week with real estate executive Larry MacNeil, whom the Raiders hired to work on a permanent stadium in Oakland.

City Councilman Larry Reid expressed frustration with Davis, calling his actions "disingenuous."

"The question is whether or not it's even worth having the conversation about keeping the Raiders here in Oakland when it seems you've made up your mind," Reid said. "Just be honest and truthful to the fans."

In a statement, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf said her city remains committed to finding a long-term stadium solution for the Raiders.

Davis has said he can contribute \$500 million toward an estimated \$900 million stadium in Oakland.

On Thursday, Davis said that under the lease agreement, his team could practice and play in Oakland while the Las Vegas stadium is being built. The earliest the team would move to Las Vegas likely would be 2020.

Talk of a move stung fans in Oakland, where there is a waiting list for 2016 season tickets. The early sellout of season tickets could be a first for the Raiders.

"I'm beyond words that he would make a 'lifetime commitment' to Las Vegas but not make the same commitment to a city that has had a lifetime commitment to his family, their partners and the franchise for more than 40 years," said Jim Zelinski, a co-founder of Save Oakland Sports.

If the team does move, it will lose a fan in Ray "Dr. Death" Perez.

"I will be done with them," Perez, 28, said Thursday. "My loyalty is not expandable. This is not a cult, and he is not the supreme leader."