

# Community Group Wants A New Park In Southeast Fresno

By Joe  
Moore

One group wants the city to turn a former USDA facility on South Peach Avenue into a new city park.

Credit Google Maps

Listen

Listening...

2:52

Listen to this report...

A local organization is asking the City of Fresno to build a new park for residents in an older part of town.

Jose Leon-Barazza with the Southeast Fresno Community Economic Development Association will ask the city council on Thursday to spend \$200,000 to do preliminary work to turn a largely vacant 48-acre parcel on South Peach Avenue into a park and soccer fields.



The land is owned by the city and used to be a USDA field station. The city received the property from the federal government at no cost in 2006, with the condition that it be used for a public park or recreational use.

Leon-Barazza says he wants the city to invest more in amenities for south Fresno residents.

*Leon-Barazza: "There's a lot of information that shows about the terrible performance of our city when it comes to the investment in the creation of parks and soccer facilities."*

Earlier this month the Trust for Public Land ranked Fresno tied for last in the nation in park space, and on Wednesday the city rejected a bus ad that called for more parks in south Fresno as being too political. The ad cited city data that shows North Fresno residents enjoy over four times the amount of park space per capita as those who live south of Shaw Avenue. The ranking counts city parks, as well as San Joaquin River Parkway properties and flood control basins.

Leon-Barazza says the Peach Avenue site is not well maintained and is currently an eyesore. He hopes a public park and soccer fields will eventually replace the weeds and abandoned buildings now on the property.

*Leon-Barazza: "The way we see it that property is owned by the residents of the our city, it is a public property that we all that live in the city of Fresno own. That it could make it a lot easier for our city to add more park space where you have the land that's readily available."*

Mark Standriff, spokesperson for Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin declined to comment on the issue saying the administration more information on the proposal, but said the city is committed to improving parks in south Fresno.

As for paying for the facility, Leon-Barazza says the city should look at new funding options, including a special sales tax.

*Leon-Barazza: "We really feel that efforts could be made to find the necessary financial resources, whether it means connecting with corporate sponsors, whether it means to conduct fundraising activities, or if you take it to the extreme maybe we need to consider a sales tax initiative so that we can fund parks the way we have been able to fund the zoo, the way we fund roads."*

The group plans to circulate a petition asking city leaders to take on the project.