



West of Woodward for Wings?

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One area often cited for a new hockey arena for the **Detroit Red Wings** is the land west of Woodward Avenue behind the **Fox Theatre**, and the site continues to make sense to some local observers.

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However, Chris Ilitch, president and CEO of **Ilitch Holdings Inc.** and son of team owners Mike and Marian Ilitch, discounted that option in a meeting with *Crain's* in May.

Even though the family owns more than half of that land in scattered parcels, Ilitch said the cost of buying the rest likely would be too high and changes in laws surrounding land acquisition would make it difficult to assemble the rest.

The Ilitches, through **Olympia Development L.L.C.**, own 34 parcels totaling almost 9 acres in the area once targeted for a new baseball stadium, according to city tax records.

The 15.4-acre area is bounded by Grand River Avenue to the west, the Fisher Freeway on the north, Clifford Street on the east and Adams Avenue on the south.

Stadium consultant Lou Beer, president of **First Public Corp.** in Saginaw, said no one looking for development sites ever expresses open interest in their target areas.

Beer said the area west of Woodward makes sense because of its proximity to other downtown entertainment venues.

"I believe it's the city's desire to continue to create density downtown, and this is next to the sports/entertainment district. There is already parking for the Fox, **Comerica Park** and **Ford Field**," Beer said, "It's only a block or two from People Mover stops, and Red Wing fans love the People Mover."

On the other hand, Jake Miklojcik, president of Lansing-based **Michigan Consultants**, said assembling an entire site west of Woodward might prove difficult.

"You can't take land when people think it's worth zillions," Miklojcik said. "And in Detroit, the problem always is land assembly."

Sean Harrington, owner of the **Town Pump Tavern** at 100 W. Montcalm and **Centaur Bar** at 2233 Park Ave., said development of the area behind Fox Theatre has been held back for years because existing property owners are asking exorbitant prices with the expectation that an arena will be built there.

While Harrington said he wouldn't mind an arena in his neighborhood, he also has his own suggestion: Build the arena on the southwest side of Grand Circus Park.

The **United Artists Building** and adjoining vacant property where the **Tuller Hotel** once stood is owned by Olympia Development. Across Bagley Street toward Washington Boulevard is the site of the former **Statler Hilton Hotel**, owned by the

city.

Ilitch Holdings and the **Detroit Economic Growth Corp.** have said they plan to co-market the two sites.

DEGC President George Jackson Jr. said Friday that he “has other plans” for at least part of that site.

Last month, Jackson said he had offered the Statler Hilton site to Livonia-based **Quicken Loans/Rock Financial Corp.** to build its company headquarters.

But Harrington said that, either way, “The sooner they decide what they are doing with the stadium, the better. ... Any announcement will hopefully open up more property back here to potentially turn into apartments or residential, which I feel is the drop-dead necessary thing for us more than anything else in downtown Detroit.”

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