

# Texas Stadium should be used, not razed

By **WILLIAM H. BRANDES**

Guest Columnist

A previous Voices of Irving question on what to do with Texas Stadium (Sunday, Nov. 14, 2004) seems to lean to demolition and new development. Now that the City Council is starting to think about this issue, Irving needs to find the right answer, and I am not sure demolition is the best one.

Having been involved with both the design and construction phases of the stadium, I am probably somewhat biased in my feelings and would like to see the stadium saved and be converted to some other use. With respect to tearing it down, here are some items to think about:

■ **Demolition:** The cost will be out of sight. If it is imploded, it will be extremely difficult to cut up, load and haul off the structural steel roof trusses and other roof-framing members. The massive concrete buttresses that support the roof and all of the other concrete elements will be equally hard to dispose of by truck hauling.

■ **Filling in the bowl:** The amount of dirt required to fill in the area above the field and lower deck seats, to bring that area to the elevation of the existing grade at the main concourse, will be beyond belief. When the stadium was built, all of that dirt was re-

moved (after the roof was erected) with large earth moving scrapers used to build dams and roads. That dirt was used as fill for all of the parking lots. Now, dirt would have to be hauled back in by trucks from off-site sources — expensive!

■ **Concrete piers:** There are massive drilled piers under all of the concrete columns and the buttresses supporting the roof. As I recall, some of these are about 100 feet deep. They cannot be removed and could certainly interfere with future new construction.

In answer to the first two items above, someone will surely say to “bury all the steel and concrete under fill dirt and then just let new construction be built on top of that.” Unfortunately, this would bring about a whole new set of problems.

Having said all of the above, the question then becomes: “Is it economically feasible to renovate, convert, reconfigure, upgrade or otherwise alter the use of the stadium to accommodate some other forum?”

Although this is where my desire to save the stadium may be somewhat ambitious, I cannot help but think there must be some ultimate idea that would work, be of benefit to the city (and its citizens) and not be too costly. The end result should probably become a

joint venture of the city and a developer, with each bringing something to the table.

**My first choice would be to convert the structure into a convention center that has been proposed for Irving, but remains a distant, unfulfilled desire.** As radical as this may sound, it may be a realistic approach to both problems — the stadium and the convention center. There are ways to convert the playing field into exhibit and meeting space, retain the upper deck seating for concerts, shows, graduations, political conventions, etc. (you name it). The Stadium Club would be a premier draw for such events, as well as being available to the citizens of Irving as a fine dining venue when not being utilized for special events.

In addition to the convention center, there is enough land to accommodate a flagship hotel on the property, which could be physically tied into the convention center. Structured parking garages could also free up other land areas within the ring road, which could be further developed for commercial and retail. The list is endless. The parking lot across Highway 114 could be sold to developers for private development.

What better gateway from D/FW Airport to an Irving Convention Center than Highway 114

through Las Colinas or a new, rebuilt Highway 183 through central Irving?

There also will be the future northwest DART light rail route going through the area. We all know what happens to real estate near a DART station as evidenced by the Mockingbird station and upcoming Plano developments. There is a lot of land left to develop in the area to the west and north of the stadium, and such development need not be limited to industrial uses. It can be a combination of commercial, retail and residential that would complement the convention center and the University of Dallas, while also providing a higher tax base than industrial uses.

Right now, I do not have a second choice, but there are probably some viable ideas out there just waiting to be discovered. The intent of this is to get the city and its citizens involved in the thinking process of what to do with the stadium. It is too much of a world-renowned landmark, which helped put Irving on the map, to just let it go the way of the wrecking ball. We may have lost the Cowboys, but that is no reason not to try and save a structure with so much history for Irving for the past 30-plus years and with the potential for a lasting future.