



## **FAQ ON THE CLOSURE OF THE BRIDGEPOINTE ICE RINK IN SAN MATEO**

### **What's the background of this story?**

On June 1, 2013, the developer at Bridgepointe Shopping Center in San Mateo, SPI Holdings, LLC ("SPI") - Managing Partner: Dennis Wong, did not renew the lease with the ice rink operator. The doors to the rink were chained shut and thousands of skaters, families and an entire community were locked out of a popular San Mateo recreational facility that had served the community for decades.

The boards and equipment are idle and the rink stands empty but ready to be reopened. The rink was used 7 days of the week from 5:00 a.m. in the morning to after midnight by community members of all ages including figure and hockey skaters, adaptive P.E. students who skated with their wheelchairs on the ice, teenagers, religious groups, families and is estimated to have had 100,000 users each year.

### **I heard that the rink was losing money and went out of business. Is this true?**

No. The rink was a popular and viable business. On April 15, 2013, Peter Meier of SPI told the rink operator: "We are not interested in extending the current tenant's lease or offering your group a new lease." Six weeks later the rink was closed and the entrance padlocked, depriving city residents of this intended community benefit.

### **Why can't the developer simply demolish the rink and put in retail stores?**

Without approval by either the Planning Commission or the City Council, the only authorized use on the site is an ice rink. In order to convert the space to retail use, the City Council would need to amend the Bridgepointe Master Plan. A recreational use other than an ice rink would have to be "similar" and subject to Planning Commission approval. These rules were already in place when SPI bought the property.

Former city leaders had the foresight to recognize the unique value of an ice rink and in particular that inclusion of the ice rink would make the center a destination point for youth in the area. Given the unique recreational value of the ice rink to the community, SPI cannot rip down the rink without City approval.

### **Why does the master plan designate the land for the ice rink?**

Bridgepointe Shopping Center was the project that replaced Fashion Island Mall. Throughout the planning process in the 1990's, proposals for a new shopping center always included retaining the ice rink located at the mall and was seen as one of the attractive aspects of the proposed project. The new center's layout and traffic flows were designed around retaining the ice rink at the site.

After the Bridgepointe project was approved and construction was underway, Sand Hill Properties, the original developer, proposed replacing the rink with additional retail stores. The City and the planning commission rejected the proposal finding that an ice rink had been contemplated throughout the planning process. The Bridgepointe development project was found to have significant negative environmental impacts; however, retention of the rink and its ongoing recreational benefit for the community was an overriding consideration that led to the project's approval.

Sand Hill Properties also raised concerns about the viability of the ice rink and finding an ice rink operator. The city commissioned a study by Sedway Group that found an ice rink was economically viable provided it paid rent commensurate with other regional ice rinks. The city council modified the

master plan to allow for an ice rink or similar recreational use subject to planning commission approval, in case an operator could not be found. Sand Hill properties then withdrew their proposal to replace the rink with retail and the rink reopened.

### **Why did the developer close the rink on June 1, 2013 even though it had no approval from the city to change the land use?**

SPI Holdings closed the ice rink in 2013. In May 2014, three city planning commissioners criticized SPI Holdings for closing the rink before it had submitted a plan to replace it, and two commissioners called for the rink to be reopened until any plan is approved. SPI did not reopen the rink. The rink sits empty.

The city's legal staff has taken the position that the city cannot require SPI to "operate" the rink. While this reading of the plan is disputed, what the Master Plan does is clearly designate an area for an ice rink. In fact, every proposed development plan provided in the Master Plan required retention of the Ice Chalet at the former Fashion Island Mall site as a condition of Sand Hill Properties redevelopment plan. In other words, to offset the impact of the proposed re-development, the developer was required to retain the existing ice rink and upgrade it. Notably, that ice rink was operational.

### **Where are we now? (Summer 2015)**

SPI Holdings submitted an application to the city to demolish the rink and replace it with retail stores. SPI is offering a one-time payment of \$3 million. The city is reviewing the proposal. Once the proposal is complete, supporters will be notified of the very important Planning Commission Meeting and City Council meetings. Although the Planning Commission will review and make a recommendation to the City Council, the decision as to whether to keep the rink or demolish it and put retail stores in its place will be made by a vote by the San Mateo City Council.

SPI originally proposed replacing the rink by installing a bathroom and synthetic turf in a San Mateo Park. See the San Mateo Planning Department website for the current proposal by SPI Holdings and related documents. Bridgepointe: [www.cityofsanmateo.org/index.aspx?nid=3000](http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/index.aspx?nid=3000)

### **Why can't the city just build a new rink for the community?**

Building a new ice rink will cost in the tens of millions of dollars, and this does not include the cost of land. The current parcel the rink sits on is about 1.7 acres with parking in the adjoining shopping center. Certainly retail rents would be higher than what an ice rink pays but the ice rink is the community benefit that allowed the Bridgepointe project to be approved in the first place.

The \$3 million offered by the developer is far from sufficient to purchase new land and build a new rink to replace the lost community benefit. It is also unnecessary and wasteful for the city to now spend its own funds to build and operate a new ice rink when the Bridgepointe ice rink was well maintained, well run, and used actively by the community. The cost to reopen the rink is minimal. Operation requires filling the rink and freezing the surface, far less costly (and less wasteful) than building a new rink.

### **Who is behind the Save the Bridgepointe Rink Organization?**

This grass roots organization is led by a core group of local volunteers. The group organizes community action and has retained an experienced land use attorney to fight for the community's rights. The group is supported by thousands of residents and community members who are passionate about retaining this substantial recreational benefit for the community as was contemplated when Bridgepointe was originally built. To that effect, we have collected over 10,000 paper and electronic petition signatures in support of keeping the rink. Please sign our Change.org petition: [www.tiny.cc/jawlwX](http://www.tiny.cc/jawlwX)

## **Do we need an attorney to fight for our rights? Isn't the public outcry enough?**

The public voice is of critical significance. At the same time, complicated legal provisions drive the community's rights to keep the ice rink. SPI has far more resources to serve its interests. In fact, SPI has hired an influential land use attorney as well as political and public relations consultants. Given SPI's resources, this is a David and Goliath situation. Accordingly, the community desperately needs someone to guide them through the legal aspects of the planning process and more importantly, represent the community's best interests with land resources becoming increasingly scarce. We absolutely need legal help to assist us with our efforts to keep the rink for our community.

## **What is the Save the Bridgepoint Ice Rink legal defense fund?**

To fight for the community's rights, and pay for a land use attorney, the organization has established a legal defense fund. The core group of volunteers has contributed thousands of dollars as well as receiving significant donations from the community. Even with prudent use of the attorney's time, we must raise additional funds to ensure the community's legal rights are represented. To donate online, please visit [www.savesanmeteorink.org](http://www.savesanmeteorink.org) and click on "Donate." Donations are not tax deductible.

## **How can we help save the ice rink? We need to keep this issue out there. Please help us!**

1. Write letters to the city council expressing your views about the ice rink's value.
2. Write letters to local newspapers to express your views about the ice rink.
3. Donate to the legal defense fund to ensure our community's rights are protected.

Links to emails for City Officials/Newspapers and fundraiser on our website:  
[www.savesanmeteorink.org](http://www.savesanmeteorink.org)

## **Please email the Council and let them know why this rink is important to you and the community! (Cut and Paste emails and send them one right now!)**

[mfreschet@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:mfreschet@cityofsanmateo.org)

[jmatthews@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:jmatthews@cityofsanmateo.org)

[jgoethals@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:jgoethals@cityofsanmateo.org)

[dlim@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:dlim@cityofsanmateo.org)

[rbonilla@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:rbonilla@cityofsanmateo.org)

[Planningcommission@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:Planningcommission@cityofsanmateo.org)

---

## **Submit letters and opinions!**

SAN MATEO DAILY JOURNAL

Email: [letters@smdailyjournal.com](mailto:letters@smdailyjournal.com)

Mail: 800 S. Claremont St. Ste. 210, San Mateo, CA 94402

Letters to the Editor should be no longer than 250 words. Perspective columns should be no longer than 750 words. Illegibly written and anonymous letters will not be accepted. Please include a daytime phone number where we can reach you.

MERCURY NEWS

E-mail: [letters@mercurynews.com](mailto:letters@mercurynews.com)

Requirements: 150 words or less; no attachments; include your name, address and daytime phone. Letters will be edited for length and clarity. Street addresses and phone numbers are not published. The Mercury News reserves the right to publish and republish your submission in any form or medium.

PALO ALTO DAILY POST

Email: [letters@pailypost.com](mailto:letters@pailypost.com)

Please limit letters to 250 words or less. Shorter letters are printed first and edited least. Include your first and last name along with your address and phone number. Of course your address and phone number will not be printed.

---

Have some ideas? Need more information? Want to get involved?

Please visit the Save the San Mateo Rink website at [www.savesanmateorink.org](http://www.savesanmateorink.org)  
or email us at [savesanmateorink@gmail.com](mailto:savesanmateorink@gmail.com)

---

Sources and additional information:

<http://blogs.mercurynews.com/internal-affairs/2015/05/15/pr-team-twists-the-truth-in-bridgepointe-ice-rink-battle/>

[http://www.mercurynews.com/san-mateo-county-times/ci\\_25850970/san-mateo-bridgepointe-ice-rink-supporters-get-big](http://www.mercurynews.com/san-mateo-county-times/ci_25850970/san-mateo-bridgepointe-ice-rink-supporters-get-big)

9-26-1996 Bridgepointe Master Plan and Final EIR.

Please see our website for more articles and Information: [www.savesanmateorink.org](http://www.savesanmateorink.org)

DISCLAIMER: While every attempt to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided on this FAQ page, and the Committee has produced it from third-party sources and documents believed to be reliable, no warranty expressed or implied is made regarding accuracy, adequacy, completeness, or legality of any information. This disclaimer includes any liability from presentation of this information and from both isolated and aggregate uses of the information.