

Sun Bowl

A three-way deal started to take shape this week that may save a landmark and get a growing institution some resources it needs. And it may not even cost kids a place to play a sport they love.

But is it still a good idea?

Time will tell as a deal comes into focus meant to allow the Washington County School District to sell East Elementary School to Dixie State University to allow DSU to expand its footprint into a usable building with additional land. That same deal would allow the school district to buy land owned by the city where Elks Field currently sits. As a property adjacent to the Sun Bowl, the field, which the city council voted to sell Tuesday, is home to the only full-size baseball facility off of school grounds and is used more than 100 times each year for games involving area high schools, youth baseball tournaments and Little League for 13- to 15-year-old boys.

The city would obtain funds from the Elks Field sale that could be put to use renovating the Sun Bowl, a facility that is used fewer than 12 days each year, on average, for the past five years.

At first glance, it appears kids lose out in this deal, but Mayor Jon Pike has hinted that an even better baseball facility could be built at a relatively low cost, meaning the kids would lose their historic venue but would gain something even better. If our elected officials truly care about teenage boys, that should happen soon.

It's a sound plan and one that appears to have support from Dixie Little League and other baseball enthusiasts in the area.

And if it's a sound plan to upgrade with a new facility over the historic Elks Field, then it should hold true for the historic Sun Bowl as well.

Simply put, taxpayers have to ask themselves if they really want to put millions of dollars into renovations for the Sun Bowl. And if that answer is yes, then they need to ask themselves why.

Some people point to possible use of the Recreation, Arts and Parks (RAP) tax that was approved by voters in November. St. George stands to receive a large chunk of that money, but we think it's fair to say

most voters who supported it believed the money would go to assisting with additional parks and trails, such as the forward-thinking 1990s bond that built the trails system and the Canyons Softball Complex. Or voters thought it would go to helping St. George Musical Theater or other performing arts groups that provide entertainment on a regular basis throughout the year.

The majority of voters likely didn't intend for that money to go to help renovate what has become not much more than a large chunk of concrete in the middle of town. Too harsh? Actions speak louder than words. If the Sun Bowl really means something to people, then there would be more than two to three events there each year. And it would be in use for more than seven to 12 days a year.

Think about that for one moment. Would we be satisfied if the federal government chose to spend money on something that is used in such a limited fashion? Would we say that's a good use of our tax dollars? The Sun Bowl as it relates to the St. George City Council is no different, at least not if we look in the mirror and are honest with ourselves.

If the council is so determined to save the Sun Bowl, then it needs to do what Mayor Jon Pike and councilmembers Joe Bowcutt and Michele Randall campaigned on in the last city election. It needs a plan — and one that goes beyond simply encouraging organizations to use the facility. Taxpayers can't be on the hook for a "build it and they will come" approach.

Not a penny should be spent on the Sun Bowl unless the community first sees how it will be used and what the city will do to promote additional events to take place there.

The Dixie Roundup Rodeo is great. The city's July Fourth celebration is fun. But the two together constitute four days a year of use. Four days.

Getting Dixie State room to grow is a smart plan. Having an elementary school in the central part of town is a smart plan.

Saving a structure used so sparingly is fiscally irresponsible.