

EL PASO, TEXAS

DEDICATED TO OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY

S E R V I C E • S O L U T I O N S • S U C C E S S

July 30, 2012



Dear Mayor and Council:

Reference item 14D that I placed on tomorrow's agenda:

- 14D.** Discussion and action on addressing the soccer field and soccer program disparity for Central area residents, particularly school age children, to include: 1. modifying previous directive on the location of the proposed soccer complex to specify a preference for a location that is closer to or abutting Central El Paso and/or 2. identifying funds in the proposed General Bond election for scattered soccer sites throughout Central and 3 increasing City sponsored league programming for Central area children. **(All Districts)** [Representative Susie Byrd, 915-541-4416]

I have placed item 14D on tomorrow's agenda in response to the recent action by council to locate the proposed soccer complex in the Eastside/Mission Valley area.

First, I want to be clear that I am not asking for Council to reconsider that action. In light of that action, I'm hoping that Council will consider allocating \$5 million in the November Bond Election for scattered soccer sites throughout Central El Paso in order to address the soccer field disparity that exists for Central area residents. According to Nanette Smejkal, \$5 million could yield as many as six fields.

There is an amount of \$400,000 for Johnson Basis, a neighborhood park in my District, that can also be reallocated for this purpose, but we would need to increase the overall size of the bond by \$4.6 million.

For your consideration, I have included the following information:

- A map that shows the Planning Areas that were used as the basis for developing the information provided in the chart. As you can see from that map, the Central Area is bounded by Executive Center in the Northwest, the U.S./Mexico Border on the Southside, Fred Wilson in the Northeast and Airways on the Eastside. Districts 1, 2, 3 and 8 all have residents who reside in the Central Planning Area.



- A map showing the existing fields and the fields proposed in the November bond.
- A chart that details the soccer field disparity and subsequent lack of teams or games in Central compared to the other parts of the City. Please note that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan adopted in 2006 and used as a guide for parks investment says, "Distribution of soccer fields is good in the Northeast and Eastern Planning areas, but is considerably worse in the Central and far West Planning areas. Both areas will benefit from the new soccer complexes that are opening in the next one to two years, but the problem in Central District remains more critical." At the time that the plan was adopted, the soccer complex funded by the 2000 bond was supposed to be built in Central on Fort Bliss land. When Fort Bliss pulled out from that deal, the complex was moved to the Northwest relieving the access issues on the Westside but leaving Central El Paso with a still critical soccer field disparity.
- A graph that shows the ratio of school-aged children to fields in each Planning Area.
- An El Paso Times article highlighting the difficulties of Central area kids, particularly low income kids, in accessing soccer opportunities.

I want to thank you in advance for helping me and the other representatives for the Central find ways to provide better access to soccer fields and soccer programming in Central.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susie Byrd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susie Byrd
City Council Representative, District 2

PLANNING AREAS El Paso, Texas

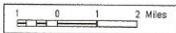
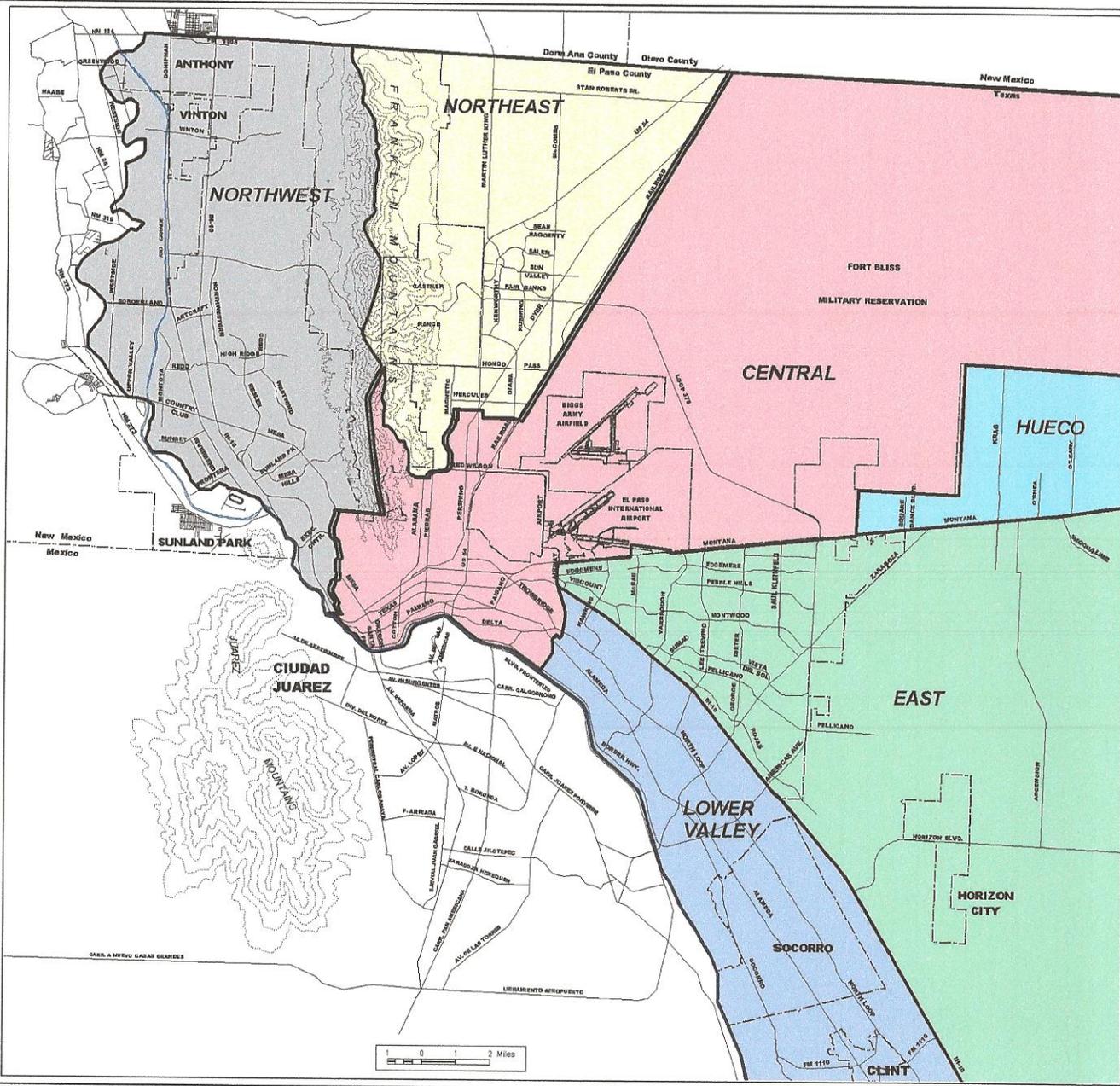
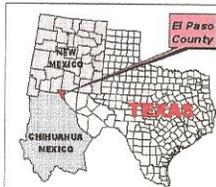


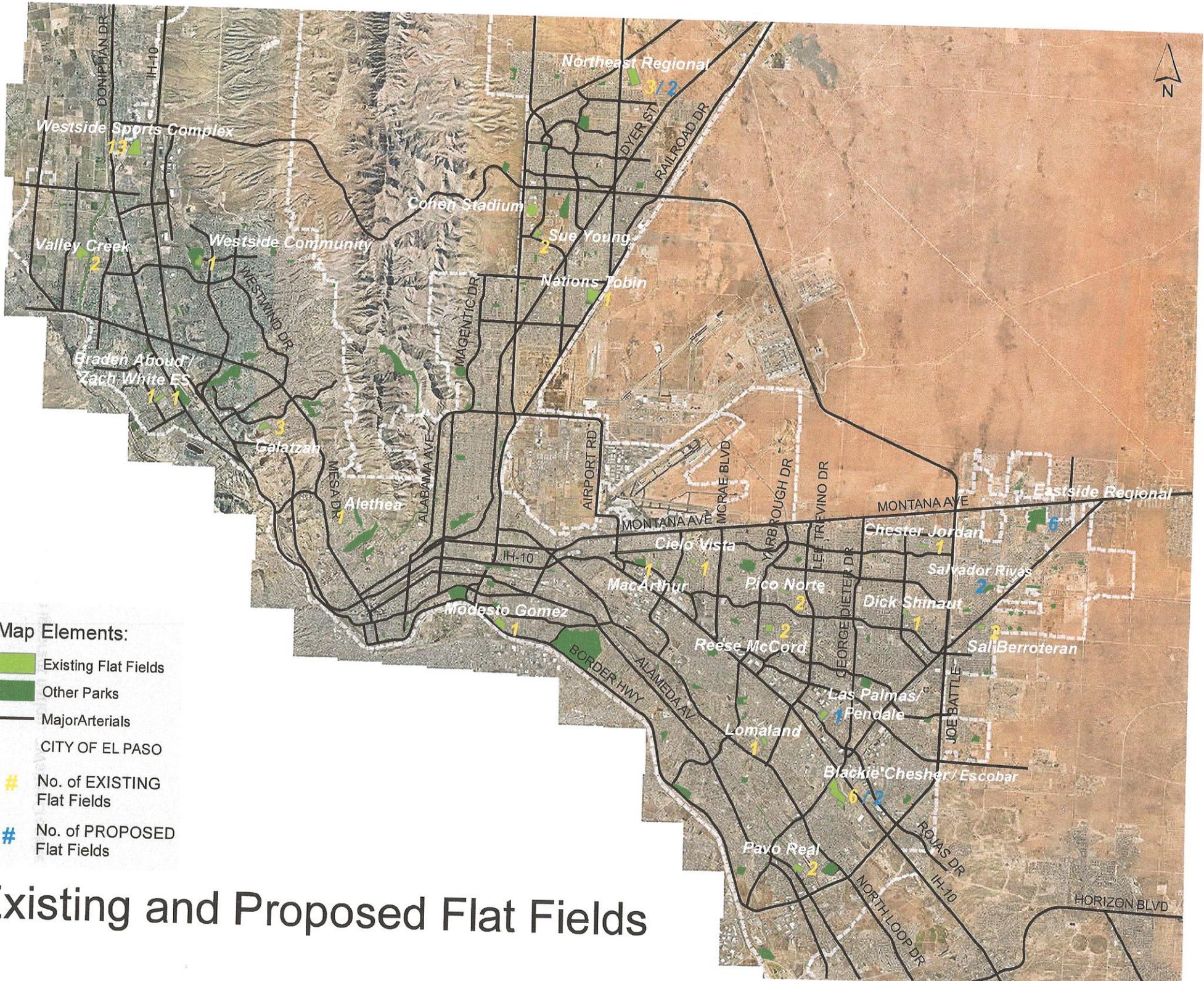
This map is designed for general illustrative purposes only and should not be used for site-specific studies. A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning boundaries.

Source: City of El Paso, Planning Research and Development; Metropolitan Planning Organization



THE PLAN FOR EL PASO
Department of Planning,
Research & Development
March, 1999





Westside Sports Complex

Valley Creek

Westside Community

Cohen Stadium

Sue Young

Nations Tobin

Braden Aboud/
Zach White ES

Galatzan

Alethea

Cielo Vista

Modesto Gomez

MacArthur

Pico Norte

Reese McCord

Lomaland

Pavo Real

Northeast Regional

Eastside Regional

Chester Jordan

Salvador Rivas

Dick Shmout

Sal Berroteran

Las Palmas/
Pendale

Blackie Chasher/
Escobar

DOMINICAN DR
IH-10

DYER ST
RAILROAD DR

WESTWIND DR

MAGENTIC DR

AIRPORT RD

MONTANA AVE
MCRAE BLVD

YARBROUGH DR

LEE TREVINO DR

MONTANA AVE

IH-10

BORDER HWY

ALAMEDA AVE

GEORGE DIETER DR

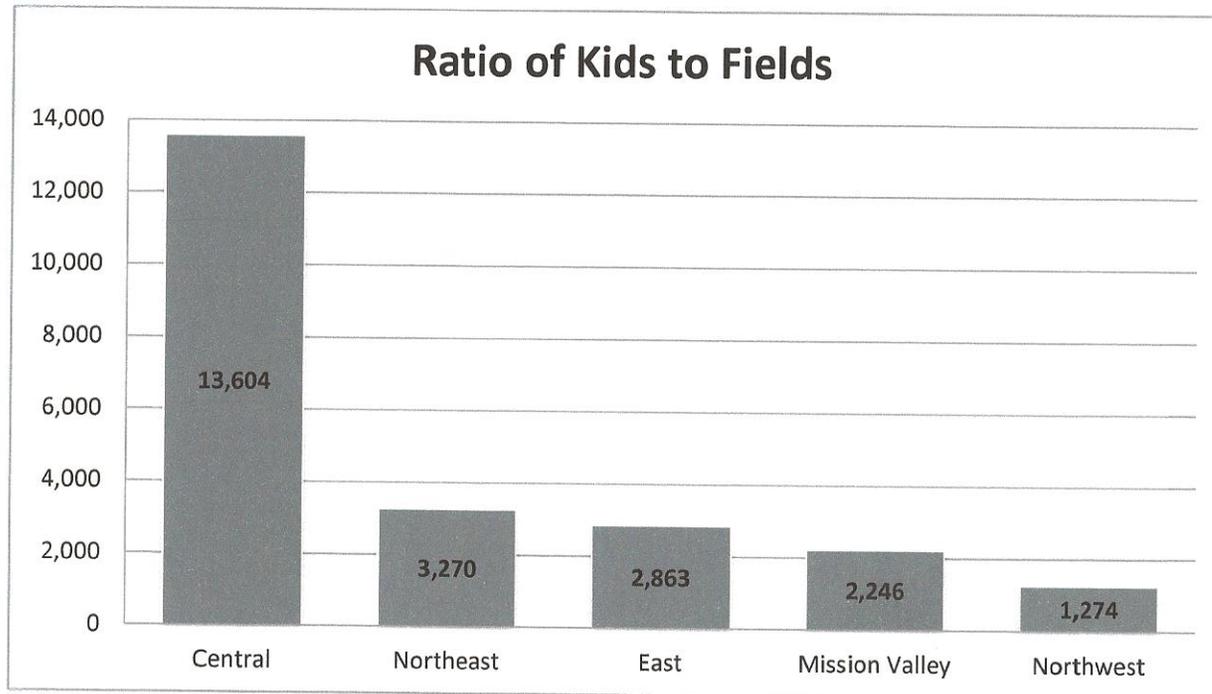
JOE BATTLE

ROJAS DR

NORTH LOOP DR
IH-10

HORIZON BLVD

Planning Area	Existing or Proposed Soccer Fields		Number of School-Aged Children, 2010	Ratio of Kids to Fields	Soccer Players Playing in Each Planning Area		Teams Playing in Each Planning Area		Games in Each Planning Area	
	Number	% of Total			Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Central	2	3%	27,207	13,604	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Northeast	8	13%	26,158	3,270	3,294	26%	254	29%	1,450	26%
East	19	31%	54,406	2,863	1,013	8%	67	8%	397	7%
Mission Valley	11	18%	24,705	2,246	6,833	53%	452	51%	3,193	56%
Northwest	21	34%	26,744	1,274	1,770	14%	112	13%	613	11%
Total	61		159,220	2,610	12,910		885		5,653	



South Side soccer: Segundo Barrio kids revel in program

By Aileen B. Flores | El Paso Times El Paso Times
Posted:

ElPasoTimes.com

Imitating Julio Gomez, who despite a head injury scored the winning goal for Mexico in this year's FIFA Under 17 World Cup semifinals, Miguel Mares tied a bandage around his head before practicing his soccer moves on a recent Thursday afternoon.

Mares, 9, dreams of one day being as good and popular a player as the Mexican futbolista Javier "El Chicharito" Hernandez.

To say the youngster began kicking the soccer ball around at an early age is an understatement.

"He's been kicking since he was in my womb," said his mother, Soledad Gomez. "He's fascinated by it. He talks, eats and breathes soccer."

Mares is one of more than 20 kids who make up the recently formed Club de Futbol Segundo Barrio, a sports program that gives hope to young soccer players in one of El Paso's poorest neighborhoods.

"Beside the fact that there are few soccer teams and leagues locally, these kids don't have the opportunity to belong to any official league due to the lack of money and transportation," said Simon Chandler, who founded the team this summer. A licensed soccer coach for eight years, Chandler has coached a team at La Fe Preparatory School in the South Side neighborhood the past two years.

Chandler said many youths in Segundo Barrio have the talent and passion to play soccer, but face many challenges to do so: Most Segundo Barrio residents live in poverty, according to U.S. Census figures.

Futbol Club membership is open to players ages 9 through 11, who must maintain good grades, conduct and attendance in school. In addition, it is expected that the players and their families be involved in fundraising activities for the team. Chandler hopes the club grows and eventually opens to younger groups, he said.

With the help of the community and organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, the Club de Futbol Segundo Barrio provides uniforms and transportation for its players, Chandler said. Aoy Elementary School, 901 S. Campbell, allows the team to practice on its schoolyard Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

The Club de Futbol Segundo Barrio, which is in the process of becoming a nonprofit organization, is seeking donations to cover the costs of developing the program.

Guadalupe Alderete, whose 9-year-old son, Daniel Alcaraz, is on the team, said she's very

happy that she can count on people like Chandler to provide sports activities to children in the community.

"I know it's a big expense to enroll kids on a team and buy uniforms," she said. "Financially, I could not afford everything that they are giving us, and it helps my son do well in the sport that he enjoys."

Participating in sports keeps kids away from bad habits and off the streets, she said. Alderete, who has lived in Segundo Barrio for about seven years, said many kids her son's age are already on a bad track.

Lucero Almaraz, a mother of two, said she considers soccer important for the physical, mental and emotional development of youths.

Almaraz believes it is necessary for local government and the community to improve the quality of life of the Segundo Barrio youths by creating more recreational programs for both boys and girls, she said.

"There are a lot of young girls who roam the streets. I don't see that they're involved in any activity," she said. "There aren't any sports for girls around here. For example, I would like to enroll my daughter in ballet or karate and there's nowhere nearby to do that. I can't take her very far."

Aileen B. Flores may be reached at aflores@elpasotimes.com; 546-6362. Translated from Spanish by Cindy Ramirez.

- Simon Chandler, head coach of Club de Futbol Segundo Barrio, is looking for donations to support the program. Donations cover the cost of league registration, uniforms, equipment and transportation.
- The youth soccer club is applying for tax-exempt status as a 501-C3 organization.
- To donate, call Chandler at 613-7756 or send checks payable to "Segundo Barrio Futbol Club" to 817 Olive, El Paso, TX 79901.

Susie Byrd: Central El Paso needs soccer fields, too

By Susie Byrd | Guest columnist El Paso Times

Posted:

ElpasoTimes.com

Forty years ago, President Nixon signed into law a game-changing piece of legislation that improved the quality of life for millions of girls and women.

Title IX broke down the barriers to sports participation for girls and women by forcing schools receiving federal financial assistance to provide equal programming for girls' sports programming and facilities.

Before Title IX became law, only 294,000 girls nationwide competed in high-school sports.

Last year, 3.2 million girls, an increase of 980 percent, participated in high-school sports.

The lesson that El Paso should learn from Title IX is that when you provide access to sports programming and to sports facilities, kids sign up to play in droves.

If you live in Central El Paso and you want your kids to play soccer, your kids face the same barriers to participation that girls faced before 1972. (The Central area is bounded by Executive Center on the West Side, the U.S.-Mexico border on the South Side, Fred Wilson in the Northeast and Airway on the East Side.)

There is no place to play unless you have a car and a whole lot of time to drive.

According to the Parks Department, there are exactly two soccer fields in the Central Planning Area and none planned for the 2012 General Bond Election.

In Central, the ratio of school-aged kids to fields is 13,604 kids for every field. Compare that to the rest of the city.

The East Side has 19 existing and planned fields (2,863 kids for every field).

The Mission Valley has 11 fields (2,240 kids per field).

The Northeast has eight fields (3,270 kids per field).

And the Northwest has 21 fields (1,274 kids per field).

The fact is that the kids in the rest of the city have five times better access to soccer fields than Central area residents.

The soccer-field disparity creates a real barrier to participation in soccer for Central area kids. There are no active organized leagues recruiting neighborhood kids in Central.

Because my husband and I own cars and have some extra time after work, we can afford to

drive 30 to 40 minutes in any direction to play organized sports.

But that is a luxury that not all Central area residents can afford, and so their kids go without soccer.

This disparity was recently exacerbated by the fact that EPISD cut the middle school soccer programs.

In fact, the only real access that some Central area kids have to organized soccer is starting in high school.

By that time, they have a lot of catch-up to be able to compete against their peers on the West Side and on the East Side who have been playing in competitive soccer leagues since they were 5.

Recently, the City Council had a discussion about the best location for the 12-field soccer complex that is proposed in the November Bond Election.

The East Side and Mission Valley representatives won the motion on a narrow margin to have the complex placed somewhere in their area.

The argument was that since 75 percent of the soccer players were playing on the East Side, then that's where the new complex should go.

In my mind that is comparable to someone arguing against Title IX by saying that we should only build fields or programs for boys because they are the only ones playing sports.

The East Side and Mission Valley have two advantages that Central El Paso does not have: good access to fields and competitive soccer leagues.

There is no doubt that every part of El Paso needs more fields and that the demand for fields far outstrips the supply.

But shouldn't we provide equal access first?

Susie Byrd is a City Council representative, soccer mom and mom who plays soccer.