



SSV Stadium Input Overview



(Madejski Stadium, home of Reading F.C. of the English Premier League)

American soccer fans have had the unique opportunity to shape their viewing experience at a most fundamental level by contributing to the design of the soccer specific stadia that are popping-up across our national landscape. Since the inception of the annual Supporters Summit each fall, MLS fans have offered their personal experiences and weighed-in on concepts and drawings for many MLS projects.

With the loss of the Earthquakes to Houston, TX, local fans chose to share their input this year via online channels such as BigSoccer.com, the North American Soccer List, and the SSV blog. Once input was solicited, fans responded with hundreds of suggestions for the new “Epicenter.” From these suggestions, a number of common themes have developed.

Executive Summary

- Intimate seating areas close to the action foster a stronger connection between fans and players, creates an imposing presence for visiting teams, and ultimately provides a more exciting viewing experience by translating the speed and power of the game to the spectator (Toyota Park does a good job of this, HDC does not).

- Fans would like a design that is unique to the community and that celebrates the legacy of the team, as well as the grassroots support of passionate soccer fans here in the Bay Area.
- Modern, covered seating amplifies crowd response back onto the field, making games lively and minimizing spillover of light and sound into adjoining neighborhoods.
- Modern, technologically advanced amenities (especially for season ticket holders) and environmentally conscious building design are a major concern.
- Fans would support on-site businesses that make the stadium a destination at times other than game days.
- Tailgating and other pre-game recreation is a key component that makes soccer games a family “event.” Shaded, tree-lined grounds and recreational playing fields are very important to the tailgating experience.
- If possible, the site should be located adjacent to public transportation hubs.

Fan Input (*broadly categorized*):

1.) Themes

- Some Spartan Stadium flavor
 - Intimacy
 - Ballustrades
 - Trees
- Retro, like current MLB movement (i.e. Camden Yards, AT&T Park, etc)
- European EPL/SPL styles (especially Reebok?)
- Earthquake
 - Crumbling Roman ruins
- Technologically advanced, Silicon Valley feel

2.) Location

- Proximity to mass transit (CalTrain, Light Rail, etc)
- Underground parking covered by playing fields
- Surrounding fields for recreational games and tailgating
- Tree covered, dedicated tailgate areas
- Comprehensive traffic plan post-game

3.) Playing Surface

- Limited space beyond the touchlines (4 yards)

- Possible retractable seats for first few rows to accommodate larger pitch (i.e. rugby dimensions)
- Locker rooms below the stands and players enter at midfield
- Real grass, not field-turf (that can be protected during other events (i.e. concerts))

4.) Seating Areas

- Intimate seating areas
- Individual seats with backs and cup holders
- Boards (wood or metal) that will generate noise when the crowd stamps their feet.
 - Goes back to NASL roots of team
 - Lost with newer concrete flooring used at stadiums
- Steeply terraced seating with unobstructed sightlines
 - Threatening and lively
 - Keeps crowd close to the field (HDC is too spread-out)
- Preferably in team colors (blue, black, grey)
- Team name spelled-out in the seats
- Possible terraces or benches behind the goals
 - Tradition
 - Low cost
- Standing section to accommodate The Casbah
- Seats close to field
- Seats low to field
 - (4-5 feet to encourage celebratory Lambeau Leaps by players, etc.)
 - Pitch level, like Europe (code issues in the U.S.?)
- Luxury suites that can be rented out by groups for a given match
- Rectangular (not oval) configuration to limit intrusion on sightlines
- Possibly open at the corners to allow view of urban surroundings

5.) Amenities

- Landmark entrance, visible from street, gateway used by players and fans
- Replay screens at both ends
- Updated sound system that does not obstruct sightlines
- Roof over spectator areas
 - Translucent to admit sunlight (adjustable translucency)
 - Focus/reflect sound back onto field
 - Minimize light and sound seepage to surrounding neighborhoods
 - Some shelter for midday events
 - Possible photovoltaic collector for green design principles
- Year-round pub (skybox?), sponsored by a local soccer business (i.e. Britannia Arms)
 - Requires membership for gameday use
 - Open to everyone the rest of the time
- Quakes Museum, statues, and banners showcasing 30+ year MLS and NASL legacy

- Opportunity for brick campaign (community participation)
- Year-round stadium shop (preferably sponsored by local business (i.e. California Custom))
- Quakes front office on-site
- Smart card/Fast card for season ticket holders
 - Automated ticket kiosks
 - Entry
 - Concessions
 - Souvenirs
 - Monthly statements
- Childrens play area with view of field
- WiFi access
- Pavilions: large screen television viewing area(s) with tables for USA matches, pregame, and important away games
- International soccer center to provide video, updates, and highlights of top Int'l leagues (also to educate and draw foreign fans)
- Publicly accessible viewing area (like AT&T Park)
- Adjacent recreational fields (soccer skills park accessible from inside stadium?)

6.) Concessions

- Televisions at the concession stands
- International beer selection
 - NO exclusive pouring rights for Budweiser
 - International selection for sophisticated, international clientele
- Restaurant with a field view
- Beer-garden with a field view
- Adequate restroom facilities (high efficiency (limited water use), effective in/out design, etc).

Another Take:

SSV Vice President Jay Hipps' Vision

I'd like the main entrance to the stadium to be adjacent to a transit stop--light rail, BART (in the South Bay), something like that. You exit the station and come onto a concourse with a series of light poles on either side with banners hanging from them. You'll find an entrance to the Epicenter Club Pub, the Stadium Shop, and the Earthquakes museum/hall of fame. (The team's offices are there, too, around the back side where you'll find the practice/youth soccer/Quakes Academy fields. Oh, and the Club Quake barbecue area, too. The lawn there is a nice touch.)

The stadium itself is relatively simple. It retains the intimacy of Spartan -- well, enhances it, really. The seats (not benches) are Quakes blue, the metal work is black, and the concrete retains its natural color to complete the standard Earthquakes palette. Seats begin right next to the field, like something you'd see in Europe. There's a canopy/roof over the stands to hold in the sound and the covering over the North End seems to have been designed to spread the sound all over the stadium. (A lot of people think it's odd that there's no canopy over the South End but they understand once you explain that's where the away fans sit. Any sound they make just dissipates into space.) Also, you can't see them from inside the stadium but the canopies are also covered with solar panels--over the course of a year, the stadium actually produces more energy than it consumes!

What's really amazing is that somehow they've managed to transfer the intrinsic energy of Spartan and all the historic matches that it's seen (the original Quakes, the Blackhawks, the inaugural MLS game, Women's World Cup, Bruce Arena's first game as US coach, 5-2, 3-2, and all the rest) so it seems like a stadium with a tradition and a history even though it's brand new...