

Sports Business

Auction for possible Arizona Coyotes arena site moving forward



Image: Arizona Coyotes

The Arizona Coyotes are a step closer to locking down a new arena site.

ARIZONA COYOTES

By [Brandon Brown](#) and [Audrey Jensen](#) – Phoenix Business Journal
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The Arizona State Land Department has approved a land auction that could pave the way for the Arizona Coyotes to build a hockey arena in the city of Phoenix.

The NHL team last year applied for a state trust land auction as part of its ongoing effort to find a home in the Valley. Tempe voters rejected the team's proposal for a \$2 billion arena and entertainment district last spring.

The land the Coyotes are looking to buy is at the northwest corner of the Loop 101 freeway and Scottsdale Road in a burgeoning part of Phoenix near Desert Ridge Marketplace, Mayo Clinic and the Fairmont Princess Scottsdale.



The state land department Board of Appeals on March 14 approved moving forward with a land auction for the site, which is currently the main site the team is eyeing for an arena, according to sources familiar with the team's plans.

The Coyotes declined to comment on the Board of Appeals decision.

At least 50 people joined the meeting virtually while one hockey fan attended the meeting in person sporting a red Coyotes polo.

The 110 acres bordering Scottsdale was appraised at \$68.5 million, or \$718,481 per acre, according to Arizona State Land Department documents. Anyone can file a protest of auction terms within 30 days of an auction posting, per state law.

The auction has to be advertised for at least 10 weeks before it occurs, which means the auction could be scheduled as early as late spring or early summer.

The property is currently zoned by the city of Phoenix for commercial mixed-use, meaning the team could buy the land and build an arena, restaurants, retail shops and

offices in the space without approval by the Phoenix City Council, thus avoiding any decision from the council going to a public referendum vote.

As of last summer, the team still hoped to build out an entertainment district surrounding an arena on a site that would not require a public vote, the Business Journal previously reported. It could take years for a project of this magnitude to be developed, depending on what's built.

If the Coyotes are able to acquire the state site, it would put an end to a years-long quest to find a new arena.

From 2003 to 2022, the team played at the city-owned arena in Glendale, [now known as Desert Diamond Arena](#), until city leaders discontinued the lease with the Coyotes.

Coyotes' search for a new home has been going for nearly a decade

Before it parted ways with Glendale, the team had frequently missed rent payments and went for a long period without paying its city or state taxes. The Coyotes also had publicly expressed interest in submitting a proposal to build an arena in Tempe.

In 2022, the Tempe City Council approved the Coyotes to acquire 46 acres of land from the city and rezone the property so the Coyotes could build an arena and entertainment district. That approval was turned into a public referendum, but Tempe voters in May 2023 struck down the deal between the city and the Coyotes by a wide margin.

While the Coyotes have been in desperate need of an arena solution since leaving Glendale, the team had been actively looking for a place in the Valley to build a new arena for nearly a decade.

The Coyotes organization, as well as the NHL, long considered Glendale an unviable location for the team to play and believed the hockey franchise would fare better in terms of attendance, sponsorships and general interest in the team if it played closer to Scottsdale [in the eastern portion of the Valley](#).

After the Tempe deal fell through, the Coyotes supposedly looked at several pieces of land and [did enter into an agreement](#) to purchase land in Mesa, but that deal never came to fruition.

Since leaving Glendale, the Coyotes have been playing home games at Mullett Arena, a venue owned by Arizona State University that seats less than 5,000 people. The team has come under fire from the NHL Players Association because Mullett is significantly smaller than every other NHL arena.

As the team has not been able to secure a long-term arena solution, rumors about the team moving to another city or being sold have come up quite frequently.