



Editor's Urban Development Journal: **Coliseum Choices:** An Asset Too Valuable to Demolish

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The Threat

With the recent City action to approve the concept for development of a soccer stadium at PGE Park and a minor league baseball stadium at the Rose Quarter to replace the Memorial Coliseum, a valuable asset owned by the City stands in jeopardy. Combined with Paul Allen's Arena Corporation's desire to develop an entertainment district at the Rose Quarter, there are twin threats to the Coliseum that magnify the importance of understanding both the value of the historic modern icon and the opportunity cost of bowing to the calls to demolish it.



The Asset

The Coliseum was designed in the modern International Style by the internationally renowned architecture firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) and built 50 years ago, just long enough to qualify it for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. Its design and construction are at one and the same time elegantly simple and enormously sophisticated.

There is a concrete bowl sitting inside a square glass box, 360 feet long on each side. The two structures are disconnected from one another. The entire 130,000 square-foot box is held up by only four cruciform concrete columns, outside the bowl. That provides unobstructed sight lines inside the bowl, which is ideal for large events.



In fact, after the four columns were constructed, the steel truss roof was the first thing built for an elegantly simple reason. In the rain-soaked Northwest, the roof was built as an umbrella to

shelter the construction of the concrete bowl inside. That concrete bowl is a very sophisticated structure with a graceful curve at its perimeter, (shown in the photograph on page 3 above and the image below), rising along the east and west sides to give more seating in the middle. Moreover, the concrete bowl is cantilevered, not only lightening its profile but also creating about 30,000 square feet of usable but unused space under its sheltering form. This is particularly felicitous because standing on the concourse on the west side, one overlooks the Willamette River, all the downtown Portland skyscrapers and the burgeoning Pearl district.



The Coliseum still has 40,000 square feet of space, as large as a Portland city block, in an exhibition hall under the plaza on the east side [left]. Formerly, it had been 60,000 square feet but the construction of the Rose Garden reduced its size. Nevertheless, that can be very useful space not only because of its size but also because it is accessible at grade from the north side.



The Memorial

A sunken courtyard between the exhibition hall and the Coliseum provides a calm, reflective space, with a reflecting pool, for the Veterans' Memorial. But perhaps the real memorial to the veterans is the clear expression of American ideals that are expressed in simple, transparent forms and innovative engineering for a civic space in which all Portlanders can gather for a variety of communal functions.

Note that the glazed Coliseum is transparent, in contrast with the Rose Garden, and has worked equally well housing Portland State University graduations, Barack Obama and Ralph Nader political rallies, concerts and a wide variety of sports including basketball, hockey games and tennis matches.

The undulating concrete bowl was designed not only to be visible from across the river but also to be lower than the roof to admit natural daylight into the bowl, as one can see in the image below. Therefore, the space was ahead of its time in interacting with the environment. Moreover, when in use, the Coliseum acts as a beacon visible



from downtown inviting citizens to it. The blackening curtains that surround the bowl when darkening was needed are no longer operable and are left closed, thereby depriving the interior of the benefit of daylight. The glass box is recessed to float above a concrete plinth.

Sustainability



In many ways the Coliseum is located and designed to better fit a sustainable future than most of the buildings of its age. It is now one of the most accessible sites in Portland by both rail and road. It is situated at the intersection of two light rail lines, north-south and east-west, one of which goes directly to the airport.

If high-speed rail is ever to come to Portland, it must come on the east side and would pass below the Coliseum right where it connects to a major transcontinental rail line. At the intersection of the major north-south and east-west freeways in Oregon, travel to and from it is direct and easily accessible.

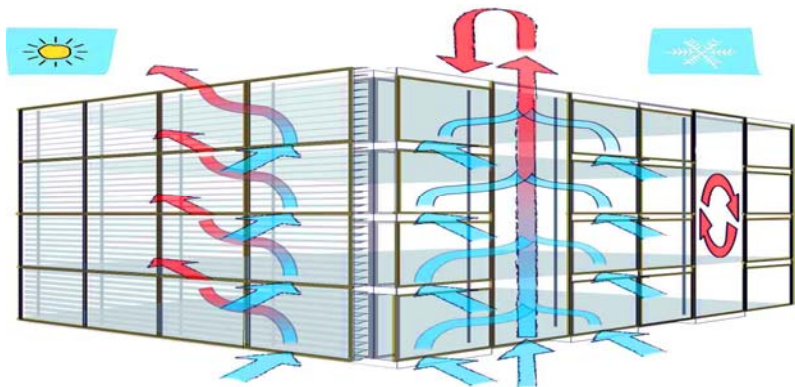
The Coliseum's 130,000 square-foot roof, the size of 3.25 city blocks, is totally unshaded and flat, lending it well to an enormous array of photovoltaic solar collectors. Its glass walls on all four sides are only single-paned windows



ostensibly making it an energy hog. However, with the addition of a second glass skin on the interior, what is an energy waster could become an energy producer because the glass walls themselves would become solar collectors trapping heat. With

appropriate ducts at the roof, that heat generated could be moved to where it is needed, or it could be exhausted, providing insulation and cooling. As the sun moves around its glass walls, the Coliseum could collect more heat than most other kinds of structures. In fact, progressive buildings in Europe, like the Commerzbank tower in Frankfurt, were designed according to the same principle. Therefore, the Coliseum could be

a trailblazer in retrofitting iconic historic buildings for energy efficiency far more sustainably than would its demolition and replacement by new construction of a baseball stadium.



Efficiency

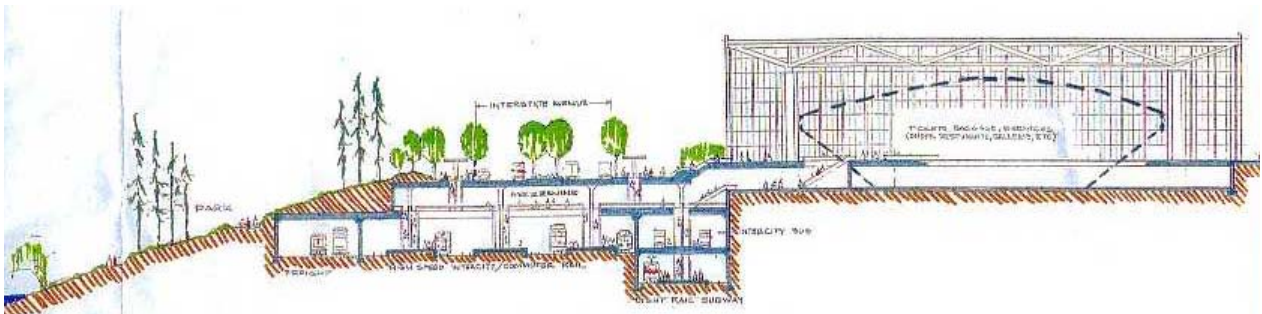
Constructing the Coliseum's pure form also produced great efficiency. To build the Coliseum, concrete trucks drove right in on a depressed entry on the north side and out on the south. They can still do that, which makes it simple to bring large shows into and out of the lower

level. It also permits the demolition of the bowl in such a manner as to maintain the integrity of the glass box for other uses in the unfortunate case that it should it not be feasible to find a valuable program and uses for both the bowl and the box.

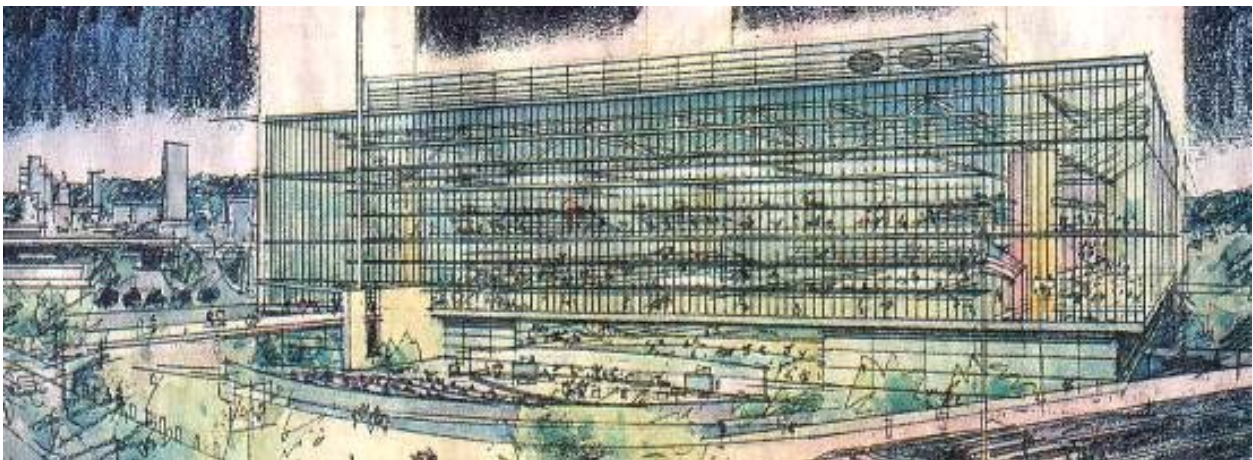


Reuse Options

It is critical to review some of the options for reuse of the Coliseum. Seven years ago in the Spring of 2002, I taught a 3-month long Real Estate Development Workshop in my class of graduate urban planning and development students at the College of Urban Affairs at PSU which produced four alternative uses for the Coliseum that deserve consideration – a headquarters hotel, an arts complex, a sustainable technology center and an urban home center. We also considered two more options - the Howell proposal to transform it into the



Coliseum Transportation Center for high-speed rail, commuter rail, light rail and streetcar integration [above] and the Obletz plan to convert it into the Memorial Athletic Recreation Center (MARC) with pools, ice rink, basketball and tennis courts, [below and next page].



The last flurry of creative proposals seven years ago followed the City's commissioning of an urban design plan in 2001 by Pittsburgh-based Urban Design Associates that would have demolished the Coliseum in favor of an urban street grid and Pearl District style development.

After widespread public resistance and an outcry by the veterans, that plan was abandoned. Similar resistance greeted developer proposals to convert the Coliseum to a Costco or Home Depot. Why should its total demolition for a minor league baseball stadium now be acceptable?

The PSU workshop was based on separate class sessions we had with a broad cross-section of stakeholders including, among others, developers J. Isaac of the Oregon Arena Corp. [current proponent of an entertainment center], Doug Oblatz of Shields, Oblatz Johnson [SOJ, current proponent of the MARC athletic complex], Jim Winkler of Winkler Development Corp. and developer of the nearby Adidas Village.



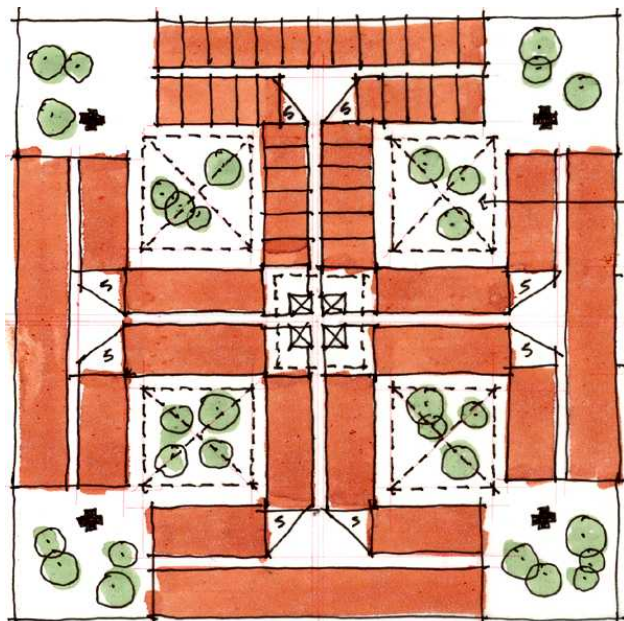
We also had separate sessions with other mentors including: Michael McElwee [PDC headquarters hotel project manager]; architects Paul Falsetto of SERA [Coliseum historian], Randy Higgins of HOLST, Jim Howell [transit advocate formerly of Tri-Met and BOORA] and Doug Nichols of OTAK as well as market economist Jerry Johnson [Johnson Gardner], contractor Darhl Edwards [Hoffman Construction]; planners David Knowles of SOJ [formerly City Planning Director] and Larry Dully [formerly PDC Development Director] who conducted the studies on the Coliseum for the City of Portland; botanists Fred Nilson [Hoyt Arboretum] and Carolyn Devine [Berry Botanic Garden]. Presentations were critiqued by Oregonian architecture critic Randy Gragg, Portland city finance executive David Logsdon, former chief-of-staff for Commissioner Charles Hales Ron Paul [proponent of the James Beard Public Market], and architect and planner Nohad Toulan, founder and Dean Emeritus of the College of Urban & Public Affairs.

In an effort to help inform public debate and assist public policy decision-makers, here is a brief summary of the four adaptive re-use plans the workshop developed at that time:

Headquarters Hotel

At the intersection of three light rail lines, the two main interstate highways and the potential high-speed rail corridor, and served by over 12 bus routes within Fareless Square, a 650-room headquarters hotel built within the glass box would permit conventioners to take light rail directly from the airport to their hotel and convention center and easily go downtown. When inter-city high-speed rail is built, the hotel's west side would become its the front door to Portland.

Re-using the enormous glass box, measuring 3.25 blocks and more than seven stories high, the project was conceived as a hotel inside a botanic garden. Unlike enclosed central atrium hotels, four glazed corner atria, each a glass cube 60 feet per side, would look out over the city and across the Willamette and each would form a microclimate representing the diversity of Oregon biomes. Every room would have a view. Cafés and restaurants



would fill the base of each atrium and would become inviting places not only for conventioners but also for other Oregonians and visitors open to the public on a 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week basis, much more accessible than even wholly public uses.

Unlike the potential headquarters hotel site across MLK Boulevard from the Convention Center, the Coliseum is visible from the I-5 freeway and from downtown, primary criteria for hotel location. And since a headquarters hotel cannot survive on convention business alone, the short 5-minute walk from the Coliseum to the Convention Center, through three existing public plazas, gives it just enough separation to attract Rose Garden guests, business travelers and tourist visitors, thereby assisting its economic viability. The two hotels and OCC are already connected by a light rail line and pedestrian streetscape on Holladay Street.



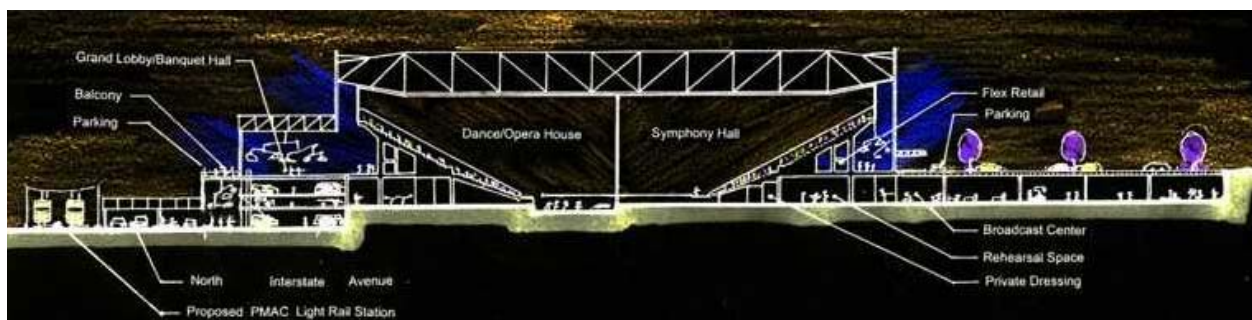
Some critics have said that a headquarters hotel needs at least 800 rooms. But in fact, PDC's criterion is a block of 400 to 500 rooms, which can easily be accommodated in the Coliseum and would be the only nearby hotel to do so. There is more than enough space for an additional 400+-room tower to be built when, as and if the market can support more rooms. This phasing option would lower the development risk.

Why would this work when prior PDC efforts failed?

- The City already owns the land, building and parking.
- The Coliseum already has 40,000 SF public space, a large extra cost for new facilities.
- Coliseum requires the lowest possible public subsidy.
- Lower subsidies mean less resistance from existing hoteliers.
- No new taxes are required.
- Adaptive reuse cost savings lower required capital.
- The separate hotel identity could better attract business and leisure markets.

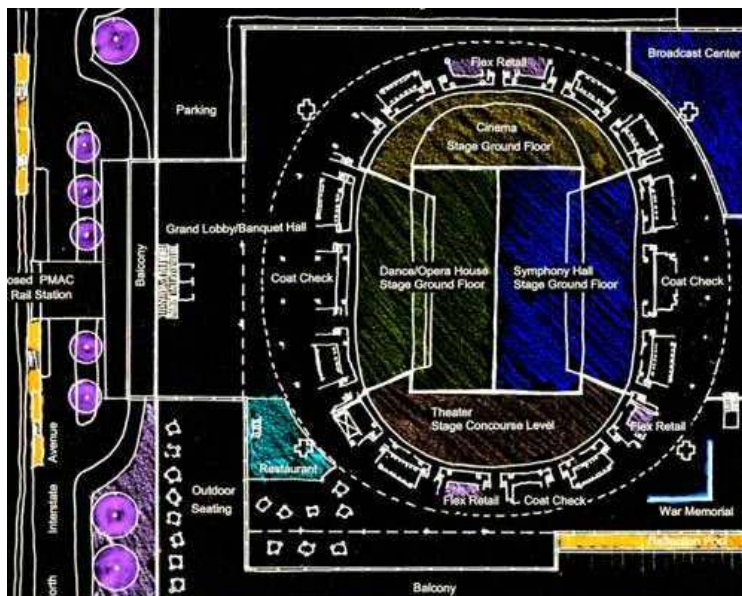
The Coliseum hotel would be a less expensive public-private project that is feasible because the public would continue to own the land, building and parking, which it need not finance, as well as the capital improvements, which would be financed with tax-exempt revenue bonds as many other cities have done for their headquarters hotels. Private developers under contract with the city would assume the risks of cost overruns and private hotel management companies would assume the risk of operating losses. Profits would be divided between the public and private sectors.

The Coliseum headquarters hotel would use all of the transit advantages of the site, re-use an architecturally historic building, reinvigorate the Rose Quarter, support the Convention Center, minimize on-site parking demand, act as a transit center, bring both weekday daytime and nighttime use on a consistent basis to an area used sporadically, provide both construction and permanent jobs and increase the tax base. Moreover, it would do so in a less costly and less risky way than any other headquarters hotel alternative. And it would be the only re-use option that meets all those criteria.



Portland Memorial Arts Center

At the time when the BODS [Ballet, Opera, Drama, Symphony] group were each seeking new venues, [an Oregon Ballet Theater, Portland Opera House, Portland Center Stage Theater and Oregon Symphony Hall] the Coliseum offered the only site where all four could be accommodated at the lowest capital costs and with the greatest operating savings. In turn this could lead the organizations to lower ticket prices, to expand the market to younger and less affluent groups and achieve greater solvency, a rare feat among arts organizations.

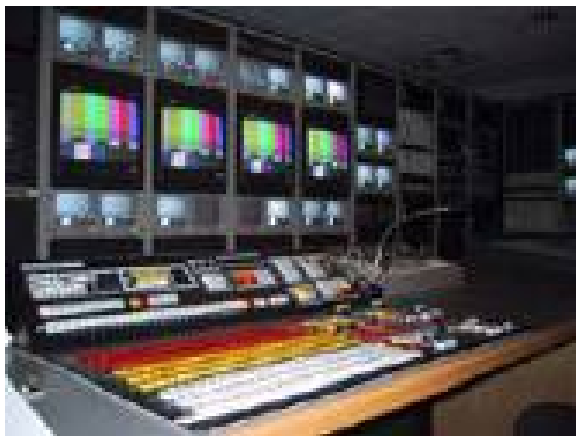


A Portland Memorial Arts Center [PMAC] could adaptively re-use both the existing bowl as well as the glass box, preserving its architectural heritage. The bowl could be divided into four main spaces housing the major users, and there would be enough space for a variety of other uses in the large complex:

- 2,200-seat symphony hall
- 2,000 seat dance and opera house
- 500-seat dramatic theater
- 200-seat black box theater
- 2,000-Seat Cinema [or up to 10 smaller ones]
- 10,000 SF Northwest Film Center studios

- 80,000 SF broadcast center for Blazer Cable, KXL & Action Sports Network
- 20,000 SF rehearsal, storage and rentable practice space
- 15,000 SF restaurant and caf  s expanding to a 10,000 SF terrace overlooking Willamette River & downtown
- 10,000 SF art books and music store
- 400-space parking garage built into the western bank topped by a restaurant terrace

The benefits of co-locating this broad array of users and uses are several. Combining broadcast studios bearing uplink capacity with live performing arts facilities permits simulcasts of special events that can increase both the audience for, and income stream to, arts organizations. Increasing the capacity for events of varied scales can expand the penetration of the market for arts to younger and less affluent segments. Moving to the east side of the river could also demonstrate the city's commitment to support the arts beyond its traditional base on the west side and among what some call middle-aged culture vulture patrons.



The economic development impact can be considerable. Studies have estimated that over 10,300 people were employed in the arts in Portland producing an economic impact of more than \$318 million and attracting more than 6.3 million attendees to Portland arts events in 2006. That has helped Portland expand its population of the 25 to 34 age group to the top tier of American cities, and has led to the creation of a growing group of new local businesses based upon both the arts and new communications media. The variety of auditoriums and meeting spaces less than five minutes from the Convention Center could expand the venues in which Convention events could be held during the daytime when the arts facilities are less used.



In 2002, estimated capital costs of the PMAC were \$47 million, far less than the total of separate facilities, and comparable to the cost of the baseball stadium. The capital cost savings of housing a variety of performance facilities means that expensive infrastructure such as bathrooms, kitchen facilities, loading docks, HVAC and security systems can be shared among many users, unlike the initial BODS proposals for separate facilities.

Operating savings could be continuous using shared employees for such things as box office activities, lighting and set

design and construction, technology equipment operation and maintenance, janitorial and security services. Adding the broadcast center, retail shops, restaurants and cafés would provide over \$1 million of annual income. The Oregon Film & Video Office could relocate and/or stimulate more arts production at PMAC. These income streams, combined with an increase in the revenue stream flowing from market expansion and media programming, coupled with all of these operating economies, could assist the PMAC to become a self-sustaining arts and media center for the region, a truly sustainable development.

Sustainable Technology Center [STC]

The Coliseum could also be a place to create an urban center of sustainable technology that would house applied research and development, manufacturing, and services, which would be anchored by energy and environment related government offices. The large footprint and seven+-story height of the building can be used create an urban alternative to suburban flex-space with over a 560,000 square feet on four floorplates. The 130,000 square-foot flexible floorplates are larger than commonly available in the suburbs. Supported by light rail and streetcar transit, as well as about 2,500 existing parking spaces at the Rose Garden that are



vacant during the day, the STC would have a parking ratio of 4.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet, far more parking than most suburban flex-space projects. At the intersection of three light rail lines and within Fareless Square, it is likely that transit could serve most of its users.

This plan could create space for over 2,000 jobs in the central city at a location that is especially attractive to the creative young urban dwellers likely to work at the STC. To make the project feasible, it would be anchored by the energy and environmental programs of nearby government offices and utilities, all of which have headquarter offices only blocks away.

1. BPA
2. State of Oregon

3. Metro
4. Tri-Met
5. Multnomah County
6. Pacific Power

In addition, other targeted users could be private research, development and manufacturing, academic research and other institutional users, energy and environmental engineering firms and an array of green technology companies. The PDC has listed solar cell production, fuel cell production and power control equipment as three areas in which the Northwest could build a niche. Electric vehicle design and engineering could be another. Sustainable technologies also include those connected with wind, geothermal and hydropower energy design and development and as well as conservation materials, techniques and control systems.



An STC would build on Portland's solid and growing reputation as a leader in sustainable development where it already houses a leading school of environmental law (Northwest School of Law at Lewis and Clark University), the China-US Center for Sustainable Development, EcoTrust, and the Portland Office of Sustainable Development. The recent \$25 million grant from the Miller Foundation is helping to make Portland State University and academic leader in sustainability. The STC would give Portland a downtown sustainability applied development and production facility to complement academic research.

The Coliseum itself can be rehabilitated to be an outstanding example of adaptive re-use according to the best green building techniques. The 130,000 square-foot roof is large enough to become an efficient eco-roof providing insulation reducing cooling loads, absorbing storm water and holding a 3.25-acre array of photovoltaic solar collectors providing power to the building. The large glass walls would provide natural light and, with the addition of another internal glass wall, provide a natural tempering chamber that will either bring heated air into the building or exhaust it from it using relatively simple control systems. By providing counter-cyclical weekday daytime use of an under-utilized historic building and supporting existing city-owned garages, an STC would advance principles of urban density.

This STC project would be economically feasible because the City already owns the land, building, and parking. The total development cost was estimated in 2002 to be \$65 million, which included \$14 million for tenant improvement allowances at \$25 per square foot. At low discounted rents that could then be as low as \$9.00 per square foot, averaging industrial and office space, the STC could produce about a \$4.5 million net operating income stream that could support about \$50 million of the capital costs, using tax-exempt industrial revenue bonds to provide low-cost financing. Students estimated that the project would require only about \$15 million in grants, which should be possible to obtain from government economic development funds and foundation sustainability grants.

A Sustainable Technology Center would support multiple goals of job creation, economic development, sustainable development, urban revitalization, reduced commuting, transit-supported development and historic preservation.

Urban Home Center

In March 2002, our Development Workshop pointed out that, among other things, the Coliseum is the quintessential big box. At the same time, large format retailers that have

saturated the suburbs were looking to tap into lucrative urban markets but find sites difficult



to find or neighborhoods resistant to their entry. The Coliseum could overcome both of these challenges and offers an urban alternative to the single-level behemoth big box in a sea of parking.

While it was clear then that big-box retailers were profitable and that almost any selection of them could succeed at the heart of a regional market of 1.8 million people with over \$33 billion of income, students concentrated only on those who were not then represented in the marketplace, would support an urban housing lifestyle and could attract customers also to downtown and to Lloyd Center, as a retail bridge between the two. These objectives excluded retailers who had saturated the region, such as Costco, Home Depot, Lowe's, Target and Wal-Mart. Should the City decide to approve an Urban Home Center, it should adopt these criteria.

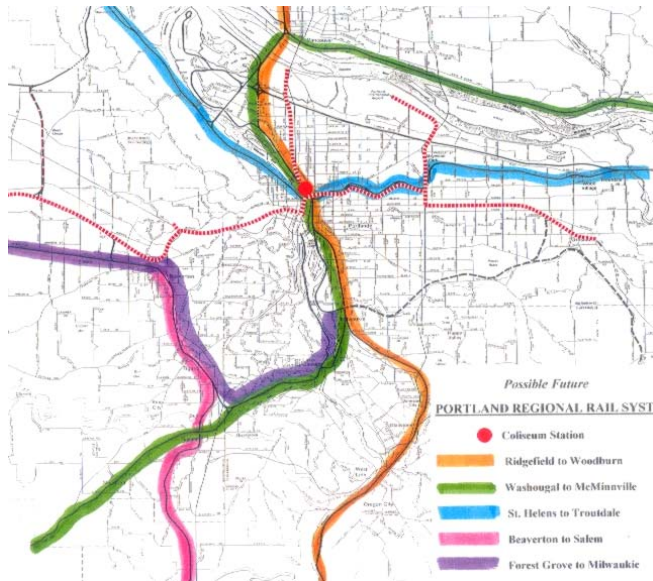
Rather, we looked at international retailer IKEA whose nearest location then in suburban Seattle attracted many Portlanders. IKEA's typical minimum store size is 260,000 square feet, which is precisely two floors of the Coliseum. IKEA is accustomed to a two-floor concept and many of its stores have glass walls. Moreover, the column-free interior space is ideal for large format retailing. Urban dwellers in smaller apartments and condominiums often use the type of affordable folding and modular furniture in which IKEA specializes.



IKEA would also have been co-located with an Expo Design Center, as it is in Palo Alto, CA. Expo Design Centers were mainly conceived as showrooms with fully furnished lifestyle vignettes featuring the products and design and construction services it provides to customers and their contractors. They occupied about 130,000 square feet, just the size of one floor of the Coliseum. The third major type of retailer appropriate to the Coliseum, and one which would fit nicely into its 40,000+ square-foot exhibition hall, would be a Crate & Barrel outlet store, none of whose 13 outlets is currently in the northwest.

One must recognize that adequate parking must be available to serve this volume of large-scale retail. In order to maintain the transparency of the glass box and reveal the retail activity

within, students located two floors of parking for more than 900 cars within the concrete base of the Coliseum. In addition, the City owns about 2,500 existing spaces in its Rose Garden garages that are under-utilized except during large events. Unlike those events, retail traffic is spread throughout the day and week so more efficient utilization could be expected. Counting all spaces potentially available when no event was held at the Rose Garden, there could be a very high parking supply of over 8 spaces per 1,000 square feet, attractive to retailers.



Some may object to bringing automobile-oriented retailing to an area so well served by transit. Unlike typical retailing, only small furniture is carried home via personal car and all larger items are delivered. Therefore, one might expect that more than normal numbers of customers would come via transit. A large number of employees would also likely use transit.

At an estimated development cost in 2002 of \$61 million, and with a net operating income of approximately \$7 million, an Urban Home Center should be financed privately and might be expected to return at least about \$3 to \$4 million annually. Since the city owns the land, the building and the parking, it is reasonable to expect that a substantial portion of that should flow to

the city. In addition, the real estate tax revenue on a leasehold interest should be expected to be well in excess of \$1 million annually. The City might choose to use some of those funds to support a smaller-scale athletic complex with competition swimming facilities envisioned in other Coliseum plans.

Beyond economic benefits, an Urban Home Center could revitalize the Rose Quarter with non-event activity and act as a retail bridge between downtown and Lloyd Center that complements both and broadens the selection, quantity and price of available goods. It also would support urban housing and could reduce regional auto trips.

[Please note that although each of the four proposals above incorporated a veterans' memorial as part of the project, this summary excluded consideration here, but one could and should be incorporated in any chosen alternative.]



Coliseum as Coliseum

Strangely, the use for which the Coliseum is most well adapted has received the least attention — as a Coliseum. One must understand the basic deal structure to surmise reasons for the lack of attention.



The Deal Structure

At the time of the construction of the Rose Garden, the City executed an operating agreement providing that the same manager manage both the Coliseum and the Rose Garden. While Paul Allen's Oregon Arena Corporation (OAC) has the obligation to cover any operating losses at the Coliseum, it must pay 60% of any net income from the Coliseum to the City, retaining 40% of net income as a management fee. Events at the Rose Garden are not so burdened. While the City may have believed that the agreement was favorable to it, one must realize that it is in the economic interest of the manager to hold just enough events at the Coliseum to keep it at a breakeven level, but no more because there is not incentive to exceed that level, especially when all the profit is available for holding the same event in the Rose Garden. The agreement does not address or resolve that conflict of interest.

In addition to receiving 40% of the net income from the Coliseum as a management fee, the OAC passes the full costs of operating the two parking garages owned by the City, including OAC's management fees, on to the city along with any parking revenues generated by events at the Coliseum. This does not constitute an incentive to hold more events at the Coliseum. The City is obligated to pay for all capital improvements to the Coliseum as well as all major repairs and maintenance. Since the Coliseum has been kept at a breakeven point, the City has had no incentive to repair and improve it.



Development Rights: Public or Private Use Questions



Furthermore, the Oregon Arena Corporation was granted and enjoys development rights for any non-public development that would occur on the Coliseum site but has no such rights for public development. It is in the City's sole discretion to determine that the Coliseum is not needed for any public use. It is in OAC's economic interest for the City to declare there is no public use for the Coliseum, and over the years it has advocated solutions that demolish it.

Can the City truly declare, without a complete professional evaluation and fully open and transparent public process, that no public use exists for the Coliseum? Can the City really

prove beyond reasonable doubt that the Coliseum is not a viable public use and, even if so, that no other public use could take its place? Should the City investigate other deal structures to maximize the value of its assets? Should it actually negotiate and try such other deal structures for a reasonable time before it takes the radical step of demolishing an historic icon right before it can be nominated and accepted on the National Register of Historic Places? Why should the same private entity manage both facilities?



Management by Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission [MERC]

In 1990, the City transferred management of both the Coliseum and Civic Stadium-(PGE Park) to MERC, which also manages the Oregon Convention Center [OCC], the Portland Center for the Performing Arts [PCPA] and the Portland Metropolitan Exposition Center [EXPO]. That placed in a single public manager all the publicly owned facilities that could accommodate large events. In 1992, the City pulled the Coliseum management from MERC and transferred it to Paul Allen's Oregon Arena Corporation (OAC). Nine years later, in 2001, the City transferred management of PGE Park to the private sports firm Portland Family Entertainment, which later defaulted on its agreement with the City. In both cases, private management of public facilities has led to adverse economic consequences for the City. Since the Coliseum is only five minutes from the Oregon Convention Center, and since the Coliseum already offers a variety of venues in which to hold public convention and conference events, and could add more as outlined above in the section about the arts center, why should not MERC again manage both facilities to their mutual benefit? Since MERC also operates the performing arts center, including the Keller Civic Auditorium, would it not make more sense for it to have a venue in which to stage

large events, concerts and festivals? Would not Coliseum rock, folk and country music concerts produce additional profits that could offset losses at smaller venues?

As described, the deal structures for both the Coliseum and PGE Park have revealed conflicts between public and private interests that have impeded the success of publicly owned facilities. MERC is subsidiary of Metro, our elected regional government, and MERC's board members represent Metro, the City of Portland, and Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah counties. It has a professional staff with broad experience in real estate management, entertainment, film and television production, arts administration, marketing and sales. The Coliseum is currently the responsibility of the City's Office of Management & Finance, which does not have similar experience or transparency.

The City also owns the parking garages for approximately 2500 cars that are mostly empty during the week, during the day. Are there other uses of the Coliseum that could help generate weekday revenue from those parking spaces? Are there ways to amalgamate the best elements of the various elements of the creative proposals that have been made within the context of the existing Coliseum? For example, could a substantial portion of the 80,000 square feet of the lower level be leased as a broadcast center to both facilitate dissemination of events that occur above and generate continuous income to offset operating expenses of the Coliseum?

Could the concourse level be leased for a large restaurant overlooking the Willamette as proposed in the arts solution? Could the east side under the cantilevered bowl be leased for sale of books or other merchandise? Could a portion of the 40,000 square feet in the Exhibition Hall be leased for a fitness center, or classrooms or a myriad of other uses especially during weekdays? Could the concrete bowl, with its stadium seating for 12,000 people and electronic communications equipment, supplement the Convention Center for general sessions for large conferences during weekdays? Are not political conventions held in precisely those kinds of venues?



As noted by Brian Parrott (*Portland Tribune*, April 2, 2009), the head PSU tennis coach, Portland would “give up a significant competitive advantage that the city has in attracting events that other cities cannot accommodate because we have two world-class arenas side by side. Example: The U.S. vs. Russia Davis Cup Final that we won the right to host because we have the Memorial Coliseum that can provide dates that very busy buildings cannot bid for.



That event brought an estimated \$7 million to \$10 million to the city and filled up every hotel room available. Philadelphia is the only other U.S. city that has two such buildings, and they are going to tear down the Spectrum. Portland will become the only U.S. city to be able to host events that cannot find a location in a major metropolitan area.”

Does it make any economic sense to demolish an historic icon for which so many uses have been developed to spend at least \$55 million building a new baseball stadium that would operate only six months of the year and house only about 70 home games? What will produce revenue there on the other 295 days of the year? In a rainy area like Portland, why does it make sense to demolish



a covered, enclosed and heated venue usable year-round for a multiplicity of uses with an open one usable only half the year, and then only for a single use? Why try to raise \$55 million in



new debt when about \$28 million still remains of the debt to convert PGE Park for baseball? Why should the City rush to demolish the Coliseum at the end of this year when no public process has considered all the alternatives?

Public Policy Questions

As a matter of public policy, for all the reasons and questions raised in this article, is it difficult to find a logically consistent sustainable public purpose based upon sound economics, rational urban planning and development, conservative architectural historic preservation, progressive transportation planning, environmental integrity, respectful veteran memorial integrity and equitable social policy to justify the demolition of a valuable public asset?



At the height of the deepest recession since the Great Depression, when Oregon's unemployment rate is the third highest in the nation, when the incomes of those employed are falling with involuntary furloughs, when homelessness is rising and even food banks experience shortages, when school budgets are being cut and tuitions are rising, and when the City cannot even maintain roads without raising parking fees, how would demolition of the public asset of the Coliseum advance public responsibility to protect and enhance public property? Why is the City considering demolishing public assets in such a cavalier fashion, on such a short timeline, before thorough investigation and public evaluation of all alternatives?

In this article alone, we have discussed seven different alternatives, each of which would preserve the Coliseum in whole or in part. The best in terms of preserving the public's economic, historic, civic and public investment may well be the simplest, improving and operating the Coliseum as a Coliseum, under the management of MERC. How can the City decide, in a period of weeks, after private discussions with only two companies owned by wealthy families who each advance their own private interests, to demolish an historic 50-year old public asset that has not only served the community well but also offers a wide array of rehabilitation and reuse options? Would Portland be making the same mistake that New York City did when it demolished the historic Pennsylvania Station?



The Hippocratic Oath to which every doctor swears allegiance is to do no harm. Do not City Commissioners owe the same allegiance to public citizens who elected them? What sense of public priorities and public interests does this course of action reveal and why should the public support any City Commissioner who advances it? When city leaders publicly purport to create “the most sustainable entertainment district in the United States”, is it not incumbent upon them to show how demolition of a complex that can itself be an embodiment of energy efficiency is sustainable? The accepted criteria by which sustainable projects are measured have been the triple bottom line summarized by the three “E”s – economy, ecology and equity. Where are the studies by independent experts that show that a single-use, minor league baseball stadium operating for 70 home games can support a \$55 million public investment, plus the economic value lost, with an existing venue that can operate 365 days in all weather with a multiplicity of uses? Where are the independent studies showing that the energy to destroy all the materials and embodied energy that comprise the Coliseum, added to all the materials and energy to build a baseball stadium, produce a net positive ecological result? Where are the independent studies to show that social equity is advanced more by 70 baseball games over six months versus admission to graduations, concerts, rallies, conventions, exhibits, festivals, hockey, basketball, tennis, figure skating and other spectator events over an entire year? When a public entity contemplates destroying a public asset, is it incumbent upon

it not only to publicly examine all alternatives, but also to produce a cost benefit analysis showing that all alternatives are inferior to the chosen one? Should the city first do no harm?

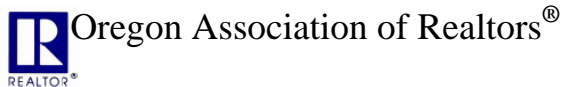


Respectfully yours,

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