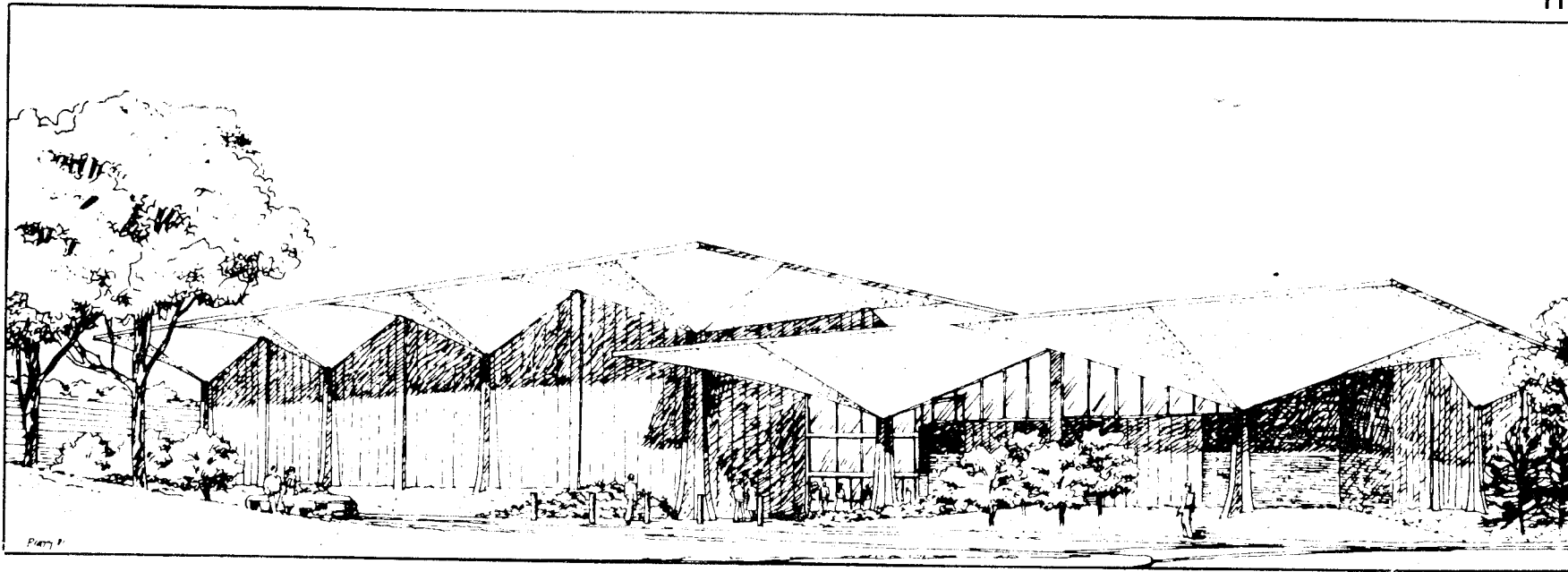
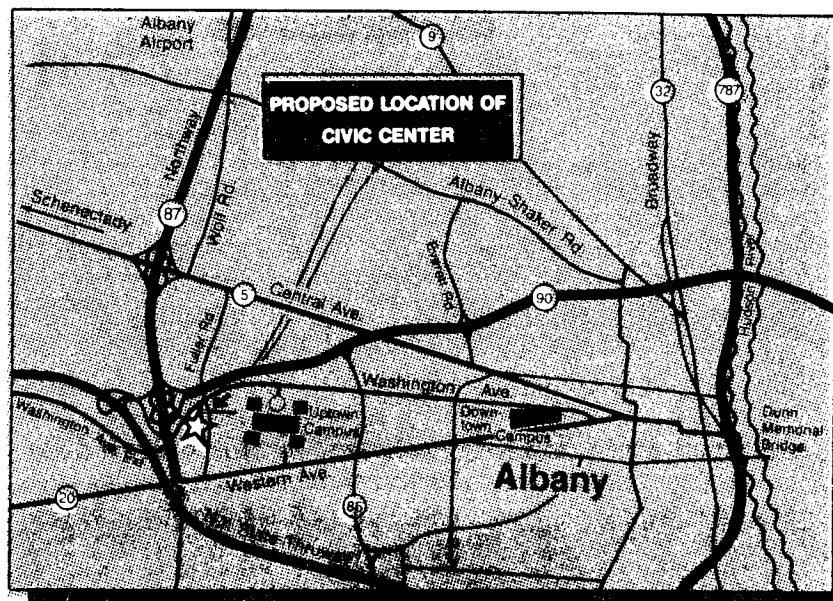


SUNYA center tab: \$



Architect's rendering of the \$25 million civic center proposed for the State University at Albany campus.

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\$25 million

Proposal holds risks for city and county

By ANDY DANZO

Knickerbocker News Reporter

Albany County would get its civic center and the State University at Albany would get its long-awaited field house under a plan outlined today by university officials.

However, the county and city of Albany would take a sizable financial risk and could stand to pay \$1.34 million a year under the joint venture presented to the county's civic center review commission this morning.

The university would take no risk and would appear to pay relatively little under the plan.

University officials are proposing a \$25 million combination civic center and field house on 77 acres at the university on the city side of the Albany-Guilderland border.

The cost of the field house would be absorbed by the state, but county and city residents would be obliged to back \$15 million of the project's cost.

"The obvious advantage to the university is, we don't have to wait eight years (to build the field house)," SUNYA President Vincent O'Leary said at a press confer-

ence today. "We could have it now . . . and it would save a lot of money."

O'Leary also noted a civic center of the size being proposed would be less expensive for the county if built in conjunction with the university field house.

"This is a partnership proposal," O'Leary said. "But a lot of work has to be done."

According to a report prepared by by SUNYA and a consulting firm, Albany Mayor Thomas M. Whalen III has indicated the city would pay up to \$200,000 a year toward the project's debt service if necessary. Whalen was not available for comment.

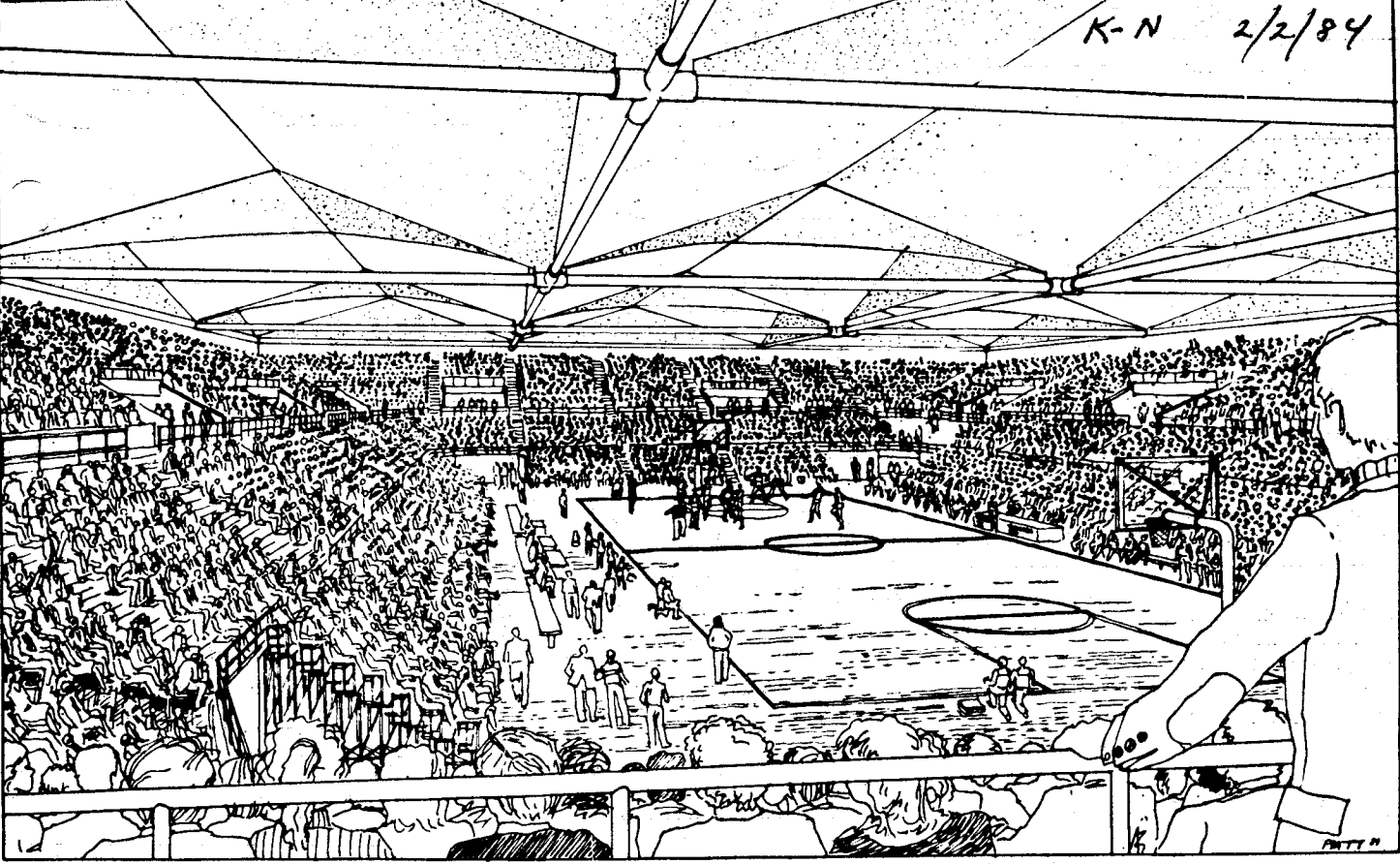
However, the mayor recently advocated new or increased taxes to help support the city's existing debt burden, which he has said would drive Albany at least \$4 million a year into the red from 1985 through 1990.

Whalen was unavailable for comment this morning.

The county tax base could also be forced to absorb a sizable chunk of debt service under the university proposal. If the center took in only as much as it cost

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INSIDE — Sketch by architects, above, envisions a basketball game in progress in a proposed 10,000- to 11,700-seat civic center on the State University at Albany campus, part of a

\$25 million plan that was presented to Albany County officials today. The project would also include a new field house for the university.

CUNYA center tab: \$25 million...

CONTINUED to operate and Albany paid a \$200,000 contribution, the county's share of annual debt service would be \$1.14 million, according to the report.

The figures assume an 8.5% interest rate on a 35-year state Urban Development Corp. loan.

A university official said the report's cost figures were tentative.

In addition, the plan relies on the state picking up \$10 million of the total \$25 million cost. That funding would remain to be worked out if the civic center commission recommended the plan to County Executive James J. Coyne and the County Legislature.

The proposal calls for a 200,000-square-foot building on the west side of Fuller Road between Washington Avenue Extension and the Adirondack Northway in Albany's Pine Bush. The 10,000- to 11,700-seat civic center arena would take up 70% of the building, with the university field house in the remainder.

The \$6 million field house and \$19 million civic center arena would be under one roof, but the field house would be operated by the university and the arena by a public corporation to be set up for the project.

The university would lease the land under the arena to the corporation for an undetermined sum.

The report recommends the state be asked to pay for the field house and contribute \$4 million toward the arena. The university's only financial obligation would be operation of the field house.

The county would have to guarantee the university use of the civic center arena for 77 days a year in return for the \$4 million state contribution. That provision is important because the field house component is not complete without the arena.

"The university's initial requirements for its recreational facility are reduced (by the proposal) because it will not be necessary to

build a field house to accommodate spectator seating needed for only a limited number of days each year, nor provide for such costly facilities as a separate ice rink," the report states.

The Albany campus has been waiting for a field house since the early 1970s, but has not been able to afford one. The facility was last considered in 1982.

Lief S. Hartmark, director of planning at the campus, said the field house would cost about \$12 million if the university built it independently. Tying it in with the civic center and taking advantage of its arena reduces the field house cost by half, he said.

Hartmark said the university would pay the county when it used the arena, but had not decided if it would pay for the 77 reserved days if they were not all used.

In turn, the county could use the field house for conventions and trade shows when the university was not using it. The uni-

versity would charge for the field house's operating costs when the county used it, the report said.

The civic center arena proposed would be 75% larger than that proposed by developer-promoter Joseph N. Futia Sr. for a Latham site adjacent to his Colonie Coliseum. Futia's arena would seat between 6,000 and 10,000, depending on the type of event, and would cost \$11 million.

However, the report said the larger arena would be feasible and would be cheaper to build on the campus than other sites.

Savings would be possible because the field house and arena could share certain construction costs and the university already has access roads, according to the report.

A recently completed 11,000-seat civic center in Worcester, Mass., cost more than \$25 million, compared with the \$19 million arena cost projected by the report.

The arena would cost \$300,000 a year less to operate on the campus

than at other sites, the report said. That saving would come from using the campus heating plant instead of building a new one and from having existing campus personnel for chores such as snow removal and routine security.

The report anticipates no ill effects on natural resources or the surrounding neighborhood from the project and projects a boon to the local economy.

Drawing on more than 1 million people within a one-hour drive of the site, the complex would draw \$10 million in new business for existing hotels and restaurants, in turn encouraging them to undertake \$24.4 million in expansion, the report predicted.

Construction of the complex would create 500 full-time jobs and another 470 full-time jobs would be created in hotels and restaurants, the study added.

"The site clearly will bring direct economic benefits to Colonie, Guilderland and the city of Albany as well as the surrounding region," the report said.