

Go Big Green?

BASKETBALL ARENA COULD BE ECOLOGICALLY SOUND by Camilla Mortensen

Plans are under way again for the construction of a basketball arena to replace McArthur Court, also known as "The Pit." But will the new arena be a "green" arena?

A recent *Sports Illustrated* cover story highlighted the effects of global warming on sports and discussed what sports teams are doing to become carbon neutral and conserve energy. Among its many examples was Gillette Stadium, home of the New England Patriots. Gillette features a water system that collects and recirculates wastewater from rinsing and flushing.

New UO Athletic Director Pat Kilkenny is specifically charged with "reviving the new basketball arena project" according to a statement by UO President Dave Frohnmayer.

The UO may be required to build its new basketball arena to a high standard of sustainability. Oregon Senate Bill 576, now under consideration, proposes requiring state facility projects to be designed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold standard. If this bill passes, the new arena would appear to fall under its effects.

More than 130 architects showed up in Salem to advocate for the sustainable buildings bill. Brook Muller, an architecture professor at the UO, said he was excited at the recent "incredible demonstration of the commitment of architects in Oregon to solving issues of global warming, sustainability and carbon neutrality."

Several sports teams including the Minnesota Twins, the University of Minnesota Gophers and the Washington, D.C. Nationals have announced intentions to build their new sports stadiums to LEED standards, and all are in a race to be the first to do it, according to press sources.

LEED standards follow a system of points with 26 points allowing a building to be LEED certified. For the silver standard, buildings need 33 points, 39 for gold and 52 for platinum. Buildings achieve points in areas such as sustainable sites, water efficiency and innovation and design process. The new arena could earn at least one point for its proximity to public transportation: The proposed Franklin Boulevard site is right off the new EmX bus route.

While higher costs may be a concern if high sustainability becomes mandatory for state buildings, Muller said in his own experience "green does not necessarily

mean you are going to spend more," and "if problems are considered early, we could save money in upfront costs and in the long term." This could be achieved, he said, "through designing a building with natural ventilation, thus saving money by downsizing the need for mechanical ventilation."

The current UO arena budget was estimated at well above \$200 million in a recent *Register-Guard* article. Most of the money will come from private gifts.

UO Associate Athletic Director Steve McBride did not return *EW* calls about plans for a "green" arena. However, the current UO Sustainable Development Plan calls for new construction to achieve "the equivalence of at least the base level of LEED certification," and says, "Generally, new construction must meet the point equivalent of a LEED Silver rating."

Projects do not have to comply if there is "a compelling reason why this is not possible."

According to Muller, if sustainability is planned into the arena project from the beginning, "problems can be solved gracefully."

The UO chose TVA Architects in Portland as the architectural firm for the new arena, which TVA refers to on its website as "a world-class 'theater for basketball.'" TVA is also the firm that designed the Nike Air Hangar (housing Nike's fleet of corporate jets), the Nike World Campus and the Nike Campus North Expansion, in addition to many other Nike projects. Locally, TVA designed the Hayward Field Renovation and the new Williams Bakery. The TVA website reports that the UO assisted in paying for design and construction of the bakery. However, as a private building, it was apparently not required to meet the UO's sustainable building standards.

A TVA representative said he "really couldn't say" anything about plans for a green, sustainable or carbon-neutral basketball arena. The plans for the arena, he said, are "conceptual." Though discussion of sustainable design and user input is called for in the UO Sustainable Development plan, the representative said, "It is not something I am able to discuss." He refused to provide his name.

But it's still possible that the UO's planned world-class arena will be a green, sustainable and carbon neutral version of The Pit in which so many exciting games have been played. **EW**



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