
III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

B. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW – ORIGIN OF THE COLISEUM

Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Commission

The Coliseum was constructed between 1921 and 1923 by the Community Development Association, a non-profit cooperative organization formed for that purpose, on property in Exposition Park leased from the Sixth District Agricultural Association of the State of California.¹ Original construction of the Coliseum was funded by both the City of Los Angeles (City) and the County of Los Angeles (County). The Coliseum is operated under the authority of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Commission (“Coliseum Commission”), which was formed under the Joint Exercise of Powers Act on September 25, 1945. Although this governing body is comprised of representatives from the City of Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles and the State of California, no taxpayer funds are used to support the facility.

The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum

The Coliseum was constructed in the early 1920s and opened its doors to the public in June 1923. The first football game was played in the stadium on October 6, 1923, with the University of Southern California (USC) hosting Pomona College before a crowd of 12,836. It was a modest beginning for a venue that would later play a prominent role in college and professional football.

The history of the Coliseum spans eight decades. It is the only facility in the world to host two Olympiads (Xth and XXIIIrd), two Super Bowls (I and VII), and one World Series (1959). Along with the adjacent Sports Arena, the Coliseum is credited with promoting the migration of professional sports to the West Coast. The Coliseum provided a home for the Los Angeles Rams (from Cleveland, 1946-79), the Los Angeles Dodgers (from Brooklyn, 1958-61), the Los Angeles Raiders (from Oakland, 1982-1994), and was the expansion home of the Los Angeles Chargers (1960, AFL).

In 1984, the State of California and the United States Government declared the Coliseum a State and Federal Historical Landmark for its contribution to the historical makeup of the 31st State of the Union as well as the United States of America.

¹ *The Sixth District Agricultural Association is also known as the California Science Center. It is in the State and Consumer Services Agency and is deemed to be a tax-exempt organization as an instrumentality of this State in accordance with Section 23706 of the Revenue and Taxation Code (See Food and Agricultural Code Section 4101-4108).*

The 92,500-seat Coliseum served as the home of the NFL's Los Angeles Rams from 1946 through 1979, the NFL's Los Angeles Raiders from 1982 through 1994, and has, since its initial construction, served as the home for the USC Trojan football team (1923 - present). The Coliseum also hosts international soccer competitions, and hosted the L.A. Xtreme professional football team during the XFL's first and only season in 2001. Other world-class events that have occurred at the Coliseum include UCLA football games (1933 through 1981); numerous high school football contests, including the famed "Shrine All-Star Game"; political rallies, including John F. Kennedy's Democratic Presidential Nomination acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in 1960; religious conventions, including an all-time Coliseum attendance record of 134,254 for Billy Graham in 1963 and the 1987 Papal Mass (the first Papal Mass held in the United States by Pope John Paul II); the 1976 Bicentennial Spectacular; and numerous rock concerts and cultural events.

Prior to the 1993 football season, the Coliseum underwent a \$15 million renovation. The Coliseum's floor was lowered 11 feet and the running track was removed to create a more intimate stadium. Fourteen new rows of seats (comprising approximately 8,000 seats) were added to the lower bowl area, bringing fans closer to the playing field. The first rows of seats between the goalposts were repositioned to a maximum of 54 feet from the sideline, instead of the previous distance of 120 feet. During this renovation the locker rooms, public restrooms, and concession facilities were also upgraded and expanded.

Southern California's damaging January 1994 earthquake resulted in major structural damage to the Coliseum, requiring approximately \$93 million worth of repairs. In the summer of 1995, the Coliseum underwent a major seismic renovation and a new \$6 million press box was constructed. The California Office of Emergency Services (OES) awarded \$100.6 million to the Coliseum Commission to cover the costs of earthquake damage. A new press box was added to the south side of the Coliseum extending above the rim and upper seating bowl. The press box is comprised of two main levels, with a camera deck located on the roof. The square footage of the press box addition, including the rooftop and circulation areas, is approximately 18,400 square feet, surpassing the 8,300 square feet of the former press box.

The Coliseum has a present maximum capacity of approximately 92,500 seats. Almost all of the seats in the Coliseum are chair-back seats. There are approximately 25,000 seats from goal line to goal line, including both the north and south sides. Rows 1-43 have a 12-inch rise, rows 44-68 have a 15-inch rise, rows 69-93 have an 18-inch rise. The distance between each row of seats is 33-inches in rows 1-14 and 30-inches in rows 15-93. Seats vary between 19 and 20 inches in width. With the exception of the east end zone, which includes bench seating, all of the seats are theater-type, self-rising chairs, the first of their kind ever installed in a football stadium at the time.

The symbolic Olympic torch monument was originally built for the 1932 Summer Olympics. It stands 150 feet above ground level and 182 feet above the field level.

The color video board affixed to the top of the Peristyle, measures approximately 33 feet, 7 inches by 44 feet. The black-and-white matrix board, measuring approximately 50 feet by 51.5 feet, carries game-in-progress information and is capable of displaying messages, pictures, animations and video action.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In response to a 1999 study by the NFL to bring professional football back to Los Angeles, the Coliseum Commission retained NBBJ, an international architectural firm that has designed numerous NFL stadiums, to develop a vision for the historic Coliseum that would enable the 1920s-era stadium to become a premiere, state-of-the-art venue for an NFL franchise. NBBJ's approach capitalized on the strength of the existing architectural elements of the Peristyle and Olympic flame, while constructing a new, modern stadium within the existing structure. The conceptual design celebrates the rich heritage of this architectural landmark, while incorporating contemporary aesthetics.

The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Renovation Project ("Proposed Project") was conceived to enhance the Historic Landmark's presence and importance in both the Los Angeles region and the nation. It was determined that the Proposed Project should preserve the exterior wall, the emblematic Peristyle on the east end of the stadium, and as much of the seating fabric and bowl geometry as possible. These fundamental historic preservation principles became important guidelines as the design work began and are illustrated in the Conceptual Historic Fabric Retention Plan provided in Figure III-3. The stadium design renderings prepared by NBBJ, as presented later in Section III.C, Project Characteristics, present a stadium proposal that is representative of a possible design solution. They are not intended to serve as a final design. To the extent that design changes are anticipated during the planning and development phase, for purposes of this EIR, the final design will be required to be principally consistent with the Conceptual Historic Retention Plan.

Early in the process of designing the enhancements to the building to make it a competitive venue for use by an NFL franchise, NBBJ looked at geometries for the seating that were in line with the current geometry, enabling the design team to save at least part of the seating sections in the existing bowl. The importance of this decision was to make sure, as the building is experienced, that there would always be a part of the bowl in view. A large portion of the west end of the bowl will be retained and, while not used for regular NFL games, portions of the seating may be used for large attendance events. The east end of the bowl is maintained in a similar manner to anchor each end of the Peristyle in its current form.

The conceptual design of the Proposed Project explores and enhances the full value of the heritage of its Exposition Park site. The Peristyle at the east end of the stadium, clad in stone, is a priceless monument to the historic events that have passed beneath its arches: two Super Bowls, two Olympics,

Figure III-3 Conceptual Historic Fabric Retention Plan

the celebrated arrival of presidential nominee John F. Kennedy and countless other sporting events. Within the Peristyle, an outdoor restaurant experience will be created. Intended to be the only open-air suites in the NFL, this area produces a distinct new club experience unlike any other in the NFL, allowing VIP ticket holders the uniquely “L.A.” experience of seeing and being seen.

The seating bowl is designed to bring more fans closer to the field and along the sidelines. On three levels in favorable sideline positions, approximately 200 suites and a club level with premier seats create high-amenity areas with great views to the playing field, while maintaining the historic fabric and defining character of the Coliseum.

The Coliseum Commission’s stated objective for this Project is to secure the highest possible level of management, operation, and maintenance of the Coliseum as a world-class, “state-of-the-art” public assembly facility of the first magnitude. The Coliseum Commission has identified the following goals and objectives for the Proposed Project:

- To renovate the Coliseum in conformance with the generally accepted standards of design for National Football League (NFL) stadiums, thus enabling the Coliseum Commission to acquire and maintain an NFL franchise in the City of Los Angeles.
- To extend the useful life of the Coliseum so as to assure that the stadium will continue to provide to the public an economically viable facility capable of hosting a wide variety of athletic, cultural, political, and community events.
- To renovate the Coliseum in conformance with the generally accepted standards of design for collegiate football, thus enabling the Coliseum Commission to continue its landlord/tenant relationship with the USC football team.
- To provide spectators and users of the Coliseum with the amenities and conveniences consistent with a state-of-the-art facility, including improved restrooms, concession, and press facilities; improved spectator viewing; luxury suites and club seating; improved locker and dressing facilities; additional circulation space; and better accessibility to seating, concessions, and restroom facilities.
- To assure that stadium operations generate enough revenue to enable the Coliseum Commission to preserve and maintain the Coliseum in a self-sufficient manner.
- To preserve, where feasible, the historic character of the Coliseum in a manner compatible with the other objectives of the Proposed Project.
- To extend the useful life of the Coliseum and modernize the existing infrastructure with energy conservation fixtures in accordance with Title 24 (C.C.R) requirements, improved emergency fire

access, and upgraded accessibility standards in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) requirements.

- To finance the renovation of the Coliseum without expending money from the City of Los Angeles or State of California General Funds.