

METRODOME HISTORY

The road to creating the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome followed a number of twists and turns — and it almost came to a dead end a number of times. We invite you to learn more about the colorful and intricate history behind the making of the Dome.

What Was Wrong With Metropolitan Stadium?

Bloomington's Metropolitan Stadium was built for the Minneapolis Millers minor league baseball team in 1956. It was expanded for major league sports when the Minnesota Twins and Minnesota Vikings came to town in 1961. While the Vikings did play home games there, the field at its core was designed for baseball. The stadium only seated 47,000 fans for football, and provided limited fan amenities and team revenues. The Vikings desired a new, state-of-the-art home built specifically for football, and the city of Minneapolis wanted to have that home in their downtown. But others had interest in becoming the site the Vikings' new home as well, including Bloomington, St. Paul, the University of Minnesota, Eagan, and Brooklyn Center.



Robert Cerny's Futuristic Vision

The idea for a domed stadium was actually conceived in the late 1960s when a Minneapolis architect named Robert Cerny introduced the concept of a domed football stadium in downtown Minneapolis. Over the next decade, Cerny's idea became a "political football", punted about in every direction. There was talk of a domed Metropolitan Stadium in Bloomington, a dome at the State Fairgrounds, a dome over Memorial Stadium, and several other ideas in-between. In the early 1970s, talk about a new stadium began to get serious. It had to. In 1975 the Minnesota Vikings' and Minnesota Twins' Metropolitan Stadium use agreements were set to expire.

Minneapolis' Move Stalls

The Board of Estimate and Taxation had seven members, five of whom would have to vote "yes" for the Metrodome proposal to pass. Mayor Stenvig, who served on the board, had to uphold his city council vote and vote against the proposal. Board member Donald Hanson also indicated he'd vote against it. The remaining five members said they were in support of the proposal. It looked as though the proposal was a done deal. However, it was then discovered that board member Alfred Hum no longer lived in Minneapolis and had moved to Golden Valley.

Mayor Stenvig had to appoint a replacement. All of his nominees were either against the stadium or refused to say how they would vote. The city council turned down each of Stenvig's nominees. Mayor Stenvig then told the city council that he would not appoint another member to the board, effectively blocking the stadium vote. Later that year, after a petition drive, an amendment was passed that required public approval on all projects over \$15 million that required borrowed money to pay for them.

Task Force Formed

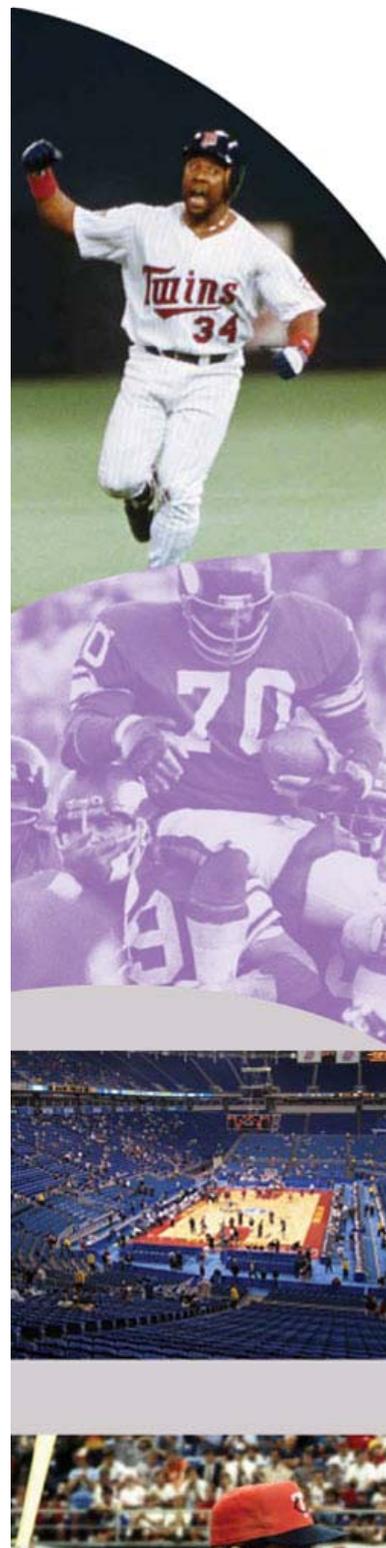
With the stadium proposal stalled in 1973, Minneapolis business leader Harvey Mackay recruited 26 people to serve on a Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce Stadium Task Force. The executive director of the task force was Charles Krusell, who played a vital role in its success. They started by conducting a \$25,000 feasibility study. Meanwhile, as the issue moved into 1974, Bloomington city leaders were also working to make their own case for keeping the stadium in their community. Bloomington held a lavish football weekend for lawmakers and others to see a game, stay at a Bloomington hotel and learn about the issue.

Neither the football weekend nor feasibility study moved some legislators. "The proposal for a new, multi-purpose stadium is dead," said St. Paul Senator John Chenoweth, "and the reason is that taxpayers are unwilling to sign a blank check. We're interested in having the Vikings stay, but the question is: what is the price?"

In April of 1975, Governor Wendell Anderson said that he was convinced that the Twins and Vikings would leave the state without passage of stadium legislation.

The Vikings' general manager-vice president Mike Lynn wanted a new stadium -- not a shared stadium with the Gophers or a renovated stadium. "The idea of playing in the college stadium is even more repugnant than playing in Metropolitan Stadium," Lynn said.

The No-Site Bill



After much wrangling in the 1975, 1976 and 1977 legislative sessions, a no-site bill -- the idea of Rep. Al Patton (DFL-Sartell) -- was finally passed in 1977. The bill created a seven-member citizens commission appointed by Governor Rudy Perpich. This commission was to select the stadium site and design. A revenue bonding package was developed to finance the stadium. If revenue streams to support the bonds were not sufficient to retire the bonds, a two-percent metropolitan area liquor tax would be imposed to generate additional bond revenues. The commission was held to certain financial parameters:

- It could spend up to \$37.5 million if it chose to build a new football stadium in Bloomington and improve Metropolitan Stadium for baseball
- It could spend up to \$25 million if it chose to remodel Metropolitan Stadium as a multi-purpose stadium
- It could spend no more than \$55 million if it decided to build a new domed stadium in any other location. In effect, if any city other than Bloomington wanted the stadium, it would have to provide the land at no cost.

Minneapolis Makes its Move

Following passage of the bill, the Minneapolis Chamber formed the Stadium Site Task Force, chaired by John Cowles, Jr., president of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company. It called for the creation of the Industry Square Development Corporation, which would provide the city of Minneapolis with a locally-owned development company. In exchange for the stadium land, the company would receive exclusive development rights in the Industry Square area. The Minneapolis City Council approved the plan. In late 1978, the Industry Square Development Corporation obtained \$14.5 million from Twin Cities companies to purchase the land where the Metrodome now stands. With that, Minneapolis became a viable competitor in the battle for the stadium site.

The New Stadium Commission

The newly formed Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission was designed to be geographically diverse. Two of the seven commissioners had to reside outside the Twin Cities. One each was to come from Minneapolis, Saint Paul, the southern metropolitan suburban area, and the northern suburban area. The chair had to reside outside of the Twin Cities. The commission's appointees in 1977 were:

- Don Brutger: A resident of Saint Cloud, Brutger served as the Commission's chair and was the owner of a St. Cloud construction company and numerous other businesses.
- Solveig Premack: A Minneapolis resident, Premack served as vice chair of the Capitol Area Architectural Planning Board.
- Richard Radman: A Saint Paul appointee, Radman was vice president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, and secretary and business representative of the Saint Paul Building and Construction Trades Council.
- Marion Kennon: A resident of Edina, Kennon was an elementary school teacher at Breck School.
- Ron Gornick: A resident of Chisholm, Gornick owned a Chisholm service station and motel. He had also served on Governor Wendell Anderson's Small Business Task Force.
- Josephine Nunn: Nunn was mayor of Champlin and a member of the Metropolitan Council's advisory committee on municipalities.
- Kelly Gage: A lawyer from Mankato, Gage was a former state representative from Blue Earth County.
- Donald Poss served as the commission's first executive director. He had been the Brooklyn Center city manager.

Selecting the Stadium Site

The commission received eight proposals for a stadium. Two came from Minneapolis, one from Bloomington, and another from Saint Paul. There was also a "Midway" area proposal for a site between Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Other entries came from Brooklyn Center, Coon Rapids and Eagan. In the end, the choice came down to Minneapolis and Bloomington. The commission could either build a stadium on the site in Bloomington or sell that land and build on the Minneapolis site.

The vote passed 4-3 to make the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis a reality.

Designing and Building the Metrodome

Construction of the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis started in December of 1979. The commission wanted the Metrodome to be an "austere, but a quality and aesthetically pleasing structure."

The design team included Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) and Minneapolis-based Setter, Leach & Lindstrom, Inc. SOM, one of the world's largest architectural firms, had designed the Pillsbury Center, Lutheran Brotherhood headquarters and Minneapolis City Center. Setter, Leach & Lindstrom, Inc., had done a number of major Twin Cities projects, including design of the Fairview-St. Mary's medical office building, the Minneapolis Convention Center and the James J. Hill House restoration. New York-based Geiger Berger Associates designed the Metrodome's roof.



Overseeing Metrodome construction was Construction Management Services of Minneapolis and Detroit-based Barton-Malow. Approximately 80 companies were awarded contracts to participate in the construction of the Metrodome, with most of the labor provided by Minnesota construction workers. On January 2, 1980, shortly after excavation had started, bulldozers encountered an immovable force - a 250,000-pound granite rock, believed to have been there for about 11,000 years. The rock was eventually moved to a bank in Plymouth, MN, dubbed "Plymouth Rock," and construction continued.

The Dome was inflated on October 2, 1981 and the stadium was completed in April 1982. The project was completed on time, and unlike many new stadiums today, under budget. The final price came in at \$55 million.

The First Years at the Metrodome

Forty-eight days after the Dome was inflated, a major storm dumped more than ten inches of heavy, wet snow on the Dome. The weight of the snow caused the roof to partially deflate. The roof



then ripped when a bolt snapped, leaving a sharp piece of steel that tore through the fabric. Air escaped through the tear and the Dome deflated even further. The rip was repaired and the Dome was re-inflated within four days. The fabric roof has torn a few times since then, but it has only postponed an event or game once – in April of 1983, a baseball game between the Minnesota Twins and California.



The first Twins regular season game at the Metrodome was April 6, 1982 versus the Seattle Mariners. The Twins fell to the Mariners 11-7. The first Vikings regular season home game was September 12, 1982, when the Vikings beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 17-10.

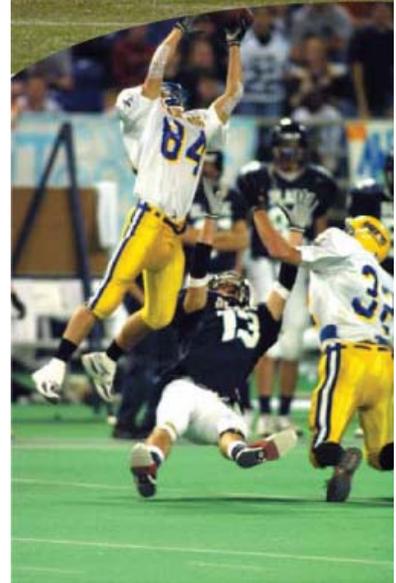
Honoring Hubert H. Humphrey

Hubert Humphrey, former Minneapolis mayor, U.S. Senator and U.S. Vice President, loved Minnesota. He was a big sports fan and rooted for the Vikings and Twins every chance he got. Because of his dedication to the state and to teamwork, the Metrodome was named in his honor -- The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome.

Celebrating Over 25 Years as Minnesota's Rec Room

The Metrodome, the country's only public stadium that does not rely on a continuing tax subsidy to finance operations, maintenance or debt payments, has truly established itself as Minnesota's Rec Room during the past 29 years.

- The Metrodome is the only stadium in the world to have hosted all of the following: the NFL Super Bowl (1992), Major League Baseball's All-Star Game (1985), two World Series (1987, 1991), and the Final Four of the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship (1992, 2001).
- Out of more than 300 event days per year at the Metrodome, less than 100 feature professional or major college sports. The rest of the event days are used by high schools and colleges, concerts, community activities, and other events.
- The Metrodome hosts boys' and girls' high schools from throughout Minnesota for athletic and other events, as well as small college athletic competitions.
- More than half a million people have come to the Metrodome to see concerts by major performers such as Pink Floyd, Paul McCartney, Guns N' Roses, Faith No More, Metallica, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, and The Grateful Dead.
- The Metrodome is the only major facility in Minnesota big enough to host major motorsports events.
- The Metrodome draws more than 4,000 runners and 30,000 inline skaters per year.



Sources:

Busch, Duffy. The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome, Souvenir Edition of the Greater Minneapolis Magazine. Minneapolis: Prime Publications, 1982
 Klobuchar, Amy. Uncovering the Dome. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, Inc., 1982

About the Dome

- > MSFA Documents
- > MSFA & MSFC Reports
- > Stadium Management
- > Metrodome History
- > MSFA News
- > Memorable Moments
- > Hubert H. Humphrey
- > Dome Tours
- > Employment

Events

- > Events Calendar
- > Vikings
- > Seating Chart
- > Disability & Access
- > Suite Information
- > Directions/Parking

Event Bookings

- > Booking Information
- > Event Spaces
- > Catering Services
- > Experience Minneapolis

Guest Services

- > A-Z Information Guide
- > Guests with Disabilities
- > Other Links
- > Food & Beverages
- > Facility Map

Contact

Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome
 Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority
 900 South 5th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55415
 Phone: 612-332-0386
 Fax: 612-332-8334
 > Contact us by email
 > Privacy Policy

©2013 MSFC

Please note: This history was downloaded via the Internet Archive from <http://msfc.com/> on April 21, 2014. It is no longer available on the Minnesota Sports Facility Authority website.