



Consultant Says New Arena Is “Feasible”

March 24, 1999

A 10,000-seat arena would not prove too disruptive to a neighborhood dominated by social service agencies, a consultant said.

Christopher Dunlavey, a principal in the Washington firm studying the feasibility of a new sports-and-entertainment complex, told residents of the Bayside neighborhood that the arena would be a good fit.

"The bottom line is this is a feasible project as conceived," said Dunlavey, who planned to release an economic analysis today.

Brailsford & Dunlavey was hired by the city after the Libra Foundation organized by the late Elizabeth Noyce donated seven acres of land for an arena and offered to pay part of the construction costs.

The foundation also picked up the \$ 110,000 tab for the consulting firm, which has worked on such projects as the Fleet Center in Boston.

Still, not everyone in Maine's largest city is convinced the project is good for the Bayside neighborhood. Residents of the neighborhood fear that affordable housing would be displaced by the arena.

"We have in this city a lot of people's wonderful ideas that turned out to be disasters," said Mary Eileen Kiniry, who oversees the community garden at the Oxford Street Shelter.

The consultants said it would be most cost effective for the city to build a new arena rather than improve the existing Cumberland County Civic Center, which has 6,500 seats.

A recent study found it would cost at least \$ 15.8 million to renovate the 21-year-old building and \$ 23.4 million to expand it. Dunlavey said those figures were low.