NPS Form 10-900
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

Resub

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JUL 15 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name R. Crosby Kemper, Sr. Memorial Arena

Other names/site number Kemper Arena (preferred)

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 1800 Genessee Street | N/A | not for publication

City or town Kansas City | N/A | vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Jackson Code 095 Zip code 64102

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide _X_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: _X_ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Toni M. Prawl 07/12/16

Signature of certifying official/Title Toni M. Prawl, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register ____ determined eligible for the National Register

____ determined not eligible for the National Register ____ removed from the National Register

____ other (explain:)

For

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 9/9/16

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

	private
X	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

X	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
2	0	**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Entertainment Facility
LANDSCAPE: Parking Lot
TRANSPORTATION: Road-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Entertainment Facility
LANDSCAPE: Parking Lot
TRANSPORTATION: Road-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Late-Modern

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Metal
roof: Metal
other: Glass
Asphalt

X **NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUTATION PAGES**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

[X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[ ] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

[ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] B removed from its original location.

[ ] C a birthplace or grave.

[ ] D a cemetery.

[ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[ ] F a commemorative property.

[ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1974-1996

Significant Dates

1974

1996

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

C.F. Murphy Associates (Architect)

J.E. Dunn Construction Co. (Builder)

HNTB Corporation (Architect – alterations)

[X] **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUTATION PAGES**

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X_State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
_X_Other

Name of repository: **Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public .ibrary**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 24.3

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (See Continuation Page)
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
1	39.093433	-94.604822	3	39.092908	-94.603611
2	39.093360	-94.603879	4	39.092394	-94.603037

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)
_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1				3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin, Principal
organization Rosin Preservation date August 2016
street & number 1712 Holmes Street telephone 816-472-4950
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108
e-mail Elizabeth@rosinpreservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Kemper Arena**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson** State: **Missouri**

Photographer: **Brad Finch, f-stop Photography**

Date Photographed: **October 2013 and April 2016**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 28: East and south elevations. View to southwest from Beardsley Road.
2 of 28: East elevation. View to west.
3 of 28: North and west elevations. Soffit vent visible under upper mass. View to southeast.
4 of 28: North and west elevations. View to southeast.
5 of 28: West elevation. View to east.
6 of 28: West and south elevation; trash dock visible on right. View to northeast.
7 of 28: Southwest corner at concourse level. View to east.
8 of 28: Arena bowl. View to south.
9 of 28: Arena bowl. View to north.
10 of 28: Floor level seating riser cubbies. View to north.
11 of 28: Typical private suite.
12 of 28: Typical upper level deck with painted mechanical vents.
13 of 28: Corner entrance vestibule at main concourse level.
14 or 28: Main concourse (typical).
15 of 28: Typical concourse concession stand.
16 of 28: Intact concourse just west of 1996 atrium. View to south.
17 of 28: Access point between concourse and 1996 atrium. View to northeast.
18 of 28: 1996 atrium and entrance. View to north.
19 of 28: Access point to arena bowl (typical).
20 of 28: Mid-level ramp/bridge to Club Level concourse (typical).
21 of 28: Club Level concourse (typical)
22 of 28: View of main concourse from Club Level bridge (typical).
23 of 28: Ground level entrance (typical).
24 of 28: Ground level concourse (typical).
25 of 28: Locker room (typical).
26 of 28: Box office. View to northwest.
27 of 28: Storage structure. View to east.
28 of 28: Storage Structure interior. View to west.

Figure Log:
Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

Figure 1: Site Map. *Source: ArcGIS 2013.*
Figure 2: Contextual Map. *Source: ArcGIS 2013.*
Figure 3: Photo Map – Exterior
Figure 4: Photo Map and Current Plan – Concourse Level
Figure 5: Photo Map and Current Plan – Club level
Figure 6: Photo Map and Current Plan – Upper Seating Deck
Figure 7: Photo map and Current Plan – Lower Level
Figure 8: Partial Site Plan for Kemper Arena, Sheet A-1.3 of Architectural Plans by C.F. Murphy Associates, 27 March 1974.
Figure 9: Concourse Level Plan, South Section, Sheet A-2.4, Architectural Plans for R. Crosby Kemper Sr. American Royal Arena, C.F. Murphy Associates, 23 July 1973.
Figure 10: Upper Level Plan, South Section, Sheet A-2.6, Architectural Plans for R. Crosby Kemper Sr. American Royal Arena, C.F. Murphy Associates, [1973].
Figure 11: North Elevation and Tranverse Section of Kemper Arena, Sheet A-3.1 of Architectural Plans by C.F. Murphy Associates, 27 March 1974.
Figure 12: Current Plan, Lower Level. Sheet A 1.1, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.
Figure 13: Current Plan, Club Level. Sheet A 1.3, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.
Figure 14: Current Plan, Upper Seating Deck. Sheet A 1.4, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.
Figure 15: Typical Elevations, Sheet A 3.2, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.
Figure 16: Section at Mid Point, Sheet A 4.1,Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.
Figure 17: Historic Site Plan. (*Source: "R. Crosby Kemper, Jr. (sic) Memorial Arena Kansas City, Missouri," Architectural Record, March 1976, 109*).
F**igure 18:** Kemper Arena, Late Summer or Fall 1974, View to Northwest. (*Source:* Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 30 October 2013)
Figure 19: Kemper Arena Following Roof Collapse, 13 June 1979 (*Source:* Vertical File, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 30 October 2013)
Figure 20: Municipal Auditorium, Kansas City, Missouri, 1950. (Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 1 April 2015).
Figure 21: Municipal Stadium, Kansas City, Missouri, 1955. (Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 1 April 2015).
Figure 22: Truman Sports Complex, date unknown. (Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 31 March 2015).
Figure 23: Bartle Hall Convention Center, Kansas City, c. mid-1970s *(*Source: Robert Askren Photograph Collection, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 30 October 2013).
Figure 24: Complete List of Concerts Held at Kemper Arena, 1975 - 2011 *(*Source: Concert Database, http://www.liquisearch.com/kemper_arena/concerts, accessed online 24 February 2016).

SUMMARY

The R. Crosby Kemper, Sr. Memorial Arena (Kemper Arena) occupies a 24.3-acre site in Kansas City's industrial West Bottoms. The 1974 arena, designed by C.F. Murphy Associates of Chicago, is comprised of two distinct components -- the concrete substructure and the superstructure. The substructure is largely hidden by an earthen berm that rises from the parking lot. The superstructure sits atop the berm. The arena bowl, seating risers, interior concourses and lower level functional spaces are integral elements of the poured concrete substructure. The superstructure includes three oversized trusses that rise from the berm to cross the mass of the building. Inside the building a secondary system of bar joists and trusses hangs from the superstructure and carries the load of the roof deck. This approach allowed designers to achieve a 324-foot clear span inside the arena. Metal panels mounted on steel mullions clad the exterior. The enclosed mass of the superstructure has upper and lower components. The lower block is an oval that reflects the shape and dimensions of the arena bowl and its encircling concourse. Resting on top of the oval is a rectangular upper block with rounded corners. All elements of the superstructure are white, giving the arena a cohesive appearance. A narrow enclosed tubular storage structure, part of the original construction, connects to the arena floor through the south end of the berm. A box office and trash dock were incorporated into the south side of the berm at an unknown date (between 1987 and 1996). A glass atrium and parking level entrance were added to the east elevation in 1996. As part of this work, the central truss was altered to accommodate additional seating on the east and west sides of the arena bowl. The modified truss was designed to visually complement the two flanking, original trusses. The significant elements of the building design otherwise remain intact. The nominated property has one secondary resource that supports its historic function: the historic parking lots north and east of the arena and the road system that navigates the property are a contributing structure.

ELABORATION

SETTING

Kemper Arena sits at the center of a large, flat patch of ground in the southwest corner of Kansas City's West Bottoms industrial district (*Figures 1-2*). The state line separating Missouri and Kansas runs immediately to the west of the property. To the east, steep bluffs present a wooded slope toward the property and the Kansas (Kaw) River, which flows just west of the state line. The river channel makes a deep curve at a point aligned with Kemper Arena. A concrete levee lines the river bank. Open lots covered with gravel and/or grass fill most of the open ground between the levee and the state line. There are a few clusters of industrial buildings in this area south of Kemper Arena.

Kemper Arena functions as part of the American Royal complex, which includes several buildings and large paved parking lots, roughly bounded by 17th Street on the north, Wyoming Street on the east, and American Royal Drive on the west and south. Within this cluster the arena and its adjacent parking lots are publicly owned, while the rest of the complex is privately owned by the American Royal, a not-for-profit organization that promotes and educates about the area's agricultural heritage. South of Kemper Arena within the boundary of the complex there are several large event halls associated with the American Royal, including Hale Arena and the Governor's Exhibition Hall. Shared drives run between the American Royal buildings and Kemper Arena with access to both Wyoming Street and American Royal Drive. The large asphalt parking lots north and east of Kemper Arena are part of the historic site plan, while the parking lots south of Hale Arena were added to accommodate patrons to the event halls. The boundary

for this nomination follows the drives that encircle the arena and its associated parking lots, excluding the non-historic American Royal buildings and their associated parking lots.

Two modern vehicular viaducts cross the Kansas River. One carries 23rd Street over the southern tip of the Kemper Arena-American Royal complex; the other carries I-670/I-70 near 12th Street, a few blocks to the north. There are also several historic truss bridges in the vicinity of Kemper Arena. Active rail lines cross the river on truss structures near 25th Street and north of 12th Street; there is also a vacated vehicular truss bridge just north of 23rd Street.

The blocks north of the Kemper Arena-American Royal complex retain vestiges of the commercial/industrial district that historically flourished in the West Bottoms. Just north of 17th Street is the prominent historic Stockyard Exchange Building. Much of the open land lying west of Genessee Street was the historic stockyards. East of Wyoming Street is the very active alignment of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and a small yard of rail spurs (*Photo 1*). Kansas City's original union station and a roundhouse once stood in this area near 14th Street.

ARENA (CONTRIBUTING BUILDING)

Exterior

Kemper Arena rests on a grass covered berm that rises approximately 25 feet above the grade of the surrounding parking lots *(Photos 1-6, Figure 3*). The berm covers the underlying lowest level of the arena structure. A wide concrete sidewalk encircles the top of the berm (*Photo 7*). Wide ceremonial concrete stairs that access the concourse align with the four corners of the arena and the original building entrances (*Photos 3 and 6*).

Three additions are integral to the south side of the berm, through which they connect directly to the interior of the arena. The box office has an arched metal roof supported on round tubular posts *(Photo 26)*. To its west, stairs rise to the sidewalk encircling the arena. A concrete loading dock sits west of the box office (*Photo 6*). Extending south from berm is a long narrow one-story metal-clad storage structure with four large vehicular bays *(Photo 27)*. The structure has tubular structural elements and a barrel-shaped roof clad with corrugated metal. Large overhead doors fill the vehicular bays in the west elevation. The floor inside is dirt *(Photo 28)*. The north end of the structure connects to the floor of the arena via a tunnel through the berm, providing covered space for event staging. While the 6,600 square foot structure was not part of the original arena plan, it was added to the design and built concurrent with the arena when operators realized the need for such a space to facilitate transitions between events held inside the arena *(Figure 17)*. As such it is considered a historic part of the resource. The additional space was especially critical when consecutive uses required different floor surfaces.[1] The box office and loading dock were added after 1987 and before 1996.

Two stacked geometric masses form the body of the arena (*Photos 3-5*). The lower oval mass reflects the shape of the arena bowl and its encircling interior concourse. The rectangular shape of the upper mass extends the main oval to accommodate mechanical equipment in the four rounded corners. Panels of seamed metal clad the walls of both forms and the soffits at the corners of the upper mass. There are slit vents and can lights in these soffits below the mechanical equipment. The entrances in the four corners of

[1] Mike McGraw, "Addition of Storage Area Approved for New Arena," *Kansas City Star,* 6 July 1973, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library.

the arena have white metal slab doors that blend with the skin when shut (*Photo 7*). Inside each entrance is a vestibule formed by a parallel bank of glazed doors (*Photo 13*).

In 1996 the east elevation of the arena was altered with the addition of an entrance at-grade with the parking lot and a large glass "mask" that covers the central portion of the facade (*Photo 2*). The mask has a gently convex shape and a sloped form that extends slightly from the skin of the building. A metal-clad parapet rises above the glazing and the original roof line to accommodate additional seating at the top of the arena's upper deck. Below the glazing, a bank of entrance doors is set into the berm and framed with concrete. Inside this entrance, patrons rise to the main concourse via escalators and stairs (*Photo 10*).

Three huge trusses composed of triangular modules cross the arena from east to west at regular intervals (*Photos 1, 5*). They are the primary structural elements that support the roof and walls. Tubular members ranging from 30 inches to 48 inches in diameter compose the trusses. The north and south trusses are identical. They rest on tapered concrete pylons, which are the visible tops of concrete footings, integral with the substructure, that extend 60 feet into the ground below the berm (*Photo 18*). The central truss was modified in 1996 to accommodate the expanded seating bowl inside the arena. The vertical legs were moved away from the east and west building walls to anchor into concrete footings at-grade with the base of the berm *(Photos 2, 4, 6*). Using members with a similar configuration to the original trusses, the central truss rises above the original parapet (and added wall section on the east), connecting to the original truss on the roof of the arena (*Figure 16*).

Interior

Inside Kemper Arena, a wide concrete concourse encircles the arena bowl at midlevel (*Photo 14, Figure 9*). The original corner entrances provide direct access to the concourse *(Photo 13)*. Concession stands and restrooms project from and recess into the concourse walls at periodic locations (*Photos 14-15*). Installation of the "mask" on the east elevation removed the metal wall cladding to create a bright, naturally lit, two-level atrium (*Photo 10*). Within the atrium all of the steel structural elements are exposed and coated with spray-on fire-retardant material. The alterations did not significantly impact the volume of the historic concourse, which remains very legible, referenced by headers that extend across the opening between the atrium and the concourse (*Photos 16-17*).

Kemper Arena has seating for roughly 18,000 spectators. Access to the arena bowl occurs at regular intervals along the concourse. Both the upper and lower seating levels are reached from the same entrance points (*Photo 19*). Each entrance has a central run of concrete stairs heading down to the lower level seats. This access is flanked by two parallel runs of concrete stairs that rise to the upper level seats. In between these access points, other doors in the concourse wall access the private viewing suites that encircle the arena at the top of the lower bowl.

The minimal historic finishes of the concourse are substantially intact (*Photos 14-16*). Square ground-face concrete tiles clad the concourse walls. The concourse has no ceilings, except in front of the four building entrances, which have dropped hard surface ceilings with can lights. In other locations the tiered concrete risers of the upper level seats form the ceiling *(Photo 16)*. Large functional light fixtures hang from the exposed structure.

The arena bowl is a column-free space, 324 feet wide (*Photos 8-9*). Within the bowl blue plastic seats are attached to concrete risers at both the upper and lower levels. The bottom edge of the lower level seats, at or near the arena floor, can be modified as appropriate for each particular event. The aisle can end in stairs that take attendees to the floor; when floor access is not desired metal railings can be installed in front of the bottom row of seats and at the base of the aisles. When needed, additional bleacher seating can be brought out from storage areas under the lower level seats (*Photo 10*). The bottom of the upper deck terminates in a concourse that encircles the arena in front of this seating level. A metal pipe railing attaches to the edge of the deck at the front of the concourse. At some locations along this midlevel point there are concrete bridges that cross over the main concourse to access secondary concession stands and additional restrooms that were added in the mid-1980s (*Photos 20-21, Figure 13*).

At the rear of the lower level seats, at-grade with the midlevel concourse, a series of twenty-five private viewing boxes or suites encircles the arena (*Photo 11*). The concourse at the bottom of the upper deck forms the ceiling for the suites. They typically have ground-face concrete block or painted drywall partitions; concrete or carpeted floors; and dropped ceiling grids, although some suites have custom finishes such as wood paneling or wood parquet floors. A partial-height plexiglass wall forms the front of each suite and perpendicular full-height glass panels separate the suites.

Finishes and fixtures in the arena area are highly functional. The concrete floor allows for the installation of alternate materials as required by specific events – ice for hockey; wood for basketball; and dirt for rodeos and horse shows. Exposed steel trusses and bar joists form a grid at the ceiling *(Photos 8-9).* Sound absorbing panels are placed within most of the grid squares. This is an original design detail. Large runs of exposed ductwork encircle the perimeter of the arena at the top of the upper deck *(Photo 12)*. Once painted a vibrant red, the color of the ductwork has faded over time. A large score board hangs from the center of the arena ceiling. Smaller scoreboards are attached to the front of the upper deck concourse at the four midpoints. None of the scoreboards is original. Primary banks of lights hang from the ceiling aligned with the long edges of the arena floor. Smaller banks of lights hang in other locations throughout the arena.

Large openings centered in the short, north and south ends of the lower seating bowl lead from the arena floor to a lower concourse that accesses administrative offices, locker rooms, and other back-of-house spaces (*Figure 12*). There is also an original restaurant/bar space on this level near the north entrance. The functional lower level spaces (concourse, offices, locker rooms, etc.) have painted concrete block walls; concrete, vinyl composition tile or carpeted floors; and dropped ceiling grids with acoustical lay-in tile. Slab metal doors access locker rooms. Offices have some storefront glazing facing the concourse (*Photos 23-25*).

ARENA ALTERATIONS

Kemper Arena experienced the following episodes of alteration since 1974.

1976 – Roof Repair

In May 1976, after an exceptionally heavy spring storm, a section of the arena roof collapsed (*Figure 19*). Forensic investigation pointed to weakened bolts between the secondary trusses and hangers as the cause of the failure. Accordingly, adjustments were made to the entire roof structure as part of the repair. The roof surface was also modified to slope outward toward the edges of the building rather than inward

toward the center of the building. None of these repairs is evident to the casual observer, and they do not impact the significance of the building's historic function as a mid-twentieth century multipurpose entertainment venue. The primary structural elements and significant exterior and interior finishes were undamaged by the collapse and were not altered during the course of repairs.

1987 – Concourse Amenity Upgrades

In the mid-1980s a Club Level concourse was added under the eaves at the perimeter of the building to provide additional women's restrooms and concession stands. These locations are accessed via concrete bridges at the base of the upper level deck in the four corners of the arena. The bridges cross the main concourse to the Club Level, which is stacked above the built-out spaces (concession stands and restrooms) on the main concourse. The volume of the main concourse remains unobstructed but for the bridges themselves (*Photos 19-21*). This alteration is highly unobtrusive and does not impact the qualities that render the building historically significant.

1987-1996 – Box Office and Trash Dock

Two elements were added to the arena in the late twentieth century. Both are built into the south side of the berm and connect to the interior of the arena at the lower level.

The box office is built into the berm immediately adjacent to the south stairs *(Photo 26*). Only the front (south) elevation and small portions of the side elevations are visible. The flat roof rises about two feet above the top of the berm. The structure is cast-in-place concrete with no ornament. Sloped concrete retaining walls flank the ticket counters recessed under the projecting roof. The five rectangular ticket window openings have a continuous concrete counter and concrete mullions. Metal roll-top security gates cover the windows. A free-standing canopy covers the box office waiting area. White tubular steel members compose the canopy frame. Steel trusses support the barrel vaulted roof, which is clad in metal panels.

The trash dock is built into the southwest corner of the berm *(Photo 6)*. Cast-in-place concrete retaining walls frame a recessed area with large trash bays. Rectangular openings in the north wall access interior loading areas. A canopy with tubular steel framing and steel trusses, similar to the canopy over the box office, rises above the concrete roof of the trash dock.

1996 – Additional Seating and East Entrance Modifications

The desire for additional capacity spurred alterations to the arena in 1996 (*Figures 12-16*). Roughly 1,500 seats were added in a block above the upper deck on the east side of the bowl (*Figure 14*). Rising slightly above the original roof line, the block is clad on the exterior with white metal panels matching those of the main building walls (*Figure 15)*. A two-story glass curtain wall was installed below the seating block. The original building skin was removed in this location. A new building entrance at the base of the curtain wall provides a direct connection between the historic east parking lot and the building interior.[2] The entrance leads to a two-story atrium where escalators access the main concourse. Expansion of the building mass to add seating required altering the central exterior truss. New vertical piers were anchored east and west of the berm and rise over the height of the new seating block (the designers anticipated a future, similar addition on the west side of the bowl), where it anchors to the original space frame, which remains intact

[2] The original design had primary entrances in each of the arena's four corners rather than a single main entrance. The original entrances are intact and used for exiting (see Photos 7 and 9).

across the roof of the arena. The design mimics the configuration of the original webs, as seen in the flanking piers.

PARKING LOT AND NETWORK OF ROADWAYS (1974 – CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE)

Two striped asphalt parking lots occupy open land north and east of the arena. Grassy strips dotted with mature deciduous trees and edged with concrete curbing and metal chainlink fences bound each parking lot. Four metal attendant booths set on concrete bases regulate entrance to the east parking lot. One such booth stands at the entrance to the north lot. The one-person booths are very small in scale and are excluded from the resource count. A network of two-lane asphalt roads encircles the arena and the parking lots, providing access to each element on the property. There have been no significant alterations to the parking lots or the road network. *(Figure 17)*

INTEGRITY

Kemper Arena remains a unique local example of the mid-twentieth century enclosed multi-purpose entertainment venue, distinguished from other recreation facilities in the city and in the region by its column-free interior and functional adaptability to accommodate a wide variety of events. The majority of features that contribute to its significance and that communicate its exceptional significance as a resource less than fifty years old remain intact. It is highly visible in its historic location and setting, prominently sited in the flat, former stockyards of Kansas City's West Bottoms. Key aspects of its design that define the property type (an efficient structural system that provides unobstructed views; tiers of seating surrounding an oval floor; functional spaces on a lower level) are unaltered. The addition of a secondary concourse and seating at the top of the bowl do not change the organization or function of spaces inside the building. They complement the original design and materials and, most importantly, have not changed the visitor experience on the concourse or in the seating bowl. Alteration of the central truss and the addition of a glass curtain wall to the east elevation in 1996 was an effort to extend the commercial viability of the arena during a period when many venues of a similar vintage were demolished. The nominated resource clearly communicates feelings about and associations with its period of construction and the area of significance for which it is nominated.

SUMMARY

The R. Crosby Kemper, Sr. Memorial Arena (Kemper Arena) at 1800 Genessee Street in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for the area of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION. It also meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration G for buildings that are less than fifty years old. It is an exceptional local example of the enclosed multipurpose entertainment arena, a property type that evolved in the mid-twentieth century to include functional elements of a traditional auditorium, a music venue, and a sports facility. The City of Kansas City, Missouri developed Kemper Arena to provide a modern, year-round venue for athletic and performance events. At the time of its construction, the multipurpose arena was considered a requisite civic resource for a thriving city. Comparable local entertainment venues extant or planned when Kemper Arena was under construction were either much smaller (Municipal Auditorium), appropriate for only a limited range of events (various downtown theaters and the Bartle Hall convention center), or open to the elements (Kauffman and Arrowhead stadiums). Kemper Arena provided a multipurpose location for a wide array of entertainment experiences that was unique in size, facilities, and amenities to the Kansas City region. Over the next forty years, the variety and importance of events hosted by Kemper Arena created an inexorable connection to nearly every resident of the Kansas City metropolitan area as well as to many from a much broader region, the boundaries of which were defined by arenas of comparable size and draw located in Omaha, Denver, Oklahoma City, and St. Louis.

The venue played a critical role in the community's collective experience during the period of significance, which begins in 1974 with the opening of Kemper Arena and ends in 1996. As Kemper Arena entered a period of decline in the mid-1990s, the venue hosted fewer A-list performers and events and struggled to retain longstanding stalwart users and regional attractions, such as the Big 12 Basketball tournament. A 1996 renovation, added seating to the upper level of the arena bowl, widened the east concourse, and added the entrance on the extended east façade in an effort to extend the economic life of Kemper Arena. These changes supported the historic function of Kemper Arena and did not alter the physical or functional qualities for which it is nominated and significant, but ultimately, the alterations were not successful in staving off economic obsolescence. Kemper Arena remained the city's most important enclosed sports and entertainment venue for another decade, until its role was supplanted by the opening of the Sprint Center in 2007. Replacement of Kemper Arena reflected a shift in arena economics, rather than functionality, that led to the demolition of many venues of similar vintage across the country. The nationwide loss of mid-twentieth century multipurpose arenas enhances the rarity and significance of Kemper as an example of its property type.

ELABORATION

THE MID-CENTURY MULTIPURPOSE ARENA

The urbanization of the United States after the Civil War was accompanied by an increase in both leisure time and disposable income. New commercial ventures offered patrons ways to spend their free time and spare money. Itinerant theater groups, circuses, horse races, athletic events, political rallies and agricultural fairs were popular attractions. In the late nineteenth century these events were housed in temporary facilities (e.g. tents or fields) on the edge of town or in an existing building with a stage or floor for performances and ample seating, such as a town hall or theater. By the start of the twentieth century enclosed sports arenas became more common as the new game of basketball gained popularity.

Advances in refrigeration technology enabled the production of indoor ice sheets, also elevating ice hockey to an indoor spectacle.

Nationwide there was a sharp rise in the number of multipurpose arenas constructed after World War II. Most of the existing facilities dated from the first quarter of the century and were aging. At the same time, communities without a venue for large civic and recreational gatherings sought to add one. America had experienced almost two decades of lean times. The federal government funded a variety of public development projects during the 1930s through the New Deal programs, but there was little private construction. Then, in the early 1940s construction materials were diverted to the war effort. By the time World War II ended and the national economy rebounded in the 1950s there was a pent-up demand for new buildings to signal the prosperity of the post-war era.

A multipurpose arena was the perfect expression of the times. An arena signaled an affluent local population with both time and money to spend on leisure activities and escapist pursuits.[3] In less populated parts of the country the variety of performers and events also drew visitors from the surrounding area. Kansas City had grown after the Civil War into an economic hub at the junction of the Midwest, Plains, and Southwest regions. In addition to its commercial services, visitors came to Kansas City from rural areas of Missouri, Kansas, and surrounding states for shopping and entertainment where, as Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote, everything was up to date.

By the late 1950s, most latent community infrastructure needs had been met and bountiful economic times allowed for public spending on civic luxuries. Such assets promoted a positive public image of the city center to counter the significant increase in suburban development. Writer Frank Deford also credits the modern multipurpose arena with enhancing the visibility of professional and collegiate athletics, taking the circus and the ice show to new profit levels, and creating a viable livelihood for musical entertainers and performers.[4] The arena offered something that would appeal to everyone, young and old, women and men. Advocates of a new Kansas City arena boasted that the venue could host over 200 events annually.[5] From the outset there would be a season's worth of professional hockey and basketball games, visits from three circuses and a couple of ice shows, as well as basketball tournaments and, of course, the annual agricultural shows of the American Royal. The American Royal was a locally hosted event that drew attendees from throughout the Midwest and Plains states. It was held in conjunction with the national Future Farmers of America convention, drawing young people to Kansas City from around the country.[6] The biggest hurdle to the success of any individual event was the multitude of entertainment options available and the finite amount of time at a patron's disposal.[7]

An arena was a big ticket item. While most arenas operated profitably, it took a long time to offset the initial construction costs. Unlike the theaters built by entrepreneurs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the high cost of arena construction in the post-war era was of little interest to the private sector. This left these projects in the hands of the local government or a public-private civic partnership. When the voting public hesitated to approve the large sums required to build an arena,

[3] Frank Deford, "Your Time, Not Your Dollar," *Sports Illustrated*, May 12, 1969, 74.
[4] Keller, 237.
[5] William McCorkle, "Thompson Asks to Build Posh Suites in New Arena," *Kansas City Star,* 7 May 1973.
[6] Lynn Cheatum, "Kemper Arena to Provide Setting for Many Events," *Kansas City Star,* 13October 1974.
[7] Deford, 75.

municipalities used public relations campaigns, often emphasizing the economic synergy of the project, to bring success at the polls.[8]

This was very true in Kansas City. There was general consensus in the early 1950s that the booming metropolitan area would soon outgrow Municipal Auditorium, opened in 1937. In 1954 voters approved a $6 million bond measure to support construction of a new arena. For almost two decades after this vote more pressing local needs held sway, and the bond funds remained unspent. In part there was little external pressure to replace Municipal Auditorium. It remained one of the largest entertainment venues among the cities with which Kansas City competed for convention and arena events, communities as far flung as St. Louis, Des Moines, Omaha, Denver, and Oklahoma City. That dynamic began to shift in the early 1970s when Oklahoma City opened a new 14,000-seat arena, St. Louis refurbished and expanded its pre-war arena (soon to be renamed the Checkerdome), and Denver voters approved bonds for a new 18,000-seat arena. As the National Hockey League (NHL) looked to expand, the time became right for Kansas City to take action. Local elected officials and civic boosters began advocating heavily for a new arena in 1971, hoping to ride the coattails of an NHL expansion team to generate action.[9]

Arena construction and capacity had surged in the 1960s. By the end of the decade, nationwide there were over 355 arenas with seating capacity of 5,000 or more and 100 arenas that could seat double that number. Two-thirds of these had been built after World War II; almost 25 percent were built after 1964.[10] By the early 1970s a new arena typically sat 10,000 – 20,000 spectators.[11] The flexible layout easily adapted to the array of entertainment offerings it hosted. Kemper Arena provided this venue for Kansas City. It offered a column-free seating bowl in a flexible venue that could accommodate between 15,000 and 18,000 patrons, nearly double the 9,500-seat capacity of Municipal Auditorium. Venues of comparable size and function were three or more hours away from Kansas City, in cities such as Des Moines (Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 1955), Omaha (Ak-Sar-Ben Coliseum, 1929, demolished 2005), St. Louis (Checkerdome, 1929, demolished 1999), and Denver (Denver Coliseum, 1951).

As was the case with almost all post-war development, parking was a critical component of a successful plan. Many new arenas were located away from the city center in new development districts cleared of older structures to accommodate the new buildings and the requisite parking.[12] A large form set in a sea of parking, the modern arena was ideally poised to host guests from far and wide. After much debate about its proposed location, Kemper Arena took advantage of such a site in Kansas City's West Bottoms. Free from the restrictions of a street grid or proximal buildings, the venue became a beacon to attendees and a regional entertainment destination.

As envisioned for Kemper Arena, a typical multipurpose venue hosted events upwards of three nights per week year-round, offering an array of entertainment options that appealed to all segments of the community. According to Deford, the arena quickly became an integral part of a community's psyche and self-perception. He wrote, "The arena, more than any other, is the building for this time…. It is a phenomenon that all by itself is changing the entertainment habits and sporting interests of millions." Carson Bain, Mayor of Greensboro, North Carolina, echoed Deford, describing arenas as "necessities for

[8] Deford, 82.
[9] Joe McGuff, "Sporting Comment," *Kansas City Star,* 23 January 1973.
[10] Deford, 72-73.
[11] Joseph R. Warlick, Jr, "A View from the Bleachers," *Modern Steel Construction,* vol. XI, No. 3, Third Quarter 1971, 3-5.
[12] Keller, 194-195,

the cities of the '70s…. America needs them for the happiness of a community, and in the long run… for civic peace as well."[13] It was this sentiment that had propelled Kansas City's civic leaders in 1971 to renew their advocacy to replace the aging Municipal Auditorium. As a *Kansas City Star* editorial noted, "the region will gain an impressive indoor amphitheater with a seating capacity large enough to accommodate national events. Jobs are at stake as well as the welfare of the local economy."[14] Another article, written shortly before Kemper Arena opened concluded, "Kansas City's image as a convention center and sports mecca will take on added sheen when the Kemper Arena is ready."[15]

From its inception, Kemper hosted a wide variety of events. The underlying concrete floor was easily topped with ice, wood, turf, or dirt as required by the program. Major league sports teams who called Kemper home included the Scouts (National Hockey League), the Kings (National Basketball Association), and the Comets (Major Indoor Soccer League). When the Scouts left after two seasons, minor league hockey teams took up residence. Kemper hosted WWE wrestling events, Women's Flat Track Roller Derby bouts, amateur figure skating competitions, and gymnastics championships. Muhammed Ali staged an exhibition bout at the venue shortly after regaining the World Heavyweight title from George Forman. You went to Kemper to see the circus, the ice show, the rodeo, and monster truck rallies. Bob Hope performed two benefit concerts at Kemper Arena. It was the site of the 1976 Republican National Convention. An annual highlight was the regional agricultural and livestock events hosted by the American Royal and, until 1998, the annual convention of the National FFA Organization (formerly the Future Farmers of America). But, college basketball was consistently one of the arena's biggest draws. For years it hosted Big 8 (later Big 12) basketball playoffs, and in 1988, the 50th anniversary of the NCAA men's basketball tournament, it hosted the Final Four, which was won by the local University of Kansas in a riveting defeat of arch rival University of Oklahoma.

Of equal importance to basketball was Kemper's role as the regional venue hosting premiere touring musical performances. Missourians could see shows of this caliber in Kansas City or in St. Louis. These performers made few stops elsewhere in the region. Kansans might see a big outdoor concert at Veterans Field on the Wichita State University campus or at an arena in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Dallas or Denver. Iowans might see a performance at the Veterans Auditorium in Des Moines. There was War Memorial Stadium in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Ak-Sar-Ben Coliseum in Omaha. But, for the majority of people living in the small cities and rural towns of the eastern Plains, Kansas City and Kemper Arena were THE destination for big musical performances.

Jethro Tull headlined the first rock concert at Kemper Arena in January 1974. Over the years, Kemper hosted performances by everyone from Frank Sinatra to Michael Jackson and U2. Elvis Presley, Paul McCartney & Wings, the Rolling Stones, ZZ Top, The Who, Aerosmith, KISS, Pink Floyd, Alice Cooper, and Rod Stewart; Yes, Queen, and Rush; Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, AC/DC, Journey, the Police, Metallica, Motely Cure, Ozzy Osbourne, Boston, and more.[16] The roster of performances reads like a who's who of late-twentieth century popular music. Figure 24 shows a list of rock concerts held at Kemper

[13] Deford, 74.
[14] "Equitable Plan to Build an Arena and Save the Royal," *Kansas City Star,* 21 March 1973. Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library.
[15] Lynn Cheetum. "Kemper Arena to Provide Setting for Many Events," *Kansas City Star,* 13October 1974, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[16] Concert Database, www.pf-db.com/index.php?list_venue&choice=113, 26January2015; Rick Hellman, KC Rock History Project, personal communication, 1 January 2015.

compiled by the website liquisearch.com. For a pop or rock concert, no other Kansas City venue could offer the size or facilities that Kemper did. Older venues, such as Municipal Auditorium, Memorial Hall (Kansas City, Kansas), Cowtown Ballroom, and the Folly Theater were significantly smaller and unable to accommodate the equipment that was inherent to large stadium concerts beginning in the 1970s. Arrowhead Stadium, Starlight Theater (at Swope Park), and Sandstone Amphitheater (Bonner Springs, Kansas) hosted a limited number of seasonal outdoor concerts and music festivals, but the vast majority of top rock shows were staged at Kemper.[17]

By the mid-1990s, there was a growing trend across the country to replace mid-century arenas. The big change was not about overall seating capacity or views (most arenas from the 1970s had ample column-free bowls), but rather it was a question of amenities. The high dollars commanded by luxury seating at major sporting events was the driving force. When Kemper opened, a professional basketball or hockey game typically drew 6,000 – 8,000 spectators. In an effort to increase revenues in the late 1980s, NBA and NHL team owners devised the idea of luxury boxes, comfortable living room-like spaces with food and beverage service that could be sold for significantly more money than a standard stadium seat. The original design for Kemper was cutting edge. It included twenty-five "suites," perhaps more aptly described as viewing boxes *(Photo 11)*. These were small private spaces partitioned from the general stands at the top of the lower bowl. The open room had movable plastic chairs, a plexiglass railing, and a very modest array of amenities. In 1996 the suites at Kemper leased for $7,200 - $14,500 a year, and there was a waiting list. If all were rented at top dollar, this would net $362,500 per year. By contrast a new arena with 200 suites outfitted with club seating, high-end finishes and luxurious amenities could generate $24 million a year. The fee was often shared with the owners of the local NBA or NHL team, who used the money to hire star players and hopefully improve their shot at a championship. The first arena to implement the luxury suite was the Palace of Auburn Hills in Michigan. Opened in 1988 for the Detroit Pistons, each of its 180 suites generated up to $200,000 a year for the team, significantly enhancing the ability of team owners to attract star players.[18] Perhaps coincidentally, the Pistons won two national championships after moving to their new arena. By 1996 this scenario was playing out across the country. Almost every city with an NBA and/or NHL team (as well as cities, such as Kansas City, hoping to – again - attract a franchise) contemplated a new arena.

This trend also documented a shift in the purpose of arenas. Most of the older arenas were publicly-financed and owned. They typically operated in the black, but required long-term financing to cover construction costs.[19] For this reason, their development had been a civic endeavor, with the cost of construction borne by the community as a whole through the sale of bonds. As public buildings, arenas were programmed to serve the entire community, offering a broad array of events – family entertainment, music concerts, as well as sporting events. By the mid-1990s this was no longer the case. The demands of professional sports teams became the driving force behind building new arenas and, to a lesser degree, renovating older arenas. In contrast to the egalitarian atmosphere that led to the construction of arenas in earlier decades, the focus on high-priced seating and amenities limited access to the arena.[20] Not everyone could enjoy the luxury facilities, and rising ticket prices reduced the number of events that most

[17] "Kemper Arena Concerts," http://www.liquisearch.com/kemper_arena/concerts, 24 February 2016.
[18] Randy Covitz, "Outclassed," *Kansas City Star,* 17 March 1996, C2:1.
[19] Deford, 74.
[20] Covitz, Outclassed.

patrons could afford to attend. The public purpose of the arena was lost for the sake of securing the revenue stream demanded by the professional sports teams.

Kemper was one of many mid-century multipurpose arenas built with the aim of providing accessible entertainment to a broad array of public interests. As communities evaluated the new model posed by the Palace at Auburn Hills, many took the fiscally prudent first step of "improving" their existing arenas by squeezing in additional seats and luxury amenities in an attempt to preempt economic obsolescence. The renovation of Kemper Arena in 1996 followed this trend. At the time, arena general manager Carolyn Foxworth stated succinctly, "There is nothing wrong with Kemper Arena."[21] Another NBA executive described a parallel situation as economic obsolescence, not physical obsolescence.[22] Aside from the week-long Big 12 basketball tournament, the arena had plenty of capacity for its regular tenants – minor league hockey, indoor soccer, and NCAA men's and women's basketball. It filled up for special events – American Royal rodeos, FFA conventions, concerts, circus, and ice shows. The addition of seating and the alteration of the east façade undertaken that year were an effort to forestall the inevitable.

It was soon apparent that the band-aids were insufficient. By the late 1990s and well into the 2000s, new, fully outfitted arenas were under construction across the country. A current list of municipally-owned arenas identifies fifty-two with capacity for 15,000 or more patrons. Of these forty-four were constructed after 1990, in the wake of Auburn Hills. During this wave of construction, the role of older arenas was at best diminished, but many were demolished. The same list identifies fifty-four additional venues as "historic," meaning they have been demolished or are no longer in use.[23] Regional losses included McNichols Sports Arena in Denver, one of the venues that spurred construction of Kemper Arena, and the beloved Checkerdome in St. Louis. Other notable losses include the Jacksonville [Florida] Coliseum (1960, demolished 2003), the Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania] Civic Arena (1961, demolished 2011), the Philadelphia Spectrum (1966-67, demolished 2010), the Atlanta Omni (1972, demolished 1997), the Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland (1973, demolished 2002), and Market Square Arena in Indianapolis (1974, demolished 2001). Each of these venues was replaced by a new arena constructed on or near the original site, attesting to the continued importance of the multipurpose arena as a functional property type to the local community. Almost universally, the desire to replace the existing arena hinged on commercial obsolescence, rather than functional obsolescence.

Kansas City could not remain immune to the "need" for an updated entertainment and sports venue. Well before the 1996 renovation bonds were retired, civic leaders began planning to replace Kemper in the hope of luring an NHL or NBA team back to town. The Sprint Center opened in 2007 as the public component of a larger privately-developed entertainment district created on the south side of downtown. Since then Kemper Arena has sat largely unused, despite assurances that it would continue to house "dirt" events (rodeos, monster trucks, circus, etc.). For the time being, Kemper Arena stands as a testament to the ideals and enthusiasms of the mid-twentieth century, the apex of the leisure economy.

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] The list does not stat the seating capacity of the "historic" arenas; some of these may have capacity less than 15,000. "List of Indoor Arenas in the United States," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_indoor_arenas_in_the_United_States, accessed 10 August 2016.

Other Entertainment Venues in Kansas City

Kemper Arena is a distinct entertainment facility within the local built environment. Designed to fill a functional void, it served as the primary indoor entertainment venue until the 2007 opening of the Sprint Center. Four extant resources within the geographical context of Kansas City, Missouri share similar entertainment values. Additional non-extant resources hosted athletic or cultural events prior to the construction of Kemper Arena. All of these buildings were constructed for limited uses, either athletic ***or*** cultural; in size and scale they paled in comparison to Kemper Arena.

One of Kansas City's earliest multipurpose venues was Convention Hall, a large brick building in the downtown convention hotel district with capacity for over 22,000 attendees. After fire destroyed the original Convention Hall in 1899, the community rallied to rebuild the facility in a span of three months to host the 1900 Democratic National Convention. By 1928 when Kansas City hosted the Republican National Convention, Convention Hall revealed itself to be woefully out of date.

Municipal Auditorium opened in 1937 across the street from Convention Hall, replacing the aging auditorium as Kansas City's primary large-scale downtown indoor entertainment venue (*Figure 20*). The replacement was functional and literal. Convention Hall was demolished after Municipal Auditorium opened, and a parking garage and plaza were constructed on the block it had occupied. Municipal Auditorium housed three distinct venues (a 10,000-seat arena; a 2,400-seat music hall; and a 400-seat theater) that accommodated a range of activities: college basketball games and tournaments, wrestling and boxing matches, musical concerts, dramatic performances, and other special events. Yet, by the early 1970s, the city had outgrown the facilities Municipal Auditorium offered. Municipal Auditorium is extant and continues to host theater productions, limited athletic events (volleyball, gymnastics, bowling, roller derby, etc.), graduation ceremonies, weddings and other private events.

Elsewhere around downtown Kansas City, theaters constructed from the 1880s to the 1920s hosted dramatic, musical, and dance performances. These buildings varied greatly in size, with the largest accommodating around 2,500 patrons. The Midland Theater, the third largest theater in the country when it opened in 1927, had 4,000 seats.[24] While many have been demolished, extant historic theaters include the Folly, the Lyric, and the Midland.

While Municipal Auditorium became the leading venue for indoor athletic events, Kansas City's primary outdoor sports venue was Municipal Stadium (originally Muehlebach Field, *Figure 21*). Located a couple miles east of downtown at 22nd Street and Brooklyn Avenue, Municipal Stadium was constructed for minor-league and Negro League baseball in 1923. When the Kansas City Athletics Major League Baseball team began playing in Kansas City in 1955, a 30,000-seat double-deck stadium replaced the older single-deck ballpark. The Kansas City Chiefs National Football League team began playing at Municipal Stadium in 1962. While Municipal Stadium occasionally hosted a musical performance (most notably the Beatles in 1964 following a herculean effort by the stadium owner to impress his teenage daughter), its primary function was baseball and football games.[25]

[24] Loew's Midland Theater and Midland Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 28, 1977.
[25] Jay Spangler, "Beatles Press Conference: Kansas City 9/17/1964," *The Beatles Ultimate Experience:* Beatles Interview Database, http://www.beatlesinterviews.org/db1964.0917.beatles.html (accessed 21 August 2014).

By the early 1960s Kansas City's major entertainment and recreation facilities had become outdated. As was common throughout the country after World War II, local governments assumed control of planning, funding, and maintaining what architectural historian George Ehrlich describes as "the assets that produce a positive national image – the so-called major league status."[26] These assets included the large-scale gathering spaces and facilities that were capable of hosting regional and national events.

Municipal Stadium was not large enough to support the surging popularity of professional football, and the inner-city location was not attractive to Kansas City's growing suburban population. Within twelve years after completing the stadium expansion, the city began to discuss building a new sports venue. In 1967 Jackson County voters approved bonds to fund two new, larger stadiums for Kansas City's professional baseball and football teams.[27] The Truman Sports Complex was built at the eastern, suburban edge of the city (*Figure 22)*. Arrowhead Stadium for the Kansas City Chiefs opened in August 1972 with more than 78,000 seats. Kauffman Stadium opened the following spring with roughly 40,000 seats.

Like cities across the country, Kansas City experienced rapid suburban growth in the 1950s. Retail businesses followed the thousands of families making an exodus from the historic city center to new and burgeoning communities on both sides of the state line. As the central business district lost its primacy as the area's commercial retail hub, city leaders focused on making downtown a convention destination, a tactic embraced by many localities to offset the loss of retail traffic to the increasing number of suburban shopping centers.[28] Bartle Hall, first conceived of in the 1960s, was designed to fill the gap in available convention facilities left by the demolition of Convention Hall in 1937. Modern convention centers required acres of uninterrupted exhibition space for booths and product displays, which Municipal Auditorium was not designed to accommodate. When it opened in 1976 after eight years of planning, design, and numerous construction delays, Bartle Hall boasted a 435,000 square-foot convention floor, much of it clear of structural members (*Figure 23)*.[29] While it continues to host conventions, meetings, shows (auto, boat, recreational vehicle, etc.), and similar events, it has never hosted performances similar to those offered at Kemper Arena.

Historic theaters continued to operate in downtown Kansas City after World War II. Movement in the industry away from live entertainment to film and the subsequent rise of the suburban multiplex cinema provided substantial competition and led to the closure of many venues. Theaters were limited in the entertainment options they could offer. Their facilities were best suited to live performances of music, dance or theater, and their size limited performances to smaller audiences. They were wholly unable to accommodate the large arena concerts that became popular in the 1970s. Renovations to upgrade technology and update finishes were not able to overcome their inherently single-use function.

With the construction of Kauffman Stadium, Arrowhead Stadium, and Bartle Hall, Kansas City's civic leaders remained focused on developing facilities to meet specific entertainment needs. Kemper Arena was the last piece of the puzzle, providing a climate-controlled indoor venue that was adaptable to a broad array of event types and allowing for nearly continuous year-round use. The proximity of the site to interstate highways and the vast expanse of adjacent parking lots provided easy access to the arena from

[26] George Ehrlich, *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1990*, Revised and Enlarged Edition (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 230.
[27] Ehrlich, 153.
[28] Ehrlich, 162.
[29] Ehrlich, 164.

inside the city as well as from surrounding suburban and regional communities. Kemper Arena was integral to the city's ability to meet the entertainment needs of residents and visitors. It was the newest, largest, and primary multipurpose arena in the Kansas City region for over thirty years.

DEVELOPMENT OF KEMPER ARENA

Talk of building a new arena began in earnest in 1971, around the time that construction started on Bartle Hall. There was particular interest in developing a venue that could attract a National Hockey League (NHL) franchise to the area and that would supplement the aging facilities of the American Royal, a Kansas City institution that held an annual Livestock and Horse Show in the West Bottoms. In the early 1970s new arenas opened in Oklahoma City and Denver, and a refurbished and enlarged St. Louis Arena (a.k.a. the Checkerdome) was selected to host the 1973 NCAA basketball championships.[30] Kansas City voters had approved bond financing for the convention center, but beyond a limited pool of money remaining from a 1954 sports arena bond, no public funding was available. Revenue bonds were proposed as the funding mechanism, which would allow individuals and corporations to contribute toward the project's estimated $10 million price tag.[31] Civic leaders discussed multiple sites for this venue – within the Truman Sports Complex, downtown next to the new convention hall, deep in suburban Johnson County, and on a piece of former stockyards land in the West Bottoms.[32]

At the end of November 1971 a group of investors emerged who supported building an arena in the West Bottoms on the condition that Kansas City obtained an NHL franchise team. The new arena would house sporting events, with a focus on hockey, and also support the programs of the American Royal. The arena and associated parking would occupy a 50-acre parcel of land that would be purchased from the stockyards company. Backers anticipated that construction could start within ninety days of approval and would take twenty months to complete.[33] It would be another year before plans gelled.

In the late Fall of 1972 the Kansas City city council was leaning heavily toward approving the stockyards proposal for the new arena. On November 30 a committee interviewed four architect-contractor teams with previous experience in arena design. Each team presented preliminary ideas for this specific project. The schedule was tight. The NHL was meeting in January to discuss moving a franchise to Kansas City. The committee would need preliminary plans by that date in order to sway the NHL.[34] Before the end of the year the committee announced the selection of Chicago-based F.F. Murphy Associates and local builder J.E. Dunn Construction Company for the project. C.F. Murphy was already engaged to design Bartle Hall and had local offices. The team was given until January 22 to develop a guaranteed price for a 16,000-seat multipurpose arena.[35]

With just forty-eight hours until the NHL finance committee meeting, the city council voted to allocate $5.6 million in general obligation bonds, the balance of the 1954 voter-approved bonds, to the project. This was

[30] Randy Covitz, "Outclassed."
[31] A Strong Downtown Bid to Tie Down Sports Arena," *Kansas City Times*, 9 Sept 1971, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[32] Robert Carroll, "Complex Web of Sites, Bids for Arena," *Kansas City Times,* 22 April 1972, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[33] John T. Dauner, "Royal Arena Site Backed," *Kansas City Times,* [3] January 1973, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[34] Dauner.
[35] William L. McCorkle, "Panel Recommends Firm for Design of Arena," *Kansas City Star,* 30 December 1972, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

the final piece of a $19.7 million financing package that also included $7.5 million in revenue bonds; $2 million of private funds pooled from an investor group; a $1.2 million capital contribution from the American Royal; $2.5 million gifted by the Kemper family; $400,000 earned interest from other money in the package; and $900,000 in federal aid for street improvements.[36] The local press heralded the decision as assuring the future of both the American Royal and an NHL expansion team. "The region will have an arena of the size needed to compete for the biggest conventions and the large national entertainment and sport events," the *Kansas City Star* boasted.[37]

Less than three months later the planning process was moving swiftly forward. *The Star* published a site plan and architect's model on February 4 that showed the exterior structure rising over the arena.[38] On a 4 April 1973 the newly formed American Royal Arena Corporation purchased 53 acres of land from the Kansas City Stock Yards Company for $3,650,000 and borrowed just shy of $1 million to purchase an additional 13.6 acres. The loan cleared the way for J.E. Dunn Construction Company to start preparing the site for construction.[39]

Ground was broken on 14 April 1973. When the *Kansas City Times* published a photo on 1 August 1974 showing the distinctive bowl and truss structures in place it was possible to envision the completed building.[40] The $23 million R. Crosby Kemper, Sr. Memorial Arena was dedicated on 18 October 1974, just eighteen months after construction began *(Figure 18).* Remarkably, the fast schedule was achieved despite a labor strike that interrupted construction for five months.

The dedication program noted that "Cooperation and civic pride within the Community have made the… Arena become a reality."[41] The Kansas City Scouts NHL team played their first home game at Kemper Arena just two weeks later, followed shortly by home games of the Kansas City Kings basketball team. College basketball tournaments were highly anticipated, as was the 1975 American Royal.

The "gargantuan" and "gleaming white arena" was an instant landmark in the old stockyards.[42] It had a footprint measuring 424 feet by 310 feet, and the top of the structure rose 95 feet above the surrounding parking lots. Inside the column-free space no seat was farther than 200 feet from the arena floor. Although it appeared smaller, Kemper Arena boasted twice as many permanent seats as Municipal Auditorium, the venue it replaced.[43] The official seating capacity was 17,000 for basketball and 16,000 for hockey. Events that required more floor space (track, rodeo, etc.) could still accommodate 15,000 patrons. This capacity placed it among the top venues in the country.

[36] McCorkle, "Panel Recommends…"
[37] "City Hall Makes the Big Decision to Build Sports Arena," *Kansas City Star,* 24 January 1973, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[38] "Arena Site Plan," *Kansas City Star,* 4 February 1973, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[39] "Arena Group Schedules Beginning of Construction," *Kansas City Star,* 4 April 1973, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[40] Joe Willington, Jr., "Arena Framework," *Kansas City Times,* 1 August 1974, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[41] Dedication Program, R.Crosby Kemper, Sr., Memorial Arena, 18 October 1974. Vertical File. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[42] David Zeeck, "Kemper Arena Dedicated," *Kansas City Star.* Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.
[43] Joe McGuff, "Rich Tradition of Auditorium Gives Way to new Arena," *Kansas City Star,* 8 November 1974, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

The inaugural event at Kemper Arena was an NHL game between the Kansas City Scouts and the Chicago Blackhawks on 2 November 1974 attended by 15,000 fans.[44] It was just the first of a wide array of events that Kemper Arena hosted over the coming decades. In addition to professional hockey and basketball teams, three travelling circuses, several ice shows, and the NCAA Big Eight basketball tournament were slated to use the facility. The Big Eight Conference was particularly excited about moving their tournament from Municipal Auditorium to Kemper Arena. The increased seating capacity alone greatly improved public access to the tournament, and Assistant Commissioner Jack McClelland was pleased with how the building separated back-of-house activities from the event-attending public, resulting in a better organized, less chaotic event. Before long, Kemper was hosting close to 200 events per year. Indoor soccer, arena football and roller derby teams played games there. Kemper hosted national championships for gymnastics and figure skating. It was the site of the 1976 Republican National Convention that nominated Gerald Ford for president and Kansan Bob Dole as his running mate. Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, the Rolling Stones, and Michael Jackson were among the plethora of musicians whose concerts filled the venue to capacity. Through 1998 the National FFA Organization (FFA) held their national convention at Kemper, bringing as many as 37,000 visitors to town and pumping upwards of $14 million into the local economy.[45] And, there were annual rodeos and horse and livestock shows as part of the American Royal. By 2005, it was estimated that 30 million spectators had attend events in the building.[46]

In the early 1990s, city officials feared that the NCAA would pull its prestigious Big 12 basketball tournament from Kansas City after the organization expressed reservations about the limited capacity of Kemper Arena. The FFA, who had been meeting in Kansas City since the 1920s, began voicing similar concerns.[47] In an effort to stave off a potentially huge economic loss, the city added 2,000 seats to the arena. Three-quarters of these were built above center court; the remaining 450 seats were placed in the corners of the floor. To house the seats above the bowl HNTB Corporation designed a curved extension on the east exterior side of the arena that also provided a new glass-front atrium and parking level entrance. The center truss of the exoskeleton was reconfigured to accommodate the change, its legs moved out from the building's east and west walls and the top chord rose higher over the edge of the roof. On the roof it connected back to the original truss. This provided for the additional seating on the east side of the bowl and made room for a similar, future expansion the west side of the arena.[48]

The improvements to Kemper appeased the NCAA for another decade. The Big 12 Men's Basketball tournament was played at Kemper through 2002 and again in 2005. The additional seating, however, was not enough to keep the FFA in Kansas City. After eighty years of Kansas City conventions, the organization chose not to return after 1998. This was a blow to community psyche; the invasion of FFA blue jackets every fall was part of the local identity.

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[44] William D. Tammeus, "Big-Time Hockey Scores First Goal for Arena," *Kansas City Star,* 3 November 1974, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

[45] Associated Press, "Kansas City may lose FFA convention," 22 February 1996, http://www.postbulletin.com/kansas-city-may-lose-ffa-convention/article_45696c55-8e5d-5607-bf48-ff6e18d30822.html, accessed 15July 2015.

[46] Randy Covitz, "A Storied History Amid Hoopla," *Kansas City Star,* 13 March 2005. Vertical File, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, A8. National FFA Organization, "A Brief History of the National FFA Organization, https://www.ffa.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/about_ffahistory.pdf, (accessed 15 July 2015).

[47] John Dvorak, "With No Bolts, New Arena Roof May Sport a Different Slant," *Kansas City Times,* 24 August 1979. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

[48] While the structural change anticipated expansion on the west side of the arena bowl this change was never made. Matt Campbell, "Panel Supports $20 Million for Arena Renovation," *Kansas City Star,* 28 December 1995, A1:5.

Even before the improvements were completed in the spring of 1997, there were rumblings in the civic community to replace Kemper Arena. Since 1971 Kansas Citians had debated the merits of a downtown arena. Many considered the West Bottoms to be an awkward location and that the venue itself was outdated, despite the recent improvements. While Kemper Arena was built with twenty-five private suites (a novelty in 1974) and all of these were leased, these spaces were woefully inadequate when compared to the luxury boxes appearing in new arenas around the country.[49] Luxury boxes in newer arenas brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars more than standard seating, which enabled professional sports team owners (especially basketball) to hire star players who increased the likelihood of a championship for the home team. While it remained fully functional as a multipurpose venue, Kemper Arena could never compete with the economics of newer arenas. Like many of its peers nationwide, it was deemed economically obsolete.

The Sprint Center opened in 2007, just inside the highway loop in the southeast corner of downtown Kansas City. The following spring the NCAA Big 12 Men's Basketball Tournament returned to Kansas City to play at the new venue. Despite promises to continue using Kemper for "dirt events" (rodeos, circus, monster trucks, etc.) the older arena sits mostly dark. In 2015 the American Royal moved their annual barbeque contest from Kemper to Arrowhead Stadium, and in 2016 they announced that the event would permanently move to Wyandotte County, Kansas. It remains unclear if the organization will continue to use Kemper Arena for its fall Livestock and Horse Show.

CONCLUSION

For over three decades, Kemper Arena was the primary multipurpose enclosed arena serving Kansas City and the surrounding region. It met the broad range of entertainment needs for which it was designed and hosted myriad professional and amateur athletic events, family entertainment performances, popular music concerts, political conventions, livestock shows, and more. In the 1990s, a wave of new arenas across the country replaced those built in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Improvements to Kemper Arena in 1996 attempted to extend its viable life, although they could not completely forestall the economic obsolescence of the venue in an era when owners relied on revenues from premium seating to supplant standard income from ticket sales. Yet, the experience of attending an event at Kemper Arena is unchanged from 1974. It remains fully functional for the use it was designed to perform. The loss of contemporary venues across the country enhances the significance of Kemper Arena as an example of the mid-twentieth century multipurpose arena property type.

[49] Randy Covitz, "Outclassed," *Kansas City Star,* 17 March 1996, C2:1.

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ADDITIONAL LATITUDE/ LONGITUDE COORDINATES

	Latitude:	Longitude:
5	39.092048	-94.602769
6	39.091140	-94.602799
7	39.090525	-94.603484
8	39.090517	-94.603719
9	39.090711	-94.604045
10	39.090758	-94.605796
11	39.090359	-94.605707
12	39.090360	-94.605948
13	39.090765	-94.605947
14	39.090762	-94.607107
15	39.092497	-94.607103
16	39.09284	-94.606837
17	9.093122	-94.606482

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated resource is defined by the ring road that encircles and defines Kemper Arena and its historically associated open space.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the eligible resource and the open land adjacent and historically associated with it.

Figure 1: Site Map. *Source: ArcGIS 2013.*

1: 39.093433
-94.604822
2: 39.093360
-94.603879
3: 39.092908
-94.603611
4: 39.092394
-94.603037
5: 39.092048
-94.602769
6: 39.091140
-94.602799
7: 39.090525
-94.603484
8: 39.090517
-94.603719
9: 39.090711
-94.604045
10: 39.090758
-94.605796
11: 39.090359
-94.605797
12: 39.090360
-94.605948
13: 39.090765
-94.605947
14: 39.090762
-94.607107
15: 39.092497
-94.607103
16: 39.09284
-94.606837
17: 39.093122
-94.606482

Figure 2: Contextual Map. *Source: ArcGIS 2013.*

Figure 3: Photo Map – Exterior

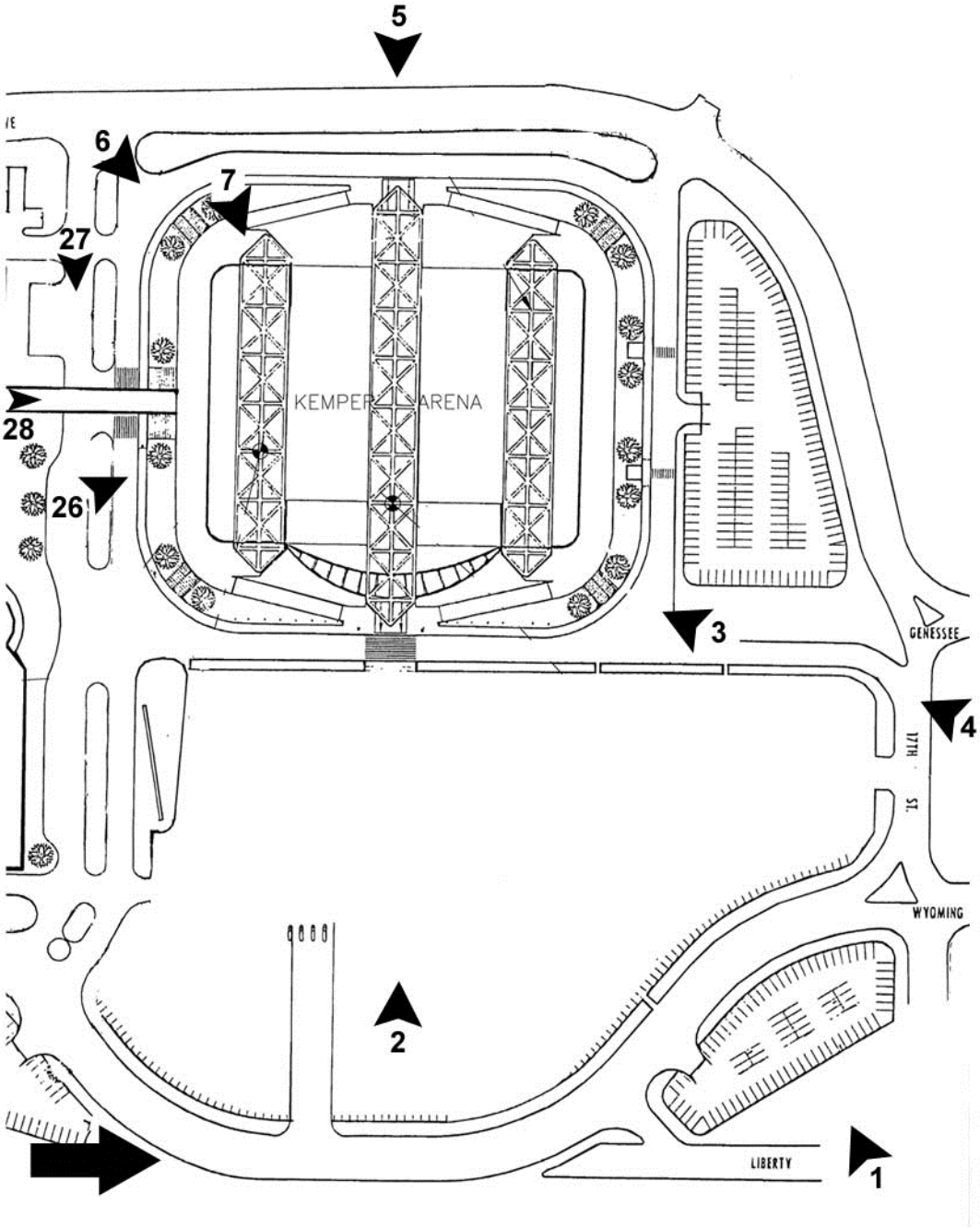

Figure 4: Photo Map and Current Plan – Concourse Level

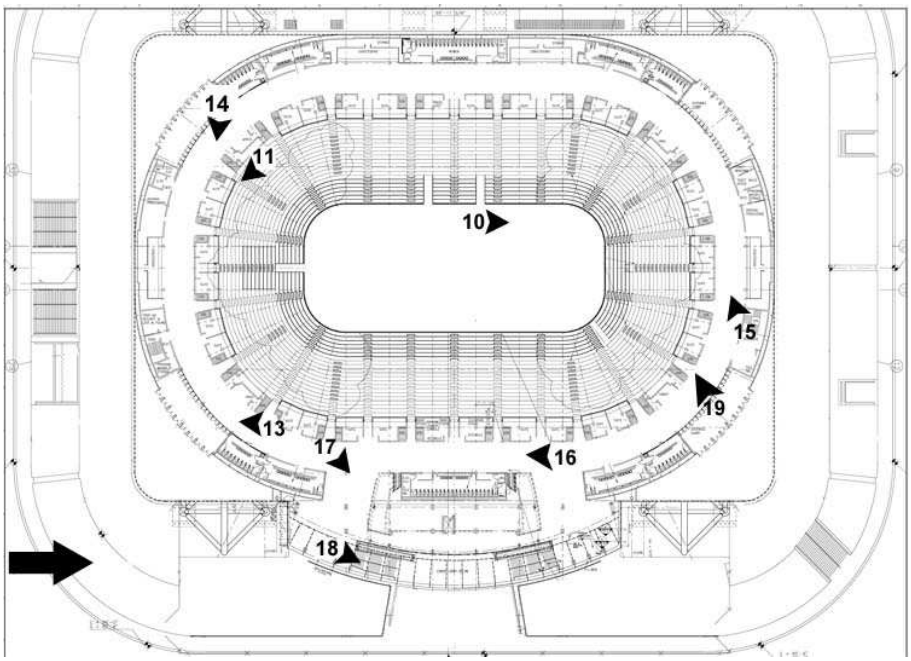

Figure 5: Photo Map and Current Plan – Club level

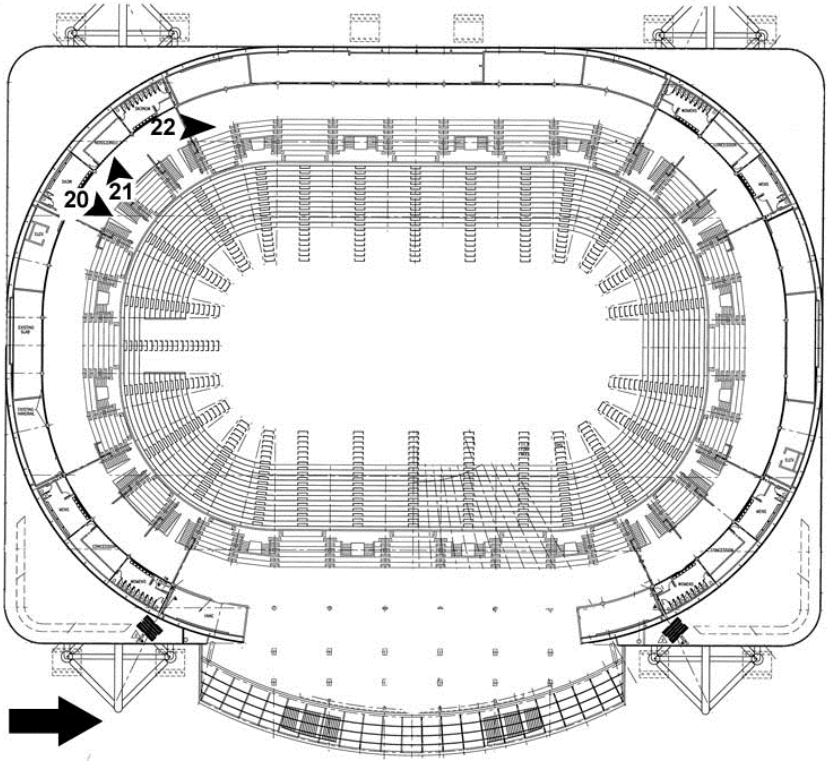

Figure 6: Photo Map and Current Plan – Upper Seating Deck

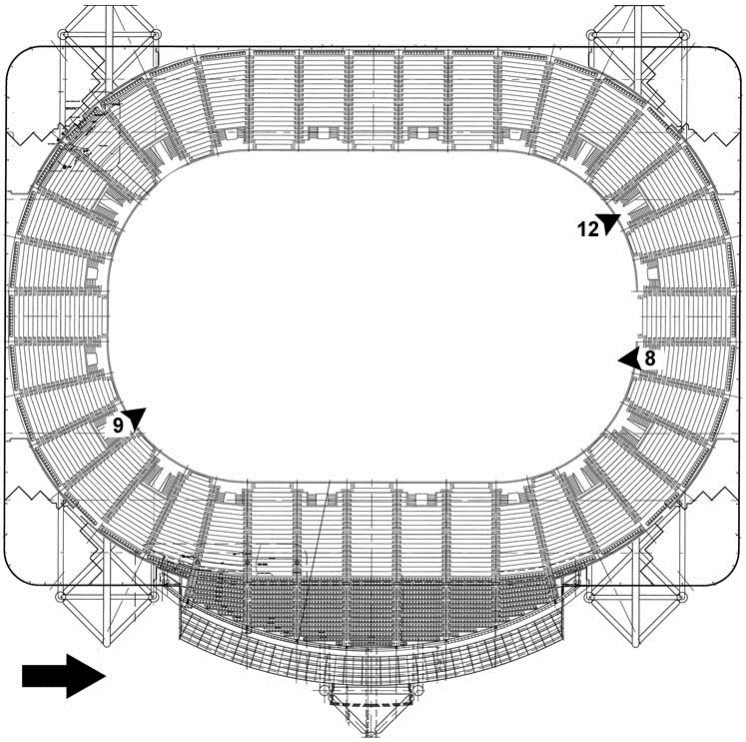

Figure 7: Photo map and Current Plan – Lower Level

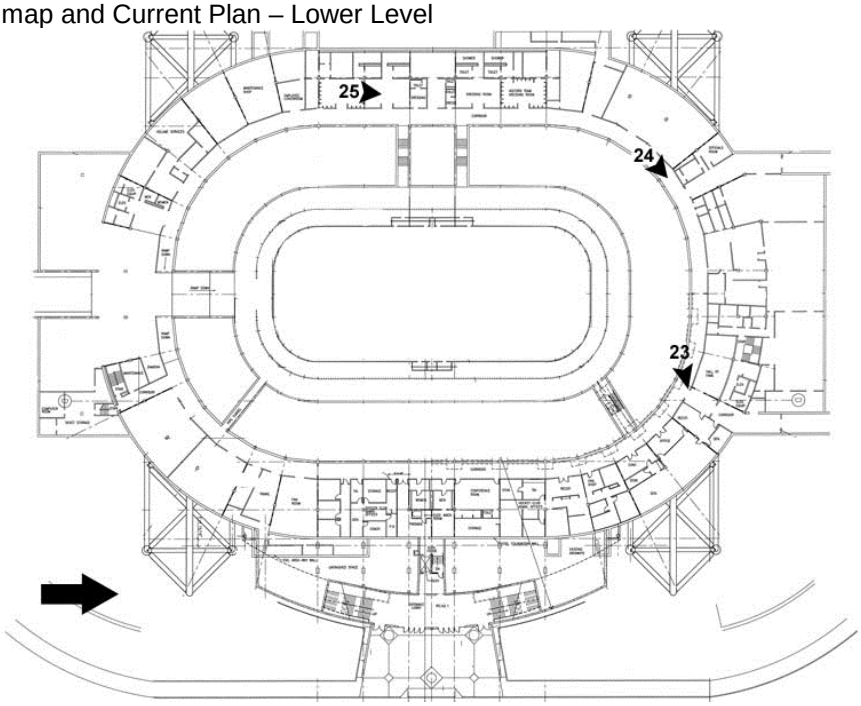

Figure 8: Partial Site Plan for Kemper Arena, Sheet A-1.3 of Architectural Plans by C.F. Murphy Associates, 27 March 1974.

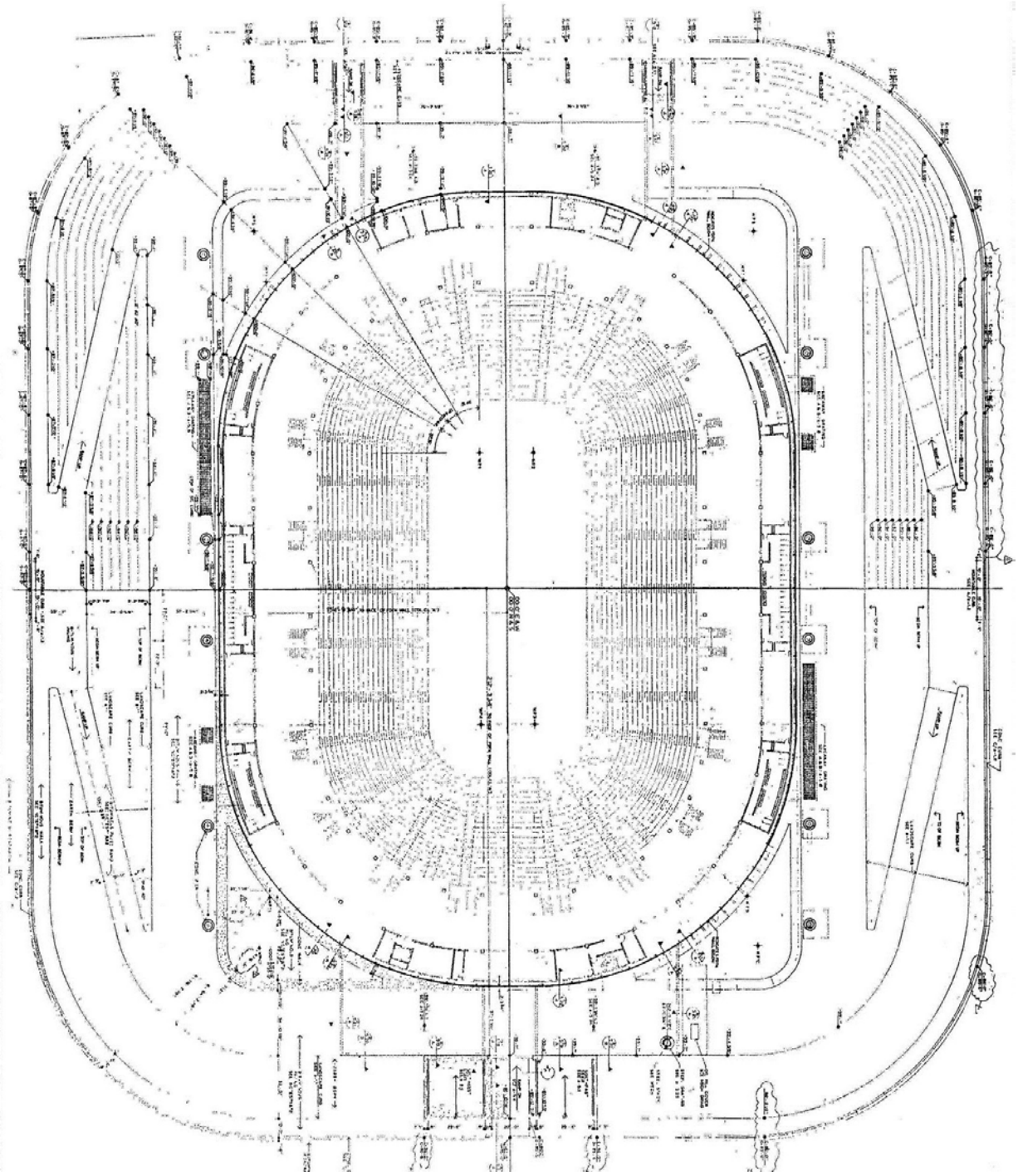

Figure 9: Concourse Level Plan, South Section, Sheet A-2.4, Architectural Plans for R. Crosby Kemper Sr. American Royal Arena, C.F. Murphy Associates, 23 July 1973.

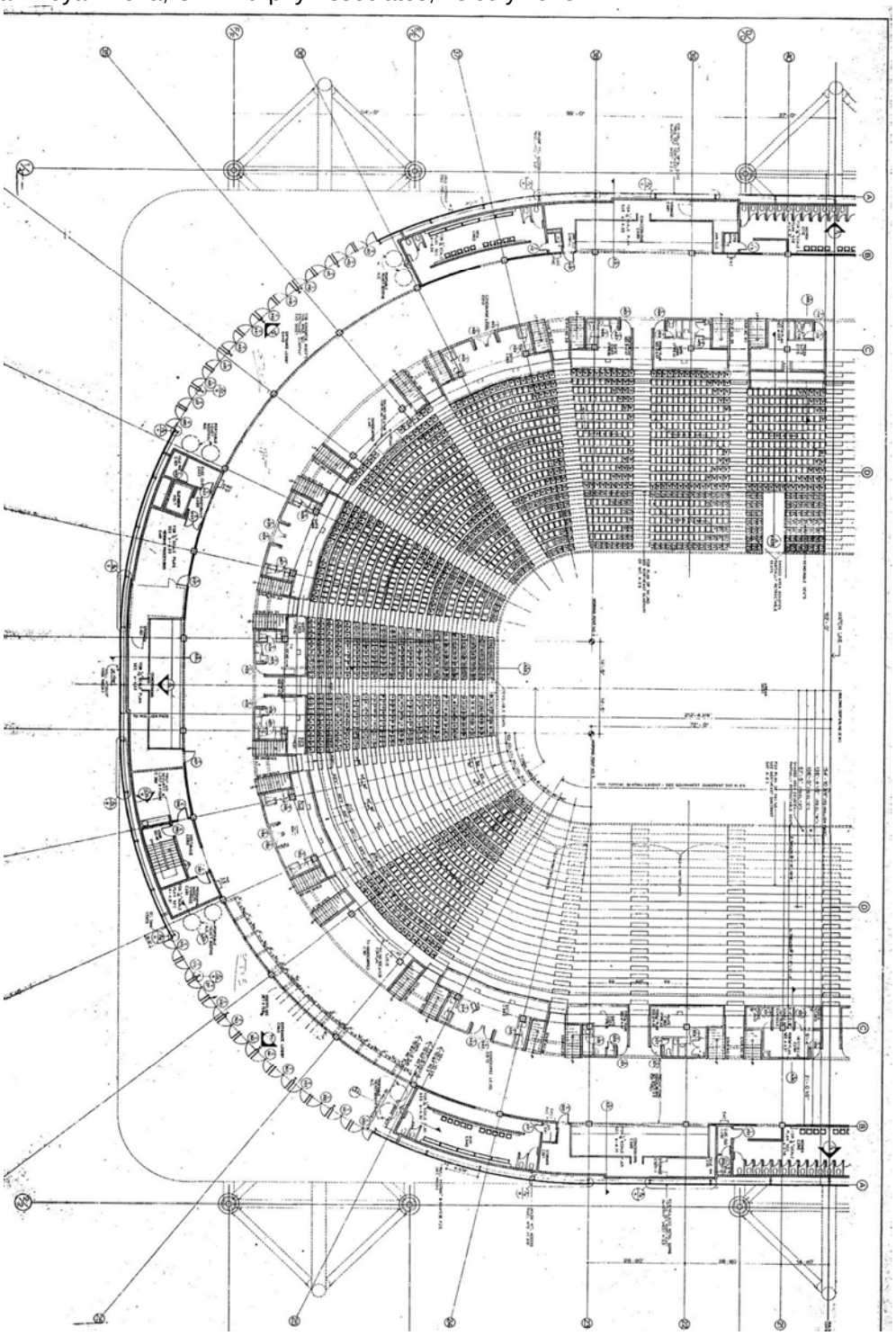

Figure 10: Upper Level Plan, South Section, Sheet A-2.6, Architectural Plans for R. Crosby Kemper Sr. American Royal Arena, C.F. Murphy Associates, [1973].

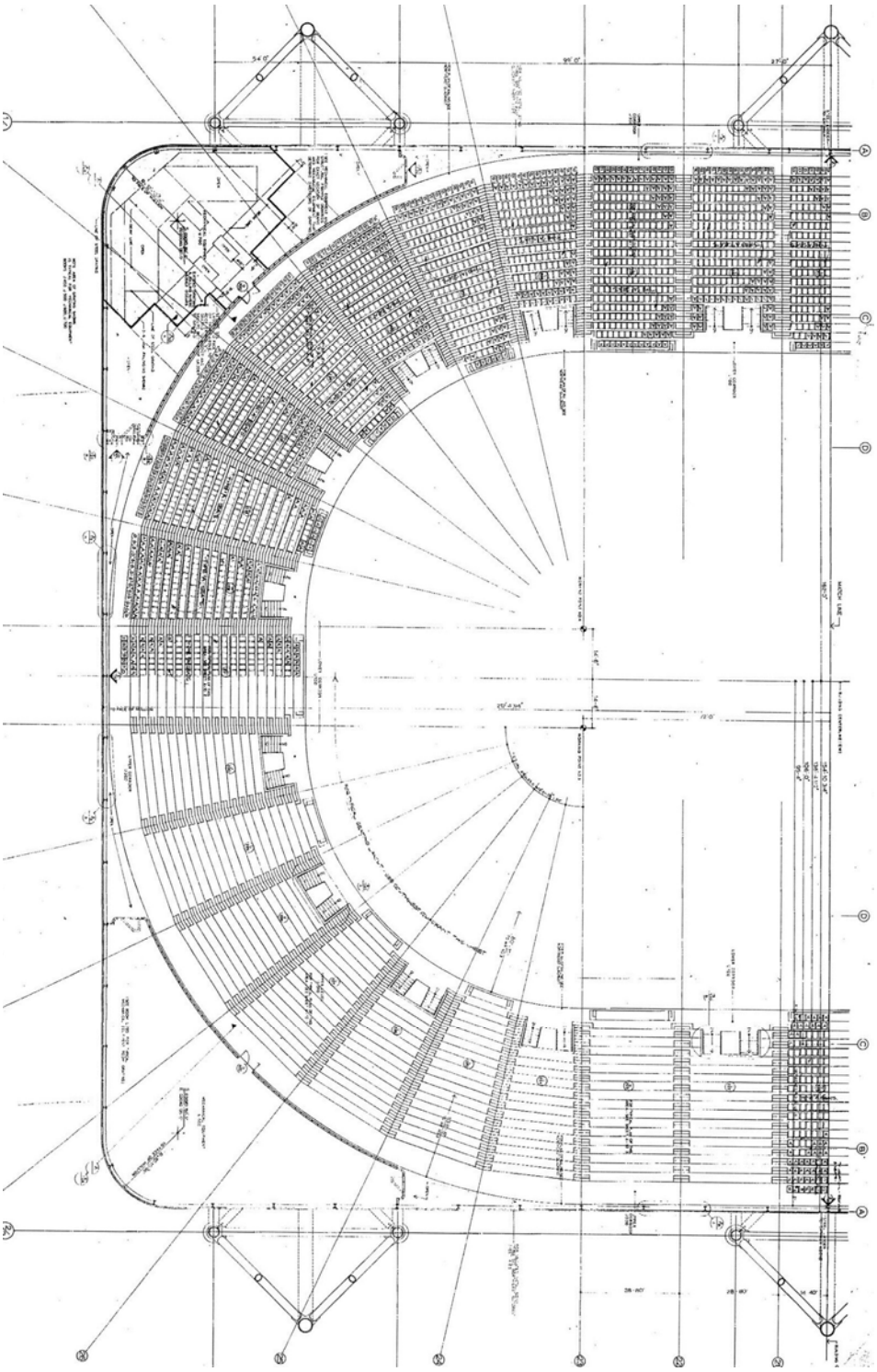

Figure 11: North Elevation and Tranverse Section of Kemper Arena, Sheet A-3.1 of Architectural Plans by C.F. Murphy Associates, 27 March 1974.

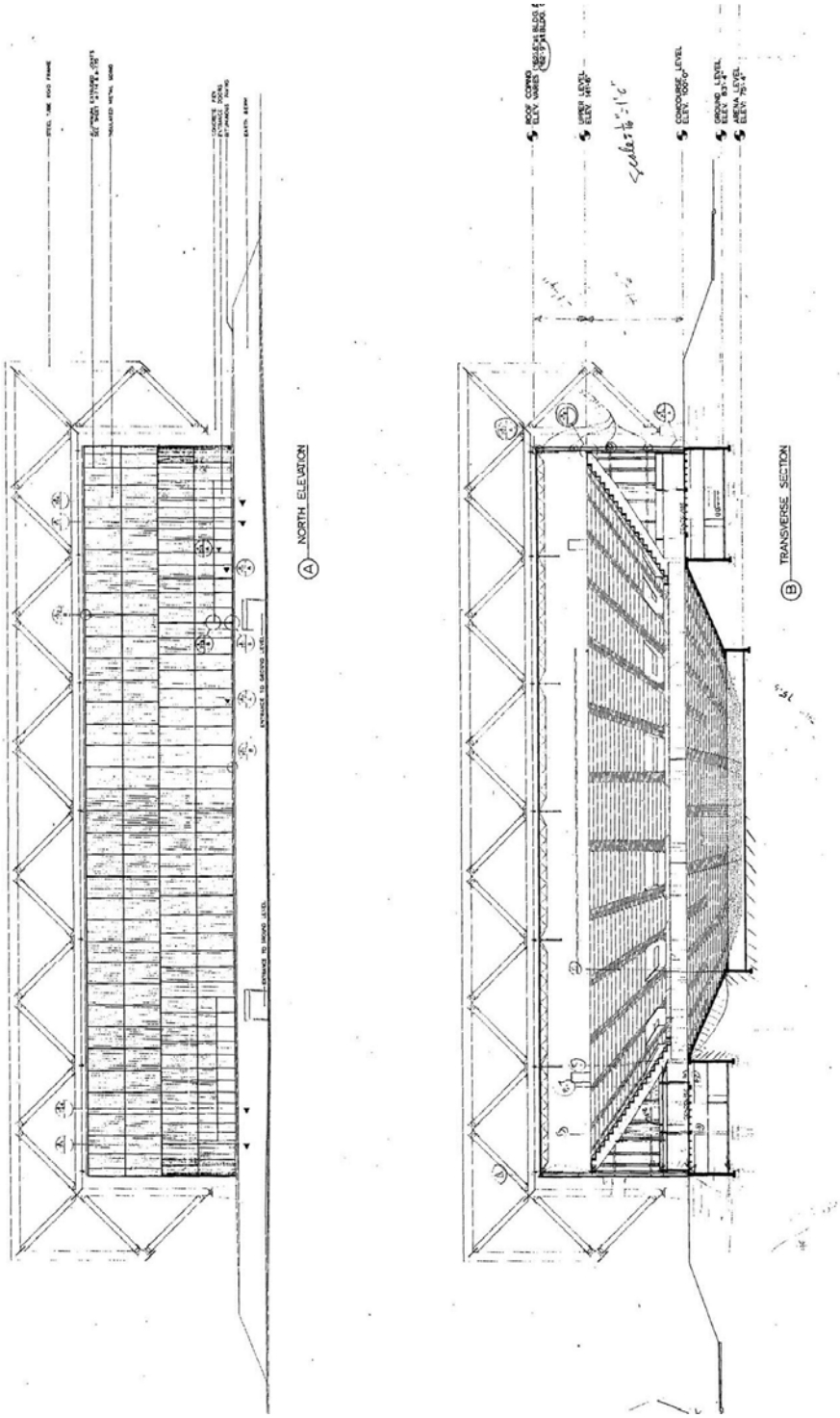

Figure 12: Current Plan, Lower Level. Sheet A 1.1, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.

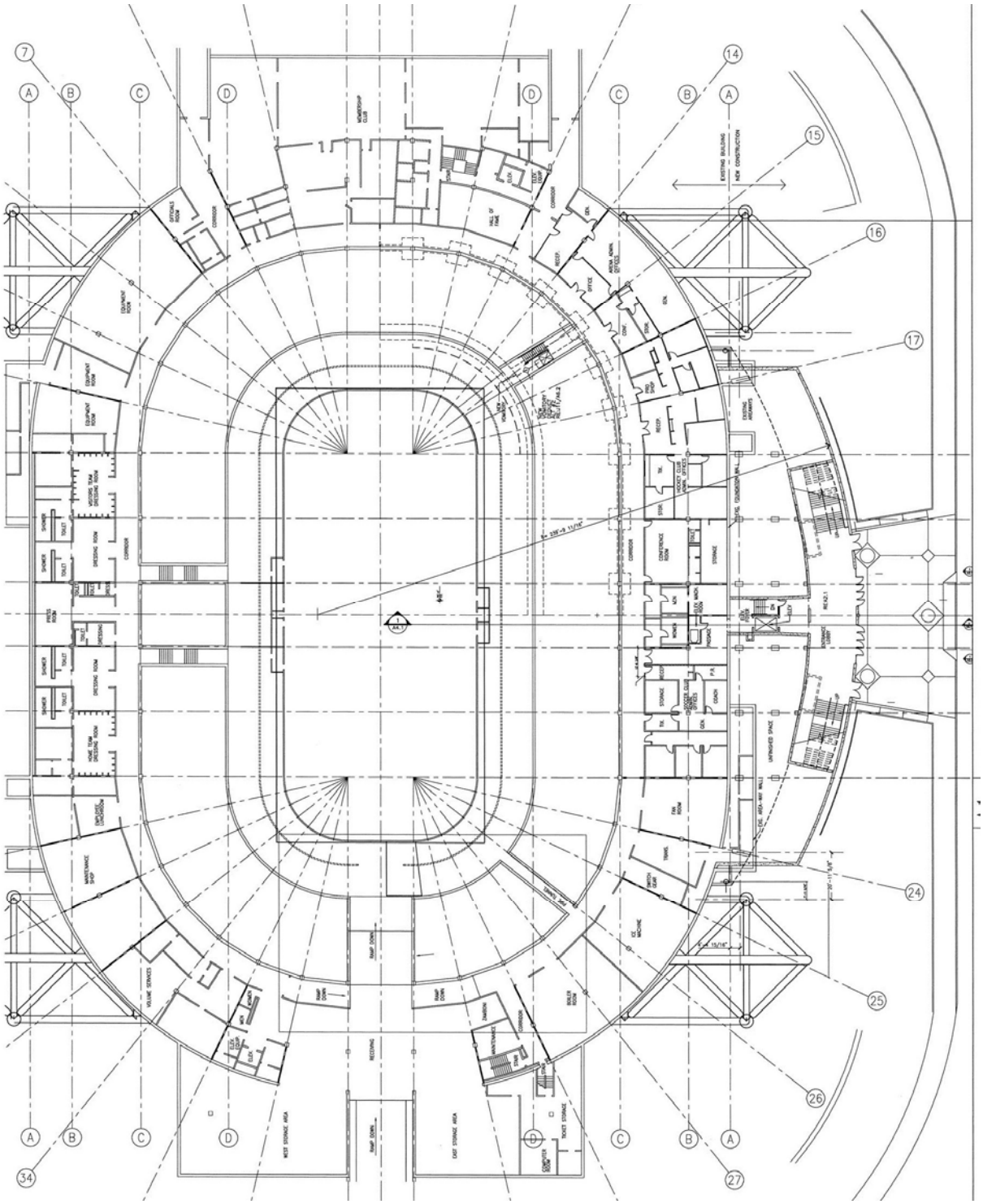

Figure 13: Current Plan, Club Level. Sheet A 1.3, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.

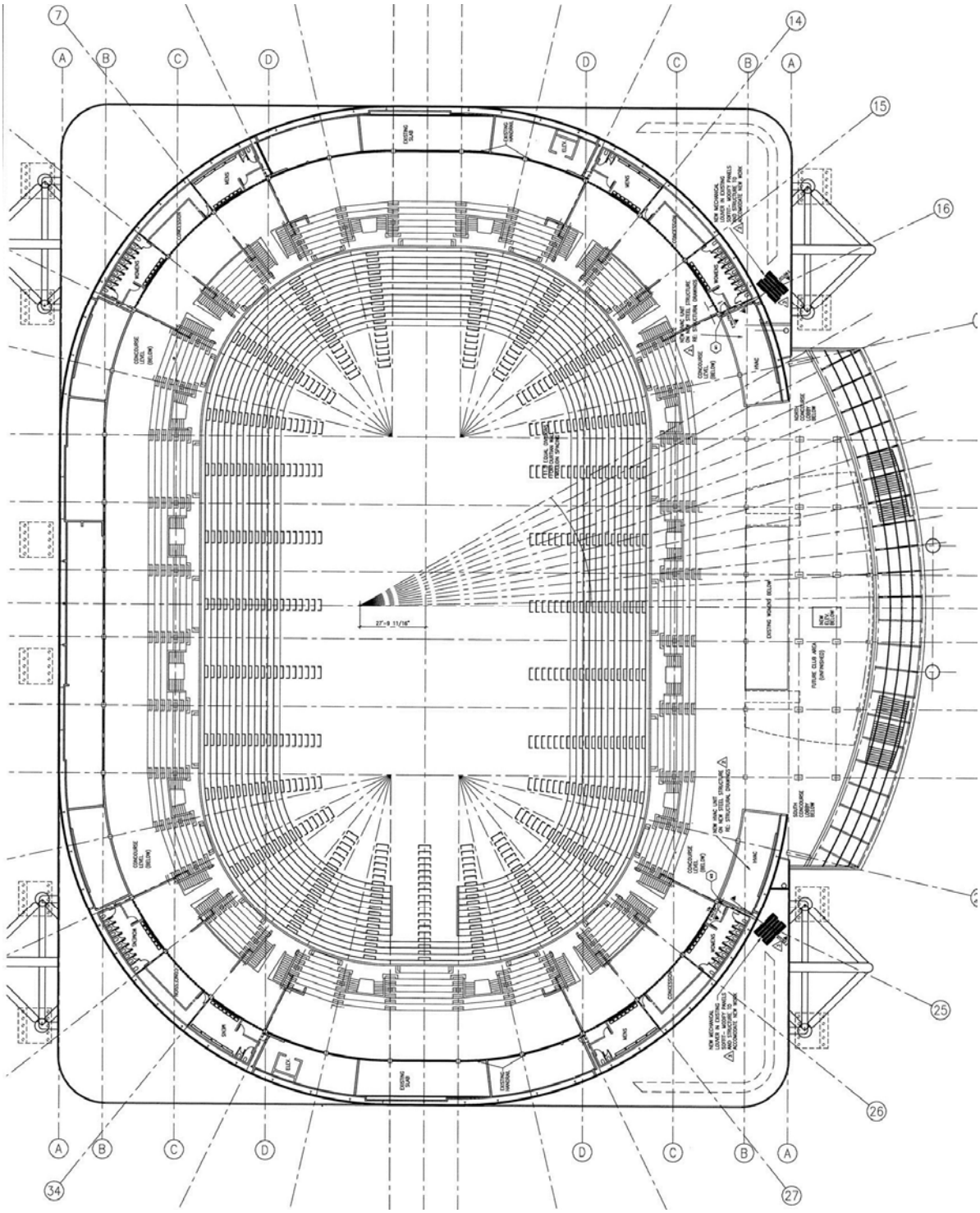

Figure 14: Current Plan, Upper Seating Deck. Sheet A 1.4, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.

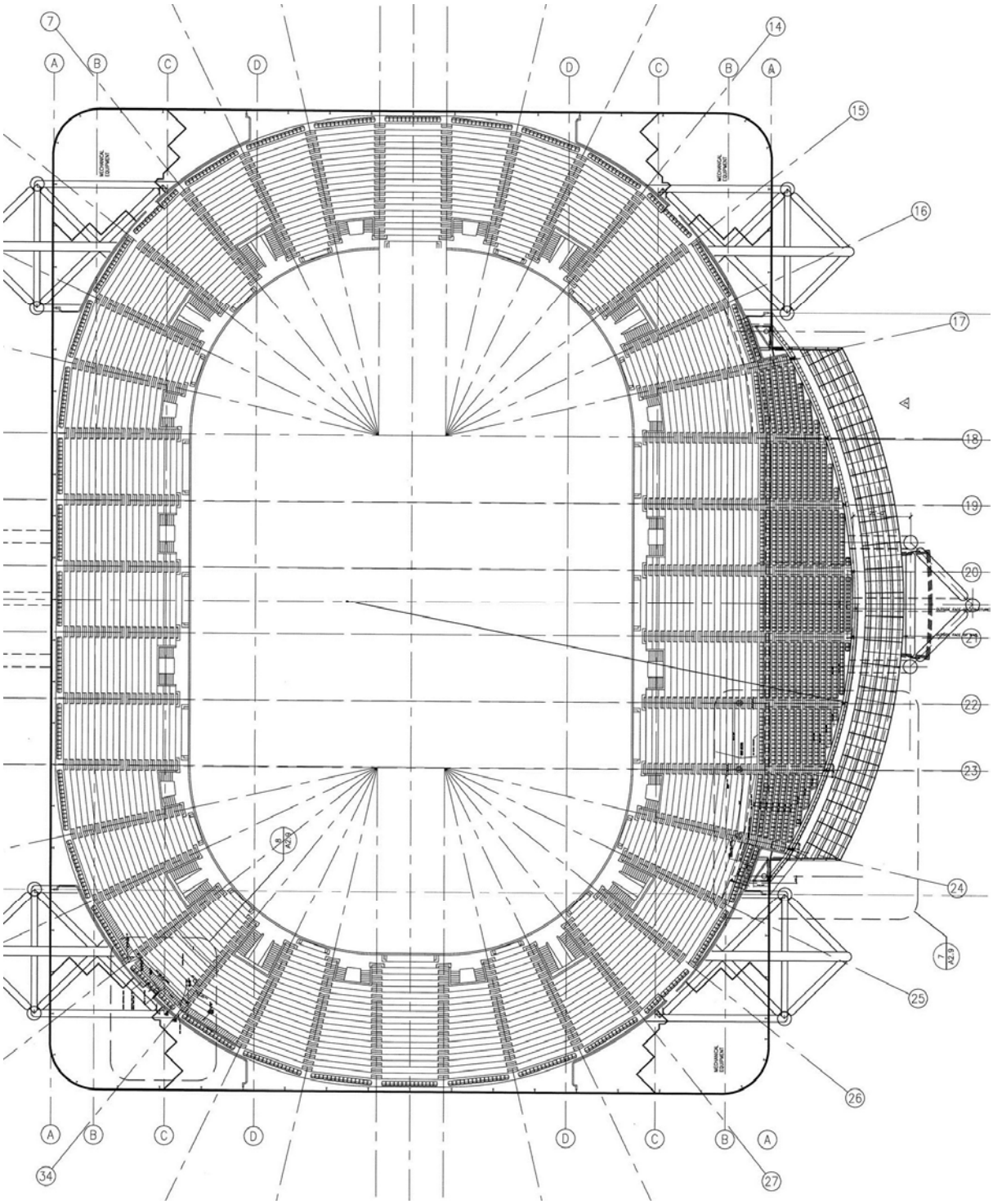

Figure 15: Typical Elevations, Sheet A 3.2, Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.

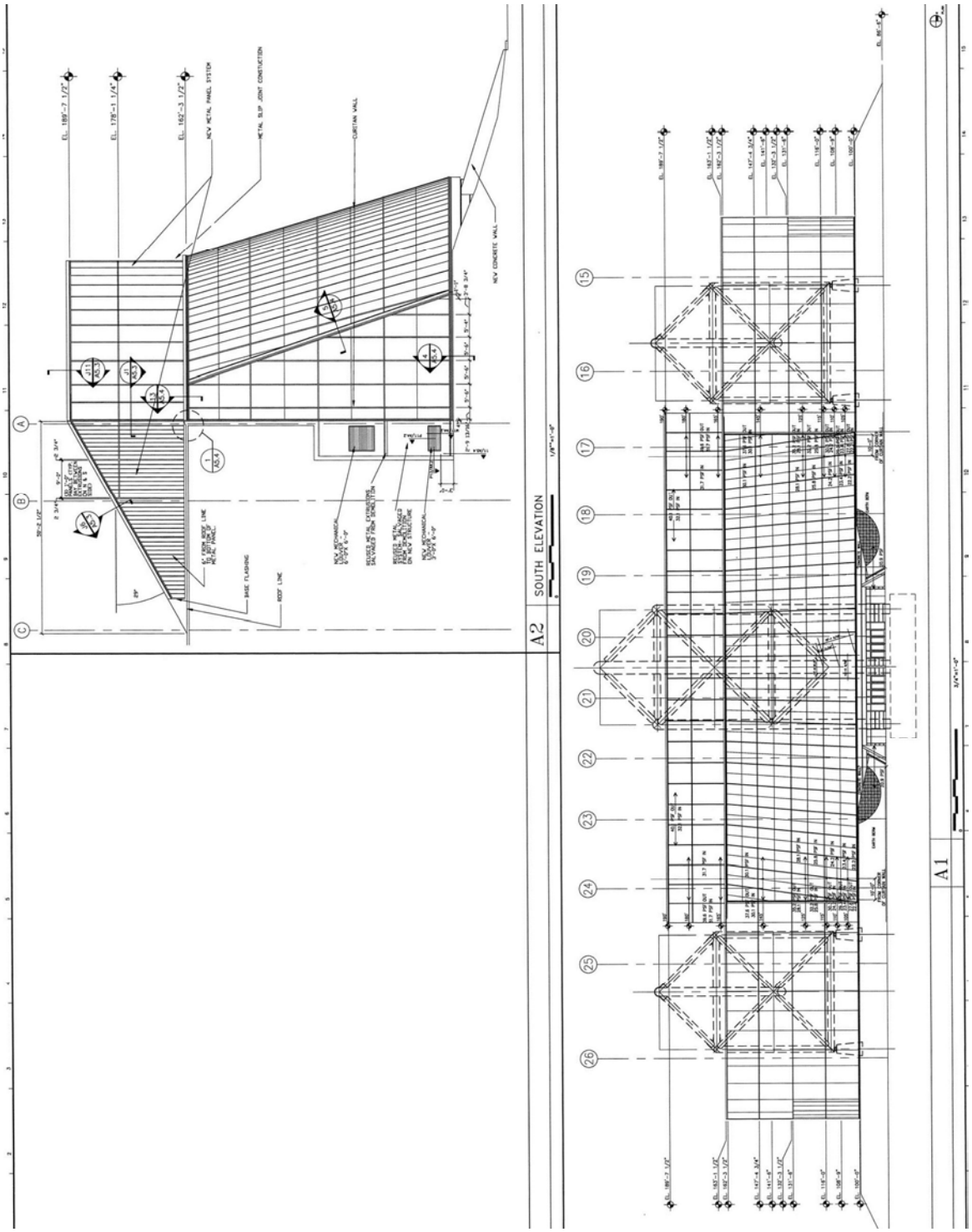

Figure 16: Section at Mid Point, Sheet A 4.1,Architectural Plans for Kemper Arena Expansion, HNTB Corporation, 22 July 1996.

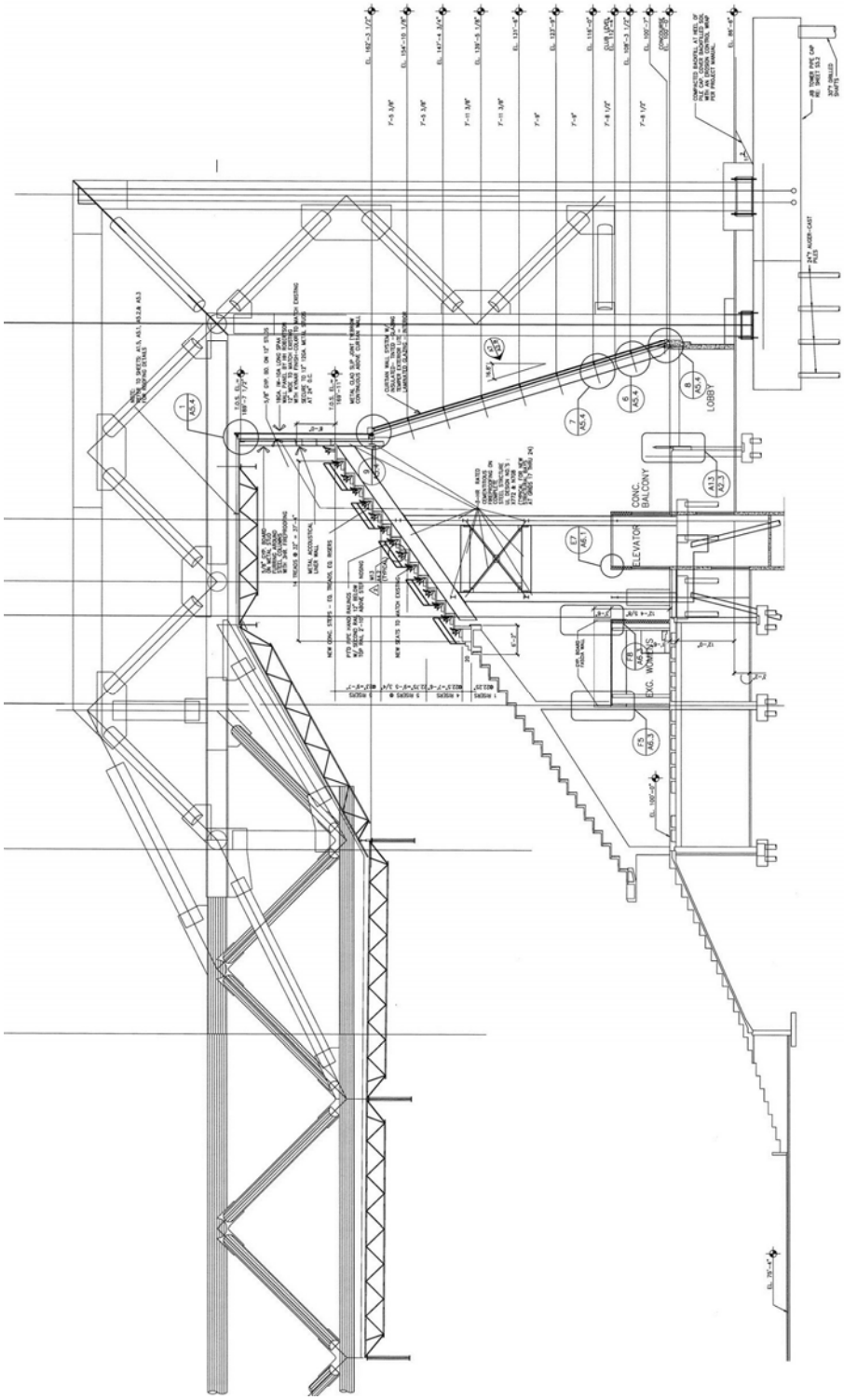

Figure 17: Historic Site Plan. (*Source: "R. Crosby Kemper, Jr. (sic) Memorial Arena Kansas City, Missouri," Architectural Record, March 1976, 109*).

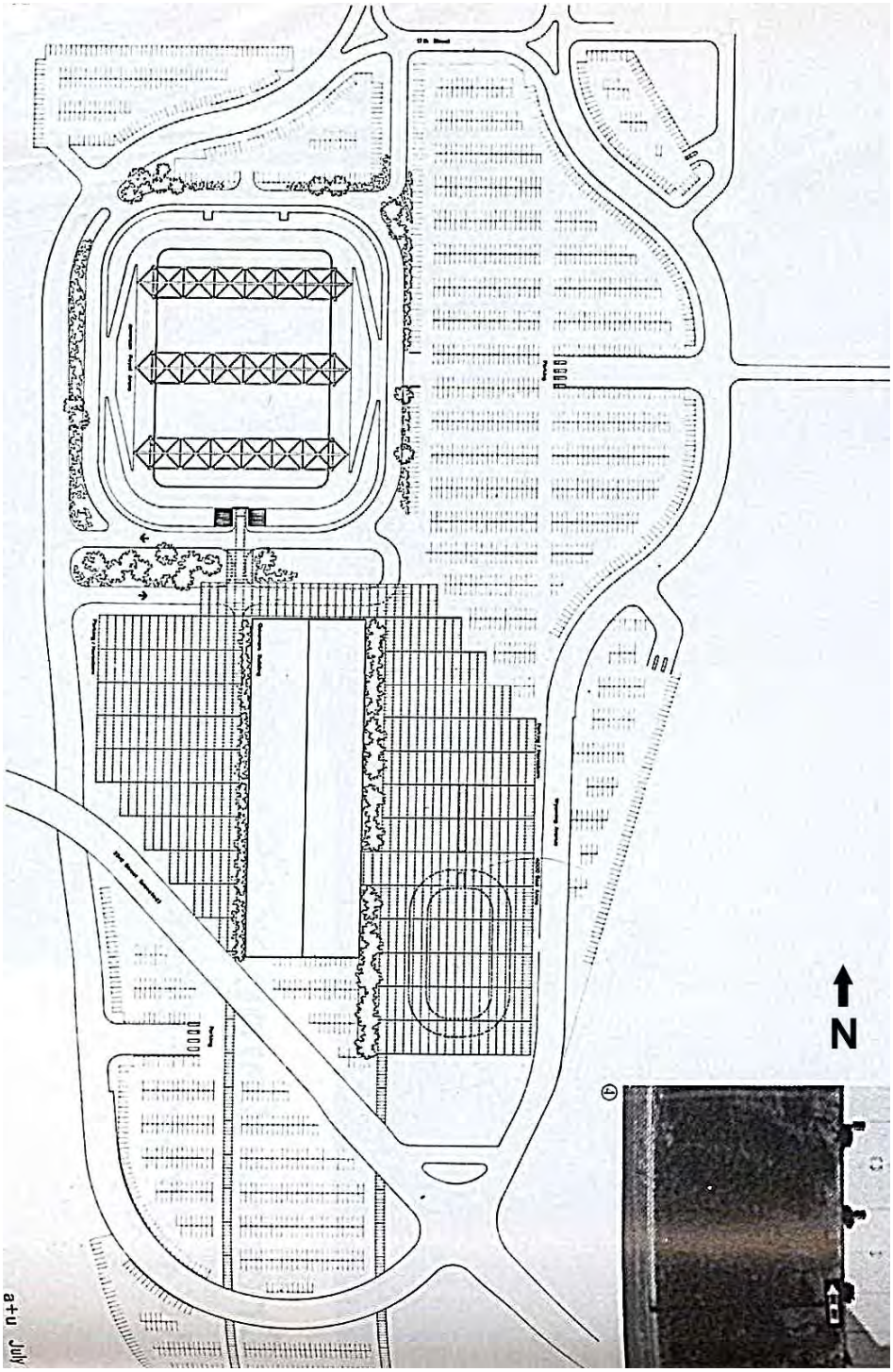

Figure 18: Kemper Arena, Late Summer or Fall 1974, View to Northwest. (*Source:* Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 30 October 2013)

Figure 19: Kemper Arena Following Roof Collapse, 13 June 1979 (*Source:* Vertical File, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 30 October 2013)

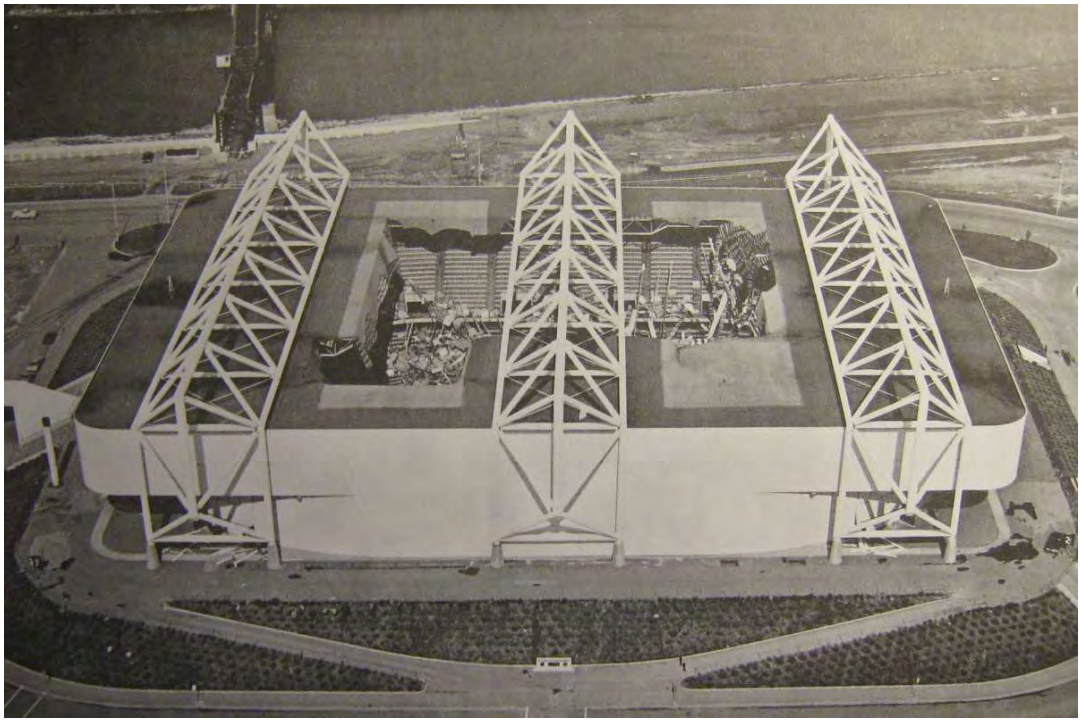

Figure 20: Municipal Auditorium, Kansas City, Missouri, 1950. (Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 1 April 2015).

Figure 21: Municipal Stadium, Kansas City, Missouri, 1955. (Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 1 April 2015).

Figure 22: Truman Sports Complex, date unknown. (Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 31 March 2015).

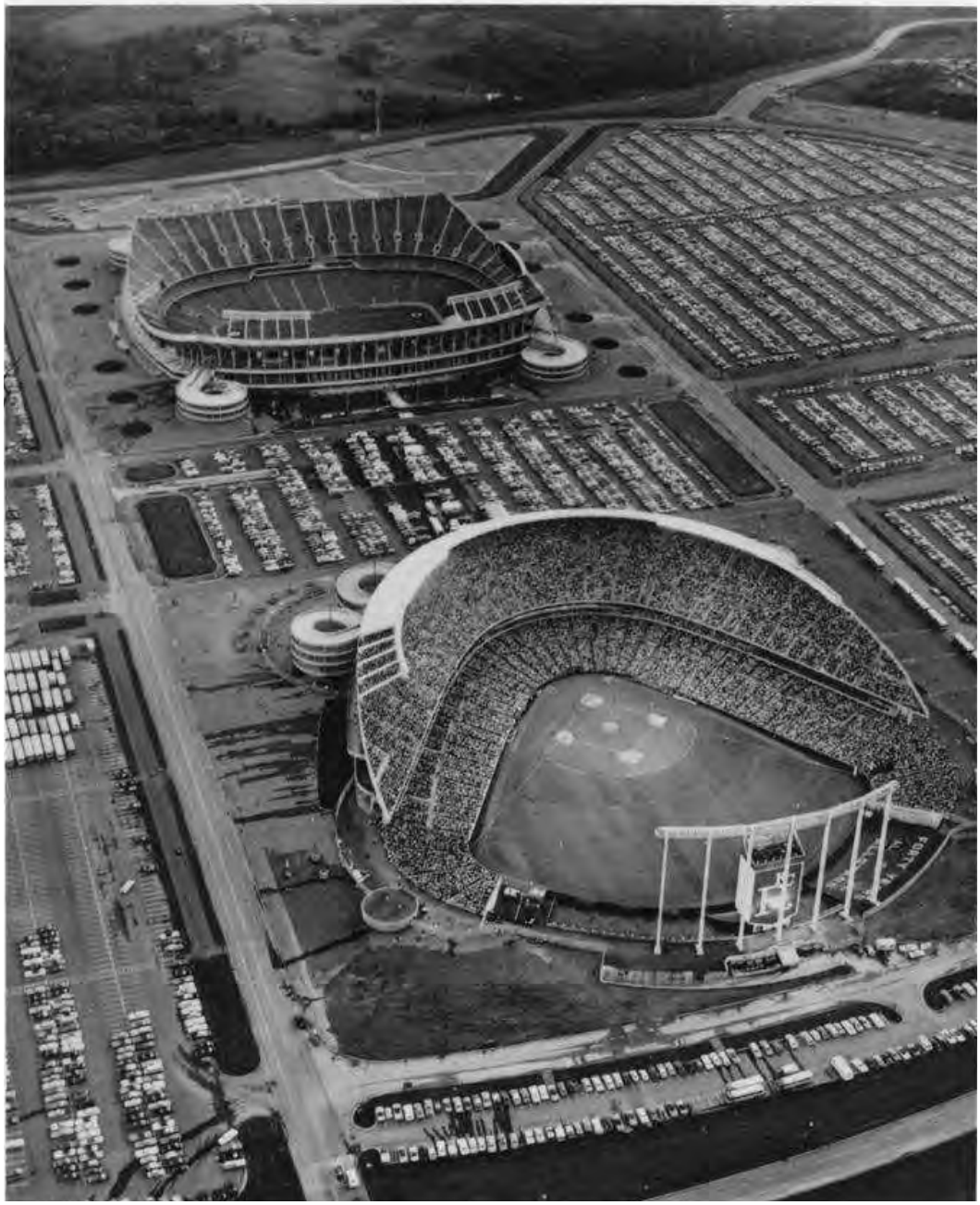

Figure 23: Bartle Hall Convention Center, Kansas City, c. mid-1970s (Source: Robert Askren Photograph Collection, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, accessed online 30 October 2013).

Figure 24: List of Concerts Held at Kemper Arena, 1975 - 2011 (Source: Concert Database, http://www.liquisearch.com/kemper_arena/concerts, accessed online 24 February 2016).

Kemper Arena - Concerts

Concerts

- Jethro Tull — January 28, 1975 and April 23, 1979, with UK
- John Denver — May 1, 1975, April 5, 1980, June 20, 1982 and December 13, 1989
- ZZ Top — October 31, 1975, with Rory Gallagher, August 13, 1981, with Loverboy, June 10, 1983, with Quiet Riot, February 16–17, 1986, with Jimmy Barnes, December 16, 1990, with The Jeff Healey Band and May 8, 1994, with Cry of Love
- The Who — December 1, 1975, with Toots and the Maytals and April 26, 1980, with The Pretenders
- Bachman–Turner Overdrive — February 26, 1976, with The Electric Light Orchestra
- Olivia Newton-John — March 3, 1976 and September 24, 1982, with The Tom Scott Quartet
- Elvis Presley & The TCB Band — April 21, 1976 and June 18, 1977
- Aerosmith — April 28, 1976, with Angel and Slade, June 28, 1978, with The Climax Blues Band, February 5, 1983 and February 19, 1988
- Wings — May 29, 1976
- The Eagles — November 24, 1976, June 23, 1980, with Christopher Cross and July 11, 2002
- Blue Öyster Cult — December 12, 1976, with Bob Seger and Dirty Tricks and October 31, 1981, with Foghat and Whitford/St. Holmes
- KISS — February 9, with Head East and November 27, with Detective, 1977 and July 3, 1996, with Alice in Chains
- Fleetwood Mac — April 1, with Rocky Burnette and September 16, 1977, August 24, 1980, September 30, 1987, with The Cruzados and August 13, 2003
- Pink Floyd — June 21, 1977
- Bad Company — July 15, 1977 and May 26, 1979
- Alice Cooper — July 30, 1977, with The Climax Blues Band and February 19, 1979, with The Babys
- Kansas — November 25, 1977, with Crawler, July 29, 1979, with Night, October 17, 1980 and July 29, 1982
- Rod Stewart — November 29, 1977, January 30, 1982, October 26, 1991, March 11, 2004 and April 13, 2007
- Waylon Jennings — December 4, 1977, with Jessi Colter
- Neil Diamond — December 12, 1977
- Ted Nugent — January 15 and December 17, 1978 and June 18, 1980, with Scorpions and Def Leppard
- Willie Nelson — January 19, 1978, September 27, 1980, September 19, 1983, November 16, 1986 and November 5, 2000
- Emerson, Lake & Palmer — February 28, 1978
- Parliament-Funkadelic — April 8, 1978
- REO Speedwagon — May 12–13, 1978, with Rainbow and No Dice and April 27, 1985
- Boz Scaggs — June 23, 1978, with The Little River Band
- The Electric Light Orchestra — July 2, 1978, with Trixter and October 28, 1981, with Hall & Oates
- Yes — September 27, 1978, June 6, 1979 and March 12, 1984
- Genesis — October 17, 1978, January 29, 1984 (Concert was interrupted by power outage caused by high winds outside the building) and January 21–22, 1987
- Billy Joel — October 18, 1978, April 17, 1984, February 13, 1987, April 2, 1994 and December 7, 1999

- Bob Dylan — November 3, 1978
- Styx — November 21, 1978, with The Babys, March 16–17, 1981, May 11, 1983, June 21, 2003, with Journey and REO Speedwagon and October 22, 2005, with REO Speedwagon
- The Moody Blues — December 4, 1978, with Jimmie Spheeris and October 24, 1981
- Queen — December 8, 1978, September 12, 1980, with Dakota and August 28, 1982, with Billy Squier
- Johnny Cash — December 12, 1978
- Diana Ross — May 12, 1979
- The Village People — May 28, 1979
- Rush — February 27, 1980, with Roadmaster, April 23–24, 1981, October 15–16, 1982, with Rory Gallagher, June 16, 1984, with Gary Moore, April 29, 1986, with Blue Öyster Cult, April 7, 1988, with The Rainmakers, March 3, 1990, with Mr. Big, May 23, 1992, with Primus and April 5, 1994
- Foghat — July 29, 1980
- Van Halen — August 22, 1980, with The Katz, October 17, 1981, with G-Force, August 7, 1982, with After the Fire, June 20–21, 1984, with The Velcros, May 31, 1986, with Bachman–Turner Overdrive and July 26, 2004, with Shinedown
- Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band — October 23, 1980, May 19, 1983 and March 21, 1996
- The Cars — October 8, 1980, with The Motels
- Elton John — October 10, 1980, September 20, 1984, June 4, 1999, April 12, 2001, with Billy Joel and April 28, 2005
- Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band — February 5, 1981, November 19, 1984, April 9, 2000 and September 24, 2002
- The Beach Boys — February 19, 1981, with Randy Meisner & The Silverados
- Joe Walsh — June 6, 1981
- The Jacksons — September 8, 1981
- Journey — September 18–19, 1981, with Point Blank and July 12–13, 1983, with Bryan Adams
- Barry Manilow — September 29, 1981 and October 9, 1984
- The Rolling Stones — December 14–15, 1981, with George Thorogood & The Destroyers and The J. Geils Band and April 6, 1999, with Jonny Lang
- The Police — March 25, 1982, with Joan Jett and the Blackhearts and November 24, 1983
- Scorpions — July 10, 1982, with Iron Maiden and Girlschool
- Crosby, Stills & Nash — August 25, 1982 and January 26, 2000, with Neil Young
- Peter Gabriel — December 4, 1982
- Neil Young — July 2, 1983, with The Fabulous Pinks and October 16, 1986
- Stevie Nicks — July 14, 1983, with Joe Walsh
- Jackson Browne — August 24, 1983
- AC/DC — October 26, 1983, with Fastway, October 5, 1985, with Yngwie Malmsteen, August 3, 1986, with Queensrÿche, July 30, 1988, with White Lion, December 7, 1990, with Love/Hate, April 2, 1996, with The Poor and September 3, 2000, with Slash's Snakepit
- Dan Fogelberg — December 18, 1983
- Lionel Richie — January 19, 1984
- Ozzy Osbourne — May 4, 1984, with Mötley Crüe and April 1, 1986, with Metallica
- Ratt — August 27, 1984, February 14, 1987, with Poison and Joan Jett and the Blackhearts and February 12, 1989
- Sammy Hagar — September 26, 1984, with Krokus

- Tina Turner — October 26, 1984, October 26, 1985, October 17, 1987, June 22, 1993 and May 17, 2000, with Lionel Richie and Janice Robinson
- Cyndi Lauper — November 30, 1984
- Iron Maiden — December 17, 1984, with Twisted Sister, June 18, 1998 and February 27, 1991
- Deep Purple — February 13, 1985, with Giuffria and May 5, 1987, with Bad Company
- Frank Sinatra — March 28, 1985
- Triumph — May 22, 1985 and October 10, 1986
- Phil Collins — June 15, 1985 and April 12, 1997
- Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers — June 26, 1985, with Lone Justice and February 26, 1990, with Lenny Kravitz
- Bryan Adams — July 28, 1985 and May 2, 1992, with The Storm
- Mötley Crüe — September 7, 1985, July 11, 1987, November 21, 1989, April 3, 1990 and March 15, 2005
- Foreigner — September 21, 1985
- Supertramp — November 5, 1985, with The Motels and Rick Springfield
- Kenny Rogers — December 6, 1985, with Dolly Parton
- Bon Jovi — February 26, 1987, with Cinderella and April 13, 1989
- The Beastie Boys — July 18, 1987 and August 7, 1998
- Boston — October 9, 1987, with Farrenheit
- David Bowie — October 14, 1987, with Peter Frampton
- U2 — October 26, 1987 and November 27, 2001, with Garbage
- Def Leppard — December 10, 1987, with Tesla and December 19, 1992
- John Mellencamp — February 16, 1988
- Michael Jackson — February 23–24, 1988
- INXS — June 14, 1988, with Public Image Ltd
- Jimmy Page — October 14, 1988
- R.E.M. — March 4, 1989, with Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians
- Hank Williams, Jr. — April 16, 1989
- Bobby Brown — May 21, 1989
- The Bangles — August 25, 1989
- New Kids on the Block — January 18, 1990, with The Perfect Gentlemen, Tommy Page and Rick Wes
- Janet Jackson — April 11, 1990, August 1, 1998, with Usher and July 14, 2001
- MC Hammer — October 28, 1990, with En Vogue and Vanilla Ice
- Bell Biv DeVoe — March 25, 1991, with Johnny Gill and Keith Sweat
- Metallica — November 28, 1991, with Metal Church, January 31, 1997, with Corrosion of Conformity and May 11, 2004, with Godsmack
- Dire Straits — February 16, 1992
- Eric Clapton — October 28, 1994, with Jimmie Vaughan & The Tilt-A-Whirl Band, April 2, 1998, with Distant Cousins, July 28, 2001, with Doyle Bramhall II & Smokestack and April 2, 2007, with The Robert Cray Band
- Page & Plant — May 5, 1995, with The Tragically Hip and June 6, 1998
- Garth Brooks — May 2–5, 1996
- Kiss - July 3, 1996, with Alice in Chains (last show with Layne Staley)
- The Smashing Pumpkins — September 1, 1996, with Garbage
- Jerry Lee Lewis — November 9, 1997
- Toby Keith — November 15, 1997 and October 27, 2000

- Merle Haggard — November 16, 1997
- Prince & The New Power Generation — January 4, 1998 and May 4, 2004
- The Backstreet Boys — July 31, 1998, November 18, 1999 and August 27, 2001, with Krystal Harris
- The Family Values Tour — October 22, 1998 and October 12, 1999
- Alanis Morissette — March 15, 1999, with Garbage
- Celine Dion — March 29, 1999
- 'N Sync — April 1, 1999, with Divine and Tatyana Ali and June 22, 2000, with Sisqó and P!nk
- Korn — April 23, 1999, with Rob Zombie and Videodrone, April 19, 2000 and July 21, 2002, with Puddle of Mudd and Deadsy
- Roger Waters — August 28, 1999
- Ricky Martin — November 30, 1999
- Nine Inch Nails — May 28, 2000, with A Perfect Circle and February 18, 2006, with Moving Units and Saul Williams
- Blink-182 — June 30, 2000, with Bad Religion and Fenix TX
- The Dixie Chicks — August 4, 2000, with Patty Griffin and May 10, 2003, with Joan Osborne
- Tim McGraw and Faith Hill — September 24, 2000, with The Warren Brothers and July 18, 2006, with Uncle John's Band
- Montgomery Gentry — October 28, 2000
- Brad Paisley — October 29, 2000
- Creed — November 15, 2000 and February 17, 2002
- Tool — October 21, 2001, with Tricky, October 16, 2002 and September 15, 2006, with Isis
- Cher — July 16, 2002, with Cyndi Lauper and September 22, 2003
- Gary Allan — October 26, 2002 and October 27, 2007
- Carolyn Dawn Johnson — November 1, 2002
- Keith Urban — November 2, 2002 and December 1, 2005, with Nerina Pallot and Richard Winsland
- George Strait & The Ace in the Hole — February 13, 2003, with Tammy Cochran, March 4, 2005, with Dierks Bentley and March 2, 2007, with Taylor Swift and Ronnie Milsap
- The Red Hot Chili Peppers — May 5, 2003, with Queens of the Stone Age and The Mars Volta
- Matchbox 20 — May 28, 2003
- Buddy Jewell — October 23, 2003
- Trace Adkins — October 24, 2003
- Craig Morgan — October 25, 2003 and October 23, 2010
- Emerson Drive — October 31, 2003
- Trick Pony — November 1, 2003
- Shania Twain — November 29, 2003
- Martina McBride — December 21, 2003, October 9, 2004, with Alan Jackson, January 28, 2006 and April 12, 2007, with Rodney Atkins and Little Big Town
- Sarah Brightman — February 15, 2004
- Clay Aiken and Kelly Clarkson — April 15, 2004, with The Beu Sisters
- Joe Nichols — October 29, 2004
- Darryl Worley — October 30, 2004
- Sarah McLachlan — April 30, 2005
- Hilary Duff — August 11, 2005

- Kenny Chesney — August 21, 2005, with Gretchen Wilson and Pat Green
- The Charlie Daniels Band — October 21, 2005
- Sugarland — October 27, 2005
- Terri Clark — October 29, 2005
- The Trans-Siberian Orchestra — December 22, 2005 and December 26, 2006 (2 shows)
- Millionaire — March 23, 2006
- Nickelback — September 16, 2006, with Hoobastank and Chevelle and September 2, 2007, with Puddle of Mudd and Daughtry
- Rodney Atkins — October 20, 2006
- Shooter Jennings — October 27, 2006
- Little Big Town — October 28, 2006
- High School Musical — January 23, 2007, with Jordan Pruitt
- Christina Aguilera — February 24, 2007, with The Pussycat Dolls and Danity Kane
- Hillsong United — April 21, 2007
- T.I. and Ciara — August 12, 2007
- The Casting Crowns — February 9, 2008
- The Foo Fighters — July 19, 2008, with Supergrass and Year Long Disaster
- Thousand Foot Krutch — February 28, 2009
- Paul van Dyk — October 16, 2009
- Abandon — February 19–20, 2010, with Unhindered and February 11, 2012
- Little Texas — October 22, 2010
- Dierks Bentley — October 29, 2010
- Heidi Newfield — October 30, 2010
- Hawk Nelson — February 4–5, 2011, with Group 1 Crew and Britt Nicole
- Jimmy Needham — February 11, 2011

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36
37

208
209

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EXIT
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231-233
SECTIONS
115-116
233
232
116
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231
Arena Information
Concessions, Restrooms
First Aid
Security - Located at Gate 3
Located on the Mid-Levels

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Suites S - V
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118 & 101
201

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108

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