

V5 Thesis Abstract

The Buffalo Bills are a defining icon for the Buffalo area. Originally located in downtown Buffalo in War Memorial Stadium, affectionately called “the rockpile”, they moved to their current stadium, New Era Field, in 1974 when construction was completed. The Bills have been playing in the same stadium for the past 42 years making New Era Field the oldest stadium still in use in the NFL. On several occasions, Roger Goodell, the NFL Commissioner, has commented, “Keep up with modern facilities if you want to remain in Buffalo.” When the Bills founding owner Ralph Wilson Jr. died in 2013, there was speculation that the team would move to a city with better facilities. However, Terry Pegula, who had just purchased Buffalo’s NHL team the Sabres, bought the Bills and the talk shifted from “will the Bills leave Buffalo?” to “where in Buffalo will the new stadium be built?” The lease for the current stadium ends in 2023 and it is unclear at this point if a new stadium is what owner Terry Pegula would want. The reason the Commissioner wants a new stadium in Buffalo is solely based on monetary gains for the NFL. All 32 teams split the revenue generated by the league evenly. Because Buffalo is a small market, they generate less than a team like Dallas or the New York Giants due to their location in a larger market. With a new stadium comes higher ticket prices and more things for fans to spend their money on when at the game.

One might argue that the stadium in its current state is already a public building. However, it is only public on certain days of the year. As such, the intentions of this project are to give the stadium back to the people of Buffalo by repurposing the structure and grounds into a multi-purpose facility that can be accessed by the general public more than once a week during football season. As it stands now, the stadium is only really in use for 36-40 hours a year. I will be partnering with several public officials in the Orchard Park area that can add insight to the development of my project in regards to what the area needs. With the lease for the stadium ending soon, the research that I do now in collaboration with these public officials will hopefully be informative to enable a new program list being developed for the additional program to be added to the stadium, encouraging the NFL that Buffalo does not need a new stadium, rather it just needs to reprogram it.

The end result that I will be designing for is a place of public use that also maintains the historic and local cultural value that the Bills have brought to the City of Buffalo enabling primary (the Bills) and secondary (new program) program to work together developing a hybrid facility servicing the Bills and the general public. With civic and public facilities spread out, repurposing of the stadium to accommodate the Bills as well as a civic center would serve as a hub for the surrounding facilities enabling the growth of the community and preserving of the Bills history. There is little need for a new stadium in Buffalo provided the current stadium is able to produce enough revenue. With the repurposing of the stadium to include a civic center with usable space for the public as well as businesses outside the 8 home games a year, there is a greater likelihood that the Bills would be able to continue using New Era Field and not have to place a heavy financial burden on the people of Buffalo