

Courtesy of the University of Idaho

The University of Idaho announced plans to renovate and update the Kibbie Dome, lowering the floor 8 feet to add an additional 3,600 sideline seats. The east and west wood walls will be replaced with translucent glass panels. One of the many highlights of the renovation includes the Vandal Hospitality Club on the east end of the stadium.

Extreme dome makeover

Iconic Kibbie Dome will be fixed up to meet fire codes, get a new look

By JOEL MILLS
OF THE TRIBUNE

MOSCOW — Under the dramatically arched but unprotected roof of the Kibbie Dome on Wednesday, University of Idaho officials announced the specifics of a \$52 million safety and aesthetic upgrade to the school's premier facility.

"This iconic structure has been part of the university landscape for 35 years," Chris Murray, the UI's vice president for advancement, told a small crowd of reporters and Vandal boosters assembled for the event.

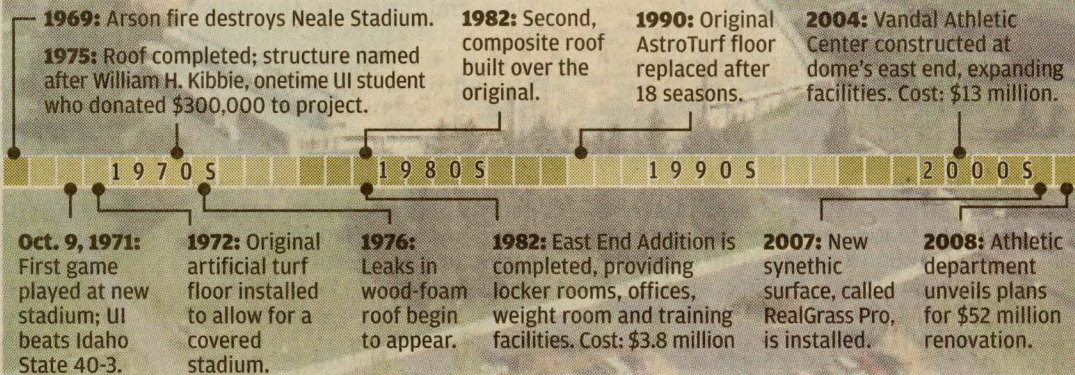
Murray said through those years, the university had done "fixes and patches here and there," but the time has come for a full renovation. It will start next winter with improvements to safety issues like fire suppression, and end in 2010 with the addition of more seating and luxury amenities.

"It's much anticipated," UI President Tim White said about the long road the university has taken to get to this point. "It is overdue, and now is the time for action."

Last year the State Board of

Kibbie Dome timeline

A look at key events in the history of the University of Idaho's covered stadium.



SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

TRIBUNE GRAPHIC / BRIAN BEESLEY

Education approved the UI's plan to fix up the facility that plays host to football and basketball games, track meets, graduations, intramural sports and the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival. The university will go into debt to fund the \$17 million in safety upgrades, and it hopes to raise the remaining \$35 million from private sources.

The Kibbie Dome has never met state fire codes, even though it was recognized in 1976 by the American Society of Civil Engineers as the nation's most outstanding struc-

tural achievement. In addition to a better sprinkler system, the dome needs upgraded ventilation, entrances and exits, and replacement of the flammable plywood end walls before it will be up to code.

Those signature end walls will be replaced with translucent glass panels, providing one of the most dramatic visual changes. Another change planned after the safety improvements is lowering the field about 8 feet to create 3,600 additional sideline seats. Lowering the field will improve sight lines for the entire venue,

according to the university.

New seating will increase the dome's capacity to about 20,000, said Athletic Director Rob Spear. "When we fill it with 20,000 people, it will be the best home-field advantage in the country," Spear said.

Luxury seating is planned, Spear said, which could provide up to \$1 million in additional revenue each year. "My strong belief is that we'll sell those out pretty quickly," he said.

A planned events pavilion

> See **DOME**, page 3A

DOME: Donor support a necessity

► Continued from PAGE 1A

that would be built just to the north of the dome is still on the table, White said, but the university is taking a "dome first" approach to improving its event facilities. If built, the pavilion would host the jazz festival and Vandal basketball games among other events.

The \$35 million in fundraising required for the second phase of renovations is part of a \$300 million, multi-year capital campaign the UI is planning, Murray said. He said the dome renovation is the largest capital project in the history of the university, and expressed confidence alumni would step up and help it become a reality.

"There's no question that when they get behind a project, it's going to happen," Murray said. "The conversations we've had with our donors and alums lead us to believe this will be achievable."

Luxury seating won't be the only amenity awaiting donors if the project becomes reality. The eastern wall of the dome will be converted into the "Vandal Hospitality Club," a 9,000-square-foot terrace that looked like a fancy restaurant in conceptual drawings shown at the event.

A Vandal Hall of Fame, updated concessions and restrooms, and a new VIP parking lot would be included, according to the university.

Spear said first-class facilities like the one the UI is trying to create are essential to

recruiting and keeping better athletes and students in general, steps necessary to turning around the Vandals' ailing athletic programs.

White said the university will have to be creative in hosting the events that take place in the dome while it spends two years under the knife, including the risky proposition of holding commencement outside in the typically rainy Palouse springtime.

"We'll find ways to host all of those events," White said.

"It'll be a little clumsy for a couple of years, perhaps."

Safety improvements should be complete in about a year, White said, and if fundraising goes according to plan, the entire project should be done in December 2010.

Those interested in donating to the project or seeking further information may visit the Web at <http://www.uidaho.edu/kibbie>.

Mills may be contacted at jmills@lmtribune.com or (208) 883-0564.

Meet "Talking River" ~Silent Auction~

January 25, 7-9 pm at the Lewis Clark Center for Arts and History at 415 Main Street in Lewiston

A silent auction will be held throughout the evening with items donated by local businesses. These items include:

- 3 month membership to Adcope
- 1 year adult membership to the Aquatic Center
- A Bernina sewing machine from Nelson's Sew Line
- A computer desk from Staples
- Certificates to Strike and Spare for bowling and food
- Other Items

Cookies/treats and coffee will be provided.

Current students in the Internship to Publishing class will read from past issues of Talking River and be available to answer questions about the Journal.

Proceeds from this event will benefit LCSC students traveling to New York for the AWP (Association of Writers and Writing Programs) Conference Jan. 28-Feb 3.