

On the Road with Tony Meeting the Residents of Colorado

COLORADO STATE

A Magazine for Alumni and Friends

WINTER 2013

CSU 2020

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for the University's Continued
Success.

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RAM

UNIVERSITY DRAWS UP AMBITIOUS GAME PLAN TO BEGIN RAISING FUNDS FOR NEW STADIUM

BY TONY PHIFER

President Tony Frank, with the unanimous approval of the Board of Governors of the CSU System, has opted to go forward with plans to raise money for an on-campus football stadium – a project he hopes will unite alumni and bring greater recognition to the University on every level.

“This certainly is one of the most ambitious projects we’ve ever considered,” Frank says. “It’s not a project without risks, and I’m certainly very cognizant of those risks. But if we are successful, an on-campus stadium can be a catalyst for future growth at Colorado State University.”

Frank’s decision, approved in a 9-0 vote by the BOG, comes with a very important caveat: Half of the money – approximately \$125 million – must be raised within the next two years for the project to move forward.

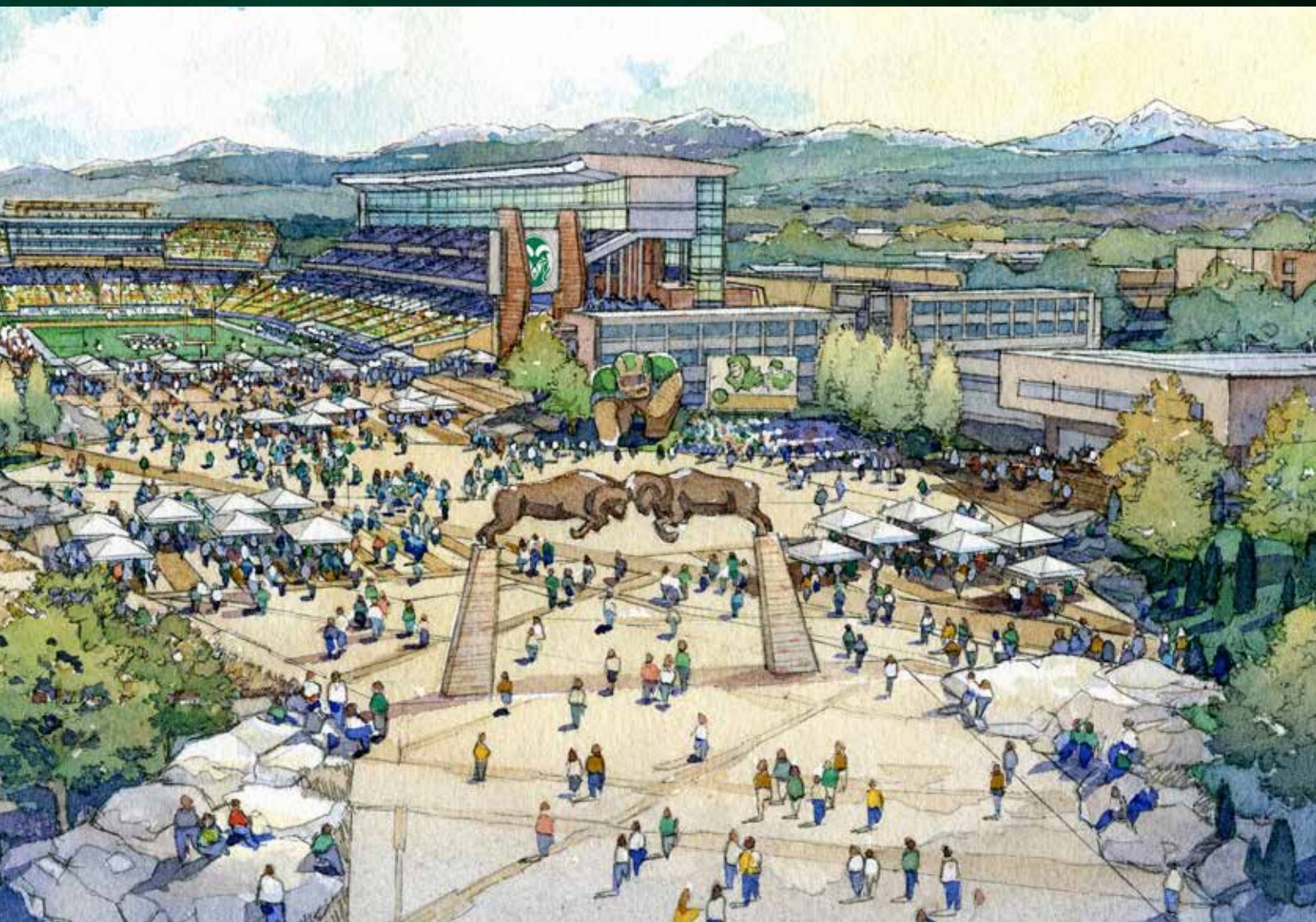
“I believe this stadium project is worth pursuing,” Frank says. “At the same time, I have no interest in burdening our students or the state’s taxpayers with the cost of this stadium. If we cannot raise half the money in two years, we will have to look at other options.”

The stadium, first proposed by Director of Athletics Jack Graham shortly after he was hired in December 2011, would replace Hughes Stadium, which has been home to Rams football since 1968. The 44-year-old facility, located beneath the “A” at the base of the foothills west of campus, is badly in need of maintenance and would require up to \$60 million in repairs over the next five years.

Still, the primary problem with Hughes, Graham says, is its location.



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“Hughes is not on our campus,” Graham says. “As a result, our alumni have no reason to visit our campus when they come to Fort Collins for football games. We need to connect our alumni and supporters to the amazing things happening on our campus.”

The stadium proposal has been one of the most talked-about issues on campus, among alumni, and in the Fort Collins community in many years. The plan has generated excitement among Ram fans, who hope the stadium will not only help elevate the football program but also help usher in other CSU varsity sports like women’s soccer and lacrosse, which could use the stadium for home games.

“This is exactly what this campus has needed for many years,” says Bill Woods, a 1958 CSU alumnus, Fort Collins resident, and longtime supporter of the University’s academic and athletic programs. “A new stadium would transform this entire campus and make our athletic programs relevant on a national scale.”

The stadium proposal has not been without its detractors. A citizens group, Save Our Stadium Hughes, formed and consistently voiced opposition to the project.

A pro-stadium group, Be Bold, also formed and supported the idea of building an on-campus facility.

Frank, recognizing early in the process the proposal’s potential to polarize the community, formed a Stadium Advisory Committee to explore both options: building an on-campus facility or refurbishing Hughes. He required monthly SAC meetings to be open to the public and offered citizens two open forums to present their views.

In addition to the public meetings, Frank asked CSU’s Center for Public Deliberation – which gathers opinion and makes results available online – to provide numerous opportunities for citizens, students, and alumni to have their voices heard. Thousands of responses were recorded and shared with the public.

A stadium consulting firm, Denver-based ICON Venue Group, was hired using private funds to choose the most feasible site on campus and provide a preliminary stadium design. ICON has designed and built numerous sporting venues around the world, including Sports Authority Field and the Pepsi Center in Denver.

After looking at a handful of campus sites, ICON determined that a parcel between Lake and Pitkin streets would be the best stadium location. Traffic impacts would be minimal, and students from all areas of campus would be able to walk or bike to the stadium in a few minutes.

The stadium would be built on land primarily occupied by a large parking lot and the Plant Environmental Research Center. The stadium committee determined PERC could easily be moved and enhanced at a new site, and that lost parking spaces would be mitigated by the construction of garages already in the Campus Master Plan.

ICON’s design calls for a 43,000-seat stadium opening to the north, providing a view of much of campus. A large plaza would connect to a pedestrian walkway into campus, encouraging students and fans from outside campus to walk or ride to stadium events.

Other potential additions include a microbrewery, a retail outlet selling CSU apparel and other paraphernalia,





Coach McElwain Calls New Stadium a Game Changer

Head Football Coach Jim McElwain doesn't have to think long before describing what a new on-campus stadium would do for Colorado State University and its football program.

"It would be," he says, "a game changer."

Hughes Stadium, located at the base of the foothills west of Fort Collins, has been home to CSU football since 1968. It has been home to many successes – the Rams won six conference championships from 1994-2002 – and many disappointments, including a 0-12 record in 1981 and back-to-back one-win seasons in 1987-88.

Despite upgrades that increased capacity and added luxury suites, the stadium is badly in need of repair – an estimated \$60 million worth over the next five years.

The No. 1 issue with Hughes, however, is location.

"It's not on our campus," says Director of Athletics Jack Graham.

Because Hughes is three miles away, alumni rarely, if ever, visit the campus when attending games. As a result, many alumni and supporters don't feel connected to the University.

McElwain, who has coached in some of the country's biggest stadiums, says schools with an on-campus stadium have a different character – a different feel on game day.

"Having seen at different stops around the country what an on-campus stadium can do, I know how important this will be for our program and the entire University," he says. "This stadium can be the cornerstone for the entire University."

Even though \$125 million has to be raised over the next two years before construction can begin, McElwain says talk of a new stadium already has created buzz among supporters and recruits.



"The players we are recruiting right now are absolutely excited," he says. "They ask about the commitment to excellence in general, what type of program we are going to be. This stadium is a huge part of that equation, letting people know that we are absolutely committed to excellence at Colorado State."

and a welcome center. Total cost is projected to be approximately \$250 million.

Tom Milligan, vice president for External Relations, says his division, Athletics, and University Advancement will work together in the fundraising campaign.

"We have an opportunity to show off our creative versatility in a very collaborative effort," he says. "This is a very important project, and we want to make sure we put forth our best efforts to ensure its success."

There is no target date for the stadium's completion, although Graham is hoping it is ready for the 2016 season. Before the first shovel pierces the ground, however, Frank is requiring that \$125 million be raised. Reaching that milestone will be the primary focus over the coming 24 months.

"I knew all along that if Dr. Frank gave his approval, there would be stringent financial conditions – and I am fully supportive of that," Graham says. "We have to protect the University from the risk of having to pay for this project. Nobody, especially me, wants to be associated with that type of failure. I'm committed to making this happen."

Graham is busy assembling a team that will launch a capital campaign by the end of the year. Collateral materials, such as brochures, documents, e-mails, and web content, are being developed by External Relations to support a team of fundraisers from Athletics and University Advancement. In addition, final design work on the stadium will be completed.

Vice President for University Advancement Brett Anderson, who led the successful completion of CSU's first capital campaign in July, says it will be a challenge to raise the money but noted that the Campaign for Colorado State surpassed its \$500 million goal by \$37.3 million and reached the goal six months early.

"I'm very confident we can do this," he says.

In the meantime, Frank says it will be important to keep the community and alumni engaged, making sure that those who are against the project feel like their concerns, such as traffic problems and game-day parking, are being addressed.

"The last thing we want to do is divide the community over this project," he says. "We have to do this in a way that is respectful of this community."