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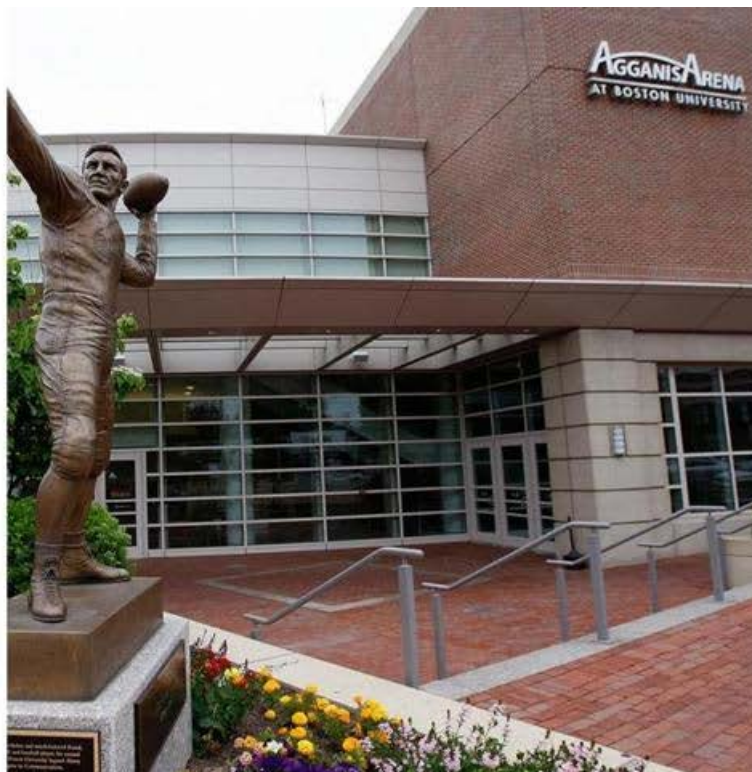
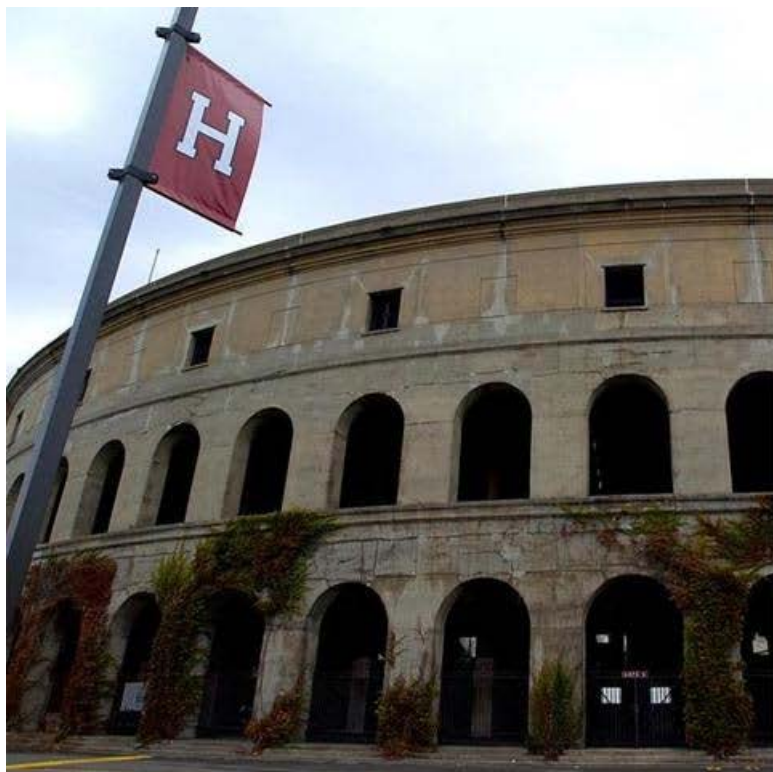
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For Boston-area colleges, Olympics would provide a chance to shine

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GLOBE STAFF

College facilities that could be used for an Olympics in Boston include Harvard Stadium and BU's Agganis Arena.

By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 10, 2015

Organizers of Boston's Olympic bid are galvanizing area colleges to play a pivotal role in staging the games, from housing athletes and providing sporting venues to building facilities that would serve students long after the international spotlight fades.

"We haven't had to twist any arms," Gloria Larson, president of Bentley University and co-chair of the Boston 2024 campaign's institutional engagement committee, said Friday. "Every college and university we've spoken to so far has been all-in in every way they could."

Organizers said that up to 75 percent of sporting venues would be on local campuses. Presidents and other top administrators from UMass Boston, Harvard, Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern, Tufts, MIT, and UMass Lowell have already been involved in discussions, Larson said.

Now, with Boston advancing to the international competition for the games, those conversations are taking on new urgency. And the committee is branching out to dozens of other colleges — including some outside of Massachusetts — to gauge their interest in participating.

Schools, for example, might provide training facilities for athletes, who typically arrive weeks before the games begin.



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Mayor Martin Walsh vowed that the cost of the project — or any debt that results — will not be paid for by Boston taxpayers.

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Several college presidents said Friday that while many details remain to be ironed out, they were excited by the prospect of using the games to highlight the city's higher-education players on the world's stage.

"We all realize this is a special moment for Boston, and we support the opportunity and frankly the obligation to work with the mayor on this opportunity," said Northeastern President Joseph Aoun

Aoun said he expects Northeastern's West Village dormitories would host news media from across the globe and the campus' historic hockey rink, Matthews Arena, would host some type of sporting event.

Aoun says hosting the Olympics could unite Boston in the same way it did for Los Angeles, which hosted the 1984 Summer Games. He was at the University of Southern California at the time.

"The best time for me when I was in Los Angeles was during the Olympics because we all worked together," he said.

UMass Lowell President Martin Meehan admitted that he was at first skeptical about the idea of an Olympic bid. But now, he's an enthusiastic supporter.

"We're eager to play any role that we're asked to play," he said.

UMass Lowell could provide space for rowers who would compete on Merrimack River. Meehan said the Tsongas Center would be a perfect venue for boxing, and the campus could also offer dormitories.

Other college sporting venues that have been mentioned include: Harvard Stadium for field hockey; BU's Nickerson Field, rugby and field hockey; BU's Agganis Arena, basketball, badminton, and handball; MIT's Killian Court, archery; and BC's Conte Forum for other events.

Proposals have also been explored to build an aquatics center at Tufts and an Olympic Village to house athletes at UMass

Boston, which would convert the complex into student dorms.

But leaders of the Boston 2024 campaign stressed that all of those possibilities are in the conceptual stage and subject to change.

Organizers and local leaders have pledged that public money would only be used to make improvements already identified as necessary.

Organizers have raised the possibility that colleges could share in some construction and other costs and could fund that by raising money from alumni and other donors. Larson said the goal is to use existing facilities as much as possible and that any new construction by colleges would be to build facilities that the schools can use after the Games.

Some have questioned whether the money colleges would spend on Olympic events or infrastructure could mean fewer dollars for academic programs and scholarships. But Larson called that notion “a red herring,” and said hosting the games would have a positive effect, creating new bonds between schools and helping to raise their international profiles.

“We are well positioned as an educational mecca and this will further allow us to highlight that fact as Boston rolls out its campaign,” said Richard Doherty, president of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, which represents 60 colleges in the state.

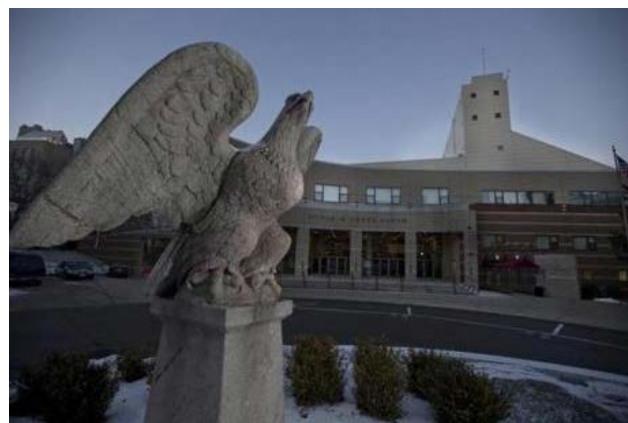
The last US city to host a Summer Olympics — Atlanta in 1996 — relied upon the Georgia Tech as a main venue. Thousands of housing units were built on the campus that have since been used as dormitories since. That city’s Olympic committee raised \$47 million privately to pay for the construction, and the University System of Georgia issued bonds to cover the remaining \$194 million in costs.

The Olympic committee also raised \$21 million in private funds to build an aquatic center on the Georgia Tech campus, which the college turned into a recreation center.

Larson, who expects Bentley to play some role, said organizers will reach out to college students to get them excited for the potential of Boston 2024 with the hope that, if the bid is successful, they will answer the call for volunteers.

“A lot of the people who are just starting college now will be prime age to be a part of the Olympic volunteer force,” she said.

Another idea is to create a nonprofit that would provide scholarships to aspiring and former Olympic and

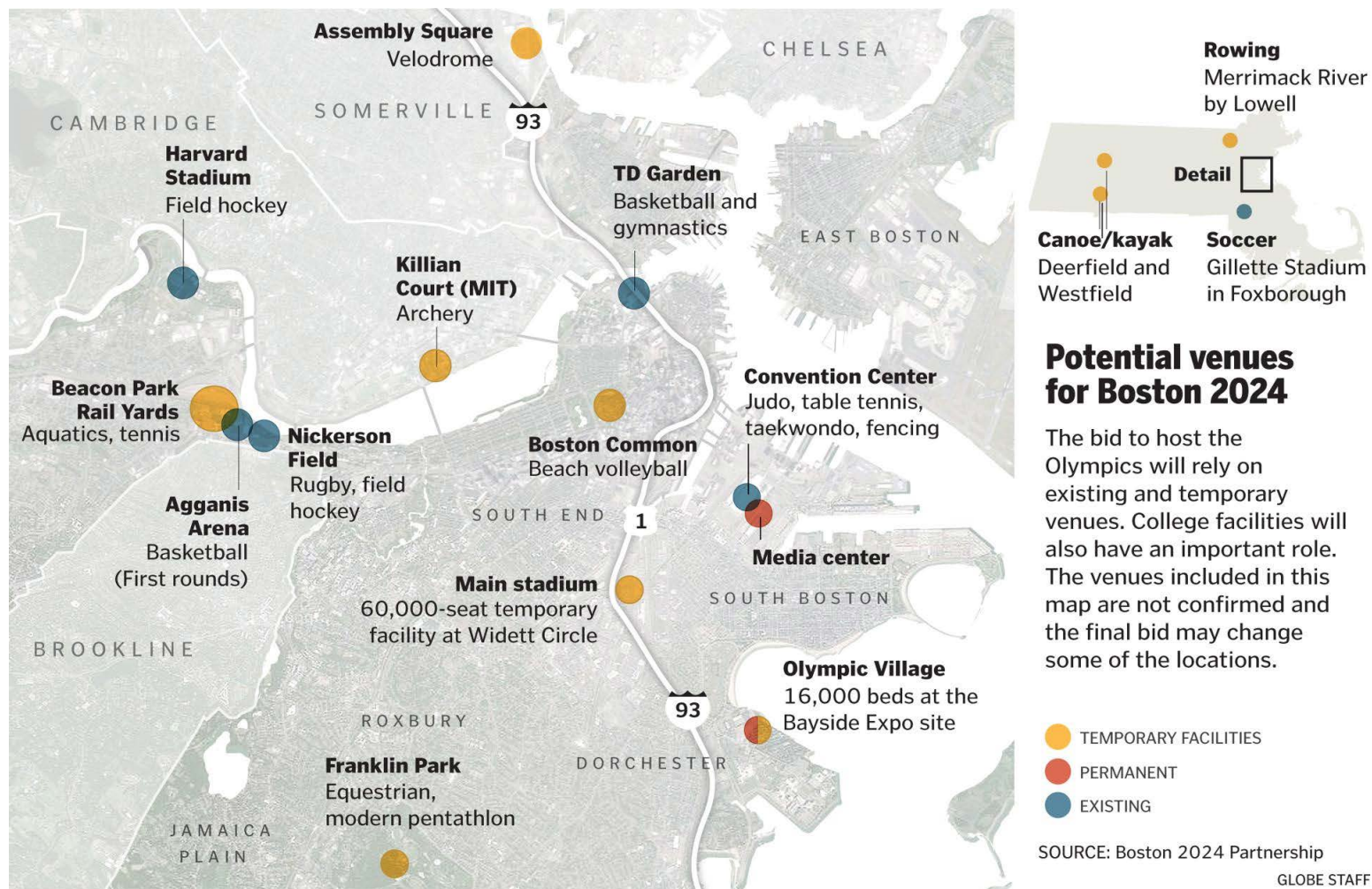


MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

Boston College’s Conte Forum could be used if Boston is chosen to host the 2024 Olympics.

Paralympic athletes so that they could attend colleges in the Boston area.

“What if we became known worldwide as a place where Olympians and top athletes would come to finish their education. That gives me goosebumps,” Larson said.



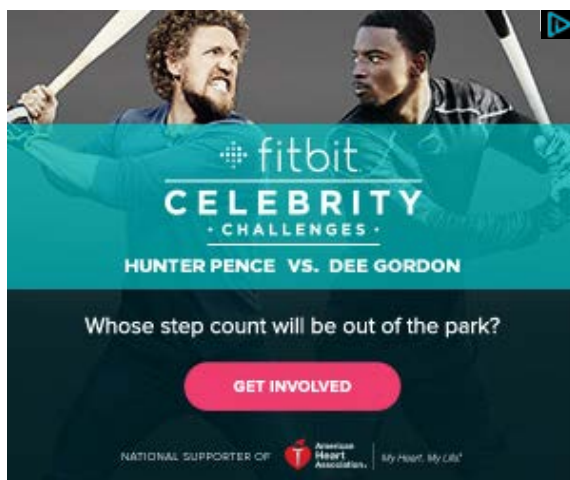
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Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)

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