

An eye on the early history of the Louisiana Superdome

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Before the structure was even begun, the vox populi had established it as “the superdome.” An exhibit at the Southeastern Architectural Archive at Tulane University delves into the early history of what is now called the Mercedes-Benz Superdome.



This aerial view of the Superdome construction was taken in June 1973. (Curtis and Davis Office Records, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections Division, Tulane University Libraries.)

“Generally, we planned the exhibit to coincide with Super Bowl XLVII as a means of drawing attention to the rich holdings of the Southeastern Architectural Archive,” says [Keli Rylance](#), co-curator of the Superdome exhibit currently on display in room 300 of Jones Hall. “The exhibit documents the site selection and design processes, and illustrates the technical complexity of the project.”

The [exhibit](#), which will continue on display until Nov. 1, 2013, chronicles the early history of the Louisiana Superdome, from the stages of the Dome's preplanning to its grand opening in August 1975.

On display are artifacts from each step of the process, beginning with documents pertaining to the 1966 public referendum, which initially supported the construction of a domed stadium in New Orleans, and cartographic surveys implicated in the decision to build the Dome on its current site out of a selection of 21 possible locations in and around the city.

According to Rylance, "Tulane University's Special Collections division benefited greatly from the generous donations of project architects Nathaniel C. Curtis Jr., Arthur Q. Davis and Edward B. Silverstein."

There are many invaluable pieces of authentic Dome history represented in the exhibit, such as original black-and-white photos of conceptual architectural models, blueprints of various cross-sections of the planned Superdome, full-color aerial photos of the Dome taken during different phases of its construction, and myriad literature praising the Dome and its multipurpose design.

The national attention on Super Bowl XLVII offers a unique chance to focus on the background of Superdome through an exhibit that is rich in New Orleans history.

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