

Worth the money? Students

Insight

Continued from Page 1

make the union more pleasing to the eye.

"A union facility should lift your spirit when you walk in," he said.

Financing

Because only academic buildings can be funded with taxpayer dollars, the expansion's \$11.8 million price tag must be covered by an increase in mandatory student fees.

The \$20 increase would begin in the fall semester of 1997. For the next 20 years, student fees would go to pay off the 20-year bonds that would be issued.

When Nebraska Union was last expanded in 1969, students also faced a high price tag. Their student fees increased \$4, from \$9.50 to \$13.50 per semester.

That may not seem like a lot, but Craig McPhee, an economics professor, said that \$4 increase was equivalent to \$16.35 today.

New construction, \$4.5 million worth, will constitute the largest portion of the project. New stores, as well as additional meeting space would fall under that.

More than 30 groups meet in the union every day. To accommodate them and other union users, more than 40,000 square feet would be added to the current 168,000-square-foot building.

While some of the meeting rooms are high quality, others are very poor, he said. An example is Room 16, a basement room with a low ceiling, dim lighting and the perpetual drone coming from the fan room next door.

At the cost of \$2.4 million comes remodeling of more than 66,000 square feet of existing space. A lot of refurbishing needs to be done in the original southern half of the building, built

in 1938.

Swanson said regular maintenance had kept the union in good shape. But, he said, maintenance won't be effective for much longer.

"There's only so much you can do with a new coat of paint and wax on the floor," he said.

A separate cost of \$806,000 would go to upgrade the mechanical system that has been in place since the building was built. The fire alarm also would be upgraded for \$150,000.

As the construction began, asbestos now secure in roofing around the union would need to be removed. That would add another \$230,000 to the project. While the ceilings are torn out, workers would go ahead and add a sprinkler system for \$128,000 and fix some lighting.

Elevators that would service every floor would cost another \$108,000. The new north entrance lobby would be on ground level. The elevators would service every floor.

Another high cost item, totaling \$960,000, will be moving Broyhill Plaza, landscaping it and building a completely new Broyhill Fountain. The plaza will need to be moved 50 to 60 feet into green space to allow for the union's northward expansion.

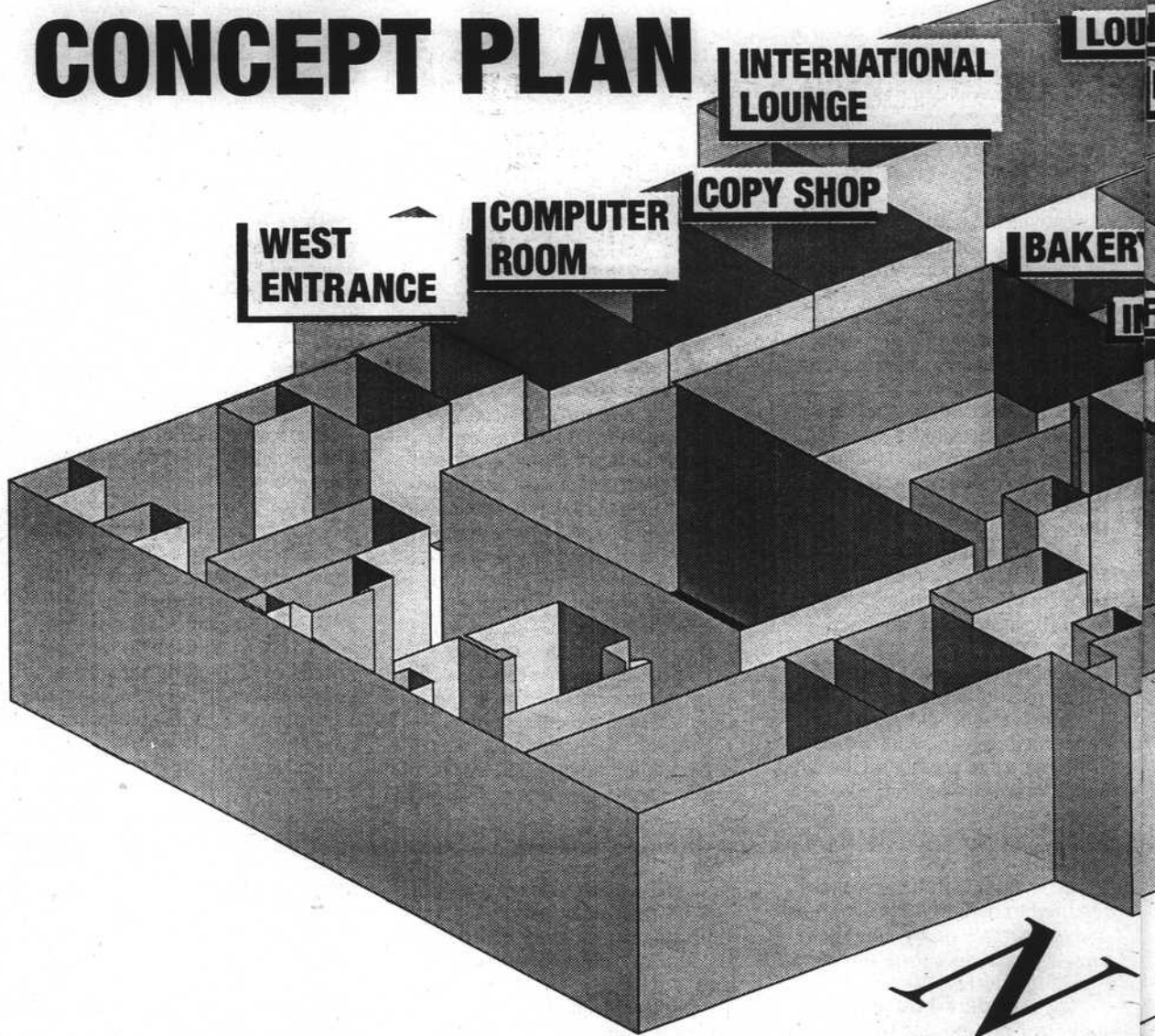
The professional services necessary for the job would equal \$1,173,000, with an additional \$428,000 going for equipment.

The budget also provides \$900,000 for contingency, and \$47,000 for other costs, to round out the \$11.83 million.

Ultimately, plans to expand Nebraska Union will rise or fall Wednesday. Swanson has said it would be difficult to get the Board of Regents to support the project if students did not approve.

But no students spoke in opposition to the plans at a forum on the expansion Feb. 28. In fact, no students spoke. Swanson said that indicated students support the plan.

MAIN LEVEL CONCEPT PLAN



Plans are in the works to improve access to the handicapped in the Nebraska Union. Some improvements would occur regardless of the results of Wednesday's referendum before students. Scott Bruhn/DN

Handicap access to be improved

From Staff Reports

Another improvement would come to handicapped access.

"Handicapped access is embarrassing to the Nebraska Unions," Union director Daryl Swanson said.

Swanson said the ramp on the west side of the union no longer meets

federal American with Disabilities Act requirements because the slope is too steep.

If the union were to undergo any changes, Swanson said, federal standards require the building first improve its handicapped access.

Swanson said the ramp would be modified and covered to protect it

from the elements.

As well, a new handicapped entrance has been proposed for the ground level of the north side. There, a passenger elevator would serve all floors in the union. Not all areas of the union are currently accessible.

The goal is to make the union a "barrier free environment."