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# By any other name, it could be \$10 million sweeter

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SALAM EXPRESS

*Study says that  
changing  
name of Joel  
Coliseum  
could bring in  
millions for  
the city*

What's in a name?  
For Joel Coliseum, the 15,000-seat arena where Wake Forest's Demon Deacons play basketball, there could be a yearly payment of \$400,000 to \$700,000 in it — more than \$10 million in a 15-year contract.

The city of Winston-Salem could make that much money by selling the naming rights to a corporate sponsor, according to a study of the issue paid for by the city.

But the idea of changing the name to B&K Coliseum, for example, does not appeal to city officials. Members of the Winston-Salem City Council said yesterday that they are willing to forgo a possible naming-rights contract because there is more to a name than money.

"Certainly, these are significant dollars," Mayor

**On the Web**  
• Should the coliseum's name be changed? Vote at [www.journalnow.com](http://www.journalnow.com).

Allen Joiner said. "I haven't seen the study, but there is tremendous community interest in this, and to change it (the name) would be seen very negatively in the community."

The coliseum is named after Lawrence Joel, an Army medic who served in Vietnam.

Joel was wounded at least twice in a battle near Bien Hoa, on Nov. 8, 1965. Despite being wounded, Joel continued to treat soldiers and was later credited with saving at least 13 lives that day. In doing so, he became Winston-Salem's only person to get the nation's highest military honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor.



OFFICIALS FILE PHOTO  
Officials have predicted a backlash if the coliseum's name is changed.

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## The price to name

Sports & Properties Inc. of Raleigh did a study estimating the reasonable value of naming rights for sports venues in Winston-Salem.

Venue	\$ per year	Years	Total
Joel Coliseum	\$550,000	15	\$8.25 million
Bowman Gray Stadium	\$300,000	15	\$4.5 million
Ernie Shore Field	\$250,000	12	\$3 million
Dixie Classic Fairgrounds	\$150,000	5	\$750,000
Joel Coliseum Annex	\$150,000	10	\$1.5 million
Winston-Salem Entertainment and Sports Complex	\$100,000	10	\$1 million

Source: City of Winston-Salem

## NAMES

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The coliseum's full name, Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum, not only pays respect to him but also to local veterans of other wars. Rows of markers with names of war dead stand in front of the coliseum. Last year, two more markers were raised in memory of Winston-Salem soldiers killed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Just as the coliseum name is a salute to all veterans, it is also seen as a salute to the contributions of the black community. The name was chosen in February 1986, after a charged debate about race and whether the coliseum should be named after a black man. Nearly 21 years later, officials are adamant about keeping the coliseum name.

"At the present time, I have not even considered a name change," Council Member Vivian Burke said. "There would be a lot of trouble if that happened."

It was not the city's intent to change the name of the coliseum. The study, which cost \$30,000, was done to see how much the Winston-Salem Entertainment Sports Complex could bring in as part of a naming-rights deal.

The complex is the umbrella name that represents all of the city's sports venues: Joel Colise-

um, the coliseum's annex, Bowman Gray Stadium, Dixie Classic Fairgrounds and Ernie Shore Field. As it turns out, the Winston-Salem Entertainment and Sports Complex could bring in \$100,000 yearly, or \$1 million over 10 years.

And that's money that the city could use. The city runs a deficit each year to keep the coliseum going. Ticket sales, concessions and parking do not cover operational expenses. As a result, the city spends about \$725,000 collected from property taxes to cover part of the expenses.

In the next few weeks, council members are expected to talk about the naming-rights study, which they have not yet received.

Joines and some council members did not immediately rule out some type of hybrid name. The BB&T/Joel Coliseum, for example, would keep the Joel name and still bring in naming-rights money.

Whatever happens, nobody was interested in losing the Joel name.

"Lawrence Joel represents the city," Joines said. "But he also represents an African-American hero, so there is a lot of sensitivity around that. We need to recognize him, as well as the other vets."

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