

A 4,500-seat UFC arena is being built on the White House lawn for Trump's 80th birthday. The price? \$60 million, with \$700,000 just to fix the grass

Story by Mike Crisolago

A \$60M UFC 'arena' is being built on White House lawn © Photo by Daniel Torok / Shutterstock

President Donald Trump told reporters last week that the UFC is going to build "a 4,500-seat arena" on the south lawn of the White House in preparation for its Freedom 250 card celebrating America's semiquincentennial (1).

And while his comment conjures images of bulldozers getting ready to rumble onto the White House grounds, renderings released by the UFC paint a different picture.

One such image (2) of the venue for the June 14 fight card — which is also Trump's 80th birthday — shows a UFC octagon surrounded by bleachers, with four arches supporting a small roof overhead and the White House in the immediate background.

That rendering — a canopy, more accurately, rather than an arena — reflects what UFC President Dana White described to The Sports Business Journal, saying, "The only thing I want to see is the White House in the backdrop and the Washington Monument on the other side (3)."

Most fans, however, won't have access to the bleachers around the octagon, which are expected to hold about 5,000 people, including military veterans (4). Instead, 80,000 spectators can watch the event via giant screens set up at The Ellipse park, directly south of the White House (5).

Still, while not exactly an arena, staging the UFC event is expected to cost a fortune.

The cost of a White House fight night

Mark Shapiro, president of TKO, UFC's parent company, noted that producing the card, including fighter pay and related fan fest events, is likely to run at least \$60 million (6).

He added that the price is "definitely not moving south — it could move north," but that TKO hopes to offset \$30 million of that via partnership deals related to the event.

Part of that cost includes the \$700,000 that White said the company would need to repair the south lawn following the fights (7).

White also told *The Pat McAfee Show* that they're building the structure in Europe before shipping it to Philadelphia and then driving it to Washington to construct on the south lawn for the fight card (8).

However, the UFC president made it clear that TKO is footing the bill, adding, "Not one dollar of [taxpayer](#) money will go into this (9)." And Shapiro noted that "We will not profit from the White House event independently (10)."

When comparing the event to the \$20 million card UFC put on at the Sphere in 2024, White added, "We're going to make the Sphere look like f—ing ashtray money (11)."

Not everyone, though, is buying the hype. Former UFC fighter "Filthy" Tom Lawlor posted "LOL that's it?" on social media after the card — headlined by a lightweight championship and interim heavyweight title bout — was revealed (12).

In fact, many have noted the absence of mainstream stars, including Conor McGregor, Jon Jones and Ronda Rousey — the latter of which dubbed the event an "oligarch shmooze fest" ahead of her own May 16 fight against Gina Carano for Jake Paul's MVP promotion (13).

Others have called the event "authoritarian theatre," while UFC fighter Brandon "Raw Dawg" Royval likened it to a *Hunger Games*-style event for "billionaires and rich people" who don't care about him (14). He added that "I'm too Mexican-looking," saying that ICE "is suspiciously arresting" people and that "Next thing you know, I'm in Mexico and I don't speak Spanish."

Making White House history

Trump, meanwhile, is predictably excited about the event, saying in his comments to reporters that "I've been involved with a lot of big events" but that "I've never had an event that's had more interest than the UFC fight that we have right at the front door (15)."

In the 1980s, his Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino hosted numerous high-profile combat sports events, including multiple Mike Tyson boxing matches and WrestleManias IV and V, in 1988 and 1989 respectively.

And while past presidents have installed sporting structures — like Teddy Roosevelt's tennis court, Dwight Eisenhower's putting green or Barack Obama's basketball court (16) — at the White House, UFC 250 will mark the first ever major sporting event held on the grounds (17).

The only other competitive sport played at the White House took place thanks to President George W. Bush's White House Tee Ball Initiative, which saw little league teams play a game on the south lawn every year between 2001 and 2008 (18).

Article Sources

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The Independent [\(1\)](#),[\(15\)](#); X [\(2\)](#); Sports Business Journal [\(3\)](#),[\(5\)](#); ESPN [\(4\)](#),[\(17\)](#); Yahoo Sports [\(6\)](#),[\(9\)](#),[\(10\)](#),[\(11\)](#); CBS Sports [\(7\)](#); MMA Fighting [\(8\)](#); The Guardian [\(12\)](#); TalkSport [\(13\)](#); The Hill [\(14\)](#); USA Today [\(16\)](#); Little League [\(18\)](#)

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