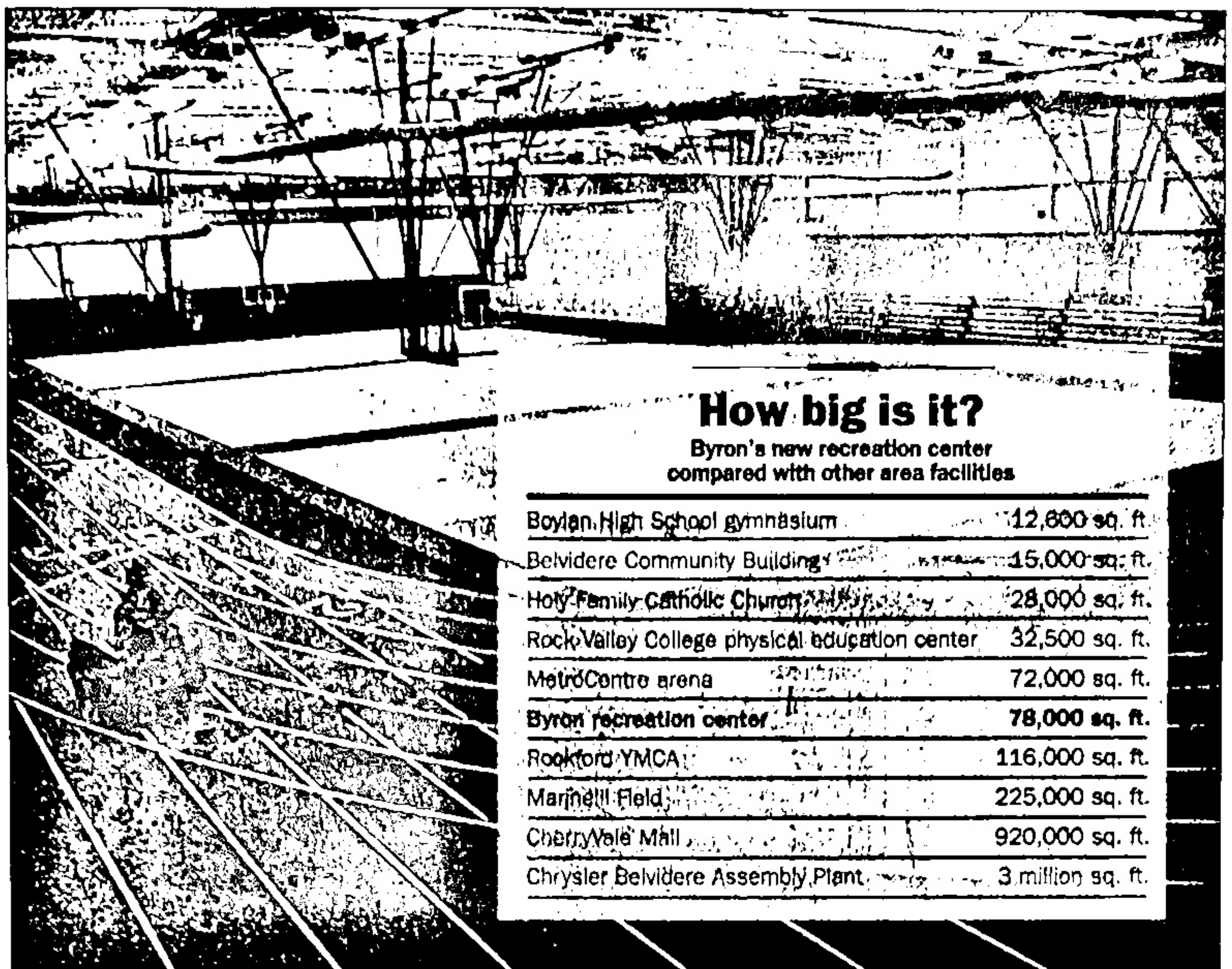


New recreation center in Byron

A breakdown
of Byron
recreation center's
features and costs

- Foundation: \$380,000
- Structural steel: \$980,000
- Masonry and concrete: \$1.2 million
- Metal closure and finish hardware: \$812,000
- Plumbing and fire protection: \$572,000
- Heating, ventilation and temperature controls: \$616,000
- Electrical systems: \$390,000
- Carpentry: \$290,000
- Walls, ceilings and floor coverings: \$165,000
- Painting: \$60,000
- Lockers: \$204,000
- Synthetic flooring: \$300,000
- Scoreboards: \$20,000
- Weight room and exercise equipment: \$68,400
- Bleachers seating: \$10,000

Source: The Durrant Group Inc.



How big is it?

Byron's new recreation center
compared with other area facilities

Boylan High School gymnasium	12,800 sq. ft.
Belvidere Community Building	15,000 sq. ft.
Holy Family Catholic Church	28,000 sq. ft.
Rock Valley College physical education center	32,500 sq. ft.
MetroCentre arena	72,000 sq. ft.
Byron recreation center	78,000 sq. ft.
Rockford YMCA	116,000 sq. ft.
Marinelli Field	225,000 sq. ft.
CherryValle Mall	920,000 sq. ft.
Chrysler Belvidere Assembly Plant	3 million sq. ft.

Photos by BRAD BURT/The Register Star

Linda Buttel sweeps the surface of the multipurpose floor inside the new recreation center in Byron.

Excellence or excess?

District's \$6 million facility draws fire in light of ComEd ruling

By **SCOTT WILLIAMS**
The Register Star

BYRON — Is it bigger than a bread box? Try bigger than a bread factory.

The Byron School District unveils its new recreation center this weekend, an expansion that dwarfs conventional school facilities.

It includes a gymnasium large enough to hold a DC-10 jetliner.

Critics jokingly have labeled the \$6 million project "United Center," after the huge sports arena in downtown Chicago.

"I'd call it overkill," said school board member William Carlson.

The debate has intensified since Commonwealth Edison won an appeal lowering the taxable value of its Byron nuclear power plant by \$700 million. The action means Byron's tax base

could drop dramatically, and the school district could be forced to tighten its belt after years of financial binging.

It also has townsfolk wondering if the recreation center is a symbol of excellence — or excess.

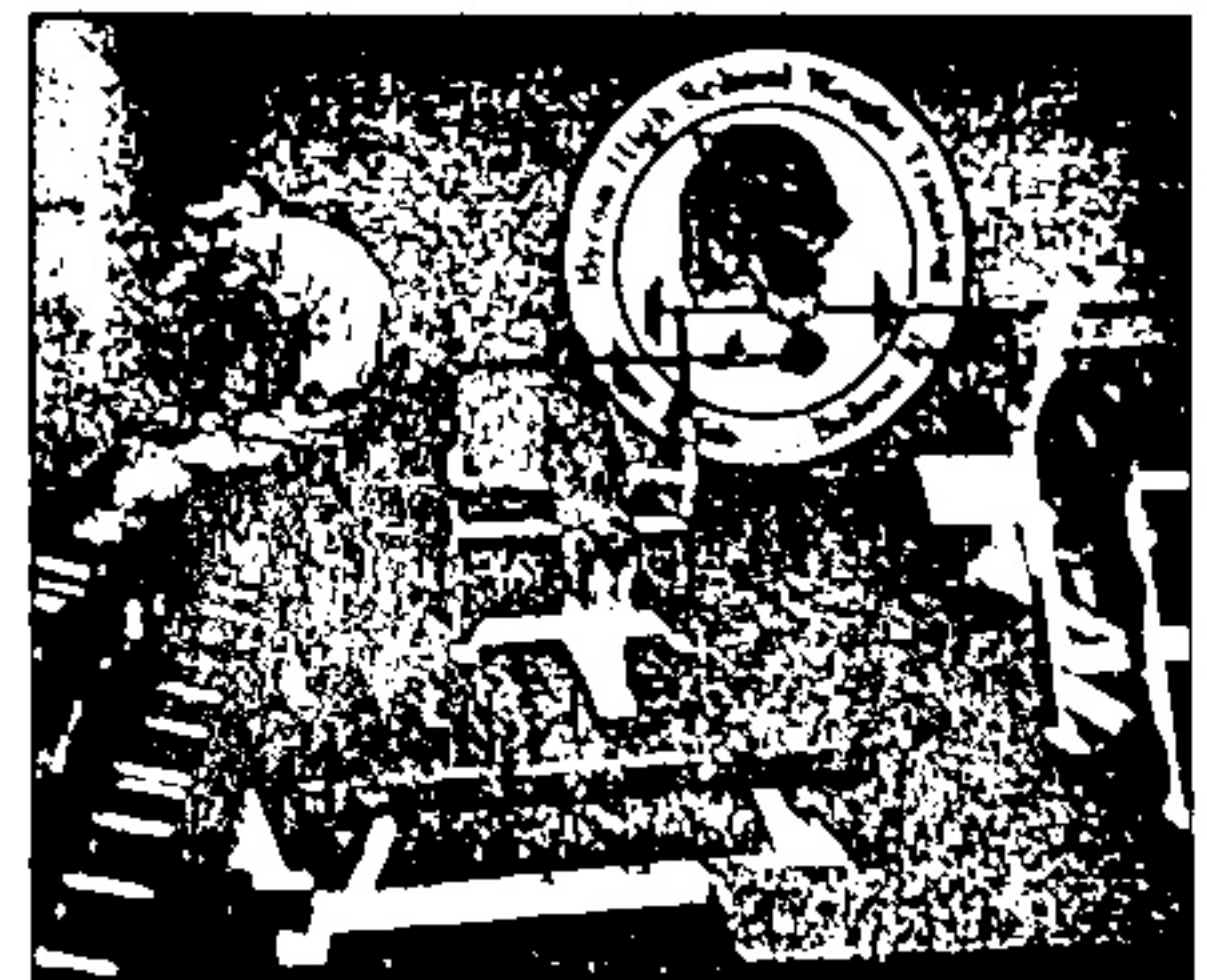
"They've mortgaged away our future," said Mike Cichon, organizer of a taxpayer watchdog group. "We're going to have to eat that building."

Approved by the school board in early 1994, the center originally was intended to relieve crowding at Mary Morgan Elementary School, where 700 students share one gymnasium.

But officials figured other schools would face congestion in the future. So they decided to build one large facility.

With tax revenue from the

Please see **Excellence**, 4A▷



Charley Riney, Byron Park District director, looks over one of two weight and strength training rooms in Byron's new recreation center, which adjoins the city's high school and elementary school.