



# SPRINGFIELD SPORTS COMMISSION INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY REPORT



Powered by the  
HUDDLE UP GROUP



NOVEMBER 6, 2019

## **Springfield Sports Commission Indoor Sports Facility Recommendations Report Executive Summary**

In the opinion of the Huddle Up Group (hereafter the “Consultant” or “Consultant Team”), the Springfield Sports Commission (“SSC”) has a good opportunity to solidify itself as a significant sports tourism destination in the Midwest. Throughout this process, Springfield’s community leaders showed a desire to grow sports tourism in the region and to also for the SSC to become more engaged with the area’s stakeholders. Both of these characteristics are positive signs that the SSC is ready to build upon its long history and move ahead to even better things in the future.

As part of a larger strategic planning project, the Consultant Team was asked to evaluate the Springfield area’s facility inventory and to identify gaps that may exist within the current venue portfolio. Pertaining to the venue audit, the Consultant Team visited 20 current sites encompassing 32 different sports venues. In addition, the Consultant Team conducted 50 stakeholder interviews by phone or in person, many of which were focused on facility enhancement and/or development. Finally, the SSC completed the Sports Tourism Index™ which evaluates current facilities and offers insights into potential gaps that a community may have with its existing venue inventory (the Sports Tourism Index™ is a proprietary tool that has been developed by the Huddle Up Group).

After analyzing these various inputs, the Consultant Team identified a need for new tournament friendly indoor spaces. Recommendations for ways to enhance some of the area’s current facilities are also outlined in the larger strategic planning document. This report offers an analysis of the potential impact that a new indoor facility could deliver to the Springfield area.



## Springfield Sports Commission Indoor Sports Facility Recommendations Report Analysis

One of the primary weaknesses cited in the SWOT analysis provided in the SSC’s strategic planning document was the lack of an indoor “anchor” facility. Springfield and the surrounding area have a very limited inventory of indoor venues that would be considered an “anchor facility,” meaning a facility that has enough fields/courts on its own to host major regional or national events. In addition, the public facilities visited by the Consultant Team were found to be in challenging condition, many in remote areas far from host hotels and attractions, and in general, not ready to host national level tournaments. In today’s sports tourism landscape, event rights holders are seeking out communities that have these anchor venues to host their events. Without strong indoor options, Springfield will be fighting an uphill battle against communities with bigger and better venues. Without a new indoor facility on the drawing board, the SSC will have to focus its marketing efforts on the current outdoor venues that are available. Below is benchmarking information from a 2018 Huddle Up Group survey of over 300 event rights holders, outlining their ideal facility requirements.

Facility Type	Anchor	Tournament Friendly
Flat Fields	Minimum 16 fields	8-15 fields
Pool	50m/8-10 lanes with diving well	25m with diving well
Diamonds	Minimum 12 fields	8-11 fields
Hardwood Courts	Minimum 8 Basketball/ 16 Volleyball	4 Basketball/8 Volleyball
Indoor Track	200 meters/6 lanes/banked	200 meters/6 lanes

To further complicate matters, the area high schools and colleges that possess good indoor facilities utilize them almost exclusively for their own programs when the tourism industry could use additional business (during the shoulder and off-peak times of the year). Additionally, there is no sustainable funding source dedicated to facility enhancement and/or development at this time.

In the near term, SSC will have to grow the sports tourism market with the assets it currently has available to them (financial, physical, and human capital). The natural progression of success would include facility enhancement and development to improve the destination offering to drive more overnight stays through sports.



## **Springfield Sports Commission Indoor Sports Facility Recommendations Report Impact Analysis**

Springfield's most pressing need is for more sports friendly indoor spaces. It is the opinion of the Consultant Team that the addition of an anchor indoor facility would return the highest ROI to the community. Below is a summary of what a new tournament friendly indoor facility could drive to the Springfield economy in a given year.

### New Facility Recommendation

The Consultant Team believes the development of a new multi-use indoor facility would generate the most return on investment over time. The most successful of these types of venues nationally can accommodate the traditional sports (basketball, volleyball) as well as emerging ones (pickleball, futsal). These flexible venues are often designed to be able to host meetings, trade shows, community events, consumer shows, graduations, bridge and chess tournaments, and similar gatherings of a large number of people. Some higher performing multi-use facilities can also accommodate concerts as well. A sampling of some of the top-flight venues in the national sports tourism space would include:

- Myrtle Beach (SC) Sports Center
  - Built – 2015
  - Cost – \$13,000,000
  - Size – 100,000 square feet
  - Configuration – 8 full basketball courts, limited seating
  
- Rocky Mount (NC) Events Center
  - Built – 2018
  - Cost – \$48,000,000
  - Size – 165,000 square feet
  - Configuration – 8 full basketball courts plus a championship court, also designed to host musical acts, both modular and telescopic seating options

In order for a venue of this nature to host many of the top regional and national tournaments, it must have ample court space, seating, scoreboards, PA systems, equipment, permanent concessions, locker rooms, coach and official meeting areas, and other related amenities. The most important of these characteristics is floor space with appropriate ceiling heights. Using the facility benchmarks noted in above, a good multi-use facility would need to have at least 100,000 square feet of dedicated court space. This area would also need to have ceiling heights of at least 36 feet to accommodate national level volleyball and basketball events. Should a funding mechanism be secured for the purpose of developing a new facility that meets these benchmarks, Springfield could achieve this goal through one of the following pathways:



1. Build an entirely new sports-specific facility somewhere in the Springfield area.
2. Build an entirely new convention center that meets the specifications sporting groups require to host their events as outlined above.
3. Expand the existing Springfield Expo's main hall from 45,000 square feet to 100,000 square feet (anchor status), and add the necessary telescopic seating, scoreboards, PA systems, storage, etc.

Should the SSC and its partners find a pathway to provide a sports specific facility to host events throughout the year, using a conservative 35% capture rate, the Consultant Team believes the following economic activity could reasonably be realized in a calendar year:

- 15 regional and national tournaments
- Over 37,000 tournament attendees
- \$15.99 million in direct visitor spending
- Nearly 21,000 hotel room nights
- Springfield lodging tax collections of nearly \$89,000
- Total sales tax collections over \$160,000
- Community based events and leagues held throughout the entire year
- More than \$270,000 in rental revenues through community user groups

Note: The annual National Christian HomeSchool Basketball Tournament is included in the above projections. While this annual event is already played in Springfield, the addition of a new 8-court facility will allow the tournament organizer to consolidate the numerous sites used today and should improve the likelihood of the tournament staying in Springfield into the future.

### Projected Costs, Timelines, and Management Models

The information outlined below on costs, timelines, and management models was provided by industry leaders The Sports Facility Advisory and Sports Facilities Management.

Today's construction climate is highly volatile. With a strong economy and a lot of construction happening, we have seen an increase in construction costs because architects, engineers, and construction managers have not had to bid low to stay busy. With scary indicators in the economy and uncertainty in the global economy due to trade wars, we are seeing a continuing trend in construction cost increases. Given these factors, project costs have varied wildly from one month to another. In general, the following characteristics are true of new venue developments today:

- Tournament-class indoor court-based sports facilities typically cost from \$180 to \$220 per square foot to develop.



- Adding meeting and convention capabilities can increase project costs dramatically based on a combination of increased size cost per square foot.

Project timelines for a new sports development typically include the following:

- Feasibility Study – Assuming the study is dedicated to a single facility, this stage normally takes between three and six months.
- Design/Approvals – This step is largely dependent on the structure of the process (example: design build versus design bid build) and normally takes between four and 12 months to complete.
- Funding – This is the biggest variable in the process. While some project literally take years to secure funding, the typical process takes between six and 18 months to complete.
- Construction – Assuming the above pieces are in place, this phase normally takes between 12 and 24 months.
- Grand Opening – The total time needed from feasibility study to opening a new venue typically ranges from two to five years.

Management models (and costs to the host community) vary by company and by project. The make-up of the project can significantly impact the fees. Given the wide ranging variables that are involved in outlining a management model for a new facility, Sports Facilities Management (SFM) would need more information about the specific project to provide a cost structure for management. The three most common facility management models are:

1. Facility is run by a local parks and recreation program.
2. Facility is run by a local non-profit.
3. Facility is run by a for-profit third-party management company.

#### Venue Enhancement Opportunities

In addition to the indoor venue development recommendation, the Consultant Team offered facility enhancement opportunities within the SSC strategic planning document. These included potential improvements to the Cooper Sports Complex, Cooper Tennis Center, Jordan Valley Ice Rink, Killian Complex and Softball Stadium, Lake Country Soccer Fields, Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, Spokes BMX, Fieldhouse Sports Center, and the US Baseball Park.



## **Springfield Sports Commission Indoor Sports Facility Recommendations Report Conclusion**

Sports tourism is a \$1.41 trillion industry worldwide, and is projected to grow to \$5.72 trillion by 2021, according to the media and entertainment research firm Technavio. A study by the Sports Tourism and Events Association (SportsETA, formerly the National Association of Sports Commissions) states that the grass roots portion of the domestic sports tourism industry is responsible for over \$14 billion annually. Sports is big business, and the competition has never been more fierce. There are more communities targeting the sports market than ever before. In order for Springfield to be relevant in this niche market, the SSC must build bridges with key players locally to pave the way for an enhanced organizational model that is focused on community partnerships to drive a sustainable sports marketing program. By forging this path, the SSC will position Springfield as a strong player in the sports tourism industry, that will be able to provide value to its stakeholders in a meaningful way year over year.

Providing a sustainable revenue stream for venue development will be mission critical for the community going forward. As this funding source takes shape, the SSC should lead a venue master planning process for the entire Springfield region. This master plan would serve as a launching pad to enhance the area's existing venues and to potentially develop new facilities that can positively impact tourism in the area, while also offering better venues for local community user groups to utilize. This should not be lost in the recommendations proposed here – improved venues will give the community's local leagues and programs better places to play throughout the year, as well as drive additional tourism to the community. While this project is focused on tourism, we cannot discount that the local user experience will be greatly improved in the process. As a final point here, these new venues would also have a combined positive effect between driving tourism and local user groups – these new facilities would also provide more opportunities to host tournaments in Springfield, which means local teams could play in regional/national level tournaments at home, rather than traveling to other destinations.

Report submitted to the Springfield Sports Commission on November 6, 2019.

