



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT FOR SPORTS TOURISM

ATHENS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

January 18, 2019

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Due North Sports Partners Profile

Due North Sports Partners is a division of Due North Consulting, Inc., an Inc. 5000 company that has served economic development organizations for almost two decades. Guiding hundreds of destinations in promoting economic development through tourism and corporate investment, Due North is profoundly grateful for opportunities to have worked with clients in attracting billions of dollars to their communities throughout North America, Europe and Asia.

Due North Sports Partners focuses on helping communities identify and leverage assets that will maximize the potential economic impact from sports tourism. Our scope of work includes community assessments; strategic planning; hospitality training; event development, planning and logistics; and event recruitment.

Due North brings together a team of experts with over 65 years of experience. Decades of work promoting destinations and managing events provides the foundation of knowledge and network of key contacts that give our clients a winning advantage in the pursuit of sports tourism and the economic growth that follows.

With a scope of services that meet a variety of needs, ranging from asset identification to marketing and selling destinations, Due North helps communities create winning strategies that meet their unique goals to deliver sports tourism.

The Sports Tourism Market Overview

The term 'sports tourism' refers to visitors who will travel to a location for the purpose of participating in or watching a sports event. The 2017 State of the Industry Report published by the National Association of Sports Commissions¹ in collaboration with Ohio University cites direct visitor spending associated with (non-professional) sports events and tourism was calculated to be \$11.4 billion.

According to the 2016 State of the Industry Report by NASC, direct visitor spending in the United States related to sports tourism increased by 26%. The 2017 Report cited visitor spending increased again by 9%. Termed 'recession proof', sports tourism has remained constant, and in some cases increased, while 'general' tourism has traditionally declined during economic downturns.

Randy DuTeau

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As vice president of strategy and development, Randy leads this project.

His professional designations include Certified Sports Events Executive and Tourism Marketing Professional.

As former Executive Director of Columbia County CVB and Development Manager of Augusta Sports Council, Randy brings hands-on experience in tourism recruitment.

His portfolio also includes event management experience such as Ironman 70.3, several USA Cycling National Championships, US Adventure Race National Championship, AAU Cross Country and USA Rugby.

¹ National Association of Sports Commissions is the non-profit 501(c) 3 trade association for the sport tourism industry in the United States.



Economic Development Opportunities

Sports Tourism

Sports tourism benefits communities through a direct economic impact of visitor spending that enters local economies through:

- Overnight lodging sales
- Restaurant visits
- Retail purchases
- Outlays for recreation and local attractions

Local economies directly benefit from:

- **Local and State Sales Tax Revenue**
Increased sales tax revenue for local and state governments directly impacts the community.
- **Lodging Tax Revenue**
Communities that collect a lodging tax see an increase in tourism revenue, which can be used to support and generate additional tourism for the community.
- **Tourism-related Jobs**
Tourism generates employee wages in categories such as lodging, retail, restaurants, recreation and entertainment, as well as business services, finance, insurance, real estate.
- **Tourism Offset for Slow Seasons**
Sports events are planned to offset slow season tourism economies

As well as indirectly through:

- **Quality of Life**
Tourism and community engagement improves quality of life
- **Property Values**
As quality of life and standards of living are raised, increased property values often follow
- **Marketing Exposure**
Sports events act as marketing platforms by way of media exposure and visitor attraction, attracting visitors who otherwise may not have considered visiting.

Outdoor Recreation

Beyond traditional sports, we are currently seeing that outdoor sports and recreation has become a powerful movement, and the economics behind it are staggering. Communities that cater to this population offer a better standard of living, industry jobs, and attract more visitors.

According to the Outdoor Association of America report, “The Outdoor Recreation Economy,” outdoor recreation annually generates \$887 billion in consumer spending; supports 7.6 million jobs; generated \$65.3 billion in federal tax money and provides \$59.2 billion for local and state tax revenue. Additionally, outdoor recreation on forest service lands contributes more than \$13 billion dollars to the national economy and supports over 205,000 jobs annually.

The Case for Sports Tourism in Athens

Athens, Georgia is an iconic sports town. The city is anchored by the University of Georgia, an NCAA Division 1 school with athletic programs that compete in the Southeastern Conference. Access to world-class venues on the UGA campus provides Visit Athens with a significant advantage to leverage in the recruitment of sports tourism. Layered over outstanding facilities, are diverse municipal venues, an established DMO and the unique reputation of a famed college-town. Combine the assets that sell Athens with the diversity of venues that widens the scope of prospective events and allows Visit Athens to cast a wider net when recruiting and developing events, and a strong case can be made for Athens to leverage sports tourism for economic development.

Assessment Methodology

The conclusions in this assessment are based upon community information gathered in the audit, comparisons to competing markets, industry norms and best practices and analysis of the findings.

Audit

Preliminarily, work to understand the organization, Athens CVB, and the Athens community began pre-engagement and continued throughout the process. Due North compiled data and insight about the assets and challenges unique to the community in the form of an audit. The audit included the following.

Reports and Documents

Community and organizational information gathered included: Visit Athens Annual Report, Athens, Georgia – The Walking Map, Athens Visitor Guide, Flagpole Guide to Athens, Georgia, Venues, Facilities and Natural Assets; VisitAthens.com; Athens Economic Development website.

Venues, Facilities and Natural Assets

In consideration of public and private venues from throughout the community, Randy DuTeau visited 16 venues during the site visit that took place July 25 - 27, 2018. Visit Athens Sales Manager, Jay Boling, provided a tour of the venues that were deemed most suitable for sports tourism. Site tour also examined green space and facilities not traditionally utilized for sports. The list of the venues visited can be found in Appendix A, Sports Assets, Venues and Facilities.

Stakeholder Feedback

The stakeholder list provided by Athens CVB included 65 stakeholders.

Interviews

Of the 65 stakeholder contacts, 9 were interviewed. During the site visit, Jay introduced Randy to key community allies, and 6 stakeholders were interviewed in-person. Following the site visit, 3 stakeholders were interviewed by phone. The list of the stakeholders interviewed can be found in Appendix B, Stakeholder Meetings and Interviews.

Why Sports Tourism?

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NASC estimates visitor spending associated with sports events at \$11.4 billion in 2017, an increase of 9% from 2016.
— NASC, 2017 State of the Industry Report

34.9 million people travel annually with an overnight stay to participate in or watch an amateur sports event.
— Sports Marketing Surveys USA

Over 53 million youth athletes travel annually to participate in sports events. Nearly 60% of parents return to the city for a vacation. 74% recommend the location to others.
— University of Florida





Email Surveys

In collaboration with Athens CVB, 63 of the 65 stakeholder contacts had email addresses and were sent the email survey. The initial survey was sent on August 8, 2018 and yielded 9 completed surveys. A follow-up survey was sent to 39 recipients on September 4, 2018, and 5 additional responses were completed. As of September 6, 2018, 14 surveys were completed; 2 of the email addresses were returned as invalid and 47 respondents had not engaged.

Other Considerations

Beyond sports, consideration was also given to: access and proximity to the community; available lodging; restaurant and retail options; local attractions that draw interest; organizational resources and community support.

Comparison and Analysis

When community data was gathered, comparisons were made to the following:

- Current potential for sports tourism
- Competing destinations
- Best practices for sports tourism

In consideration of the comparisons, a SWOT analysis was generated and is provided for the benefit of helping Athens CVB understand the opinions of Due North.

Recommendations

In consideration of the above methodology, the community findings and analysis, recommendations are made for growing sports tourism in Athens-Clarke County and recognizing the economic value this initiative holds.

City of Athens-Clarke County

Community

The Athens-Clarke County metropolitan area serves as an employment, cultural, educational and business center for surrounding counties and all of Northeast Georgia.

Home of the University of Georgia and Athens Tech, the community is well-established as a center for the arts, learning, cuisine and music. Athens is also noted for a rich manufacturing history and a strong industrial base. From food processing and pharmaceuticals to plastics, manufacturers like Caterpillar have flourished in Athens-Clarke County for many years. Boasting a diverse business mix, Athens is home to major Fortune 500 companies and local entrepreneurial startups alike.

Access

By Ground

Accessible from US-441, US-78 and GA-316, Athens is 30 minutes south of Interstate 85 and 35 minutes north of Interstate 20. Close proximity to several southeastern population hubs allows drivers from the following cities to reach Athens in four hours

or less.

- Atlanta, GA 70 miles
- Augusta, GA 95 miles
- Greenville, SC 96 miles
- Columbia, SC 163 miles
- Chattanooga, TN 177 miles
- Charlotte, NC 201 miles
- Birmingham, AL 219 miles
- Savannah, GA 219 miles
- Knoxville, TN 235 miles

By Air

Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport is 80 miles away, and travel time is approximately one hour and 40 minutes.

Sports Venues

Athens sports facilities belong to Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department, the University of Georgia, the Clarke County School District and private investors. An overview of facilities that can be used to drive sports tourism follows.

Summary

31 venues and facilities were identified across Athens and neighboring Oconee County that could be utilized for events. Venues include baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, multi-use fields (for sports such as Ultimate Frisbee, rugby and lacrosse), basketball gyms, a skateboard park, track and field venues, tennis courts, pickleball courts, aquatic facilities and trails.

Downtown Athens

The Classic Center

The 373,000 square foot Classic Center is the premier venue for sports in Downtown Athens. The Akins Arena space has previously been utilized for events such as hockey, robotics competitions, gymnastics, cheer and dance, electronic gaming, and pickleball and the Pavilion has been used to accommodate outdoor hockey.

This convention and performing arts center in Downtown Athens features 90,000 square feet of convention space and 56,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. It also holds a 2,100-seat performing arts theater. Akins Arena at the Classic Center has the capability of holding a 17,000 square foot NHL-regulation hockey rink. There is also a 20,000-square foot pavilion that can hold an outdoor ice rink. The Classic Center boasts state-of-the-art audio/visual capabilities and has an attached 654-space parking deck.

Akins Ford Arena at the Classic Center

The Akins Arena at the Classic Center is home to the UGA Ice Dawgs hockey team. In 2016, the Arena was the site of the 2016 SECHC Championships. The Classic Center location has also been the site of roller derby, gymnastics, robotics, and other competitions. The Arena would also work well for cheer and dance and various other events. Its downtown location is in close proximity to 1,750 hotel rooms.





University of Georgia

Ramsey Student Center

440,000 square foot student recreational and athletics facility located on the East Campus of Georgia. It is one of the largest student recreational facilities in the United States.

Ramsey Student Center, which houses the Gabrielson Natatorium, with 50-meter pool, diving well with 10-meter platform and recreation pool, also includes basketball courts and a volleyball arena for the UGA Women's Volleyball Team.

This is a world class facility that hosts NCAA swim and volleyball competition. The facility also offers a climbing wall, workout facilities and racquetball courts.

Recreation Sports Complex

The recreation sports complex is an outdoor facility utilized for intramural and club sports at the University of Georgia. The complex is used to host intramural sports, club sports, and outdoor recreation activities. The complex includes nine grass fields and 15 tennis courts in addition to Lake Herrick Beach and an outdoor challenge course.

Foley Field

Foley Field is considered one of the finest baseball complexes in the US. Home to the UGA baseball team, this facility has previously hosted the SEC Championships, now in Hoover, AL through 2021, as well as NCAA Regionals and Super Regionals.

Stegeman Coliseum

Stegeman Coliseum is home to Georgia's gymnastics and basketball teams. Another world class facility, the coliseum could easily accommodate amateur gymnastics national championships, cheer and dance competitions, basketball, volleyball, and other major events.

"Spec" Towns Track

"Spec" Towns Track, a 400-meter track, has eight 42-inch running lanes surfaced with a BSAF Conipur MX full depth, Polyurethane embedded EPDM wearing layer. The renovated facility also features two redesigned throwing circles with cages, five vaulting areas, four expanded long jump areas, along with two javelin runways, a shot-put area, two high jump pits and an underground storm retention drainage system.

UGA Golf Course

With a par-71 course that is 7,523 yards, this is Athens' only in-town, public golf course. The course has played host to five NCAA Women's National Championships. For four years, the course was the site of the "Web.com Athens Classic at UGA." Georgia was the only institution of higher learning to host a Web.com event. Facility was also site of a PGA Junior Championship and Men's and Women's SEC Championships.

In addition to various amateur tournaments, the course would work well for Regional NCAA, National American Junior Golf Association and Georgia High School Association tournaments.

Athens-Clarke County Community and Leisure Services

Southeast Clarke Park

Highlights of this a 124-acre facility include ACC Tennis Center, pickleball courts, trails, multi-use fields, and the Skate Park of Athens.

ACC Tennis Center

ACC Tennis Center at Southeast Clarke Park offers 12 lighted hard surface courts, a covered viewing area and offices with meeting space. The Tennis Center is utilized for USTA tennis tournaments and was the 2014 USTA Facility of the Year.

There are also six dedicated pickleball courts in Southeast Clarke Park, which is home of the Athens Area Pickleball Association. The park is also used for tournaments.

These facilities would work well for multi-day USTA Tennis State Championships and pickleball tournaments.

Skate Park of Athens

SPOA is a 4,500-square foot poured concrete skatepark. It was funded in part with a \$10,000 contribution from the Tony Hawk Foundation.

Sandy Creek Park

This is a 782-acre park that features the 260-acre Lake Chapman, a baseball field and two multipurpose fields. The park also features disc golf courses totaling 29-holes. This is an excellent multi-purpose park that has several sports possibilities. The park has hosted triathlons, disc golf tournaments and other events. This expansive green space leaves the imagination reeling when concepting events.

Trail Creek Park

This is a 113-acre park that includes soccer fields and more than five miles of mountain bike trails. A bicycle “pump track” track is also planned to be added next to the trailhead by the summer of 2019. The multi-use fields of Trail Creek Park are utilized for soccer, football, rugby and Ultimate Frisbee.

Holland Youth Sports Complex

Holland Youth Sports Complex offers lighted fields for baseball and softball and three multi-use fields that can be used for soccer, lacrosse and other field sports. This is a venue for the Athens United Soccer Invitational tournament.

With five Little League fields and two adult-sized fields, this complex can accommodate youth baseball, girls’ softball, and adult softball tournaments. The complex would work well for tournaments such as Georgia Little League Baseball and Softball and USSSA Baseball High School State Championships.

Satterfield Park

Satterfield Park features five lighted baseball fields, which includes one specifically for girls softball. The facility also has three tennis courts. Similar to Holland, five baseball fields make this park an ideal location for youth tournaments. The two adult fields can be utilized for adult softball tournaments.





Bishop Park

Home to the Dolphins Swim Team, a registered Georgia Recreation and Parks Class A team, they partner with the UGA Bulldog Swim Club. During the season, practice and swim competitions are held at this facility. The pool offers a venue that can accommodate swim meets.

Also notable of Bishop Park is that it is home to the Athens-Clarke Gymnastics program. This program is 45 years old, and it has been affiliated with USA Gymnastics for 30 years. The gymnastics program annually hosts the Classic City Gymnastics Challenge at Clarke Central High School. In 2018 the event had 109 unique athletes competing. The event will be held again April 6-7, 2019.

Additionally, Bishop Park offers nine tennis courts and three baseball/softball fields.

[Clarke Central High School](#)

The high school has quality sports facilities and an excellent grass football field in their stadium. Also, there is a six-lane track that encircles the field.

[Firefly Trail](#)

The Firefly Trail is a planned 39-mile rail-trail that will extend from Athens-Clarke County to Union Point in Northeast Georgia. “The Firefly Trail is being created to “enhance health, safety, tourism and economic development” for the communities along its route.

This is not a traditional sports venue, but it will be a strong asset for outdoors recreation events as it gets further developed. The route holds potential for running races, walking events and bicycle tours.

[United Team Sports Center](#)

A privately owned 35,000 square foot facility, the Sports Center has with three full-size basketball/volleyball courts, one half court and 7,500 square feet of artificial turf. Also available are basketball training, league play, football training, gymnastics and cheer programs for kids. This facility is used for tournaments and would be an excellent facility for basketball and volleyball.

[The Georgia Club](#)

The Georgia Club is a semi-private golf community minutes from Downtown Athens. It features 27-holes of golf (one 18-hole course and an additional 9-hole course, as well as practice facilities and PGA instruction.

The semi-private club offers a par 72 course of 7,283 yards suitable to accommodate American Junior Golf Association and Georgia High School Association tournaments.

[Regional Parks](#)

Oconee Veterans Park

Oconee Veterans Park in Watkinsville has four lighted baseball/softball fields, seven grass multiuse fields and eight tennis courts.

This complex is in neighboring Oconee County. Due to proximity, the multi-use fields will work well for Lacrosse because they are ideally located near Herman C. Michael Park.

It is a good example of a complex that has great offerings and could be incorporated into a regional competition across several sports disciplines.

Herman C. Michael Park

Herman C. Michael Park is located across the street from Oconee Veterans Park. It includes one Little League and two adult baseball fields, one multi-use fields, six hard tennis courts and two basketball courts. Combined with Oconee Veterans Park, the park can increase field availability, which allows for larger baseball/softball tournaments. Also, with six tennis courts, this facility can serve as a secondary venue for large USTA tournaments.

Oconee Heritage Park

Oconee Heritage park is in neighboring Watkinsville. Equestrian events are held in the outdoor arena. The facility also has a 130’ X 140’ outdoor arena, small show arena and 31 stalls.

The park also features an 8-mile singletrack mountain bike trail. This trail has been used for 24-hour races, 6-hour mountain bike events and recently a National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) race.

Bogart Sports Complex

Bogart Sports Complex is specifically designed for baseball and softball. With six lighted fields, this is a suitable facility for youth baseball and softball tournaments, as well as adult softball.

Since the complex is in neighboring Oconee County, this would not be a first pick for use, but be useful as an overflow facility and present an opportunity for collaboration.

Sports Events and Tourism Today

Sports tourism generated \$10,761,398 in economic impact during the 2017 fiscal year. The primary event drivers included:

• National Gymnastics Challenge at Ramsey Student Center	\$525,640
• Made in the USA Sports Festival (gymnastics) at The Classic Center	\$152,220
• University of Georgia Athletics Association Division 1 Women’s Golf	\$102,561
• Double Dog Dare Flyball Tournament at The Classic Center	\$92,796
• CCSA 2018 Swimming and Diving Championships at the Gabrielson Natatorium	\$63,164
• Athens Bulldogs Swim Club ABSC Northeast Divisionals	\$60,888

There were over 52 events logged for the year, with gymnastics, swimming, and hockey being significant economic drivers for sports tourism.

Visit Athens

The Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau is a proactive sales and destination marketing organization for Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. The Athens CVB is charged with increasing the economic impact of the hospitality and visitor industry by attracting individual visitors, group tours, and meetings and conventions to Athens.



The Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau is a division of The Classic Center Authority and is funded through Athens-Clarke County's hotel-motel tax of 7%. The CVB receives 31.42% of those collections, which contributes \$974,000 to fund an annual budget of \$1,170,487. Additionally, there is in-kind revenue of \$100,570, as well as revenue which is not reflected in the above numbers but directly credited to expense line items or provided through such items as the advertising-supported visitor's guide and not reflected in financial statements.

The CVB has a staff of ten employees: eight full-time and two part-time. Three are in sales-specific roles. While sports tourism is not a singular focus for any of the CVB staff, the sales manager does cover the sports tourism market, which was responsible for 53% of his sales last year.

Visit Athens utilizes partnerships throughout the community to promote sports tourism. Partner entities include Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services and the University of Georgia.

- Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services oversees parks, facilities and programming for the city. They see the value in attracting events and have expressed desire to further build on the sports tourism program. Additionally, they have expressed a desire to develop events that could serve the community while also attracting out-of-town visitors.
- The University of Georgia is also a willing partner to assist Visit Athens efforts to attract more events.

Beyond Sports

Lodging

Athens-Clarke County has 27 properties with a total of 2882 rooms. 1,750 rooms are downtown. Properties range from 1 to 4 stars, with average-daily-rates that range from \$59 to \$258.

Restaurants and Retail

Athens has a wide variety of dining options that features something for every taste. Restaurants across the culinary spectrum are located throughout the city. Fast and fast-casual options from recognizable corporate chains are available for traveling families going from the hotel to the field. Healthy and fresh options can be found by the health-conscious athletes. Foodies will surely find a unique meal to satiate their tastes and appetites. And, quaint dining spots can be found in Downtown Athens, where adult athletes can go after a race to enjoy craft beer and a great meal.

Points of Interest and Local Attractions

- **Downtown Athens**
With an eclectic mix of retail, restaurants, and clubs, it is a testament to the inherent hipness of the town. Seeing music at the 40-Watt Club or feeling the wind blast of 100 plus cyclists barreling through Turn 1 past the Georgia Theatre during the Athens Twilight Criterium are all hallmarks of a true Athens experience. There is a vibrant arts culture.
- **University of Georgia**
The school was founded in 1785 and is one of three institutions that claim the title of 'Oldest Public University in the United States.'
- **Firefly Trail**
The trail is currently under development, but, when completed, the Rails-Trails path will extend for 39-miles into Northeast Georgia. Within the city, the path will have spurs that provide for greater connectivity.

- North Oconee Greenway
The Greenway includes a 7.25-mile paved multi-use trail that extends from Dudley Park to the Sandy Creek Nature Center.
- State Botanical Garden of Georgia
A 313-acre preserve designed for the study and enjoyment of nature and plants.
- Georgia Museum of Art
The official state museum of art, a permanent collection of more than 10,000 pieces of art is housed here. There is no admission fee to enjoy the works.

Competitive Analysis

Visit Athens will be competing against DMOs with a dedicated full-time sports sales manager or a sports commission dedicated solely to the purpose of recruiting sports events. Competing organizations may have larger sports marketing budgets and/or more staff, but Athens has the luxury of viable facilities in quantity and quality, and their reputation as the quintessential small town with a thriving downtown and unique culture.

When comparing Athens against other communities, the following was considered:

- Southeastern Conference communities – Major Division 1 colleges with high profile sports programs, particularly football, will put a premium on athletic venues, as well as facilities dedicated to student life i.e. Club sports and intramural sports.
- Georgia communities with an active sports program. Visit Athens is affiliated with Georgia Sports, the statewide coalition for state-wide sports marketing efforts.

Regional Market

DMO and/or Sports Commission	Overall Budget	Staff	Number of Sports Staff	Economic Impact from Sports Tourism
Visit Athens	\$1,170,487+	10	<1	\$10,711,906
Augusta Sports Council*	\$600,000	4	4	\$39,542,766
Visit Knoxville Sports Commission**	\$5,200,000	8	4	\$1 Billion
Visit Tuscaloosa	\$1,290,000	8	1	\$19,000,000
Visit Greenville	\$9,200,000	20	1	>\$29,500,000
Experience Columbia SC/Columbia SC Sports	\$4,500,000	10	2	>\$11,000,000
* Sports Commission that works with a DMO				
** Sports Commission that is part of a DMO				



Market Position

In the last two years, Visit Athens has become proactive in the recruitment and support of sports events. Compared to obvious players in the region, Athens has a firm advantage in this process because of the strong selection of quality sports facilities, as well as the quantity of available offerings. The challenge for Visit Athens is that the sports tourism budget is small and primarily used for attending a sports tourism conference and marketing through the Georgia Sports Planner.

With fewer resources allocated towards a sports tourism initiative, Athens is positioned behind those destinations that have allocated more resources for staff dedicated to recruiting and supporting sports; brand recognition from sports-specific marketing to sports event organizers in local and national audiences and sponsorship programs that provide financial support to recruit and retain events. The market position of Visit Athens should be expected to improve as the organization increases resources allocated toward sports tourism to overcome current disadvantages.

Value Proposition

As part of a sports tourism initiative, Visit Athens should quickly determine their value proposition for sports event owners and reinforce it across all marketing channels and touch points. The value proposition should communicate the significance of choosing Athens as a host destination and differentiate Athens from competitors. It should be strong, obvious and concise, as it must succinctly and clearly communicate what makes Athens a better choice as a host destination. Ultimately, it should become part of the Visit Athens sports brand.

Authenticity and originality are essential to an effective value proposition. The purpose is to explain the value of choosing Athens and position Visit Athens to stand out from the competition. Currently, competing DMO brand messaging or taglines are as follows.

- Augusta Sports Council – Where Great Sports Play
- Visit Knoxville Sports Commission – Knox Rocks Sports
- Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports – The One and Only
- Visit Greenville – Yeah, THAT Greenville
- ColumbiaSC Sports – The Real Southern Hot Spot

Ideally, Visit Athens can build on the current brand messaging – Life Unleashed, and integrate a message that communicates value to the sports tourism audience.

For example, Sports Unleashed is an obvious option on which to build. Although the Sports Unleashed tag line alone does not convey a clear benefit (i.e. the value) of hosting events in Athens, it works well because it implies unlimited potential while also allowing Athens to build on current messaging. The exclusion of a benefit can be easily resolved by adding a similar second phrase to convey the benefit. For example, if Athens CVB wants to lead with customer service, something like Sports Unleashed. Service Uncompromised. could be used. Or, if the preference is to lead with the value of UGA facilities, a tagline such as Sports Unleashed. Venues Unrivaled. could be used.

The value proposition may change over time, going through different iterations. The model vehicle to convey the value proposition will be testimonials from satisfied event owners and organizers.

Strategy

Visit Athens has excellent facilities, the backing of an established DMO and a thriving sports community. Even a small allocation of resources towards the development of sports tourism can allow Visit Athens to have more of an advantage.

Considering some of the competing destinations have larger budgets and more staff, focus on a few key areas can help lay a solid foundation for growth in market share.

- Human Capital: dedicated staff and a community network of sports-related representatives
- Brand Awareness/Market Exposure: build awareness and exposure through relationships with local sports bodies and brand recognition with national rights holders.
- Sponsorship Funding: fund a sponsorship program to incentivize the recruitment and development of events.

With a dedicated and strategic focus on growing the sports tourism program while targeting and recruiting events that are a good fit for Athens, the community can realize greater economic benefits from sports tourism.

SWOT Analysis

Introduction

Visit Athens is already pursuing a strategy that allows the community to enjoy the benefits of sports tourism. Throughout the year diverse events are held that draw people to the community. By leveraging access to outstanding facilities, the CVB works to secure events that promote sports tourism. The most recent drivers have been gymnastics, hockey, golf and swimming.

Strengths

Established Destination Marketing Organization

The Athens CVB is an established, experienced and well-staffed marketing organization with strong leadership. This is manifested in the continued growth of the Classic Center and the number of visitors Athens draws annually. The guidance, systems and network of Visit Athens will provide the indispensable backbone for an initiative to grow sports tourism.

Sports Sales Resource

The Athens CVB 'Sales Manager' is responsible for recruiting sports tourism. While it is not clear exactly how much time the resource in this position is expected to dedicate towards the recruitment of sports tourism, it is an advantage that some part of the job is dedicated solely to the recruitment and development of sports tourism.

Weaknesses

Small Budget Allocation for Sports

For a well-funded organization in a community with outstanding facilities and an expectation to drive sports tourism, there is little budgetary allocation made toward achieving this objective. Currently, the Athens CVB seemingly dedicates less than 2% of the overall budget to the recruitment of sports tourism. These funds are used for travel and limited marketing. A competitive sports tourism initiative will need more funding allocated for sales, marketing and sponsorships.

Allocation of funds for sports tourism would allow for dedicated sports staff; dedicated sports marketing to build awareness and increase exposure to event owners and rights holders and development of a sports development fund. A sports development fund would be a valuable asset for use in pursuing the sports tourism market, as it would provide financial support for sales to leverage when recruiting and retaining events. For example, this fund would provide a funding source for bid fees and sponsorships for local events that promise to deliver economic impact through room nights.



Lack of Dedicated Sports Staff

Athens is rich with sports assets and has the resources to dominate the sports tourism market in Georgia, as well as be a major competitor in the Southeast. A staff member, dedicated solely to the recruitment and development of sports tourism, would enable the community to more successfully compete in sports tourism market.

Shifting the sales manager to focus solely on the recruitment and development of sports tourism, rather than serving multiple DMO markets, would facilitate a concentration on sports. This change would better position Athens to compete with those destinations that have experienced resources solely dedicated to sports sales.

Opportunities

Inventory of Venues

Athens CVB has access to an inventory of high quality venues that can be leveraged as assets to recruit sports tourism.

Athens-Clarke County Venues

The unified government of Athens-Clarke County has made a significant investment in venues and facilities. The Classic Center, ACC Tennis Center and development of multi-use trails demonstrate the value that the community has placed on quality facilities, as well as the understanding that these facilities will add to the quality of life and serve as an economic driver to attract tourists and events. The CVB has direct access to Athens-Clarke County Venues and can include them in the available inventory that can be used to recruit sports events.

University of Georgia Venues

The University of Georgia is home to world class sports facilities used for NCAA conference and national championship events across myriad sports disciplines. Notably, UGA was host to Olympic Soccer during the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. UGA is open to event recruitment in partnership with Visit Athens. It will largely be contingent upon the time of year (conflicting sports seasons). When available, the facilities can be used to recruit events.

Integrated Partnership University of Georgia

A collaborative partnership with the University of Georgia presents valuable event opportunities to bid on SEC and NCAA events. It also comes with it a luxury of having additional sports facilities within the inventory, as well as the quality and capacity of the facilities. UGA will need to take the lead on these opportunities as it ensures that facility usage is a given.

Partnership with Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department

Leadership at the Leisure Services Department would like to pursue a partnership with Visit Athens for the development of a multisport event. A multi-sport event will promote community brand and facilities. If well planned and executed, the development and growth of this event could be an ongoing source of revenue for the community.

Athens Name Recognition

Athens is recognized as a sports town, as is proven by the hundred thousand or so who set out for their weekend pilgrimages to Sanford Stadium each fall. However, Athens' reputation surpasses even the high-profile University of Georgia teams such as Georgia Bulldogs football and UGA Gym Dogs gymnastics. Off campus, Athens is home to one of the most iconic cycling events in the country, the Athens Twilight Criterium, as well as the AthHalf half marathon.

Famous for producing a music scene that gave the world REM, the B-52's and Wide Spread Panic, among other renowned bands; the city is also known for arts and culture. That is evident in the AthFest Music and Arts Festival, a three-day show-

case for local regional musicians, bands, and artists. Events like this contribute to the quality of life of the community and also serve to enhance the reputation of Athens as a fun, welcoming city with an energetic vibe. Replete with excellent lodging, especially downtown, and a wide selection of dining options, bars, live music clubs and brew pubs, Athens has a lot to offer tourists, especially those traveling for sports. Community pride runs deep, particularly for the University of Georgia and the beloved Bulldogs.

Athens enjoys a unique reputation, and that will be beneficial for the CVB as they market to and recruit sports events. Having this historic college town as the backdrop for events will undoubtedly be a competitive advantage that opens doors and presents opportunities to grow and develop events.

Local Sports Bodies

There are many sports groups in Athens that span a diverse range of disciplines. These groups represent opportunities to build relationships that can be utilized in event development. An outreach program would facilitate this effort and allow the CVB to foster relationships with leadership representatives of these various sports groups. As relationships are developed, they can become a source of leads for new events. Local sports groups also serve as a knowledge source crucial to understanding the nuances of sports. Lastly, local sports groups are invaluable in securing a volunteer base that is invaluable to event support and management.

Strong Cycling Culture

Athens has a rich and historic cycling culture, and it is home to the Athens Twilight Criterium, one of the most iconic cycling events in the world. Amateur and professional cycling teams also call Athens home. The culture presents opportunities for growth, and the community is committed to expanding and enhancing the local cycling infrastructure, which is seen in the expansion of Firefly Trail and the mountain bike trails at Trail Creek Park. Investments in the development of a bicycle infrastructure will allow the city to further capitalize on the existing events and the cycling demographic within the community as well as leverage Athens as a premier cycling destination.

Threats

Regional Competition

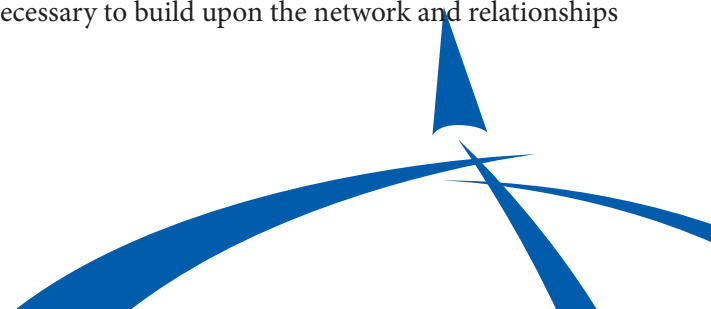
The southeast region is lucrative and competitive for sports tourism. Competing destinations have experienced, dedicated resources allocated towards the recruitment of sports tourism, as well as significant marketing budgets. In some cases, Athens will be competing against the marketing effort of a DMO combined with the sales and service efforts of a sports commission. With no single staff member dedicated to sports, competing DMOs will be a threat to Athens. Sports tourism is significantly different than other types of tourism. Athens could more effectively compete with other markets if the sales manager could focus solely on developing and recruiting sports tourism.

Access to University of Georgia Facilities

The University of Georgia has different motives than Visit Athens when it pursues Conference, Regional, and National Championships. Succinctly, they seek competitive advantage over their rivals. UGA has expressed a willingness to deepen collaborative efforts with Visit Athens. However, facility priority will always be given to school teams and club sports. It will be necessary to understand competing objectives can pose a threat at times. Therefore, it will be beneficial to maintain open communications on leads, and work in tandem to research and source sports events that will fulfill University of Georgia Athletics Association aims, as well as that of Visit Athens.

Limited Access to Traditional Sports Venues

Access to school and Leisure Services' facilities may present challenges. An abundance of facilities does not guarantee access. As Visit Athens expands their sports tourism efforts, it will be necessary to build upon the network and relationships



with local facility providers to ensure scheduling, understanding of times of availability and protocol for securing facility access for events.

Executive Summary

Athens is a city that thrives on sports, and it is obvious that the community could further benefit from capitalizing on the pursuit of sports tourism. Leveraging the unique facilities provided by the University of Georgia, as well as the city's own venues, will allow for continued growth.

Commitment to an investment that permits allocation of sports-specific resources will be a sure step towards the community realizing increased economic development through sports tourism.

Recommendations

Overview

The objective of this section is to deliver general recommendations based on the findings of this assessment for the purpose of offering guidance to Visit Athens for use in growing sports tourism. These recommendations are not intended to provide the level of detail consistent with a strategic plan. However, this assessment and the subsequent recommendations are designed to provide a foundation for Visit Athens to pursue sports tourism.

Recommendations are made in three categories:

1. Organization and Structure
2. Marketing, Communications and Sales
3. Events and Venues

Organization and Structure

Allocate Funds to Support a 'Sports Sales Manager' Position

Visit Athens has a strong lead sales person in place as a resource to pursue the sports market. The role of this resource currently includes responsibilities in areas not related to sports business. If allowed, a dedicated sports sales manager would undoubtedly facilitate a stronger and more financially lucrative sports tourism program for Athens-Clarke County.

Create a Sports Advisory Committee

It is recommended that Visit Athens establish a Sports Advisory Committee comprised of five to seven individuals with an active interest in Athens sports. Desired members should represent sports clubs, facilities, promotions groups, local lodging, Leisure Services, and local government. A Visit Athens board member should chair the committee. Other committee members do not have to be on the Visit Athens board.

The committee would help:

- Steer the sports tourism initiative for Visit Athens/Athens Sports
- Cultivate event leads
- Establish and oversee the sports budget for Visit Athens/Athens Sports
- Upon establishment of a sponsorship program:
 - oversee the sponsorship budget
 - vet candidates for sponsorship

Marketing, Communications and Sales

Marketing and Communications

Allocate Funds for Sports Tourism Marketing and Communications

Establish the value proposition for Athens, and use it to build the Athens Sports brand. Develop a marketing and communications strategy around the Athens Sports brand, using sports-specific and audience-targeted creative and content.

Allocate funds that allow Athens CVB to strategically target both a local audience of sports bodies and a national audience of sports event organizers. Increased exposure of Athens as a sports destination brand will build awareness about the benefits offered to sports event organizers (i.e. the value proposition).

Sales and Recruitment

Engage Local Sports Bodies

Engage and develop relationships with Local Sports Bodies that can grow sports tourism. These sports clubs and event organizers can be a source for event leads; a volunteer base and a knowledge resource for the sports they serve.

Groups worthy of pursuing are:

- ACC Leisure Services
- United Team Sports facility
- Soccer clubs
- UGA Campus athletics
- Running clubs
- Event promoters
- Cycling clubs
- AAU athletics promoters (basketball, volleyball)
- Gymnastics clubs
- Swim clubs

Allocate \$10,000 for the Development of a Sponsorship Fund

Establish a sports fund to facilitate a 'Sponsorship Program' that can be utilized for bid fees, event development, and support. To begin, allocate \$10,000 annually; then increase as finances and demand allows.

- \$1,000 for bid fees
- \$9,000 allocated to sponsorship and event development. Implement an application process where event rights holders can submit for financial assistance to develop or support events that will draw out-of-town guests. Cap individual events at \$1,000. Applications should be vetted through Sports Advisory Group.

Events and Venues

Strategically Target Events

To maximize benefit of sports tourism, there are individual sports that offer specific events that would be a good fit for Athens. These events "speak" to the venues that are available and/or subscribe to the local sports culture. Listed below are six targeted sports with accompanying events that should be targeted. The information includes venue suggestions and attendance projections.

Golf

Amateur golf tournaments are excellent. Junior golf, in particular, is effective as parents and family typically follow the tournaments. American Junior Golf Association can attract 80 to 100+ participants. Using a 1.5 multiplier per person means tournaments have the potential of attracting 200 + visitors. Single day tournaments which may include a practice round can generate at least one night's stay. Multi-day tournaments generate 2-3 days stays with the potential of 400 + room nights.



Venue(s):

- The Georgia Club
- UGA Golf Course

Event(s):

- GHSA High School Championship

If you can host the Boy's and Girl's Championships, there will be approximately 200 players in attendance. The tournament is held the third Monday in May. It will require a support commitment from the golf clubs and be "hosted" by a local high school. Some teams may come in the Saturday before if their Sunday practice round is early. Most teams will stay one night. Parents attend with their players.

Cycling

Cycling culture is big in Athens. The community hosts a number of events annually across all cycling disciplines. Capitalize on this by finding new opportunities through collaborative efforts with the cycling community. The trend in cycling events is that they are typically 1-2 days, which will bring high concentration of day visitors. It may be worth considering pursuing a high profile multi-day event.

Venue(s):

- Trail Creek Park
- Downtown Athens and outlying county roads
- Firefly Trail
- Classic Center

Event(s):

- USA Cycling Collegiate Road National Championships.

The USA Cycling event is typically a three-day race that bring 300-350 cyclists. Logistically it will require identifying courses for three disciplines: Road, Criterium, and Team Time Trial. Athens is the quintessential college cycling town. This event would work. There are local resources that can facilitate all aspects of event management and Local Organizing Committee (LOC) responsibilities. The event has the capacity to generate approximately 800+ room nights.

- Bicycle Ride Across Georgia - Spring tune-up ride

Bicycle Ride Across Georgia's Spring Tune-up is a multi-day "hub and spoke" series of bike rides that begin and end in the host community, but utilize different courses each day. In 2018, over 1,000 riders registered. Camping is a big component of the event. However, the event will generate room nights as well.

- NICA races could be held at the trails in Trail Creek Park and Oconee Heritage Park

A National Interscholastic Cycling Association event is already held at Oconee Heritage Park. Per NICA, these events are typically two days and can draw 600+ student-athletes. When parents, coaches, and volunteers are factored, the number of visitors can bring the numbers closer to 1,000. Athletes who live within three-hours may be considered day trippers. However, teams from further out may consider overnight stays. Many groups prefer to camp onsite. A NICA event was held in Heritage Park in October. Athens CVB provided a small room block of 240 for the Oconee County event. NICA events are one of the fastest growing interscholastic sports in the country. It's worth continuing support of these events and, if possible, develop another for Trail Creek Park. Once data is collected from the October race, it can provide the foundation for putting Trail Creek Park into consideration for 2019. Participants who camp will decrease potential hotel room nights. The Athens-area mountain bike advocacy group, SORBA Athens helps maintain the trail and hosts events throughout the year.

- Sports and outdoors recreation conferences could be held at the Classic Center. In recent years, the community has hosted the Georgia Bike Summit and the Georgia Trails Summit. Meetings can bring 100+ participants who will stay two days for a quick conference.

Tennis

USTA sanctioned events are very good for driving room nights. State Championship events run Thursday to Sunday and can draw 1000 participants for multi-day tournaments. The ACC Tennis Center is an ideal location. The venue is already the site of several large USTA tournaments. The ACC Tennis Center is a strong regional venue that was recognized by the USTA as a Facility of the Year. The University of Georgia is home to the Dan Magill Tennis Complex. These facilities host significant and high profile tennis matches. Combined, they have 28 outdoor courts. Continue supporting existing events and partner with the sanctioning body to identify new opportunities.

Venue(s):

- ACC Tennis Center
- Dan Magill Tennis Complex

Event(s):

- USTA State Championships
- Collegiate Conference Championships
- Professional Invitational Tournaments

Pickleball

Pickleball tournaments are drawing 150+ participants. Single day tournaments will generate day visitors. Multi-day tournaments may generate overnight visitors (25 to 75 room nights). This sport is probably the hottest trending at the moment. With a nice facility in a cool town, this is the sport to continue supporting. Athens has benefitted from pickle ball tournaments at the Classic Center and on the courts at Southeast Clarke Park. There is also a strong local association. According to USAPA there are over 3.2 million pickleball players in the U.S. Continue to support existing events and attract new tournaments.

Venue(s):

- Pickleball Courts at SE Clarke Park adjacent to the ACC Tennis Center
- Classic Center

Event(s):

- US Pickleball-sanctioned championships

Track & Field

The availability of world track facilities at UGA opens opportunities to host AAU, USATE, GRPA and US Paralympics events. Thus, these types of events should be a target. AAU Region and National Qualifiers are multi-day events capable of attracting attract 1,200 to 1,600 athletes and generating over 3,000 room nights. GRPA State Championship can attract 1,000+ participants. It would also be worth approaching US Paralympics to host the US Paralympics Track National Championships. The events don't draw the large numbers like the AAU events however they still attract hundreds of athletes for a



multi-day high profile event which will generate significant media exposure.

Venue(s):

- “Spec” Towns Track

Event(s):

- AAU Regional Qualifier
- AAU District Qualifier
- US Paralympics Track National Championships

Baseball

Baseball and softball tournaments are excellent drivers for local economies. High profile tournaments at UGA draw participants, spectators and media attention. Youth travel tournaments can generate high room nights.

Venue(s):

- Foley Field at the University of Georgia
- Holland Youth Sports Complex

Event(s):

- The SEC Championship is currently held in Hoover, Alabama. Hoover has hosting rights through 2021. The SEC invites 12 teams to compete in the six day event. with media and spectator accommodations a 12-team tournament can bring an estimated 2,400 room nights. This has significant collaborative potential with the University of Georgia and would be a great fit for Foley Field.
- USSSA Baseball Championships. There is great demand to host USSSA tournaments. As an examples of events which can be up for bid, the Douglasville NIT have the capability of hosting up to 180 teams with the potential of generating 1,500 to over 3,000 room nights.

Event recruitment efforts should not be limited to the aforementioned sports. Athens is a diverse sports town with many different sports facilities catering to various disciplines. A combination of world class collegiate venues and excellent regional facilities gives Athens a competitive advantage for attracting numerous sports events. The following disciplines also provide ample opportunities.

Basketball – Boys and Girls youth basketball events are a solid bet. AAU-sanctioned youth basketball tournaments should be pursued and supported. Venues such as the United Team Sports Center, as well as high school facilities are ideal. Establish a cooperative collaboration to assist UGA is supporting SEC tournaments and championships. If available, utilize the arena for non-collegiate events.

Swimming and Diving – Gabrielson Natatorium and the swim facilities at Bishop Park already host national and regional meets. Utilize these resources to identify or develop new events. Swim meets are multi-day and typically include parents and family. The GRPA State Meet annually attracts 800+ swimmers and would be a good event to recruit. Collaborate with UGA to identify, recruit and present high profile NCAA meets.

Volleyball – High school gyms, Stegeman Coliseum at UGA, ACC Leisure Services facilities, and United Team Sports Center all offer excellent volleyball facilities. Continue supporting and/or developing club and AAU Volleyball tournaments, as well as partner with UGA for SEC championships and other high profile tournaments.

Soccer - Local soccer clubs are an asset that should be targeted and supported. The Athens Invitational has the capacity to host 120 teams and utilizes 6 ACC parks. Continue supporting events such as the Invitational and identify new events

for recruitment or development. Collaborate with UGA to identify collegiate club opportunities for the UGA Recreation Sports Complex

Rugby – Local rugby clubs can play on football, soccer and multi-use fields. The fields at the Recreational Sports Complex at UGA would be suitable to run multiple games. ACC facilities (Trail Creek Park, Southeast Clarke Park, and Holland Youth Sports Complex for example) would also be good sites. Local clubs will present the primary opportunities for events, which will be sanctioned by USA Rugby, the national governing body in the United States.

Ultimate Frisbee – Local Ultimate clubs also present growth opportunities. A number of tournaments take place throughout the year. Southeast Clarke hosts several 1 and 2-day tournaments. Consider establishing a partnership with Good Luck Ultimate, Inc. and the UGA club to support existing events and identify new opportunities. With 9 fields, the Recreational Complex at UGA could be a site for regional and, potentially, collegiate Ultimate championships.

Conclusion

Recommendations emphasize next steps to further develop a sports tourism initiative for Athens CVB. Dedicating resources will be an important first step. The distinctions of targeting sports tourism require experienced and dedicated resources to be competitive. Additionally, audience-centric marketing and communications will be important for delivering the right messages to the right audiences, as Visit Athens will want to build upon current messaging and direct it towards local sports bodies within the community, as well as generate exposure to event owners and rights holders beyond Athens.



Appendix A – Sports Assets, Venues and Facilities

1. UGA Golf Course

Notable asset(s):

- Athens' only in-town public golf course. The 18-hole, par 71 course is 7,523 yards.

Current use(s):

- NCAA Women's National Championships
- "Web.com Athens Classic at UGA"
- PGA Junior Championship
- Men's and Women's SEC Championships

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- NCAA junior and amateur golf tournaments

Example(s) of events that could be accommodated:

- Regional NCAA tournaments
- National American Junior Golf Association tournaments
- Georgia High School Association Championships

Availability:

Based around existing schedules

Limitation(s):

UGA Golf will always take priority.

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.

2. The Georgia Club

Notable asset(s):

- Semi-private golf community minutes
- 7,283-yards from Black tees, 5,152-yards from Red tees
- 18-hole course
- 9-hole course
- Practice facilities and PGA instruction

Current use(s):

- Golf play and tournaments

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Junior and high school tournaments with 80-110 participants

Example(s) of events that could be accommodated:

- American Junior Golf Association tournaments
- Georgia High School Association Tournaments

Availability:

Based around regular play and booked tournaments

Limitation(s):

Regular play and booked tournaments

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.

3. Bishop Park

Notable asset(s):

- Olympic-sized pool
- Gymnastics facility

Current use(s):

- Home to Dolphins Swim Team
- Home to Athens-Clarke Gymnastics Program

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Club and state swim meets

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- GRPA State Meet “A” Division (2-day event)
- North Georgia District 7 Meet

Availability:

Based around the Dolphins swim schedule.

Limitation(s):

This is a public facility that is also home to a swim club.

Non-club events would need to be worked around existing events.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.



4. The Dan Magill Tennis Complex

Notable asset(s):

- 12 outdoor tennis courts
- 4 indoor tennis courts
- Seating capacity >5000

Current use(s):

- Home to the University of Georgia Men's and Women's tennis teams
- NCAA Men's National Tournaments, Women's National Tournaments; Men's and Women's combined tournaments

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- NCAA tennis tournaments

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- NCAA Men's and Women's National Championships
- Professional Tournaments
- Showcase Matches

Availability:

Availability is based upon existing UGA and special event scheduling.

Limitation(s):

UGA tennis team priorities will always take precedence.

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.



5. Southeast Clarke Park - ACC Tennis Center

Notable asset(s):

- 12 lighted, hard surface courts
- 6 pickleball courts
- Covered viewing area
- Offices with meeting space

Current use(s):

- USTA tournaments
- Athens Area Pickleball Association tournaments

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Tennis tournaments
- Single and multi-day pickleball tournaments

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- USTA Tennis State Championships (multi-day)

Availability:

The facility can be utilized for events, but planning needs to be done in partnership with ACC Leisure Services.

Limitation(s):

Booking will need to be worked around existing league play and tournaments.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour



6. Holland Youth Sports Complex

Notable asset(s):

- 5 lighted Little League fields
- 2 lighted adult fields
- 4 lighted multi-use fields

Current use(s):

- Baseball, soccer, and other athletic events

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Youth baseball
- Girl's and adult softball tournaments
- Soccer, lacrosse, and additional field sports tournaments on the multi-use fields

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- USSSA Baseball High School State Championships.

Note: There is great demand to host USSSA tournaments, of which the following are up for bid:

- 17U-Open (2019)
- 16U-Open (2020)
- 16U-AA (2020)

Availability:

Availability is based around league play and booked tournaments.

Limitation(s):

ACC Leisure Services take priority.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.

7. Satterfield Park

Notable asset(s):

- 5 lighted baseball fields, including:
 - 1 for girls' softball
 - 2 adult fields

Current use(s):

- Youth league sports

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Youth baseball
- Girl's and adult softball tournaments
- Soccer, lacrosse, and additional field sports tournaments on the multi-use fields

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Youth baseball and softball tournaments
- Adult/senior softball tournaments

Availability:

Based around existing league play and tournaments

Limitation(s):

Scheduling

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.

8. Jim Joyner Recreation Complex

Notable asset(s):

- 2 hardwood basketball courts
- 2 baseball/softball fields
- 4 multi-use fields

Current use(s):

- Youth league play

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Youth basketball tournaments
- Soccer and additional field sports tournaments on the multi-use fields

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Club soccer
- Lacrosse tournaments

Limitation(s):

Since the facility is located in Jackson County, it would not be a first pick for use. However, in combination with Athens facilities.

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.



9. Bogart Sports Complex

Notable asset(s):

- 6 lighted baseball/softball fields

Current use(s):

- Baseball/softball tournaments

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Youth baseball and softball tournaments
- Adult softball tournaments

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Youth baseball and softball tournaments

Availability:

Availability based around league play and department programming

Limitation(s):

Since the complex is in neighboring Oconee County, this would not be a first pick for use, but be useful as an overflow facility and present an opportunity for collaboration.

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.

10. Oconee Veterans Park

Notable asset(s):

- 4 lighted baseball/softball fields
- 7 grass multi-use fields
- 8 tennis courts
- Basketball gym

Current use(s):

- Utilized for Oconee County recreation play

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Lacrosse tournament overflow, due to proximity to Herman C. Michael Park

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Facility can be utilized for youth and adult baseball and softball tournaments such as USSSA State Tournaments

Availability:

Availability based upon existing league play

Limitation(s):

Beyond use for lacrosse with Herman C Michael Park, the park would not be a first pick for use since it is in neighboring Oconee County. Similar to Jim Joyner Recreation Complex, it would be good for overflow, in combination with Athens facilities. However, it is a good example of a complex that has great offerings and could be incorporated into a regional competition across several sports disciplines.

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.

11. Herman C. Michael Park

Notable asset(s):

- 1 Little League field
- 2 adult baseball fields
- 1 multi-use fields
- 6 hard tennis courts
- 2 basketball courts
- 18-hole disc golf course

Current use(s):

- Recreational disc golf, youth leagues

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Combined with Oconee Veterans Park, it increases field availability, which can allow for larger baseball/softball tournaments
- With 6 tennis courts, this facility could serve as a secondary venue for large USTA tournaments
- Disc Golf tournaments

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- PDGA-sanctioned disc golf tournaments
- Travel baseball & softball tournaments

Availability:

Availability based on existing Oconee County programs

Limitation(s):

Access based around existing programs

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour.

12. Oconee Heritage Park

Notable asset(s):

- Outdoor arena
- 130' x 140' outdoor arena
- Small show arena
- 31 stalls to accommodate horses for equestrian events
- 8-mile single-track mountain bike trail

Current use(s):

- Trail:
 - 24-hour races
 - 6-hour mountain bike events
- National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) race
- Arena:
 - Equestrian Events

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- National Interscholastic Cycling Association events (typically two days)
- Sanctioned Cutting Horse Events
- National Barrel Horse Racing (NBHA) sanctioned events



Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- USA Cycling Collegiate Mountain Biking Championship

Availability:

Based around existing events

Limitation(s):

Facility is in neighboring county

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour

13. Trail Creek Park

Notable asset(s):

- 2 soccer fields
- 5+ miles of mountain bike trails
- Development of bicycle “pump track”

Current use(s):

- Multi-use fields: soccer, football, rugby and Ultimate
- Mountain biking

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Ultimate tournaments, mountain biking events, soccer

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- NICA Mountain Bike race
- USA Ultimate-sanctioned tournament
- USA Rugby Southeast Championships (semi-finals)

Availability:

Based around ACC Leisure Services scheduled events

Limitation(s):

Other than scheduling, there are few limitations.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.



14. Clarke Central High School

Notable asset(s):

- Stadium with grass football field
- 6-lane track

Current use(s):

- School use

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Field sports which include football, soccer, rugby, Ultimate, and camps
- Gymnastics and cheer

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Ray Guy Kicking, Punting, and Long Snapping Camp

Availability:

School district has hosted “outside” events and are open to more.

Limitation(s):

School sports will take priority. AAU events and larger GRPA competitions favor and/or require 8-lane tracks.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour



15. United Team Sports Center

Notable asset(s):

- 3 full size basketball/volleyball courts
- 1 half court
- 7,500 square feet of artificial turf

Current use(s):

- League play for basketball and volleyball
- Training camps

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Basketball
- Volleyball

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- AAU basketball tournaments
- AAU volleyball tournaments

Availability:

The facility stays booked with tournaments and camps however, they are open to event ideas and collaboration

Limitation(s):

Privately owned facility stays booked. Must work around scheduled events

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour



16. UGA - Ramsey Student Center

Notable asset(s):

- Natatorium
 - 50-meter pool
 - diving well with 10-meter platform
 - recreation pool
- Basketball courts
- Volleyball arena

Current use(s):

- NCAA swim, UGA Women's Volleyball, Diving, NCAA Basketball

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- NCAA events

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Mens' & Women's NCAA Conference and National Championships in Swimming, Volleyball, Diving, Basketball
- GRPA State Swim Championships
- AAU Swim Invitational

Availability:

Limited

Limitation(s):

UGA events take priority. Unless non-UGA events can be "locked-in," the possibility exists that events can be "bumped

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour



17. UGA – Recreation Sports Complex

Notable asset(s):

- 9 grass fields
- 15 tennis courts

Current use(s):

- The facility is used for UGA club and intramural sports

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Soccer tournaments, ultimate tournaments, tennis tournaments

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Collegiate club ultimate tournaments
- Club tennis tournaments

Availability:

Availability is contingent upon intramural and club sport scheduling.

Limitation(s):

UGA will always take precedence over “outside” activities.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.

18. UGA – Stegeman Coliseum

Notable asset(s):

- Coliseum

Current use(s):

- UGA gymnastics and basketball teams

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Gymnastics
- Basketball
- Volleyball

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Gymnastics National Championships
- Volleyball Conference Championships
- Basketball Conference Championships

Availability:

Limited

Limitation(s):

School events will always take priority.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.



19. UGA – Foley Field

Notable asset(s):

- Baseball complex

Current use(s):

- UGA baseball team
- SEC Championships

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- NCAA baseball

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- NCAA Regionals and Super Regionals
- SEC Championships

Availability:

Limited based on UGA team schedule

Limitation(s):

School events will always take priority.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.



20. The Classic Center

Notable asset(s):

- Akins Arena with NHL-regulation hockey rink
- Outdoor Pavilion

Current use(s):

- Arena:
 - UGA hockey team, SECHC Championships, robotics competitions, gymnastics, cheer and dance, electronic gaming
- Pavilion:
 - Outdoor hockey

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Cheer and dance
- Various events

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Cheer Extreme
- Varsity All Star Competitions
- American Contract Bridge League District 7 Regional Championships

Availability:

Visit Athens works in partnership with the Classic Center. Events must be booked around existing events, but the facility is available for booking.

Limitation(s):

Working around existing booked events.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.



21. Sandy Creek Park

Notable asset(s):

- 260-acre Lake Chapman
- 3 baseball field
- 2 multi-use fields
- 23-basket Disc Golf course

Current use(s):

- Triathlons, disc golf tournaments

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Triathlons, paddling, open water swim
- Disc golf

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- PDGA-sanctioned tournaments
- USTA-sanctioned triathlons

Availability:

Facility is available for events

Limitation(s):

Must work around existing events

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour.



22. Firefly Trail

Notable asset(s):

- Development will include 39-mile rail trail

Current use(s):

- In development

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- Running races, walking events, bicycle tours

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- Bicycle tours

Availability:

Availability is probably based on a “case-by-case” contingency.

Limitation(s):

This is a public facility. It may not be possible to “hard close” the trail for an event.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour



23. 'Spec' Towns Track

Notable asset(s):

- 400-meter/8 42-inch running lanes with BSAF Conipur MX full depth, Polyurethane embedded EPDM wearing layer
- 2 re-designed throwing circles with cages
- 5 vaulting areas
- 4 expanded long jump areas
- 2 javelin runway
- Shot put area
- 2 high jump pits

Current use(s):

- Home to UGA track team

Best use(s) to draw sport tourism:

- NCAA Track and Field
- USTA and AAU Track and Field

Example(s) of events the facility could accommodate:

- AAU District and Regional Qualifiers
- AAU National Championships

Availability:

Limited based on UGA schedule

Limitation(s):

UGA meets take priority.

Site tour:

This facility was not included in the site tour

24. Memorial Park

This 72-acre park has a lake, nature trails, pool, and basketball courts. While it is a nice park, it is not a primary consideration for sports events.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour

25. Ben Burton Park

Ben Burton Park is a 32-acre nature preserve situated on the Middle Oconee River. It offers two miles of trails and a non-motorized boat launch.

While the kayak ramp could serve as the launch for paddle events, this park is not a primary consideration for sports events, and limited parking could be a factor.

Site tour:

This facility was included in the site tour



Appendix B – Stakeholder Meetings and Interviews

In-person Meetings and Interviews

1. Jay Boling, Sales Manager, Athens CVB
2. Kent Kilpatrick, Director, ACC Leisure Services
3. Mel Cochran-Davis, Parks Services Administrator, ACC Leisure Services
4. Melanie McElroy, Community Outreach Coordinator, ACC Leisure Services
5. Eric Eleton, Facility Supervisor - Youth Athletics, ACC Leisure Services
6. Steve Argo, Facility Supervisor – Youth Athletics, ACC Leisure Services
Note: Steve was interviewed prior to starting the position with ACC Leisure Services
7. Blaine Williams, Manager, Athens-Clarke County
8. Danny Bryant, Arena Services Manager, The Classic Center
9. Jay Drudge, Director of Sales, United Sports Team Center
10. Scott Norris, VP of Sales and Marketing, Benson Hospitality Group
11. Matt Brachowski, Associate AD - Event Management, University of Georgia Athletic Department
12. Christie Purks, Assistant AD, Event Management, University of Georgia Athletic Department
13. Gene Dixon, Founder, USA Crits/Twilight Criterium
14. Ken Sherman, Chair, Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan Committee
15. Mark Ralston, Chair, Firefly Trail Committee

Phone Interviews

1. Nick Arnold, Director of Sales, Athens CVB
2. David Crowe, Founder, WBL
3. Elliot Caldwell, Executive Director, Georgia Bikes





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