



## *Soccer Fields At Knoxville Municipal Golf Course*

*Possible solution to a lack of tournament quality fields*

***Abstract:** Trading 9 holes of a golf course for fields that could generate more than \$18 million a year in visitor spending*

*August 2024*

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*Prepared by  
DSA Sports LLC*

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## INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of an agreement dated May 22, 2024, between Visit Knoxville (VK) with offices at 301 South Gay Street, Knoxville, TN 37902, and DSA Sports LLC (DSA) with offices at 9880 Forestglen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45242. The agreement covers the feasibility of constructing soccer fields on part of the Knoxville Municipal Golf Course. The study is being conducted with a level of confidentiality due to the uncertainties surrounding the concept.

To understand possibilities, it was decided that DSA would determine the number of fields possible, whether a nine-hole golf course could remain, and how many of the total number of fields might make sense financially.

Accordingly, DSA proposed to provide VK the following:

- A site plan.
- A determination regarding a nine-hole golf course.
- Construction estimates.
- Projected usage locally and for outside events.
- Financial projections of sufficient detail to determine viability.
- Projected economic benefits.
- A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis.

DSA further proposed to work with The Motz Group on the site plan and construction considerations. The Motz Group is a nationally recognized supplier of grass and turf sports surfaces. Their location in the Cincinnati area made logistical sense. It was understood the work product would estimate costs and what the site plan might be. DSA pledged to provide actionable data: enough information to decide whether the idea has sufficient merit to warrant detailed consideration and further study.

The course visit was on May 22, 2024. Very preliminary elevations were noted, along with the golf holes that might be considered for fields. At least seven or more holes were deemed too uneven, leading to whether nine might be saved.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It may be possible to convert about nine holes of the Knoxville Municipal Golf Course to rectangular, lighted, artificial turf fields for soccer, lacrosse, football, and other uses. A nine-hole course might be saved, made up of the fields furthest from the existing clubhouse. This is a possibility for discussion.

A conversion will be costly. Probably upward of \$20 million, and operation of the fields for heavy local uses and outside events might result in shortfalls of as much as \$400,000 to \$450,000 a year. DSA has been very conservative with income projections. Improvements in performance, which is within the realm of possibility, could reduce the number to below \$300,000.

For this investment, the city and county could realize an increase of about \$18 million a year in visitor spending, based upon reasonable projections. This spending would be subject to sales tax, and each occupied room will produce room tax revenues.

Many cities and counties are investing in facilities designed to increase their share of the growing market for sports tourism. Few of these destinations have Knoxville's location, access, experience as a successful event host, and plenty of additional things to see and do.

Funding for such a facility is never easy to find, but the payoffs are great. A private fund-raising campaign could be combined with the creation of a Tourist Development District. Details follow. A city in Kentucky funded their sports complex by creating a tax on restaurant meals. It has been successful.

This report details how a complex could be built and provides construction, revenue, and expense projections. A very important additional benefit would be the impact on the local soccer community. Practices and games would be played under all conditions except an electrical storm and even then, play would resume after the storm passes.

Between increased local participation and an exceptional increase in visitor spending, this investment is worthy of consideration.

## BACKGROUND

DSA performed two earlier studies. The first looked at the feasibility of an indoor court facility and an outdoor sports complex. It had been determined that the area was underserved by sports facilities. The second study examined the impact turf could have on the operation of existing grass fields. It was this study that uncovered the possibility of using the golf course instead of turfing existing fields, which vary in size and location.

A section of the first study is included as a reference. It is Appendix I, Development Concept – Outdoor Facility.

This study was completed in February 2019. The projections were based on ten rectangular fields. Costs were projected for grass and turf surfaces. These projections can be found on pages 8-9 of the report.

Eight fields were projected as turf and two of grass.

No provision was made for land costs. No site was selected.

An operating loss of about \$380,000 per year was projected.

Costs have increased due to inflation and the pandemic.

DSA will apply a 20% increase for construction and operating costs.

Although the annual projected losses in the 2019 study were significant, estimated economic benefits were greater.

It was projected that about \$12 million a year in direct visitor spending would result from outside events. This spending would be taxed, resulting in another \$1.1 million or more.

Sports tourism and the popularity of participating on local teams has increased since the pandemic.

And local teams, clubs, and leagues would have access to fields 365 a year and 24/7 every week. Some of the existing grass fields are on low-lying land. Rain does present problems for practice and games.



All residents would experience an increase in their quality of life: the influx of new dollars produces jobs, saves residents from tax increases (because visitors are also paying taxes), and provides better and more facilities.

Both studies recognized the competition. There are cities close to Knoxville that have sports facilities that host events and visitors. None, however, are located near the center of a large city where lodging, restaurants, and retail stores are located. Some are in tourist areas where traffic is bad under the best of conditions.

Knoxville has the experience, organizational expertise, and location to be even more successful.

DSA understands the importance of maintaining green space. The Knoxville Municipal Golf Course is a beautiful site. The mature trees along each fairway make it even nicer. Many of these would be lost to the fields.

There are trade-offs to be made should the site be selected for fields.

## SITE VISIT

Knoxville Municipal Golf Course is an 18-hole layout that opened for play in 1984. There is a substantial elevation difference from the clubhouse and parking lot to the fairways (about 35 feet). This lends itself to interesting locations for golf tees and greens but not for accessible athletic fields.

The northern portion of the course is unusable for flat athletic fields.

The first observation was the lack of vehicle access from Schaad Road to the level of fairways (1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18...those most suitable for fields).

*It was also apparent that holes 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, and 15 were not suitable.* Some of the 4th fairway could be used as could part of #15.

The 12th hole runs along the rear of existing housing. It is suitable in terms of elevation but separate from the balance of the best locations for fields.

On holes 1, 2, 3, and 9 the elevations from tee to green are between 25 and 30 feet across 400 to 525 yards. These four are next to each other. The elevation differences between holes 11, 18, 17, and 16 are less than the first four.

Because there is a perfect balance of 9 and 9, careful consideration is needed as to the viability of a nine-hole layout. The holes unsuitable are those furthest from existing parking and the clubhouse, cart barn, etc. The terrain naturally slopes upward away from Schaad Road.

There is water at the base of the hill separating the clubhouse from the fairways. This water continues through #10 and along #11. These areas are off limits for fields. There are other valleys along and across some of the more elevated fairways, and these areas are not included in usable acreage.

*Please note Appendix II – Three Possible Configurations.*

The existing parking area is more than sufficient for golf and would remain should fields be built. Unfortunately for soccer parents and others, the trek from lot to field would be a challenge. That might suggest putting two or more fields on parts of the existing parking lot and spread the balance of parking around the fields located on the lower elevations.



One of the diagrams shows parking in the area at the base of the hill below the clubhouse and running along the water course.

Access to the site is not difficult. There are ample streets and roads connecting to main arteries and interstates. Downtown Knoxville is just under 9 miles away. Midday, this should be a twenty-minute trip.

There are plenty of hotels and restaurants, no further than 1-75 to the east and south of the site.

The golf course is managed by a vendor and owned by the City of Knoxville. There may be contract provisions that must be considered if this potential project moves forward.

The clubhouse has a small pro shop and a grill with a limited menu.

## ANALYSIS OF PRIOR STUDY AND PROJECTIONS

The 2019 projections for a ten-field sports complex need revision. Costs have gone up with inflation, Also, no provision was made for constructing fields on land with varying elevations. This will increase site preparation costs beyond the effect of higher prices.

Since the two sections of the 2019 study are included in this report, they will be discussed separately.

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### ***Development Concept – Outdoor Facility***

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The report addressed both indoor and outdoor facilities. This focus is on the latter. In fact, another study in 2023 concluded that benefit could be achieved by converting several existing grass fields at John Tarleton and Tommy Schumpert Parks and the AYSO fields adjacent to Tommy Schumpert Park.

The 2023 study also observed that twelve fields could be built at Knoxville Municipal Golf Course, and that the model for them could be the Scheels Overland Park Soccer Complex in Overland Park, Kansas. The number of fields was estimated at the time without walking the golf course.

Twelve characteristics of well-used, popular sports facilities can be found on page 25 of [Appendix I](#). All these characteristics apply to the site/VK/Knoxville.

### **Funding**

It is anticipated that most of the funding will come from private sources. The land could be donated by the city to the county, and a decision would be made on private or public management. VK would work with the management team to identify and pursue opportunities to host events featuring visiting teams.

Management of each event would be determined in the bidding process.

### **Competition**

There is plenty of competition within 200-300 miles. Knoxville has a significant geographic advantage over its competition. The metro area is served by a network of interstate highways and downtown and the surrounding area offers plenty to see and do. Hotels are plentiful at most price points.



Sevierville and Pigeon Forge are well-known destinations, and so is the traffic. Many groups have expressed interest in Knoxville instead of its eastern neighbors...if fields are available.

### What to do?

The 2023 report points out that the biggest winners will be residents if a new complex is built. All the current fields are grass except for the intramural fields at the University of Tennessee. Grass fields can be the preferred surface, but not for events depending on travelers. If a team from Cincinnati, for example, is going to spend two or three nights at a tournament in Knoxville, they are going to want to know how many games they are guaranteed.

Ten or twelve lighted turf fields provide that guarantee. Competition can always take place except during an electrical storm, with play resuming as soon as a storm passes.

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### *Projections for an Outdoor Complex*

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The 2019 study focused on soccer (the largest travel sport) and lacrosse (the fastest growing team sport). Both sports can use the same size field. Soccer can also use fields divided into smaller fields for younger players. Three 7v7 fields fit on one full size field. The large field has 22 players at a time. Three 7v7 fields have 14 players on each with a total of 42, one short of double the players (and families and friends), all of whom would be visitors.

### Development Costs

The study used eight turf fields and two grass fields as examples. The construction cost of these fields was estimated at **\$6.006 million**.

Lighting was estimated at \$200,000/field, or another **\$2 million**.

Also needed are interior roads, parking lots, sidewalks, restrooms, concessions, scoreboards, goals and netting, some portable seating, playground equipment, maintenance equipment and building(s) to store equipment and supplies, and shade structures. These were not priced individually.



Fields of this kind should be fenced to prevent unauthorized use and/or damage.

Nothing was set aside for site preparation. The golf course site needs significant site preparation, including earthmoving, retaining walls, drainage systems, etc. before fields can be built. These costs cannot be estimated until after a full-scale engineering survey is completed.

The total cost for ten fields was estimated at \$15 million. It would be closer to **\$17.5 million in 2024**. This cost would be about the same if all ten were turf.

If twelve fields were built the cost would be at least **\$20 million or more**.

Reprojections based upon low, medium, and high utilization appear later in this report.

### **The significance of local users**

DSA has indicated they will be among the biggest winners. The good news is tempered by a need to charge usage fees for practices and games. These might be charged by the event, year, or season. A complex like this is a major investment and use fees will be required.

Based on the 2019 and 2023 studies, it seems likely these new fields will be used heavily. DSA feels they will be the first choice for all but the AYSO program, and even then, they might be needed when severe weather conditions make their low-lying grass fields unplayable.

### **Outside uses**

Most outside events will be scheduled a year or more in advance. This makes it possible for local/regional users to know their future schedule before the end of each season.

Outside uses must have priority until twelve months out.



## KNOXVILLE MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE

The possibility of converting some of this course to sports fields was raised in a meeting with the Legacy Parks Foundation in late 2022. It was suggested that the city might be willing to donate the land to the county for a sports complex. There was a suggestion the course was not heavily used.

Please see *Appendix III, Course Scorecard.*

It has been noted that about half of the course might be suitable for rectangular, lighted turf fields. The balance is too hilly but might be suitable for an indoor sports complex, or to continue as a 9-hole golf course. DSA studied the feasibility of an indoor court facility in 2019. The need for more court space was identified. Preliminary projections showed promise, with annual revenues approaching operating costs...and the potential for increased visitor spending 12 months each year.

Two sites were proposed. Neither were as well located as the Schaad Road site.

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### ***The Course***

As already discussed, there are significant elevation changes. For example, the fairway on #1 is about 30 yards below the tee, which is at the clubhouse. By the time players reach the #1 green, they are back to the same level as the clubhouse. The rise of 30 feet over 600 or so yards can accommodate rectangular fields running across the fairways and tiered into the rising fairway.

The area encompassing holes #3, #2, #9, #1, #18, #11, #17, and #16 is the area proposed for conversion to soccer, lacrosse, or football fields. The water at the bottom of the clubhouse hill would remain. This removes hole #10 from consideration. Number 12 could be used for fields or parking.

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### ***Issues***

A sports complex will require a road connecting the site to Schaad Road or the street to the west of the cart barn and maintenance area. The best connector is one with three lanes, so two can be directed in or out.



Parking on the field levels is a necessity. The existing parking areas are too far away and too much above the fields.

The new parking areas could be in clusters spaced around the fields.

These fields will need permanent restrooms and concessions. And, because some trees will be removed, shade structures would be welcome.

Complete engineering studies will be required, starting with soil borings to determine the level for each field.

Grading will be necessary, along with necessary infrastructure for water, electricity, sewage, and proper drainage.

Extra costs will be incurred for retaining walls wherever the elevation requires.

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### ***Indoor Court Facility***

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There has been speculation about the benefit of an indoor facility containing about eight high school size basketball courts and/or sixteen volleyball courts. These courts would be heavily used by area players and become a magnet for outside uses.

This site has plenty of room for a building and parking, some of which can be shared with the fields. It could be built on some of the land deemed unsuitable for level fields.

The construction of an 80,000 to 100,000 square foot building would eliminate any chance of keeping a 9-hole course.

## ESTIMATES ON NUMBER OF FIELDS, REVENUES, AND EXPENSES

A breakdown of operating expenses and revenues is needed.

DSA will use the 2019 projections for ten fields as the basis for this section. At that time, two of the fields were proposed to have grass and eight would be turf. All turf fields reduce the amount of maintenance. This also increases utilization.

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### Expenses

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Here are the estimated expenses as of February 2019:

|                           |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| • Staff                   | \$250,000     |
| • Marketing and Promotion | 175,000       |
| • Maintenance             | 330,000       |
| • Utilities               | 100,000       |
| • Supplies                | <u>30,000</u> |
| Total                     | \$885,000     |

The passage of five years, the pandemic, and inflation DSA would think these costs should be increased by at least 20%, or \$1,062,000.

Total annual expenses were estimated at \$885,000. A complete breakdown is in Appendix II.

**Expenses should be re-projected at \$1.1 million.**

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### Revenues

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The revenues from 2019 include the following:

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| • Sponsorships  | \$100,000      |
| • Rental Income | 300,000        |
| • Concessions   | <u>100,000</u> |
| Total           | 500,000        |

The methods used in 2019 for computing rental and concession income are detailed in the report.



The variables to consider when computing revenues are:

- Adjustments for calendar (school schedules affect field use).
- Time of day (during school months, vacation times).
- Day of week (lack of use during school day, heavy use into evenings, much heavier use on weekends).
- Whether teams and clubs are accustomed to paying rental fees, which will be required.
- The number of fields in use at one time is heavily impacted by the above.

The combined 2019 total for sponsorships, rentals, and concessions was just above \$500,000. Prices have increased on the same amount of use.

**Total revenues should be re-projected at \$600,000.**

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### **Total Profit/Loss**

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The current estimated annual loss from operations would grow to about **\$500,000 (\$1.1 million less \$600,000).**

### **Estimated economic benefit.**

The 2019 study suggested about \$15 million a year in direct economic benefit, including taxes (economic impact would be higher).

If an increase of 20% is used to account for higher room, food, and local spending, **total economic benefit could be as much as \$18 million a year, compared to an estimated loss of \$500,000.**

Additionally, the complex will produce a substantial increase in the quality of life for area athletes and their families. With much more time to practice, lighted fields, and unlimited availability, teams and leagues will experience many new benefits.

It will take three or more years to reach a stabilized level of operation. VK will be able to prebook events before the fields are complete. It will be enough to know when they are ready and how many fields.

Finally, taxes paid by visitors tend to hold down tax increases on residents.

## LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH PROJECTIONS

Financial projections change with utilization. DSA is using the 2019 projections as medium performance metrics. With those numbers as the base, computations are offered to demonstrate what might happen with additional scenarios.

Rather than submitting a long and complicated series of charts, here are data showing three levels of performance:

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### **Revenues**

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#### **Low Projections (2019)**

Instead of the original \$300,000 in rental income, based upon 50% utilization, this number could be as low as \$200,000, which would reduce concession income to \$75,000.

Total income would drop to \$375,000 (sponsorships stay at \$100,000).

#### **Medium Projections (2019)**

These were estimated at \$500,800.

#### **High Projections (2019)**

DSA feels there is the potential for much higher utilization, beginning with the first year. There are no turf fields in the market (except for intramural fields at UT). If an 8 to 12 field complex opens with all fields lighted and in turf, many area programs could decide to move some or all their operations. And, as many as fifteen major events could be staged.

In this case, Rentals could reach \$400,000 and concessions would increase to \$175,000 for a total of \$675,000 including sponsorships.

### **Summary**

All revenues increased 20% for inflation:

- Low expectations  $\$375,000 \times .20 = \$450,000$
- Medium expectations  $\$500,000 \times .20 = \$600,000$
- High expectations  $\$675,000 \times .20 = \$810,000$



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## ***Expenses***

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These are based on 2019 estimated costs of \$880,000, or \$1.1 million in 2024.

Low Projections = \$900,000 (fewer hours)

Medium Projections = \$1.1 million

High Projections = \$1.2 million (more revenue but no more hours)

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## ***Summary***

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Low Projections = \$450,000 shortfall

Median Projections = \$500,000 shortfall

High Projections = \$390,000 shortfall

These projections are based on soccer. Additional uses (lacrosse, flag football, and football) could improve financials.

## HOW MANY FIELDS?

This report has referenced 8, 10, and 12 fields. How many should be considered? The short answer is as many as possible. The site appears limited to twelve full size fields (115 yards by 70-75).

Appendix II shows an eight-field concept and two different ten-field ideas. There may be room for two more fields on either of the ten field diagrams.

Operating losses will be lower with fewer fields or higher utilization, but so will the ability to attract events. A complex like this is similar in intent to a convention center. It is a catalyst that makes events happen that benefit the entire area. The impact of visitor spending is real.

The estimate of twelve fields representing the most that could be built is still not enough fields on one site to host the largest soccer events. Ten to twelve fields, however, are enough to host more than 80% of what could be booked.

DSA has continually cited the Scheels Overland Park Soccer Complex as an excellent example of a twelve-field complex. It is included as Appendix IV – Scheels Overland Park Soccer Complex. The field diagram does not do the complex justice. It is an excellent facility.

This complex is kept busy during the week with local games, practices, clinics, etc. The weekends are focused on outside events.

There is a problem here that must be avoided: the local soccer organization has a long-term lease. Although the city thought it was worth paying for the complex because it could host events bringing visitors, the club gained total control over bookings. This means an emphasis on rental income and team revenues rather than outside events.

DSA was asked to audit the situation, and it was found these bookings were made intentionally to serve the commercial interests of the club. Overland Park has addressed the situation, but the results are still far below preconstruction estimates. VK must be able to book outside events until no less than a year out. After that, the local/regional groups can be scheduled.

These policies must be established before work begins.



## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

Every project is different. Knoxville has a shortfall in off campus (high schools and university) sports facilities. There is a particular need for more rectangular fields and indoor courts. DSA has prepared this analysis of the potential impact of rectangular fields on the golf course.

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### **Strengths**

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The existing rectangular field complexes are in heavy use. They vary in size, location, and condition. The project under consideration is an excellent solution to overuse, makes possible larger events on one site, and allows VK to compete effectively with similar complexes within 300 miles.

It will be a meaningful change for local programming. Lighted turf fields provide space for practice and games when players are not in school. Weather and late hours cease to be issues.

Knoxville is in an excellent geographic location. Most teams travel by auto, and the interstate system feeds into the area from all directions. There are plenty of hotels, lots of restaurants, and many things to see and do.

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### **Weaknesses**

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The complex will be expensive. Construction costs are estimated at between \$20 and \$25 million. It will operate at a deficit. Facilities of this type are primarily built for two purposes: improved quality of life for residents and the opportunity to host multiple outside events that will bring visitors. This comes at a cost. Parks and convention centers operate in much the same manner.

The golf course site will require contouring of the existing fairways. The fields will replace several fairways and many trees will be lost.

The complex will require access from Schaad Road, in the area where the cart barn and maintenance are located. This can be determined during the engineering survey,

Parking is a necessity. One large lot or several smaller parking areas must be sited.



Because there is water at the base of the hill below the clubhouse, it must be preserved. This may require pedestrian bridges and more retention ponds.

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## **Opportunities**

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VK has been unable to attract large to medium size rectangular field events, primarily soccer. The estimates for visitor spending (about \$18 million a year) show the kinds of beneficial impacts possible.

In addition to events, there are chances to bring teams from the north for late winter practices and games. More teams equal more hotel rooms.

There will be excellent opportunities to attract events from facilities in Sevierville and Pigeon Forge. These vacation areas are overcrowded, and teams must compete with vacationers when trying to reach competition sites. Meals can be a problem, as well. Games must start on time.

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## **Threats**

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There are other demands for funding. Private and public investments are needed for other worthy causes. Fortunately, sports tourism has proven to be recession resistant. It has also recovered quickly from recession and pandemic. VK has made do with existing facilities throughout its history. Dedicated, industry specific facilities will attract large numbers of visitors and assist residents in multiple ways.

A large threat is continuing to be unable to build facilities that will make dramatic improvements in VK's ability to build economic development through visitor spending. Existing sports complexes have either too few fields, are overused, or do not meet tournament specifications.

The southeast is the most productive area for sports tourism. Knoxville, while doing very well with what exists, has not had the chance to market a major new complex.



## FUNDING

A fundable model is the first requirement in obtaining funds, no matter where hoped for funding comes from. Investors (private or public) must feel the concept is solid and well thought through. The needs for the project must be defined along with proposed benefits. This report is a first step in this direction. The best definition of a fundable model is “do people understand and believe in what you wish to accomplish?” Is it clear that opportunities for success are present?

Sports complexes are springing up across the country. In some cases, they are seen as a panacea for lagging visitor spending or needed to generate economic development in an otherwise underperforming market. It is not a promising idea to expect a complex to perform well despite being wrong sized or under or overdeveloped.

As the industry has grown, and as claims of economic benefit explode, more communities want their own sports complex. This can lead to retaining outside expertise to conduct market and feasibility studies. DSA is one such consultant. We believe it is essential that a consultant must not have an economic interest in the outcome of a study.

It is also important to understand the number of participants in amateur sports is not increasing at a pace sufficient to provide enough events for every destination. The only solution is to take events from others. This is not as easy as building the complex...sports have been built in part on personal relationships. It is not enough to believe “if you build it, they will come.”

Rocky Top Sports World is one of many facilities managed by a company that had a hand in its development. That same company would be delighted to step into this project and shepherd it to completion...provided they were retained as manager. This otherwise excellent company is owned by an investment banking firm and cannot afford stagnant revenues. It also cannot have an interest in ownership. To do so could expose them to risk.

The projections in this report show a shortfall between revenues and expenses. They also suggest a dramatic increase in taxable visitor spending and meaningful impacts on local sports programming. This is where decisions become difficult: can we afford the development costs and an annual shortfall to enjoy the projected increases in spending?



DSA had a similar experience in Myrtle Beach. We conducted a feasibility study for an indoor sports complex. Our projections were conservative and showed the chance for breakeven after about three years. That turned out to be the case.

DSA also conducted a study for Myrtle Beach for a complex like this, except it would be built on vacant land. Local uses were projected to be extremely low due to the small number of permanent residents and the needs of local sports programmers. DSA did not recommend further pursuit of the idea.

Another consultant was hired to repeat the study. The new recommendation was to proceed. Nothing has happened since.

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## ***Sources of Funding***

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One source identified by the Legacy Parks Foundation was private donations. This type of funding is seen mostly in collegiate environments. Success requires a compelling message, with sufficient perceived value to the donors. Northwestern University, a private institution, is building a new football stadium/entertainment venue for \$800 million, all in private donations.

Private donations need to be considered due to the costs and the dramatic positive effect it would have on the quality of life for residents.

## **Public Sector**

This usually takes the form of general obligation debt or bonds. Elizabethtown KY built its sports complex with bonds secured by a new tax on restaurant meals. Wellington FL is guaranteeing bonds for a new indoor complex via operating profit. Carmel IN built one of the largest indoor and outdoor sports complexes by using tax increment financing.

Civitas Partners, a well-regarded consultancy, has experience establishing Tourist Improvement Districts. Please refer to *Appendix V – Securing Dedicated Funding for Sports Tourism.*

This could be an answer. DSA does not have a commercial relationship with Civitas. We were impressed with a presentation made by Civitas and recommend that VK contact them for more information.



## **Medical Institutions**

Hospitals and medical providers are known to have an interest in associating with sports complexes. They may provide funding and may decide to build a clinic or outpatient facility in conjunction with the complex.

## **Educational Institutions**

A relationship could be made with the University of Tennessee, for example, in conjunction with the private donations campaign. A non-profit development corporation could be created to secure tax-free bonds. The university might also consider a business association with the complex.

Securing funding is a major task. A Tourist Improvement District has real potential. In the case of a TID funds flow to the DMO and then to the project. They do not need to go through the city or county.

## CONCLUSIONS

The potential for this project has variables that affect results. Costs are affected by the number of fields, the amount of infrastructure, sufficient ingress and egress, the amount and space(s) for parking, the possible need to reconfigure a 9-hole golf course, any surprises resulting from a thorough engineering survey...these are some of the principal issues.

There is little question of the need for a complex with multiple lighted rectangular fields. Knox County has grass fields, but these vary in size and location and must be given time to recover from heavy use, particularly if the fields had to be used just after rain.

The travel market is based in part on teams getting the number of games promised. Lighted turf fields provide the maximum assurance possible. And ten or more fields on the same site allows VK to book events with 80 to 100 teams...even more. These teams come with family and friends who stay in hotels, eat in restaurants, and shop. All these purchases are taxable.

DSA has estimated as much as \$18 million in additional visitor spending in the first few years.

DSA is also certain local clubs and leagues will gravitate to the complex. The ability to schedule practice and games on a dependable basis without damaging the fields, and without the need to close them to recover.

DSA suggests one stadium field with permanent seating for about 1500. The complex should be fenced and/or protected from unauthorized uses and vandalism.

VK will be able to use their contacts in sports travel to spread the word of the complex. Just as volleyball or basketball teams would like to compete in the convention center and enjoy downtown while avoiding traffic up the mountain, so would soccer and lacrosse teams.

Here is a list of key advantages provided by a new multi-rectangular field lighted sports complex:

- Area teams will have dependable access to large numbers of fields.
- Practice sessions will not be shortened or limited due to access issues.

- 
- VK will be able to book large tournaments producing significant financial benefit for the area.
  - VK will be able to attract large soccer events, something not possible presently.
  - Soccer is the largest travelling sport, and spans many age groups, including younger players who compete on two or more fields inside each full-size field. These events bring more visitors than older players to full-size fields.
  - Turf fields have been improved; rubber pellets, which caused cancer scares just a few years ago, have been replaced by completely inert materials that are cooler in warm weather.
  - Field lighting systems have also been improved; LED bulbs produce more light from less electricity.
  - Field lighting also produces much less spillover into surrounding neighborhoods; they are focused on the playing surfaces.
  - The site is easily reachable from the area's network of interstates.
  - It is less than nine miles from downtown Knoxville.
  - There are hotels within easy reach, and plenty of restaurants as well.
  - The Knoxville area has plenty of things to see and do for visitors when not competing.
  - Northern teams will travel to practice and compete in late winter and early spring when their fields are unavailable.

Although a ten to twelve field complex is likely to cost between \$20 and \$25 million, and it will run an operating deficit, at least in early years, it will also produce tremendous advantages for area young people and their families when limits on participation are lifted. Youngsters can be reluctant to play when they are unable to practice. Because participation in healthy outdoor activities benefits every participant, a complex like this could become an answer.

Based on medium expectations the potential is for \$18 million in visitor spending in return for a \$500,000 shortfall and dramatically improved conditions for area sports programs. It is expected this shortfall will decrease with every operating year.



## **DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT - OUTDOOR FACILITY**

There are certain characteristics that are common to well-used, popular sports facilities. These are the most important:

- Location – within a short drive or by public transportation
- Properly designed and equipped – courts or fields spaced properly with everything needed for practices or games
- Designed for tournament use – proper dimensions (i.e. soccer fields sized to new regulations)
- Some permanent seating and room for spectator supplied chairs
- Sufficient separation of teams and spectators (indoors, hopefully on different levels)
- Enough local demand to keep the facility busy (and producing income) during the week
- Easy to reach from outside the area (near one or more interstate highways)
- Close to a concentration of hotel rooms, restaurants and shopping
- Sufficient numbers of select serve hotels (with free breakfast) and rooms with double beds
- In the center of a densely populated portion of the country, since most teams will travel up to 300 miles one way if they feel the event is attractive
- Reputation for proper site management, plenty of parking, ease of access
- Site management known to large numbers of teams and event owners (trust factor)

### **Funding**

Sports facilities also require significant up-front costs for design and construction, plus ongoing maintenance and operations. DSA believes a requirement for public funding is meeting unmet local need for sports programming. If residents do not need more courts, fields or diamonds the private sector should be involved.

Some of the projects listed have been publicly funded under the belief that “if you build it, they will come.” This makes for a nice movie but belief, as has been said, is not a strategic plan!

Some developers feel it is their task to sell a city on the virtues of sports marketing, build a complex and then be retained as managers for a guaranteed fee. Another entertaining film and musical, “The Music Man,” is about a salesman who creates a band, sells the instruments and then plans to leave town. Sport tourism has grown to this point: there are enough cities eager to participate that proper research has taken a back seat to determining what can be utilized effectively.

DSA also believes an excellent choice in public facilities is private management (assuming the park and recreation department is short staffed). Private management (or public where staff allows) must be well-known and respected in the sports being served. Otherwise, teams and events may not come due to uncertainty as to the quality of the site and event. Many communities have such expertise on staff. Others (like Round Rock) have recruited the talent needed and added to city staff.

### Competition

When DSA entered the industry there were fewer than 30 cities with organized efforts to attract sport tourism. In fact, the term “sport tourism” was not in use. Facilities and agencies (sports commissions, primarily) sought events that would basically produce televised events that people would also buy tickets to see. They also looked-for large-scale youth tournaments.

Knoxville was an early entrant into the market, and has remained active and successful, but the success has been limited by facilities.

Today, competition is more focused on youth sports, where there are no tickets or television, just visitors!

DSA estimates there are more than 475 cities, counties and states pursuing events. Fortunately, there are more events and more event owners than ever.

Unfortunately, some events and owners have become demanding: they will come if their financial success is assured. This can mean host cities are putting up the money in the hope visitor spending will be sufficient to cover costs.

This has led to optimistic projections of economic impact. These projections are hard to challenge since the impact spreads across the city.

All too often, hard dollars are invested in facilities and guarantees in the hope soft dollars (estimates of economic impact) will make up the difference.

### What to do?

This study is a significant step. DSA trusts that public investment will take place to the extent that leaders are convinced of the significant benefits to residents that accrue through better access to facilities where residents can practice and play. Much has been said about the dangers of inactivity to youngsters. We also know if they cannot practice, they will quit.

So, a facility must make a difference in the lives of residents, and there must be enough of them to keep the doors open between outside events. This does not happen to any extent with Rocky Top Sports World. Too few people are permanent residents. The same is true in Myrtle Beach.

It is also known that estimates of economic benefit start with new visitor spending. Since nearly all spending is subject to sales tax, events will produce more funding for government. New revenue makes it unnecessary to increase taxes on residents.

Instead, it produces new dollars that can be invested in, among other things, new facilities that will attract more visitors.

There is at least one more crucial point: public recreation facilities are not designed to produce profit. Their costs are an investment in the community.

Quality of life is the big winner, and people like to live where the quality of life is good.

So, if a carefully planned facility does not cover all of its costs but produces a better quality of life and new dollars that circulate through the local economy, most would agree something good is happening.



APPENDIX

II



MOTZ

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Cincinnati, OH  
USA

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CINCINNATI, OH, USA

Knoxville Parks and Rec  
Motz Synthetic Turf Field  
Conceptual Field Marking Plan

PROJECT ADDRESS

Knoxville Parks and Rec  
3925 Schaad Road  
Knoxville, TN 37921

PROJECT PHASE

Design  
Development  
(Not for Construction)

NORTH



SCALE

1:200

DRAWN BY

JC

DATE

4/15/2024

SHEET

PF1.3



LEGEND: (LISTED IN ORDER OF DOMINANCE)

SOCCER (WHITE): 225' X 345' (0/0)

NOTES:

- COLORS SHOWN ARE FOR REFERENCE ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR COLOR MATCHING PURPOSES. PLEASE REFER TO YARN SAMPLES FOR ACTUAL COLORS.
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CINCINNATI, OH, USA

Knoxville Parks and Rec  
Motz Synthetic Turf Field  
Conceptual Field Marking Plan

PROJECT ADDRESS

Knoxville Parks and Rec  
3925 Schaad Road  
Knoxville, TN 37921

PROJECT PHASE

Design  
Development  
(Not for Construction)

NORTH



SCALE

1:200

DRAWN BY

JC

DATE

4/15/2024

SHEET

PF1.4



LEGEND: (LISTED IN ORDER OF DOMINANCE)

SOCCER (WHITE): 225' X 345' (0/0)

NOTES:

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CINCINNATI, OH, USA

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Motz Synthetic Turf Field  
Conceptual Field Marking Plan

PROJECT ADDRESS

Knoxville Parks and Rec  
3925 Schaad Road  
Knoxville, TN 37921

PROJECT PHASE

Design  
Development  
(Not for Construction)

NORTH



SCALE

1:200

DRAWN BY

JC

DATE

4/15/2024

SHEET

PF1.5



LEGEND: (LISTED IN ORDER OF DOMINANCE)  
SOCCER (WHITE): 225' X 345' (0/0)

NOTES:

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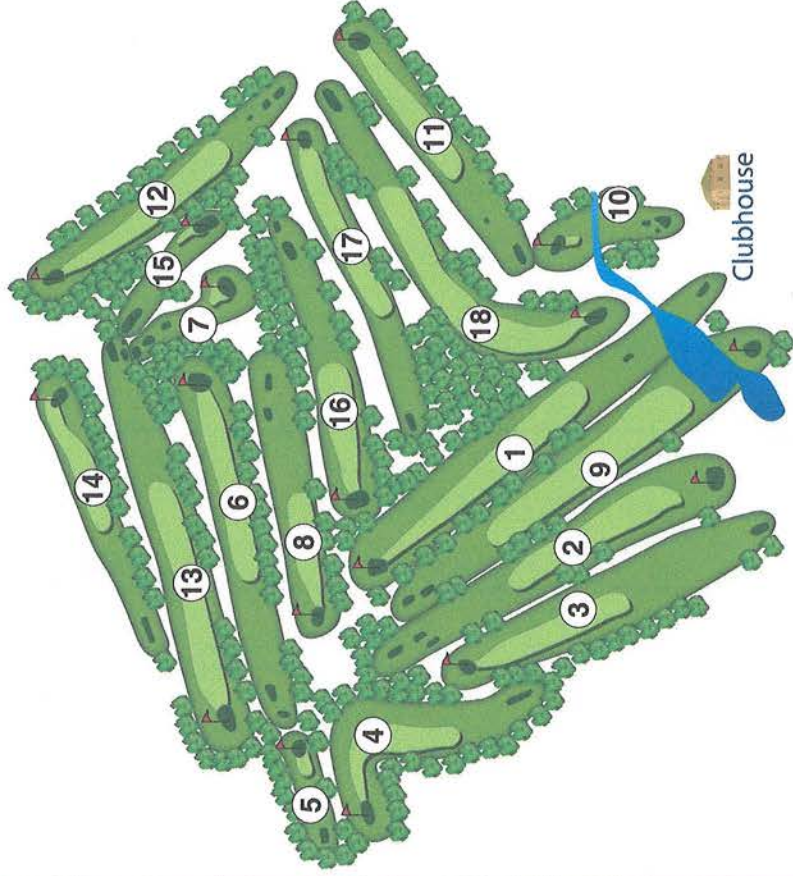


# APPENDIX



**U.S.G.A. RULES SHALL APPLY  
EXCEPT AS MODIFIED BY LOCAL RULES.**

1. A ball played from hole #18 which lands outside of the cart path on #11 fairway will be played as out of bounds.
2. Carts must stay on path on holes #14, #16 and all par 3's.



All persons on or about these premises assume all risk of injury/loss to themselves or personal property, and also assume all liability to others for their acts. We reserve the right to refuse admission to golf course or clubhouse, and to cancel playing privileges at any time.



**KNOXVILLE**  
MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE



3925 Schaad Road | Knoxville, Tennessee 37921  
(865) 691-7143



Tekoa Baptist Church



APPENDIX

IV

To Access  
Parking Lot D:

Make U-Turn  
at Nieman Rd.

135th Street

### Site Index

- A. Parking Lot A
- B. Parking Lot B
- C. Parking Lot C
- D. Parking Lot D
- E. Fieldhouse
- F. Skatepark
- G. Basketball Court
- H. Tennis Courts
- I. Pickelball Courts

### Parking

- Lot A Fields 1 - 4
- Lot B Fields 5, 6, 9
- Lot C Fields 10 - 12
- Lot D Fields 7 - 8



**OVERLAND PARK**  
K A N S A S

Deanna Rose  
Farmstead



# Building Back Better: The Need for Dedicated Sports Tourism Funding

## Introduction

Sports tourism is a global business that creates jobs, stimulates local economies and benefits communities by creating positive economic impact through hosting sports events. As tourism begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, sports commissions and sports-focused Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) will need to find alternative funding outside of traditional hotel occupancy taxes to rebuild.

This white paper outlines Tourism Improvement Districts (TIDs) as a compelling solution, as these special self-assessments on tourism-related businesses generate dedicated revenue to bid for, host, and market sports events. In addition, TIDs enhance public/private partnership as well as quality of life for a destination's residents by providing funding opportunities for local events and sports facilities.

## 2019 Sports Tourism Impact:<sup>1</sup>

**180M**

**Sports  
Travelers**

**\$45.1B**

**Direct  
Impact**

**740K**

**Jobs  
Supported**

<sup>1</sup> Tourism Economics, prepared for Sports ETA, *Sports Tourism: State of the Industry Report* (2019) (Sept. 1, 2020) <http://sportseta.org/state-of-the-industry-report-2019>.