

SPORTS TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

VISIT OVERLAND PARK



August 23, 2022

POWERED BY THE HUDDLE UP GROUP

Visit Overland Park
Sports Tourism Strategic Plan
Executive Summary

In the opinion of the Huddle Up Group (hereafter the “Consultant” or “Consultant Team”), Visit Overland Park (“VOP”) has an opportunity to solidify itself as a strong sports tourism destination in the Midwest. Throughout this process, community leaders showed a desire to grow sports tourism in the city and for the new sports and events brand to become engaged with the area’s stakeholders. These are both positive signs that the Overland Park area is ready to grow sports tourism in the area.

This strategic planning project was conducted with the input of two (2) members from the Consultant Team and included our 6-step process, highlighted by the following elements:

- Two (2) in-person and fourteen (14) phone interviews with Overland Park area leaders.
- 40 electronic survey responses from VOP stakeholders.
- Two (2) in-person town hall meetings with local stakeholders.
- Tours of twenty-one (21) different sites encapsulating 23 sports venues. (June 28/29, 2022).
- Competitive Site Tour of six (6) existing facilities or under development. (August 15, 2022).
- Benchmarking against high performing venues both regionally and nationally.
- An analysis of best-in-class sports commissions of similar market size and structure to VOP.
- A rating of VOP through the Sports Tourism Index™.

The enclosed report offers a SWOT analysis and recommendations for the creation of a sports brand within VOP and an enhanced sports tourism marketing program. This document offers depth on each recommendation along with back up research and benchmarks that support each of the suggestions made by the Consultant Team. For each recommendation, action items and benchmarks are provided. In summary, there are four (4) Short-Term and three (3) Long-Term recommendations, detailed in the full report:

Short-Term Recommendations – Sports & Events Organization Structure

1. Creation of Sports Brand
2. Enhance Organization & Board Structure
3. Develop Mission Statement, Objectives, and Goals
4. Drive Awareness

Long-Term Recommendations – Future Planning

1. Develop a sustainable funding source and expand business development efforts.
2. Strengthen community alignment.
3. Regional Sports Tourism Master Plan for Facilities & Marketing

The opportunity at hand is to put in place an enriched sports tourism support system that engages all stakeholders throughout the Overland Park area to drive economic development and improve opportunities for community user groups. Through a community-wide effort, VOP can drive increased economic activity through sport in the form of additional overnight stays, which will provide more lodging and sales tax revenues to the City of Overland Park year over year. Given the opportunities that exist and the numerous organizations that could play a key role, the Consultant Team believes the new sports and events brand is the ideal to lead the development and enhancement charge on behalf of the Overland Park community.

Visit Overland Park
Sports Tourism Strategic Plan
Synopsis

The sports tourism industry has grown consistently over the past 20 years. The study by the Sports Tourism and Events Association – *State of the Industry Report 2021*, states that the participant driven portion of the domestic sports tourism sector is responsible for more than \$39.0 billion in direct spending as of the end of 2021 as compared to \$15.0 billion in 2019. This direct spending generated a total economic impact of \$91.8 billion in the local economy, driving over 635,000 jobs and \$12.9 billion in taxes. Add to this industry growth the increased popularity of sports such as BMX, pickleball, quidditch, e-gaming and ultimate, the opportunity for the continuing expansion of economic development through sports tourism is tangible.

Throughout the research process, it became apparent to the Consultant Team that there is an opportunity for VOP to enhance its presence in the sports tourism market through the creation of a sports and events brand. The key moving forward is for community stakeholders to work together through VOP in developing tourism driving assets that can deliver upon the sports tourism mission of VOP on a recurring basis from one year to the next. Through the execution of a strategic and targeted game plan, VOP will enhance Overland Park’s position regionally and nationally in the sports tourism industry.

Methodology

The Consultant Team conducted an audit on the current sports tourism work of VOP and an analysis of the area’s sporting venues. The audit included multiple day market visit (June 28-29, 2022), Competitive Site Tour of six (6) existing facilities or under development. (August 15, 2022), two (2) in-person meetings, fourteen (14) phone interviews, 40 electronic survey responses, and two (2) stakeholder town hall meetings. Stakeholders that were engaged included VOP staff and board, community leaders, athletic administrators, event owners, hospitality industry executives, and local club leaders that were identified by VOP. The facilities listed below, and in Appendix D along with a rating for based on its current ability to attract sports tourism driving events.

- Blue Valley High School
- Blue Valley North High School
- Blue Valley Northwest High School
- Blue Valley Rec Baseball and softball fields
- Blue Valley Rec Baseball and softball fields
- Blue Valley School District Athletic Complex (ANT DAC)
- Blue Valley Southwest HS
- Drive 5 Sports Center
- Johnson County Community College Baseball stadium
- Johnson County Community College Basketball arena
- Johnson County Community College Fieldhouse
- Johnson County Community College Soccer stadium
- Mid-America Recreation Complex- Johnson County Parks and Rec
- Nicklaus Golf Club at Lionsgate
- Overland Park Convention Center
- Scheels Overland Park Soccer Complex
- Shawnee Mission North HS Athletic complex
- Shawnee Mission South HS Athletic complex
- Shawnee Mission West HS Athletic complex
- St Andrews Golf Course
- Sykes-Lady Golf Course

The audit was led by Huddle Up Group Principal, Eric Olson (St. Louis, MO) and Founder + CEO, Jon Schmieder (Phoenix, AZ). The audit focused on five (5) areas:

1. Evaluating the current sports tourism efforts of Visit Overland Park.
2. Assessing the current facility inventory and quality.
3. Benchmarking of the current facilities using the Sports Tourism Index™ as a scoring tool.
4. Offering a list of “Best in Class” sports commissions that currently exist in destinations similar in make-up to Overland Park.
5. Providing a gap analysis of community-wide efforts and recommendations for a sports and events commission structure that could drive increased tourism to the market through sports.

Discussions were held around national best practices in these theme areas and focus was given to applications for VOP. The intent of this process was to create community support for VOP’s increased sports tourism strategy by giving local stakeholders a voice, and to foster a teamwork mentality throughout Overland Park.

The Consultant Team took the results from stakeholder interviews as well as the data from the Sports Tourism Index™ and the site visits to Overland Park, then overlaid national best practices from several “Best in Class” DMOs and sports commissions to develop and deliver the enclosed recommendations. These recommendations are intended to spark a dialog within the community’s leadership hierarchy in order to build a framework for next steps on an expanded sports and events tourism marketing effort.

The recommendations presented here are based upon what the Consultant Team believes are five (5) universal truths about Overland Park’s tourism and sports market position:

1. There is a desire to grow sports tourism in the city, greater collaboration opportunities exist with local partners that can align with VOP’s mission to expand its sports tourism and community impact.
2. There is a significant need for the marketing and communication of an “Image and Awareness” campaign for VOP to local and regional stakeholders.
3. The current organizational structure for supporting sports tourism strategy is not sufficient for implementation of the strategy and warrants identification of resources (headcount and budget) to drive sports tourism development.
4. VOP lacks the necessary cooperation and access to participant-based anchor facilities, in addition many of the existing facilities that could host significant tournaments are not being optimized.
5. While Overland Park is well located geographically, the regional competition is fierce however there is the opportunity to be a strong, if not dominate sports tourism destination both in Kansas and the Midwest Region.