



North Platte

North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau

NORTH PLATTE/LINCOLN COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU SPORTS TOURISM STRATEGIC PLANNING PROJECT



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HUDDLE UP GROUP



April 25, 2019

Lisa Burke
Executive Director
North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau
101 Halligan Drive
North Platte, Nebraska 69101

Dear Lisa,

Thank you for your efforts on our recent work in North Platte. You, your team, and your community stakeholders have been quite helpful throughout this process. The groundwork we have set with your local leadership will serve as a strong foundation for future sports tourism, venue, and event development efforts in the North Platte area.

Enclosed is the report detailing our findings. The report includes a SWOT analysis of the venue inventory in the North Platte area and the current sports tourism efforts of the North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau (“CVB”). The report includes recommendations for facility, event, and organizational development enhancements that would likely drive additional overnight stays and economic impact to the North Platte area. Both the SWOT analysis and the recommendations are built on a “Powers of Three” foundation (three main points, and in most cases, no more than three action items for each).

Please let me know if you have questions about the enclosed recommendations leading up to our final presentations. We are looking forward to our next visit and our follow-up discussions.

Thank you again for all your support throughout this process!

Yours in Sport,



Jon Schmieder
Founder + CEO
Huddle Up Group, LLC



North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau Sports Tourism Strategic Planning Project Synopsis and Methodology

The sports tourism industry has grown consistently over the past 20 years. Studies show that the grass roots portion of this market is worth more than \$11.4 billion annually to the domestic economy. Whether you use the National Recreation and Park Association spending estimate (\$85 per person per day), the 2011 National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) study (\$208 per person per day), or the Destinations International (DI) economic impact calculator, the value of this niche market is palpable.

Add to this industry growth, the increased popularity of soccer, lacrosse, and other emerging sports (examples: Bicycle Moto Cross or BMX, pickleball, quidditch, rugby, ultimate, and Esports), 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 the North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau (“CVB”) to enhance its presence in the sports tourism market. The key moving forward is for county stakeholders to work together in building and managing an expanded sports tourism marketing program, and to focus political capital on building relationships locally that can deliver upon the sports tourism mission of the CVB on a recurring basis from one year to the next. Through the execution of a strategic and targeted game plan, the CVB will enhance its position regionally as a player in the sports tourism and events industry.

Methodology

The Huddle Up Group, LLC (“Consultant” or “Consultant Team”) conducted an audit on the current sports tourism work of the CVB, and an analysis of the area’s sporting venues. The audit included over a dozen in-person meetings with multiple community groups and key stakeholders, 35 phone interviews, including CVB staff, community leaders, venue managers, athletic administrators, event owners, elected officials, and additional targets that were identified by CVB. Phone interviews were conducted by Huddle Up Group Principal, Gary Alexander (Nashville, TN).

The facility and organizational audit was led by Huddle Up Group Founder + CEO, Jon Schmieder (Phoenix, AZ), and Director, Caroline Brown (Scottsdale, AZ). The audit focused on three (3) themes:

1. Facilities inventory and quality.
2. National best practices for sports tourism and events marketing with similar market characteristics.
3. Identification of new business models/opportunities that would enhance the CVB’s overall tourism results.



Discussions were held around national best practices in these theme areas and focus was given to applications for the CVB and the North Platte area. The intent of this process was to create community support for the CVB's increased sports tourism marketing, event creation, and venue enrichment efforts by giving local stakeholders a voice, and to foster a teamwork mentality throughout the North Platte region.

Over the course of three days (February 18-20, 2019) the Consultant Team visited 35 sites encompassing over 50 existing sports and entertainment facilities, several of which have multiple sports and/or special event uses. These facilities are listed below, and also in Appendix E, along with potential enhancements/improvements that could be made to each venue.

- Bill Wood Field
- Brady Schools
- Centennial Park
- Cody Park
- D&N Event Center
- Dowhower Softball Complex
- Dusty Trails River Outfitting
- Hershey Baseball Fields
- Hershey Schools
- Indian Meadows Golf Course
- Lake Maloney
- Lake Maloney Golf Club
- Lincoln County Fairgrounds
- Lincoln County Wildlife Gun Club
- Maranatha Bible Camp
- Maxwell School
- Maxwell Gun Club
- North Platte Community College
- North Platte High School
- North Platte Rec Center
- North Platte Rec Center Skate Park
- North Platte River
- North Platte St. Pats High School
- Palmer Park
- Platte River Mall
- Potential BMX land
- Potters Pasture
- Rivers Edge Golf Course
- Sears building
- Simon Construction Company building
- Splatterbox Paintball



- Sutherland Football Field
- Sutherland Rodeo Grounds
- Sutherland Schools
- Wild West Arena

In addition, the Consultant Team reviewed several historical and internal documents including, but not limited to, the following:

- 308 BMX Fundraising Budget
- 308 BMX Lease Agreement
- 308 BMX Grant Application
- 2017 Economic Impact Report
- 2018 CVB Budget Report
- 2018-2019 CVB Universal Grant Guidelines and Application
- 2018 North Platte Area Sports Commission Transaction Detail
- CVB Funding Summary
- CVB Improvement Fund Budget
- CVB Organizational Chart
- CVB Promotional Fund Budget
- Individual Event Budgets (7)
- Lincoln County Area Facilities Summary
- Lincoln County Fairgrounds Architectural Plans
- North Platte Area Map
- North Platte Area Sports Commission Bylaws
- North Platte Area Sports Commission Sponsorship Playbook
- North Platte Area Sports Commission Sponsorship Roster
- State of Nebraska Civic and Community Center Financing Fund Grant Guidelines
- State of Nebraska Community Development Block Grant Guidelines

The Consultant Team took the results from the phone and in-person interviews, as well as the data from the site visit to the North Platte area, then overlaid national best practices 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 tourism marketing effort.

The recommendations presented here are based upon what the Consultant Team believes are nine (9) universal truths about the North Platte area's tourism and sports market position:

1. With the market fluctuations in two of Nebraska's primary business drivers (agriculture and rail transportation), it is mission critical for tourism to provide sustained economic stability for the North Platte area year over year.
2. The CVB has had some success in the sports tourism market. With that in mind, the



Consultant Team believes a solid strategy that is well executed will likely generate positive results for the community in the future.

3. Other than a long standing community discussion around the development of a national level BMX track, no tourism driving facilities have been announced to the public that have a funding source attached to allow them to become reality.
4. The funding source dedicated to developing new facility products is relatively small. Additional resources may be needed to develop new venues and/or enhance those that exist today.
5. Many of the existing facilities that could host significant tournaments are typically unavailable during tourism's off peak and shoulder seasons due to their existing tenants and programs (examples: high schools and the college in the area).
6. Some of the municipally owned and operated facilities in the area have very limited funding dedicated to enhancement/improvement, as most of the resources invested in these venues are operational (upkeep) in nature.
7. There are is a good population of locally based event promoters that could positively impact sports tourism in the area.
8. The current structure where the Sports Commission sits inside city/county government is likely the reason that the corporate community has yet to fully engage with the organization.
9. There has been a long-standing discussion about the development of a new multi-use facility, which would be a positive asset for the sports market. There is also a master plan for a new arena at the fairgrounds. While these projects are likely to take several more years to come to fruition, the strategic plan outlined below focuses on the near term as well as new facility development in the longer-term.



North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau Sports Tourism Strategic Planning Project SWOT Analysis

It is the opinion of the Huddle Up Group (“Consultant” or “Consultant Team”) that there is an opportunity to grow sports tourism in the North Platte area. Through our extensive phone interviews, review of numerous historical documents, conversations with your local event promoters and venue managers, and our knowledge of the national marketplace, we believe there is room for the North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau (“CVB”) to deliver additional overnight stays to the destination through sports and events. An expanded sports tourism effort will lead to increased economic development and will positively impact the community over time.

In a market the size of North Platte, with its numerous positive attributes along with several market challenges, it is critical that grass roots sports tourism and special events serve as tourism drivers for the local economy. Keeping grass roots sports tourism at the forefront of the CVB’s objectives, below is a SWOT analysis of the current sports tourism efforts of the CVB. Each SWOT item features three key issues with no more than three action items for each (“Powers of Three”).

Strengths

1. Leadership – North Platte has a solid mix of community leadership and a CVB staff that is well respected locally. Several survey respondents shared that they believed the CVB staff was collaborative and trying to do a lot with their resources. The CVB’s stakeholders unilaterally support an increased emphasis on sports tourism and events marketing in the future. Any new development of the sports tourism market will require the CVB to find ways to continue to partner with the community’s top organizations and enhance its position as the go to sports tourism organization in the North Platte region.
2. Destination Offering – North Platte offers event rights holders and visiting teams a hospitable and inviting family friendly community that is well situated to host state, regional, and select national level tournaments. The recent addition of new hotels in the market (and those under construction) offer teams more choices when participating in a tournament or event. North Platte also has an adequate level of team friendly restaurants in the area. North Platte’s location is convenient to the regional part of the country via car along the I-80 corridor. All of these factors make North Platte a viable host site for tournaments and special events.
3. Funding and Resources – At this time, the CVB’s sports effort is well funded versus its regional competition. Most of North Platte’s competitors are operating with far fewer resources in one of the three key operational areas (funding), however the top sports commissions/CVBs in the industry have far more invested in the second and third assets needed for success (facilities and human capital) than does the CVB. Drastic staff additions are not necessary, however a small enhancement to the staff in the area of



serving the CVB’s sports clientele would likely have positive returns very quickly. The current staff is working well in dedicating resources towards created and owned/operated events such as the American Cornhole Series. While some of the destinations outlined below are larger than the North Platte area, these examples are offered as a guide to what resources may be needed to continue to successfully compete in the sports travel market (number of staff dedicated to sports in parentheses). Note that these numbers are not the total sports budget for these destinations, the numbers represented here are their “deal closing” budgets, or funds they have to move around when opportunities arise:

- a. Fargo/Moorhead – \$139,000 (2)
- b. North Platte/Lincoln County – \$125,000 (1)**
- c. Appleton – \$100,000 (2.5)
- d. Rapid City – \$55,000 (2)
- e. Kalamazoo – \$75,000 budget (2)
- f. Campbell County/Gillette – Approximately \$29,500 (sports staff of < 1)

Weaknesses

1. Facilities – While the area does possess a select number of facilities that can be used to attract larger regional and select national level events, the North Platte area has very few facilities that can be used to attract high-level tournament play and their related tourism dollars. Most of the facilities toured by the Consultant Team are adequate for community use but need upgrades to be seriously considered to host the larger national level tournaments. The venue challenges in the North Platte area include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Limited Inventory of Significant Outdoor “Anchor” Facilities – North Platte and the surrounding area has a limited inventory of venues that would be considered “anchor facilities,” meaning a facility that has enough fields/courts on its own to host major regional or national events. This is especially true in the area of flat multi-sport fields, as the area doesn’t have a complex with eight (8) or more fields in one location (8 fields is a nationally accepted benchmark as a minimum number of fields to host the top tier state and regional level tournaments). These multi-field complexes are often the driving force of a sustainable sports tourism program in small and mid-sized markets (competitive examples: Elizabethtown, KY and Grand Park, IN). Add to this that Dick’s Sporting Goods Park in the metro Denver area has 24 fields and a Major League Soccer Stadium all on one site, the battle for facility relevance in the region is surely a challenge. In today’s sports tourism landscape, event rights holders are seeking out communities that have these anchor venues to host their events. Without a solid inventory of these types of venues, North Platte will be fighting an uphill battle against communities with better facility options.
 - b. Accessibility – The area has a number of high schools and a college that possess facilities that could be part of the sports tourism game plan in North Platte.



However, as is the case with most scholastic settings, these facilities are often unavailable to the CVB due to use by their own internal user groups. A strategic discussion with each of the schools in the area should be had to find spots in the calendar where both the schools and the hospitality community could benefit. That is, where both sports tourism and the local schools can meet to mutually benefit North Platte. Examples of this would include expanding the relationship with the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) and the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA). The local schools have hosted championships from both of these organizations in the past and would benefit from hosting even more NJCAA and/or NSAA events in the future.

- c. Event Staffing – Supporting created/owned events and larger regional level tournaments requires the host have an experienced event staff and a solid volunteer base that can be deployed at any time of year for whatever event has a need (versus recruiting a large group of volunteers for an event that happens sporadically). At this time, the CVB has a limited sports staff available and has not had the bandwidth to develop a large pool of volunteers to support their partners’ events. While a volunteer base can be built over time, the current CVB staff is working to get up to speed on how the sports market works, so the focus has not been on event management. In addition, the current staff has limited experience in the sports events market, specifically in game day execution, which is an area many event owners seek local help when producing their championships. The best host communities in the country are expert at handling all non-competition aspects of their client’s events.
 - d. Calendars – Currently CVB does not have the same level of access to all area venue calendars. The CVB staff is tasked with booking events that drive increased tourism revenues to the area (preferably in off-peak and shoulder seasons). In order to achieve maximum impact, the CVB staff needs to be able to consistently review where the community’s venues have open dates and then attempt to book new events in those open windows. In addition, the CVB would ideally have a “favored nation status” at all area venues, where the CVB would have priority for booking the facilities. This would include venues with relatively short booking windows such as the various parks and recreation departments. Some form of a regularly shared venue calendar/process would be advantageous for the CVB staff going forward.
2. Messaging – The value and potential impact that sports tourism can offer North Platte isn’t well understood by area stakeholders. A concerted effort should be made to quantify and communicate the impact sports can have on the community from one year to the next. This communication should be shared with CVB stakeholders, elected officials, and the community at large. The better the CVB can convey these success stories, the more support North Platte’s tourism efforts will garner in the future.
 3. Air Lift – The limited daily flight inventory in and out of North Platte could be a barrier



to consistently attracting regional and national level events to the community. If more flights are not secured to raise competition, the limited number of flights and their high cost could prove detrimental to the CVB's marketing efforts.

Opportunities

1. Community Engagement – Through an enhanced sports tourism program, the CVB will have a great opportunity to significantly grow its connection to the community. Specifically, the CVB can use this enhanced sports tourism initiative within North Platte to galvanize area leaders in the following ways:
 - Education – Sports tourism has the potential to make a significant positive impact on the North Platte marketplace. The Consultant Team believes there is a great need for both internal and external education on the historical and future potential value of sports tourism to the area. In the minds of the Consultants, the hospitality community, and North Platte area leaders could all benefit from a summary on the overall positive impact sports related business brings to the area today, and how the CVB's expanded sports marketing effort will benefit the community in the future.
 - Stakeholder Engagement – Many high-level decision makers interviewed were unable to articulate the impact sports tourism has on the area. By leading a collective conversation around sports tourism that will focus stakeholders on the building blocks for success (examples: destination marketing, event creation, and venue development/enhancement), the CVB will be able to better engage community leaders throughout North Platte. There is more on this topic in the recommendation section of this document.
 - Expanded Partnerships – From information gathered through the research process, the Consultant Team believes there is strong support from community leaders to expand the sports tourism effort across the county. Specifically, this includes an increased engagement of the area's event promoters, the area high schools, venue managers, elected officials, parks and recreation directors, and the hospitality community at large. Increased collaboration focused on event creation and venue enrichment with these stakeholders will lead to positive results in economic development through the hosting of more sports tournaments and special events.
2. Created/Owned Events – North Platte has a collection of individual organizations that serve as event promoters. The events some of these organizations host directly support the tourism mission of the CVB (examples: area softball and baseball clubs, Nebraskaland Days, fairgrounds, and the running events). Where possible, these success stories should be replicated to increase the inventory of locally created events that would in turn, deliver increased overnight stays in North Platte. Created (or locally "incubated") events are becoming more and more popular among destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and sports commissions. Created events can help build a long-



term presence that fill the calendar needs of the local hospitality industry, and drive business to the area year over year. Created events allow the managing entity (such as a local promoter in partnership with the CVB) to control not only where they fall on the calendar to maximize their impact, but also to take advantage of the profits from successful events. Further, the development of new facility assets could also lead to additional event creation opportunities (example: a new BMX track).

3. Leisure Sports Tourism – Two programmatic opportunities emerged during the research process. North Platte has significant outdoor venues assets, including multiple gun ranges, access to multiple hunting grounds throughout the area, and a significant trail system for running and cycling events/activities. The Consultant Team believes these outdoor assets offer the CVB an opportunity to build a more substantial marketing campaign around outdoor leisure (non-competition based) activities targeted at the regional drive market. These outdoor assets could lead to future event opportunities. Should the CVB take this path, it is essential that all marketing efforts be measurable as to their impact on overnight stays in North Platte proper.

Threats

1. Community Alignment – The long-term success of any tourism program for North Platte will depend on the engagement of partners throughout the region. A unified and successful tourism effort will require that resources and community support be offered by numerous stakeholders in the area (examples: various city managers and elected officials, county supervisors and staff, the parks board and staff, venue owners/managers, various sports clubs, hospitality leaders, area high schools, and the corporate community). Without a unified effort, it will be difficult to make a significant tourism impact on North Platte and the adjoining jurisdictions. Today there is a theme of some fragmentation between various factions in North Platte, specifically, dissention between some of the area's youth sports clubs. While this is common in larger markets, it is somewhat rare in smaller markets the size of North Platte. Achieving a state of collaboration throughout the region will be mission critical going forward if progress is to be made in the sports tourism and events marketplace.
2. Regional Competition – There are several competitors in North Platte's geographic region that are well established in the national sports tourism space (see Appendix C). The high level of competition from nearby communities is only the beginning (most notably Kearney, Lincoln, Omaha, and Denver). This growing competition makes it more difficult each day for North Platte to remain relevant locally, regionally, and nationally. While North Platte may not want to be "like" some of these communities, their presence in the sports tourism space will require the CVB to pick its proverbial spots and be smart about what its focus areas become with the resources it has to work with today.
3. Local Economy – The political challenges of the railroad industry could present wide ranging financial challenges for the North Platte area. The CVB's sports tourism efforts could help smooth out some of the economic peaks and valleys that any job losses in the



rail industry present in the future.

North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau Sports Tourism Strategic Planning Project Recommendations

The enclosed game plan includes recommendations for three (3) primary focus areas and three (3) secondary concepts for future consideration, with action items noted where appropriate. The primary areas must happen in the short-term, regardless of new resource acquisition or if a venue development/enhancement program is put in place. **The secondary recommendations are every bit as critical as the primary ones, however, will likely take more time and strategic planning to bring to fruition.**

Primary Recommendation Areas

1. Event Solicitation/Creation Concepts
2. Success Measures/Benchmarks
3. Local Messaging and Marketing Platforms

Secondary Recommendation Areas

1. Venue Enrichment/Development/Usage
2. Funding Mechanism
3. Investigate Organizational Structure as a “Sports Authority”

Primary Recommendations

Primary Recommendation #1: Event Solicitation/Creation Concepts

During the research and analysis for this project, several areas of opportunity presented themselves relating to the attraction, creation, and servicing of events. Three (3) such concepts are outlined below:

1. Empower Local Promoters – The North Platte area has a solid foundation of event promoters whose work supports the tourism vision of the CVB. These locally based event leaders offer the community a tremendous resource to build annual sports and event properties, and thusly increase economic development. By offering support to these locally incubated programs through a dedicated grant/incentive fund, the CVB can build a solid annual cache of events that will allow it to then pick and choose where to participate in competitive bids for additional state, regional, and national tournaments. In order to execute upon this recommendation, the CVB staff needs to focus on a few key action items:
 - a. Continue to utilize the current promotional fund to provide resources for an event grant program. In addition, the CVB should look for additional resources to further enhance support for local event operators that drive tourism to the region.



Additional funds could potentially come from (1) leveraging the existing CVB grant programs, (2) the work of the Mayor’s Wellness Committee, (3) redirect much of the sports advertising budget towards creating new events, and/or (4) use the funds currently restricted to a future indoor multi-use facility (should that project not progress). Many DMOs or CVBs use a scorecard to evaluate each event opportunity and allocate funds along a set calendar (Visit Eau Claire, WI and Experience Bryan – College Station provide industry best practice examples on this topic).

- b. Engage in a progressive dialog with area sports/events leaders on the expansion of their existing franchises, and also the creation of new events within the structures that already exist. Examples of optimizing the current resources (people and places) available in North Platte would include events with MMA, the running community, area high schools and the junior college, mountain biking community at Potter’s Pasture, roller derby, events created and hosted by the various partners at the fairgrounds, and tournaments hosted by the area’s softball and baseball organizations.
- c. Growing and/or replicating the successful events that already exist would allow CVB to expand its tourism impact without having to bid against other communities for events through a traditional RFP process. Engagement of the local event promoters and their properties will likely lead to opportunities to expand into multiple championships over additional weekends across all sports. Where CVB can help build recurring community “owned” events and championships, the CVB won’t have to rely as much on bid-in events to fulfill its tourism mission.

Action Item: Schedule meetings with local event organizers.

- 2. Venue Booking Policies – The CVB should strive to have “favored nation status” at all parks and recreation facilities, scholastic venues, fairgrounds, arenas as well as at privately run facilities. While this is easy to state on paper, it is often tougher to achieve due to differing priorities between the venue manager and the CVB. In some cases, this is also difficult to achieve where there is “territorialism” between various community user groups. As the CVB continues to assist financially with the enrichment or expansion of area venues, there is an opportunity to request this favored nation status as part of any Improvement Fund grant in the future. In addition, a transparent (shared) calendar at all venues is critical for the CVB to add value to venue managers over time. This calendar would include area parks facilities, privately run venues, high school and college fields/gymnasiums, and additional locations with sports and event friendly spaces. In order to be effective in the sports tourism space, a well-balanced use (between community user groups and tournament play) of all venues is critical. With that in mind, in the case where the CVB can invest in sports facility improvements, the CVB should have calendar control of those venues 18-months and further out (similar to how a DMO would normally block out key dates in their convention facilities).



- Action Item:** Create a shared venue calendar system.
3. Scholastic Visitors Guide – There is a good amount of sports tourism activity that is generated by the local college and area high schools. While these inbound visits may come in small groups for short stays, cumulatively these visits could become a strong asset if captured. The Consultant Team recommends the CVB work with its scholastic partners on a visitors guide specific to these visiting teams and the high school/college markets. The guide should be developed and marketed with the team manager in mind, and list not only hotels but also team friendly restaurant information. This could actually evolve from a document to a larger program that the CVB could use as a marketing tool to support its local schools.

Action Item: Create a visitors guide for inbound sports teams.

Primary Recommendation #2: Success Measures/Benchmarks

In order to create and deliver the educational outreach programs outlined below, the CVB must be able to message the success of its efforts. This would require the staff to be able to accurately measure the economic impact of its activities (through past data captures or via the Destination International impact model), and also be able to effectively capture room night totals from events it hosts (through live data captures, use of a standardized formula based on participant numbers, or a technology such as EventConnect). In addition, the CVB should summarize and use its historical data on some of the key events from year to year to use as positive examples of what tourism can drive to North Platte over time.

Currently, the CVB measures success purely on the status of overall bed tax collections. While that is certainly one parameter that can be used, most sports commissions or sports tourism efforts measure additional matrix, including, but not limited to the following:

- Number of new events landed.
- Number of new events created.
- Total room nights generated.
- Room nights renewed from one year to the next.
- Total economic impact.
- Sales tax collections.

North Platte is currently realizing a strong bounce back in total occupancy taxes collected, after a down year in 2016. With more new hotels coming on line, this upward trajectory is likely to continue in the coming years. With that in mind, the Consultant Team would recommend the sports commission focus on three (3) annual measurements:

1. Total room nights secured through sporting events (both bid on and created).
2. Number of events created (with a goal of 2 per year).
3. Number of events secured (goal TBD).



Lastly, for any events that the CVB or sports commission supports financially (through grant funds or sponsorships), should be required to utilize the CVB to send out leads and to help secure hotel rooms and venues. With the right technology in place, this leads service will give the CVB a system to track success more easily than trying to chase down pick-up reports after the events take place.

Action Items: Determine measurement metrics and set goals for each, add to the event grant program a requirement for the CVB to issue hotel leads for all events receiving a grant or sponsorship.

Primary Recommendation #3: Local Messaging and Marketing Platforms

Throughout the research process, the Consultant Team encountered instances where stakeholders (both internal and external) were unsure of the historical importance of sports tourism on North Platte. While this is very common in markets the size of Metro North Platte, there is a good amount of education that needs to take place in the future. The Consultant Team recommends five (5) action items to help improve CVB's messaging to both internal and external stakeholders:

1. Local Communications – The CVB and its stakeholders, elected officials, and the hospitality community at large in North Platte will be well served by a session on the value sports tourism brings to the area today, and what it could drive to the area in the future. To deliver upon this message, the Consultant Team recommends the CVB undertake the following actions:
 - a. Value Proposition – Create an education campaign to roll out both internally and externally. This quarterly road show would be presented in a 60-minute coffee workshop format. The CVB sports staff would present on the value of sports tourism to the county, and the opportunities available to the North Platte region in the sports and events marketplace. Presentations should be made to various community groups (examples: elected officials, chamber leadership, civic clubs, high school athletic directors, hoteliers, restaurant association, sports venue managers, etc.). It is important to reiterate that the CVB and sports staff utilize outside supporters (examples: CVB Board members, event rights holders when in town, local event promoters) as partners in these meetings in order to give these presentations third party validation.
 - b. Create Corporate/Hospitality “Forums” – Where the education campaign noted above is aimed at community groups, the CVB staff should also develop a channel to educate and engage the corporate community in North Platte. The Consultants recommend the creation of a quarterly “6&6 Lunch”. These lunches employ six existing stakeholders (examples: CVB Board members, staff) to each invite one guest from the business community (six stakeholders, six guests, “6 & 6”) to attend an informative luncheon on the importance of tourism, sports and events, and the work of the CVB in the sports tourism industry today, and the



opportunity for partnership involvement.

Action Items: Build a PowerPoint deck for use at the coffee workshops, schedule one (1) coffee workshop for 2019, schedule one (1) “6 & 6” luncheon for 2019.

2. Sports Tourism Advisory Committee (STAC) – Several interview respondents cited a level of disconnect with the current sports tourism efforts of the CVB. In addition, it is a common thought in the area that many of the local youth sports programs need more operational support to be successful in the future. While these issues could be due to a relatively new sports effort or perceptions that are unfounded, the Consultants believes the creation of a more formal community-based sports advisory group would benefit the CVB in a very meaningful way. This new entity would help the CVB to build stronger community relationships for the long haul. Specifically, the creation of this group and the constant communication that would ensue would help connect the dots on created event opportunities (see Primary Recommendation #2 above) as well as uncover more traditional event bid prospects in the future. The Consultant Team believes this intentional networking effort should bear fruit in a relatively short period of time. Finally, given that the CVB Board of Directors are appointed positions, this advisory group will offer more inclusion opportunities for local leaders to get involved with the CVB.

Action Item: Develop a preliminary list of potential STAC members to be formally launched in 2020.

3. Targeted Outreach – Most DMOs and CVBs work to generate business by attending travel industry conferences, conducting sales trips, and coordinating familiarization (FAM) tours. As is the case with most small market destinations, the CVB’s past efforts at these conventions have delivered sporadic results. While the CVB staff should attend trade shows where necessary for professional development purposes (examples: NASC Symposium, 4S Summit), the Consultant Team recommends that any additional travel for shows and show-related sponsorships should be removed from the 2019 travel calendar and those funds reallocated to launch locally created event products. When attending these national events, where possible the CVB should engage elected officials, community leaders, and venue partners in this process, and budget for the costs of travel for one individual to attend each conference or special event where potential partners can be sought out and secured.
4. Strategic Partnerships – There is an opportunity for the CVB to utilize this enhanced sports tourism effort to build bridges in the community. More specifically, there is a need for this newly expanded sports tourism program to bring area sports tourism and event groups, multiple city and county parks leaders, and the corporate community into the fold. Relationships can be enhanced with the various venue managers, community sports groups, and the county’s tournament organizers among others. There are two (2) specific areas where the CVB can enhance its relationships community-wide:



- a. The creation of the STAC as noted above, would provide a high level of connectivity to the North Platte sports market and would support the CVB in a more intentional way going forward.
- b. There is opportunity to recognize the past work of these community leaders through an annual community awards event of some type (example: A Sports Tourism Advocate of the Year award along with a Danny Woodhead High School Athlete of the Year award). This could be done as part of one of the quarterly STAC meetings, or as a standalone event (Travel Medford and the Southern Oregon Sports Commission have proven this model to be quite beneficial).

In both of the above recommendations, the end goal is for the CVB to be viewed as the "go to" organization when its partners need help to create and host an event.

Action Item: Develop a preliminary list of potential recognition events that could serve as a positive bridge building event in the North Platte community.

5. Trumpet Successes – In all cases where the CVB is involved in the production of an event, the organization should make it a priority to promote the community impact of the competition/tournament. This promotion should be sent out via traditional and also new media outlets, to both media and non-media audiences. The information should include economic impact data derived from the aforementioned DI impact tool. It is important that in this process the CVB steer clear of the perception of taking credit for the event in total, and that the event rights holder or local promoter be included in the promotion process throughout. Further, an ROI should be calculated on the tourism spending return for every marketing dollar spent by the CVB (most destination marketing organizations, or DMOs, aspire for a 9-to-1 or better return on each dollar invested in tourism development).

Action Items: Identify 2-3 outlets to publicize success in the sports tourism markets, and who will be responsible for messaging to/through those outlets on a regular basis.

Secondary Recommendations

In the near term, the CVB will have to grow the sports tourism market with the assets it currently has available to them (financial, physical, and human capital). The natural progression of success would include facility enhancement and development to improve the destination offering and drive more overnight stays through sports. Without a large inventory of “anchor facilities”, nor venues that can be improved to become a significant tourism driver, a longer-term vision will need to be placed on venue development for North Platte. Looking at the long-term sports tourism needs of the region, the destination will need to create a structure to effectively leverage opportunities as they arise, and also identify a funding source to use to draw additional investment in new product development (sports venues) and the enhancement of existing facilities.



Secondary Recommendation #1: Venue Enrichment/Development/Usage

1. Venue Enrichment/Development – Noted previously in this report, venue development and enhancement are critical to the long-term success for North Platte and Lincoln County as a community. For the CVB to positively impact the area’s grass roots sports events community as well as its future sports tourism work, the organization and its partners must identify additional funding mechanisms for venue enhancement and development projects (see below). This would include special projects needed to consistently land major regional and national tournaments for the area, and to enhance the local user group’s league and recreational play. The current needs for this fund would include, but are not limited to, the following projects:
 - a. Anchor Venue Inventory – The North Platte area currently has a limited supply of “anchor” venues that could be used to drive tourism to the destination. Many of North Platte’s regional and national competitors have significant multi-use sports complexes, including:
 - Dick’s Sporting Goods Park (Denver, CO) – 24 fields and an MLS soccer stadium.
 - Aurora Sports Park (Aurora, CO) – 23 flat fields and 12 diamonds.
 - Dakota Fields Sports Complex (Rapid City, SD) – 12 flat fields.
 - CAM-PLEX (Gillette, WY) – Multi-use complex with a 50,000+ square foot conference center and arena.
 - b. Infrastructure Enhancements – All venues in the county that are used to host regional and national tournaments should provide permanent restrooms and concession facilities, television ready lighting, adequate parking on site, a championship field, WiFi coverage, a tournament office to serve as an operational headquarters, and adequate power locations to accommodate television/streaming or new media style broadcasts. Most of the venues in the North Platte area lack some or all of these assets. In addition, many of the outdoor facilities visited by the Consultant Team need equipment upgrades or replacements. The region could also use more artificial turf surfaces over grass, which would help with inclement weather issues, extend the outdoor playing season, and minimize maintenance costs over time. The current Facility Improvement Fund could help enhance some of these existing facilities to make them more tournament friendly, while also serving to improve the local community user group’s experience.
 - c. Venue Master Plan – Currently, there is not a region-wide facility master plan for the entire community. While some of the CVB’s stakeholders have mast plans or facility development/enhancement concepts for their own organizations (such as



parks and recreation), there isn't a unified plan that traverses the entire community. There is also a 100 acre piece of land owned by the City of North Platte that is slated to become a sports complex. This parcel would be a key cog in master planning the rest of the region going forward.

- d. Indoor Venues – North Platte has a limited inventory of quality indoor spaces that can be used for tournament play. Future facility development should focus on new or enhanced indoor spaces, as these indoor venues would offer more event opportunities outside of the prime tourism season (May to October). Additional multi-purpose indoor spaces would likely add value in the shoulder and off peak tourism seasons when weather can prove to be a challenge. In addition to providing more indoor facilities, it is likely there will be a need for additional investment in athletic equipment to host larger tournaments (examples: sport court, basketball baskets, volleyball nets, pickleball net systems). As tournament opportunities arise, the facility Improvement Fund should be tapped into to pay for these equipment upgrades. These purchases can be used for years into the future to expand the CVB's reach into the fastest growing indoor sports, and to diversify beyond the traditional competitions. The ability to host indoor events could also strengthen tourism in the shoulder season and off-peak months. The growing sports opportunities could include:

- Pickleball – USA Pickleball's membership has grown seven-fold in the past six years.
- Cheer and Dance – 1.6 million core participants engaging in the sport at least 13 times per year.
- Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) – Core participation in MMA competitions is up 77% over the past three years, totaling nearly 1.3 million athletes.
- Additional Growth – Boxing and roller hockey also offer a significant growth market in the indoor sports space, rising in core participation 41.4% and 39.5% since 2012, respectively.

An investment in this equipment could also allow for the CVB to host many of the larger more traditional and established sports competitions, including:

- Basketball – 15.6 million people in the United States are considered core basketball players, participating in the sport 13 or more days per year.
- Volleyball – Has a core audience of nearly 3.6 million people.
- Indoor Soccer (Futsal) – Over 2.6 million core athletes participating 13 or more times a year.



- Archery – Core athlete participation in archery (26 or more days per year) is up 8.1%.*

* – The statistics noted above were obtained from the 2016 Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s annual sports participation report. The study measures participation changes over one, three, and five years.

Action Item: Begin to develop a region-wide facility master plan by pulling in each of the independent master plans that may already be in place (examples: parks and recreation, school district, fairgrounds, junior college, private facilities).

Secondary Recommendation #2: Venue Funding Model

In order to enrich the destination’s venue mix, the CVB and its tourism partners will likely need to identify additional sustaining funding sources beyond the current Improvement Fund to help drive new development. Numerous markets across the country have implemented a dedicated tourism-based revenue source to enhance their sports facilities. These taxes are most commonly a hotel occupancy tax or a food and beverage tax (see Appendix A). Should such a tax, or another funding source be identified, the Consultant Team has outlined below how such a funding model could work for the CVB and its sports tourism program:

1. Sports Development Fund – Identifying a dedicated funding source for the venue projects noted above, and those opportunities that may arise in the future, is critical for the CVB to grow the sports market. The national best practice for the activation of these newly identified funds would be to use them as a catalyst for a “challenge grant” style program. That is, there would be a formal grant request process for the CVB’s partners to apply for funds in a dollar-for-dollar match for capital projects that would drive overnight stays to North Platte. For every dollar the partner invests, they would be eligible for a dollar from the CVB Sports Development Fund. Employing this type of a matching program ensures that all parties have a vested interest in the positive outcome of each project, and that the CVB’s investments are well protected. In addition, effective use of these funds to drive more overnight stays would subsequently increase the impact of tax collections by these additional visitors. Finally, should this fund be put in place, the CVB should tie all grants to the concept of “Favored Nation Status” noted earlier in this report.

A major point of note, numerous cities are increasing their bed tax rate and/or using a food and beverage tax to put towards the construction and/or operation of new sports facilities (Examples: Rockford, Evansville, Shreveport, Spokane, Appleton, Tulsa, Eau Claire, Fort Wayne, Ashland, Millville, Elizabethtown, etc.). See Appendix A for additional details on this topic.

Action Items: Identify new potential funding sources to augment the current facility enhancement grant initiative already in place. Add to the facility development grant program a requirement for the CVB to issue hotel leads for all facilities receiving a grant/sponsorship and also add a requirement for facility use by the CVB at discounted



rates or at no cost for a specific number of events each year.
Secondary Recommendation #3: Investigate Organizational Structure as a “Sports Authority”

The current sports commission is a brand within the CVB and not a formally formed non-profit organization. In this type of organizational structure, it is a common challenge to generate significant community/corporate financial support as the sports entity technically sits within a governmental agency. While there are positives and negatives to every organizational structure, what would work best in Lincoln County may be a formally created sports commission under a 501(c)3 non-profit umbrella. This would be especially true if there is a fundraising activity that needs to take place to build new venues and/or to generate more income outside of the current bed tax resources that are allocated to the CVB.

Action Item: Outline the positives and negatives of formally incorporating the sports commission under a non-profit banner.

Note: A summary of all activation recommendations can be found in Appendix D.

Conclusion

Sports tourism is a \$1.41 trillion industry worldwide, and is projected to grow to \$5.72 trillion by 2021, according to the media and entertainment research firm Technavio. A study by the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) states that the grass roots portion of the domestic sports tourism industry is responsible for \$11.4 billion annually. Sports is big business, and the competition has never been more fierce. There are more communities targeting the sports market than ever before. In order for North Platte and Lincoln County to be relevant in this niche market, the CVB and sports commission must build bridges with key players locally to pave the way for a new organizational model that is focused on more locally created events that can serve as long term assets. By forging this path, the CVB will position the North Platte region as a strong player in the sports tourism industry, that will be able to provide value to its stakeholders in a meaningful way year over year.

The North Platte area has a rich history that includes Buffalo Bill Cody and the impact of the railroads. At the same time, a high dependence on only a few major industries (such as the railroads) can put a destination at financial risk. This is all the more reason why tourism needs to be at the forefront of any economic development focus for North Platte and Lincoln County.

North Platte has had success in hosting sporting tournaments and competitions over the years. The Consultant Team believes there is additional opportunity for the CVB and its partners to grow the impact of sports and events tourism in the future. To frame up this vision, the Consultant Team offers four “Big Ideas” for North Platte:

1. The CVB needs to be more intentional about how it plays the sports tourism game. North Platte cannot play the same game that its more well-funded and experienced competitors play in larger markets, with superior venues, and more resources. The CVB has to play its own game to be successful.



2. There are several opportunities to leverage today. Create small opportunities year over year, with a vision for the longer term. The CVB and its sports tourism program needs to be intentional about an external focus towards its local partners (STAC) to be effective in the future.
3. Community leaders shouldn't let facility discussions get in the way of blocking and tackling sports tourism efforts that can happen now. There are opportunities to be had, even if new resources or venues don't materialize.
4. The end goal should be for the CVB to become the go to organization that the community can lean on for all sports tourism related issues/opportunities (example: be in a position to take on a leadership role with area promoters to remove barriers for them to create tourism driving products).

The CVB and its partners can achieve tourism growth in North Platte through the empowerment of local event promoters/operators to create home-grown grass roots events, develop new event and venue products, and host bid-in state/regional/national championships when necessary. In order to really make an impact on North Platte, its businesses, and even more importantly its citizens, the CVB needs to focus its efforts on three (3) overarching objectives:

1. Create a culture of sports and events development. Develop new events (two per year), develop human capital, develop relationships, and develop physical products (venues) when resources become available.
2. Partner with local promoters to build created events that will call North Platte home long into the future that will not be subject to an RFP process with the CVB's competitors.
3. Make the long-term enhancement of North Platte's venue "tool kit" a priority, by leading a community-wide discussion that focuses on the future vision of the community through a sports tourism lens.

In order to pursue some of the "Big Ideas" and objectives laid out above, the CVB would need to identify a new and sustainable funding source for facility development. Even with the addition of a new funding mechanism, to be effective in the near term with its current resources, the CVB needs to be strategic in how it promotes the destination. In the future, the CVB must pick up the ball and create an empowering environment for its local event promoters (hosting tournaments) and community partners (venue development) to build a foundation for long-term success.

Specifically, the CVB sports effort should focus its resources on three (3) initiatives (or "Pillars" as outlined in Appendix F). Each Pillar has a specific target audience, as well as tactics to achieve the CVB's tourism goals for each area. The Pillars are meant to be simple and also clarifying, so both internal and external stakeholders can easily understand the mission and goals of the CVB and this enhanced sports tourism effort. The Pillars include the following three (3) focus areas:



1. Events – A two-pronged events approach would include the current practice of pursuing a limited number of traditional bid-in events with event rights holders, and a new vision for incubating and creating new events in partnership with the community’s local promoters (example: the “12th Man” concept where over time CVB develops one event each month that is locally owned and run). As the CVB’s expanded efforts take root and new locally produced events are developed, there will be less of a need to focus on competitive bid processes to drive overnight stays. Both the traditional bid-in events as well as created events that drive overnight stays will deliver on the CVB’s tourism mission.
2. Venue Enhancement – Providing a sustainable revenue stream for venue development will be mission critical for the community going forward. As this funding source takes shape, the CVB should lead a venue master planning process for all of North Platte and Lincoln County. This master plan would serve as a launching pad to enhance the area’s existing venues and to potentially develop new facilities that can positively impact tourism in the area (while also offering better venues for local community user groups to utilize). This should not be lost in the recommendations proposed here – improved venues will give the community’s local leagues and programs better places to play throughout the year, as well as drive additional tourism to the community. While this project is focused on tourism, we cannot discount that the local user experience will be greatly improved in the process. As a final point here, these new venues would also have a combined positive effect between driving tourism and local user groups – these new facilities would also provide more opportunities to host tournaments in Lincoln County, which means local teams could play in regional/national level tournaments at home, rather than traveling to other destinations.
3. Community Engagement – Messaging the mission of the CVB, the importance of sports tourism to the area, and the historical success of the organization to various stakeholder groups is critical to future success. In addition, the concept of an expanded sports tourism program would likely draw in new talent and further deepen the sports tourism community’s ties. This effort will provide a place for further venue and event development discussions to take place. The best practice for success with Sports Commission Boards (and Advisory Boards where applicable such as the proposed STAC) is to ensure that they have a defined role, something the CVB and its stakeholders should contemplate prior to assembling and recruiting this group. The CVB has several different stakeholder groups, reaching them consistently with a meaningful message will help grow the organization’s reach and influence over time.

The unprecedented growth of the sports tourism industry (see Appendix B) shows the high level of market sustainability that support the expansion of economic development in this space for Lincoln County. The recommendations suggested here will positively impact the county’s tourism profile and also positively affect the citizens and community user groups on a day-to-day basis.



Throughout this project, subjects expressed a desire for community leaders to work together. There is a great deal of support for the CVB to expand its reach in the sports tourism space. With that in mind, there is an opportunity for the CVB to be the connection point in sports tourism through the enhancement of its current sports marketing efforts, that can lead the charge in the creation of new event and venue products. This investment will, in turn, help drive economic development year over year into the future.

As in any new project, there are numerous variables that would need to be considered in evaluating the ROI and risk in expanding the community's sports tourism program, including work towards the development of new venue assets. It is the experience of the Consultant Team that the communities who consider the overall impact on their tax base as a whole, will have more success than those that measure success purely by room nights or bed tax collections. That is, the cities that take into account the entirety of the community impact and total economic activity that is generated by a sports tourism marketing program, generally display a higher level of collaboration than those that simply measure heads in beds and sales tax totals.

In summary, the Consultant Team offers what we feel are the four (4) most important things for the CVB to facilitate in the immediate future:

1. The CVB sports staff needs to become more externally focused in developing and growing local relationships. This starts with the creation of the STAC, and an intentional effort to connect with local venue managers and event organizers on a routine and ongoing basis.
2. Meet with the leaders of top tournaments and special events to identify areas where the sports tourism initiative can partner with them to enhance their existing properties, and potentially create new ones. Engaging local promoters in the event development process to create more owned event assets will have positive long-term effects on the community, including lessening the dependency on bid-in events and transient/corporate tourism.
3. Develop a venue master plan for the area. This plan should include a facility enhancement wish list along with projected budgets for the desired improvements, as well as a new venue development target list inclusive of projected project costs. These facility enhancements and new builds should then be prioritized in order of those that will drive more overnight stays to Lincoln County. Once finalized, the CVB, sports commission, and STAC should formally adopt the list of enhancements/developments as a long-range improvement plan (with or without an identified funding source).
4. Determine future potential funding pathways, and what percentage of those funds would be attributed to this expanded sports tourism effort, and also to other tourism driving programs through the CVB.

In the eyes of the Consultant Team, the puzzle pieces exist in Lincoln County to expand



economic development for the region through sports and special event activities. The only question would be to what extent this development effort can be supported financially in order to best benefit the destination. The Consultant Team believes it is within the power of the CVB and its stakeholders to capture more opportunities in the sports tourism and events market, while also enriching the lives of its citizens. This community-wide effort will help the North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau lead the tourism and business communities in an ongoing and proactive manner into the future.

Report submitted to North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau on April 25, 2019.



Appendix A – Trends in Sports Facility Funding

The most common funding source for new facilities is a general fund allocation from the city/county where the facility is located as well as a land contribution for the venue to be constructed (again donated by the city or county). Although the level of success is yet to be determined, several communities around the country have already, or are in the process of, raising their bed tax collection rate to fund sports-related facility development, including:

- Rockford (IL) having already finished a significant expansion of its outdoor sports venues, used bed tax dollars to bond \$10 million towards a new indoor facility. The Downtown Sports Complex carried a price tag of \$24 million and opened in late 2016.
- Evansville (IN) recently opened a new \$15 million multi-use outdoor sports complex that is entirely funded by bed tax dollars. The future management of this facility will also be funded by bed tax dollars and it is run by the DMO itself.
- Spokane (WA) bonded \$25 against future bed tax collections to construct a new athletic field house which will open in 2020.
- Shreveport (LA) passed a bed tax increase for the expansion of their Convention & Visitors Bureau's national marketing program. This new tax also supports the Independence Bowl (venue enhancements and improved match-ups) and the Shreveport Regional Airport (incentives for new airline routes). This combined effort between three of Shreveport's leading agencies shows the economic development impact that sports tourism can have on a mid- or small-size market. Grand Junction (CO) passed similar legislation in 2019.
- Fox Cities (Appleton, WI) raised their bed tax rate from 6% to 10% to build a convention center, a new large (hardwood, turf, and ice) indoor sports complex, and to renovate three existing sports facilities used to attract regional and national tournaments. The new Champions Center is set to open in October of 2019.
- Placer Valley (CA) is allocating funds from an increased bed tax as well as a new hotel assessment to construct and manage a \$35 million multi-use all turf sports complex. The venue opened in 2018 and is managed by the area tourism bureau.
- Pasco (FL), in partnership with the Florida Sports Foundation, is in the process of developing a new sports complex on 120 acres of county-owned property. Pasco County is investing \$11 million to the project, including \$8.5 million in tourist tax funds and \$2.5 million in unrestricted bond proceeds.
- In January 2016, Warren County (OH) raised the lodging tax one (1) percent to finance a \$10 million, 20 field sports complex. The rate hike increased the county hotel occupancy tax from 3% to 4%. The tax will be used over 20 years to pay off debt the Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau will take on to pay for the complex.



Appendix A (Continued) – National Trends in Sports Facility Funding

In addition to the hotel tax examples noted on the previous page, several communities have implemented a food and beverage tax for the purpose of developing or enhancing sports facilities.

- Elizabethtown (KY) passed a 2% food and beverage tax in 2012 to fund the development and management of the Elizabethtown Sports Park. In its first five years of operations, the “mega complex” drove nearly \$100 million in direct visitor spending to the community (according to studies commissioned with SportsImpacts, one of the top economic impact agencies in the country). Etown as it is known, is currently looking at facility expansion opportunities to capture even more sports tourism activity.
- For the past 30 years, Fort Wayne (IN) has implemented a 1% food and beverage tax that is used for capital projects. This program has funded several new buildings at the site of the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum arena, including a 100,000-square foot expo center and 5,000 seat baseball stadium. These funds have also been used to renovate the arena’s ice floor, to add 2,500 seats and meeting rooms to the arena. The fund generates \$7.5 million per year and is currently being considered to help finance a new arena downtown.
- Ashland (OR) employs a 5% food and beverage tax which garners nearly \$4.5 million a year. Twenty percent of these funds are allocated to the acquisition and preservation of open spaces for parks and recreation, with 80% of the funds used to retire debt for a community-wide waterway enhancement.
- Historically, King County (WA) has used intermittent funding from food and beverage taxes to build stadiums such as the King Dome. While this program is not active today, it has been a tool the Greater Seattle area has used in the past for venue development to entice professional sports teams to the area. Similarly, the State of Florida has a professional league stadium venue development program that is also funded by temporary food and beverage taxes, when needed. Finally, Milwaukee used a food and beverage tax to build Miller Park, home of Major League Baseball’s Milwaukee Brewers.
- In 2007, the State of New Jersey created the “Sports and Entertainment District Urban Revitalization Act.” Under this legislation, the community of Millville levied a 2% local food and beverage tax to fund a sports and entertainment district including a 500-acre motorsports park that hosts numerous events including NASCAR racing.

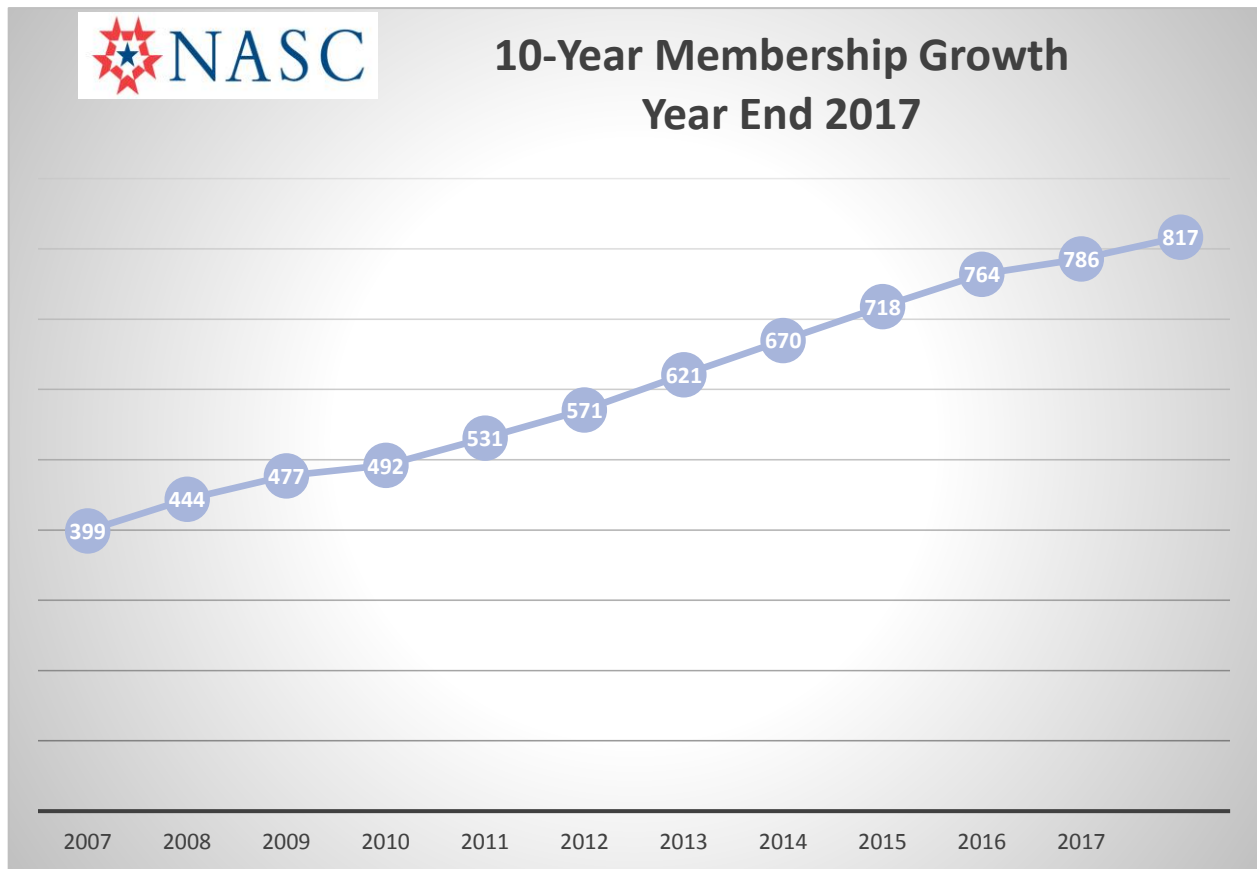
It should be noted that different states have different regulations regarding the use of funds generated by bed and/or food and beverage taxes. The cases outlined above are not exhaustive and should be viewed only as examples for further discussion.



Appendix B – National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) Membership

Sports tourism has grown exponentially over the past two decades. The nature of the industry is that it is relatively “immune” to market factors such as troubled economies, war, high unemployment, 9/11, or similar factors. Studies by the NASC show that the grass roots sports tourism industry is worth over \$11 billion and that there are more events today, with more participants competing in those events, than ever before.

Projections indicate that the grass roots sports tourism industry (exclusive of mega events like the Superbowl, Final Fours, etc.) is growing at a pace of 12-14% per year, with more growth anticipated in the coming decade. Below is a chart outlining the growth of membership organizations within the NASC, which is a direct correlation to the growth of the sports tourism industry as a whole.

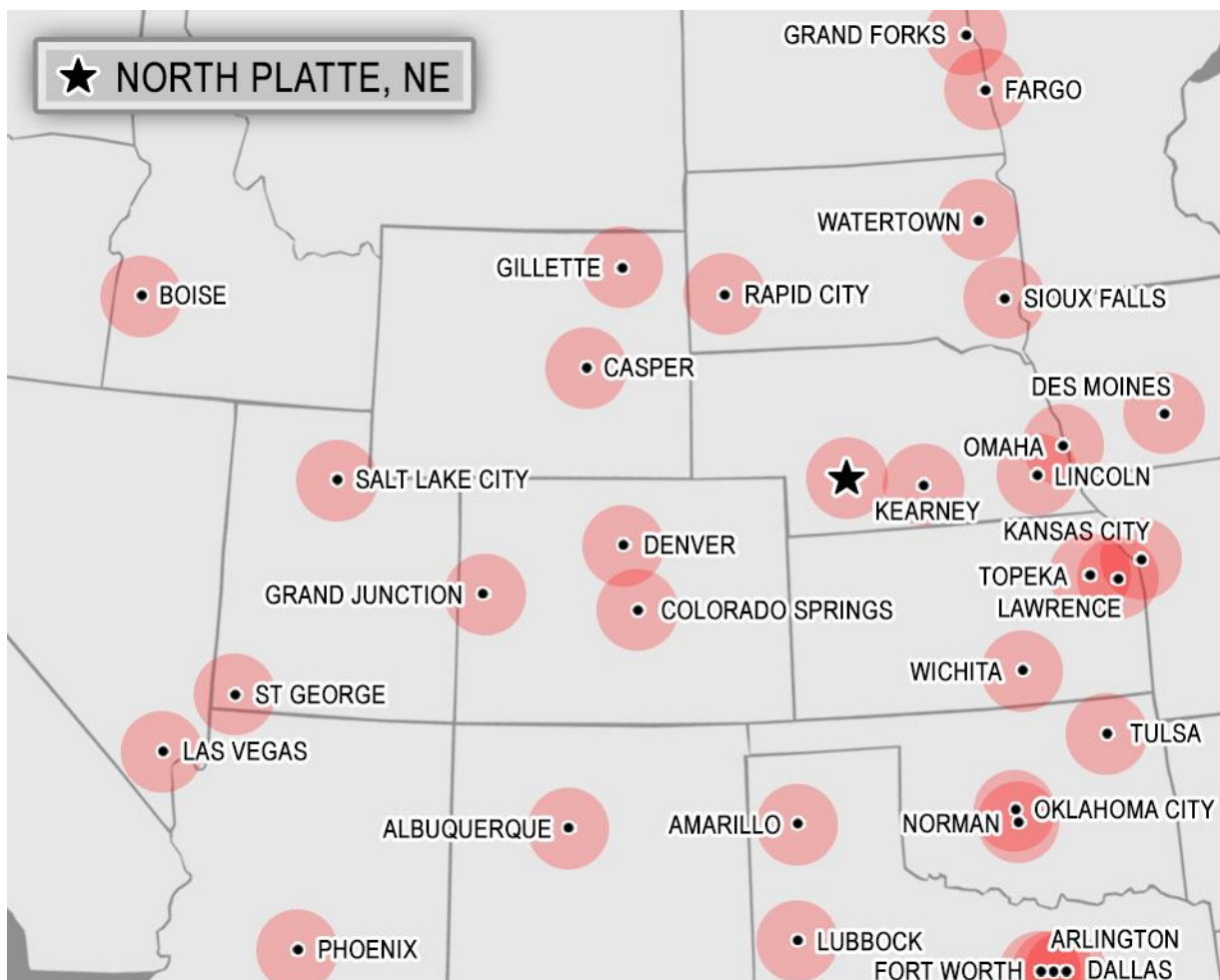


Appendix C – North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau Regional Competition Analysis

The sports tourism and events industry is as competitive today as it has ever been. Numerous destinations market themselves in this niche industry in the form of a DMO, Convention & Visitors Bureau, city, or through an alternative organization.

Below is a visual representation of the various entities in North Platte's geographic region that are active in the sports tourism and events space. The circles surrounding each city represent a 100-mile drive market for local and regional events.

While tournaments often attract teams from as far away as a full day's drive, this graphic shows the significant level of competition in this industry and the high level geographic overlap amongst these communities.



Appendix D – North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau Summary of Action Items

Action Items for Primary Recommendations (Near Term)

1. Schedule meetings with local event organizers.
2. Create a shared venue calendar system.
3. Create a visitors guide for inbound sports teams.
4. Determine measurement metrics and set goals for each, add to the event grant program a requirement for the CVB to issue hotel leads for all events receiving a grant or sponsorship.
5. Build a PowerPoint deck for use at the coffee workshops, schedule one (1) coffee workshop for 2019, schedule one (1) “6 & 6” luncheon for 2019.
6. Develop a preliminary list of potential STAC members to be formally launched in 2020.
7. Develop a preliminary list of potential recognition events that could serve as a positive bridge building event in the North Platte community.
8. Identify 2-3 outlets to publicize success in the sports tourism markets, and who will be responsible for messaging to/through those outlets on a regular basis.

Action Items for Secondary Recommendations (Long Term)

1. Begin to develop a region-wide facility master plan by pulling in each of the independent master plans that may already be in place (examples: parks and recreation, school district, fairgrounds, junior college, private facilities).
2. Identify new potential funding sources to augment the current facility enhancement grant initiative already in place. Add to the facility development grant program a requirement for the CVB to issue hotel leads for all facilities receiving a grant/sponsorship and also add a requirement for facility use by the CVB at discounted rates or at no cost for a specific number of events each year.
3. Outline the positives and negatives of formally incorporating the sports commission under a non-profit banner.



Appendix E – North Platte Venue Needs Summary

Overall, the Consultant Team found few “anchor” facilities in North Platte. Below is a list of all venues evaluated by the Consultant Team along with areas of enhancement needed for each. To be clear, even if these enhancements are made at the facilities listed below, it is unlikely that any of them would be made tournament ready with only these additions/changes.

Facility	Description	Comments
Bill Woods Field	American Legion field owned by the City, run by the local club.	Good facility, seats 1,500.
Brady Schools	Grass field with seating for 750+.	Facility is outdated.
Centennial Park	Seven youth baseball diamonds utilize by Little League. Small soccer pitches on site.	Diamond fields are different sizes which can cause flexibility issue for certain age groups.
Cody Park	Four lighted fields managed by the North Platte Recreation Center.	Complex has most of the necessary amenities to host tournament play. Fields are all in a central location.
D&N Event Center	40,000 square foot indoor court facility used for basketball, soccer, volleyball, MMA, roller derby and other events.	Versatile venue that could host additional sports such as boxing. Could use more court space.
Dowhower Softball Complex	Seven diamond complex utilized by the Platte Valley Girls Softball Association.	Complex has most of the necessary amenities to host tournament play. Fields are all in a central location.
Dusty Trails River Outfitting	Provides a good entry point into the river a long with a variety of activities including tubes, canoes, kayaks, and tanks.	Good location for the tank race start.
Hershey Baseball Fields	Two lighted playing fields, one softball, one American Legion.	Good facility but small with only two fields.
Hershey Schools	Football field and outdoor track with seating for 1,000. Gymnasium with two full-sized courts with seating for 750.	Football field and track are good quality for community use.

**Appendix E – North Platte
Venue Needs Summary (Continued)**

Facility	Description	Comments
Indian Meadows Golf Course	9-hole course, par 36.	Too few holes to host anything significant. Might be more suited to be transitioned to a flat field facility for more tournament and community use.
Lake Maloney	1,650 acre lake with camping pads, RV hookups, boat ramps, fishing stations, and a beachfront.	Used for triatholons, a good venue for the endurance events.
Lake Maloney Golf Club	18-hole daily fee golf course with practice facilities.	Good links style course that can host regional and state high school level tournaments.
Lincoln County Fairgrounds	Multi-faceted facility including outdoor volleyball courts, outdoor arena, steerhead indoor arena, dirt racetrack, equine stalls, RV hook-ups and WiFi throughout.	Typical multi-use fairgrounds venue in need of modernization/upgrades.
Lincoln County Wildlife Gun Club	Skeet, trap and sporting clays shooting facility with seating for 300.	Good facility that can be used to host shooting events.
Maranatha Bible Camp	9-hole disc golf course, fishing and other silent sports venues on a 40 acre lake, sand volleyball court, soccer with seating for 600, archery range, skeet and trap shooting.	The shooting facilities are good and could be used to host regional or locally created events.
Maxwell School	Football field with seating for 100. Two gymnasiums with seating for 1,100 and 250 respectively.	Limited amenities at the football site. Larger gymnasium could be used at a complimentary venue for tournament play.
Maxwell Gun Club	100/200 yard rifle ranges, two pistol pits, five trap pits. Archery range planned for the future.	Good facility for smaller shooting events. The new archery range could be an asset for future use.

**Appendix E – North Platte
Venue Needs Summary (Continued)**

Facility	Description	Comments
North Platte Community College	NJCAA gymnasium seats 1,800. Theater.	Good facility could be used to host a holiday invitational basketball tournament. Theater could be used for cheer and dance.
North Platte High School	Turf football field with seating for 3,500. Gym with seating for 2,200+. Auxiliary gymnasium also on site.	Good high school facilities that could be used for hosting smaller invitational tournaments for the hardwood sports and/or football games.
North Platte Rec Center	Two-court gymnasium with rubber flooring with seating for 150. Small 25 yard pool with diving well with limited seating and a small deck space.	The gym flooring isn't conducive for tournament play and the pool doesn't meet the quality standards needed for larger meets.
North Platte Rec Center Skate Park	Concrete skate park with five metal ramps.	Facility is outdated.
North Platte St. Pats High School	Gymnasium with seating for 800. Football field with seating for 800.	Average high school facility, could be used as an ancillary site for tournament play.
Palmer Park	American Legion sized baseball/softball field.	Decent facility for one off league games.
Platte River Mall	Aging retail space with increasing vacancies.	Facility isn't structurally designed to become a sports facility, however the land could be an asset for new facilities should the mall eventually be decommissioned.
Potential BMX land	100 acre plot being master planned by Parks and Rec.	Could be a good site for soccer to relocate to, add BMX and other sports assets in one location.
Potters Pasture	2,000 acres of recreational land used for mountain biking and other outdoor sports.	Versatile venue to host a myriad of recreational and competitive events.
Rivers Edge Golf Course	Public 18-hole golf course, par 71.	Parts of the course have flood plain issues. Could be reconfigured to serve a different sports such as BMX racing or the flat field sports.

**Appendix E – North Platte
Venue Needs Summary (Continued)**

Facility	Description	Comments
Sears Building	Good open indoor space, mostly vacant.	Could be repurposed for indoor sports such as BMX racing.
Simon Construction Company building	Manufacturing facility.	Low ceilings would make repurposing this building cost prohibitive.
Splatterbox Paintball	Multiple playing areas including an airfield and tire bunker.	Specialized facility for paintball uses.
Sutherland Football Field	All weather facility with seating for 800.	Turf field helps with challenging weather patterns.
Sutherland Rodeo Grounds	Outdoor arena with seating for 2,500, 4 pit horseshoe facility.	Average venue used for rodeo events.
Sutherland Schools	All-weather track and football field with seating for 800. Soccer field. Two-court gym with seating for 1,200.	Good high school facility. The all-weather surfaces are good to combat pending weather issues.
Wild West Arena	PRCA outdoor rodeo arena with seating for 4,000.	Hosts the PRCA Rodeo, one of the larger events in the area each year.

**Appendix F – North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau
Sports Tourism Market
5-Year Strategic Mission Pillars**

In the future, North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau’s enhanced sports tourism effort should sharpen its focus on three (3) key mission areas, or “Pillars.” Each Pillar is driven by a different audience, all focused on increasing overnight stays and consumer spending in the North Platte area. This refined focus will help CVB enhance its messaging and will deliver directly on the community’s tourism mission. The recommended Pillars are below along with their driving audiences/factors.

North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau Sports Tourism Market 5-Year Strategic Mission Pillars			
Pillar	Events Bid/Created/Owned (Short-Term)	Venue Enhancement (Long-Term)	Community Engagement (Ongoing)
Audience	Tourism Economic Development Rights Holders/NGBs Local Promoters	Venue Managers Hospitality Leaders Elected Officials Economic Development	Elected Officials C-Level Community Leaders Local Media Non-Profit Civic Groups Hospitality Community
Tactics	Revamped Sports Marketing RFPs & Event Bids Grants Program “12 th Man” Grow existing events 10%/Yr. Create two new events/Yr.	Venue Needs Master Plan Venue Development Fund Funding Source Defined	Staff = Outwardly Focused “6&6” Lunches Economic Impact Releases Corporate Support/Recognition National Outreach Sports Commission (?)

