

SM 445 Final Exam:
Stadia as the Anchor for Urban Development and Image

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Prepared for
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Introduction

Cities have long struggled with many issues such as inequality and class tension. These issues were often present in the separation between different districts inside of cities. Some areas were full of wealth and development, others laid un-developed with lower income residents living in poor conditions. This disparity of urban space directly impacts the brand of the city, leading to the idea of urban revitalization.

Over the past years, urban revitalization and regeneration have proven to be integral to a city and its attractiveness to potential tourists, but also critical for maintaining a high quality of life for a diverse population of residents. Cities have built new infrastructure in order to spur on economic growth and social cohesion (Ehrenfeucht and Grodach, 2015). Overall, this can lead to a positive image of the city and can enhance the cities status as a tourist destination.

Within the context of sports tourism, a common driver of urban revitalization is through the construction and attraction of various sport stadia. Sport stadia can regenerate urban space by attracting sport tourists, while simultaneously acting as the impetus to improve a city's tourist image. Particularly, this is most prominent in entrepreneurial cities. Through the projects of Camden Yards in Baltimore and Petco Park in the San Diego Ballpark District, I will explore how stadia can be used to first benefit an urban area, then serve as a gathering place for both tourists and residents, and finally, garner enough attraction to affect the image of the respective city.

Stadia

Stadia in the Framework of Urban Revitalization

Stadia have proven to serve as a vital anchor to developing urban space and attracting copious amounts of sport tourists, while also providing infrastructure for current residents of the cities. Many cities over the past 20 years have set out to use revitalization strategies to build sport facilities that contain not just a stadium, but an entire development including residential and retail land uses as well (Gerretsen, 2018). These projects can be positive catalysts for cities through economic benefits, and “offer advantages for cities competing for tourists through architectural design” (Ahlfeldt and Maennig, 2010). These stadia leave a lasting legacy on the city as Charles Corwin (2011) examined that, “A community's success can be based on the amenities it has to offer. Sports stadiums, established as iconic forms (i.e. through prominent design), might allow cities to vie for international attention and establish the city in the international tourism market.”

This introduces a major concept within sport tourism- the entrepreneurial city. These cities are classified as second tier cities that often lack the major scale and advantages of first tier, international cities like New York City and Paris. They often have regional economic growth that is backed by growth in firms and public policy that promotes new, unique ideas and entrepreneurship (Kerr and Glaeser, 2010). Entrepreneurial cities also spur urban growth and economic development through the creation of new types of urban spaces as these cities want to be able to compete on a greater stage, so thus they use sport stadiums to promote a positive image.

While the academic literature pertaining to the positive image effect from sports stadiums is limited, it is rational to realize that these facility developments in sports can and do serve as

synecdochic images for an entrepreneurial city. In 2011, Coates and Humphreys examined that these sport facilities can function as an urban amenity that provides benefits to residents, thus garnering community pride. Their observation shows that simply having a stadium can generate a positive urban image for the city. All in all, research has shown that the concept of urban revitalization through stadia has a direct impact (economically and socially) on the community for which it is located, which potentially leads to an enhanced image for tourists of entrepreneurial cities.

Camden Yards

The first major example of this concept in action is the development of Camden Yards in downtown Baltimore, directly next to the Inner Harbor. Camden Yards is “widely considered a model project of downtown revitalization,” which helps to prove that stadiums can be successful in promoting and attracting sport tourists (Chapin, 2004).

Background

Prior to the project, the land that Camden Yards is now located on consisted of old industrial buildings with many of them abandoned. “An overall eyesore for the city of Baltimore, Maryland. This land was located to the west of the Inner Harbor which had already been partially revitalized and was centered towards tourist attractions such as the National Aquarium, the Maryland Science Center and an entire retail and gathering area” (*Baltimore Inner Harbor Visitor Center | Visit Baltimore*, 2021). The city of Baltimore set out to revitalize the warehouse district and expand the so-called “tourist bubble” westwards through the construction of Camden Yards.

The urban benefits derived from the ballpark

Overall, the success of this project is measured in the urban benefits that it provided. Financially, this project spurred economic activity and growth in an area that had previously seen no growth. They successfully funneled tourism between the ballpark and Inner Harbor which has further centralized economic growth in the city (Chapin, 2004). In addition, much like we discussed with the Olympics and infrastructure, Camden Yards eliminated the risk of being a “white elephant” by connecting the ballpark with an entertainment complex to serve tourists on non-event days.

However, I ascertain that because public subsidies were a major part of this development, it is critical to understand the impact on taxpayers that this project incurred. Because the state of Maryland paid \$106.5 million for the ballpark to be built, it must prove to benefit the taxpayers to truly be considered an urban revitalization success (Barker, 2017). Fortunately, Camden Yards has had an overall economic impact of \$331.3 million in 2014 and 2015, as well as, generating \$22.5 million in state tax revenues (Barker, 2017). These numbers don't fully compare the direct impact and return to taxpayers, but what it does illustrate is that the ballpark has improved spending on local businesses, which produces a better quality of life and vibrancy in Baltimore.

Camden Yards as a gathering place for tourists and residents

Socially, Camden Yards has served as a huge anchor in bringing tourists and residents back to downtown Baltimore. Barker (2017) provided the data stating that Camden Yards averages about 2.7 million fans in a season. This further proves that sport tourism exceeds the rest of the city, as the Inner Harbor has been enhanced by events at Camden Yards, which increases their tourism footprint. On the other hand, residents also gather at the ballpark to watch a game or to participate in the various activities surrounding the stadium such as shopping and local eateries.

Image effect of the ballpark on entrepreneurial city of Baltimore

Baltimore is a true entrepreneurial city due to its need for innovation and distinction from its surrounding cities like New York City and Washington D.C.. Prior to the development of Camden Yards, Baltimore had a negative sports image as teams consistently left the market (i.e. the Baltimore Colts). The Orioles had played their stadiums in old Memorial Stadium.

When Camden Yards was built, this not only kept the Orioles in Baltimore but it served as a great image due to its central location and urban regeneration efforts. Not only that, it helped to spur on the Ravens franchise and the construction of their new stadium. Through sports venues, Baltimore has been able to enhance their image as a great mid-atlantic tourist destination that provides a different scene than the bustling cities surrounding it. There is however scrutiny in this case, due to the significant public investment and the unclear benefits for taxpayers. Yet overall, this case illustrates that Camden Yards spurred urban revitalization, which provided an enhanced destination image for Baltimore.

San Diego Ballpark District

The second major example further proving the positive effect of stadiums on a city that uses them for urban revitalization is Petco Park in San Diego, California. The ballpark which anchors an entire mixed-use district, has had profound impacts on downtown San Diego in the context of attracting tourists and accomplishing their city planning goals.

Background

The ballpark district in San Diego transformed once of the worst areas in the city to one of the most desirable areas. Prior to construction, the neighborhood where the district now stands was viewed as one of “San Diego’s most dangerous and dilapidated neighborhoods” (*San Diego Ballpark Neighborhood Revitalization*, 2007). Much like Camden Yards, the area was full of empty warehouses and vacant lots. This neighborhood also had a large issue with environmental contamination which the ballpark district has mitigated since its inception (*San Diego Ballpark Neighborhood Revitalization*, 2007).

The urban benefits derived from the ballpark

When deriving the benefits from this project, it is critical to first understand what the city of San Diego was trying to achieve through this development. Their main goal was to mitigate the sprawl of San Diego and to revitalize the East Village of San Diego (Rosentraub, 2014, pp. 139–164).

This stadium and subsequent district accomplished the city's goals with flying colors. The first metric that proves the revitalization of this area and its reduction of sprawl come through total population growth. From my analysis, over the first ten years of the ballpark’s life, the district had an average annual growth rate of 11.25% compared to that of the entire county which was only 1% (See Appendix A for reference, pg.7). In a similar manner, the ballpark district also increased total housing units by 32.92 % compared to that of San Diego County which only saw a 1.20% growth rate (See Appendix B for reference, pg.8). Overall, this proves that this stadium and its district revitalized this area of the city and mitigated sprawl from the city to the suburbs in San Diego County.

Fiscally, this stadium also proved successful in providing urban benefits. After the construction, it was found that over the next 10 years there was \$2.87 billion of new development surrounding the ballpark, all done through private funding (Rosentraub, 2014, pp. 139–164). This large scale of investment shows that the ballpark had a positive impact on other developments surrounding it, thus making it more attractive as a destination for tourists. The

ballpark also showed large increments in taxes collected using tax increment financing. The major implication of this is that this funding went back into the development authority to improve the infrastructure of other parts of the city, raising the quality of life for residents.

Ballpark district as a gathering place for tourists and residents

Overall, Petco Park serves as the perfect gathering place for tourists and residents looking to attend a game in a revitalized district in the city. As part of the urban development plan, multiple green spaces were included around the ballpark for relaxing and gathering (Rosentraub, 2014, pp. 139–164). Not only are these spaces perfect for gamedays, but they provide ample space for other events to be hosted there as well. This is illustrated in recent data that states, “Roughly 3 million people, per year, visit this part of downtown San Diego and it has come alive” (*San Diego Ballpark Neighborhood Revitalization*, 2007).

Image effect of the ballpark on entrepreneurial city of San Diego

Like Baltimore, San Diego is in the shadow of Los Angeles and San Francisco, necessitating its need for innovation and entrepreneurial action. The development of Petco Park and the Ballpark District was critical to the city attracting attention through sport. The positive image that exudes from San Diego because of their urban revitalization efforts anchored by the Ballpark District is clear and refreshing for tourists to experience. This is evident in their marketing materials which showcase the ballpark as one of the central attractions downtown (Downtown & Gaslamp Quarter, 2020). Overall, San Diego is another example of an entrepreneurial city that has used sports stadiums to revitalize urban space and promote a positive image for potential tourists.

Conclusion

Implications

Using the concepts of entrepreneurial cities and urban regeneration, the development of sports stadiums have proven critical to enhancing the image and status of entrepreneurial cities. Through both cases provided above, the respective stadiums showcase how a city can transform a district within the city to promote attraction and reduce fiscal stress on the city, leading to opportunities to promote greater urban equity (Corwin, 2011).

In conclusion, sports stadiums are massive anchors for urban areas. However, it is critical to realize that because of the massive funding that is poured into these venues, the taxpayers can suffer from not gaining a return on the taxes they pay. This causes a responsible level of scrutiny around publicly funded venues and draws into question their positive effects on their urban communities. On the other hand, they can promote fiscal benefits and new investment, they can drive social gatherings and interaction through the creation of green spaces and retail outlets, which all leads to the attraction of tourists and new residents. All of these impacts can be compounded into developing a positive image for an entrepreneurial city that lacks a major synecdochic image. In simple terms, sports stadiums can be, if planned and leveraged properly, an essential asset of attraction for entrepreneurial cities like the cases from Baltimore and San Diego.

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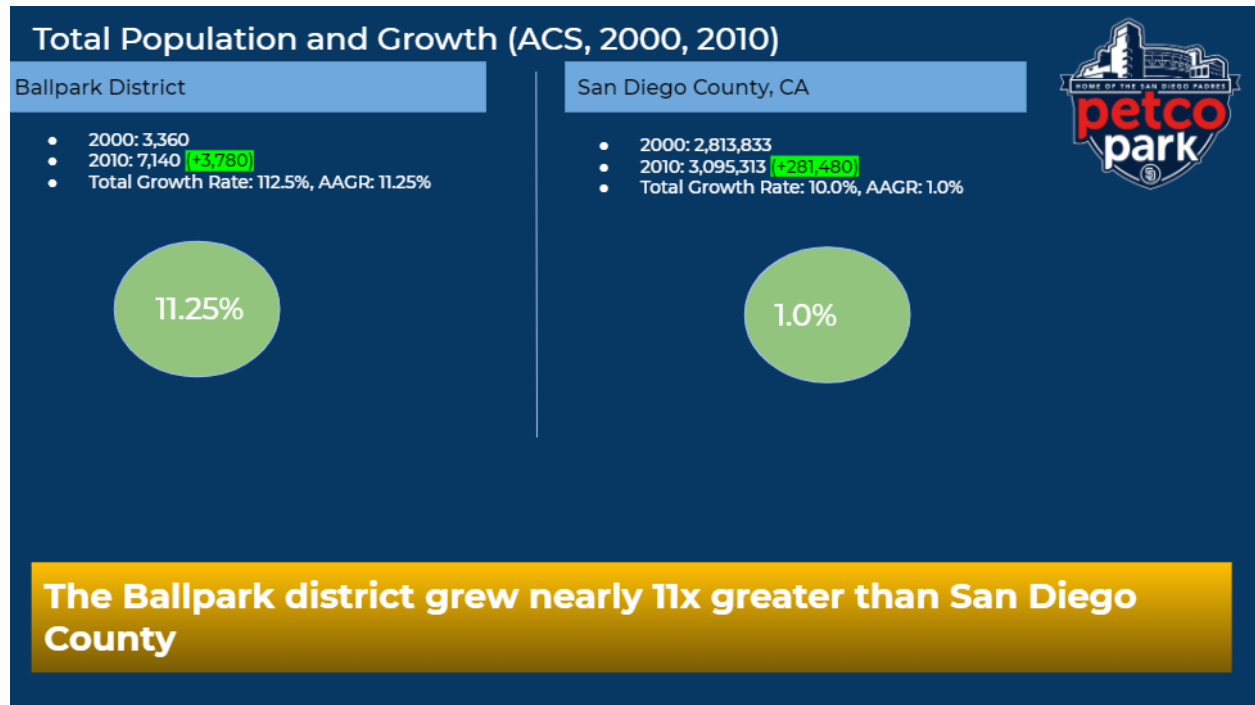
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Appendix A

Data was extracted from the American Community Survey and the Census data in 2000 and 2010.



Appendix B

Data was extracted from the American Community Survey and the Census data in 2000 and 2010.

