USING MASTER PLANS TO CREATE VALUE FROM NEW SPORTS FACILITIES

A white paper from L.R. Kimball

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One of the largely unanticipated results of the nation’s recent economic slump was a significant decline in construction costs for sports facilities. L.R. Kimball has seen slack demand prompting contractors to become much more competitive in their bids. By early 2010, construction was being quoted at costs that were 10 to 25 percent lower for sports structures than they were 18 to 24 months earlier, when budgets for these projects were developed.

This supply-and-demand reality suggests that colleges and universities may have a narrow window of opportunity to launch sports facilities and still benefit from the highly competitive construction environment. The longer that institutions delay in preparing for construction, the more likely it is that building costs will increase as the economy improves.

Stadiums, ball fields and arenas should not be developed as isolated projects, however. To take full advantage of current cost savings and future needs, educational institutions should work with architecture and engineering professionals to create master plans—not only for academic and residential facilities but for sports structures as well. Institutions that promptly complete plans and feasibility studies will be in a better position to determine their capital needs and timing strategy and obtain funding. In turn, these institutions will be able to benefit from lower building costs while gaining maximum flexibility in the range of uses for their sports facilities. A master plan allows institutions to more effectively meet the needs of the campus as a whole than if a single facility were considered without embracing related needs.

**Aligning Objectives for Sports and Academic Programs**

The most successful sports facilities align with the overall objectives of a college or university. Sports centers impact everything from campus traffic patterns and parking requirements to revenue sources and student recruitment. A master plan enables the institution to capitalize on its overall academic objectives by supporting them with appropriate structures.

For example, if a university decides to build a new football stadium, a strategic master plan should be developed for the facilities that will be impacted by the project. By relocating an entire football program into a new stadium complex, space in existing facilities will become vacant. Other sports programs could potentially benefit from using the vacated space, creating efficiency and saving costs. By considering the needs of the university’s athletic program holistically and with proper planning, effective use of space and budgets can result.

Another benefit of master planning is to understand all of the uses that a multi-purpose facility will endure. If the structure was only built for football, but the college subsequently decided to schedule a concert there, expensive renovations might be required to accommodate thousands of fans who will be sitting on the field. Such considerations can range from relocating or adding restrooms and concessions to ensuring a safe exit through ground-level tunnels. Planners
at one new professional sports stadium discovered that, when they scheduled a concert to accommodate 10,000 fans on the field, they were required to facilitate additional exiting capabilities. They incorporated a costly smoke exhaust system into a field access tunnel in order to meet building codes, which eliminated the event’s profit potential. If a significant number of additional concerts were not scheduled, their initial investment would not be recouped.

Another benefit of strategic thinking during the planning process is to fully recognize and leverage the long term revenue generating potential of the venue. In a well-designed facility, fans will spend more money. Many new stadiums incorporate small “neighborhoods” within the building to encourage shopping and spending. These areas can provide a revenue stream during events and remain open between events, if desired. A master plan will help the institution leverage the full revenue generating potential of retail shops, special events, academic gatherings and other activities.

**Working from a Single Master Plan for the Campus**

To the extent possible, institutions should try to integrate their academic, residence and athletics programs into a single plan. Institutions are best served by hiring a professional services firm that has the expertise to integrate facilities planning with the business aspects of the university’s overall plan.

To prepare this kind of integrated master plan, an organization must address numerous questions regarding a sports facility’s impact on the campus, and on offices and services that the facility may incorporate. The plan must consider such issues such as:

- How will older facilities be used after their functions are assumed by the new facility?
- Will the athletic department have one centralized training room for every sports program or will each sport get its own training and locker facility?
- Will athletic administrative offices be housed in the new sports facility, an academic building or another structure on campus?
- Is the school’s shuttle bus fleet and routing sufficient to meet the increased demand from the larger facility?
- Which academic programs and classrooms should be situated close to or inside the new sports facility to allow for integrated programs? By incorporating academic functions into athletic venues, matching funds for state sponsored institutions may be available.
- Will the new facility cause changes to existing parking requirements? Where will the parking be situated? Should parking decks be built.
- How will fans be transported to and from the parking areas?
- How will the flow of traffic to the new facility impact traffic patterns in the surrounding community? For example, will the university be scheduling football games at the same time that municipal arenas are staging major concerts or their own sports activities?
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Feasibility Studies to Translate Concepts into Plans

Supplementing the master plan, which incorporates a new facility’s impact into a holistic view of the campus, should be a feasibility study for each new facility. This study enables the university to know if a planned project is actually feasible for construction.

In its extensive work with developing master plans for universities and feasibility studies for sports facilities, L.R. Kimball has developed an efficient feasibility-study process that clearly lays out the options and recommendations for design and scope of a project and ties those recommendations to the objectives reflected in the university’s master plan.

L.R. Kimball takes the following steps to prepare the feasibility study:

1. We collect existing-facility information from the university and review materials to understand the existing environment. To avoid duplicating studies that already have been conducted, it’s critical that institutions provide their consultants with all available information related to the project.

2. We schedule and conduct a project visioning session with all the project stakeholders.

3. Subsequent to the visioning session, we produce a draft design statement that will outline the project’s vision, scope, quality and delivery concepts.

4. We meet with specific user groups to determine their needs in detail, including equipment, systems and space requirements, as well as timelines, funding and descriptions of which groups will use the facility and how they interact with each other.

5. We produce a project micro-program outlining the items identified in the meetings with user groups and seek approval from the university.

6. Upon receiving approval, we produce several project options with order-of-magnitude cost estimates for evaluation by the design team and the owner team.

7. Once the project direction is selected, L.R. Kimball aligns the scope, quality and budget to produce a project concept set of funding documents for the university to use in a capital campaign for the new facility. Fundraising documents include a rendered site plan, color-coded concept floor plans, a perspective sketch and the final cost estimate.
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HIGHLIGHTS

To get answers to additional questions about the master planning process or talk about the needs of your campus, L.R. Kimball experts are available to help. Please contact:

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Master Planning Pointers for University Leaders

In developing master plans and feasibility studies, L.R. Kimball offers the following suggestions to help ensure the most successful and effective outcomes:

1. Consider the pros and cons of decentralizing vs. centralizing facilities, from training rooms to parking lots, sports campuses and retail areas.

2. Consider conducting a market study to determine how the campus fits into the community around it. The market study can be a critical tool to guide the building program. Such a study can determine, for example, if sufficient corporate support exists to build luxury boxes or the prospect of corporations being willing to pay for naming rights. It will identify revenue streams; and, for a team that is relocating, it will examine the demographics to see if a particular market can support the team economically.

3. Select a professional with a process that integrates facilities planning with the institution’s overall strategic plan so that the business aspects and requirements of the school are part of the process. A sports facility that is well integrated into a strategic business plan should help the institution generate more revenue, attract and retain more students, and earn more favor from alumni.

4. To the maximum extent possible, integrate academic, residence and athletics into a singular plan and hire consultants who have in-house expertise in combining these aspects of the school’s development.

The master planning process can be complex. With the right professional partner, universities can complete their plans efficiently and gain a vision of their new sports facility’s long term impact.
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Athletics Master Plan for Roadman Park

California University of Pennsylvania
California, PA

Roadman Park facility that includes renovations to football, baseball, and soccer fields
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Athletics Facilities Master Plan
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, PA

Sports facilities including football stadium, natatorium addition, indoor multisports complex
Athletics Master Plan for Robinson Court
University of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, PA

Master planning study for Robinson Court development of venues for softball, baseball, and soccer which turned into Petersen Sports Complex

Petersen Sports Complex

600 Seats for softball field / 900 seats for baseball field / 735 seats for soccer field
30,000 SF support buildings
$29 million
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