

THE COMEBACK:

**Sports in a
Worldwide Pandemic**



PART 2:

Facility Development & Redevelopment

As President Biden’s “Build Back Better” initiative signals, there will be significant attempts to provide infrastructure assistance to states and cities as the pandemic winds down. In turn, communities will be exploring opportunities for securing public assistance for facility development and modernization; community development; commercial development; and the like. Through this year, cities, counties, and states will face a decision on how best to allocate the stimulus-related “infrastructure funding” that should be available. As we look at “best practice” templates to guide us out of the pandemic, it is important to gain the perspective from teams, leagues, facility designers, architects, urban planners, and public officials.

That’s what Foley & Lardner and host Rick Horrow of Horrow Sports Ventures explored in the second installment of their Leadership Insight series, [The Comeback: Sports in a Worldwide Pandemic](#). Here are some of the key takeaways and learnings from each panelist’s conversation on stimulus financing, facility projects, and the importance of infrastructure recovery in a post-pandemic world.

Greg Ballard, Founder, *United States Conference of Mayors Sports Advisory Committee*

- **Vision of Indianapolis:** Former Mayor Greg Ballard’s vision for Indianapolis focused on establishing the infrastructure that would bring people into the city. This can be accomplished in many ways, including culture and arts, food, mobility options (bicycles / transit); or – as exhibited by Indianapolis – sports. This strategy paid off for the city; highlighted recently by their hosting of the NCAA’s March Madness.
- **Sports/Events to Promote Economic Development:** Sports played a major role in the economic development of Indianapolis, and it was intentional. Beginning 45 years ago, city leaders selected amateur sports as a way to promote Indianapolis; securing events like the National Sports Festival of 1982 and the PanAm games in 1987. From there, they expanded their reach, working with the NCAA and other sport governing bodies to bring in high-profile events; later building out the infrastructure that would promote economic development in the area.
- **Fostering Cooperation to Promote Economic Development:** Like other assets, cities regularly compete for sports and entertainment events, but in this case former Mayor Ballard fostered cooperation between cities and mayors by sharing information, key learnings and best practices, while working to establish a set of standards for events going forward.

- **Using Public/Private Partnerships for Economic Development:** Such partnerships are important for cities as they maximize the use of government assets, whether it be a building, money, or personnel. Further, they give citizens and businesses a feeling of comfort and understanding that these infrastructure projects are worth investing in for the community's greater good.

Bryan Trubey, Global Director, Principal and Executive Vice President, HKS

- **The New Generation of Multiuse Facilities:** HKS always focuses on “serious architectural expression”, which ensures the communities they work in are getting a facility that is relevant to the current place, time, and culture. They also want their projects to be innovative, profitable, multipurpose, and better than the last; ultimately building a facility that is symbolic to each individual community.
- **Design and Conceptual Changes Due to Covid:** The timing to get these projects done is unprecedented, so HKS is first focused on optimizing and monetizing the surrounding real estate; aiming for 4 to 5 times the city's investment in real economic uplift for the community. They are also committed to designing facilities that have a high-quality look and feel, making them known for buildings with a great fan experience. HKS also emphasizes creating environments that are easy to clean and treatable mechanically, something they are comfortable with thanks to their work in healthcare.
- **Safe Stadium of the Future:** As exhibited by SoFi Stadium and Globe Life Field, HKS is focused on bringing two things to the stadium of the future: (1) More space per person and (2) Multiple entry points. This allows for the space to create a preeminent fan experience and offer flexibility in event type. It also helps fans feel comfortable and safe returning to events.

Janet Marie Smith, Executive Vice President, Planning & Development, Los Angeles Dodgers

- **Guiding Principles in Mixed-Use Developments:** To reinvent downtowns in the new age you need attractions that make people in surrounding areas feel the downtown is their city square and part of their community. These attractions could be a convention center, aquarium, museum, or a ballpark – as was the case with Baltimore and Camden Yards, which city leaders felt would bring a new sports culture and attract people from surrounding areas.
- **Maximizing Investment in Infrastructure Partnerships:** Public / private partnerships can be the catalyst communities and cities need for growth. These interactions can function in myriad ways, ranging:
 - Public sector funded projects, with the private entity providing operational support and capital.
 - Private sector owned projects, with the public sector supporting through regulation and zoning foresight, allowing for venue updates to maintain relevance.
- **Post-Pandemic Modernization and Facility Development:** Many fans no longer want to only take in a game or event from their seats, instead they'd like the increased flexibility to move around and experience the facility's full offering. The job for facility developers then is to responsibly create an environment that is experiential, while also safe for fans.

Frank Supovitz, Founder, Fast Traffic Events & Entertainment / Former NFL/NHL Executive

- **Canceled Live, In-Person Events; Impact on Economics and Quality of Life:** The cancelation of live events majorly impacted both community economics and quality of life. Live, in-person events are a social experience communities use to escape from pressures of daily lives; and television doesn't entirely fill the void. Further, these major sporting events have far-reaching economic impact – providing jobs, putting tourists in hotels and restaurants, boosting public transit use, increasing tax revenue, and more.

- **Coming Back Stronger:** We've learned from the pandemic the importance of fans in the stands. In-person spectators make national sports more relevant, generate interest in local markets and even boost broadcast numbers, so it will be critical to prioritize the in-person fan experience moving forward. We also learned that we need to be prepared for the unforeseen, but imaginable; making it important for facility developers to prioritize health and safety in our venues, ensuring cleanliness and sanitation for fans.
- **Managing Contingency Plans amid Shifting Guidelines:** Fan safety will be the number one priority in every way, no matter the specific capacity numbers. So, it's important facility managers and event coordinators work directly with local and state governments to ensure practices align with up-to-date guidance. With this, some traditions may have to be reconsidered in ways that allow fans to experience them, but also align with health protocols. If this can be accomplished, the sports world should be optimistic about filling stadiums in the future.