THE NEW CATHEDRALS: THE SPORTS STADIUM AND
MASS MEDIA'S ROLE IN FACILITATING NEW CONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Stadium construction has occurred at record-breaking level in major metropolitan areas of the United States in the last decade. This dissertation traces media coverage of stadium construction policy throughout the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, focusing specifically on newspaper coverage of this issue. The hypothesis that media practitioners in smaller metropolitan areas will be more likely to privilege voices supporting new stadium construction is examined. The case study method is utilized and content analysis is employed to determine media coverage trends in major American metropolitan areas. Cincinnati and Pittsburgh are examined as small market cities, while Boston and New York are explored as larger market cities. Evidence is provided that larger markets adopt a more critical position than small market cities regarding new stadium construction in newspaper opinion content. Large market publications are similar to smaller market counterparts in providing greater opportunity for expression to pro-stadium voices. Boston, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh provided more detailed news coverage of this issue than New York City, the largest media market observed. The ramifications of such coverage tendencies for the broader public are examined. Historic examination of stadium construction coverage from the Progressive Era to the present provides evidence of a changing policy landscape. Construction policy changes include a shifting of power from political leaders to sports franchise owners and political approval of more dramatic levels of stadium-related taxpayer subsidies. Citizens have never been major contributors to the dialogue about stadium construction policy in major-market media coverage.
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Although I feel saddened by the trend of abandoning old, historic buildings in favor of brand new facilities with more capacity to generate team revenues, I did my best to reflect all dimensions of this complex issue. While many individuals have disdain for the stadiums built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I am troubled that all of these facilities may face the wrecking ball by the end of this decade. While these facilities do not have all the amenities of new stadiums, they reflect an era of optimism, when communities felt that football and baseball could coexist without separate venues. I am hopeful that at least one of these facilities might be preserved so that in generations ahead citizens can continue to experience the uniqueness of a variety of ballparks.

The current cycle of professional stadium building may be coming to a close as only a few teams have failed to attract new stadium deals, but a call to build a new generation of sports facilities will probably begin before long. It is only a matter of time before some innovative individual concocts an idea that changes the power structure in stadium construction policy. I sincerely hope that when this happens, the communities involved in these decisions take time to carefully consider the many budgetary priorities that are on the table before committing significant funding to new stadium construction.

My final hope is that political leaders, media practitioners, and team officials will act with courage on these issues and consider the broad needs of public before a penny of subsidy is dedicated to games that have been enjoyed by youngsters for generations. It is my belief that if responsible action is not taken, that over time sporting institutions will lose credibility and subsequently create the recipe for their own decline. Many citizens have grown weary of team owners’ threats to leave a community if a new, heavily subsidized stadium is not constructed for them. Such a strategy might work in the short term, but it has the capacity to backfire in the long term. The emergence of professional commercial team sports is a relatively recent development when compared to the broad context of other institutions that are part of our civilization. With this in mind, there is no assurance that communities will continue to look at professional sports as a symbolic indicator that a city has achieved “major league” status.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Prior to the nineteenth century, many great cities of Europe were best known for their ornate and inspiring cathedrals. By the nineteenth century, American cities worked to build a more modern identity through construction of luxuriously appointed railroad stations. As the twentieth century unfolded, urban pride took a more blatantly commercial direction with the skyscraper serving as a tangible display of urban progress. As architects mastered techniques for skyscraper construction, the pervasiveness of these grand structures seemed to diminish a single building’s capacity to serve as a defining landmark for a given community. Instead, these tall buildings served as part of a larger “skyline” that seemed rather similar from city to city. Beyond that, most of these grand buildings were intended for corporate commerce, hence their doors were largely closed to the general public. For a brief period, the shopping mall, a decidedly suburban concept, may have captured the imagination of some citizens, but the ubiquitous nature of mall architecture and its transparent goal of commerce has dimmed its luster in the eyes of many.

As the twenty-first century opens, many cities struggle to maintain a unique identity that might capture the imagination of its citizenry and those beyond. Construction of one new building in a large city may help to improve the overall image of a community, but only in a small, incremental way unless the facility somehow becomes a recognizable symbol of pride for a community. Public officials struggle to encourage major development of urban infrastructure through tax abatements for corporate construction and direct funding for other building projects. Subsidized airports and convention centers have served as a gateway to bring in new commerce and tourism, but these projects don’t seem to have the same inspiring power once held by the beautiful cathedral, the ornate train station, or the huge skyscraper proudly built in years past. A number of civic leaders have turned to stadium construction as a most visible way to enhance their city’s image. Central to this visibility is the enthusiasm of media institutions regarding coverage of professional sports. Such enthusiasm, made apparent through multi-billion dollar agreements for broadcast rights, provides largely positive national exposure to a community that might otherwise be overlooked in typical news reporting.

In recent years, the stadium has supplanted the ancient cathedral as the most visible and recognizable structure in many communities. It is likely that more Americans could readily
identify Yankee Stadium than would be able to identify nearby Saint Patrick’s Cathedral. It is also likely that more local newscasts would choose the stadium as a scenic backdrop for weather updates than a cathedral, a railroad station, or a skyscraper. Yet many of this nation’s most recognizable structures have a limited future. Tiger Stadium, Fenway Park, and Yankee Stadium, America’s oldest major league facilities, are either on line for demolition or are perilously close to being replaced by newer facilities that have the capacity to bring in greater revenues for sports franchise owners. Chicago’s Wrigley Field remains the only historic major league facility that appears to have a fully secure future. Taxpayer subsidy of new sports facilities has made this reshaping of the sports landscape a hotly contested political issue. A number of citizens have asked whether these sports palaces of yesteryear should be replaced.

Civic leaders, at the urging of sports franchise owners, are engaged in a nationwide stadium construction boom unlike any other in American history. In 1976, James Michener suggested that “the Age of the Stadium” had emerged. Michener was correct in noting that stadium construction in the late 1960s and early 1970s helped to create a sports-oriented identity for a number of cities, but the urban commitment to stadium construction during these decades pales in comparison to the dramatic mobilization of resources for new stadium construction in American cities since the 1990s. Furthermore, the stadium construction boom of the 1990s has expanded beyond the major city. Minor league ballparks, university stadia, spring training sites, and even youth-oriented sports facilities have been upgraded or completely rebuilt in small and mid-sized towns in recent years.

To demonstrate that stadium construction has expanded considerably since Michener suggested that the stadium has become a defining feature of the urban landscape, one need look no further than the recent record of construction in professional sports. Eighty-three percent of North America’s major professional sports franchises (baseball, basketball, football, and hockey) are either playing in new facilities, constructing new facilities, or pushing the public to fund the construction of new facilities. An April 1999 report by Fitch IBCA, an international financial rating organization, states that among the 120 major professional sports franchises “41 teams are playing in the 33 new stadiums or arenas that have been constructed since 1990, [while] 49 are seeking new facilities or have new facilities currently under construction.”

The luxurious nature of these new facilities is also a defining characteristic of this new
“age of the stadium.” At one time, the Louisiana Superdome, opened to the public in 1976, was regarded as the most lavish example of stadium expenditure in the United States. By 1997, economists Roger Noll and Andrew Zimbalist concluded that the Superdome was no longer a unique example of spending extravagance. Noll and Zimbalist report that for over two decades its cost, “about $163 million, approximately $450 million in today’s dollar,...stood out as a wild anomaly. Today it would fit nicely in the upper range of the standard experience”3

The opening of Seattle’s Safeco Field in July 1999 at a cost of $517 million dollars is an example of this new generation of upper range stadia. Despite considerable controversy and $100 million of construction overruns, Washington State Representative Steve Van Luven confidently argues that “baseball, we found out, brings people together in this state....When the legislators put this piece of [stadium subsidy] legislation together, they did it for the kids and for the future of baseball in the state of Washington.”4

Many argue that despite the grandeur of these new palaces, sports has been anything but unifying in recent years. Although Seattle’s Mariners made early overtures that they would cover construction cost overruns for Safeco Field, their most recent strategy has been to renege on that commitment.5 In cities throughout North America, vigorous debates have persisted about whether public subsidy of stadium construction is a prudent expenditure for taxpayers. In Boston, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and other cities throughout the nation the debate has been extremely contentious. The rising price of stadium tickets, the haughtiness of athletes and owners, and the increasing level of spectator stratification, something that has intensified with the creation of new luxury skyboxes and club seats, have made modern professional sports a site of considerable struggle. Frank Deford argues that in an earlier era the stadium was a “twentieth century village green where we could all come together in common excitement...., but now that the stadiums have become, in effect, incidental attachments to royal suites, it is even more difficult to justify publicly financed stadiums.”6

Deford’s analysis of the “village green” may reflect sports values frequently trumpeted in post World War II America, but a tradition of economic segregation can be uncovered in earlier generations as well. Construction of the first enclosed professional baseball parks was undertaken, in part, to exclude what was perceived to be unsavory elements of the community. The father of professional baseball, Harry Wright, frequently insisted on higher ticket prices, in
one case equating the entertainment value of high-quality baseball to the offerings of a more upscale downtown theater. During the Progressive Era, as modern concrete and steel stadia emerged, some franchise owners began to offer various ticket pricing schemes to ensure that the most affluent baseball fans might be rewarded and presumably separated from the riff-raff according to seat location.

**Goals and Methods**

The goal of this study is to determine the nature of media coverage relative to the stadium construction issue. A central research hypothesis is that media coverage will tend to favor pro-stadium coverage, contributing to the likelihood of new stadium construction in major urban areas throughout America. Before full examination of media coverage tendencies can take place, however, a background of stadium-related issues will be presented in order to provide a firm foundation for this research. Examination of this contextual information will expose the evolutionary nature of stadium construction policy, which will, in turn, provide for a richer overall understanding of how media coverage has become an integral part of the stadium construction process.

In this initial chapter, a history of the stadium will describe how the stadium construction issue has evolved over time. Following that, the second chapter will review current stadium-related scholarship to establish how this issue has been examined in light of recent construction initiatives. This chapter will close with an overview of economic issues surrounding stadium construction, examining the dramatic increase in stadium expenditure that has recently occurred in professional sports.

Once these opening two chapters properly contextualize the historic, economic, and political ramifications of stadium construction, the third chapter will provide a media-based theoretical overview that centers on research related to media bias, what is known regarding the nature of media bias, followed by a comprehensive description of the methodology that will be employed in region-specific case studies, including an overview of the content analysis that will be conducted to determine the overall direction of recent stadium-related news coverage.

Individual case studies will be presented in subsequent chapters. These city-specific case studies will open with a qualitative examination of the metropolitan area’s history and culture. The use of historic methods is intended to provide a site-specific overview that will permit a
deeper understanding of how each particular case study has evolved over time. This historic research will be followed by a content analysis of recent stadium-related media coverage. The content analysis will provide an understanding of the rhetorical strategies employed in stadium-related news coverage. A secondary, but more elusive aim will be to determine whether the public is adequately represented or generally excluded in daily news coverage of this issue. Once a carefully structured content analysis provides empirical data regarding media coverage tendencies, textual analysis will provide a more detailed explanation of media coverage bias. The textual analysis will be undertaken by isolating specific examples of media coverage, using them to explain key trends that are evident in each case study. The individual case study will close with region-specific analysis of media coverage and its potential impact on the shaping of stadium construction policy in other metropolitan areas.

The dissertation’s final chapter will isolate the four metropolitan areas under observation in previous chapters, comparing and contrasting the local tendencies evident in these studies to broader national trends. The analysis will close by placing the entire issue in broad historical context. Of particular concern will be an examination of how media coverage has shifted over time. Normative issues related to press coverage will be explored. This will serve to connect the present-day actions of media, political leaders, and the public to potential future directions of stadium construction policy.

Various hypotheses will serve to focus this dissertation. First, it is hypothesized that press coverage will be influenced by a booster mentality that encourages new stadium construction. Second, it is further hypothesized that this boosterism will be more profound in small market coverage than in larger markets. In short, media practitioners from a city with a smaller population base such as Cincinnati and Pittsburgh will be more inclined to push harder for new stadium construction than larger metropolitan areas such as Boston or New York. It is speculated that smaller market media practitioners will feel more compelled to demonstrate their “major league” status by slanting news coverage to favor policy outcomes that result in new stadium construction. Third, it is hypothesized that media routines in both large and small urban markets will tend to offer a more visible platform to those pushing for new stadium construction than anti-stadium activists, but small markets will do so to a greater extent. The degree of privilege afforded to pro-stadium advocates is uncertain, but will be determined through content analysis
of media messages. This content analysis will provide some level of quantitative data which will serve to support or refute the previously delineated hypotheses. The goal in the content analysis is to provide a quantitative dimension to enhance the rigor of a study that is primarily qualitative.

A focus on the Pittsburgh and Cincinnati case studies will anchor the examination of smaller market major league cities, while Boston and New York will be examined for larger market major league cities. Because small market cities struggle more vigorously to maintain their “major league” status, it is reasonable to conclude that the analysis may be somewhat more detailed for Cincinnati and Pittsburgh.

A key reason for greater analytical focus on smaller media markets is that larger metropolitan areas have greater overall resources at their disposal, yet seem less inclined to cave in to stadium construction subsidy demands by sports franchise owners. In short, citizens in smaller metropolitan areas must make greater individual and collective sacrifices to provide new stadium subsidies, yet these same areas appear more inclined to provide more extensive subsidies for these projects. When a decision is made to subsidize a sports franchise, smaller metropolitan areas will devote significantly more resources per capita to stadium construction, despite pressing local education, human services, and infrastructure needs. This counterintuitive decision to allocate higher levels of taxpayer subsidy to non-essential entertainment projects in smaller markets, particularly when larger markets are in a much stronger position to make such expenditures, merits significantly closer scrutiny in order to understand the rationale for such policy tendencies.

Public opinion data will be drawn from newspapers and non-media sources such as think tanks, universities, and advocacy groups. Correlations of media coverage tendencies and available public opinion data will serve to determine whether community values are reflected in the final media product. The results will be presented as a case study in a narrative that combines historical research methods, ethnography, and textual analysis. Although the primary focus of the analysis will be Boston, Cincinnati, New York, and Pittsburgh, limited attention will be given to sun-belt, mid-west, and west coast cities to avoid an exclusively northeastern media focus and the creation of a study that does not address the broader implications of stadium construction throughout the United States. In order to maintain focus in the various city-specific case studies, regions not chosen for case study analysis will be isolated in greatest detail in the opening
chapter background and in the concluding chapter’s overview of national trends in stadium construction coverage.

One objective is to determine whether current media routines provide fair and reasonable coverage that represent the diversity of each given community on a broad level. In short, this research will attempt to determine how the public is portrayed in media coverage. Where possible, news coverage will be compared to available public opinion data to determine whether the reporting tendencies evident in media coverage closely reflect public sentiment on this issue. It is anticipated that this research will uncover evidence, through the use of various historical materials, that current trends in stadium subsidy have been the result of an evolutionary process, suggesting that the long-range shape of future policy is less than certain, despite arguments to the contrary by some individuals with expertise in this area.

Exploring these media-related hypotheses is increasingly important in today’s commercially-driven media environment. In their recent normative treatise, *Custodians of Conscience*, media scholars James Ettema and Theodore Glasser argue that “members of the media...must seek the wisdom to know what is right and the courage to speak the truth about it.” As Ettema and Glasser’s acclaimed text was initially released, the *Columbia Journalism Review* presented a 1998 cover story which boldly concluded that “more so than at any other time in history--the news product that lands on newsstands, doorsteps, and television screens is indeed hurt by a heightened, unseemly lust... for even greater profits.”

Such focus on profits may constrain the ability of editors and reporters to cover owner requests for stadium construction subsidies in a fair and balanced manner. The symbiotic commercial relationship between local media institutions and sports teams could have a chilling effect on reporters as cooperative marketing partnerships, media-related sports franchise ownerships, and broadcasting rights negotiations result in shared efforts to maximize revenues. Because these shared mutual interests are difficult to quantify, can differ by market, and may not actually have an impact on news routines, the research methods chosen in a study of this nature must allow for extreme flexibility.

Case studies offer several advantages over other research methods. One salient feature of the case study is its ability to offer detailed analysis of a highly complex situation. Although quantitative research can offer a great wealth of empirical data that might be lacking in case
studies, this research strategy is often limited in its capacity to deliver depth and detail. Case studies, if properly executed, offer highly detailed insight and analysis. Roger Wimmer and Joseph Dominick assert that another key advantage of the case study is the “ability to deal with a wide spectrum of evidence.”

The ability to examine a specific case in its totality is a major advantage when an abundance of variables are involved. The highly complex nature of political maneuvering during stadium-related negotiations simply cannot be captured in a highly structured quantitative research design which puts a premium on statistical rigor. Some perceive the limited unit of analysis in case studies to be a disadvantage, but tightly controlled quantitative research methods can not always resolve this issue either. Simply put, sample sizes of over one hundred would be needed to allow for meaningful quantitative analysis of variables. With the stadium issue, major urban areas in the United States are too limited in number to develop a sample size sufficient to establish the type of statistical significance that permits broader generalizations about data application. With case study methods, instead of relying primarily on statistical data, reasonable comparative analyses can be made through extrapolation of a wide array of both qualitative and quantitative data. Charles Ragin argues that “this flexibility, a hallmark of the case-oriented approach, enriches the dialogue between ideas and evidence.”

The complexity of the stadium issue requires utilization of more than a single research strategy if a comprehensive understanding is desired. The stadium debate intersects with cultural studies, economics, law, and sociology. As a result, this research will be interdisciplinary in scope. The scholarship of civic planning, mass communication, economics, and sports administration will be utilized to enhance the analysis.

**Historical Methods, and Selected Use of Cultural, Economic, and Urban Scholarship:**

Historical methods will uncover the evolution of the stadium construction issue. Analysis of the cultural landscape will serve to focus on the status-related rationale for heavy community subsidy of privately owned sports franchises. Economic scholarship will explore the bottom-line economic value of sports subsidy to a community, while urban scholarship will explore the broader role of sports subsidy in shaping a metropolitan region as well as neighborhoods within the region under examination.

The historical analysis will focus on the emergence of team sports in America in the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The relatively recent rise of professional sports as a highly popular leisure option for Americans suggests the potential for future change in the leisure landscape if sports franchise owners move in a direction that is not somewhat compatible with public opinion. Taxpayer subsidy of stadium construction is a recent phenomenon. Historical examination of this issue is particularly important because it will allow for a deeper level of understanding of how this issue has evolved in America. Understanding the evolution of stadium construction policy may lead to a wider range of policy options in the future than if a broader context were not provided. Historical research will serve to expose ideologies that have shifted over time while exposing ideologies that have remained stable over several generations.

To fully understand the importance of sports to many citizens within a community, an examination of the significance of sports as a symbolic representation of a locale’s “major league” status is in order. If properly conducted, historic research will help to uncover the cultural implications of sport within a community. This analysis will be guided largely by James Carey’s ritual model of communication studies which is rooted in a desire to determine how “shared culture is created, modified, and transformed.”

His cultural studies paradigm attempts to better understand how deeper rituals and ideologies shape the course of human events. He is less concerned with empirical validation of media effects and more concerned with uncovering the deep historical undercurrents present in the media content that may shape a given society. According to Carey, “cultural studies does not attempt to predict human behavior; rather, it attempts to diagnose human meaning.”

In this regard, a key research objective will be to determine the various ways in which media coverage of stadium construction policy has been interpreted and perceived over time. Uncovering historic trends in stadium-related news coverage will help to contextualize the current stadium policy landscape. As such, this research will enhance overall understanding of the present day significance of stadium construction as it is currently communicated by mass media practitioners.

Carey’s scholarship borrows eclectically from a variety of scholarly traditions. Many of them are highly compatible with the stadium construction issue. Carey has been influenced by the urban scholarship of Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, and Robert Park, the organizational and class-based sociology of C.Wright Mills, and the technological analyses of Harold Innis.
One shortcoming of the Carey research model is its tendency to focus almost exclusively on qualitative information. Carey argues that such a focus is preferable and more credible because “there is no such thing as communication to be revealed in nature through some objective method free from the corruption of culture.”15 Carey’s argument has merit, but quantitative attempts to determine cultural tendencies have the capacity to further our knowledge of a given cultural event or issue. Such methods can be quite helpful in understanding in more specific terms the nature of representations within a culture.

Instead of relying on general assertions which might be easily challenged, a quantitative framework will allow for highly specific examination of key variables. Media practitioners often argue that coverage of stadium issues has been fair and balanced. In one example, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editor John Craig argues that despite adopting an editorial position that supported stadium construction, “we did not compromise one inch on fair news coverage and gave equal prominence in our reporting to people on the other side of the argument.”16 Stadium researchers have more consistently argued that the pro-stadium position receives coverage advantages unavailable to stadium construction opponents. Because of conflicting claims between media practitioners and stadium scholars, such quantification is required to determine which claim has the most validity.

Lack of quantitative rigor is a key weakness of cultural studies research. To offset this fundamental weakness, limited quantitative analysis, in the form of content analysis, will be utilized in this study to offer tangible benchmarks for qualitative assertions that are made in each particular case study. This quantitative analysis will draw from the rhetorical scholarship of Richard Barton and William Gamson.

Most currently available stadium-related, urban planning and economic scholarship focuses heavily on quantitative analysis, yet this focus tends to be primarily economic in nature. A blind spot of this particular research strategy is that it can overlook or minimize the cultural implications of stadium funding decisions. As a result, conclusions drawn in this particular examination of stadium construction will offer a more qualitative focus on the cultural dialogue that is relevant to the stadium debate. With proper use of qualitative methods, the use of presently available urban and economic research can help to uncover ideologies that are germane to media coverage of stadium construction initiatives.
The urban “growth model” is an example of an ideology that has permeated urban planning scholarship in recent decades and has been utilized frequently to justify new stadium construction. Although recent economic scholarship overwhelmingly refutes the capacity of stadium construction to contribute to the substantial long-term economic growth of a region, the linkage of stadium construction to the growth model persists in some examples of media coverage. This occurs, in large part, because public relations efforts often tout projected benefits that are an inherent part of highly partisan sponsor-funded feasibility studies. These studies are routinely used to obtain political leverage for public subsidy of stadium construction. A deeper understanding of urban planning and economic literature will help to sort fact from fiction in this highly contested area.

The unique nuances of sports industry economics shape this issue in a very clear way. Although financial records are not publicly available for almost all modern professional sports franchises, several economists have successfully estimated sports franchise balance sheets using publicly available figures related to television income, ticket revenue, tax policy, and other available information. These economic estimates serve to demystify claims made by sports franchise owners regarding profit and loss statements. Since many sports franchise owners argue that their ability to compete profitably in the “sports marketplace” is strained because of stadium-related economic issues, scholarship which focuses on industry economics may be of greater significance than broad macroeconomic research. Knowledge of the financial landscape in sports will assist in determining whether media coverage tends to passively accept owners’ financial claims or whether they aggressively question owners when they unfairly skew financial claims to their advantage in order to justify public subsidy for new stadium construction.

Legal issues are also significant in understanding yet another dynamic of stadium construction initiatives. As such, this scholarship must be examined in some cases to understand the impact of court decisions on franchise mobility, the effect of tax legislation on profitability, in addition to the potential effects of federal and state legislative proposals which are intended to address this issue. To understand how legal issues have an impact on stadium construction, consider the examination of legal constraints related to ownership control. Legal precedents which have fostered franchise mobility also have the capacity to constrain league sanctions against team movement. These legal rulings additionally hurt cities’ negotiating base, while
empowering individual owners to aggressively play one city’s bid for a sports franchise against another.

When NFL franchise owner Al Davis legally challenged the league in his attempt to move his Raiders from Oakland to Los Angeles in 1982, the courts were asked to determine whether teams were individual, competing entities, much like independently owned gas stations that compete actively for customers, or whether they were constrained by strategic control of a larger organization, much in the manner that a corporate branch office was compelled to follow the directives of a larger parent company.

In franchise relocation decisions the courts have ruled that individual sports teams act as individual competitors rather than a unified organization. The result of this legal interpretation has been an undermining of league stability, while sports franchise owners have been given greater latitude to shop for better financial incentives from any city willing to offer an enticing subsidy plan. In response to this legal landscape, cities have competed amongst one another for limited franchises, offering lavish stadium incentives as a way to either retain the current home team or to entice an existing franchise to move away from another community. This competitive bidding has become so prevalent that even small towns have jumped on this bandwagon. As Al Davis was contemplating moving out of Los Angeles, the city of Irwindale, California aggressively attempted to lure his Raiders into relocating a state of art stadium in their community. Several years later, when the tiny city of Green Bay, Wisconsin planned a stadium subsidy vote for its NFL team, the even tinier town of New Berlin, Wisconsin drafted a resolution “inviting the Packers to relocate to Waukesha County if Brown County residents vote[d] down a sales tax to help renovate Lambeau Field.”

Leagues also stepped back from restrictive attempts to limit franchise movement. Some individuals believe that such laissez-faire policies are welcomed by league officials, but unless serious federal legislative proposals addressing the stadium subsidy trend gain momentum, the motives of league officials are difficult at best to determine. Federal legislation could be crafted to overturn the current legal status of sports franchises, but Congress has demonstrated little desire to act on this issue, leaving cities to fight among themselves for highly coveted sports teams.

To understand how we have arrived at this current status in stadium construction policy,
it is important to trace the history of stadium construction itself. Of particular concern in this study is how media coverage has influenced the overall policy landscape. Interestingly, the stadium in both ancient and modern cultures has had humble roots, but over time, sports related facilities have grown in stature and complexity. The political dynamic associated with sports infrastructure has also shifted over time, creating a complex landscape which suggests that the past is not necessarily a prelude to future stadium-related policy formation.

**History of the Stadium: Religious Roots and the Transition to Secularism**

Most individuals would correctly regard the stadium as an ancient concept. Closer examination of the stadium’s history reveals that its emergence as a commercial entity is a rather recent development. Public subsidy of stadium construction is an even more recent development in North American sports. With less than a handful of exceptions in major league sports, public subsidy of stadium construction on a large scale did not emerge until after World War II. The significance of myth in sport and literature serves to heighten the importance of sport’s ancient heritage. The perpetuation of unsubstantiated myths about sports leads many citizens to falsely believe that the institutions, individuals, and organizations that currently control the sports landscape will not profoundly change in the years ahead. Understanding the history of this issue is important because it reveals that change in sports, particularly in the current political dynamic of stadium construction, is possible. The eventual direction of this change, however, is less than certain and will be determined largely by the nature of political activism, citizen involvement, and consumer preferences in the years ahead.

Historians can not speak with clarity and unanimity regarding the early origins of the term “stadium,” yet most will acknowledge that the original Greek *stadion* was built with reverential and religious intentions. The earliest stadia contained only enough seats for judges and a few dignitaries, so remaining patrons stood along the embankment of the facility. As such, David Gilman Romano suggests that the origins of the term stadium may be derived from the Greek verb meaning “to stand” and that the term *stadion* literally meant “the standing place.” Romano further suggests the origins of the stadium could have evolved as a result of Greek ambassadors visiting Egypt in the sixth century B.C.E. The linkages between Egyptian and Greek cultures are echoed by other historians. Oswyn Murray’s treatise on early Greece observes that Greeks “were enormously impressed by Egypt, its great antiquity, its highly stratified society, its
powerful religion and massive monuments.”

The literature of epic poet Homer refers to a “running place” or “racetrack” in the ninth century B.C.E. Evidence of the term *stadion* does not emerge until the fifth century B.C.E. in the literature of Herodotus, Simonides, Pindar, and Bacchylides. The Greek *stadion* was originally a simple track surface. The *stadion* was built in close proximity to an altar and might contain a grandstand which was built into an earthen embankment.

The term *dromos* was used to describe a stadium-like facility that had no room for spectators. Footraces were among the most common competitions to be held in these structures, but field events such as javelin, discus, long jump, wrestling, and boxing were also prevalent. Herodotus was the first to describe the term *stadion* as a unit of measurement. A *stadion* was one full length of the track, approximately 600 feet. After this unit of measurement gained acceptance, it appears that a race of this length was commonly referred to as a *stadion* or *stade* by fellow Greeks.

Although many of these ancient edifices may have been forever lost due to physical decay or replacement by other structures, archeologists have uncovered a number of these ancient facilities. Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, originally built in the second century A.D.E. was utilized for the 1896 Olympics and is still in use today. Considerable evidence is available to demonstrate the religious basis of the Greek *stadion*. Among the most compelling is a bronze statue found by modern archeologists from approximately 490 B.C.E. depicting a runner with the words “I belong to Zeus” inscribed on the statue’s right leg.

Roman athletics gravitated to a much more secular direction. The coliseum was adapted from the circular shape of the theater rather than the rectangular dimensions of the Greek running track, suggesting Roman sport evolved with a higher priority ascribed to entertainment and spectatorship. The gratuitous violence and homage paid to high ranking Roman leaders rather than a Roman god push a visit to the coliseum further into the realm of the secular. Comparing the Greek and Roman experience, Lewis Mumford argues that in Roman sport “one finds...greater concentration of varied activities, a higher degree of formal order, [and] an expansion of the themes already found elsewhere in the Hellenistic town.” The secular shift could be seen in the decorative accessories that were a part of these Roman structures. The Greek statuary with a focus on deity were supplanted by a Roman focus on local civic leaders.
Mechanisms for funding the construction of public facilities and the public events themselves contributed to the secular nature of these events.

Funding the “bread and circuses” of Rome was largely a private undertaking. Paul Veyne writes that the great architectural masterpieces of Rome “were built by notables who bore the expenses out of their own pocket. These same men paid for the public spectacles staged each year to the delight of the populace.”\textsuperscript{26} Prior to the construction of permanent arenas such as the Roman Coliseum, events took place in hastily constructed wooden structures that appear to have been dismantled after a performance or after a series of performances. The first century A.D.E. is regarded by several historians as a time when construction of “edifices of spectacle” was most profound.\textsuperscript{27} The spending of private dollars on public facilities was a manifestation of a highly competitive political order in which conspicuous consumption was a most potent manner for Roman leaders to display individual power and achievement.

Historians are divided on whether construction of the great Roman Coliseum marked a respect for laboring citizens or a contempt for the lower class. Rudolfo Laciani argues that site selection and construction strategies reflect utter contempt for the Roman worker. The locale was described as “marshy, damp, and unsteady” with “an abundance of local springs” permeating the site.\textsuperscript{28} In addition, Vespian’s architects planned the project without resorting to the use of machines. Paul Veyne argues that Vespain’s construction strategy had a worthwhile civic intent. According to Veyne, the refusal to use machines was “for fear of reducing the lower orders of Rome to famine….The emperor treated much if not all of Rome as though he were its curator or guardian.”\textsuperscript{29}

Lewis Mumford in his classic survey of urban history suggests that the decadence of Rome is ever present in today’s urban America, manifested in the violent spectacles of the gridiron. According to Mumford, violent modern-day football contests, with their array of sensory-bombarding, consumption-oriented thrills, are evidence that “though not a stone has yet crumbled,...the barbarian has already captured the [American] city from within.”\textsuperscript{30} Anthropologists in the centuries ahead may regard American sport, particularly football and ice hockey, as excessively violent, but the Roman sporting experience, with its focus on death, was uniquely brutal beyond any comparisons found in today’s modern American sport.\textsuperscript{31} Nevertheless, the role of the audience in the sporting experience is somewhat similar in Rome
and today’s modern professional sports. The Roman model of sport evolved into one in which the Greek ideal of citizen participation was almost fully supplanted by passive spectatorship.\textsuperscript{32}

Rome’s secular model of sport and the evolution of stadium construction from temporary wooden facilities to grandiose permanent structures parallels the development of sport in America. Once Roman sport evolved to a perverse festival of consumption in the vast coliseum, the stratification and ordering of the fan experience was decidedly similar to the seating arrangements accorded the modern American fan. One historian observes that the coliseum’s “entrances, staircases, [and] passages...were designed with such skill that each person, whether of the senatorial, of the equestrian, or of the plebeian order, could gain his seat without trouble or confusion.”\textsuperscript{33}

The architecture of professional sport in the United States evolved, as in Rome, from temporary wooden structures to more permanent structures of the same material. After fire jeopardized the safety and profitability of an emerging enterprise, concrete structures were devised. As with Rome, the initial structures were privately financed. Although some exceptions existed, such as the opening of Cleveland Municipal Stadium in 1931, public financing of sports facilities did not emerge until later in the twentieth century.

In its earliest years American sports seemed to be patterned after the British model that put a premium on amateurism. Disdain for professional athletics in Britain was a defensive mechanism used by the upper class. Those pushing for amateurism often used moral arguments to defend their position, but the goal of amateurism was often exclusionary. Insistence on amateur status in early sport prevented common citizens, many with decidedly more athletic prowess, from participating in organized athletics since the standard work week left little leisure time for the lower classes.

The same disdain for professional athletics could be found in the rhetoric of American sports coverage, but the competitive excesses of the American sports enthusiast led to bending the tacit rules of amateurism in order to gain the upper hand on the field of play.\textsuperscript{34} The competitive American temperament fueled the emergence of professional sports and quasi-professional collegiate athletics. James Walvin aptly summarizes the trajectory of American sport in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, stating, “even when the Americans copied a European form of leisure, they invariably made it bigger, more spectacular, and often as not, more
Professional baseball’s viability as a commercial product became evident after the famed undefeated season of the 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings. Prior to their well-publicized tour, phony amateurism was rampant and savvy baseball fans knew this. Players were often given full-time jobs that required little or no effort. In an extreme case, George Wright, the premier shortstop for the Washington Nationals, was “employed” as a government clerk in 1867, but his work address, 238 Pennsylvania Avenue, was a public park in close proximity to the White House. In yet another humorous example of phony amateurism, the New York Mutuals, entrenched in William “Boss” Tweed’s political patronage, were routinely assigned to do-nothing jobs in the city’s coroner’s office.

Civic pride was a decided influence in the attempt to corral the finest athletes, eventually leading to civic pride as part of the stadium construction process. The amateur status of many top-level baseball players was suspect even before the 1869 Red Stockings were formed. Stephen Gusov argues that a good ballplayer lived a charmed life because he “literally would have no real expenses to meet. Everything was handed to him by members of the business community who were happy to see him playing for the home team.” Professionalism was tacitly incorporated into the fabric of baseball before 1869, but the Red Stockings of 1869 served to legitimize professionalism by virtue of their unparalleled record of 56 victories and a single tie.

The enclosed ballpark of the Gilded Age was a temporary wooden structure. In the 1860s and 1870s a fenced-in ballpark simply meant “a split rail fence had been erected...behind the outfielders and around the perimeter of the entire grounds...[to keep boisterous fans] from crashing the gate and or storming the field while a game was occurring.” In these early years, baseball entrepreneurs might even position overflow crowds on the sidelines and deep in the outfield. More elaborate construction strategies were eventually employed as the number of baseball fans increased and the ideology of professionalism began to take hold. Nevertheless, until the 1890s, when public transportation changed the dynamic of urban life, these facilities remained largely temporary structures. Michael Benson offers the following summary of the early ballpark:

Wooden fences were raised on whatever land the club owner had bought or leased...to save expenses, players often assisted in construction...[Major League] teams...would
change home grounds routinely. Sometimes they just changed sides of town. Sometimes they changed states....If a franchise did outlive its ballpark..., a new ballpark was sometimes constructed in its place in a matter of days, maybe during a road trip.40

As the nineteenth century closed, more permanent structures gained currency for a variety of reasons. The apparent popularity of baseball in major metropolitan areas led many owners to believe that the sport was sufficiently mature to support greater investment in infrastructure. Developments in urban infrastructure provided further inducements for action. Part of many cities by the turn of the century, the electric trolley offered fans, or “cranks” as they were then known, convenient transportation to sporting events. The allure of baseball appeared to be so popular for independent streetcar operators of the Progressive Era that Steven Riess notes “some companies even supported franchises at a loss because of anticipated profits from increased use of their streetcars.” Financial backing from streetcar companies was common even at the minor league level with a variety of southern cities benefitting from this practice. In New Orleans, a streetcar line went as far as to build a new ballpark in 1898 in addition to providing direct financial backing for the Crescent City’s minor league team, the Pelicans.41

Politicians and well-connected prominent citizens worked together to control baseball’s stadiums in the Progressive Era. An owner unwilling to allow political leaders to share in profits might find zoning regulations altered in ways that made franchise ownership useless. An uncooperative or poorly connected owner might soon find out that streetcar construction was planned with the new line designed to cut directly through a ballpark, rendering the site useless. John Brush, owner of a Cincinnati baseball franchise, reportedly sold his interest in the franchise after alleged disclosure of “municipal improvements” by Republican power brokers. In 1901, Ban Johnson, a powerful figure in baseball history, was thwarted in his efforts to establish an American League foothold in New York because of political machinations of the ruthless Andrew Freedman, then owner of the New York Giants. Even after Freedman’s political coalition lost political clout, Johnson’s effort was stymied until 1903 when he caved in to demands for shared ownership by well-connected politicos. Included in the ownership coalition were a former police chief, a well-connected professional gambler, and a former city superintendent of buildings.42

Ballparks of the Progressive Era were privately owned and privately maintained primarily
because profits were high and the ideology of the era was not receptive to government subsidy of private enterprise. Local government maintained a powerful position as a regulatory force, however. In many cases, regulations were devised to extract wealth, prestige, or a combination of both in a manner that benefitted well-connected officials. Despite baseball’s positive and wholesome image, below the surface political opportunism was the order of the day.

Even when predatory actions were taken to eliminate competition, Progressive Era politicians and their friends did not regard their machinations as dishonest or reprehensible. George W. Plunkitt, a legendary Tammany Hall boss, makes the distinction between “honest” graft and “dishonest” graft, proudly stating in 1905 that “I got rich from honest graft.” According to Plunkitt, politicians practicing “honest” graft “didn’t steal a dollar from the city treasury. They just seen [sic] their opportunities and took them.” A most ruthless tactic taken by civic leaders of this era, exercising the power of eminent domain, could cut a road or a trolley line halfway through the property of a team owner unwilling to deal with political leaders on their terms. The message of such action was clear to any emerging entrepreneur: cooperate with local officials or face severe economic setbacks and possible extinction of your sports team.

Historical analysis is extremely valuable in uncovering trends that shape the direction of modern stadium discourse. In From Ritual to Record Allen Guttmann traces the progression of sports from primitive times to the present. He isolates seven features not generally present in primitive sports, but clearly evident in modern sports. Those seven elements are secularism, equality (among competitors), specialization, rationalization, bureaucracy, quantification, and establishment of records. Many of these elements became increasingly important in American society during the Progressive Era and beyond. They also fueled an ideology that led to stadium construction in major urban areas throughout America in the twentieth century.

The movement of sport into a secular and rationalized direction accelerated its prominence in Progressive Era newspapers. Sport, an extremely popular Progressive Era diversion, helped build newspaper circulation through inclusion in penny press publications. Nevertheless, a tension existed in Progressive Era publications between high culture and low culture. Major urban newspapers often catered to low culture, of which sport was a part, but they also included a variety of features that exposed cultural tensions among the classes. Society pages, stories about museums, and coverage of the city orchestra often competed with coverage
of tawdry crimes and blood sports such as boxing. Even within the sports page, class values were contested. Ivy League football was generally highlighted, but many Progressive Era citizens regarded spectator sports as low class entertainment that should be avoided. Sports entrepreneurs of the day pushed hard to portray professional ballplayers as wholesome and heroic figures. Eventually, such an image appeared to take hold in the American psyche, setting the stage for greater expenditure on sports infrastructure.

If an ideological trend existed in American society at the time, it appears to have been an acceptance of commercialism and tacit agreement that many parts of society could benefit from implementation of a rationalized bureaucracy. These ideological tendencies were extended to sports infrastructure and sports management. As an example, the emergence of Taylorism as a management strategy for industry ushered in an era of specialized, rationalized, and bureaucratized management that inspired assembly-line production on a grand scale. The assembly-line production of the automotive plant was not conceptually different to the type of specialization that was occurring in sports during the Progressive Era. Players were assigned specific positions on the field, given new and specialized equipment (e.g.: baseball gloves) to improve their performance, and fans were ushered to predetermined ballpark seating areas that tended to divide individuals along class lines. Records were kept on the field of play, paralleling the routine performance audits that were part of a newly bureaucratic industrial society.

Record keeping also extended to the financial ledger, where sports franchise owners became increasingly concerned with maximizing revenues and minimizing liabilities. Increasing seating capacity in the early years of professional sports meant simply adding rows of wooden seats. As Americans displayed a greater willingness to pay an admission fee, owners contemplated the benefits of larger, more permanent facilities, while considering the apparent liabilities of the old style wooden construction. The emerging popularity of tobacco products at this time presented clear fire hazards, while the potential for collapse further endangered fans and exposed owners to unwanted negative publicity.

Philadelphia’s cozy Baker Bowl, destroyed by fire in 1894, reopened with a brick, steel and concrete grandstand in 1895, a dramatic departure from the tradition of wooden ballpark construction in America. The park served as home to the Phillies until 1938. Because Philadelphia’s Athletics were considerably more popular than the Phillies during most of this
period, the innovative masonry construction strategy employed by team owner William Baker was largely unappreciated by many baseball fans and fellow franchise owners. Poor maintenance, in part the result of very limited team ticket revenues, further clouded the reputation of this unique facility. Regardless, concrete and steel were making inroads in other areas of building construction, so it was only a matter of time before an attempt would be made to construct a sports facility with these elements as the primary ingredients.

The first fully concrete and steel stadium in America was not built by a sports entrepreneur. Instead, Harvard University built a steel reinforced concrete football facility in 1903 that remains a Boston area landmark to this day. The facility was inspired by the enthusiasm of selected Harvard faculty and wealthy alumni patrons from the class of 1879 shortly after fire destroyed a section of the university’s wooden bleachers in 1902. Interestingly, at the time some believed that the concrete structure could not survive New England’s rugged winters. Built in a mere four and a half months, the facility featured a construction process accelerated by an on-site mini-foundry. This allowed the transport of slabs to their needed destination via rails that were also temporarily installed on the construction site location. Although the stadium was an architectural wonder at the time, media coverage was sparse by today’s standards. The Harvard Crimson, a publication generally limited to students and the university community, often gave this unique facility front page coverage, but the widely distributed Boston Globe offered considerably less visible coverage to this Harvard University project. While the story received local and even occasional brief mention in national media, it simply did not generate the type of frequent front-cover headlines and sustained beat coverage by the city and business bureaus of the major Boston newspapers of the time. The public’s knowledge of the stadium was made familiar by periodic mentions of the structure in game-related coverage.

Yale and Princeton, Harvard’s biggest rivals, did not construct similarly large concrete facilities until 1914. Before that, a number of professional baseball franchises constructed new ballparks with private funds. Media coverage of college football was extensive during the Progressive Era, while professional football, in its infancy at this time, was strictly blue collar in appeal. It was barely recognized by major urban newspapers.

Some would argue that media emphasis of collegiate football accelerated stadium
construction and changed institutional priorities in a dramatic way. In the early 1900s, there were examples of college presidents being replaced, despite a commitment to academic excellence, in part because of poor performance on the playing field. Administrators at Ohio State University regarded stadium construction as a positive means of outreach to the local community, launching its first ever capital campaign in 1919 with the sole purpose of raising money for football stadium construction. This strategy of “community outreach” had an exceedingly rational basis. Media publicity was partially responsible for sport historian Ronald Smith’s assertion that despite Harvard’s nation leading commitment to endowed professorships, it was better known for constructing “the first concrete stadium in America.”

In such an environment, it is hardly surprising that a number of rival university football programs eventually committed resources to new facilities. It is unclear whether Princeton and Yale’s full decade delay in stadium construction was the partial result of unenthusiastic media coverage of Harvard Stadium’s 1903 construction. Early media coverage of the first concrete and steel sports facility, Harvard Stadium, would almost certainly be perceived as inadequate in today’s media environment. The New York Times, a generally reliable source for Ivy League football coverage, simply noted the opening of Harvard Stadium in a single sentence in the opening paragraph of its game day coverage. Similarly, the Boston Herald focused primarily on game coverage, making a fleeting front page mention of the new stadium but showing considerably greater concern for Harvard’s inability to defeat Dartmouth in its first game at this new facility. The Boston Herald’s front page photo closest to the Harvard gridiron story was of the Yale versus Princeton game rather than the new stadium.

Prior to the next round of big-time collegiate stadium construction at Yale and Princeton in 1914, professional baseball’s first major era of modern ballpark construction began. In 1909 this era was ushered in with the completion of Shibe Park in Philadelphia and Forbes Field in Pittsburgh. Shibe Park opened on April 12, 1909, while Forbes Field opened about two and a half months later on June 30, 1909.

Benjamin Shibe, a sports equipment manufacturer of baseballs and bats, was majority owner of the Philadelphia Athletics. His ability to obtain positive press for the Athletics, more commonly referred to as the A’s, was the result of minority ownership by Sam “Butch” Jones, a sports reporter for the Associated Press, and Frank Hough, the sports editor of the Philadelphia
Inquirer. These sportswriters were actively engaged in promotion of the franchise. In 1905, during the Athletics only World Series performance prior to the construction of Shibe Park, the Philadelphia Inquirer heavily covered the championship, featuring not only traditional reporting, but a newspaper sponsored promotion promising “to give the team $1,000 in gold if they win the World Series.” Jones and Hough helped in site selection for the ballpark that preceded Shibe Park, and made sure that positive coverage continued during and after Shibe Park construction.

Both Forbes Field and Shibe Park represented large capital outlays, but the economics of the Progressive Era helped make such projects feasible. Low overhead for players salaries meant that the bulk of ticket revenues could be retained by owners. These revenues could be plowed back into schemes that would deliver higher levels of future profits. Construction labor was also relatively cheap, in part due to an influx of immigrants from Europe. Furthermore, if a franchise owner could adroitly use political connections to steer clear of the potential machine politics land-mines that were so prevalent in urban America, restrictions on new construction and commerce were limited. Pittsburgh’s status as the “smokey city” reflected this tolerant acceptance of mercenary commerce which was certainly not limited to sports-related endeavors.

The 1909 media coverage of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh’s new ballparks was more extensive than previous sports facility-related coverage. Unless the student-run college newspaper were brought into the analysis, Boston area coverage of the 1903 Harvard Stadium construction was less profound than media coverage for these two Pennsylvania facilities. Opening day for each facility serves as a compelling barometer for this assertion. Boston newspapers covered the Harvard football story on the front page, but focused more substantially on the game itself than the new stadium. The front page Harvard game coverage was not accompanied by a photograph of the new sports facility. Both Pennsylvania markets utilized front page photos of the new facilities as they opened. The Pittsburgh coverage offered a five photograph collage that was a more technically advanced layout and design than typical Pittsburgh Post front page coverage.

The popularity of the new cement and steel ballparks gave rise to duplication of the concept far beyond Pennsylvania’s borders. As with many sporting and commercial trends, success inspired widespread imitation. Cleveland dismantled the wooden grandstands of League Park, replacing them with a concrete and steel double-deck structure. Chicago’s Charles
Comiskey broke ground for his palatial new ballpark on February 10, 1910, opening to the public less than six months later on July 1, 1910. New York’s famed Polo Grounds, a site of sporting activity since the 1870s, was renovated in 1911 with new concrete and steel sections after a raging fire destroyed much of the ballpark in early April. Cincinnati, proud of its status as home of the first fully professional baseball franchise, opened a concrete and steel ballpark on April 11, 1912. Days later Detroit flexed its industrial muscle with the construction of Navin Field, currently known as Tiger Stadium, opening on April 20, 1912. On the same day, the Boston Red Sox christened Fenway Park. The first sports facility construction boom included minor league parks in some cities, but the most profound examples of sports architecture were primarily housed in the northeast and urban Midwest.

Professional baseball led the way in sports-related construction projects. Serious stadium construction for football was limited to the college game during the Progressive Era. Although considered “amateur,” college football might be more credibly labeled “quasi-professional” since it was quite common for alumni and friends of the university to compensate collegiate players for their service on the gridiron. Professional football similar to today’s highly structured NFL game simply did not exist. Through the Progressive Era and after World War I the professional game was regarded as a low-class, blue collar enterprise, forcing early professional football teams to utilize whatever facilities might be available to them. In one example, the Providence Steam Rollers, an early NFL franchise, played their home games on the interior of a bicycle racing track from 1925 to 1931. Media coverage of the period reflected these values, so it wasn’t until the advent of television that professional football began to challenge the preeminence of baseball as America’s favorite professional spectator sport. Not surprisingly, the 1960s featured the explosive growth of multi-purpose facilities frequently designed to give the viewing needs of professional football significant consideration, often at the expense of baseball.

Prior to design of multi-purpose and football-specific facilities, professional sports stadium construction clearly favored the needs of baseball. Nevertheless, football stadium construction on the collegiate level gave rise to consideration of taxpayer subsidized stadium construction in the 1920s. During this period of heavy university construction, several cities determined that stadium construction might help to enhance the national profile of their community in the same manner that a university football stadium seemed to raise the national
profile of a large university.

Pasadena, California built the Rose Bowl in 1922 as a monument to its annual bowl game. Los Angeles and Cleveland constructed large multi-purpose facilities in 1923 and 1931, respectively, with the intention of attracting the Olympic Games for their respective cities. Chicago erected Soldier Field in 1924 as a monument to military veterans and the popularity of sport. Most significant to the future of stadium-building policy, these facilities marked a new commitment to public financing of sports-related construction projects.

**Post-World War II Construction: The Stadium as a Reflection of Civic Pride**

Despite introduction of this limited public subsidy trend in the 1920s, professional sports owners did not generally perceive the potential of public financing as a means of increasing profits until the 1950s. While most superficial historic analyses regard Walter O’Malley’s move to Los Angeles as a defining moment in changing the dynamic between community and the sports franchise, more incisive analysis recognizes Milwaukee’s construction of publicly financed County Stadium as a precursor to the westward movement of professional baseball. As O’Malley was negotiating the Dodgers fate, he intermittently referred to “a ‘Milwaukee formula,’ whereby in return for playing in a publicly owned stadium, the city could tax receipts and concessions.”58

The Braves’ move from Boston to Milwaukee in 1953, four years before the Dodgers’ move took place, demonstrated to baseball executives that public funding of baseball facilities was feasible and could be regarded as a way to improve profitability. The Braves, derided by one Boston sportswriter as “a $600,000 bouncing check,” managed to attract a mere 281,000 New England fans for the entire 1952 season.59 After moving to Milwaukee, the Braves attracted 67,714 fans in their first two games. By the end of the season, team attendance had increased more than 750 percent above 1952 levels; 2,131,388 fans visited the new publicly financed ballpark during the 1953 season.60 After Milwaukee’s dramatic financial success, team owners were exposed to the value of a new publicly funded stadium. Momentum for a new stadium construction boom was now in force. During the 1950s, media coverage in several cities linked civic pride with stadium construction initiatives. Team owners, media practitioners, and local politicians appeared to be intent on selling an ideology that community support for new stadium construction was an expected part of the duties of a city that had earned “major league” status.
The New York metropolitan area did not generally follow these trends, however. Brooklyn Dodger owner Walter O’Malley hoped to build a new stadium with his own funds to replace aging Ebbets Field, but was consistently rebuffed in his attempts to gain help for this project by New York City politicians. Robert Moses, the legendary power broker and city park commissioner, repeatedly stonewalled O’Malley’s desire to privately purchase land through public use of eminent domain procedures. The Brooklyn Dodgers case is highly significant to the stadium issue in that it demonstrated that a profitable team owner could be coaxed into leaving an already lucrative market if political leaders were insensitive to team owner demands. The case has further significance in that it introduced baseball to both Los Angeles and San Francisco, by virtue of Horace Stoneham’s simultaneous decision to shift his Giants franchise from New York to California. The Dodgers initially played in a less than optimal Los Angeles Coliseum, a facility that was ill-suited for baseball. Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley then pushed forward on plans to construct Dodgers Stadium, a privately funded enterprise that was made possible by land subsidies provided by city leaders in Los Angeles. On the other hand, the Giants moved into Candlestick Park, a taxpayer subsidized facility, perpetuating the arrangement that had been established in the 1953 Boston to Milwaukee franchise shift.

Shortly after the Dodgers and Giants moved to the West Coast, the Continental League, a failed attempt to challenge professional baseball’s existing powers, pinned its hopes on convincing cities such as Minneapolis to construct new municipal stadiums. Major League Baseball accelerated league expansion to some of these metropolitan areas. The purpose of this expansion, although not explicitly stated, was to fend off the Continental League’s potential challenge to baseball hegemony. Major League Baseball executives used publicly financed stadia as a necessary carrot for cities interested in achieving major league status during this period. In short, odds of selection for a Major League expansion franchise at this time diminished substantially without a tangible plan to build a new publicly financed ballpark.

Press coverage often became a major factor in the push to attract a major league team in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Jay Weiner’s account of Minnesota’s press coverage related to Major League expansion suggests that public funding of a stadium was at the core of the Minneapolis/St. Paul strategy to attract a major league franchise. According to Weiner, newspaper stories that had the potential to educate the public about the financial liabilities related
to public funding faced editorial censorship.62

The ballpark of the 1950s and early 1960s was built primarily with baseball in mind. The sight lines and the overall configuration of these parks were better suited for baseball than football. That would change in the mid-1960s with the advent of the circular stadium, a design that combined characteristics of both modern and ancient architecture. These facilities were not ideal for football spectatorship, but they were even less accommodating for baseball viewing. The soft circular design of these facilities made for easier crowd-related camera panning, a media strategy popularized by ABC’s sports production guru, Roone Arledge, than quirky ballparks with sudden angles and a less geometric configuration. They also became a visible symbol of civic pride as many regarded these facilities as futuristic.

Many people associate the circular stadium with a late 1960s focus on technology and modernity, in part, because of the integration of artificial turf and large electronic scoreboards into these facilities. Nevertheless, the roots of the circular stadium were inspired by the ancient architecture of Rome. Robert Moses’ design philosophy in the construction of New York’s Shea Stadium in 1964 was to emulate the architectural grandeur of the Roman coliseum in a setting that offered modern amenities including easy access to major highways. According to Moses biographer Robert Caro, “Shea Stadium...was his answer to Ceasar’s Coliseum. And the Park was surrounded by his great roads, the cloverleafs and broad ribbons of concrete that to him represented beauty....It [was] a landscape by Moses, bearing his signature as plainly as if he had scrawled it into the concrete in giant letters.”63

Moses regarded Shea Stadium and the park surrounding it as a monument to his greatness as a city planner. Construction began not long after Dodger Stadium opened in Los Angeles in 1962, an event that may have prompted the egotistical Moses to respond in kind. Accordingly, he did more than simply build the municipal stadium at the site that he previously tried to push on Walter O’Malley before he moved his team westward. Moses took steps to publicize this monumental construction project, integrating this facility into the 1964 and 1965 New York World’s Fair, a massive public display that attracted millions of citizens to the Queens site. The circular design of Shea Stadium, both ancient and futuristic, caught on beyond Gotham’s borders. Cities throughout America contemplated how they could put their unique imprint on this rather standardized design.
Perhaps the most celebrated use of circular design took place with the construction of Houston’s Astrodome, a facility which opened to the public in 1965. If Robert Moses perceived New York’s circular stadium design as a reflection of the past, the designers of Houston’s facility were firmly committed to creating a stadium that reflected the future of sports spectatorship. Judge Roy Hofheinz cajoled politicians, the press, and anyone else who would listen into building the Astrodome with the purpose of creating a facility that was so lavish that it would raise the stature of Houston nationally. After the Astrodome opened, Hofheinz remarked that “nobody can ever see this and go back to Kalamazoo, Chicago, New York, you name it, and still think this town is bush league.” Stephen Klineberg, a sociologist at the University of Houston, called the completion of the Astrodome, “the most exciting thing that has ever happened to Houston.”

Prior to the construction of this huge indoor edifice, ballparks and stadiums were designed first and foremost to showcase baseball or football games. The Astrodome became a place that many people visited primarily to see the facility itself. The game, while entertaining, was secondary to the experience created by this new building’s unique design.

This focus on indoor entertainment inspired political leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana to construct a similar indoor facility more massive than the Astrodome. The Louisiana Superdome, the most popular site for NFL Super Bowl play, opened to the public in 1975. Its circular dimensions are so massive that the entire Astrodome could be physically contained within the interior of this more modern facility. For a full decade after its construction, however, the Astrodome was the most talked about sports venue in the United States.

If the typical ballpark reflected a Progressive Era desire to master and shape nature according to man’s desires, the Astrodome took this notion to its most absurd extreme. When initial attempts to grow grass inside this enclosed building failed, the Astrodome’s architects used science to resolve the dilemma. Natural grass was replaced by a space-aged plastic grass produced by Monsanto, a multinational chemical and fiber manufacturer. Houston’s oppressively humid summers were held in check by a massive air conditioning system that cooled the stadium to a comfortable 72 degrees. Fans were kept entertained during a boring game by the most elaborate scoreboard ever built. Years before the advent of the Jumbotron and DiamondVision, the large television screens that have become commonplace in today’s ballparks, the Astrodome
featured a massive two million dollar scoreboard that entertained fans with animated electronic programming.

The Astrodome, rather than the teams playing in it, attracted nationwide media attention. This coverage often suggested that Houston was emerging as a high tech city. Many regarded the Astrodome as such a technological marvel that it was commonly referred to as “the eighth wonder of the world.” A 1965 *Sports Illustrated* article referred to the Astrodome’s high tech scoreboard as “an electronic accomplice...which can lead cheers, sass umpires, and do everything but pinch hit.” 67 Houston gained substantial media exposure when President Lynden Johnson visited the Astrodome’s newly created “Presidential Suite,” a precursor to today’s modern luxury skybox. The Astrodome also contained several less opulent luxury suites which were leased to local corporations. It also featured an on-site bowling alley, a barber shop, a circus room, and a number of other amenities never before included in a stadium or ballpark.

As much a theme park as it was a stadium, the facility became a high-tech destination that attracted a multitude of out-of-town visitors. In the early years of the Astrodome, visitors and television viewers were treated to images of groundskeepers, concessionaires, and ushers wearing space suits. For a city that was previously regarded as low-tech and backwater, Houston in its focus on modernity received a welcome image change. The involvement with NASA’s space program contributed much to this overall image upgrade, but the Houston Astrodome became a place where American citizens’ perceptions about a newly emerging high-tech Houston were reinforced.

As Houston gained attention for this architectural creation, other cities looked to build new sports facilities with the same “modern” looking circular design. The goal was to use a new stadium as a way to enhance their own major league image. Stadium construction on the west coast, followed by projects in New York and Houston, prompted a “keep up with the Joneses” desire to build new taxpayer subsidized sports facilities. The emergence of televised network sports programing in the 1960s helped bring vivid visuals of these new facilities to a broader national audience, intensifying the incentive to build. Several of the cozy old ballparks built during the Progressive Era were replaced in the 1960s and early 1970s by much larger facilities with the hope that these structures would portray an image of a thoroughly modern major league community. The stadium had become a symbol of community pride, and taxpayer funding was an
expected part of building this “modern” image.

St. Louis opened Busch Stadium in 1966. Oakland unveiled Alameda County Stadium, and Anaheim, California opened a new ballpark in the same year. While none of these were domed, the St. Louis facility copied Houston’s construction of 55 private stadium boxes, building 39 private suites into their new facility. Interestingly, the luxury suite was not integrated into most other new facilities. Owners appeared to be satisfied to pack as many fans as possible into the new ballparks. With the notable exception of Kansas City’s Lamar Hunt, typical team owners would not revisit the skybox or luxury suite concept for at least a decade.

In 1970 Busch Stadium was converted from grass to artificial turf, a move in line with the prevalent desire to portray a modern image. As St. Louis made the transition to artificial turf, other outdoor facilities were opening with this plastic grass integrated into original ballpark construction plans. Cincinnati’s Riverfront Stadium and Pittsburgh’s Three Rivers Stadium both opened in 1970. A year later, another modern circular facility, Veterans Stadium, opened its doors to the citizens of Philadelphia. As these facilities opened, national media coverage often focused on the integration of this modern turf into the stadium design, giving communities a little extra publicity for investing in a unique new product.

Older “rust-belt” cities seemed to particularly enjoy the association with modernity. Working hard to shed its national image as a run-down mill town, Pittsburgh in particular hoped to show itself capable of adapting to change. The transition of Pittsburgh’s sports culture from the exceedingly traditional Forbes Field, constructed in 1909, to a very modern circular stadium with artificial turf suggested that the Steel City was willing to move forward despite powerful stereotypes to the contrary. With the construction of Three Rivers Stadium, Pittsburgh also helped to usher in another new concept: the stadium club. While other cities may have had a tradition on-site club facilities for years, Pittsburgh’s Allegheny Club was different. This club was formed with a primary mission of helping to defray stadium-related costs in an attempt to make finance, construction, and maintenance of Pittsburgh’s new stadium feasible. The club also offered members a restaurant facility that overlooked the stadium action, a precursor to the club seating concept that is currently part of today’s stadium design.

New York, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia’s multi-purpose outdoor stadium designs were essentially similar in nature. Kansas City’s construction of two sports-
specific facilities marked an important departure from this multi-purpose architecture. The Kansas City model contained a baseball park and football stadium in close proximity to each other. This created a new paradigm in sports facility construction. This two-stadium facility, now known as the Truman Sports Complex, is located on the outskirts of Kansas City. The complex offered convenient highway access and sport-specific spectator sight lines that represented an improvement over what was previously available in the multi-purpose parks constructed just a few years earlier.

The Kansas City project proved to be a harbinger for the stadium construction arrangements that took place in the 1990s and beyond. The Kansas City project began with a countywide citizen’s referendum vote in 1967. Both publicly funded despite the considerable wealth of Chiefs owner Lamar Hunt and Royals owner Ewing Kauffman, the two facilities were carefully tailored to each particular sport; but the total project would not have taken this shape if not for the insistence of football franchise executives for a separate football-only facility. As such, this project marked a transition to a stadium dynamic that gave football franchises greater negotiating leverage than in the past. Prior to the Kansas City project, taxpayer funding for a football-only facility was an unlikely prospect, particularly in light of a mere eight to ten home games annually scheduled for this sport.

Kansas City dedicated millions of taxpayers’ dollars to build the football stadium first, an indication that football was overtaking baseball as America’s most popular spectator sport. The Kansas City Royals opened their baseball stadium after the Chiefs’ first season was completed. The Chiefs were able to move ahead of the baseball team in construction priority because they were a championship caliber team, while baseball’s Royals were an expansion team that had yet to make its mark as a top-tier franchise.

The Jackson County, Missouri referendum that paved the way for Kansas City stadium construction required two-thirds citizen approval at the polls, a seemingly insurmountable goal. Further complicating this approval process was the manner in which the referendum was constructed. Instead of combining highly desirable construction projects with the stadium decision, a common tactic in modern stadium referenda, citizens had the ability to separately vote for only those items that they wished to fund from a total $102 million construction package. Forty-two million dollars was dedicated to stadium construction alone. The remainder of
proposed expenditures were allocated to schools, roads, and other infrastructure needs.

Media coverage may have helped some citizens to determine how to vote, but the campaign strategy used by key Kansas City’s stadium proponents was much less focused on direct media influence of citizens than more recent stadium referenda. Community elites most in favor of stadium construction focused their resources on careful interpersonal contact with voters rather than on direct contact with media practitioners. Chief’s President Ray Evans set up a phone bank at his downtown Traders National Bank office to facilitate this interpersonal contact. Workers systematically called every voter in Jackson County, often working twelve-hour days to accomplish this herculean task. Football team employees recruited supporters to hand out flyers at busy public locations. On election day, team representatives utilized the thorough records obtained during phone contact with voters to dispatch cars to the homes of citizens who would otherwise have missed the vote. The overall communication strategy was based on a formula established by a political strategist who had helped elect the brother of a Kansas City Chiefs’ board member governor of Kansas. When all the votes were counted, the stadium referendum comfortably passed with a 68.1 percent majority.68

A final manner in which the Kansas City project may be correlated to modern day projects is in it overall dedication to opulent stadium amenities that became in and of itself a media story. Team owners Lamar Hunt and Ewing Kauffman dedicated $17.5 million of their own funds to furnish luxury skyboxes, team offices, and stadium clubs. Lamar Hunt appointed his personal skybox with seventeenth century art, furniture, and unique treasures gathered from France, Spain, and various other locales from around the world.69 Hunt had taken the standard of stadium luxury one step farther than Houston’s Roy Hofheinz. The skybox was now more than simply a place to comfortably watch a football game. It was a tangible way for wealthy individuals to consume conspicuously in a manner that might even surprise Thorstien Veblen, the turn-of-the-century sociologist who savaged the quirky habits of Progressive Era elites. Wealthy team owners might not have the capacity to perform heroic deeds on the field of athletic competition, but the taxpayer subsidized stadium offered a new venue where owners could flex their competitive muscle through well-publicized consumption.

This competitive impulse extended to testosterone-laden attempts to flex muscles of community pride as well. Political leaders in various locales jockeyed to top the opulence of
previous stadium projects, building on a grand scale. The result was completion of several massive indoor structures in New Orleans, Seattle, Montreal, and the Detroit suburb of Pontiac, Michigan in 1975 and 1976. After listening to years of haughty derision from New Yorkers, New Jersey politicians made a successful attempt to bring one of New York’s cultural treasures to its borders. The New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority opened the doors to Giants Stadium in 1976. To the dismay of New Yorkers, this state of the art outdoor facility lured the New York football Giants from Yankee Stadium in the Bronx to East Rutherford, New Jersey. New York City responded with a massive renovation of Yankee Stadium as a means of ensuring that its coveted Yankees would not be swayed to cross the Hudson River. Before Giants Stadium was completed, New York City officials showed their extreme displeasure by locking the Giants out of both Yankee and Shea Stadiums. This forced the team to scramble for a temporary home. Ironically, they eventually settled in for a season of football at one of the only regional facilities large enough to handle large NFL crowds, the ancient Yale Bowl in New Haven, Connecticut.

The heavy construction of indoor stadia in the mid and late 1970s was followed by a construction slowdown in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Double-digit interest rates and an economic recession contributed to this building slowdown. The cost of financing stadium construction bonds rose dramatically during this period, making stadium-related funding a luxury that most communities were unwilling to consider.

Dramatic cost overruns in New Orleans and Montreal’s projects further scared leaders away from new stadium construction. Instead of new stadium construction, sports owners and stadium authorities in several cities looked to less expensive renovation as a means of maintaining a profitable physical plant. Denver, Atlanta, Detroit, Anaheim, San Diego, and San Francisco completed stadium renovation projects that were substantially cheaper than the new construction initiatives undertaken several years earlier. Minneapolis’ Metrodome and Indianapolis’ Hoosierdome, built in 1982 and 1984 respectively, were construction anomalies during this period. The Hoosierdome was constructed to lure the Colts, an NFL franchise, away from their original Baltimore home. Simply an unusual construction initiative from this period, the Metrodome’s construction occurred because it meshed with the desires of several key leaders in the Twin Cities. Minneapolis newspaper executives emerged as the most vigorous proponents of this construction.70
As the 1980s unfolded, stadium renovation outpaced new stadium construction by a wide margin. The limits of public subsidy compelled Miami Dolphins owner Joe Robbie to finance his own new stadium in south Florida. He opened the doors to this facility in 1987. The early 1990s ushered in a new era of stadium construction, however. This period was punctuated by franchise relocation threats, the introduction of “old style” stadium architecture, increased demands for taxpayer subsidized facilities, transfer of sports teams to a new, more aggressive generation of entrepreneurs, and a grass roots backlash against owner demands for taxpayer subsidized sports palaces. Politicians of the past readily aligned themselves with the local sports franchise when trawling for votes; but this strategy no longer assured elected officials a safe harbor as sport and politics became uncomfortably intertwined. If a franchise left town to pursue more lucrative opportunities in another city, a politician might be made a scapegoat. On the other hand, if a political leader voted to provide multi-million dollar subsidies to already wealthy team owners, they faced the wrath of an angry electorate. To protect themselves from these uncertain developments, many politicians pushed for public votes on stadium construction proposals. As owner demands for new stadium construction intensified, media coverage became an increasingly important dimension of this next era of stadium construction.

The Current Era of Stadium Construction

As the bonds for many civic stadium projects of the 1960s were due to expire in the 1990s, sports franchise owners confronted with the knowledge that competing owners were constructing new stadiums better designed exploit economic opportunities in the years ahead. Skyboxes commanded high prices from corporate clients, and this revenue was shielded from league revenue sharing schemes. In addition, the novelty of new facilities seemed to attract larger crowds while the new technology which was integrated into these facilities provided the capacity for ever increasing profit margins. Wider concourses offered greater potential for in-stadium retailing and improved concession revenues. New electronic devices and seats with built in cup holders provided amenities that helped to entice casual fans to visit and consume. Increased availability of amenities as basic as bathroom facilities provided a desired convenience and encouraged even higher levels of food and drink consumption during games.

Increasing player salaries, the result of a minimal owner discipline as free agency permeated the sports marketplace, pushed many franchise owners to seek new revenue streams as
a means of retaining profit margins or as a way to attract top-tier free agent ballplayers. New publicly subsidized facilities seemed to be the easiest avenue for owners to take in order to remain competitive with other sports franchises as high-priced free agent ballplayers became available. Particularly prone to establish new contractual milestones, professional baseball’s salaries struck many casual fans as wildly excessive. Alex Rodriguez’s ten-year, $250 million contract prompted many fans to complain that his salary averaged $45,000 per at-bat, a figure that exceeded the annual earnings of the typical American worker.71 Crowds at visiting ballparks around the country responded to this exceedingly high salary with organized chants of “Pay-Rod” and “A-Wad” during the 2001 baseball season.

A shift in the composition of sports franchise ownership further served to pressure stadium construction. The transition from the local family owner to the corporate leader of national stature served to ratchet up competition for greater revenues. No longer were team owners a select club of insiders, they were now a cross section of the nation’s most aggressive capitalists, a core of individuals used to bending rules for their own benefit. These men frequently looked to heavily subsidized new stadium construction as a means of achieving maximum profitability. Seattle Seahawks owner Paul Allen, frequently cited as America’s third richest man, is an example of this trend. Although he has earned enough to finance several stadium projects on his own, his competitive impulse prompted team sale and potential relocation threats if his team did not receive a new taxpayer subsidized stadium. These threats ultimately led to construction of a new stadium and implosion of the Seattle Kingdome after only 24 years of service.

The NFL has been much more successful at controlling players’ salaries than Major League Baseball. The football league negotiated a salary cap with the NFL Players Association to avoid widespread player demands for higher salaries. But the influx of highly driven executives with records of financial success in other endeavors has helped to push stadium construction initiatives to the forefront in several communities. For these new owners, gaining a competitive edge through government subsidy is an expected way of doing business. For these individuals, maximizing profits, regardless of strategic consequences for competing owners, is a routine managerial response. Sharing of broadcast revenues, an NFL practice, may make stadium subsidies less necessary for smaller market teams to survive than in baseball, but stadium
subsidies have become widespread, nonetheless, simply because they are so easily achieved that they are difficult to resist.

For entrenched owners who make up the “old guard,” calls for stadium subsidies reflect a competitive desire to keep pace with this new breed of NFL entrepreneur. In some cases, the owners of a previous generation, such as Ravens’ owner Art Modell, have demonstrated limited money management skills, forcing a demand for lavish new stadium deals to offset personal financial inefficiencies. It is probable that several of the old guard owners fear the vast resources and potential ruthlessness of new team ownership. The NFL’s old-guard ownership may be significantly more affluent than the typical American, but compared to software tycoons and pharmaceutical company heirs recently purchasing franchises, old guard owner resources are much more limited. Although team owners collectively determine the future of the league in policy votes at annual owners’ meetings, the wealth disparity among NFL owners is a likely source of uneasiness for these less affluent owners. If owners with extremely deep pockets collectively decide to raise salary cap limitations to openly compete for free agent talent, a problem that has plagued other sports, it has the potential to devastate the financial solvency of some long-time owners. For these individuals new stadium construction has become an avenue for ensuring long-term financial stability.

When the Broncos and Falcons faced each other in Super Bowl XXXIII, the total gross revenues for television broadcasting the event were approximately $150 million. The Super Bowl is clearly the most watched sporting event in America, but the revenues achieved through this broadcast pale in comparison to the revenues sought by several professional sports franchise owners for stadium construction in recent years. A 1996 report indicated that "$7 billion has been spent over the past three years to build or renovate 30 major sports facilities in America," an average of over $230 million per facility. Stadium and Arena News, a specialized financial publication that has emerged as a result of this recent construction boom, describes the stadium and arena venue as “a $6 billion industry.” Professional franchise owners have put up some of the funds for this construction; but in recent years, taxpayers have been asked to take on an increasing burden of skyrocketing stadium construction costs.

In 1995, a $60 million public commitment to renovate the San Diego Chargers’ facility helped to pave the way for its role as host of the 1998 Super Bowl.
environment, a $60 million dollar renovation proposal would be regarded by many owners as seed money for very minor cosmetic improvements. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the NFL would consider such an expenditure adequate for a city proposing to host a future Super Bowl. For many sports franchise owners, construction of new stadiums have become the real "Super Bowl." The structural integrity of most older stadia are sound, but these huge concrete structures have become financially obsolete.

In a sense, the rules of professional sports management have shifted the game from the field of play to the field of high finance. As a result, it is not uncommon for Major League Baseball and National Football League franchises to contribute significant amounts of funding to organizations that attempt to shape public opinion on this issue. In 1997, Brookings Institution President Michael Armacost indicated that the funding discrepancy between stadium advocates and stadium critics is typically “more than twenty to one.” More recent stadium initiatives have featured campaign funding disparities of double and triple that number. Since most of this money is aimed at media-related expenditures, pro-stadium forces have a decided edge in media access unless news coverage vigilantly pushes to maintain balance.

Such balance is hard to achieve, however, because opposition tends to be dispersed among the general populace, while stadium proponents are generally cohesive and easily organized by self-interest. This is a common pattern within the American political system, but the stadium issue differs from other special project subsidies in the level of media attention which is afforded to professional sports teams. As a result, an unorganized public is much more aware of stadium-related subsidy requests than they might be for other types of business-related subsidies. Despite this awareness, the public may not receive full disclosure on many issues related to stadium subsidies in media coverage traditionally utilized by sports fans. As an example, subsidy coverage on baseball game broadcasts are likely to be heavily skewed by how broadcasters are selected for these events. Game day broadcasters are generally approved by team owners, making it highly unlikely that they would consistently reveal information that might call stadium-related subsidies into question.

Despite the owners’ ability to control some elements of media coverage, the stadium construction issue has polarized sports fans unlike any other issue. Claims that new sports facilities can rejuvenate the economic condition of large cities are often vastly exaggerated.
Feasibility studies and impact reports often contain flawed assumptions that overestimate the long term benefits of stadium construction to the economic vitality of a community.

Nevertheless, scholars often underestimate the potential for stadium construction to lift the collective spirit of a metropolitan area that has recently acquired a professional sports franchise and the collective shock experienced by a city victimized by a sudden franchise shift. From an economic standpoint, one might argue that Cleveland's expenditure of approximately $231,000 per job in the Gateway Project was a poor investment in the city's infrastructure. But the project contributed to a lifting of community pride, and it reversed the decline of a blighted inner city neighborhood. The economics of the Cleveland construction may have been questionable, but the emotional lift experienced by Cleveland's citizens was immeasurable, helping to offset some of the sting that resulted when Art Modell moved his NFL franchise from Cleveland to Baltimore after the 1995 season.

The new franchise "free agency" in sports, spurred by Al Davis's court victory against the NFL in 1984, has profoundly changed the ground rules for stadium construction in major metropolitan areas across the country. Davis's court challenge opened the floodgates for team relocation and stadium subsidy. He knew the financial consequences of this were significant. In a 1985 NFL owners' meeting, Davis argued that "because of his [Davis's] move, franchises' leverage in the superstadium game had made a quantum leap, and that [transgression from a traditionally cohesive NFL policy] made everyone more money than they could have otherwise hoped for." The departure of the Browns from Cleveland after many years of sellout crowds and an intensely loyal fan following hammered home how dramatically these ground rules had changed in recent years for NFL cities. Before Al Davis's shift of his Raiders franchise, the NFL was a paragon of unity and stability when compared to other sports entities.

Randy Roberts and James Olsen trace much of this cooperative management style to the immigrant, Roman Catholic heritage that was part of the cultural upbringing of early NFL owners such as George Halas, Tim Mara, Art Rooney, and George Marshall. In this early setting, franchise shifts seldom occurred, so owners were less likely to make stadium requirements and potential franchise movement a critical concern. Once expansion resulted in a more diverse ownership profile, it was only a matter of time before individualism resulted in challenging the league's cooperative management structure. Bottom-line economics, including limited broadcast
revenues, had an impact on the geographic stability of the NFL in the early years. Prior to 1960, the NFL was much less prestigious and much less able to dictate key economic decisions since its audience was primarily blue-collar, instead of today's demographic mix of a more upscale clientele. In its early years, the NFL often played second-fiddle to Major League Baseball and even big-time college football. Television contracts were so insignificant that, through part of the 1950s, NFL games were carried on the now defunct DuMont Television Network. In the early 1970s, former CBS Sports Chief Bill MacPhail openly admitted that, although the NFL was currently perceived to be a better package by leading broadcast executives, in the mid-1950s he "would have preferred the network to have college football."

The NFL's policy of revenue sharing both television income and gate receipts worked to create parity, allowing small market teams such as Green Bay to compete with New York and Chicago; but in recent times a new breed of owner, seeking individual rather than collective success, has looked to concession sales, parking fees, and skybox revenues as well as other avenues for profits in order to gain an edge over competing franchise owners. Major League Baseball’s heavy reliance on local broadcast revenues has served to maintain a high level of individualism amongst team owners, making the geographic stability of franchises less than certain. Despite this, baseball owners have been less inclined to succumb to franchise free agency in recent decades, but they continue to use the threat of movement as an effective method of obtaining new stadium financing.

The ability of some owners to generate vast revenues from stadium sources has inspired many owners to look at new stadium construction as a panacea for lower than desired revenues. In 1994, Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones was able to extract over $37 million in stadium-related revenues by adding 68 luxury suites and other marketing strategies. More than double the stadium revenue of any other NFL franchise in that year, this resulted in a 25 percent increase in the value of the team. Jones clearly set a standard that other NFL owners now look to as they devise independent strategies to manage their respective franchises. The Cleveland Browns, a newly minted NFL franchise that began play in 1999, crafted a stadium package that yielded the team a whopping $49 million in annual revenues before the team ever played a single down.

The result is a system that is more entrepreneurial than cooperative, particularly in relationship to the regional and municipal stadium authorities that serve individual franchises.
Now that the genie is out of the bottle, sports franchise owners are willing to carefully shape media campaigns in an attempt to obtain new stadium deals that maximize stadium-related revenues. What must be examined is whether the vast subsidy required to keep up with this “stadium game” is worthwhile to those communities considering such an investment.

Without doubt, the prominent media coverage that professional sports has received increases the desirability of retaining or acquiring a major league franchise. The publicity of nationally televised broadcasts on major networks gives host cities abundant publicity, which may include numerous aerial views of the city skyline. Another attractive feature of major league status is routine coverage of the city’s team on evening newscasts and in morning newspapers throughout the nation. This generally benign coverage can be contrasted to typical news stories of distant cities which often focus on crime, natural disasters, or bizarre events.

For a city with a rich cultural heritage and a clear national identity, the need to offer brand new facilities might be a clear luxury that can be avoided. The New York metropolitan area, for example, can afford to share a single stadium located outside of New York’s borders between two NFL franchises, simply because New York’s national stature is unquestioned and its economic vitality is secure. As long as the facility is maintained in a way that permits owners to keep pace with strategies that maximize stadium income, it is possible that ownership will remain generally satisfied and the community will be spared the need to rebuild a new facility in order to retain a franchise. Despite this, New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s recent push to dedicate more than $1 billion for stadium construction on Manhattan's west side shows that even the most secure metropolitan areas can fall prey to the one-upmanship that is part of the process of maintaining professional sports facilities.

For many cities, particularly those in the northeast "rust belt," declining stature is a real concern that tempts city leaders to ante up hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to avoid being classified as a "second class" city that can not maintain its professional sports teams. As Charles Euchner asserts, it is often the cities struggling most with image and infrastructure concerns that must bid the highest to remain in the high stakes stadium game. Franchise free agency has opened the potential for many cities to make a legitimate bid for a professional franchise, raising the stakes of franchise relocation considerably. With a limited supply of sports franchises available, the virtual monopoly status of the NFL and Major League Baseball can be leveraged
by an owner to obtain the best stadium deal possible.

In cities without franchises, the payoff for attracting a major league franchise is national publicity as a “big league” player and any economic, cultural, and psychological benefits that the region might accrue. Such a scenario encourages cities that hope to obtain a franchise to raise their level of subsidy to a point beyond what may be prudent for a city with an existing NFL franchise. City leaders with franchises in place must make the difficult choice to provide an excessive stadium subsidy to a sports owner or risk the loss of their team to a city without a franchise. It is literally a civic "keep up with the Joneses game" that appears to have had little constraint in recent years. Attempts to regulate this franchise movement with federal legislation have been fruitless. Hearings by the House Judiciary Committee in 1995 shed much light on the issue, but led to no change whatsoever in federal policy on franchise relocation. At best, the hearings pushed the NFL to develop a plan to appease the citizens of Ohio since the departure of Cleveland’s football franchise to Baltimore served to inspire these hearings.

In such market conditions, cities with existing franchises must either ante up, or live with the possibility of being painted as a city in decline in national media coverage when a team leaves a city. Should a city succeed in retaining its franchise, the number of new jobs created are limited to those temporary positions dedicated to new stadium construction unless a long-term strategy is devised that reinvigorates the neighborhood surrounding the stadium. The result is often simply a reshifting of regional spending priorities, rather than a true long-term economic renaissance. Modest increases in regional entertainment revenue might occur, however, if a new stadium is sufficiently unique that it attracts a great deal of visitor interest from sports fans outside of the construction zone’s metropolitan area. Nevertheless, such increases in outside revenue are constrained by the likelihood that enthusiastic ticket purchases by local residents would limit ticket sales for those living outside a metropolitan region’s boundaries. In short, a popular new venue is likely to simply recycle entertainment dollars within a metropolitan area rather than create substantial new economic growth for area citizens. Scholarship that examines the economic implications of stadium construction almost universally support this assessment.
Sources: Chapter One

1. The most recent NFL agreement, signed in 1998 and worth $17.6 billion over eight years, is an example of this enthusiasm. This single agreement represents a greater sum than the total amount spent on every major professional football facility ever built. Network coverage of football games frequently include panoramic views of the city. Aerial shots, provided by a cameraman in a blimp, are absurdly unrelated to the game coverage itself, particularly in cities with domed stadiums, yet these images are profoundly desired by civic leaders. Print coverage in sports pages throughout the country is also a coveted benefit of maintaining a professional sports franchise.


5. Despite active lobbying for a new stadium Seattle Mariners’ legal counsel Bart Waldman made it clear that the team regarded the burden of paying for overruns as one the public should endure. In a letter to the Washington State Major League Baseball Facilities District, the organization responsible for oversight of stadium construction and funding, Waldman argued that “the magnitude of this burden [$100 million overrun]...now exceeds the entire purchase price of the club [and], threatens to undermine the very purpose for which the ballpark was conceived- ensuring the success and competitiveness of baseball in Seattle.” Bruscas, Ibid.


15. Carey, p. 31.


17. For a thorough example of this genre of economic scholarship, see Sheehan, Richard. *Keeping Score: The Economics of Big-Time Sports*. South Bend, IN: Diamond Communications, 1996.


22. Romano, p. 103.

23. Romano states that this facility was constructed in the 2nd Century A.D.E. on page six of his text, but some historians trace the construction of this facility to an earlier date.


26. Paul Veyne. *A History of Private Life: Volume I- From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*. Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1987. p. 107. Because work was frowned upon in Roman aristocratic circles, funding for these projects came from a variety of sources including the expectation of a tribute from middle and lower class subjects in exchange for services or protections. A Roman citizen might, for example, pay a healthy tribute to avoid military conscription. Military missions in colonial outposts might also be undertaken with the intent of
raising funds for civic projects.


31. Accidental high school and collegiate football deaths are chronicled each year in newspapers throughout the country and should not be minimized in any way. Nevertheless, Roman sport seemed to revel in death as evidenced by Laciani’s description of some of the most brutal violence on p. 371. Included in his description are multiple slaughters of humans and animals for perverse entertainment purposes.

32. Guttmann, From Ritual To Record. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. p. 29. Allen Guttmann argues that by 90A.D., “gladiators were almost always slaves rather than citizens, a complete reversal of the Greek view of participation.” With multi-million dollar salaries abundant in professional sports, such a correlation may seem absurd. However, modern-day participation in professional sports is largely passive for the typical citizen. Whether in front of a television or at the stadium, consumption of beer, hot dogs, and nachos are certainly more the norm than active and vigorous exercise.

33. Laciani, p. 379.

34. For a particularly detailed examination of the tensions between amateurism and professionalism in American sport, see Mrozek, Donald. Sport and the American Mentality, 1880-1910. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1983.


42. For a significantly more detailed overview of Progressive Era politics as it related to establishment of ballfields and sports franchises, see Riess, pp. 49-84.


44. This strategy was common during the Progressive Era, but diminished as an effective tactic after World War I. As plans for Yankee Stadium were introduced in the 1920s, some opponents of construction unsuccessfully pushed political leaders to cut a road through the property to prevent completion of the stadium in the neighborhood. For a more detailed examination of political ruthlessness that was part of establishing and/or maintaining a ballpark location, see Reiss, *Touching Base*, pp. 66-75.


46. Taylorism is a science-based management strategy that was developed during the Progressive Era by Frederick Taylor. It involved rationally breaking down production practices so that the highest levels of efficiency were achieved. Prior to implementation of Taylorism on a grand scale in American manufacturing, a greater level of craftsmanship was evident in the workplace. Labor historian David Montgomery has written extensively on this shift in production and its ideological implications for the typical citizen.


48. The Baker Bowl’s questionable reputation as a facility was clearly earned by a lack of rigorous maintenance. Stands from the Baker Bowl collapsed in 1903 and 1927. In 1903, 11 died and over 200 were injured in this unfortunate instance. No deaths were reported in 1927, but a number of serious injuries were reported. See Ritter, Lawrence. *Lost Ballparks*. New York, Viking, 1992. p. 16.


52. Smith, p. 218.


54. For an example of this frequently run promotion see the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. October 4, 1905, p. 15. The Giants beat the Athletics in the series, so the $1,000 was never paid out.


56. Record Breaking Crowd at Opening of Ball Park. *Pittsburgh Post*. July 1, 1909, p. 1. The headline above the newspaper’s collage read “Scenes During Opening-Game at $1,000,000 Forbes Field.”


58. Sullivan, Neil. *The Dodgers Move West*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. p. 97. A variety of modern accounts of the Dodgers’ move to the West Coast, particularly those in the popular press, contain inaccurate or unsubstantiated speculative claims about the significance of this franchise shift. Sullivan’s text provides the most comprehensive, accurate, and detailed historic account of Walter O’Malley’s decision to move his baseball franchise from Brooklyn to Los Angeles in 1957.


60. Buege, p. 61.

61. Michael E. Lomax, University of Georgia, has studied the Continental League and the implications of this failed league for publicly funded major league ballpark construction. Information on his recent research is available at: Lomax, Michael and Amy Armond. “The League That Never Was: Politicians, Local Boosters, and the Rise and Fall of the Continental


64. Yardley, Jim. “Last Innings at a Can-Do Cathedral.” *New York Times*. October 3, 1999, p. 20. Note: both Hofheinz and Klineberg’s remarks were extracted from this article.

65. This point is made in graphic displays that are referred to by tour guides during public tours of the Superdome. The author visited the Superdome for a tour of the facility in August 2000.

66. The giant scoreboard was dismantled in 1988 to make room for more seating and luxury skybox facilities for Oilers Owner Bud Adams. According to Paul Darst, director of Astrodome video productions and scoreboard operations for 28 years, “nobody has come close to matching that scoreboard, and I don’t think anyone ever will.” See: Truex, Allan. “Keeping Score: Dome’s Futuristic Original Scoreboard Was Entertainment in Itself.” *Houston Chronicle*. September 30, 1999, special Astrodome Farewell section.


71. An example of agitated fans responding to Rodriguez’s record-breaking salary can be found at: “Letters: A-Rod’s Big Salary is Case of Sports Bucks ‘Gone Haywire.’” *USA Today*. December 15, 2000, p. 25A.


77. Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Comm'n vs. NFL, 726 F.2d 1381 (9th Cir. 1984); c.d., 105 S. Ct. 397, 1984.


Chapter 2: Literature Review-- The Recent Emergence of Stadium-Related Scholarship

Fifteen years ago scholarship focusing exclusively on stadium-related issues was somewhat rare. Now it is reasonably abundant. In the early years, a limited body of architectural and economic scholarship could be uncovered; but outside of this realm, stadium construction was not generally considered an area worthy of detailed and vigorous scholarly analysis. In general, prior to the 1980s, stadium-related scholarship might be conducted as a one-time project by an economist, a sport historian, an urban planning expert, or a legal scholar. By the 1990s the landscape of stadium-related scholarship had changed, and its availability had increased substantially. Some scholars have committed to stadium-related scholarship as the core of their personal research agenda.

Despite the vast increase in such scholarship, a clear blind spot in this expanding area is a general failure to offer a detailed focus on media and its role in shaping stadium construction policy. Since the decision to build a stadium is often preceded by either a media-intensive citizen referendum or a publicly contested vote by elected officials, careful examination of media coverage is warranted.

The emergence of Baltimore’s Camden Yards as a popular and well-publicized tourist destination served to spur new stadium construction in a number of cities. The dramatic increase in stadium construction pushed urban scholars and policy analysts to examine a variety of issues related to this trend more carefully. Predictably, most of this scholarship focuses on the economic prudence of new stadium construction, with a specific focus on the relative wisdom of taxpayer subsidies for these massive projects. Uncovering tendencies in media coverage was generally of secondary importance in these analyses.

Economic analyses related to stadium construction are among the most thorough and thoughtful examinations of the stadium issue available at this time. The almost universal theme in scholarship of this nature is that new stadium construction can not be justified as a major economic stimulus for a metropolitan area. Despite the clear importance of these analyses, a typical and noteworthy shortcoming of this literature is its inability to capture the broader political landscape and how this political setting involves or excludes the general public. A more media-centered analysis would better clarify the social dimension of the stadium issue in a manner that is unlikely to be achieved in economic analysis.
The Brookings Institution effort of 1997, edited by Roger Noll and Andrew Zimbalist, provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of the many complexities of the stadium construction issue within the framework of economic analysis. A variety of economists, each with different areas of expertise, offer a range of theories about why stadium construction continues at such a rapid pace in light of its poor economic return on investment.

Robert Baade and Allen Sanderson argue that the impact of new sports facilities to spur job creation is highly exaggerated and largely skewed by a number of questionable assumptions that are often part of the economic feasibility studies. These studies are generally conducted by individuals lobbying for stadium construction. They indicate that the economic impact of sports teams are significantly less impressive than highly publicized feasibility studies suggest since sports-related spending tends to “realign economic activity within a city’s leisure industry rather than adding to it.” They compare Alabama’s highly publicized subsidy to Mercedes Benz in 1993 at about $200,000 per job to the taxpayer cost for stadium construction subsidies. In a most extreme case, they utilize employment projections provided by an Arizona Office of Sports and Development study to estimate the average subsidy for constructing a Phoenix baseball stadium exceeded $705,000 per full-time job. These projections were independently prepared by Deloitte and Touche for the Arizona agency. Nevertheless, there is little reason to believe they would underestimate figures since it is in their client’s interest to establish the most appealing job creation numbers possible.

Dennis Zimmerman suggests that the current system of stadium finance has been "made worse" by existing federal legislation aimed at stemming the tide of federal stadium construction subsidies. These subsidies can take many forms, but are primarily the result of federal policy that allows for tax-free funding of municipal projects of this type. He suggests that in the absence of changes, a greater percentage of stadium construction costs should be shifted to those enjoying activities emanating from the facilities in the form of personal seat licences, higher ticket prices, and taxes on broadcasting fees.

Rodney Fort offers the "setter" model as a tool for understanding how owners are able to lobby communities successfully for more lavish stadium facilities than might be reasonable in a more competitive economic marketplace. Instead of regarding the decision to fund construction as a simple “voter preference” issue, Fort’s model creates a scale of various policy options...
ranging from a worst case scenario of “no team” to a desired outcome of many owners, construction of a lavish “Taj Mahal” at taxpayer’s expense. According to Fort, sports franchise owners often have the ability to “obtain more spending than the median voter prefers by making the reversion outcome highly undesirable.” Fort describes the “no team” scenario as the “reversion outcome” that allows team owners to leverage their bargaining position more heavily than might be possible under normal circumstances.

The Brookings Institution effort also offers several city-specific case studies. The focus of these case studies is largely economic, with attempts to understand media coverage generally unexamined. Brief references to media spending disparity ratios, the differential between media spending to obtain stadium subsidies and media expenditures by anti-subsidy coalitions, that heavily favor pro-stadium lobbyists, periodic inclusion of case-study events that received media attention, and vague references to the public susceptibility to political advertising appeals provide some recognition that these authors are aware of the potential for media influence with this issue. One of the more comprehensive attempts to address the media dimension of stadium funding, John Blair and David Swindell’s overview of the Cincinnati referendum, devotes three pages to the Cincinnati media campaign that resulted in a 61.4 percent election day victory for pro-stadium advocates. Although media analysis is limited in this study, the authors conclude that the public was hampered by superficial coverage of economic studies that served as a basis for pro-stadium arguments. They concluded that “sound bite” journalism severely limited the public’s ability to fully understand the issue.

James Quirk and Rodney Fort offer two analyses of the stadium issue. The first effort, published in 1992, provides somewhat comprehensive economic and historic analyses of stadium construction. Their second work, published in 1999, contains considerably less data, but is significantly more critical in tone. The harsh tone of their most recent effort, aimed primarily at team owners, league officials, and political leaders, suggests that these authors believe that the current direction of professional sports management has worsened and requires a major overhaul.

In their initial collaborative effort, Quirk and Fort examine historical trends in stadium construction, isolating three eras of stadium construction. The first begins in 1909 with the construction of concrete ballparks such as Philadelphia’s Shibe Park and Pittsburgh’s Forbes
Field. The second is ushered in by direct municipal support for stadium construction beginning in the 1950s with the construction of Milwaukee County Stadium as a means of enticing a major league franchise to abandon an existing market. Although the Boston Braves were not generally missed in New England, the knowledge that franchise free agency was an available option for team owners served to fuel community subsidy, eventually leading to highly publicized franchise shifts from New York to Los Angeles and San Francisco. They delineate the third era as the current period, in which cities, counties, and states often combine resources either to entice franchise movement or to retain an existing franchise.

They conclude that construction spending costs, when adjusted for inflation, have increased by a significant margin over time from the first era to the second, but that construction costs from the 1960s to the late 1980s have generally kept pace with inflation. Also significant in their analysis is an overview of rental, parking, and concession agreements. The comparative data, while helpful, is gathered too early for the researchers to note the emerging increase in subsidy level for newly constructed stadia. These authors admit that some of their figures are based on educated speculation for several reasons. They state that "financial data on stadium operations are scattered, even for those stadiums that are publicly owned, and for a number of publicly owned stadiums and arenas, no published data are available." Their attempt to fill in gaps by administering a survey resulted in a response rate of about one half. Of those responding, “half refused to divulge information on the grounds of confidentiality.”

In their most recent effort, entitled *Hard Ball: The Abuse of Power in Pro Team Sports*, Rodney Quirk and James Fort spend less energy tracking detailed stadium-related data and more time attempting to diagnose problems that have emerged since their first analysis of stadium subsidies. The authors recognize the dramatic increases in stadium subsidy between 1992, when their first book was released, and 1999, the year of their second text. As such, they offer considerably more emotion with their evidence as they argue against taxpayer subsidized stadium construction. They offer Seattle as a case study. In this example, voter rejection was overturned by legislative maneuvering in order to construct a lavish new ballpark for the Seattle Mariners to replace the Kingdome, a taxpayer-funded facility that was a mere 20 years old at the time of the
vote. Despite considerable taxpayer subsidy of the new ballpark, Mariner ticket prices have more than doubled.

Quirk and Fort argue that Seattle’s long-range agreement to permit the taxpayers to share ten percent of the team’s operating profits is absurdly misguided, though it may reduce the vocal objections of some taxpayers. The rationale for this argument is that the State of Washington has no control over the team’s accounting policies. The team can artificially eliminate profits at any time through perfectly legal tactics, including the provision of selected benefits or through direct payment of bonuses to owners, players, or major executives.

The authors provide another example of misguided government policy as they demonstrate the foolishness of an agreement that subsidizes the San Diego Chargers for unsold tickets in a manner that makes it more profitable to leave seats empty than to make an attempt to sell them. Not surprisingly, this franchise has fielded losing teams since 1997, the year prior to establishment of this agreement. Various managerial changes occurred after the 2000 season, a season in which the team posted the worst record of any NFL franchise; but unless capital appreciation is desired, this particular franchise has no financial incentive to improve its performance on the field.

Legislative documentation is also extremely helpful in understanding the range of issues that are part of stadium construction decision-making process within a community. The text of House Judiciary testimony on February 6, 1996 focuses on professional sports franchise relocation, but a great deal of the testimony centers on analysis of the economic and emotional impact of stadium construction that has been undertaken as a result of either sports franchise relocation or efforts to fend off franchise relocation. The text of these hearings include testimony from major league sports executives, political officials at the local and national levels, lawyers, scholars, and, believe it or not, a single rabid sports fan who garnered national attention for wearing a dog costume on game days. The diversity of viewpoints serves to complicate the analysis, but this range provides a more objective overview of how stadium construction impacts sports management decisions in various communities.

The Judiciary Committee testimony of many scholars cite the "monopoly" status of sports leagues as a rationale for legislative action. University of Illinois' Stephen Ross advised that confrontation of the stadium issue lies at the core of national trends in sports franchise relocation.
In examining the economics of the National Football League (NFL), he concluded that "for many years now the principal difference between the most profitable and least profitable franchises was not the quality of the organization or the team but the success of the team owner in negotiating a lucrative stadium deal." The NFL offered a carefully worded statement which leads with an argument that potential legislation on franchise relocation could "have the effect of locking a team into its current facility with the threat of potentially ruinous financial penalties." The statement further argues that claims of the monopoly status of football are specious since the NFL "competes in a broad sports and entertainment market with a variety of other producers." As part of the Congressional Record, the league also stated that one purpose of its managerial structure "of separately owned and managed teams is to enhance public confidence in the integrity of the athletic competition within the league." Many individuals have countered that community-based ownership strategies might achieve the same objective while limiting the potential for the type of franchise movement that has served as a key stimulus for the recent taxpayer-subsidized nationwide stadium construction boom.

The uncertain and tenuous position of communities in the decision to build stadia has sparked several recent scholarly efforts that are aimed at educating the public about the various issues related to modern sports management tactics. Michael Danielson argues that owners’ attempts to play community against community as a means of maximizing revenue has resulted in a weakening of ties between the sports franchise and its host community. While he does not argue directly that the eventual result of such weakening might be long-range diminished support for the sports franchise, it is logical to assume that such a scenario is possible.

Danielson’s detailed critique includes a full chapter on the stadium construction issue. While admitting that the recent boom in stadium construction is worthy of careful examination, he is quick to point out that subsidies have fueled sports franchise relocations well before the stadium construction boom of the 1990s. In one example, Danielson mentions the sweetheart deal between the city of Los Angeles and the O'Malley family to provide land for the construction of Dodger Stadium at Chavez Ravine in the late 1950s. Nevertheless, Danielson concludes that the problem of community-based stadium subsidy has worsened substantially in recent years. He closes his study with the ominous claim that communities "will remain very limited partners of professional sports, building most of the arenas and stadiums, paying more
and more of the capital costs, and being frozen out of decisions, profits and equity shares."^{18}

Charles Euchner argues that cities have been weakened by demographic shifts to the suburbs, making them more vulnerable to the threats by team owners to move outside of the city limits. Despite the admitted negotiating strength of sports franchise owners, he states that "imaginative and skilled politicians with public support are able to strike better deals than more ordinary politicians."^{19} Echoing the sentiments of Progressive Era ideology, he concludes that a national approach to urban policy would improve matters because "the cannibalistic struggles for sports franchises undermine the prospects for nationwide prosperity and security."^{20} Euchner’s obvious dedication to this topic, as reflected in this quotation, generally ascribes too much importance to stadium construction as an overarching national economic issue.

Recent examination of the stadium issue from the vantage point of journalists has also added to the richness of literature in this field. Ironically, these critiques do not generally take a close look at the role of media involvement in this issue. Joanna Cagan and Neil deMause offer a decidedly critical examination of the issue. They vociferously attack the present system of financing sports stadia, arguing that "the effective blackmail that professional teams wield over cities is not good, not correct, and it is not eternal."^{21} They suggest that the media serve a role as educators since "more newspaper and magazine articles are written exposing the stadium swindle, while fewer people now take seriously the argument that funding sports stadiums is good business for city governments."^{22}

Ed Fowler, a Houston Chronicle sportswriter, provides a single team case study, examining events leading to the Houston Oilers' move to Tennessee after team owner Bud Adams was unable to extract an agreement to construct a new stadium from taxpayers in the Houston metropolitan area. His text focuses much of its energies on the idiosyncrasies of Adams and the activity of rival owners, so the stadium issue is sometimes placed in the background. Despite this tendency, Fowler’s account places the stadium issue at the core of the Oilers' departure from Houston. He asserts that Bud Adams "extorted a $67 million Astrodome redo [ie: renovation] with a threat to leave town and, long before his lease was up, began screaming for tax dollars for an entirely new building."^{23}

Literature aimed at a general chronicle of stadium construction in specific cities offers a comparative base for the case study methods relative to this issue. Among the more useful
examples is Peter Richmond's coverage of Baltimore's construction of Camden Yards. He offers a comprehensive overview of the various factors that are part of the immense task of constructing a new sports facility. The concept of a ballpark that was intended to echo the past emanated primarily because of media coverage of public input. The original plan to integrate an aging railroad warehouse into an old-fashioned overall stadium design was forwarded by Eric Moss, an architecture student at Syracuse University. Positive press coverage of Moss’ design proposals resulted in revised architectural plans from the large construction firms bidding on the Camden Yards project. If left to professional architects, it is likely that the overall design of this trendsetting ballpark would have been substantially less unique.24

The historic approach of Stephen Riess offers a case study framework that is extremely insightful. In *Touching Base*, the commercially published version of his doctoral dissertation, Riess traces the political and social dimensions of baseball during the first major period of stadium construction in the United States.25 His study examines New York, Chicago, and Atlanta, offering a wide array of historical data which show the link between political forces and those involved in creation of the physical infrastructure of professional sport in the early years of the twentieth century. Riess argues that Progressive Era stadium construction was politicized in many ways, with graft and political favor evident as a residual by-product. Nevertheless, sport, particularly baseball, was viewed ideologically as something that "stood for fair play, individualism, and community pride."26

One key value of Riess' work is that it shows the early years of commercialized sport, offering a point of comparison with today's environment. In the Progressive Era, politicians had much greater control over team owners, often dictating the terms necessary for a franchise to locate within the city limits. His work also serves to explain how today's often accepted ideology of sport as a positive force in community development was formed. These insights are critical to the understanding the origins of many arguments that are part of the current political landscape when the stadium construction issue emerges in specific communities.

Although not dedicated to the stadium issue in a specific sense, Ronald Smith's examination of collegiate sports in the years predating much of Riess' focus serves to illuminate the emergence of a "commercialized, professionalized, and rationalized" system of athletics that has helped to shape the current sports landscape today.27 The early years of Ivy League football
helped, in many ways, to provide a foundation for the symbolic institutional importance of sport to a given community. Many institutions' emulation of the Harvard-Yale sports management model led to a wider acceptance of an ideology which emphasizes the somewhat illogical correlation between winning on the field of sport and winning in a significantly broader communal sense. Smith concludes that Harvard's national leadership role in establishing endowed professorships in the Progressive Era "was no less important, only less well known, than that it had built the first concrete stadium in America." In the same vein, the athletic achievements of professional sports teams often overshadow the civic accomplishments of America’s great cities in national press coverage. Nationally distributed photos and video images of sports teams’ parades after winning a championship are an example of such publicity. The coverage of such celebrations on CNN, ESPN, and in local news outlets throughout the nation can be sharply contrasted to the relative lack of coverage afforded to programs that might successfully combat a particular city’s poverty or crime. Mayors and governors are tempted by the same pressures that haunt college presidents when priorities of athletic subsidy and more traditional expenditures are debated.

Of lesser importance, but helpful in some regard, is popular literature aimed at providing generic information about individual stadium history. Many of these analyses focus on specific stadiums or ballparks and are written by individuals with specific emotional ties to the city under observation. Some of these publications are efforts to put a particular community in a highly positive light for making the decision to construct a major league sports facility. Michael McKenzie’s *Arrowhead: Home of the Chiefs* is a clear example of this genre. While more balanced and sophisticated in its approach to the politics of stadium building, Marty Mule’s *Superdome: Thirteen Acres that Changed New Orleans* also fits into this genre. McKenzie offers glowing praises to those responsible for building Kansas City’s Arrowhead Stadium, while Mule tends to lionize the architects of the New Orleans Superdome as “intense visionaries.” Dozens of books have been written about individual stadiums and ballparks. Overall, the appeal of these books is local, but the utility of these texts to a scholar of this issue is that they convey the sense of reverence that many have for the local stadium or ballpark.

These texts remind us that many citizens perceive these structures to be much more than impersonal brick and mortar. The local ballpark can help to shape collective community
memories and sports-related myths in ways that would not be possible in other community structures. These works are a vivid reminder of Sharon Zukin’s assertion that “culture is more and more the business of cities.” In constructing stadiums, cities become repositories for cultural events that have the potential to shape how a given community feels about itself. Although limited in many regards, these localized works help to balance the less personal economic analysis that tends to drive stadium-related scholarship.

Clearly, most recent stadium-related studies focus on the overall economics of stadium construction. As such, examination of media content is of less concern to the authors of these works. Nevertheless, some do provide speculation or opinion on the nature and direction of media coverage. Marc Rosentraub, for example, argues that media coverage of stadium issues tend to favor sports franchise owners due to the ability of sports coverage to bring a desired demographic to a given medium. As a result, he suggests that politicians "may be very receptive to supporting sports issues if it means favorable exposure [for them] in the media." Charles Euchener offers another media related hypothesis regarding stadium issue coverage, one that argues that "the local media tend to be 'boosterish' toward the local team because of the glow of major league status that they receive from their association with the team."

These propositions are not explored in a highly rigorous manner, however, because examination of media coverage is secondary to the overall mission of these respective authors. Despite the general focus on economics, these efforts are limited by various factors. Among the most significant are limited access to financial records of privately held sports franchises and the lack of consistency in reporting methodologies. Because of the wide divergence of accounting methodologies, one baseball executive confidently reported that one accountant’s claim of a $2 million profit could be legally reported as a $2 million loss. The economic research of scholars such as Richard Sheehan brings some clarity to economic observations in sports. Sheehan uses a variety of investigative tools to uncover approximate revenue levels for professional sports institutions. Nevertheless, limited access and limited knowledge of accounting practices and procedures continues to hurt the ability of journalists to report adequately on stadium subsidies and many other aspects of sports management.

George Sage's examination of Denver's decision to construct a baseball stadium is a rare study that focuses specifically on media coverage in a detailed way. This study is written from a
critical-cultural perspective. Sage argues that media coverage is skewed to favor those civic leaders committed to support of new stadium construction. Despite its many merits, it does not attempt to validate the overall nature of media content and its potential impact on the public in a specific and quantifiable way. No published study to date has undertaken this task. This is a key reason that a content analysis of media content and careful examination of public opinion data are key elements of the proposed study.

Jose Fransico Marichal’s unpublished Master of Arts thesis, conducted at Florida Atlantic University in 1995, provides some quantitative analysis of media coverage as it relates to stadium construction. Marichal balances urban studies with media theory, grounding his media-related analysis in agenda setting theory. His content analysis of news coverage reveals that pro-stadium coverage outpaced anti-stadium arguments by a 14.5 percent margin, while community actors comprised a mere 9 percent of individuals quoted in articles. The disparity in larger metropolitan areas was more profound, with community actors receiving only 5 percent representation in cities with populations of over three million people. Marichal concludes that newspaper coverage contains “a dangerous over-reliance on institutional actors.”

Application of Marichal’s work to current reporting routines is constrained by two factors. First, his research was obtained from a database that spans from 1982 to 1990, a period when stadium construction was visible but not as pervasive as the mid and late 1990s. Second, it is likely that pro-stadium voices are more prevalent than his research suggests. He appears to categorize public officials calling for stadium renovation as anti-stadium construction. This is understandable for the period selected, yet it is likely with new construction generally replacing renovation by 1991 that the measurement of pro-stadium voices would be more profound today.

Jay Weiner’s analysis of Minnesota stadium construction history offers a detailed analysis of media involvement in this particular case study. Weiner’s detailed background of the construction of Minnesota’s Metrodome shows that press influence played a part in the public subsidy process. John Cowles, Jr. was an active supporter of the decision to build this new indoor facility. He also served as chairman of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company, described by Weiner as “the region’s most powerful media outlet and opinion maker.” Cowles presided over a local newspaper with editorial positions supporting new stadium construction; but certain vagaries of the Twin Cities market challenged the credibility of such endorsements. First, a grass
roots “Green Fan” movement led by Philadelphia transplant Jullian Empson caused emotional citizen opposition to the entire idea of an indoor stadium.\textsuperscript{38} Second, an independent core of media practitioners may have attempted to offset the enthusiastic boosterism of \textit{Star Tribune} management.

Weiner cites an act of journalistic muscle flexing when on March 1, 1979, 45 writers and editors collectively paid to run an advertisement that expressed uneasiness with their boss’s active support of this issue. Cowles allowed the advertisement to run, but this decision may have been colored by approval of stadium construction in Minneapolis days earlier. The advertisement assured readers that “our professional principles have not been undermined by Cowles’ involvement in the stadium issue....But to prevent even the appearance of such a conflict of interest, we believe management should avoid a leadership role in sensitive political and economic issues.”\textsuperscript{39} Weiner served as a \textit{Star Tribune} reporter during the political infighting over Metrodome construction. Such closeness to the situation offers the potential for inside information that may not otherwise be available, but it may also serve to cloud Weiner’s judgment about the significance of the newspaper staff’s efforts to challenge their publisher.

Despite tangible contributions to stadium construction literature from a number of media practitioners, no specific coverage tendency emerges. Joanna Cagan and Neil deMause argue that stadium coverage helps to educate the public in a beneficial manner.\textsuperscript{40} Jay Weiner and Ed Fowler offer a more mixed analysis. Fowler suggests that the public relation machines of major league sports teams have the capacity to strongly influence media coverage of stadium construction issues. Weiner argues that media management may tend to favor stadium construction, but tension created by the public and journalism practitioners creates an environment that has the potential to alter the eventual outcome of such policy decisions.

Careful, detailed, and systematic examination of specific case studies will serve to offer a more complete picture of how media coverage is integrated into this highly complex policy debate. Since the research provided in this literature review tends to assume that news coverage is skewed to favor new stadium construction, systematic exploration of media coverage tendencies is important and necessary. If further examination uncovers media coverage that is skewed in the anticipated pro-construction direction, the general observations of previous stadium-oriented scholarship would be accurate. If such media-related hypotheses are refuted, the
research offered in this work would reveal a flaw in prior stadium-related research. Either finding would benefit the future of scholarship in this important area.

The Feasibility of Economic Arguments for New Stadium Construction

In recent decades urban studies scholars have struggled with the declining influence of cities as more affluent residents and selected corporations establish residence in outlying suburbs. In *City Limits*, Paul Peterson argues that cities are systematically weakened in regional and national competition for jobs, taxpayers, and resources. He indicates that such intercity competition creates an unhealthy “growth machine” model that systematically encourages projects aimed at growth while diverting concerns for social services to the back burner. His solution to the crisis is somewhat counterintuitive; he calls for greater federal subsidy of social welfare programs that would improve the quality of life in the city, with a reduction in funding levels as a region’s economy improves. The inherent logic is that the reduction in subsidies would limit incentives for civic leaders to heavily subsidize new businesses as a means of attracting firms from outside the region. Although he fails to mention stadium construction in his text, his suggestion that inter-city competition can frequently inspire counterproductive policy decisions at the local level merits careful examination. 41

Comparison of stadium construction policy in a broad range of areas offers some evidence that new construction is economically counterproductive for local communities. The decision to construct new stadia in many metropolitan areas is most recently driven by fear of franchise relocation rather than an actual need for new facilities. Simply put, political leaders in major metropolitan areas must furnish professional sports franchises with excessive subsidies and increasingly attractive venues or risk losing them to more aggressive competing metropolitan areas. Increasingly, political concessions aimed at sports franchise owners have moved beyond a game of what economists call diminishing marginal returns to become a game of negative economic returns. When the fear of franchise departure is taken out of the equation, a more rational economic decision can be made regarding stadium construction policy. In such cases, renovation is more often a better policy decision than new facility construction.

Big-time college football offers a comparative model that supports such an assertion. The emergence of professional sports has guided much of the sports construction policy in the twentieth century, but, historically, big-time collegiate sports was responsible for much of the
commercialization and rationalization that has fostered the emergence of professional sports. Long before the NFL was a major entertainment option for Americans, the collegiate game was considered an outstanding commercial product. As late as the early 1960s, many leaders in sports media considered the college game a superior product. Pondering the football landscape in the late 1950s, CBS Sports Vice-President Bill MacPhail argued, “back then I would have preferred to have college football....I thought the color and the rah-rah...school spirit thing had it all over the pros.” MacPhail admitted that he was wrong as the 1960s unfolded and the NFL emerged as a more popular programing option, yet college sports still have a wide following and are certainly an important element of current network sports programming.42

With the exception of player salaries, big-time collegiate athletics are managed in a manner that closely parallels the professional model. In some of the most popular university venues, ticket prices correlate with prices paid at professional football games, although perennial losers must understandably offer tickets at a lower price to attract fans. The University of Michigan’s single game ticket prices for the 2001 season have been set at $51, $47, and $43, with season ticket packages established at $47, $43, and $39, depending on the location of the seats.43 These reported prices do not include booster club donations which may also be required to obtain seating in some sections. After booster club expenses are factored into the equation, Pennsylvania State University’s newly established end zone club seating prices average $257.50 per game.44 The cost per game is in the same range as a current NFL ticket holder required to purchase a personal seat license and spread such a payment over a two to four year period. NFL ticket averages in 2000 were $47.69 per game. Major League Baseball, with many more games scheduled, averages $18.99 per game for the 2001 season.45

Major college conferences and the NCAA work diligently to maximize television revenues in a manner that parallels what is being done in professional sports administration. The most significant difference between big-time collegiate sports and the professional model is that the university does not have the capacity to threaten franchise relocation, a most powerful negotiating advantage when seeking construction subsidy from community leaders. In short, university administrators must determine what course of action is most prudent based on economic factors, rather than from a weak negotiating position with an unpredictable team owner.
In most cases, major universities chose to renovate old stadia rather than build an entirely new facility. At the collegiate level empirical evidence is overwhelming that new construction is severely limited because the threat of team relocation is eliminated. In an examination of seven of college football’s most successful athletic conferences, the average stadium was 58 years old, with the average date of initial construction set at 1942 (see table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference (alphabetical):</th>
<th>Number of teams:</th>
<th>Oldest:</th>
<th>Newest:</th>
<th>Average:</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big East</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Ten</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Twelve</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1936</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pac Ten</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>1939</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeastern Conference</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1935</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Average:** 1942

*Data Sources: Munsey & Suppes/selected University web sites, December 1999*

Universities throughout the nation have not abandoned stadium construction entirely, however. Many major universities have plans for renovation on the table or have completed some form of major stadium renovation in the last decade. New football stadium construction at the major university is not widespread. At the University of Pittsburgh (Big East), plans were completed in 2001, which allowed the team to play in a newly constructed facility that is shared with the Pittsburgh Steelers, a professional team. Averaging this new construction project into the above totals would reduce the average age of these university facilities by slightly more than a year. If the entire Big East decided to fund new stadium construction for all member institutions, the average university stadium at the 70 universities in the conferences listed above would still be more than 50 years old, ancient by the standards of professional football.

Some urban universities may be limited in site availability, but big-time college football is comprised of a high number of land grant and rural institutions that could maneuver new land for stadium construction with considerably less restriction and cost than a typical professional football franchise. In such an environment, new stadium construction would be selected if such a path were more economically beneficial for the university. Even the most expensive university-
level renovations are cheaper than new construction at the professional level.

Almost all university stadium renovation projects have been estimated to cost less than $100 million, approximately one-third the cost of a low-priced professional football stadium project. Even the most lavish university renovations are cheaper than the least expensive newly constructed professional venues. Ohio State University’s very extravagant $187 million stadium renovation is currently the most expensive university-owned project of its kind in North America, yet this extensive renovation is at least $25 million cheaper than the least expensive professional football stadium under current consideration. Simply put, without a major taxpayer subsidy, new construction is generally a less prudent course of action even when athlete salaries fail to depress bottom-line profits.

League officials have struggled with public resistance to maximize taxpayer stadium subsidies, fighting hard to keep calls for renovation off the public policy agenda. After all, if several teams could simply renovate at a lower cost and remain highly competitive, it would hurt the overall capacity of a professional sports league to extract windfall taxpayer subsidies that primarily benefit the bottom line of franchise owners. Additionally, new construction often affords the benefit of a newly renegotiated lease agreements, providing owners with a convenient means of escape from less than desirable long-term leases. Some of the newer leases give team owners a greater percentage of concessions, skybox revenues, and other benefits that may not be available in an older stadium lease.

Green Bay’s public ownership of the Packer franchise is a particularly troubling case study for some of the NFL’s most powerful executives. Because the Packers are owned by a limited number of citizens in Green Bay who serve as “shareholders,” the possibility of franchise relocation could not be used as leverage to extract taxpayer support for stadium-related construction. This is an ownership structure that has been prohibited by the league in subsequent NFL franchise agreements, in part, to prevent community-owned teams from limiting profitability for individual owners.

The founders of the Packer franchise were immensely prudent in their ability to prevent franchise relocation or sale of the team by profit-thirsty taxpayers or shareholders. To prevent departure from Green Bay, the bylaws of the team stipulate that any proceeds generated from the sale of the team would become property of the local American Legion Post. In essence, the
shareholders of Packer stock would receive no direct benefits as a result of any attempt to liquidate the franchise. When the bylaws were drawn up in the 1920s, however, no one ever conceived that an NFL franchise might be worth more than $600 million dollars.

In recent years, NFL owners have had to deal with the uncomfortable knowledge that Green Bay’s public ownership formula could be raised each time that an owner threatened to move the franchise unless a new stadium was built. A 1998 policy analysis by Joseph Bast of the Heartland Institute, a public policy think tank, offers a credible reason why this public ownership formula might be a dramatic concern to owners. According to Bast, “the franchise is the least subsidized sports team in the country because its ownership by fans makes it unable to credibly threaten to relocate. The results have been good for the host city, the fans, and the team.”

If this type of analysis was restricted to think tank reports with a rather limited public circulation, owners might not be particularly concerned about the Green Bay Packers ownership model. But the public has turned to the Green Bay’s community-based model as an example of how sports might be restructured in other communities. Sportswriters and knowledgeable fans have frequently cited the Green Bay Packers as an example of how professional sports should be managed in America. In a best-selling book intended to detail the many problems of professional sports, Mike Lupica waxes poetic about the beauty of Green Bay’s public management approach, suggesting that “when an owner does put a team up for sale in this country, in any sport, the first thing he must do is make a public offering.” Presumably, such an offering would allow a community to purchase the team. Sportswriter Paul Glauber demonstrates similar enthusiasm about the Packers’ model, ranking the team’s fans absolute best in the NFL. Glauber gushes that the enthusiastic support of this “city of less than 100,000 [for the Packers]...remains one of the most compelling stories in pro sports.”

Green Bay’s stadium, built in 1957, is very old by NFL standards. Yet it is still considered a serviceable facility for viewing football. In a Sporting News cover story, Paul Attner argues that “for a real football fan, this [Green Bay’s Lambeau Field] is Mecca.” Sports Illustrated’s Richard Hoffer similarly placed Lambeau Field ahead of all other NFL venues in a ranking of twentieth century sports facilities. It is not surprising that the marketing success of the Packers in Lambeau Field, a somewhat run down NFL venue, might be an irritant to NFL owners in newer, more pristine venues. After all, the success of the Packers might be regarded as
clear evidence that massive stadium subsidies are not necessary for professional sports to survive in the United States. Furthermore, a $50 to $100 million college-sized renovation project might send the wrong message for future professional stadium projects.

As a result, after debating the need for a new stadium, the Packers President Bob Harlan, with the full support and backing of the NFL, spearheaded a campaign to obtain public financing for a $295 million renovation of Lambeau Field. The total amount of this proposed project exceeds the most extravagant college renovation project by over $100 million and is more expensive than at least three brand new NFL stadium construction projects. The Packers have proposed a $160 million taxpayer subsidy, with $92.5 million of the remaining funds to come from a one-time $1,400 assessment on season ticket holders and $20.4 million to be acquired through the sale of non-voting stock in the football franchise. In brief, $272.9 million, or over 92.5 percent of the total cost, will be directly paid by the public in one way or another. The remaining 7.5 percent will likely be paid in higher ticket prices once the facility is completed.

Better locker room and training facilities could benefit the franchise in luring free agent players, but a number of items in the proposal have little to do with football operations. The plans call for the addition of an expansive, five-level atrium, an expanded Packer Hall of Fame facility, additional rest room facilities, 12,000 feet of space for two retail shops, expanded skyboxes, new indoor club seating, and an addition of 8,000 to the overall seating capacity of the stadium.

Although impossible to determine how much influence the NFL exerted to push this project forward, evidence suggests that the NFL is elated to see this particular project moving ahead. First, information regarding the proposed project has been prominently displayed on the NFL’s web site, including a May 10, 2000 release inviting the public to a Lambeau Field ceremony where Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson would sign a bill authorizing a referendum vote to fund $160 million in construction costs through a 0.5 percent Brown County sales tax. According to this news release, a “family-day atmosphere” would “celebrate” the event, with free parking, free admission, and full access to the Packer Hall of Fame as part of the package.

A second indicator of strong league support for the project can be found in the relative silence of NFL officials as veiled threats were published regarding the future of the Packers in
Green Bay if this extensive renovation project was rejected by voters. Even though the team’s bylaws stipulate that the Packers franchise can not be sold, hence could not be moved out of Wisconsin, rumors that the NFL might eventually close down the franchise, if proved unprofitable, began circulating in early 2000. At the end of February, such talk earned the imprimatur of Packer management. They actively used this as bargaining leverage in official public pronouncements.

According to Packer President Bob Harlan, if the voters failed to ante up for this major renovation project, bankruptcy of the Packer franchise might ensue. According to this scenario, Harlan suggests “the board of directors could decide to liquidate the franchise.” Harlan further argues that after completion of this “liquidation,” the league could step forward and grant a new expansion franchise to the significantly larger and presumably more profitable Los Angeles market. Although the NFL’s generous revenue sharing formula makes such a series of events unlikely, league officials failed to comment on Harlan’s doomsday scenario. Understandably, because the taxpayers of Wisconsin would ultimately subsidize the future revenue growth of the Packers, while eliminating a major argument that community ownership offers an avenue to restrict excessive stadium subsidy, it was not in the interest of the league to comment or clarify. One final indicator that the Packer plan was strongly supported by the NFL are pronouncements from team sources that some of the project funding may come from low-interest NFL sponsored loans. It is anticipated that at least $13 million will emanate from this source.

With NFL backing and veiled threats of team dissolution, the Packers were able to obtain public approval for a half-cent sales tax levy to fund their stadium project. Despite the consistently loyal support of Packer fans prior to the September 12, 2000 vote, the measure passed with only 53 percent support. On the Sunday before the referendum, a number of people campaigned against the measure, bringing “Vote No” signs into Lambeau Field on game day. The voters turned down a secondary referendum question which would have allocated “excess sales tax funds to pay for essential city services.” The political action committee dedicated to passage of the stadium referendum reported spending over $420,000 through late August to assure passage of the measure. According to the Green Bay News-Chronicle, “the bulk of the expenditures were for voter research and broadcast advertising.”

The $295 million Packer renovation model is less a reflection of the type of cost savings
that can be achieved at the university level and more an artifact of excessive subsidies which are often readily available to professional sports franchises. Packer executives have capitalized on the rabid emotional support of local residents to seek approval for extravagant amenities that would not be normally integrated into a university stadium renovation. Unless a stadium has severe structural deficiencies, it is likely that renovation is a more cost effective option than new construction, particularly in football, where facility usage is generally limited to less than a dozen games a year even when home playoff games are factored into the schedule. Taxpayer and season ticketholder subsidies in the form of personal seat licences (PSLs) skew traditional free market economics so that franchise owners are encouraged to build new facilities rather than renovate existing venues.

If such an assertion is true, why do selected franchise owners chose to build their own brand new facilities when heavy subsidies are largely unavailable? With lucrative taxpayer subsidy, such private financing schemes are less common today. Nevertheless, the decision to privately build is partly driven by ego, but is also influenced by capital appreciation of franchise value, as well as generous infrastructure subsidies that are often extended to team owners by key political leaders. These subsidies save owners millions of dollars and can include significant public resources for road construction, land, parking lot paving, and site preparation. Among the most recent sports franchise owner to finance a new stadium privately was Jack Kent Cooke, whose new stadium was opened for the Washington Redskins in 1997.

The aging Cooke passed away as stadium construction was nearing completion. Although he did not enjoy the new facility during his lifetime, the value of his estate increased immensely from the construction, revealing precisely why some owners would self-fund a higher percentage of new stadium construction if government subsidies were withdrawn or otherwise unavailable. Cooke acquired sole ownership of the franchise for approximately $15 million, purchasing 25 percent in 1960 for $350,000 and the balance through a series of purchases that were completed by 1979. In 1999, sale of the team was finalized to settle Cooke’s estate in a transaction totaling $800 million. In an ironic testimony to the transitory nature of “empire building” in the sports industry, after the sale of the franchise, Jack Kent Cooke Stadium was renamed FedEx Field in a multimillion dollar naming rights agreement. The official press release announcing the deal with FedEx failed to even mention Cooke’s name. Nevertheless, Cooke did not entirely bankroll the
project. In fact, the State of Maryland provided a $70 million subsidy to the project, skirting the
direct stadium subsidy issue by allocating these funds for infrastructure and road work in the area
that surrounded the stadium construction site.

San Francisco offers yet another reason for private financing of a new sports facility. A
clear lack of support for public subsidy for a new ballpark, as voiced in four failed referenda, was
partially offset by political maneuvering that resulted in land subsidies and tax abatements for
new stadium construction. In addition, a vibrant regional economy and highly creative
management approaches resulted in extraction of revenues from an array of sources to help pay
for a variety of construction costs. High-profile advertising, ballpark naming rights, and sale of
seat licenses were just a few of the avenues utilized to raise funds for private construction.
Twenty million dollars was raised simply by placing an 80 foot tall Coke bottle in a prominent
location in the ballpark outfield, $50 million was raised through a naming rights agreement with
Pacific Bell, a prominent West Coast phone service provider, and $60 million was raised by
selling personal seat licences for access to the best seats in the ballpark. Despite a number of
problems with California power generation, Giants management also negotiated a favorable long-
term energy deal with Enron, a power company hoping to raise its corporate profile in the wake
of energy deregulation. The Giants were also successful in extracting fees from Chevron, a
petroleum company, for the rights to sell ballpark tickets at its Bay Area gas stations. Chevron
hoped to profit from more customer traffic and further hoped to boost convenience product sales
as a result of the deal.

Although unable to fully fund the ballpark through creative strategies, Giants owner Peter
Magowan demonstrated that even in urban areas where high construction costs are unavoidable,
taxpayers subsidy can be limited dramatically. Whether his creative financing strategies can
positively contribute to a winning sports franchise is less clear, however, as more heavily
subsidized team owners may be better positioned to offer greater financial incentives to top-level
free agent players.

On a broader sociological and political level, the sum total of stadium-related
construction expenditures are not particularly significant unless regarded against comparatively
unimpressive allocations for specific regional social service programs. The approximately $20
billion allocated for professional stadium and arena construction throughout the entire twentieth
century pales in comparison to the $400 billion allocated by the federal government to cover a single year of Social Security expenditures. When compared to annual corporate revenues, the total of professional sports stadium-related construction expenditures for the twentieth century are the approximate equivalent of a single year of revenues for Wells Fargo Bank, Sara Lee Corporation, Xerox, or Loews, Inc., firms that Fortune magazine ranks between 60 and 70 in its annual Fortune 500 listings. The one week economic downturn in April 2000 cost investors a total of $2.1 trillion in stock equity losses. This total could have built 100 times more major league facilities than were constructed in the entire twentieth century. The $35 billion spent on prisons and correctional institutions or the $42.4 billion spent on weddings in the United States in one year would provide sufficient funding to rebuild every major league football and baseball stadium in use during the 2000 season at least twice. In short, if measured as a portion of a multi-trillion dollar national economy, stadium-related construction subsidies are relatively minor.

Nevertheless, at the microeconomic level, stadium expenditures are sizable. If these funds were diverted from other local programs, it would have a profound effect on many local organizations. As a result, it is no accident that owner demands for new stadium construction meet with considerable resistance at the grass roots level, particularly when many of the professional athletes’ salaries exceed $1 million per season. When a variety of local service organizations are forced to conduct bake sales, raffles, and other fund-raisers to survive economically, it should be no surprise that stadium subsidies are less than well received by many citizens. One hundred million dollars would finance only about one third of a typical professional sports construction project, but it would provide enough funds to double the nationwide capacity for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. That level of funding would expand the current program by about three million youths, offering them a variety of constructive programs and activities that might not otherwise be available in their neighborhoods. One hundred million dollars could also provide 400 quarter-million dollar block grants to various community organizations for a multitude of worthwhile civic causes. Ten million dollars, mere pocket change on a typical major league stadium project, is the total expended by the entire state of California on a pilot program intended to assist homeless citizens to make the transition to productive work. As inner city citizens look at decaying community centers or meager social
service budgets, it is not unreasonable to understand that some citizens regard ballpark subsidies with great disdain.

Regardless, others in the community feel that the prestige of maintaining major league status within the community is well worth the subsidy. Such arguments have been bolstered by a variety of creative tax schemes contrived by pro-sports politicians to shield local taxpayers from stadium-related assessments. The careful crafting of “visitor fees” on rental cars, hotel rooms, and other tourist-oriented services have virtually ensured that a large portion of stadium subsidies will be paid for by out-of-town visitors, many with no desire to visit the ballpark.⁶⁴

Extensive media coverage of sports teams has been a key reason why many citizens believe that such subsidies are worthwhile, despite overwhelming scholarly evidence that such construction has little or no direct effect on the overall long-term economic growth of a region. The nationwide exposure of a community in daily sports coverage in newspapers and on television is perceived to have an intangible public relations value that is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify. The perception of major league status is as important to mayors of cities in decline as almost any other factor. In this vein, frequent national exposure of a major league home team is a compelling psychic benefit for citizens of a given metropolitan area. When the Rams moved from Los Angeles to St. Louis, numerous voices articulated the cultural significance of this move to the citizens of St. Louis. A far from elegant, yet heartfelt, citizen’s remark that without an NFL team, “we’re a cowtown,” probably best summarizes the gut-level value of such media exposure to many average citizens throughout the country.⁶⁵

The most recent NFL television pact requires broadcasters to pay $17.6 billion over eight years for transmission rights for this once a week sports product. This highly lucrative contractual arrangement provides clear testimony to the premium that many citizens place on major league professional sports. Owners are highly aware of the coveted status that sports holds within the metropolitan culture. They often have the capacity to utilize this highly desirable cultural capital to bargain for the best possible stadium arrangement for their franchise. The potential threat of franchise movement becomes a “wild card” that gives owners bargaining leverage that is difficult for political leaders to counter. Whether local news coverage skews this bargaining process in a manner that provides an unfair negotiating edge for team owners requires further systematic examination.
**Sources: Chapter Two**


3. Badde and Sanderson, p. 112.


7. Fort, p. 156.


10. Quirk and Fort, p. 163.

11. The agreement with the State of Washington permits the team a $100 million credit to cover past franchise losses claimed by team owners. With this in mind, it could be years before the 10 percent profit-sharing agreement becomes an issue. Although Quirk and Fort argue that the Mariner owners have no reason to share profits with the stadium authority, it is possible that a marginal amount of profit could be shared in a decade or so if such a move benefitted the public relations interests of the team. Nevertheless, the wide latitude afforded to owners via traditionally accepted accounting practices makes such sharing of team profits likely only if convenient for owners.


13. Committee on the Judiciary, p. 266.

15. Committee on the Judiciary, p. 281.


22. Cagan and deMause, p.199.


24. Richmond, Peter. *Ballpark: Camden Yards and the Building of an American Dream*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993. pp. 128-143. Note: although Eric Moss formulated the original plans for an old-fashioned ballpark that included integration of an old railroad warehouse into the overall design, the appropriation of his fundamental design strategy by international architectural firms left him largely uncredited for his ideas. His name appears on none of the official literature, placards, or merchandise that is part of Camden Yards lore despite evidence in media sources that he was the source of these innovative designs.


38. The “Green Fan” movement is explained in Weiner, pp. 78-83.


46. For specific data on new stadium projects on a broad range of sporting venues, see: “Forthcoming Attractions: A Round-Up of Planned Sports Stadia and Arena Around the Globe.” *Stadia*, February 2000. pp. 16-17. To understand the anomaly of the Ohio State project cited here, it should be noted that this project allocated more than twice as many dollars to renovation as the next most expensive ($80 million) collegiate project listed in this industry-oriented source.


59. Revenue figures for each of these listed companies exceed $20 billion according to the 1999 *Fortune 500*. [available: www.fortune.com/fortune/fortune500].

61. To build two stadia for each major league sports team at the amounts indicated, team owners would have to average slightly more than $344 million per stadium for the $42.4 billion figure and slightly less than $287 million per stadium for the $35 million figure. Prison related expenditure totals cited from: Schlosser, Eric. “The Prison-Industrial Project.” *Atlantic Monthly*. December 1998, pp. 51-77. Wedding expenditure totals cited from: “Numbers.” *Time*. March 27, 2000, p.27.


64. Several articles have been written on this tendency to tax visitors to finance sports-related infrastructure needs. The most common forms of taxation are hotel taxes, which are as high as 17 percent (Houston, TX), and car rental taxes. Jim Bradley, a mayoral candidate in Salt Lake City, host of the 2002 Summer Olympics, wryly stated “we have to raise the car rental tax as high as we can....We have to look at opportunities like that to just screw them [visitors].” “Notebook: Verbatim.” *Time*. August 23, 1999, p.19. For greater detail on this tendency to tax visitors for local sports infrastructure projects see: Wade, Betsy. “Need an Arena? Tax a Traveler!” *New York Times*. June 18, 2000, p. TR-4.

Chapter 3: Creating the Framework for Analysis of Media and Stadium Policy

Major cities throughout America have struggled with stadium construction issues. The ultimate decision to build is frequently prompted by image-related issues. Concerns about how a city will be perceived on a broad national level often drive the community dialogue on such issues. As such, the extensive national media coverage afforded to major league sports is a key factor in the decision to build a stadium.

Peter Eisinger argues that in today’s current focus on stadium and convention center construction we have made a philosophic transition from urban policy that focused on residential services to a visitor-oriented, entertainment-based policy. Such policy is predicated on a desire to lure suburban outsiders and distant visitors into a given city. Eisinger compellingly argues that such reliance on middle and upper class “bread and circuses” marks a fundamental policy transition away from the nineteenth and early twentieth century construction of facilities and infrastructure. According to Eisinger, the projects of this earlier era served city residents in a more democratic manner; in short, the libraries, parks, and public health facilities that were constructed during this period benefitted a broader array of citizens. Recent stadium construction tends to have a less democratic benefit to the citizenry. Instead, it is predicated on provision of upscale services as a means of maintaining an image that will be portrayed outside the borders of a community. Eisinger does not emphasize some elite-driven projects of the Progressive Era such as construction of opera houses, orchestra halls, and museums, but overall, his somewhat optimistic argument about the past has some credibility.

The pervasive media landscape fosters such “image-based” policy decisions. But as political decisions are made that may cater to suburban visitors and distant outsiders, have local media institutions provided thorough and balanced coverage that does not undermine the democratic process? The question of whether stadium construction coverage contains a decidedly pro-stadium slant has not been adequately answered in available scholarship on the topic. Although most stadium-related scholarship assumes a pro-stadium slant that encourages new construction, evidence of another possible coverage tendency might be found.

Roger Noll and Andrew Zimbalist’s research on behalf of the Brookings Institution provides a compelling argument that funding discrepancies for stadium construction campaigns offer considerable advantages to pro-construction voices. Mark Rosentraub suggests that the
interlocking commercial interests of media organizations and sports franchises create a natural tendency to favor new stadium construction. George Sage combines the arguments of the Brookings Institution effort and Rosentraub in an examination of the political economy of stadium construction. According to Sage, because of the momentum established by community boosterism the deck is decidedly stacked against those who might successfully oppose new stadium construction in a given community.

Yet other evidence suggests that pro-construction slanting is not inevitable, nor is the validity of a pro-construction hypothesis certain. Joanna Cagan and Neil DeMause argue that the press act to inform the public about “the stadium swindle” with an increasing number of articles that expose the subsidies given to team owners. In a recent trade journal article on stadium and arena construction, Jay Cross, head of business development for the Miami Heat basketball team, argued vociferously that even though his team spent over a million dollars on a carefully designed media campaign to construct a new arena, “the press didn’t cut us any breaks.”

Jose Francisco Marichal, in an examination of early 1990s press coverage of 14 cities, concludes that the question of pro-stadium boosterism is less than certain. In a breakdown of the various political actors involved in the issue, he suggests that “community actors tended to raise questions about the stadium development issue..., the project-related actors tended to support this issue..., [while] government actors tended to act as something of a ‘swing vote,’ with divergent camps on either side.” Further systematic analysis of news coverage tendencies must be conducted to resolve this wide diversity of conclusions regarding coverage tendencies in stadium-related news reporting.

The Booster Spirit, Media Routines, Public Relations, and the Public

A central hypothesis of this research is that a pro-construction bias exists in stadium-related news coverage. Although the American press tends to highlight a commitment to balance and fairness, often utilizing the term “objectivity” to reflect this desired goal, many practitioners would agree that news reporting devoid of bias is a problematic undertaking. A variety of variables confound the reporter’s ability to report any event with full accuracy. Personal bias, the constraint of media routines, managerial bias, and numerous external influences are among the most salient factors that cause coverage to stray from an objective ideal. The ideology of boosterism is yet another factor that complicates the ability of reporters to provide accuracy in
news coverage, particularly in issues related to regional sporting institutions.

Even without consideration of stadium-related news coverage bias, it is difficult to deny that the booster spirit has contributed mightily to the recent growth in stadium construction. It is difficult to find scholarship that defines boosterism, but it can be separated from generic calls for economic development, which may not reflect the booster mentality, by an individual’s positive emotional bond to the location that is being discussed. Boosters want to promote their city because they are enthusiastic supporters of a given locale. Some calls for economic development that would not fall within the framework of boosterism are predicated on a concern for generation of wealth, not community pride.

Sports-related media coverage, with its focus on highly emotional competitive comparisons to other cities, is more inclined to reflect boosterism than dispassionate economic rhetoric. Individuals from major cities want their home to be regarded as “major league,” and professional sports franchises have become a convenient and recognizable symbol of this “major league” status. During national telecasts of sporting events stadiums are routinely shown and cities are often talked about, compelling civic boosters to support new stadium construction even when economic logic might suggest another course of action could yield greater returns for the general citizenry.

The booster mentality is deeply ingrained in the American psyche and, despite denials by some media practitioners, it is an inherent part of modern journalism. It has been part of America for centuries, hence, it is an ideology that is less likely to shift with time. Daniel Boorstin traces boosterism in America to the booster press that facilitated nineteenth century westward expansion. Evidence of some level of boosterism can be traced even further back to the early days of colonial settlement. As such, it is important to recognize that knee-jerk boosterism is an inherent part of the fabric of many communities, making opposition to the political demands of the home team a potentially dangerous practice. Further examination is required to determine whether boosterism permeates news coverage in a clear and compelling manner.

Further complicating this civic boosterism is a layer of sports industry boosterism that has permeated media coverage since the emergence of professional athletics in America. The influence of university-level boosterism that came with big-time collegiate athletics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries served to cultivate a jingoistic sports reporting model
that stressed localism. During the earliest years of organized college football, newspapers throughout the country dutifully reported top-rated Harvard and Yale scores, the most important football powers of the time, but greater levels of coverage were often afforded to local collegiate successes. The *Atlanta Constitution* often featured banner headlines of John Heisman’s Georgia Tech football squad and Denver’s *Daily News* tended to focus on University of Denver despite their second-rate ability when compared to Ivy League teams. The stature of local alumni within the community was a likely influence in these coverage tendencies.

With the emergence of professional baseball as a popular commercial product, the linkage to positive coverage was more often directly influenced by self-interest of newspaper management. Joseph Pulitzer and many of his contemporaries often regarded positive coverage of the home team a convenient circulation booster. Sports team owners were equally enthusiastic about the positive publicity that such an arrangement might afford. Aaron Champion, the primary financier of the famed 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings, was described as “delighted with the arrangement” that permitted Harry Millar, a newspaper writer, to join the team on their road trips. Stephen Guschov describes Millar’s role as “more of a publicity flack for the club than...a hard nosed reporter.”¹⁰ In a more profound conflict of interest, some media practitioners were directly linked to team ownership. In 1901, Frank Hough, sports editor for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and Sam Jones, a baseball writer for the Associated Press, teamed up with Connie Mack and Benjamin Shibe to purchase the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team. Shibe owned half the team, Mack owned twenty-five percent, while Hough and Jones each held twelve and a half percent of the team’s shares. Not surprisingly, boosterism permeated the Inquirer’s daily coverage of Athletics baseball. Historian Bruce Kuklick states that “Hough’s column ‘Don’t Knock-But Boost’ greatly helped the franchise.”¹¹

While boosterism is an important element in the push for new stadium construction, it is the ability of sports franchise owners to leverage their monopoly status in a specific entertainment niche that is largely responsible for the dramatic increase in stadium construction across the nation. In short, the popularity of a sports franchise within a community has given sports franchise owners an opportunity to extract substantial subsidies from the public at a time when government officials are limiting government funding in a variety of other areas. As city after city turns to stadium construction to enhance, create, or preserve its “major league” status, a
divided public struggles with the various issues surrounding public subsidy of the profit-generating sports industry.

The role of mass media in this stadium construction boom is considerable. The certainty that a major-league football or baseball team receives continuous national media attention intensifies the desire of city leaders to maintain their “major-league” status at almost any cost. Sports franchise owners, clearly aware of the symbolic value of their product, have pushed hard to achieve vast government subsidies in recent years. The level of these subsidy requests is so profound that many city leaders have turned to county and state funding sources for new stadium projects. Unlike Progressive Era politics where the city leaders had the upper hand in negotiations, the power has shifted to favor sports franchise owners in a considerable way.

The public relations prowess of sports leagues has contributed to this power shift. Former Houston Mayor Bob Lanier contends that “these sports teams have the best PR machines in the world,” further suggesting that league offices mobilize an additional layer of public relations influence. According to Lanier, “they really do a marvelous job of couching issues in ways favorable to themselves. The NFL PR machine undertakes to personalize the issue--between the team and the mayor. That’s big-time pressure.” Not surprisingly, as a result of this pressure, it is often the mayor who becomes the most spirited advocate for new stadium construction.

That football and baseball franchises are adept at public relations is significant to their overall success. After all, the public relations market has become saturated with special interests, so teams have to push hard to cut through the clutter of competing messages. The increasing importance of public relations can’t be underestimated as a force in the democratic process. Ray Eldon Hiebert and Sheila Jean Gibbons assert that “the amount of news that originates in public relations offices...has been estimated to be as little as 30 percent and as much as 80 percent in each day’s mass media.” Stan Sauerhaft and Chris Atkins, top executives at public relations giant Burton Marsteller, described their professional aim as “the art and science of creating, altering, strengthening, or overcoming public opinion.”

Stewart Ewen cautions that public relations has a clear potential to diminish political participation while undermining the democratic process. According to Ewen:

Publicity becomes an impediment to democracy...when the circulation of ideas is governed by enormous concentrations of wealth that have as their underlying purpose, the
perpetuation of their own power. When this is the case—as is too often true today—the idea of civic participation gives way to a continual sideshow, a masquerade of democracy calculated to pique the public’s emotions.\textsuperscript{15}

Whether media coverage of sports facility construction reflects a shift from “civic participation,” to what Ewen calls “a continual sideshow” merits careful examination, particularly when the self interest of media institutions have the potential to cloud construction-related news coverage decisions. A number of media companies or media company executives own professional franchises.\textsuperscript{16} Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation currently owns the Los Angeles Dodgers and maintains a minority interest in the New York Knicks and New York Rangers. Time-Warner, by virtue of Ted Turner’s involvement with the company, owns the Atlanta Braves, the NBA’s Atlanta Hawks, and the NHL’s Atlanta Thrashers. The Tribune Company owns the Chicago Cubs, while Disney, parent company to ABC and ESPN, owns the Anaheim Angels and the Anaheim Mighty Ducks. The latter, an NHL franchise, was named after a popular movie marketed by Disney, further blurring the line between media product and sports marketing.

It is not unlikely for smaller local media corporations, including newspapers and television stations, to maintain a minority ownership position in major sports franchises within their community. Nevertheless, an ownership position in a team is not required to create a potential conflict of interest in stadium construction policy. The linkage of higher circulation to coverage of major sports teams creates a powerful incentive to favor booster-oriented policies that will ensure the continued success of the local sports franchise. Mark Rosentraub offers evidence of newspaper circulation declines when labor disputes prevent games from taking place. He further argues that the \textit{Dallas Morning News} has reported its highest circulation figures during Super Bowl coverage of the Dallas Cowboys. Rosentraub concludes that “the media has discovered a ‘golden goose’ in sports and that goose is rarely analyzed for officials who must decide whether or not a [stadium construction] subsidy is needed.”\textsuperscript{17}

The intermingling of commerce and reporting is evident after stadium construction is completed. In many cities, the giant scoreboard, which has become an increasingly successful means of revenue generation for team owners, features the local media as among the most prominently displayed sponsors. When Bank One Ballpark was completed in 1998, for example,
the most clearly visible scoreboard advertiser was the *Arizona Republic* with a large placement at the top of the screen immediately below an old fashioned circular clock. In numerous other facilities, display advertisements for local television stations and newspapers are similarly visible.

The fees paid by television stations and major networks for professional sports broadcasting rights further complicates the ability of media practitioners to provide comprehensive coverage of all issues surrounding stadium construction policy. The NFL’s $17.6 billion agreement with the networks reflects a capital outlay so substantial that broadcasters are clearly compelled to take dramatic steps to ensure an adequate return on this huge programming expense. According to Lawrence Strauss, such contractual largess may diminish critical coverage of sports teams since “big money can tempt the networks into viewing the sports organizations they cover as marketing partners.”

Whether slanting of local news coverage would result because of these substantial financial commitments by networks is unclear, but the television and radio stations that broadcast these games have made it abundantly clear that live coverage of the local team is highly desirable. Some stations have even changed network affiliations after league contracts were lost by a network. Such desirability presents the potential for slanting stadium construction stories since stations compete in a corporate culture that is defined by commercial success.

The *Los Angeles Times* coverage of the city’s newly constructed Staples Center offers a noteworthy example of how commerce and media self-interest can affect news reporting of sports-related projects. On October 10, 1999, the newspaper created a 162-page magazine special that centered on the opening of a new $400 million facility that would serve as the new home for the NBA’s Lakers and Clippers and the NHL’s Kings. Articles were universally supportive of the new arena, with one article, entitled “What the Staples Center Could Do for L.A.” providing an array of reasons why the new structure would lead to a revitalization of downtown Los Angeles. Unknown to the public, the newspaper’s editorial staff, and even Editor in Chief Michael Parks was publisher Kathryn Downing’s agreement to share revenues from this specific publication with Staples Center management.

The publication generated $2 million in revenues, but was castigated by the public and much of the newspaper’s staff once this revenue-sharing agreement was uncovered by *New*
Times, a smaller Los Angeles area weekly publication. Kathryn Downing indicated that her attempted reconciliation meeting with the newspaper staff “was the angriest, most confrontational meeting I’ve ever seen at the paper.” She later showed little remorse for blurring the lines between news and advertising, indicating that her secrecy in arranging a deal was a mistake, but that she feels “better to know...[promotional revenue sharing] is a common industry practice.”

Although most of the national focus on this story has evaluated the morally questionable decision to shield the nature of this cross-promotional effort from the public and the newspaper’s reporting staff, a deeper ethical question should be addressed. Was the news staff so willing to comply with suggestions or other cues given by key management personnel that the quality of news coverage was jeopardized? Of particular concern is the news staff’s complicity in assembling 162 pages of puffery. While it is possible that stories critical of the center may have been edited or killed by individuals with knowledge of the profit-sharing arrangement, no evidence of such tampering has surfaced.

That a staff of one of America’s most respected newspapers was content to produce an uncritical celebration of an arena which benefitted from several taxpayer subsidized advantages should provide a profound reason to question the credibility of subsequent news coverage produced by this award-winning newspaper. It was only after this agreement with the Staples Center was made public that more critical Los Angeles Times coverage of the Staples Center project was provided to the public.19

The construction of sports cathedrals has contributed to a vigorous national debate about the role of sports in American society. Many argue that stadium construction contributes to the economic vitality of American cities, inspiring others to invest in the future development of the community. This economic development argument is frequently advanced by the pro-stadium lobby. Despite significant economic evidence challenging this argument, it is often the most compelling and powerful claim advanced by pro-stadium advocates. The “quality of life” argument, while more realistic and potentially more accurate, appears to be a less vociferous argument for those pushing new stadium construction initiatives. The ability of an entire metropolitan area to enjoy either an evening at the stadium or live game coverage on television is difficult to quantify, yet the benefits are palpable for anyone exposed to the stadium atmosphere
on game day, animated water cooler conversations during the week, or lively corner tavern debates on the day after an exciting hometown victory.

Nevertheless, stadium construction of an unprecedented magnitude has occurred in spite of considerable public opposition. This opposition takes many trajectories. Some argue that public subsidy in this area is welfare for the rich. Others state that taxpayer monies would be better spent in other areas. Several have suggested that sports franchise owners and athletes, the primary beneficiaries in new stadium construction, have not earned the privilege of taxpayer subsides. Multimillion dollar contracts for athletes and multibillion dollar television packages for owners are often cited as reasons for funding opposition. Headlines received by numerous athletes for troubles ranging from drug abuse, drunk driving, criminal assault, and rape have further eroded the desire of many citizens to support any attempt to subsidize the sports industry with taxpayer monies.²⁰

**Developing a Theoretical Framework: A Literature Review of Related Media Scholarship**

Arguments on both sides of the stadium debate reveal much about the politics and culture of a community. Exclusion and privilege, both driving forces in the earliest decisions regarding ballpark construction, permeate today’s dialogue. Nevertheless, the parameters of exclusion and privilege have changed in both subtle and not so subtle ways over the years. Class-based privilege may still exist, though the rhetoric of exclusion may be more subtle. The rhetoric of exclusion based on ethnicity, once openly tolerated, even celebrated at some points in history, has been virtually stricken from much of today’s mainstream media messages. Despite this change, minority representation in the decision making process of most communities has been limited.

Media coverage of the stadium construction debate tends to reflect reporting trends that are generally present in other types of news coverage. Michael Schudson argues that “to understand news as a culture requires what categories of person count as ‘who,’ what kinds of things pass for facts, or ‘whats,’ what geography and sense of time count as ‘where’ and ‘when,’ and what counts as an explanation of ‘why.’”²¹ Using Shudson’s analytic framework, it is argued that the rhetoric contained in contemporary news coverage of stadium construction provides a tangible indication of media perceptions regarding the nature of community power. Which voices deserve prominence? [i.e: who?] Which arguments are most credible? [i.e: what?] How much attention does a particular aspect of this issue merit? [i.e: where/when?] What ideologies deserve
prominence, and what ideologies merit media filtering? [i.e: why?]

News coverage does not take place in a vacuum. Media routines reflect a variety of conscious and unconscious choices which combine to shape news coverage. The actors chosen, the prioritization of arguments, and placement decisions are made as part of a highly dynamic process which includes input from both internal and external sources. Reporters must frequently navigate a diverse assortment of issues while struggling to determine which voices merit prominence.

Gaye Tuchman compares the news process to the fisherman’s process of casting a net upon the waters, selectively choosing what to retain from a diverse catch.22 Where to cast the net, what information to retain (or discard), and how to organize what information is retained are all choices that have an impact on the final media product. Daniel Berkowitz cogently points out that in today’s sophisticated, public relations-driven news environment, much of the media practitioner’s “catch” of the day “amounts to news sources who have intentionally jumped into the net with the motive of promoting their own points of view.”23 Because of time and space limitations, media practitioners must routinely set priorities that determine the nature of news discourse. In essence, media practitioners actively shape the rhetorical landscape as they prioritize which rhetorical appeals merit inclusion in news coverage.

In light of these factors, it is important to analyze media content in a manner that exposes the biases and patterns which emerge in daily reporting of public policy issues such as stadium construction. This study will specifically examine the selection of political actors and the rhetorical strategies employed by these actors in newspaper coverage of the stadium construction issue. Analyses of such variables are important because an exploration of this nature will serve to highlight the ideologies inherent in media coverage of this issue.

The debate regarding media involvement in the political process has not changed dramatically since the intense philosophic debates between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey during the first half of the twentieth century. Lippmann argued that the general public was less capable of making prudent public policy choices because of “the failure of self-governing people to transcend their casual experience and their prejudice, by inventing, creating, and organizing a machinery of [false] knowledge.” In such a world, Lippmann argued, the public would haphazardly stumble through important policy issues unless guided by more educated and
rigorously trained professionals capable of avoiding “violent prejudice, apathy, preference for the
dull and trivial as against the dull important, and the hunger for sideshows and three-legged
calves.”24 In response to such public inclinations, Lippmann distrusted the capacity of the press
to inform and enlighten citizens, favoring instead more insular policy formation, guided by
technocratic expertise.

Dewey argued for a more participatory government, suggesting that “communication
alone can create a great community.”25 At issue for Dewey and Lippmann was whether the public
had the collective wisdom to prudently shape public policy. Dewey had some reservations about
the public, but ultimately believed that the general public could collectively shape policy in a
positive manner. Dewey considered the open dialogue that shaped collective democratic decision
making as important as the decision itself. Lippmann, by contrast, was convinced that the
public’s inattention to detail and capacity to create false images (stereotypes) would render
government less effective and less able to deal with complex issues. In Lippmann’s view, press
coverage often confused the public because media practitioners were subject to the same biases
and shortcomings as typical citizens.

Media scholars tend to focus on the media/governing dynamic in traditional examination
of the Lippmann and Dewey debate. Nevertheless, a less examined area, but equally important, is
the somewhat similar attitude of both these intellectuals relative to the nature of objectivity and
bias as it relates to media coverage.26 Both Dewey and Lippmann shared a belief that objectivity
was not an inherent element of news coverage. Lippmann attributed this belief to the limited
cognitive abilities of the reporter, while Dewey suggested that the elusiveness of objectivity was
more rooted in the unique qualities of the individual reader. In Art as Experience, Dewey argued
that “tendencies of experience do not have limits that are exactly fixed....Experience is too rich
and complex to permit such precise limitation.”27

Lippmann struggled to believe that objectivity was philosophically possible in a manner
similar to some of the great thinkers of classical Greece, but his expressed early hopes for human
comprehension of an objective “truth” by a cadre of rigorously trained social scientists,
evaporated as he began to contemplate the ramifications of Einstein’s contributions to the world
of physical science. In short, the credibility of “relativity” in Einstein’s explanation of the
physical sciences, further bolstered by Werner Heisenberg’s research challenging the objective
qualities of scientific measurement, diminished Lippmann’s ability to believe that objectivity could be achieved even by the most educated individual, let alone a beat reporter with a moderate level of intelligence.  

Contemporary media scholarship often revisits these same arguments regarding objectivity, but a greater level of attention has been afforded to the role that ownership, ideology, and journalistic routines play in affecting attainment of objectivity. Journalistic routines and deep-seated traditions can influence reporters to apply a ready-made template to a particular story, thus shaping journalistic discourse in ways that may not be consciously recognized by even the most seasoned practitioners.

Gaye Tuchman describes the news-making process as the “act of creating reality itself rather than a picture of reality.” The news story is an inexact attempt to recreate the occurrences of a particular event or activity. She argues that newsworkers attempt to cope with the confusion presented through multiple information sources about an event by “imposing a uniform rhythm of processing upon occurrences.” Tuchman argues that these professional news practices which are intended to achieve this goal “serve to legitimize the status quo.” One way in which this occurs is in the selection of a uniform set of community participants who are a routine part of the policymaking dynamic.

Charles Bantz, Suzanne McCorkle, and Roberta Baade’s analysis of news gathering routines argue that managerial tendencies to shape the news gathering processes to achieve assembly line efficiencies foster a “lack of flexibility, lack of personal investment in the product, an evaluation of newswork in productivity terms, and a mismatch between the newsworkers expectations and the factory in which they work.” Although these scholars are reluctant to isolate the content-specific ramifications of restrictive news gathering routines, they firmly argue that productivity, measured in terms of total news output, is significantly more valued than an overall concern for product quality. This recent tendency to regard institutional productivity and profitability as paramount concerns may shape news coverage in both intentional and unintentional ways.

Reporters may not consider the public policy ramifications of continuous reliance on familiar Rolodexed sources, but they may intuitively understand that reporting quality suffers when factory style reporting prevents comprehensive analysis of important public issues. A
study prepared in 1999 by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press concluded that “at both the local and national levels, majorities of working journalists say that increasing bottom-line pressure is hurting the quality of [news] coverage.”

A number of scholars have made similar claims but have focused more specifically on ownership issues. Ben Bagdikian may be best known for his critical argument that corporate media concentration has severely hampered the ability of local reporters to cover issues effectively that might negatively impact on the financial viability of a media practitioner’s parent company. In his scholarship, Bagdikian argues that such corporate self-interest has negative implications for proper resolution of issues such as stadium subsidies, stating that “in a world of multiple problems, where the diversity of ideas is essential for decent solutions, controlled information inhibited by uniform self-interest is the first and fatal enemy.” Theodore Glasser suggests that restrictions against reporter involvement in political campaigns are more than offset by routine management participation in community institutions such as corporate boards, business organizations, think tanks, and charities. He argues that the detached objectivity which drives contemporary reporting strategies are “largely a matter of efficiency--efficiency that serves, as far as I can tell only the needs and interests of the owners of the press, not the needs and interests of talented writers, and certainly not the needs and interests of the larger society.”

David Demers rejects the assumptions of these scholars, arguing that corporate newspapers are “more critical of the status quo” while placing “more emphasis on product quality.” Survey information and content analysis of newspaper editorial pages are utilized by Demers to support these conclusions. Demers’ research, while a step forward in the application of quantitative rigor, is not without flaw. He relies entirely on the self-reporting of newspaper professionals to determine commitment to product quality. In addition, the selection of editorial content was made by newspaper management rather than through a randomized process. As a result, it is unclear whether corporate ownership, presumably with higher levels of formal management training than family-owned newspapers, truly raise newspaper quality standards or whether more sophisticated internal management strategies simply create an employee perception of greater commitment to quality.

In Demers’ content analysis it is unclear whether corporate newspapers executives were simply more effective than family-owned newspaper management at selecting samples of
editorial pages that reflect commonly accepted newsroom ideals. Furthermore, it is also conceivable that “tolerance” for diversity of opinion in the editorial and letters to the editor sections may not be tolerance at all. Instead, it could be a backlash to news coverage that is heavily skewed to favor entrenched community interests. In short, examination of the substance of front page news stories might be a more realistic barometer of overall product quality. Nevertheless, Demers’ research adds a level of uncertainty to the economic claims of Bagdikian and his colleagues. Such uncertainty merits further examination of news reporting content in a manner that is less prone to manipulation from managerial sources.

Through content analysis of a range of important national issues, Frederick Fico and Stan Soffin provide some empirical evidence that smaller newspapers provide less balance than larger market “prestige” newspapers. Whether management structure, market size, or other factors are responsible for this is problematic, but their research suggests that fair reporting faces greater obstacles as market size diminishes. These researchers measured fairness by balancing comparison of space allotted to each side of an issue; but they did suggest that in at least one issue, Gulf War coverage, congruity with available public opinion data might be a more acceptable method of determining whether reporting is a fair reflection of reality. Regardless of which benchmark is used in determining fairness, these scholars conclude that practitioners and academicians should “develop and apply content based tools that enable ongoing and self-conscious assessment of fairness and balance in the coverage of particular issues.”

Phillip Tichenor, George Donohue and Clarice Olien’s community conflict research offers evidence that newspapers in smaller communities work more diligently to seek out consensus rather than conflict in their news coverage strategies. The result is “more homogeneous” coverage and a limited number of institutional actors in news stories. Larger media markets were found to have a wider range of institutional actors and a greater diversity of voices since practitioners in these markets are “forced to consider the differing and often conflicting interests of...various groups.”

Frederick Fico and Stan Soffin’s study offers evidence of limitations in smaller city reporting strategies. Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien offer supporting data suggesting that smaller markets are more inclined to offer increased parochialism and conflict avoidance tendencies in news reporting. Both studies are confounded by the research of Jane Delano Brown, Carl Bybee,
Stanley Wearden, and Dulcie Murdock Straughan. These researchers suggest that local newspapers, presumably with a higher ratio of family ownership, may work harder to include a broader range of sources in news reporting. According to these authors, content analysis reveals that smaller newspapers were more inclined to seek out news sources outside of “routine channels.” They were also less inclined to use unidentified sources; but in a troubling assessment, these authors conclude that reporters at all levels “have relinquished control of news to their sources.”

C. Kevin Swisher and Stephen Reese present evidence that reporting bias may encounter an impact from yet another factor: regional interest. In a quantitative analysis of tobacco-related coverage, tobacco region newspapers were more likely to devote coverage to a tobacco lobbying group while they were much less likely to mention the American Cancer Society. These authors conclude that “the objectivity routine...proves dysfunctional...[because] the routines of newswork become in this case a channel through which economic influence is manifested.”

Harvey Molotch, an urban scholar, further indicates that local interests provide a potential source of news bias simply because of an editorial deference towards regional economic growth. He also argues that such bias is not restricted to the newsroom; it permeates virtually all levels of American society since a “growth machine” model has been adopted as part of a larger core ideology throughout the nation. The focus on economic growth as opposed to a more neutral form of reporting has implications in what is covered; but it may also be a factor in what is not covered. Lack of Chicago area news coverage of a nationally reported Sears consumer fraud case, despite the location of corporate headquarters within the city limits, reflects one example of the silencing potential of this growth-oriented focus.

Scholarship that focuses on media ethics tends to argue that some media routines may have changed during the last few decades, but the basic ethical principles of modern journalism have not. Since the advent of “objectivity” as a media routine in the early twentieth century, Clifford Christians argues that “the public expects the press, although trusting it begrudgingly, to produce full and accurate reports of matters of social importance.” H. Eugene Goodwin reinforces this notion in stating that “although the history of American journalism contains some colorful lapses in the accuracy standard, accuracy has been the goal of virtually all journalists in this country for at least a century. But accuracy is not enough....Thoughtful journalists seek
A most difficult challenge is determining how to shape community representation when making daily coverage decisions. Because a variety of community actors struggle to incorporate their organizational or personal objectives into the newsroom agenda, this particular aspect of news gathering is fraught with ethical challenges. Jack Doppelt’s research provides indications that media contacts are somewhat limited. In essence, his research suggests that practitioners tend to utilize the same array of sources in a variety of stories, making it very difficult for individuals who are not part of the existing reporting framework to be heard.

Sharon Dunwoody and Steven Shields’ research of Wisconsin statehouse reporting routines uncovered a similar reporting tendency to act as a conveyor belt for institutional sources. Their research provided a cross comparison of written materials provided to statehouse reporters and actual news coverage in four major Wisconsin newspapers. A mere 8.6 percent of the materials offered to reporters during the coding period “came from persons or organizations outside state government.” They also found a statistically significant link between “published materials and raw materials designed specifically for the press.” Although reporters tended to rely heavily on these materials for most of the 12 content analysis categories created by Dunwoody and Shields, they found a greater level of reporter independence in stories related to “bureaucratic functioning” and “political party/elections” categories. In issues related to actual passage of legislation, reliance on press releases and other written materials was profound.

These researchers conducted a limited ancillary examination in their study which focused on quoted sources. In this examination, they found a greater level of reporting flexibility in their contact of non-governmental sources than with governmental officials. But those quoted from government, “resembled the world offered up to journalists in the plethora of print materials made available to them.” Dunwoody and Shields conclude that the “world presented by the press” may mirror reality, but “it may be a reality constructed by the providers of [press-related] information.” In short, press sources tend to be drawn from conveniently available sources rather than from individuals sought out independently by reporters.

Media-reporting biases of both inclusion and omission must be regarded in approaching stadium-related research. Much of the negotiation related to stadium construction policy takes place behind closed doors, making after the fact source-related analysis increasingly important to
understanding this issue. Sports franchise owners often insist on such low-profile negotiating tactics, despite the significant role of public funding in policy proposals. Civic leaders are reluctant to resist the desires of team owners, in part, due to an increased willingness of sports franchises to abandon a region for a better stadium arrangement elsewhere. In recent years, deterioration of personal relationships between team owners and key civic leaders has accelerated franchise relocation, leaving politicians vulnerable to public criticism when a franchise moves away from a given region. Because of the “closed-door” nature of stadium negotiations, media coverage of this issue is particularly important. It represents the public’s primary access to information and has the potential to shape how this particular issue is perceived by citizens.

The closed-door nature of many stadium-related negotiations is but one impediment to better public understanding of this issue. Another is limitations of access to a variety of industry-related sources that might be used by the public to better understand this issue. These industry sources are largely unavailable to the public simply because the price of acquisition is too expensive for both the general public and public libraries with limited resources. Two examples illustrate this fundamental problem. First, a one year discounted subscription to *Stadium and Arena Financing News*, for example, is $485. Second, access to *Stadium Insider*, an online industry publication is available for a less pricy $275 per year. Although such fees may be worthwhile expenditures for those generating direct profit from stadium-oriented activity, these publications are too expensive for personal access by the general public. They are also generally unavailable through a typical public library because these publication are probably considered too specialized to justify the sizable expenditure required to make them accessible to the public.

*Sports Business News* and *Sports Industry Daily*, both Internet publications, offer free access to stadium-related information, but these sources are not commonly known or widely discussed in popular media. As a result, few individuals are aware of these resources other than industry insiders and highly motivated sports fans. The information offered in these on-line publications is good, but depth and detail is typically limited.

Because of these access-related limitations, stadium research must examine how the public is represented in more accessible media sources. Careful examination of stadium construction rhetoric in mainstream media coverage will uncover how power is shaped, maintained, and transformed within a community. This analysis seeks to expose whether media
coverage offers a balanced representation of community values or whether the coverage tends to favor a particular agenda. The availability of limited public opinion data relative to the stadium construction issue provides a tangible benchmark that can be used to determine whether a full range of community values are reflected in media coverage of the issue. If media coverage of the stadium construction issue is more actively shaped by one viewpoint than is evident in public opinion data, a compelling case can be made for media-driven agenda setting. If, however, coverage tendencies appear to reasonably reflect the diverse range of public viewpoints evident in available public opinion data, then media routines will more appropriately reflect a collaborative process better understood by media theorists as agenda building.

**Methodology: Content Analysis as Means of Rigorously Testing Hypotheses**

In his classic treatise *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke challenges the ability of rhetoric to clarify human intentions, suggesting that humans should systematically employ reason to better clarify rhetorical intent. In brief, he suggests that language has the capacity to cloud understanding unless reason, precision, and clarity are actively sought. According to Locke, “books of rhetoric which abound in the world will instruct those who want to be informed..., [but rhetoric can also serve as a] powerful instrument of error and deceit.” Use of content analysis is a modest attempt to enhance general understanding of how various actors employ stadium-related rhetoric to achieve specific goals.

Claims of media bias favoring the pro-stadium position must be challenged in order to achieve credibility. One method of challenging this hypothesis is to carefully examine the rhetoric utilized in coverage of the stadium issue. A detailed content analysis should reveal which voices receive privileged status from media gatekeepers, while exposing the ideologies that are most prevalent on each side of the stadium construction debate. Although it is hypothesized that pro-construction voices tend to receive privileged status, without systematic analysis, such claims can be challenged and dismissed as unfounded speculation. In order to understand this issue more precisely, a methodology known as content analysis has been employed.

Bereleson defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." While all research contains some degree of bias, content analysis is a way to more objectively check the external validity of a researcher's subjective observations. A most appealing feature of this technique is
that it is easily understood by almost anyone. Singletary asserts that "content analysis is something that most of us do almost daily, albeit on a casual level....We look for generalities, regularities, and patterns in the information..., [and] we test the consistency of information."59

The content analysis in this research is simply a rudimentary attempt to check the validity of the researcher’s subjective assumptions before a more thorough textual analysis of stadium-related media coverage takes place. Frederick Fico and Stan Soffin argue that this form of analysis is important because “a commitment to fairness, at a minimum, requires a systematic evaluation of sources and how they are used as issues unfold.”60

As previously stated, the following hypotheses will be explored as part of this content analysis:

H-1: News coverage in both large and small urban markets will be influenced by a booster mentality that encourages new stadium construction.

H-2: Both large and small markets will offer a more visible platform to individuals pushing for new stadium construction, but small markets will offer a more profound pro-construction slant in their news coverage.

H-3: Media coverage in all media markets will tend to favor voices pushing for new stadium construction at a level that exceeds the desires of the broader community.

This content analysis will focus exclusively on quotations utilized in news coverage. As such, the research method employed will be referenced throughout this study as “quote-specific” content analysis. Such a strategy differs from traditional forms of content analysis in that it omits paraphrasing and reporter analysis. This particular strategy has been undertaken for a variety of reasons.

First, a strong case can be made that a reporters’ use of quotations marks a conscious attempt to privilege a specific individual’s observations, reactions, or opinions. In short, the choices made in quote utilization reveal journalistic values and priorities. If public input is
considered an important dimension of an issue, it will be reflected in the reporter’s use of a broad range of sources that reflect the diversity of the community. If expertise is privileged, reporters will focus more heavily on technical professionals and scholars. If political leadership is prioritized, it is likely that reporting would privilege the words of high-level elected officials.

Furthermore, isolation of quotes is important because a number of scholars argue that use of quotations requires a higher level of journalistic care and precision than paraphrasing. John Maxwell Hamilton and George Krimsky suggest that journalists confront quotations with a greater level of concern for complete accuracy than in paraphrased sections that simply require capturing the “sense” of what a speaker says. These scholars indicate that for journalists quotes are “supposed to be sacred” and that “tampering with a quote is a professional mortal sin.”

Use of quotations also serves to bridge a theoretical divide between methods employed in structural-functionalism and critical cultural scholarship. Although these scholarly traditions are inherently incompatible on a fundamental philosophic level, the methods utilized in this instance can be successfully adapted by members of either camp. Critical cultural scholars display general disdain for quantitative research methods, but the tendency of many critical cultural scholars to assert that typical citizens are marginalized in political discourse requires greater assertion of evidence than is often employed by qualitative methodologies. On the other hand, structural-functionalist assumptions that democratic processes, though imperfect, tend to be shaped by a diverse range of interested parties also requires more careful scrutiny. Both structural-functionalists and critical cultural scholars would concede that an individual’s ability to break through the multitude of voices seeking media access to obtain a direct quotation is one measurable way to determine one’s potential to shape public opinion on political issues of importance to a given community. Development of quote-specific content analysis is an attempt to create a framework for analysis of how power is perceived and shaped by media professionals.

Quote-specific content analysis can not resolve issues of closed-door assertion of institutional control, but no method is suited to fully examine instances of this nature adequately. To confront such inevitabilities, careful analysis and critique of potential motives for behind-the-scenes maneuvering will supplement the content analysis. This should result in a better understanding of how individuals may attempt to shape policy by functioning beneath the radar screen of media scrutiny, but analysis of this sort must be judiciously and cautiously offered as a
supplement to this specific research method.

The quote-specific content analysis applied here involves three levels of examination. First, it examines the position of the quoted individual. Second, it examines the rhetorical appeal that is made in the selected quotation. Finally, the analysis will delineate the broad topical focus of the article under observation. In short, the analysis will determine whether the person is in favor of or opposed to stadium construction. Once that is achieved the analysis will seek to delineate the specific appeal utilized to justify that particular position. Finally, the analysis will attempt to determine the topical focus of the entire article. Such a strategy allows a basic understanding of how the issue is framed in press coverage. Upon completion of the content analysis, careful textual analysis pinpointing specific tendencies related to press coverage will enhance general understanding of the findings provided in the content analysis.

The appeals utilized in the content analysis are an adaptation of the cross cultural scholarship of Richard Barton. The appeal categories have been modified somewhat to reflect appeals that may be specific to the stadium construction issue. This issue-specific modification draws from the scholarship of William Gamson whose focus group-oriented analysis was carefully tailored to the issues under his observation. This flexible strategy for category selection will ensure inclusion of issue-specific appeals without overlooking rhetorical appeals most common in traditional political discourse. Although a compelling case can be made for categories that draw focus to issue-specific appeals alone, a fundamental weakness of such a strategy is its inherent lack of utility as a benchmark with other forms of political discourse. The blending of a mixture of broadly common categories (as developed by Barton) and issue-oriented categories (as utilized by Gamson) allows for a richer analysis of the total media landscape. This overall strategy improves the range of analysis beyond what might be possible if categorization focused on only one dimension of analysis.

A pre-test of the initial coding sheet was administered to ensure that it was an effective research tool. The pre-test resulted in several minor modifications of appeal categories. First, the “progress” and “not making progress” categories were added to the appeals options since a number of individual statements steered away from ideologies and simply indicated whether goals were advancing or failing to advance. Second, a category for “status” was added because the symbolic power of being classified as a “major league” city appeared to retain considerable
currency in arguments regarding the stadium construction issue.

After the pre-test of a preliminary coding sheet, the following appeal categories, as defined below, were finalized on the content analysis coding sheet:

*Economic:* appeals to the economic benefits or limitations of stadium construction.

*Authority:* appeals that attempt to “close off, limit political discourse” by appealing to institutional authority. Appeals to the authority of elected or appointed officials or to the authority of team ownership are anticipated examples in the stadium construction debate.

*Community Bond:* appeals to the ability of stadium construction or opposition to construction to build community cohesiveness. Threat of team departure followed by an argument that local teams bring citizens of diverse backgrounds together unlike other entertainment options falls into this category.

*Community Needs/Values:* appeals to “sense of community needs and values.” Appeals to an improved quality of life that would follow with new stadium construction reflect an example of appeals to this category. Assertions that building a stadium makes a city a “better place to live” fall into this category because of their generic, non-economic claims. Appeals to values that are claimed to be community-specific differentiate this category from broad ethical/conscience appeals.

*Technical Expertise:* appeals to specialized knowledge rather than political stature or entrepreneurial authority. Appeals to expertise in economic or construction-related disciplines reflect appeals intended for this category. As with appeals in the “authority” category, appeals to expertise are also intended to “close off, limit political discourse.”

*Ethical/Conscience:* appeals to ethics or an individual’s conscience. Differs from the “community needs/values category” in that normative appeals here are intended to be applicable on a broader scale. An assertion that stadium subsidies offer benefits to wealthy individuals at the expense of average citizens would be one example of this appeal.

*Ideal Social Order:* appeals for an “ideal social order” call for “an open, participatory democracy.” This is an ethical appeal of a very specific variety. Such appeals are invitational, arguing for greater levels of democratic participation. This category can be contrasted with an appeal to authority which is predicated on closing off participation.
Making Progress/Not Making Progress: quotations in this category are more accurately statements of opinion than an actual appeal. A pre-test of the coding sheet revealed that a number of quotations simply relayed perceived progress or lack of progress rather than attempting to convey ideological information to the public. To ensure consistency, the notion of “progress” is dependent on the goals of the speaker. For example, anti-construction voices would perceive negative construction-related news as progress.

Status: appeals to community status. Claims that new stadium construction is required to remain a big-league city reflect status-related appeals.

Other: appeals that do not adhere to any of the descriptions provided in the defined categories. “Other” serves as a catch-all for arguments that fail to mesh with any of the pre-established categories. The coding sheet provides a comment space to allow for inclusion of repeated themes in this final category. Appeals that are frequently utilized in this category can be better understood and analyzed through qualitative analysis once the prominence of these themes are quantitatively established.  

As the appeal categories listed above are quantified through the content analysis process, it will be possible to determine which fundamental arguments hold the greatest level of perceived utility for the various actors involved in the stadium debate. The specific appeals made by actors on both sides of this issue reflect ideological choices that are made with the express purpose of convincing a broader public to support a given policy proposal. These choices might accurately reflect community concerns or values; but even if they are not an accurate reflection of reality, they are still an important analytic tool. The importance of this data is derived from the certainty that category choices offer one clear indicator of a perceived set of community concerns or values by individuals with media access on this issue.

Attempting to isolate “boosterism” as a potential reporting style is among the most difficult tasks of this study. Because boosterism is hypothesized in media coverage, a definition of the term is required in order to develop a strategy aimed at determination of whether press coverage favors boosterism over other news gathering strategies.

Maxwell McCombs offers four distinct “visions” of professional journalism: professional detachment, investigative reporting, boosterism, and public journalism. Boosterism is marked by a commitment to a reporting style that is predicated on enhancement of community
institutions. Urban historian Daniel Monti, Jr. links boosterism to “civic patriotism,” implying that commitment to community loyalty and growth are inherent to the booster mentality.66

Daniel Boorstin suggests that boosterism has its roots in an American desire for expansion, particularly as our national borders expanded westward. He draws parallels between desired economic growth on the community level and the “booster press.” According to Boorstin, boosterism was a means of attracting new citizens to fledgling communities, particularly during westward expansion, with an underlying goal of economic and commercial vitality at the local level. Since these scholarly attempts to explain the nature of boosterism place varying weights on institutional, material, and economic progress, a definition that recognizes the value of each of these elements will be utilized in this determination of whether stadium-related media coverage can be categorized as reflective of boosterism. Boosterism will be defined as media coverage that is ideologically slanted to favor local institutions, individuals, and projects which are perceived to have the capacity to improve the economic or cultural stature of the locality under observation. An emotional bond to community is one element that separates boosterism from dispassionate appeals which support economic growth.

Since no single strategy can empirically validate whether boosterism persists in press coverage, four methodologies will be utilized to determine whether trends that favor boosterism are inherent in news coverage. The first will examine opinion-related media content in an attempt to determine whether editorial leadership regards new stadium construction as an important element in community enhancement or as an unnecessary expenditure of community resources. The second will examine placement and origin of quotations in news coverage, measuring which positions and individuals receive priority. The third will measure rhetorical appeals that appear skewed to favor perceived community improvement of economic or cultural institutions over appeals less rooted in community development. The fourth measurement will be comparative in nature, examining the congruity of news coverage with available public opinion data.

Examination of opinion-related stadium coverage during the period when news content coding is set will determine whether each publication under observation maintains a pro-construction stadium slant in editorials, op-ed pieces, and news commentaries. A publication strongly favoring new construction policy because it is perceived as best for the advancement of a community will suggest that a booster mentality persists. It must be recognized, however, that
analysis of clearly labeled opinion content can not be utilized to determine whether news content maintains bias. In short, this first level of analysis serves primarily as a general indicator rather than as empirical validation. It is likely that opinion content will be less than twenty articles for each community, making this specific indicator somewhat tenuous unless a very clear pattern of editorial partisanship emerges.

The second area to be measured in examination of “boosterism” is the placement of quotations in news coverage. Two factors are of significance in this analysis: the placement of specific viewpoints and the stature of those selected to speak on behalf of the broader community. Because boosterism has been defined as media coverage that is ideologically slanted “to favor local institutions, individuals, and projects which are perceived to have the capacity to improve the economic or cultural stature of the locality under observation,” categories that recognize community leadership have been established at the individual level. To determine which voices have been most privileged in the debate over stadium construction policy, the content analysis coding document was divided into role specific categories for each individual quoted. This subdivision would allow determination of which voices are most strongly recognized by media practitioners. The following categories serve to delineate the individuals who may be quoted in each news story:

**Prominent Politician:** Leaders within the political community. Mayor, governor, U.S. senator, and congressman are included in this category. In addition, elected representatives with titles such as “president” or “commissioner” will be included provided that they have the stature to shape the direction of stadium construction policy. Because of differences in local governing structures, one or two unique titles may gain inclusion in the “prominent politician” category for a given metropolitan area. To assure consistency in assignment to this category, justification must be provided for political titles not automatically included in this category for each particular market. Justification for a particular exception will be provided in the text that analyzes the content analysis for a given metropolitan area.

**Politician:** council members, board members, state-level senators, state-level congressmen, and other elected individuals that do not fit into the “prominent politician” category. This category may also includes individuals with important titles from outside
the city or county where stadium-related policy is being shaped. As an example, a “county commissioner” or “mayor” from a bordering county or town would not have “prominent” stature regarding the ability to shape stadium-related policy.

*Civic Leader:* A non-elected community leader. Included in this category are individuals with leadership titles in political organizations or the business community, such as a company or organization CEO or president. Also included are members of volunteer boards and civic organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

*Expert:* An individual that is solicited for an opinion on a specific topical area of expertise. Economists, public relations professionals, industry analysts, think tank representatives, and architectural engineers are a few of the individuals that may fall into this category. This person differs from a civic leader in that he or she has (or claims to have) skills or knowledge related to the information that is being solicited in the news coverage. The president of a local firm that provides economic forecasting services would be categorized as an “expert” when asked to comment on regional economic benefits of a project, but would be more appropriately classified as a “civic leader” if solicited for an opinion outside an area of expertise, such as the political ramifications of a policy proposal.

*Sports Franchise Owner:* Owners and part-owners of a sports franchise, including immediate family members who hold high-level positions within a sports franchise.

*Sports Management:* Non-athletic team employees, league officials, and other individuals possessing job titles that involve them directly with day-to-day management of the sports industry. To be included in this category, the individual must have a clear association with the team or sport that is requesting the sports subsidy. As an example, the head coach of an NFL team would be included in “sports management” while the head coach of a regional high school team would be more appropriately categorized as “citizen” or “activist citizen,” depending on the role of the individual when cited by the reporter.

*Athlete:* An individual who is on the roster of a professional sports franchise during the time when a quote is solicited. Retired athletes will not fit into this category, but instead will be labeled as “sports management” if employed by a professional team or placed in another category that reflects their current role within the community.
Activist Citizen: Individuals who are identified as having a clear link to an organization or specific activity that is directly related to active lobbying for a specific position relative to stadium construction policy. The “activist citizen” category includes individuals who are either organizing to mobilize for a specific cause or are working at the site of a specific campaign-related event such as a rally, protest, or petition signing. If individuals are identified as officers within the lobbying organization, they will not be moved to the “civic leader” category unless the organization with which they are affiliated are not identified as having clear positions on the stadium issue.

Average Citizen: A citizen solicited for an opinion who does not have an identifiable link to a specific organization or group that is lobbying for stadium-related policy. An example might be citizens solicited for comments at a tavern during routine business hours. Individuals who appear to be randomly selected are included in this category.

Coverage that privileges the voices of political leaders, business leaders, and team owners will suggest boosterism, while greater focus on citizens and experts will suggest a coverage strategy that is less rooted in boosterism. News coverage is traditionally presented in an “inverted pyramid” style, making placement of quotations a significant indicator of bias. The inverted pyramid style presumably places the most important voices first, followed sequentially by voices of diminishing importance. Because the inverted pyramid is a generally accepted news gathering routine, a coding strategy that would permit tracking of the position of various quotes will be employed. A letter of the alphabet representing the quotation position, beginning with the letter A provides a convenient tracking system for determination of journalistic priorities regarding how each quote is positioned. Of particular concern is which voices appear in the first, second, and third position in a given story. Such a coding strategy will allow for better understanding of how media gatekeepers prioritize the arguments made by those involved in shaping stadium funding policy. Should pro-construction voices receive greater access to early story quotations, a booster mentality might be prevalent. Patterns of selection in first three quotations of each story will be analyzed to determine whether a consistent pattern of quote positioning bias is prevalent.

As with analysis of opinion content, the measure provided in this analysis of news coverage simply provides a suggestion that boosterism may persist, not conclusive evidence of a booster mentality.
The second measure of boosterism, careful focus on topical categories reflective of booster bias, will provide an additional dimension of analysis. Because boosterism is predicated on the perception of community progress and cohesion, appeals that privilege the prudence of collective community action and economic improvement will be categorized as supportive of boosterism. Of the ten appeal categories listed on the coding sheet, four appear to be consistent with this interpretation: economic, community bond, community needs/values, and status. The rather generic “making progress/not making progress” category has the potential to reflect boosterism, so careful qualitative assessment of how this category is implemented in coverage will take place after the coding is completed. Appeals to ethics/conscience, technical expertise, social order reflect value-based logic that could have an indirect booster component in some instances, but these categories are appeals that transcend the dictates of a specific community.

Furthermore, in keeping with the previously established definition of “boosterism,” these appeals do not directly “favor local institutions, individuals, and projects which are perceived to have the capacity to improve the economic or cultural stature of the locality under observation.” In general, appeals rooted in values not congruent to collective action, such as individualism, will be isolated as appeals that fail to support boosterism. The remaining categories, if carefully examined on a case by case basis, may contain some facet of boosterism, but since inclusion of a booster bias may not be direct, these categories will be regarded as either neutral or anti-booster in nature. Should obvious and frequent booster appeals be made in these non-booster categories, qualitative analysis will be utilized for clarification. Finally, the “other” category will be carefully monitored, as it has the capacity to reflect either booster bias or values that are considered transcendent of a given community. Percentages will be given to determine the prevalence of appeals within each category delineated.

The third measurement will be comparative in nature, examining the congruity of news coverage with available public opinion data on public desire to partake in new stadium construction. If the coverage of pro and anti-stadium viewpoints is closely balanced with public opinion data, reporting tendencies can be argued to serve as a mirror for the larger society under observation, negating assertions of a “booster” press. Nevertheless, if coverage is skewed to represent one side more substantially than public opinion suggests is merited, then further qualitative analysis will be required to determine whether boosterism has pervaded. Generally, it
is speculated that a pro-construction bias will suggest a higher level of boosterism, but more careful qualitative examination of the total political landscape must be offered to determine whether such a conclusion would be prudent.

To summarize, attempts to determine the prevalence of boosterism are difficult and potentially subjective. In order to diminish the possibility of a flawed overall analysis, several forms of analysis will take place with the possibility that a mixed message in one form of analysis may result in an inability to fully demonstrate whether the “boosterism” hypothesis is valid. Despite limitations in the overall strategy, the following series of individual analyses may help to determine whether boosterism is a common element in routine press coverage of stadium-related issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Analysis</th>
<th>What is Measured</th>
<th>Expected Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1: Quote placement</td>
<td>which voices receive best placement</td>
<td>pro-construction bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2: Quote content</td>
<td>which appeals receive greatest utility</td>
<td>pro-growth bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3: Opinion content</td>
<td>which opinions are given greater priority</td>
<td>pro-construction bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4: Qualitative</td>
<td>whether measures 1, 2 &amp; 3 are credible</td>
<td>uncertain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Field of Examination**

The sources chosen for this content analysis will be daily newspapers. Newspapers will be selected because of their capacity to transmit greater levels of ideological content than broadcast media. Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure hammer home this point in stating that “all the words spoken on a network evening newscast will fit, with room to spare, on the front page of a newspaper.”

This basic fact compelled Jerry Yeric and John Todd to cautiously argue that “opportunities for learning political information are greater from the newspaper...than from television.”

Cross-media agenda-setting studies utilizing a variety of designs are not fully conclusive regarding the advantages of newspapers in transmitting ideology. After comparing numerous studies, Wayne Wanta suggests that despite television’s potentially greater effectiveness in rapidly conveying information, individuals “recalled the issue information for longer periods from newspapers.” Robinson and Davis confirm Wanta’s hypothesis in an examination of national survey data, arguing that newspaper readers have greater levels of generalized knowledge than consumers of television alone since those “who claim to watch TV newscasts have lower
comprehension scores.” John Robinson and Dennis Davis provide a literature review of 15 studies that provide further support for the notion that newspaper readers are more informed than individuals primarily reliant on television for news content.70

In metropolitan areas with more than one paper, the prestige press of the community will be selected for primary analysis. Secondary and less concentrated analysis of tabloid newspapers or less widely circulated evening newspapers will be undertaken, but this study will commit to a greater systematic analysis of the prestige newspapers since it would be logical to determine that the enhanced credibility of these publications would have a potentially greater impact on policy formation within a community.

In the New York metropolitan area, the New York Times will be selected over the New York Daily News and the New York Post. Nevertheless, brief cross-comparative analysis of competing publications will be offered to determine whether some level of coverage consistency permeates stadium-related reporting. In Pittsburgh, The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette will be selected, while in Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Enquirer will be selected for in-depth analysis, with less detailed examination provided for the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review and the Cincinnati Post respectively. The Boston coverage will focus primarily on the Boston Globe, with a limited analysis of the Boston Herald. The less comprehensive secondary analysis of competing local newspapers should offer tentative evidence of coverage consistencies.

Although television coverage will not be at the core of this research, the importance of broadcast news to the overall media landscape is too significant to fully ignore. As a result, a cross-comparative analysis of at least one week of a highly concentrated news coverage period will be made in the concluding chapter. This examination of television will focus on coverage of the Pittsburgh stadium funding issue. A core question of this limited cross-media comparison is whether the level of reporting bias is consistent across media. While this limited examination will not fully resolve this particular issue, it will offer preliminary data that may be used to further enhance future research in this area.

**Time Frame for Content Analysis: Tailoring the Analysis to the Metropolitan Area**

The decision making process varies widely in the formulation of stadium construction policy. In some communities a voter referendum provides the mechanism for construction or rejection of new construction. In other communities, funding decisions are made by elected
governing bodies or non-elected committees such as a regional “stadium and convention authority.” Finally, some stadium-related policy decisions are made through a combined referendum-legislative process that is a difficult-to-explain hybrid of policy outcomes. As such, finding a unit of analysis that offers a reasonable basis for comparison among differing metropolitan areas is difficult and potentially subjective. In order to minimize selection-related bias that could potentially skew results, peak periods of media coverage were used as a determining factor for each metropolitan area. A minimum of three months of stadium-related coverage was selected for each metropolitan area, but a maximum of four and a half months was utilized in the Pittsburgh case study because, unlike other case studies, three separate legislative steps were undertaken before stadium subsidies were fully in place. Because percentages have been used in this study, comparative analysis will be possible even if the time-frame for coverage differs according to community.

For Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, both cities with referendum processes, the three months preceding the actual vote will be chosen for content analysis. Because the voters of Pittsburgh rejected stadium funding, an additional five weeks of coverage will be added. First, the analysis of the three weeks preceding the committee vote to authorize local funding of taxpayer subsidies. A second two week block will include the month immediately preceding the Pennsylvania state legislature vote to authorize a state subsidy for stadium construction.

Although a second referendum was part of the Cincinnati process, this referendum has not been included in the content analysis. This is because the second Cincinnati referendum was related to site selection only, not actual stadium construction subsidy, rendering analysis of the second referendum unsuitable for testing pro or anti-construction hypotheses. Simply put, almost every argument made in the second referendum assumed that stadium construction would occur, rendering the debate about whether to build moot. Nevertheless, this second referendum provided valuable information regarding public policy regarding stadium construction, so this should not be overlooked. As a result, qualitative analysis of site-related media content has been offered in the chapter focusing on the Cincinnati case study when it was specifically relevant to research questions that are pertinent to this particular project.

Since no referendum has been offered in either metropolitan New York or Boston regarding taxpayer subsidy of stadium construction, a preliminary analysis of media coverage has
determined the most prevalent three month coverage block for each region. The time frame for preliminary “first-tier” analysis of media coverage levels has been determined on a case-specific basis. This was be done by simply examining the number of stadium-related stories each month during a specified period and isolating the most intensive three month coverage period.

In the Boston metropolitan area, coverage period from September 1998 through January 2001 was examined to determine the best period for content analysis. This time frame is based on two factors. First, the New England Patriots football team owner Robert Kraft’s November 19, 1998 surprise announcement of his intention to move his franchise from the Boston suburb of Foxboro, Massachusetts to Hartford, Connecticut triggered greater public concern about the stadium issue as it related to this NFL franchise. Second, the Red Sox management announced its firm determination in early 1999 that a new ballpark, not a renovation, was needed to replace Fenway Park. This announcement forced Boston area fans to confront the future home of the local baseball franchise. After both of these announcements, an increase in news coverage of stadium related proposals from both the Patriots and the Boston Red Sox occurred. Content analysis from April through July 1999 was chosen because it marked a time when both the Red Sox and the Patriots were actively involved in selling stadium subsidies to the public. During this time, the Patriots committed to a return to Massachusetts and the Red Sox unveiled their plans for a new ballpark that was intended to replace Fenway Park. This was one of the few time-frames when both sports franchises were heavily involved in the subsidy issue simultaneously.

For the New York metropolitan area, several events and issues were critical. First, an increase in news coverage of stadium construction proposals appears linked to an April 13, 1998 incident at Yankee Stadium in which a quarter ton steel “expansion joint” collapsed into the seating area, causing cancellation of several baseball games. Shortly after the incident, George Steinbrenner, principal owner of the Yankees and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani both began to advance plans to construct new sports facilities in New York City. Second, a May 15, 2001 story that the New York Jets owner would consider departing for Los Angeles if not for new stadium construction merited careful scrutiny. Media coverage of the potential for a departure for Los Angeles was somewhat sparse, suggesting that threatened franchise shifts away from large market cities are not automatically perceived as dramatic news events by media practitioners.

The period of preliminary examination for New York media coverage was from April
1998 through May 2001. In this instance, month by month analysis of New York area stadium-related news reporting during this three year period revealed very limited moments of extensive stadium-related coverage throughout the process. The three month time-frame from April to June 1998 reflects a most extensive period of press coverage, followed quickly by an overall drop-off in stadium-related reporting. During this period, local coverage was initially heavy, and widespread national coverage was achieved.

The stadium-related coverage began with the collapse of a 500 pound steel beam in Yankee Stadium which prompted reporters to cover the stadium issue. Some individuals, including New York’s mayor and the Yankees’ management, used this news event as an opportunity to lobby for new stadium construction. The period also overlapped with the New York Mets announcement of plans for a stadium to replace Shea Stadium. Sustained enthusiasm for the stadium issue could not be found in the New York case study throughout the three year examination period, so the April through June 1998 time-frame was selected because of the heavy initial coverage which occurred in April and May, 1998. Although the entire multi-year time frame will be examined in a qualitative manner, this three month period was chosen for a rigorous quantitative content analysis in order to test specific hypotheses.

Some universal trends emerged from this examination, but each metropolitan area also exhibited some unique media coverage characteristics. As a result, reliance on a single research method could not yield productive and meaningful research across all case studies. Focus on a single research methodology would have excluded a variety of relevant variables that should be considered if a thorough understanding of the stadium construction issue is desired. As such, a mix of historic, economic, and political analyses were used as needed in each case study. Use of a uniform coding standard in the content analysis section of each case study allowed for tangible comparisons and contrasts of media coverage trends in the cities under examination. A thorough use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies has exposed the unique characteristics of each case study, while revealing specific trends that may be reflective of deeper national media coverage tendencies as they relate to media coverage of stadium construction efforts in professional sports.
Sources: Chapter Three


9. The early literature and personal letters from the colonial era suggests a variety of reasons for traveling to America. Boosterism was a small percentage of this literature. As with Daniel Boorstin’s assertions about nineteenth century boosterism, it was most prevalent in seventeenth century colonial America when self interest warranted such a posture. Church elders and entrepreneurs in search of resources for England were most inclined to act as boosters. David Cressy offers limited evidence of both religious and secular boosterism, while Sacvan Bercovitch provides an overview of boosterism with clearly religious overtones. Cressy, Daniel. *Coming Over: Migration and Commerce Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987; Sacvan Bercovitch. *The American Jeremiad*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.


18. After CBS lost the rights to broadcast the NFL to Fox in 1994, some stations abandoned their affiliation with CBS. While other variables may have affected this decision, the proximity of this programming change to the loss of the NFL contract should be considered evidence that NFL program content was highly coveted at the local level. For more on this issue, see Perman, Stacy. “Thrown for a Loss by the NFL.” *Time*. January 26, 1998, pp. 52-53.


20. The prevalence of such transgressions are too numerous to chronicle but are visible in daily sports reporting. Entire books have been written on this topic. Among the best known is: Benedict, Jeff and Don Yeager. *Pros and Cons: The Criminals Who Play in the NFL*. New York: Warner Books, 1998. *Sports Illustrated* has responded to the high frequency of sports-related infractions by creating an open-ended bottom of the page section of news briefs that it headlines simply “blotter.”


26. For an examination of this less publicized dimension of the Dewey/Lippmann debate, see: Bybee, Carl. “Can Democracy Survive in the Post-Factual Age?: A Return to the Lippmann-


28. Heisenberg determined that energy, a fundamental component of Einstein’s theory of relativity, could be interpreted to be “particle-like” or “wave-like,” depending on the method of scientific observation. Carl Baybee argues that this empirical observation “helped to shatter the Newtownian world of the physical world as composed of fixed substances and laws.” (Bybee, p. 50). Lippmann, in a letter to a friend, indicated his awareness of this epistemological shift.

29. Tuchman, p. 12.

30. Tuchman, p. 211.

31. Tuchman, p. 5.


38. Fico and Soffin, p. 631.


43. Swisher and Reese, p. 1000.


51. Dunwoody and Shields, p. 492.

52. Dunwoody and Shields, p. 493.

53. Dunwoody and Shields, p. 495.

54. Dunwoody and Shields, p. 496.


56. Subscriptions to *Stadium and Arena Financing News* are available at American Banker Newsletters, One State Street Plaza, New York, NY 10004. According to the publisher, the $485 subscription fee is a 30 percent discount off the regular subscription price of $695. This discount offer was made at various times in 1999.
57. The online subscription to Stadium Insider is available at www.stadiuminsider.com. The cited $275 price reflects a subscription offer as of May 2000.


60. Fico and Soffin, p. 631.


62. An examination of 25 years of communication-related content analyses by Riffe and Freitag critically cited the lack of rigor inherent in many studies of this nature. According to the authors 54% of the content analyses observed lacked formal hypotheses, while 72% were criticized for a lack of theoretical underpinning. Riffe, Daniel and Freitag, Alan. “Twenty Five Years of Content Analyses in Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly.” Journalism Quarterly. August 1996, pp. 133-139.


64. Words and phrases placed in quotes in descriptions are taken directly from descriptions provided by Barton. See pp.18-20 of Ties that Blind in Canadian American Relations.


Chapter 4: The Cincinnati Case Study

Cincinnati is a city of contrasts. The lazy paddlewheel riverboats visible on the banks of the Ohio River offer a stark contrast to a more contemporary city that operates at a considerably faster pace than these relics of yesteryear might suggest. It is a polite city that mixes Southern and Midwestern cultures, but it also seems to act as a lightning rod for occasional uncivil controversy that has garnered national attention. Riots and unrest permeated the city in April 2001 after a police officer shot an unarmed civilian. The Mapplethorpe Exhibit and Ku Klux Klan rallies are other examples of events that have brought heated controversy to this city in recent years.

These confrontations can be clearly contrasted with an accommodating cultural heritage that was not only reluctant to choose sides in the Civil War, but was so reflexively generous to nineteenth century beggars that the Cincinnati Daily Enquirer claimed that “adjoining cities and towns [were] shipping their paupers here.”¹ More recently, the region’s reputation for civility was creatively cited in USA Today’s Four Sport Stadium Guide when explaining the dimensions of Cinergy Field. According to this book’s authors, “the field’s perfectly fair, symmetrical, average dimensions..., favoring neither pitcher nor hitter” reflect “the city’s reputation as a polite town.”² While the city received abundant negative national attention for racial unrest and rebellion against police brutality allegations in April 2001, what was not covered were popular city block parties featuring more than a thousand friendly residents in the same Over-the-Rhine neighborhood that was the site of unrest and acrimony a few days earlier.

A Hamilton County population that is politely conservative on a range of social issues can be contrasted to abrasive popular culture icons who have emerged from the Cincinnati metropolitan area. Pornography magnate Larry Flynt and popular talk show host Jerry Springer seem to reflect everything that the typical Cincinnati resident abhors, yet Flynt’s publication empire emerged from his Cincinnati base, while Springer first gained the public spotlight, not as a Cincinnati talk show host, but as a political figure who was eventually elected Cincinnati’s mayor.³ The less than clean reputations developed by Springer and Flynt are also an ironic contrast to Cincinnati’s largest employer, Procter and Gamble, the nation’s largest producer of soaps and cleaning products.

It is a parsimonious culture with a population that wants to maintain necessary city
services but is reluctant to part with tax dollars unless a program can be justified as necessary. This reluctance to spend may have deep roots, evolving from a manufacturing culture that derived its resources for soap production from animal fat by-products obtained at the many pork slaughterhouses that shaped the early years of Cincinnati’s shift from agricultural processing to industrial production.

Determining why Cincinnati citizens might willfully spend taxpayer dollars on stadium subsidies might seem like a mystery, but this might be better explained as part of a long-standing desire to be identified as a major city with world-class status. Stephen Guschov’s early history of Cincinnati baseball traces the formation of the nation’s first fully professional baseball team in 1869 to a desire for civic pride that was cultivated, in part, by the derisive moniker “Porkopolis” which was often attached to Cincinnati by the haughty citizens of Chicago. So pervasive was the term “Porkopolis” that in 1876, Cincinnati’s local baseball team was nicknamed the “Porkopolitans” to the dismay of many but with the approval of Josiah Keck, the team owner who derived his profits from the meat packing industry.

Historian Carl Abbott argues that Cincinnati’s wealthy classes of the nineteenth century allowed the Cincinnati economy to languish while Chicago and St. Louis moved forward through a more aggressive boosterism that attracted industry and investment. If Cincinnati proved to be a laggard in civic boosterism during the nineteenth century, it was clearly ahead of its time in identifying professional athletics as a means of achieving widespread prominence. American Studies Professor Robert Harris Walker argues that “residents of this city not only enjoy their baseball, but feel that the city is judged by its baseball.” Cincinnati’s long-standing heritage of sports-oriented boosterism created a fertile terrain for new stadium construction as the 1990s unfolded. It should be no surprise that the Queen City was at the center of the first legislation simultaneously approving public subsidy for construction of two major professional sports facilities.

**Cincinnati: An Overview of Stadium Construction History**

Cincinnati is a metropolitan area with a high level of enthusiasm for sports. Not surprisingly, this enthusiasm is reflected throughout the cultural fabric of the city. Despite many losing seasons as an NFL franchise, former Bengal players are frequently featured in local advertisements. Billboards for food products endorsed by retired quarterback Boomer Esiason
might be found on Vine Street during the summer months. 

Radio advertisements and public service pitches featuring Hall of Fame lineman Anthony Munoz are also plentiful. The Cincinnati Public Library often features sports-related public displays and has even published thousands of copies of a baseball-related bibliography created by its staff for free distribution to local citizens to encourage use of a rather sizable collection of sports-related materials. 

The University of Cincinnati also offers an abundance of sports-related resources including a remarkable collection of recent dissertations and theses which have been acquired from colleges and universities throughout the United States.

On a more general level, Cincinnati Reds legend Johnny Bench has been featured on the cover of *Cincinnati* magazine several times. The Cincinnati Pops Orchestra has tailored its performances to include baseball themes, with Johnny Bench in at least one instance serving as a guest narrator. 

A well-traveled Cincinnati road by Riverfront Stadium (recently renamed Cinergy Field) has been named in honor another legendary teammate of Bench, Pete Rose. Despite Rose’s banishment from baseball after an investigation into his gambling activity while serving as manager of the Reds, many Cincinnati residents continue to look favorably upon this local sports icon, often calling local talk shows to argue that his treatment at the hands of baseball’s executives has been unfair. Professional football, introduced to Cincinnati in 1968 with the creation of the Bengals franchise, tends to take a back seat to the Cincinnati Reds in terms of overall community enthusiasm and support. A recent *Cincinnati* magazine confirmed this, calling the Reds Cincinnati’s “most precious institution.”

During Marge Schott’s tenure as Reds owner, she capitalized on this local passion for sports, adorning local buses with billboards that prominently featured Cincinnati Reds logos in an effort to increase sales for her car dealership. This use of sport for commercial purpose has deep roots in Cincinnati. The first fully professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, was initially formed in 1866 by Cincinnati attorney Aaron Champion, “an enormous civic booster...[who] believed that if the city of Cincinnati prospered, so would he.”

Champion believed that a winning baseball team could instill civic pride and as the son of a prosperous merchant, he was familiar with the world of commerce. He hired Harry Wright, a handsome and athletically gifted English native with roots to New York area baseball, to lead the new franchise.

Initially, the Red Stockings were easily outclassed by teams from New York and
Washington, but by 1869, it was clear that the all-professional formula established by Wright was the future model for baseball in America. The 1869 Red Stockings stunned the baseball community by earning a remarkable undefeated record of 56-0-1. Baseball historian Steven Guschov remarked that “Harry Wright’s men were not just hired gun professionals, but also were pioneers and teachers of the burgeoning game.” Children would attempt to emulate the fielding and hitting techniques of these professional athletes. Similarly, baseball teams in other towns would push harder to achieve the same level of success attained by the 1869 Red Stockings, emulating many of the managerial tactics and strategies formulated by Harry Wright in Cincinnati.

The impact of Cincinnati’s undefeated season on the future of baseball, while difficult to fully determine, must be regarded as profound. Professionalism, a concept often regarded as undesirable in sports during the Gilded Age, gained currency and credibility in baseball and was fully entrenched by the Progressive Era. Wright reinforced the credibility of professionalism with a regimen of tough practice sessions and an insistence on healthy diet that excluded excessive drinking. The uniform style, adapted from knickers that were used in the English game of cricket but offset with unique brightly colored hosiery, was also a hallmark of the Cincinnati squad. Mixing a unique style with a focus on winning, Wright’s squad furthered the credibility of sports as paid, commercial entertainment. This position stood in contrast to the previously established English model of sports, one that was predicated on a genteel and aristocratic amateurism.

This process was evolutionary, not revolutionary, however. The refusal of some teams to play against less affluent professional squads offers significant evidence that the English model of elitism had not entirely disappeared in 1869. Nevertheless, a model of baseball predicated on commerce and entertainment was emerging, and that model would eventually displace the elitist amateur model of the old world. Albert Spalding, a legendary figure in the sporting industry and a rival to these early Cincinnati teams, made the linkage between sports and entertainment abundantly clear. In a question that reflects the current-day ethos of sport and society, Spalding rhetorically asked, “how could it be right to pay an actor, or a singer...for entertaining the public, and wrong to pay a ballplayer for doing exactly the same thing?”

The introduction and general acceptance of this new professional ideology in sports eventually led to the need for ballparks and stadiums that were more elaborate, and over time,
these structures became a reflection of civic pride. Cincinnati was a clear leader in this evolutionary process, but the ballpark as a revenue generating venue developed initially in the New York metropolitan area, not Cincinnati. Cincinnati’s first ballpark was less of a profit center and more of a necessary locale to retain a ball club which, through success, became a symbol of community pride. In short, Cincinnati’s first professional ballparks offer modest philosophic parallels to the current subsidy model of stadium construction.

Cincinnati’s baseball club initially paid $2,000 to rent the Live Oak Base Ball Grounds for the 1866 season, moving to the Union Cricket Club Grounds in 1867. In 1867, club president Chapman ordered an allocation of $10,000 to refurbish the Union Grounds, presumably utilizing the club dues of its 380 members for these improvements. Included in the improvements were field grading, sodding, and construction of stands and a clubhouse. As baseball increased in popularity, membership in the cricket club declined. By 1868, the baseball club had assumed all debts related to the Union Grounds, a clear indication that baseball had supplanted cricket in this community. This indebtedness complicated Chapman and Wright’s goal of fielding the first “all professional” team in 1869. To alleviate this debt problem, Chapman offered a $11,000 stock issue in 1868 and a $15,000 stock issue in 1869. With the entire team’s payroll at $9,300 for the 1869 season, there is no doubt that a portion of these funds were allocated to ballpark improvements. Ticket sales further enhanced the club’s revenue position as they embarked on their first fully professional season.

The first attempts to fence in ballparks, including Cincinnati’s Union Grounds, had a clear exclusionary dimension, but Cincinnati’s first large major league ballpark was a decidedly more egalitarian effort. League Park, erected in 1884 for the Cincinnati Reds, reflected the blue collar environs of an abandoned brickyard that was surrounded by factories. The ballpark was hardly a source of community pride. Its stands collapsed on opening day, the first time they ever held spectators, killing one person and injuring scores of others. It was the first reported structure-related fatality in baseball. The park was destroyed by fire in 1900. A wooden facility was built to replace it.

Team owner John Brush began construction on a more permanent facility in 1901, opening it to the public on April 17, 1902. Despite its limited capacity, this blue collar park, formally still identified as League Park was often called the “Palace of the Fans” by city
residents. The Palace was unique in its use of classical architecture, giving Cincinnati fans a unique touch of elegance. With Corinthian columns and arches, parts of it had the look of a federal building. It included some concrete and steel sections and some wooden sections that were remnants of the earlier ballpark. In 1912, after a number of cities had constructed higher capacity concrete and steel facilities, Cincinnati replaced this classical structure with a less ornate modern 20,000 capacity ballpark which was then called Redland Field. In 1934, after the Reds were purchased by manufacturing magnate Powel Crosley, the ballpark was renamed Crosley Field. After a winning team clearly captured the enthusiasm of the community, Crosley Field was expanded in 1939 to accommodate 30,000 fans.

Following the construction of several municipal ballparks in other cities during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the tradition-rich Crosley Field began to be regarded as an archaic community eyesore that needed to be replaced. In an age that glorified cutting-edge technology, as evidenced by public enthusiasm for space exploration, it was difficult to defend an old fashioned ballpark that reflected the quaint values of yesteryear. Cincinnati subsequently built Riverfront Stadium to simultaneously serve as a home to the Bengals and the Reds.

The construction of this stadium was encouraged by local media coverage including numerous articles over a number of years. In July 1959, the Cincinnati Enquirer simultaneously appealed to civic pride and a cultural emphasis on modernity in an in-depth series devoted to stadium construction in other cities. A front page introduction to the series began by asking: “Can the Cincinnati Reds be lured away? Would the availability of a fancy, modern stadium in another city do it?” The series prominently featured many photographs, and included strategies used by public officials and civic leaders in other communities to lure away baseball teams from other cities. The most profoundly emphasized strategy offered in this series was the construction of new ballparks to attract or retain a major league baseball team.

The first article offered a sub-heading that cautioned “if we dilly-dally, we’ll lose the team.” It indicated that Reds owner Powel Crosley threatened to move the team if better parking facilities and quite possibly better overall facilities were not forthcoming. The need for a new stadium was strongly suggested, but renovation of Crosley Field in exchange for a long term city pact was also discussed. According to proponents of a new stadium, “an industry that brings prestige plus several million dollars a year to the city is too valuable to risk.”
Subsequent coverage in this series focused on the modern amenities offered at newly constructed facilities in other cities. Attracting the Braves through construction of Milwaukee’s County Stadium, was described by “most citizens” as “the city’s biggest step forward in years.” San Francisco’s Candlestick Park was described as “the newest and most modern in the nation.” This article on San Francisco did more than simply generate public envy for this new publicly subsidized West coast ballpark, it also provided justification for direct media involvement in the campaign to use public funds to construct a stadium. According to the author, “the four daily newspapers spearheaded the drive. As soon as business leaders and merchants figured out what a major league team would mean for the city in terms of spending, they got on the bandwagon....It was an easy sell.”

On the day after the San Francisco article, a front page model of an $8 million stadium intended for Cincinnati’s Carthage Fairgrounds was featured, presumably to excite readers about the possibility of a new facility. A same day feature article about the Twin Cities simultaneously constructing two baseball stadium projects offered a tangible example of a community willing to take excessively bold action to acquire a major league franchise. Minnesota did not have a major league franchise at the time, so the veiled threat of a Reds departure might have been perceived by some readers in this particular coverage. Coverage of Los Angeles stadium construction rounded out this series, but the intensity of this special coverage did not appear to push a new stadium project closer to fruition.

Tracing Cincinnati’s history of locating Crosley Field’s eventual replacement at the riverfront is somewhat surprising. If examined through the prism of current stadium construction, it is strongly possible that under similar conditions construction may have taken place away from the riverfront. Cincinnati Reds owner William DeWitt was never enthusiastic about a riverfront location. Instead, he preferred that new stadium construction take place in Blue Ash, a section of the city that offered greater immediate access to highways. With no guarantees of a football franchise when key construction decisions were being made, it is likely that current policy and press coverage would have given considerably more credibility to DeWitt’s desires than occurred in the late 1960s as he was lobbying for a stadium.

The development of Riverfront Stadium was clearly a drawn-out evolutionary process. Establishing credibility for a riverfront site may have been sparked by one individual’s modest
attempt to install a statue in a visible public location. One of the earliest proposals, released in 1948, considered a riverfront stadium as part of a larger urban plan to improve the entire downtown area. The City Planning Commission did not focus on the stadium as an essential part of this redevelopment, but indicated it would be an important feature that would improve the Cincinnati economy if approved. According to their report, “the Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates Cincinnati has lost $1 million a year for lack of facilities for major sports events.”

In implementation of the City Planning Commission strategy, the city did not focus on a new riverfront stadium and citizens did not appear to believe this was a problem. Furthermore, general development on the riverfront did not seem to attract a multitude of supporters, so pushing for riverfront construction of any type appeared to have extremely limited political currency. In the late 1950s and the early 1960s much of the citizenry of the Cincinnati metropolitan area considered the dilapidated riverfront beyond hope.

The lack of prime development along the riverfront during this time suggested that many government officials and members of the business community were in fundamental agreement with typical Cincinnati residents. The poor overall condition of Cincinnati’s riverfront provided a rationale for the inability of most citizens and leaders to regard this land as a potential resource. Louis Leonard Tucker described the riverfront of this period as “dismal and dirty. [It was] the city’s depository for sand, gravel, coal, and junk; filled with decaying buildings and the accumulated filth of a century of floods, hardly a visually exciting front yard for the Queen City.”

The initial push to develop the city riverfront in a symbolic way was made in 1959 by Robert Acomb, president of the Queen City Printing Company. Shortly after a conversation with his daughter, Jill, revealed that she had no knowledge of the historic origins of the city’s name, he determined that a statue of Quinctius Cincinnatus, the legendary Roman military leader and farmer, would serve to educate Cincinnati’s youth about the city’s classical origins.

Acomb convinced a number of his colleagues at the Cincinnatus Association, a small and exclusive civic club, that the idea had merit only to have the idea turned down by the city’s museum director. The director considered the notion of a Roman statue in front of the museum both low-brow and tacky. Nevertheless, the idea of riverfront construction gained some level of
credibility outside of the snobby circles of high culture. In July, a *Cincinnati Enquirer* article focusing on the future of Crosley Field quoted John Lloyd, chairman of the Civic Stadium Development Committee, touting a riverfront location as the place “where almost everyone believes the [new] stadium should be.” Although Lloyd’s remarks appear to definitively reflect public sentiment, evidence suggests that other sites may have been more attractive to the general public and to Reds management at this time.27

After months of inactivity regarding riverfront development, the Cincinnatus Association approached the City Planning and Park Board with an idea that would expand the development of Cincinnati’s riverfront beyond what was initially proposed. At this meeting Acomb and his colleagues received a green light to investigate the notion of a riverfront park that would include installation of the statue. The desire to expand riverfront development beyond the initial statue proposal may have been accelerated by a legislative maneuver in 1959 to raise the city’s bonding authority by $30 million. After one failed attempt to place a $4 million bond issue on the ballot for the November 1961 election, plans were solicited from architects around the nation as part of a well-publicized contest to develop a specific set of plans for this park. Although the contest failed to produce a winning entry, it garnered considerable media coverage and sparked public enthusiasm for potential acceptance of future proposals for riverfront development. Tucker described this process as “the key to riverfront renewal [with] the first move in a domino game...[passage of] the $6,600,000 bond referendum of 1962.”28 Although a large park area was not constructed, part of the bond issue included funding for a convention center. The subsequent municipal construction helped to make taxpayer funded stadium construction at the riverfront significantly more viable to many within the Cincinnati metropolitan area.

By the mid-1960s the dialogue had shifted from whether to build a new stadium at the riverfront to almost full acceptance of the notion that, if approved, new construction would take place at a riverfront location. In 1965 Attorney Jusdon Allgood, representing a firm that served as bonding consultants to the Hamilton County Commissioners, confidently reported that a stadium “could be financed, constructed, and paid for without new taxes.” Media coverage of his conclusions focused on stadium revenues from rental agreements with teams, ticket fees, concession sales, and parking revenues as sufficient to pay for what was reported to be a $20 million project.29 Less than a month later, a front page story focusing on a newly commissioned
feasibility study for the stadium project estimated total cost of new construction as $35 million. An accompanying story suggested adding a dome to the new structure, while an adjacent photo of Ohio Governor James Rhodes in football formation with five local politicians seemed to be designed to foster public enthusiasm for political efforts to lobby for an expansion NFL franchise for Cincinnati. The six photographed politicians were reported to be set to travel to the site of the NFL Pro Bowl to examine “the city’s chances for a grid franchise.” According to former Cincinnati Mayor Gene Reuhlmann, Governor Rhodes’ highly visible involvement at this Chamber of Commerce luncheon “really lit a spark” for the project.

By the middle of 1966 the riverfront location was solidified as the sole choice for stadium development. The government-commissioned feasibility study isolated the riverfront site as best for the region. A publicly circulated bulletin from the Hamilton County Good Government League in May 1966 seemed to finalize support for riverfront development. This document stated that the Reds first choice was a site in Blue Ash, but “after several days of negotiating, [Reds owner] DeWitt gave approval to the steering committee’s number one choice, the riverfront.”

By June the public debate on the stadium issue moved away from site location and general feasibility issues to a focus on aesthetics, construction, and financing. An 18 member Stadium Selection Committee, formed in 1966 and chaired by Cincinnati Enquirer Vice President Charlie Staab, met to determine a basic framework for stadium design. Utilizing St. Louis’ newly constructed circular stadium (Busch Stadium) as a model of modernity, civic leaders and stadium engineers overruled Reds owner William DeWitt’s desire for an open-ended horseshoe shaped stadium that would have left a part of the stadium open for full view of the Ohio River. Despite a number of known construction impediments, on July 7, 1965 the Cincinnati Enquirer’s lead story enthusiastically announced that “Cincinnati’s new riverfront stadium would cost $34,379,000 and be open by August 15, 1968.”

Media coverage during the remainder of 1966 and throughout 1967 generally followed two trajectories. The first focused on overcoming obstacles to ensure construction, including isolation of a variety of issues that helped to delay project completion. The second touted specific aspects of the stadium that would better serve the fans and the community. In 1968 and 1969, reporters suggested that obstacles to completion of construction were increasingly financial in nature. By 1970, the community pride began to emerge more prominently as a coverage theme.
As Riverfront Stadium neared its opening in June 1970, a media focus on civic achievement was embodied in the variety of “world-class” elements that were reportedly integrated into this new stadium.

Among the initial obstacles reportedly complicating stadium construction were land acquisition issues, the logistics of rerouting or suspending Pennsylvania Railroad traffic around the construction site, political bickering, funding complications, and street redesign in the stadium area. Public input and grass roots objections to construction went largely unreported, however. Two rare exceptions were an unsuccessful petition drive by Walter Kelly, president of the Hamilton County Democratic Club, “to place the sports stadium issue on the November ballot” and intermittent coverage of a lawsuit by a local attorney designed to block construction because the “structure [was] designed peculiarly to benefit an individual rather than the taxpayers in general.” The suit was unsuccessful, with all opportunities for appeal exhausted after a verdict from the Ohio State Supreme Court in June 1968.

Political infighting centered on the project cost, determination of responsibility for potential operating deficits, and concerns about local team commitments to specific contractual terms. A major focus related to team contracts was whether Cincinnati could obtain a league franchise for a new expansion football team. Legendary football coach Paul Brown pushed hard in the early stages to convince the city that quick stadium construction action was required to gain an NFL expansion franchise. The NFL’s general response from Cincinnati representatives was reserved distance. CBS network representatives were similarly non-committal about Cincinnati’s inclusion in the NFL. After rumors circulated that Seattle and New Orleans were network expansion favorites, a CBS representative told Paul Brown that “they don’t care where the new franchise goes.” Brown pushed hard to rush stadium construction in 1966, but Republican city council leaders could not be convinced that Cincinnati was a front runner for a 1968 NFL franchise. This viewpoint, coupled with a firm desire to hammer out a long-term lease with the Reds, delayed the decision to dedicate funds to detailed stadium construction plans.

After the legislative foot-dragging seemed to assure at least a one year delay on the stadium project, news reports seem to gradually shift coverage of obtaining an NFL expansion franchise to a more likely scenario of obtaining a less prestigious AFL team. In one case, coverage also focused on the Cincinnati Reds as an attractive prize for Milwaukee civic leaders,
with Reds owner William DeWitt reassuring local fans that “they’re not going to get Cincinnati.” This statement came two days after city officials postponed funding of architectural planning for the proposed stadium.

Instead of making threats to leave Cincinnati for a more lucrative arrangement elsewhere, DeWitt worked with Council Majority Leader Eugene Reuhlmann, local business leaders, and others to attract private funding for the desired architectural reports. At the urging of Cincinnati’s Mayor, Charlie Staab utilized his clout as vice president of the Cincinnati Enquirer and as local Chamber of Commerce head to begin raising funds within the business community for these necessary stadium architectural plans. According to Dennis Breen’s recent historic analysis, “Staab’s newspaper began churning out articles that appeared more like press releases, cheerleading and listing daily campaign contributions.” The polarization that Breen argues was caused by this overtly positive coverage was generally either downplayed or fully omitted from the pages of the Cincinnati newspapers during this period.

Architects and city officials pressured less enthusiastic individuals to move forward on the stadium project with periodic threats of price increases for construction. Most politicians and civic leaders regarded new stadium construction as an eventual inevitability, but for those opposing the project, these price increases served as a compelling argument to avoid construction entirely. Interestingly, cost concerns did not appear to provoke comparison shopping among architects or construction firms. Throughout the process, city and county officials regarded Atlanta architect George Heery and co-designer James Finch to be sufficiently expert in all facets of stadium design that seeking other firms appeared to be unnecessary. The primary contractor, Huber, Hunt, and Nichols, seemed to be chosen and utilized with a similar lack of controversy.

A number of politicians, including four city council members, regarded a signed long-term agreement between the city, the Reds, and the new owner of an expansion football franchise as a necessity before moving forward. A particular concern to the most cautious council members was the potential for an operating stadium deficit, which would presumably be absorbed by the city’s taxpayers. Although the stadium debt was to be funded through Hamilton County’s bonding authority, the city would be in charge of the maintenance, operation, and presumably expenses not covered by rent, concessions, and parking revenues. When an agreement was finally reached on construction financing and facility maintenance, the deficit
issue was not resolved, but city and county officials seemed to tacitly agree that a 3 percent hotel tax might be enacted if operating deficits became an issue. To forestall deficits prior to stadium completion, this tax was approved by city officials in 1969.

DeWitt’s battle with city officials over a long-term Cincinnati Reds’ contract for the new stadium and his general dislike for the riverfront location eventually resulted in sale of the team to a new coalition of local interests led by Cincinnati Enquirer President and Publisher Francis Dale. Not surprisingly, the investment might have provided incentive for tacit media coverage bias, but this is difficult to determine since before and after stadium completion, news coverage in the Cincinnati Enquirer and the rival Cincinnati Post and Times Star was generally positive with most of the reporting focused on ensuring project completion rather than analysis of whether the project deserved a taxpayer subsidy. Citizen input was generally limited to elected officials and key business leaders. In short, typical citizens were generally frozen out of media access during the decision-making process in the planning and construction of Riverfront Stadium. Such grass roots inquiries may have required working outside the boundaries of typical journalism routines of the time but may have yielded alternate policy options regarding the final direction of this stadium project.

The overall tone of stadium construction coverage in the years before the Cincinnati Enquirer’s top executive actively involved himself in a coalition to purchase the Reds suggests pro-construction coverage was inevitable regardless of whether Francis Dale’s activist investment took place prior to the opening of Riverfront Stadium in 1970. Nevertheless, Dennis Breen’s analysis of this entire process concludes that “political orchestrations, newsprint manipulation, hard-nosed pragmatics, and big money gave birth to Riverfront Stadium.”

As the stadium was opened to the public, media coverage featured glowing praise of this new civic monument. Whether the generally positive Cincinnati Enquirer press coverage throughout 1970 represented self-interest or a natural honeymoon period in which a genuinely excited public basked in the civic pride generated by the opening of a new facility is uncertain and such claims are virtually impossible to fully validate. In general, the Cincinnati Enquirer coverage was not markedly different in nature than what appeared in the Cincinnati Post and Times Star.

Coverage in both publications prior to construction approval and project completion
appeared to emphasize a need to move forward on stadium construction. Nevertheless, throughout the process the Enquirer may have been a slightly more aggressive than the Cincinnati Post and Times Star in pushing for new stadium construction. On July 9, 1966, The Cincinnati Enquirer’s highly visual front page story touting the new stadium design trumpeted how this stadium would bring the fans closer to the action than was ever possible at Crosley Field. The article’s second sentence quoted James Finch, one of the project architects, stating that fans would be so close to the field that “any closer and they’d be in the game.” A March 2, 1967 front page article in the Cincinnati Enquirer, which focused on rising construction costs as stadium construction was still uncertain, used bold type to highlight only two paragraphs to ensure that these specific passages were more apt to be seen by newspaper readership. The first bold-faced paragraph was positioned immediately after two opening paragraphs summarized the expert analysis of the stadium’s architect, George Heery, before the city’s Capital Improvements Committee. The bold copy indicated that “the underlying significance of Mr. Heery’s report was that the longer the city delays the award of the contract the higher the cost will be.”

The Cincinnati Enquirer also offered a number of special articles “exploring the impact on the area of the new riverfront stadium.” These articles, offered to the public as political debate on the stadium issue was heating up, tended to be promotional in nature, focusing on stadium amenities or entertainment opportunities that a new stadium might present to the city’s residents. An April 2, 1967 article focused on the press amenities and their capacity to attract solid network coverage of Cincinnati events. Two days later the focus was on the diversity of events that might come to Cincinnati if stadium construction were completed as proposed. Soccer, pageants, circuses, art shows, concerts, rodeos, and even road races were all listed as possibilities that would presumably enrich the lives of area residents. According to the author, “there is no limit to what Cincinnatians will be able to do with their new riverfront stadium.” The capacity of this series of articles to influence public opinion may have been tempered by less than prominent placement, however, as these largely positive pieces were not offered front page status. Regardless, shortly after these articles appeared, an important agreement was finalized between city and county officials to underwrite $42,250,000 in stadium construction bonds.

Stadium coverage was largely supportive of construction, but stories were not universally positive as construction moved forward. Coverage of political debates on funding, the uncertainty
of price increases as construction faced delays, and even coverage of a one-day worker strike in September 1968 revealed information that might convince citizens that stadium construction was not a prudent move. Overall, stadium proponents clearly received better media coverage and media access than individuals opposed to construction.

Although the stadium was not fully completed when initially opened on June 30, 1970, it was proudly showcased by the local media. *The Cincinnati Enquirer* created a special publication to showcase the facility. This special “Souvenir Edition” exuded civic pride as text and pictures heralded the greatness of the new facility, reflected on the memories provided by the old facility, and congratulated those whose efforts made Riverfront Stadium possible. On the cover of this publication was a commentary by *Cincinnati Enquirer* City Editor Bob Harrod which called the circular facility “a crown for the Queen City.” Harrod argued that the new stadium, constructed where “warehouses, bawdy houses, [and] produce houses once stood...has changed our skyline, our pulse, our very lives. It looms over the city today as a monument...to the people of Cincinnati and their faith and pride in themselves and their community.”

Community pride was obvious on this historic day, but some of Cincinnati’s residents regard the 1970 All Star Game as the stadium’s true opening since it nationally showcased the stadium and the city in a way that had not been done before.

A less detailed focus on the sports franchise owner in the late 1960s and early 1970s marked a key difference between contemporary Cincinnati stadium construction coverage and the coverage of Riverfront Stadium’s construction process. Reds owner William DeWitt was included in some of the coverage, but his overall ability to control the media agenda was minimal. DeWitt’s role in the process was curtailed by a variety of factors; most notably, a consensus among politicians, business leaders, and stadium experts appeared to overrule some of his personal preferences. He appeared to be held in check by others regarding both stadium location and design, two areas where current owners seem to have considerable input. His options were also limited by his civic mindedness, a factor which prevented him from using team ownership as a potential threat to his community. In no instance did DeWitt suggest moving the team away from the region as is common in current stadium construction negotiation. Instead of acquiescing on the final elements of stadium construction with which he strongly disagreed, in particular the long-term contract for tenancy at Riverfront Stadium, he transferred team
ownership to a consortium of local civic leaders, insisting that the Reds remain in Cincinnati before finalizing the sale. Local media leaders were instrumental in arranging for this transfer of ownership.

**Marge Schott, Mike Brown: Cultural Capital, Civic Pride, and the Push for New Facilities**

By the 1990s professional sports had moved into a more overtly mercenary direction. American sports had always been a commercial enterprise, as demonstrated by the geographical relocation of baseball teams in the 1950s and 1960s and the rapid expansion of professional football in the 1960s and 1970s. Even the most avid Cincinnati sports fan would recognize that in 1869, the baseball team assembled by George Wright maintained an intense eye on bottom-line profitability.

But by the 1990s, television revenues for sports franchise owners had grown substantially and the amount of team revenue that could be derived from stadium agreements also increased. Players had also complicated the process, using a complex collective bargaining process to secure labor pacts that resulted in a larger slice of the economic pie than was possible during the decades immediately following World War II. With an increasingly competitive entertainment landscape that included various competing electronic leisure options, team owners were now more willing to leverage their ownership status against civic pride early in the negotiating process, rather than as a last resort. As communication technologies erased the significance of time and space, cities were less likely to call the shots when dealing with team owners. With new satellite technologies, increased media coverage, a political landscape that discouraged commercial regulation, and relatively plentiful jet travel, franchise relocation had become easier than ever to arrange.

Major league executives knew that in a multi-channel television environment, their product offered a known and valuable entertainment option to emerging communities looking for tangible symbolic recognition of their metropolitan growth. In the 1990s, the northeast, the industrial mid-west, and select California cities no longer held hegemonic power over franchise location decisions. As the sports landscape evolved, negotiating power shifted to team owners, and they utilized this leverage more profoundly than ever before. Many owners knew that threats to leave an area would be treated with trepidation by many in the community, particularly politicians and business leaders who were in a position to push new stadium construction
Cincinnati’s team owners were aware that their property had enormous value as a regional cultural asset. When it became clear that both the Cincinnati Reds and the Cincinnati Bengals could dramatically improve their bottom line with separate new stadium agreements, it was only a matter of time before team owners would begin to portray Riverfront Stadium as a regional liability despite its overall structural soundness. As these pronouncements were made, Cincinnati media practitioners no longer relegated team owners to a less prominent coverage position. Reds Owner Marge Schott and Bengals Owner Mike Brown recognized this, as both jockeyed to establish positions that could maximize their revenues in ways that were not previously possible in past decades.

Political leaders, citizens, and business leaders looked on in frustration as media coverage focused on the owners desires for a new stadium for their respective teams. Former Reds Owner Marge Schott tended to adopt a reclusive posture through much of this process, while Bengals president Mike Brown was more approachable but was also difficult to work with at several moments in the process.

Part of the problem in dealing with these owners was the contractual relationship between the stadium authority and the two teams. The terms of the Riverfront Stadium lease stipulated that both parties would be treated as equals, compelling each party to childishly complain when one franchise seemed to gain even the slightest advantage over the other. The lease further compounded acrimony between the teams, as renovations and structural changes to the facility required the agreement of both parties before construction could begin. Unfortunately, when revamping the stadium created a perceived disadvantage for one party, little effort was made to determine whether the proposed renovation might be undertaken in a manner that would be creatively beneficial to both teams.

One such example involved the opening of a “stadium club” at Riverfront Stadium. Instead of working out a compromise that would create lucrative opportunities for both clubs, years of bickering left this section of the stadium unused and unfinished. Because a large portion of stadium revenues were retained by the city to avoid major stadium deficits, team owners seemed to react protectively to known revenue streams instead of seeking out creative new revenue opportunities. The stadium club is an amenity that is currently a coveted revenue stream
for team owners. Nevertheless, when a club area was proposed in the 1970s, Cincinnati team owners avoided the concept entirely since it might mean less seating for regular patrons. In 1974 the notion of a stadium club was advocated by the Reds. The Bengals dragged their feet, citing a disparity in “free” memberships for the Reds and the potential loss of regular seating as their primary cause for opposition.48 Months earlier, the city advertised the availability of “private loge boxes” as an amenity that would be available for a newly proposed indoor sports arena. But the potential for expanding such a concept for Riverfront Stadium to utilize this vacant area for “club” seating never appeared to garner significant media coverage.49

In 1988, almost two decades after initial discussions of a stadium club began, the Reds and the Bengals were both pushing the city to complete construction of such a project, but both parties strenuously objected to paying for any costs associated with the of construction of such a facility.50 By 1994, as the stadium construction issue was heating up in Cincinnati, the city expressed a desire to commit $16 million to creation of luxury boxes and a stadium club, regarding this construction as a means to improve stadium-related revenues to the city. The plan was vetoed by Marge Schott, in part because some of the construction would jeopardize the status of several areas that were popular with Reds season-ticket holders. City leaders responded to this setback by shelving renovation plans despite an earlier agreement with the Bengals that promised improvements in the team’s revenue picture.

Similar bickering, political infighting, and non-productive energy was exerted during an unproductive scoreboard controversy in the late 1970s, providing further evidence of a tendency for contentiousness among city officials and team owners on anything related to stadium management.51 Despite acrimony between the individual teams and those responsible for stadium management, all parties demonstrated a capacity for cooperation when concession revenues were jeopardized by independent vendors’ concession and souvenir sales on Riverfront Stadium’s plaza. On April 2, 1976, Judge Thomas Heekin upheld the right of city officials to allow the Reds to exclusively contract with Cincinnati Sportservice, Inc. for vending rights on stadium property, banishing independent licensed vendors to the less desirable perimeter of stadium property.52

Periodic problems between the teams and stadium management were evident to observant citizens, but arguments that Riverfront Stadium was an archaic relic did not begin to surface until it became apparent to Cincinnati sports franchise owners that other baseball and football teams
had improved their financial position substantially through new stadium construction.

A 1990 economic study touted the tremendous benefits of Riverfront Stadium to the local economy. The study, released by the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, was prepared using data provided by University of Cincinnati Economist George Vredeveld. It concluded Riverfront Stadium’s economic impact from 1970 to 1990 was $2.6 billion. Vredeveld’s inflation adjusted figures estimated a $4 billion economic impact in 1990 dollars. The study attempted to capture all direct and indirect revenues related to events held at Riverfront Stadium. Included in the analysis were revenues from such diverse sources as stadium concessions, local restaurants, and area hotel bookings. A *Cincinnati Enquirer* article summarizing the study led with a quote from Michael J. Comisar, a restauranteur, praising the wisdom of city leaders for the downtown proximity of the stadium, concluding “thank God it was built downtown. It has been a home run for business here.”

As this report was released, a number of new stadium projects in other cities were underway. Camden Yards was among the most successful in baseball. Opened in 1992, it served as a powerful and nationally recognized symbol for the success of Baltimore’s highly touted waterfront entertainment complex. By 1994, the Baltimore Orioles ranked second in stadium revenue, eclipsed only by the Chicago White Sox, a team that was also the beneficiary of a new taxpayer subsidized facility which opened in 1991. Baltimore and Chicago’s 1994 stadium revenues totaled $19.7 million and $22.4 million respectively. With less fanfare, the 1994 renovation of the Dallas Cowboys’ home field by Jerry Jones, included the addition of 68 luxury suites. This renovation resulted in the generation of over $37 million in stadium revenue and a whopping 25 percent increase in the team’s market value in just one year.

Once these construction projects were completed and stadium-generated revenues became public knowledge, it was abundantly clear that a new or dramatically renovated stadium could increase a team owner’s revenue substantially. If a significant taxpayer subsidy could be arranged, as was the case in Baltimore and Chicago, the lions share of these revenues could be retained by the team owner. Particularly attractive to both baseball and football team owners was the fact that stadium-generated revenues, exclusive of ticket sales, were exempt from all league revenue sharing agreements. If owners worked harder to attract more traditional fans, they would have to share a portion of their ticket revenue with colleagues, but with the new reliance on
upscale stadium clubs and skyboxes, they could pocket 100 percent of many forms of newly generated stadium revenues.

As a result, the 1990s were a period of great difficulty for stadium management officials, particularly in Cincinnati. In 1993, Bengals owner Mike Brown “threatened to leave town with the team if there wasn’t a breakthrough on a renovated stadium or a new stadium for the pro football franchise.” At the same time, the Reds’ management, invoking their contractual agreement to “equal treatment,” complained that a number of Riverfront Stadium renovations were needed to satisfy the Reds. To avoid further stadium-related deficits, Cincinnati officials contemplated a number of managerial changes, including private sector stadium management and peddling the naming rights to Riverfront Stadium to a willing corporate suitor.55

Even though Cincinnati had retired only about half of the original Riverfront Stadium debt, owners from both the Reds and Bengals began to make increasingly difficult demands for new amenities or entirely new facilities in the early 1990s. What was particularly difficult about this situation, was that these team owners acted in a highly competitive manner. Temporary cooperation was rare and was generally followed by acrimonious demands for “equity.” If the Bengals’ Mike Brown negotiated a perk that was previously unavailable to both parties, Reds’ owner Marge Schott would soon complain that this was an unfair favoritism. If negotiations shifted to pacifying the Reds, Mike Brown would offer less than subtle reminders that the Bengals might take drastic action in the future.56 Citizens and political leaders had no doubt that Brown was suggesting negotiation with other cities might occur, even if this strategy was not fully articulated. Similarly ominous were claims that virtually any Riverfront Stadium renovation advantage violated a lease agreement that called for “equal treatment” of both tenants since this could also be used to trigger a franchise move.

A most difficult part of this entire process was a lack of consistency and clarity on the part of both team owners. Marge Schott made occasional demands for a new stadium. Shortly after such a demand was articulated, she frequently withdrew from any involvement in stadium-related discussions. Although Schott was often unreasonable and cantankerous, city council members hurt their negotiating position with Schott in several ways. In March 1994 the seeds for future acrimony were sown when Schott refused to sign off on improvements to Riverfront Stadium that would benefit the Bengals. Some city council leaders, frustrated with Schott’s
intransigence, “criticized her, questioned her loyalty, and even laughed at her demands.”

In attempting to shame Schott into signing a short term agreement without making modest attempts to directly confront her demands, permanent acrimony and suspicion was cultivated. Less than two months later, the city readjusted the stadium’s market value upward from a depreciated value of $19.8 million to a book value of $47 million in response to a controversy involving the school board and the county. A move that may have seemed harmless to the typical citizen, this readjustment had the potential to further the rift between Schott and the city. This financial decision took place just days after Schott made overtures to purchase Riverfront Stadium, a maneuver that would have avoided the heavy-handed request for two brand new facilities made by both owners in the months ahead. Although difficult to determine precisely how Schott perceived this action, it is likely that she regarded it as hardball posturing by city leaders to extract a maximum sale price from her. Not surprisingly, she backed off these overtures to purchase Riverfront Stadium shortly after this reassessment issue surfaced.

Bengals Owner Mike Brown, while generally more amiable in dealing with civic leaders, was also difficult to pin down. Brown alternated his demands periodically while openly admitting on several occasions that failure to meet his deadlines could result in a franchise relocation. In November 1993, Brown attempted to frame his demand for a new stadium as a civic-minded attempt to remain in Cincinnati. In a front page story featuring a panoramic three column photograph of Brown standing inside Riverfront Stadium, he indicated that a new stadium was essential to securing the Bengals’ future in Cincinnati. But Brown also suggested that he would be willing to accept a less generous stadium subsidy to remain in Cincinnati than might be offered by other cities. He cited Baltimore specifically as a city that might be courting NFL franchises for relocation if they were not selected to receive an NFL expansion franchise in the months ahead. Brown indicated that the level of subsidy that might be offered by Baltimore could make any team the NFL’s “number one money producer.” Brown’s position in this article was firm in its demand for a subsidy, yet was presented in a manner that was intended to paint him as an unselfish and civic-minded community leader. The article concluded with Brown’s assessment that “rising player costs and decreasing TV revenues could put his club in the red as early as 1994.”

Public opinion data tended to reveal that Brown’s veiled threats to move the franchise
were an essential ingredient in obtaining stadium revenues. Without such threats, the public was united in opposition to stadium subsidy. Early in the process opposition was so clear on this issue that even franchise threats to move were limited in their ability to raise public sympathy for stadium expenditure. An April 1995 *Cincinnati Post/WCPO* poll of 531 Cincinnati area residents revealed that 81 percent opposed increased property taxes, while 72 percent opposed an increase in sales taxes to build a new stadium. 58 percent believed that a single new stadium should be built to retain the Bengals, but 65 percent opposed taxpayer subsidies in construction of this facility.

Despite public distaste for subsidy, civic leaders, feeling backed into a corner by local team owners, voted to increase sales tax by one penny for each dollar of purchases without consideration of a public referendum. Civic leaders tried various strategies to make this sales tax hike more palatable to the public. The most emphasized strategy was the claim that half of this increase would be paid by either visitors or businesses rather than Hamilton county residents, since out-of-town shoppers tended to frequent Hamilton county malls. These claims did not appear to assuage the citizenry, however. Popular sports columnist Tim Sullivan articulated this point, stating that “the man in the street is in a foul mood. He doesn’t much like the idea of subsidizing millionaire owners, and he despises politicians who would commandeer his cash for that purpose...It is a difficult proposition to court people after you have told them their opinion doesn’t count.”

Subsidy opponent Tim Mara, a local attorney, emerged as leader of subsidy opposition, threatening a petition drive that was eventually successful in forcing this issue to a public referendum. The certainty of defeat at the polls forced modifications in the proposal, cutting the tax to a half cent and eliminating prison construction from the legislation. A 4.3 percent reduction in property taxes was also added to make the overall package more attractive to the general public. With these modifications in place the proposal was set for a March vote. Both sides fought hard to win positive media coverage for their side as election day approached.

Although public support seemed limited for taxpayer subsidy, political concessions that reduced the sales tax to a half cent appeared to give the stadium subsidy a chance for passage. Media coverage would be an extremely important element in focusing how the public would perceive this issue.
Empirical Examination of Media Tendencies: A Methodological Overview

A systematic content analysis process has been utilized to empirically determine media coverage tendencies in the months leading up to the Cincinnati referendum on stadium construction financing. Content analysis of news stories extend from December 1, 1995 to March 19, 1996. The March 19, 1996 date was established as a cutoff since this was the date of the stadium referendum. Data collected after March 19 would be automatically skewed to favor the victorious pro-construction position since post-election coverage understandably focuses more prominently on specific plans to facilitate construction rather than whether construction should take place. Before the election outcome was certain, however, determining which side received more privileged media access requires systematic scrutiny that can only be achieved through a systematic methodology such as content analysis.

A primary concern of this research is whether a pro-stadium bias permeates news coverage. This study also seeks to isolate the appeals most favored by the various actors. Such data will provide a helpful indicator of the factors considered most important by the various participants in this important civic undertaking. Finally, establishing the individuals who receive prominent media access will help to determine which individuals are generally favored by media practitioners while suggesting which individuals may be marginalized by these practitioners. A confounding variable in this final research objective may be the inability of practitioners to obtain access to some key actors, despite considerable effort. In one cogent example, Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott’s periodic silence was not the result of press indifference. Reporters repeatedly indicate that steps were taken to obtain input from Schott. In many cases, the Reds principal owner declined comment.

The news coverage of this issue was extensive, with a variety of editorials and citizen letters providing further information that could be used by voters to determine whether stadium construction was prudent for this region. A total of 246 direct quotations from a total of 61 articles were isolated during this December to March period. Coding was conducted in accordance with procedures described in the methodology section (see chapter 3), utilizing categories specifically delineated in advance of the coding project.

Regional differences in how headlines are determined make story selection a less than precise process. Nevertheless, a specific process was utilized to ensure that all relevant stories
were eligible for inclusion in the coding process. A visual inspection of all pages of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* during the period of analysis was undertaken. In the case of Cincinnati’s referendum coverage, “Issue 1,” the technical term assigned to the sales tax initiative was one sought after headline term that ensured inclusion in the field of analysis. Other terms that triggered inclusion were: stadium, sales tax, and referendum. If these terms were present anywhere in the headline, the story was included. In rare exceptions, stories that included these terms may have been discarded from the field of analysis if it was evident that inclusion of the story would be inappropriate. An example might be a headline that utilized the term “referendum” which focused on something that was not related to Issue 1 in any way.

The coding process was sufficiently detailed to permit numerous analyses of news reporting tendencies. Recording the placement of each story permits some analysis of the general importance accorded to coverage of this issue by media practitioners. Categorization of pro-stadium and anti-stadium voices and establishment of general categories for the professional status of individuals who might be quoted allows for deeper understanding of media routines and biases. The latter coding process will determine whether routine citation of elite voices tends to diminish the role of less visible citizens in the process. Nine profession-related categories were established prior to initial coding of these stories. Finally, a breakdown of rhetorical appeals utilized by individuals cited during the reporting process will lead to an improved understanding of which arguments are perceived to resonate with the public in the debate over whether stadium funding should be approved. Such data is significant in that it offers an indication of what aspects of this issue are considered most compelling to politicians, civic leaders, activists, and average citizens.

**Content Analysis of Press Coverage: An Overview of the Data**

Story placement data provides one key indicator that the stadium issue was deemed critically important by Cincinnati’s media practitioners. Sixty-five percent of the stadium-related news stories during the examination period received some form of front page placement. Forty percent were on the front page itself, while 25 percent were situated on the front page of a physically separate newspaper section such as the first page of the metro section or the business section. Only 35 percent of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*’s news coverage from December 1, 1995 through March 19, 1996 was relegated to the internal pages of the newspaper. Even when
internal placement was given, the newspaper staff tended to offer more visible placement locations. In the March layouts that preceded the election, 81 percent of all stories were clearly situated above the newspaper’s fold position. In February 79 percent of all stadium-related news stories were positioned above the fold. Almost half of the March coverage (48 percent) included some picture with the news story. In short, media coverage was highly visible as the referendum decision approached.

Newspaper coverage of the stadium issue did not neglect the anti-stadium voices during this period. In fact, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* was not reluctant to lead with an anti-stadium quote in some of its news coverage. Nevertheless, a tendency to favor stadium construction voices in the weeks leading up to the referendum was evident. Since the election was scheduled for March 19, 1996, a close analysis of March 1 through March 19 articles should reveal whether the substantial disparity in campaign funding which clearly favored the pro-stadium voices resulted in a profound media coverage bias.

Analysis of all referendum-related stories revealed that pro-referendum quotes outpaced anti-stadium voices by a 54 percent to 34 percent margin. Eleven percent of the quotes were uncommitted or failed to provide any indicator of policy preference. If the uncommitted were deleted from the pool of analysis, the disparity between pro and anti-stadium voices would be 62 percent to 38 percent margin. Utilizing the stadium referendum election outcome as a comparative benchmark, the media coverage ratios reflect congruity with public opinion on this issue. The election results were 61 percent and 39 percent respectively, much closer than the tolerances of a typical effort to apply sampling error formulas commonly used in public opinion research.64

**Cincinnati News Coverage Orientation to Stadium Development:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Quotations:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>135</td>
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<tr>
<th>Percentages of Quotations:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
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This close match of news coverage with indisputable public opinion data (i.e.: actual election results) offers evidence that bodes well for routines employed by current media practitioners in this instance. Nevertheless, more careful scrutiny of media coverage data suggests some potential cause for concern. Simply put, a subtle pro-stadium bias may be uncovered if one looks beyond percentage totals and considers overall news presentation strategy. Of particular interest is how reporters utilized quote placement in their stadium-related coverage.

Those familiar with the inverted pyramid formula that is routinely taught in journalism schools know that important news information tends to be offered early in a story, with less prominent material relegated to positioning later in news coverage. Typical readers unfamiliar with this journalistic strategy still intuitively know that important information is generally delivered early in a news story, while less important material is located later in the story. With this in mind, access to the first, second, or third quotation provides greater access to readership, particularly when many stadium-related stories are continued on inside pages. Examination of quote positioning strategies during the final weeks of the campaign permits a determination of how the news staff prioritizes the various viewpoints offered during this hard fought campaign.

News reporters occasionally offered anti-tax advocates the first quote position, but as the election neared, pro-stadium voices were allowed significantly greater placement in the more visible first and second positions, while appeals in the third position were almost evenly distributed. During March 1996 news coverage, pro-stadium voices were over four times more likely to be positioned as the first quotation. The bias was less profound for second position quotes, with a slightly greater than two-to-one ratio between pro-tax and anti-tax positions. The third quote position was closely balanced, actually more skewed to the anti-stadium slant than public opinion, with 54 percent reflecting pro-tax sentiment and 46 percent taking an anti-tax position.

This quote-positioning bias may have several causes. It is quite possible that media access to pro-tax advocates was considerably more convenient than media access for opposition leaders. Many of the frequently quoted pro-stadium advocates were elected officials, team owners, and civic leaders, while the anti-stadium forces tended to be citizen activists. The pro-stadium sources were already integrated into the news gathering process by virtue of prior media access.
on a range of other issues, while those lobbying to block the stadium sales tax were often less connected to the civic leadership grapevine.

During the coding process, two political leader categories, “elite” politician and “regular” politician, were created to isolate how more powerful political leaders were handled by reporters. The elite politician category includes a governor, a major city mayor, a county commissioner, or a United States senator. The “regular politician” category was created to identify political figures that might traditionally have less stature. Included in this category are city council members, mayors of smaller suburban communities, and state-level representatives. Since two of the three county commissioners supported new stadium construction, prior to coding, a pro-tax bias that may have exceeded a two to one ratio was anticipated in the “elite” politician category. The actual disparity between elite politicians was a lopsided sixteen to one ratio, with elite politicians heavily favoring the stadium subsidy.

One of the three county commissioners did oppose the stadium tax, but as the content analysis demonstrates, he was not frequently quoted. This might be perceived as a media bias issue, but it is also possible that an established political leader might intentionally choose to avoid high-profile conflict in this situation. An opponent of the sales tax, if not personally passionate about the issue, had little reason to take a highly visible stand against stadium construction. After all, such an involvement might have provoked the ire of well-connected civic leaders, a powerful source for campaign donations, endorsements, and a range of other highly useful community resources. With most major business leaders and two fellow county commissioners supporting the stadium tax, vocal public opposition would only make political sense if populist outcry appeared to be very strong.

### Cincinnati News Coverage Quotation Source Categories

**Breakdown of Individuals Quoted According to Stadium Development Position**

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<tr>
<td>positive</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>246</td>
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Close scrutiny of public opinion data reveals that public opposition to the stadium subsidy weakened as the election neared, but then shifted back to greater balance in the month of the vote. By mid-January, evidence of a shift on the stadium subsidy issue from strong public opposition to majority support had emerged. A Cincinnati Post/WCPO-TV poll of 525 randomly selected Hamilton County residents was completed on January 11, 1996. Unlike previous polls which showed stadium-related support in jeopardy, this poll reported that 49 percent of the respondents supported the sales tax initiative with a mere 40 percent opposing the proposal. The acceptance of a pro-construction position which was established by this data made intense vocal political opposition by well-established political leaders much less likely.

This weakening of opposition is also reflected in news coverage shifts that are similar in nature. With the exception of December 1995, a time when stadium subsidy plans were being formulated, and March 1996, the month when the vote took place, news coverage reveals relative consistency in maintenance of a pro-subsidy position as election day neared. If neutrally coded positions are eliminated from the analysis, the shift is never more than 5 percent from one month to the next and fluctuates less than 3 percent in the three months before the election. From March 1, 1996 until election day, 61 percent of the quotes were pro-subsidy, while 39 percent opposed the Issue 1 vote, a margin of only one percent less than the overall average for all news stories and a representative ratio that is an exact percentage match of election day results. The following data reveal that despite gradual changes in public opinion from opposition to support of the stadium subsidy, a very clear pro-subsidy position was always maintained in news coverage as the election approached:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Issue 1 voices:</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Issue 1 voices:</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is within this environment that examination of political involvement in the stadium issue should be undertaken. In Cincinnati Enquirer press coverage during months leading up to the referendum, a visible disparity was evident in the political representation between voices favoring stadium construction and those opposed to stadium construction. Early in the process, such disparities were out of step with public opinion, which was against stadium subsidies in December, but as the election neared, the percentage of pro-stadium quotes were in harmony.
with the level of public support that the subsidy issue received at the ballot box.

Several other important coverage trends emerged in the categorization of the various actors involved in the stadium funding process. Among the most heavily represented pro-stadium voices were team owners and elite politicians, collectively representing 52 percent of the pro-tax quotes. Ohio’s governor and the Hamilton county commissioners were the most quoted pro-tax politicians. The owner voices focused most heavily on NFL franchise input, most notably quoting Bengals owner Mike Brown. Reds principal partner Marge Schott tended to maintain a low profile, but a March 8 article that focused on her specifically helped to articulate her views. It is possible that the owners’ would have been more heavily represented if Schott had lobbied harder for stadium funding.

Individuals in the “civic leader” category were three times more likely to represent the pro-tax position. This category includes prominent business leaders and individuals serving as chair or president of a major civic organization. On the other hand, citizens were about five times more likely to oppose the sales tax initiative. Tim Mara, a local attorney and recognized leader of the anti-tax movement, was cited in more than three quarters of the “citizen activist” quotations. This heavy citation of a single opposing voice may have had negative consequences for anti-stadium forces.

Specifically, these citations might have allowed pro-stadium voices to demonize a single individual, reducing the need to address highly specific policy matters. Rhetorical appeals to authority, a strategy which is intended to close off competing discourse, were more popular for stadium advocates in the closing weeks before the referendum than any other rhetorical tactic. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of the appeals made during the March coding period fell into this domain.

Another significant trend was the general lack of average citizen input in news reporting throughout the final months of coverage before the referendum took place. The Cincinnati Enquirer provided ample opportunity to citizens to write letters to the editor, often providing large headlines and prominent positioning for the less popular anti-subsidy position. They also offered polling data in April 1995 and January 1996, while soliciting public viewpoints in a more aggressive manner prior to the December 1995 coding period. But a key deficiency in the pre-election news coverage was its limited public input from “average” citizens, people with
potential concerns who might not be involved in direct policy formation. Overall, less than 10 percent of the news coverage citations in the three months prior to the vote included typical citizens despite their eventual role as the ultimate decision makers in this process. During the coding period, ten “average” citizens were cited in opposition to the tax proposal, while six were listed in favor of the plan and a handful of “neutral” comments could be attributed to typical citizens.

The appeal strategies utilized in the stadium issue offer some indication of the priorities of each side. Stadium subsidy opposition focused most heavily on ethical appeals (34 percent) and economic appeals (33 percent). Because the stadium subsidy would provide direct benefits to team owners, the popularity of ethical appeals by subsidy opponents is not surprising. The economic appeals were generally related to this argument. They were attempts to refute claims of economic benefits made by civic leaders pushing for stadium construction, arguing that these claims were overstated and inaccurate. The third most utilized appeal for stadium opponents were appeals to community needs at just 12 percent. In some cases these community-based appeals had subtle ethical underpinnings. Arguments related to more pressing community priorities were frequently incorporated into these appeals.

Stadium subsidy proponents tended to offer a broader range of arguments. Appeals to authority and community needs were most prevalent in pro-stadium quotations (19 percent each), but economic appeals (18 percent) and general statements touting the overall progress of the campaign (16 percent) were also heavily used. The appeals to authority should not be surprising, given the community leadership stature of those pushing for stadium construction. Such appeals are often an attempt to close off oppositional discourse, but such a strategy is less effective if made by individuals with limited bargaining clout.

The relative balance of authoritarian appeals with those focusing on community needs may have been strategically intended to prevent public outcry against excessive use of authority. It is likely that such balance was created to close off debate while fostering a sense of civic-minded stewardship might be more palatable to those outside the circles of leadership in Hamilton county. The focus on progress and economic development may have been an extension of that desire to portray a sense of stewardship.
Percentages of Total Appeals in Cincinnati News Coverage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Bond</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Needs/Values</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Expertise</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical/Conscience</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Order</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Progress</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Making Progress</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*note: figures are rounded

A Forum for Pro-Construction Voices: Evidence of Opinion Gatekeeping Bias

*Cincinnati Enquirer* news coverage appeared to closely match community values on the stadium construction issue. Nevertheless, staff-generated opinion columns were much more profoundly skewed to favor the stadium construction initiative than was reflected in available public opinion data. This opinion bias provided significant evidence of editorial boosterism. Staff-generated opinion columns include editorials, staff opinion columns offered in news, business, and sports sections, and op-ed page “guest columns.”

Letters to the editor were not included in this analysis of staff-generated opinion columns for several reasons. First, letters are not generated through active solicitation or direct action of *Cincinnati Enquirer* employees. In short, the editorial staff might encourage letters from a diversity of voices in routinely generic calls for letters, but the fundamental ideological content of letters to the editor are not managed or controlled by the editorial staff unless management has made a conscious decision to radically transgress generally accepted journalistic norms. A mix of citizen viewpoints in the letters to the editor section offers ample evidence that the *Cincinnati Enquirer* did not censor letters that were critical of stadium construction during the referendum campaign. In the Sunday issue less than two weeks before the scheduled vote, a large headline was afforded to an anti-stadium sports section letter; a pro-subsidy voice followed with a
considerably smaller headline. Second, letters to the editor are generally considered a public forum that serves as an avenue for those without the power to obtain specifically delineated opinion-oriented space.

While it is possible for elites to use the letters section to further their objectives, it is also reasonable to conclude that some of these elites are more likely to be afforded “guest opinion” column than typical citizens. Staff columns, guest opinions, and editorials are generally afforded more prominent placement, larger headlines, and in some cases include layout features that set them apart from letters to the editor. In two examples of Cincinnati Enquirer tendencies, individual photos are used in staff-generated columns and guest columns have been made more prominent than other editorial content through boxes, larger headlines, and inclusion of photos or artwork of some type.

A pro-construction slant should not be surprising in light of the clearly stated editorial stance of the paper prior to the referendum. A February 11, 1996 article outlining the Cincinnati Enquirer’s “agenda” for the year, argued that “opinions have their greatest impact at close range, so most of our arsenal...will be targeted locally.” The first priority listed in this effort to mobilize opinion was to “continue our series of editorials focusing on the importance of keeping both of Cincinnati’s pro sports franchises.” According to the staff, maintaining such a posture was important because “keeping both teams is essential to tourism, economic development, jobs, riverfront renewal, downtown renewal, and community pride.”

Because this explicit pro-construction posture was delineated several weeks before the referendum vote, it should be of little surprise that the editorial pages and opinion content of the Cincinnati Enquirer were not particularly accommodating to leading voices wishing to offer alternatives to new stadium construction. In an analysis of opinion-based content from February 1, 1996 through the day before the vote, March 19, 1996, only one solicited opinion column expressed full opposition to Issue 1. A blend of nineteen editorials and staff or guest columns were uncovered that expressed pro-construction sentiment. Six columns were sufficiently ambivalent in their posture to be labeled “neutral.” In short, 73 percent of Issue 1 solicited opinion content was clearly pro-stadium, 23 percent was neutral, while a mere 4 percent was against taxpayer subsidized construction. If neutral opinion columns were pulled from this analysis, pro-construction voices outpaced anti-construction voices by a 19-1 ratio, a lopsided
percentage differential of 95 percent to 5 percent.

Opinion articles that were “neutral” generally contained some pro-stadium content, but if they did not clearly and openly endorse Issue 1, they were listed as “neutral.” Examples include two articles that suggest Bengals owner Mike Brown has taken the proper steps to merit the public subsidy proposed in Issue 1. One contrasts his efforts to work with city leaders with Marge Schott’s reflexively antagonistic posture, concluding that citizens should simply subsidize a stadium for the Bengals while forcing the Reds to develop their own privately funded construction strategy.69 The other similarly argues that Brown is contributing funds in the push to construct new stadiums, but never fully endorses new construction for both teams.70 It could be interpreted as an indirect endorsement of new stadium construction, but the opinion article’s argument is too subtle to definitively label as pro-construction. Another opinion piece appears to favor construction if local politicians can obtain some form of subsidy from the NFL and/or state legislators, but the tenuous nature of the author’s restrictions make it similarly difficult to label such a proposal “pro-stadium.”71

Some opinion content that does not directly address stadium construction as a primary theme could have had either a positive or negative impact on public support for stadium construction. Two examples are the focus on Marge Schott and her management of the Cincinnati Reds and a number of articles that identified cities that might take steps to obtain an NFL franchise. The latter is significant in that a strong undercurrent of innuendo throughout the subsidy campaign process suggested that Cincinnati’s NFL franchise could be relocated to another city if stadium subsidies were not approved by taxpayers.

It is likely that this opinion slanting had an impact on referendum support, yet verification of potential effects is problematic. Such media slanting might have slightly diminished the comfortable margin enjoyed by pro-construction proponents, but because of the comfortable margin of approval at the polls, it is unlikely that a change in opinion content alone would have altered the outcome of the Issue 1 vote.

Nevertheless, the presence of such opinion column bias should be a concern to citizens, community leaders, and journalism practitioners. After all, if public opinion data on this issue were extremely close, such profound pro-subsidy biases could have a number of meaningful ramifications on policy outcomes. On the legislative level, the outcome of a close vote could be
altered in some manner. The traditional argument is that such bias would inspire individuals to follow the leadership exhibited on the opinion pages. An alternative outcome could be reflexive citizen rejection of overt media bias, inspiring citizens to vote against stadium subsidy in greater numbers than would be expected with more balanced coverage. On a journalistic level, a profound level of imbalance could affect the credibility of the messenger, ultimately diminishing the stature of the media institution under observation as a credible information source in future policy debates.

It is possible that the *Cincinnati Enquirer* pro-subsidy opinion content did not have a mobilizing negative effect largely because the subtle nature of the appeals included in much of the opinion-related content. This support for the subsidy meshed closely with citizen ambivalence about this issue in a variety of ways. Even when opinion columns actively supported the stadium tax, the columnists frequently reflected a general distaste for the subsidy issue itself.

Peter Bronson, the editorial page editor for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, aptly captured citizen ambivalence in a February 11, 1996 op-ed piece. Bronson argued, “I’d vote for the stadium tax in spite of the owners..., but it would be nice if they would quit dickering around like Mr. Haney on *Green Acres* and pry open their checkbooks in time to help voters choke down the tax....Without the Reds and the Bengals, Cincinnati is Hooterville with soap salesmen.”72 This opinion piece clearly supported the tax but was less than flattering to the team owners while admitting that the tax might not be fair to taxpayers. At the same time, it emphasized the profound symbolic significance that citizens attach to the presence of major league professional sports as a comparative indicator of major league status in other areas within the community.

On the Sunday before the referendum, Bronson offered another pro-subsidy op-ed piece that was openly critical of regional leadership. While enthusiastically endorsing the stadium subsidy, he admitted that the “voters have a right to be steamed” because “the downtown ‘in-crowd’ can be excruciatingly arrogant, like some student council planning a dance without asking anyone but the cheerleaders and football players.”73 Business editor Jon Talton maintained a similar tone as he argued vociferously that a pro-subsidy vote was necessary to maintain a healthy regional economy. Instead of arguing only for the rationality of Issue 1 support, Talton tempered his enthusiasm for subsidy stating that “it might not be fair. It might not be right. But it is the economics of sports in the 1990s.” Nevertheless, according to Talton, support for the tax
was prudent because “1996 will be the year when Cincinnati decides whether it will remain a major city, or accelerate a decades-long decline into second-rate status.”

Cartoons and graphics provided by the *Cincinnati Enquirer* were also skewed to favor stadium subsidy. Jim Borgman, a nationally recognized cartoonist with Pulitzer prize recognition, offered two very powerful subsidy-focused cartoons prior to the referendum. On the day of the stadium vote, Borgman’s cartoon featured an overhead illustration of the downtown area, with several of the streets leading into a sink drain. Underneath a visual that was intended to suggest that Cincinnati might be headed “down the drain” if the referendum failed was the simple caption “Plan B.” A week before the vote, Borgman offered a cartoon with a caption “how they should have pitched it” that suggested that residents outside Hamilton county would pay a sizable portion of any sales tax increase. The cartoon was intended to reinforce an occasional pro-subsidy argument that individuals from outside Hamilton County are frequent shoppers at Hamilton County malls. The cartoon showed a well dressed man holding a document headlined “Sales Tax Plan.” Three conversation balloons appear next to this individual to reflect him whispering “Psst...We found a way to make outsiders pay part of your property taxes, fund our schools, and build two new stadiums....And they can’t even vote on it.”

The single editorial example of stadium subsidy opposition prior to the referendum was simply overwhelmed by pro-construction voices in every manner. As a result, Tim Mara’s attempt to deliver an anti-tax op-ed piece on Sunday, March 17, 1996 probably fell short of its desired goal. In this edition of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Attorney Mara, the acknowledged leader of the opposition, had his opinion vociferously juxtaposed by Jeff Berding, the campaign manager of the pro-stadium campaign. Both pieces received similar sized headlines and equal column space. Nevertheless, directly above these two opinion pieces was an editorial featuring a headline that was more than twice the size of the op-ed headlines afforded to Berding and Mara. Furthermore, the pro-subsidy editorial was fortified by a large graphic intended to discredit Mara’s position on the stadium tax. The graphic displayed downtown Cincinnati, featuring a huge entrance sign similar to those occasionally posted at city or state borders. The simply sign read “Welcome to Nowhereville, Ohio.” Tim Mara, Mayor.” Below this anti-Mara illustration, readers were invited to turn to the inside pages of this opinion section where Cincinnati Bengals Owner Mike Brown was given space to make his case which predictably favored the stadium
tax. Above this invitation readers were further reminded that the next day’s newspaper, published one day before the election, would include stories on “how a half cent tax can boost our economy, create jobs, and spread stadium costs regionally.” If Mara’s positioning in the lower right corner of the opinion page did not substantially marginalize his message, the pro-stadium editorial, the bold pro-referendum headlines, the negative graphic, and Berding’s opposition column certainly conveyed to the public a second class stature for this lone defender of the anti-tax position.

It is possible that Mara was the only well known individual willing to go on record in op-ed commentary as a vociferous opponent of the stadium tax, but the opinion-page deck was stacked against stadium construction opposition in a manner that transgressed journalistic norms of fairness. If a well known voice could not be found to go on record against the stadium tax, the Cincinnati Enquirer staff could have, at a minimum, sought out articulate average citizens and accorded those individuals more prominent op-ed space periodically to offer some level of balance. With citizens voting for the stadium initiative at 61 percent levels, a three or four to one pro-stadium slant might be expected, particularly when this publication has gone on record as highly supportive of Issue 1. But in this opinion-related category, pro-construction voices outpaced anti-construction voices by a 19-1 ratio in the weeks leading up to the election, a lopsided percentage differential of 95 percent to 5 percent. In short, with one op-ed exception that was immediately offset by three pro-tax voices and a stinging ad hominem graphic, the letter to the editor was the only tangible refuge for individuals wishing to express their anti-tax sentiment on the opinion pages of the Cincinnati Enquirer.

Ironically, the first letter to the editor on the Sunday before the vote, a letter authored by George Vredeveld, an economics professor at the University of Cincinnati, accused media coverage of irresponsibly pandering to the anti-stadium position “in its zeal to cover ‘all sides of the story.’” He further contended that the press allowed anti-stadium voices to repeatedly launch “politically motivated criticism” against a pro-construction economic report that he was instrumental in preparing. Vredeveld appeared to be stung by skepticism that did not emerge in his prior stadium-related economic analysis including his 1990 Riverfront Stadium study that was not tied to calls for new construction subsidies. Overall, his arguments may have had some validity in selected news coverage, though the general reporting bias appeared to favor stadium
construction slightly more than was reflected in public opinion on the issue. If his accusations were to be extended to the slant offered in editorially-controlled opinion pages, however, such aggressive claims were decidedly off-base.

After the stadium funding referendum was approved, editorial criticism of stadium issues took on a more critical edge. When the Bengals announced their “Personal Seat License” campaign in which season ticket holders would be asked to pay several hundred dollars in order to have the privilege of purchasing their tickets, sports columnist Paul Daugherty referred to the Bengals claims of “exciting new amenities” in return for this fee as “a crock.” He further stated that this was “the cost of doing business in the era of rampant greed.” 1997 included a variety of highly critical columns and editorials.

Nevertheless, a more critical editorial tone took place after stadium taxpayer funding was assured, not when it may have altered the most significant public policy issue related to Cincinnati stadium construction, taxpayer funding. Regardless, the tone adopted after the Issue 1 referendum contributed to the debate about ballpark location, which, in turn, led to another important stadium policy decision that directly involved Hamilton county residents.

The Election Aftermath: Overruns, Citizen Frustration, and Soul Searching

Passage of Issue 1 may have satisfied Cincinnati sports franchise owners, but citizen response was not universally enthusiastic. While some citizens expressed relief, even elation, that the local sports franchises would remain in Cincinnati, others stoically braced themselves for the uncertainties of the construction process.

Initial coverage of construction preparation was optimistic about public participation in the process. An April 4, 1996 guest opinion featured Hamilton County Commissioner Bob Bedinghaus, the chief architect of Issue 1. Bedinghaus informed citizens that “over the next several months, we will be working to get the best deal for the taxpayers.” In addition, the county commission planned to host “a public forum seeking input on the design of the stadiums...to involve as many community members as possible to allow everyone a say in the future of the community.” Two days later, sports columnist Tim Sullivan presented his stadium “wish list.” He further encouraged Hamilton County residents to submit their stadium proposals to the Cincinnati Enquirer offices which would then “be passed on to the appropriate parties.” Sullivan offered an address and fax number in his column, assuring readers that “the will of the people
will be heard even if it means giving Gilbert Gottfried a microphone.”84 Citizens offered similar enthusiasm for stadium construction shortly after the referendum. The “Readers’ Views” section of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* featured a number of pro-construction letters, with an occasional dissenting opinion, including a total of six positive letters on March 26, 1996. After several months passed, a public meeting was set up as “the first and only opportunity for public input before the stadium sites are chosen.”85 Predictably, the riverfront was recommended by experts.

The call for public input contributed to a second referendum, one that focused on the site location for the Cincinnati Reds’ ballpark. Media coverage was a critical factor in determining the direction of this campaign, as consideration was narrowed to two sites for Cincinnati Reds ballpark construction.

Before the baseball site referendum occurred, however, disputes between team owners and political leaders complicated the stadium construction process significantly. Bengals owner Mike Brown continued to make demands that were intended to push stadium construction forward, focusing primarily on land acquisition issues. Brown’s successful use of veiled threats in the funding referendum campaign seemed to cultivate a repeat of this tactic in media coverage when pre-construction negotiations became particularly difficult.86 One controversy centered on control of future land development processes and ancillary road funding, pitting the city and county officials against each other.87 Brown sided with county officials, in part because this position would provide him with greater leverage in future development issues, with his immediate goal to situate ample parking closest to the stadium. The city objected to this agreement between Brown and county officials since it could jeopardize long-term plans to develop the riverfront as a larger entertainment district would do more than simply attract football spectators.

A variety of compromises were made helping city and county officials to reach an agreement one hour and fifteen minutes after Mike Brown’s imposed deadline.88 The deal appeared to limit Bengals’ control of the riverfront property that was not directly situated on the football stadium construction site. Nevertheless, subsequent contractual wording in a Spring 1997 agreement between the county commissioners and Mike Brown appeared to enhance the Bengals power over riverfront development beyond what was acceptable to city officials.89 Although site preparation had been underway for months, formal groundbreaking ceremonies for
the Bengals’ new stadium finally took place amidst much fanfare on Saturday, April 25, 1998.  

The stadium situation may have been more complex for the Cincinnati Reds than the construction process which transpired for the Bengals. City and county leaders held their breath as negotiations took place with an unpredictable Marge Schott. Schott, still irritated by what she perceived as preferential treatment for the Bengals, vacillated positions to such an extent that one county leader proclaimed in exasperation that dealing with the Reds is “like negotiating with Jekyll and Hyde-- you don’t know what to expect from one day to the next.” At the same time, citizen activists worked to control both political and media agendas, eventually forcing an unprecedented referendum on ballpark location.

Prior to the 1996 Issue 1 referendum, Schott tinkered with the idea of purchasing Riverfront Stadium, possibly feeling that outright ownership would eliminate various irritating management-related controversies with the city and the county. After the referendum passed, Schott abandoned the ownership proposal. She toyed with the notion of moving the team to northern Kentucky, but could not attract a subsidy to push such a plan forward. She also made several failed demands to step ahead of the Bengals for a new stadium, despite generally opting out of the referendum campaigning process. As it became clear that the Bengals had better positioned themselves with key political and civic leaders, momentum increased for ballpark construction in a less affluent inner-city neighborhood. By April 1997, four options had emerged regarding the Cincinnati Reds stadium situation. The Reds preferred new construction on a riverfront site west of the Roebling Bridge. City officials had hoped to use this site for non-sports development. The second site was a site nicknamed “the Wedge” which would tightly squeeze a new stadium between the Riverfront Coliseum and the old stadium. A third option was relocation at Broadway Commons, an area located between the northern fringe of downtown and a rugged inner-city residential area. A final option was refurbishing Cinergy Field.

Schott, unwilling to accept construction at the Broadway Commons site, briefly backed off demands for a new stadium and considered accepting a major renovation of Riverfront Stadium, now renamed Cinergy Field after a $6 million naming rights agreement was reached to help defray stadium expenses. Several political leaders were excited about the prospect of financial savings that would be achieved with renovation. Nevertheless, after numerous meetings with city and county officials, she decided to endorse new construction at the Wedge site. This
location was later renamed “Baseball on the Main” after some proponents of the riverfront site determined that the “Wedge” moniker may have pejorative connotations that could be exploited by riverfront site opponents.

Schott’s riverfront construction desires were supported by most business and county-level elites. City leaders were less certain about the Broadway Commons choice. An energetic group of citizens, led by Cincinnati Councilman Jim Tarbell attempted to redirect the stadium construction issue to a site he called “Broadway Commons” located in Over-the-Rhine, a section of the city that was in need of infrastructure improvement. The seeds for a grass roots support were first planted in 1994 when Tarbell teamed up with Peter Guggenheim, a marketing and special-events specialist, to launch a media campaign for this cause. A first step was formation of a group called the Committee to Restore Intimacy in Baseball (CRIB). They followed with advertising, a direct-mail campaign, and attempts to lobby both city leaders and Reds owner Marge Schott.95

Unlike typical movements that quit when elite interests appear to have won out, the Over-the-Rhine advocates continued to push forward, refusing to quit. The Broadway Commons backers may have lacked political and economic clout, but they had an intense enthusiasm that was contagious. They cleverly obtained media publicity throughout the process and eventually gained the endorsement of Cincinnati’s mayor and several media practitioners. Tarbell’s supporters built a large facade of an old-fashioned ballpark on the Broadway Commons property.96 This display provided opportunities for highly visual media coverage. A large photo of the facade appeared in an article about site selection during the first week of the 1997 baseball season.97 Jim Tarbell combined his city council election campaign with promotion of the Broadway Commons, handing out Jim Tarbell baseball cards instead of traditional campaign literature. He also obtained publicity by seeking trademark approval for “Broadway Commons” days before the referendum.98 Tarbell was so effective at creatively obtaining publicity that Jim Borgman presented a humorous cartoon with a tuxedoed Tarbell lifting a top hat to expose baseball-like stitch marks in his bald head.99

Advocates of the Broadway Commons location also created a very sophisticated web site that included various graphic representations of a new stadium situated in the neighborhood so that citizens could see what the final product might look like. To offset complaints that this proposal would be inconvenient or hurt downtown development, photographs were carefully
crafted to show the site’s proximity to Route 71, a major interstate, and downtown Cincinnati, with one photo taken from the Cincinnati public library, located in the heart of downtown Cincinnati. The web site quoted experts, recruited volunteers, listed endorsements, provided distribution sites for yard signs, and even solicited on-line credit card donations for the cause.100

The campaign to build a ballpark at Broadway Commons appeared to be doomed on July 1, 1998 as Marge Schott and county officials entered an agreement to build on “the Wedge” site.101 Tarbell and his supporters pushed ahead, however, working feverishly to obtain the required 26,800 valid signatures needed to get the site location issue placed on the November ballot. On Sunday, July 27, 1998 Cincinnati Councilman Todd Portune and Jim Tarbell delivered 44,562 petition signatures to the Hamilton County Administration Building, forcing a second stadium-related referendum in November.

Both sides waged a strong campaign with each side closely matched on financial resources.102 The pro-riverfront campaign organized a political action committee that it named “Move Greater Cincinnati Forward.” Not surprisingly, the largest contributors to the riverfront campaign were the Cincinnati Reds and the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce with donations of $50,000 and $25,000 respectively. Both sides appeared to garner adequate media coverage and opinion content was not as one-dimensional as in the funding referendum. The Cincinnati Enquirer endorsed the riverfront option while some staffers, including sports columnist Paul Daugherty and political columnist Cliff Radel, endorsed the Broadway Commons proposal.103

The Broadway Commons plan had several advantages, including lower overall cost for construction and site preparation. An unscientific Cincinnati Enquirer poll revealed that 425 favored the Broadway Commons site while only 151 favored the riverfront proposal, but the self-selection of the polling process clearly skewed the results. On election day, 65 percent voted for the riverfront site, while only 35 percent endorsed the Broadway Commons location.

The backing by key elites may have helped the riverfront option, but a number of other factors could have hurt the Broadway Commons proposal. First, the effort to get on the ballot required framing the issue as a revision of the county charter. Some voters may have viewed amending the county charter for a sports subsidy issue as a dangerous precedent. Some concerns may have persisted about whether the charter would evolve into an unwieldy smorgasbord of
special interest amendments rather than an overarching governing document.

A second concern involved the unpredictability of the Reds situation. Marge Schott was often a loose cannon, but prior to the referendum, she announced intentions to sell some of her shares to take a minority role in the team. This created further uncertainty regarding the future of the Reds in Cincinnati. While some voters may have liked the Broadway Commons idea, it was clear that the Reds were fully committed to a riverfront location. So firm was this position that in February 1997 the Reds threatened a lawsuit if the riverfront site was not approved. In an era of sports franchise free agency, some citizens may have felt that failure to pacify Schott and her eventual successor, hard-nosed businessman Carl Linder, could trigger a franchise move or a protracted lawsuit. Even though such a scenario was highly unlikely, after months of veiled and overt threats from the Bengals, citizens were conditioned to regard professional sports franchises as highly mobile.

Racial and class division may have been more subtle and less visible contributor to the failure of Broadway Common by such a wide margin. As Tarbell sought early publicity for his campaign in 1994, news coverage indicated that some citizens were “worried about criminal activity in the surrounding neighborhoods and interstate accessibility.” Whispers about security and safety in the Broadway Commons area may have triggered fears from white suburban voters even if such fears lacked substance. Finally, citizens knew that the most powerful members of the community supported construction at the riverfront site. Many were tired of the stadium debate. Some citizens may have felt that any decision which forced the hand of elites might result in further delays and problems. Citizens who simply wanted order, harmony, and progress disliked the potential for future acrimony with key civic leaders. Some citizens were victims of “stadium fatigue” and simply wanted the entire issue to be resolved in the most expedient manner possible.

Understandably, as construction plans moved forward on the football stadium, citizen distaste for the stadium issue became increasingly apparent. Projected cost overruns left many people disenchanted. Even Cincinnati Enquirer columnists and editorial writers who were generally supportive of the initial stadium subsidy referendum became fatigued by cost overruns and team owner demands. A 1997 editorial pointedly accused Brown and Schott of “arrogant, rude, and greedy” behavior, further stating that instead of thanking the public for millions of generous subsidy dollars, they have “threatened and bullied our elected officials, whipsawed the
public, and exploited every opportunity to grab everything in sight.”

Two and a half years later, sports columnist Tim Sullivan described the construction project as one “that is destined to be remembered as the most feckless use of public funds since the $400 toilet seat.”

Ironically, the per-seat cost to construct this new stadium was slightly more than $6,900 for each of the facility’s 65,600 seats.

The long, drawn-out process did little to foster public support for stadium construction. During the Issue 1 campaign, many officials frequently told the public that no “Plan B” existed. After the vote, however, Cincinnati Councilman Todd Portune indicated that he had been asked to hold back plans for an indoor multi-use facility that would be home to the Bengals until after the referendum result was determined. Although some discussion surfaced regarding a domed stadium prior to the vote, the idea never received a thorough public airing even though some citizens may have regarded this as a sensible way to attract major non-football events to the region. Equally frustrating was the uncertainty of the entire stadium construction process. The public was often presented with figures that appeared to be calculated with decimal-point precision, but as plans moved forward, each subsequent estimate was markedly higher. Explanations for the increased costs suggested that early planning for the project may have been superficial and haphazard.

In the opening stages of negotiation, renovation of Riverfront Stadium appeared to hold promise as one method of cost containment. In 1994, estimates of $44.4 million and $48.3 million were advanced to convert the 24-year-old facility to baseball or football only operation, potentially saving the city and the county millions on the need to provide two brand-new facilities. In 1995, Cincinnati city mayor Roxanne Qualls announced a $540 million plan to build two new stadiums, with taxpayers shouldering “$410 million of the cost, about 75 percent.”

Estimates for the Bengals’ football stadium were set at $270 million prior to the referendum. By March 6, 1996, just days before the referendum vote, Cincinnati residents were told that basic renovation to keep Riverfront Stadium operational would require “a backlog of deferred maintenance work totaling $54 million,” at least $5 million more than either 1994 Riverfront Stadium renovation proposal. Two years after the referendum approval, newspapers reported that the “guaranteed maximum price” for football stadium construction would be $290 million, with the real cost for land acquisition, site preparation, and construction set at $403
million. As Paul Brown Stadium prepared to open in September 2000, total construction costs were listed at $453.2 million, over $52 million more than the initial estimated taxpayer subsidy for both the baseball and football projects. If baseball stadium costs could not be dramatically contained, a total construction bill exceeding three quarters of a billion dollars was likely. The Cincinnati Post estimated that “the actual cost could exceed $967 million..., [a figure that] represents $1,141 for every [Hamilton] county resident, not including interest.” Many citizens were so befuddled by ever-changing economic projections that many simply regarded the stadium construction issue as an absurd farce that was beyond public control or understanding.

General fatigue for the issue was accelerated by the long debate about ballpark location which resulted in selection of a riverfront site, the desired choice of community elites. An undercurrent of open hostility for stadium subsidy was evident in casual conversations among citizens in restaurants and grocery store checkout lines. In one reaction, local artist Amy Gallagher and friend, Keith Baker, designed a “Shoot Me, I Voted for the Stadium Tax” t-shirt. This message clearly resonated with Hamilton County residents. The design proved so popular that in November 1997, Cincinnati magazine indicated that “people call day and night wanting shirts. Retail stores want to stock them. Production had to be turned over to a silk-screen shop in order to meet demand.” This Cincinnati magazine article supported the assertion that many citizens believed they were manipulated into voting for stadium construction by civic leaders who were further accused of suppressing more reasonable construction estimates. Political leaders responded to such allegations with claims that the figures offered in 1996 reflected a “best guess” in light of information that was constrained by lack of planning funds before the Issue 1 referendum.

Urban affairs scholar David Swindell argued that keeping estimates “as low as possible” is politically rational during a referendum campaign, but it can “backlash” if construction costs differ dramatically from what was initially sold to the voters. Such a reaction was evident in several areas of Hamilton county. As early as December 1997 a group calling themselves “Citizens for Major League Sanity” handed out leaflets before sporting events which advocated spending limits and cost containment on stadium construction.

By October 2000, citizen resentment for the stadium issue was so entrenched in the regional culture that one local columnist stated that an attempt by some civic leaders to attract the
2012 Olympic games “may be compromised by Bengal’s backlash.” Individuals outside the region might be puzzled by this football reference since American-style football has no place in Olympic competition, but Cincinnati citizens had no problem quickly connecting the Olympic bidding process, and its recent linkage to Salt Lake City scandal, to the drawn-out football stadium construction issue. Understandably, local residents, fatigued with construction budget overruns and seemingly endless political dialogue about stadium construction had less enthusiasm for sports-related expenditures than ever. A September 30, 2000 Internet poll revealed that 80 percent of respondents were fully opposed to Cincinnati hosting the 2012 Olympics. While many residents remained comforted by Cincinnati’s ability to retain their identity as a “major league” city, an uneasy street-level feeling persisted that average citizens had been hoodwinked by elites and sports franchise owners during the entire stadium construction process. Many citizens were proud of the final product, a completed state-of-art Paul Brown Stadium, but felt that the overall price had been unreasonable.

As Paul Brown Stadium opened, the sense of communal triumph, similar to what was evident as the Riverfront Stadium opened in 1970, was understandably tempered by citizen uneasiness about the dramatic financial and psychological costs of this project to the community. Cost overruns were not the only issue of concern. While completed construction might provide long-term benefits to downtown real estate interests, short-term construction inconveniences irritated some citizens. National coverage of Cincinnati real estate offered some evidence that football stadium construction may have limited, or at least delayed, city development of residential properties in the downtown area. Local media coverage offered similar evidence with some businesses giving consideration to leaving the downtown area after years of parking and construction-related problems. What began as a simple defensive effort to prevent franchise relocation to a distant city had turned into an extended series of lessons on the relationship of professional sports with special interest politics.

Media coverage of this new stadium’s first events revealed both positive and negative public reaction even though the citizens quoted in each article were almost universally Bengals’ fans. Positive coverage tended to focus on either community pride or the state-of-art qualities of the stadium itself. Adrienne Hundemer, a construction worker from Dayton, OH, summarized this viewpoint stating “I am proud to be a part of this....They say this is the best facility in the
NFL.”

The Cincinnati Enquirer indicated that they received about 900 fax and e-mail reactions after the Bengals’ opening exhibition game in Paul Brown Stadium. Many citizens gushed about the modern facilities and the potential image boost that the stadium might provide for Cincinnati. One citizen argued that it dispelled Mark Twain’s notion that “Cincinnati is 10 years behind everywhere else...[since Paul Brown Stadium] puts us 20 years ahead.” But overall, the Enquirer indicated that response was tepid as “most of you came down in an area about as gray as the stadium’s concrete concourses.” A typical response argued that “the city can be proud to have a fine stadium...[,but] I would be more proud if I didn’t have such a sense of outrage over the high price tag.” Ken Bauman, a long-time Bengals season ticket holder, was irritated over both the location of his new seats and the $4,800 seat license that he was required to purchase before he could obtain his season tickets. He asserted that if offered a full refund for his seat license, you could “color me gone.”

Bauman was not alone in his reaction. The novelty of a new stadium had inspired first season sellout crowds for all five non-expansion franchises to complete stadium construction projects since 1997, but in Cincinnati, sellouts were the exception rather than the rule. Only one of the first three regular season home games managed to sell out. As the 2000 season unfolded, it became clear that a new stadium would do little to help improve the Bengals’ on-field performance. With a far from spectacular 0-4 start, Bengals fans were treated to the indignity of network television blackouts for each unsold home game. This long-standing network policy prevented locals from watching the home team if they did not sell out 72 hours prior to kickoff. Many Cincinnati fans determined that a mediocre on-field product was not worth further investment of their hard-earned dollars. Ironically, because the capacity of the new stadium was approximately 5,000 more than the old facility, stadium sellouts were now even harder to achieve and less certain in Cincinnati. During most weekend home games in the 2000 season, most area Bengals fans’ options were limited listening to radio broadcasts or providing a further team subsidy by attending the game at the already heavily subsidized facility.

Savvy citizens could see beyond the glitter of a fancy new stadium, noting that insider self-interest and elite appeals for community enhancement were curiously intertwined. Less than a month and a half after the 1996 stadium-tax referendum took place, Jeff Berding, the campaign
coordinator for the stadium tax campaign, signed a three-year contract with the Cincinnati Bengals. His job focused on community relations and marketing with a key responsibility to “sell suites at the planned stadium to major corporations- most of which contributed money to the $1 million pro-tax campaign.” Not surprisingly, the Bengals, the primary beneficiary of the referendum, contributed $300,000 to Berding’s carefully orchestrated 1996 media campaign. In addition, targeted campaign contributions continued long after the construction began. Four years after the 1996 vote Bengals owner Mike Brown and his attorney reportedly donated $13,500 to County Commissioner Bob Bedinghaus’ reelection campaign. Bedinghaus, the leading county-level advocate for Issue 1, was most responsible for the millions of stadium subsidy dollars received by Mike Brown. Bedinghaus may have appreciated the donation, but his involvement in the stadium tax issue was costly. His association with stadium construction overruns contributed to his defeat at the polls to Todd Portune, an individual who took a much more cautious posture throughout the stadium debate.

In the months prior to the stadium opening, the Bengals also hired reporter Geoff Hobson from the Cincinnati Enquirer. Hobson was closely linked to coverage of the referendum issue and covered stadium construction issues during his tenure at the Cincinnati Enquirer. His referendum coverage was particularly effective in explaining the potential for franchise relocation if the generous stadium subsidy was not approved by taxpayers.

Hobson’s role with the NFL franchise was to provide team-related stories for the Bengal’s newly designed web site. The team described Hobson’s role as one of an “independent” reporter, but fellow journalists questioned his ability to report objectively when his paychecks would be furnished by the Cincinnati Bengals. Cincinnati sports-talk host Andy Furman suggested that Hobson’s coverage would be curtailed by Bengals owner Mike Brown if it turned too negative; Furman cited his personal banishment from Bengal-related talk-show coverage on game days as evidence of this particular trend. Interestingly, Hobson coverage of stadium construction issues seemed to end when he left his Cincinnati Enquirer reporting job. He did not touch this issue in any way during his initial weeks as a Bengals employee. According to an August 9, 2000 USA Today report, “Hobson says he doesn’t have time to write about stadium issue but will do so if team officials have anything new to say about the topic.”

Public enthusiasm, pride, anger, and ambivalence were visible as Paul Brown Stadium
opened to the Hamilton county residents. Citizens held similar views about the new ballpark under construction for the Cincinnati Reds. Corporate leaders, aware of public sensitivity regarding stadium construction animosity, took steps in 2000 that might not have been offered under normal circumstances. After Cincinnati’s beloved Reds fell short of a post-season playoff spot in 2000, a Cincinnati demolition company offered to remove the artificial turf at the old stadium so that the 2001 Reds could play on a more desired natural grass surface. The move would presumably help the team make a smoother transition to the new ballpark in 2003 while improving the Reds chances to reach the playoffs in 2001 and 2002.131

Bengals owner Mike Brown also took action to limit public backlash against stadium subsidy, dropping an unpopular clause in his negotiated lease calling for public subsidies if ticket sales fell below 50,000 seats.132 In a similar effort to minimize taxpayer unrest, construction officials were quick to publicize that they would avoid financial penalties that would have been payable to the Bengals if construction did not finish on schedule.133 Media coverage was also adjusted to reflect citizen concerns over stadium subsidies. Although opinion-related content overwhelmingly favored stadium subsidy in the weeks prior to the Issue 1 referendum, as the construction process unraveled in 1997 and beyond, opinion content shifted towards a greater willingness to be critical of owner demands. Media coverage might still display a “booster mentality,” but the limits of boosterism were occasionally revealed in news and editorial coverage that followed the Issue 1 vote.

In looking at the Issue 1 vote, a 1997 Brookings Institution analysis concluded that the citizens of the Cincinnati metropolitan area, “desperately afraid of being perceived as another Louisville, Lexington, Dayton, or Columbus,...bought a lot of image...at a pretty high price.”134 The residents of southwest Ohio were not alone in their desire to maintain a “major league” image through the use of subsidies to professional sports teams. In Pittsburgh, Seattle, Boston, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Houston, and a variety of other large and small metropolitan areas, the allure of “major league” status resulted in new calls for multi-million dollar stadium subsidies.

Local politicians, media organizations, and citizens supported these subsidies because of the powerful symbolism that they perceived to be part of major league sports. Even the President of the United States gave Cincinnati positive reinforcement for their landmark decision to subsidize two new stadiums. In a March 1996 visit to Cincinnati President Clinton opened his
remarks offering “congratulations on the recent success of your stadium and education referendum,” calling this citizen choice for subsidy “an impressive thing.”135 Despite citizen misgivings, the symbolic power of sport was exceedingly difficult to refute.

Media coverage has been a critical force in fostering “major league” aspirations in cities throughout the nation. Although cost overruns in cities such as Cincinnati tempered general enthusiasm for major league sports regionally, it did little to curtail the national trend of stadium subsidy. According to Rick Horrow, an NFL consultant on such issues, Cincinnati was “going to be a case study that gets presented to owners and city officials around the country.”136 The successful media campaign in Cincinnati had broad implications for other sports franchise owners clamoring for new facilities.
Sources: Chapter Four


3. Flynt is a native of Saylersville, KY, a small rural community in eastern Kentucky. Nevertheless, he has established his commercial base in Cincinnati, currently serving as proprietor of a controversial adult bookstore in the Cincinnati area.


8. Kansas City, MO has built the first dual use sports complex, a concept which has been copied by several cities. Nevertheless, Kansas City and subsequent cities approved funding of each project in separate legislative actions. Hamilton County’s 1996 referendum marked the first time any community committed to construction of two major professional sports facilities at one time.

9. During the summer of 1999 barbeque products endorsed by Norman “Boomer” Esiason were marketed throughout the Cincinnati area, including a billboard in one of the residential neighborhoods of Vine Street.


14. Guschov, p. 94.


16. Guschov offers evidence that the 1868 stock issue was not a success, raising only $3,000 (p. 14). Voigt does not provide evidence of this nature, but does indicate that the club incurred some indebtedness in 1868, potentially reflecting lukewarm acceptance of this initial public offering. Voigt does suggest that the 1869 stock issue was a success, indicating that “half” was sold “to members and the rest to new investors.” Voigt, David Quentin. *American Baseball: From the Gentleman’s Sport to the Commissioner’s System*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983, p 24.

17. Precise figures for the 1869 team payroll are available through Voigt (vol. 1), p. 27.


24. “New Frisco Stadium Ready in September.” *Cincinnati Enquirer*. July 14, 1959, p. 2A. The article points out that taxpayers voted to fund $5 million of this $11.5 million project.


27. Amick, George. “The Stadium Race: As Redlegs Pasture at Crosley Field, Other Cities Build.” *Cincinnati Enquirer*. July 12, 1959, p. 1-E. Lloyd’s remarks are offset by remarks from others that either renovation of Crosley Field or construction of a new park at the Carthage site would best serve the community. A front page sketch of the Carthage Fairgrounds proposal in the
Cincinnati Enquirer on July 15, 1959 provides further evidence that riverfront development, although popular with select community leaders such as members of the Cincinnatus Association, was not the clear favorite for stadium development with all segments of the public.


33. Harmon, Pat. “Reds Objection Fails; Circular Stadium OK’d.” Cincinnati Post and Times Star. June 15, 1966. The horseshoe shape might seem like an odd request for a baseball enthusiast with no knowledge of Ohio’s stadium history. The first huge stadium project in the state of Ohio was the horseshoe-shaped football stadium at Ohio State University in 1922. Many Ohio residents consider this stadium a cherished state landmark.


35. “GOP Slows Down Stadium Project.” Cincinnati Post and Times Star. July 30, 1966, p. 1. According to this article, a key factor in funding the detailed stadium design plans was the certainty that a $400,000 initial allocation for these plans would commit the city to a secondary $600,000 payment for a “second installment” of plans by the architect. If an NFL franchise could have been assured at the time, it is likely that Republican reluctance to move forward would have been tempered, if not completely eliminated.

36. The NFL and AFL were completely separate leagues with separate network contracts in 1966. The AFL generally located in cities that did not have existing NFL franchises. Because the NFL had already established teams in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and was positioned in the most populated markets, the AFL was considered a less prestigious league despite its exciting brand of football. In an August 4, 1966 news story, AFL Commissioner Milton Woodward


44. “Stadium Cost Figure Up, And May Still Go Higher.” Cincinnati Enquirer. March 2, 1967, p.1.


58. Crowley, Patrick and Mark Braykovich. “City Reassesses Stadium’s Worth: New Estimate Doubles Value Filed in March.” *Cincinnati Enquirer*. May 21, 1994, p. B4. Although Schott may have felt this reassessment was aimed at hurting her position as the potential owner of Riverfront Stadium, city officials claimed that they were simply readjusting the assessment in response to the school district’s concern that they were losing tax revenues on land taxed at below market values.


60. Hortsman, Barry. “We Want Bengals, but Not Tax.” *Cincinnati Post*. April 19, 1995, pp. 1A, 4A.


64. The samples utilized in this research are entirely too small to credibly utilize statistical methodologies such as sampling error, but the congruity of available public opinion data with news-oriented quote representation suggests that *Cincinnati Enquirer* provided news coverage of Issue 1 that reflected community desires.

65. These categories were created to establish uniformity in analysis of case studies in various cities. Cincinnati’s political structure is problematic for the period of this analysis in that the mayor did not formally “campaign” for the position, but instead emerged as the individual who
acquires the most votes among the slate of city council candidates. Despite this less than
conventional manner of mayoral appointment, the mayor still maintained an important role as a
spokesperson for the city and the region. As such, the individual elected to this post is generally
the most visible elected city official in the same manner that the county commissioners tend to be
Hamilton County’s most powerful elected representatives. Since the referendum, Cincinnati has
changed its governing structure, making the mayoral election process more similar to other cities.

66. A total of 94 political quotations were examined. 53 of the pro-stadium quotations came from
“elite” voices, while only 4 anti-construction quotations emanated from this “elite” category.
“Regular” politicians were less likely to support the proposed stadium subsidy, with 22
indicating opposition and just 15 indicating a supportive position.


69. Daugherty, Paul. “Let Marge Finance Her Own Stadium.” Cincinnati Enquirer. March 4,


71. This particular opinion column expressed uneasiness that Cleveland was able to extract a
subsidy from the NFL to construct a new facility, while Cincinnati would receive no NFL
subsidy at all. The piece concluded with an admonition that local legislators should push harder
to gain subsidy revenues from outside Hamilton County before the stadium vote was finalized.
The author endorses stadium construction, but not in the manner desired by franchise owners.
According to the author, Bengals owner “Mike Brown does not want a dome..., [but] it is not his
call. If we are going to spend half a billion dollars on stadium projects, lets put it to the best

72. Bronson, Peter. “Owners Deserve a Holding Penalty.” Cincinnati Enquirer. February 11,

73. Bronson, Peter. “Wrong for All the Right Reasons.” Cincinnati Enquirer. March

74. Talton, Jon. “It’s Time for Major League Attitude Change.” Cincinnati Enquirer. February
11, 1996, p. F1. On March 10, 1996 Talton publicly announced his departure from Cincinnati to
accept a position in Charlotte, NC.


79. The concept for the “Nowhereville” sign may have been adapted from a state anti-tobacco billboard campaign which was popular at the time. The billboard positioned a teen smoker next to a city sign which read “Welcome to Loserville, Population You.”

80. Brown, Mike. “Recapture Our Sense of Optimism.” *Cincinnati Enquirer*. March 17, 1996, p. F3. Note: Brown’s column was positioned in the lower left corner of this page. It was boxed and accompanied by a photograph of Brown.

81. Professor Vredevedel indicates nearly 1,000 hours were spent preparing his economic analysis which touted the economic benefits of new stadium construction. His findings are consistent with the methodologies utilized by consulting firms often hired to justify stadium construction, but they run counter to findings generally offered by more skeptical researchers. These researchers employ methodologies that discount the value of construction-related jobs since, according to the logic of the skeptics, such construction employment could be just as effective as a “job creation” mechanism if tax dollars were spent building any alternative edifice. According to these economists, measurable long-term job creation should be reported, not temporary construction salaries during a limited two year construction period. Although he does not identify specific individuals, David Swindell, a urban studies professor at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio is one individual with whom Vredevedel is indirectly challenging in this letter. After the referendum Swindell contributed to a 1997 Brookings Institution project which concluded that economic projections for stadium construction tend to be vastly overstated by construction proponents.


85. Michaud, Anne. “Public Input on Stadium Plans Sought.” *Cincinnati Enquirer*. November 11, 1996, p. B9. Of interest is article placement. The public invitation was relegated to a less than prominent location at the bottom of an internal page wedged between a shoe sale ad and a home furnishings store ad. This is in contrast to the front page placement of many stadium articles.

86. Brown’s strategy seemed to be a non-threat that was framed in media coverage within the context of a potential franchise move. In early December 1997 Brown stated “I am not threatening anything...I hope this gets worked out.” By the end of the month, Brown set a firm deadline of January 31, 1997 stating if the deadline was not met, “we would have to look at


89. Peale, Cliff and Barry Horsham. “Development Debate Escalates-City: Bengal Lease Invalid.” Cincinnati Post. July 8, 1997, p. 1A. The terms of this lease stipulated that, “the county shall make no improvements to the stadium complex without obtaining the prior written consent of the team.” County and team officials argued that this did not constitute “veto power,” but was rather a “partnership” that was “typical of what a ‘major tenant would receive in any major real estate development.”


94. Hobson, Geoff. “Welcome to Cinergy: Play Ball.” Cincinnati Enquirer. September 10, 1996, p. A1. Potentially adding to the frustration of the Reds management was the fact that this naming rights deal was held up for several days because the Bengals refused “to sign off on the deal until the county hammered out a stadium deal with the Bengals.”


98. “‘Broadway Commons’ name is Tarbell’s trademark.” *Cincinnati Enquirer.* October 29, 1998, p. B3. Some Tarbell’s detractors sought to imply that he might be making this move as a way to profit in the future. Some also suggested further self-interest in that his business would be improved if the Broadway Commons site was chosen.

99. Borgman, Jim. [Tarbell Illustration.] *Cincinnati Enquirer.* April 20 1997, p. A13. In this cartoon, a citizen with a ballpark-related article is shown stating “you have to hand it to Tarbell, he doesn’t miss a trick.”

100. The web site created for this campaign was located at [www.broadwaycommons.com](http://www.broadwaycommons.com). The site is no longer active.


105. Indications of citizen displeasure with the stadium issue were obtained via several media sources. This sentiment was further reinforced and confirmed during several personal visits to Cincinnati as this research was undertaken.


108. This figure is based on the total cost of construction, including land acquisition costs.


112. “How the Stadium Fund Went Bust.” *Cincinnati Post*. March 6, 1996, p. 1A. In 1994, a firm with expertise in stadium construction and renovation was brought in to offer renovation options and cost estimates. In this case, press coverage did not provide specific expert analysis in arriving at the cited $54 million figure.


117. Tate, pp. 51-52.


120. A Cincinnati.com poll released on September 30, 2000 of 603 internet respondents revealed only 17 percent willing to support Cincinnati hosting the Olympics with a mere 12 percent willing to spend tax dollars to support hosting the Olympic games. Eighty percent were against hosting the Olympics with 87 percent opposed to use of taxpayer funds for this purpose. The poll included 603 respondents. It was a non-random sample, hence it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding how these results mesh with public opinion.

121. According to a *New York Times* article, the tangible impact of stadium construction is uncertain in the long term, but negative in the short term. They reported that one leading Cincinnati family’s residential real estate may have been negatively impacted by stadium construction. Nevertheless, government subsidies and potential for a better quality of life after the construction has been completed may have a long-term positive impact on residential real estate in the downtown area. According to the article, two downtown buildings “had a waiting list until earlier this year, when some tenants fled because of inconveniences from construction of a new football stadium for the Cincinnati Bengals....Vacancies resulted, which have since been filled, although the waiting list [for apartments] is a thing of the past, at least for now.” Eckberg, John. “More Call Cincinnati Downtown Home.” *New York Times*. July 30, 2000, Section NE, p. 28.
122. David Ginzburg, vice president of Downtown Cincinnati, Inc., optimistically argued that “80 to 85 percent that I’ve talked to intend to stay downtown,” but one frustrated executive indicated that he was relocating to Blue Ash. According to the executive, “I’ve been waiting 15 years for things to get better, and they haven’t. They are getting worse.” Booster to Business: Stay Put. *Cincinnati Post*. June 14, 2000. [www.cincypost.com/news/parkin061400.html].


130. Jenkins, Chris. “League’s Web Site Links Teams to Internet to be Just Like TV: Profit Making.” *USA Today*. August 9, 2000, p. 3C.


132. Brown was criticized for vetoing Cinergy’s transition to a grass surface a year earlier. This was something that was highly desired by the Reds, and baseball fans regarded this move as the last arrogant attempt to get even with the Reds for previous stadium disputes. His concession on this particular issue may have been partially prompted by this criticism.


Chapter 5: The Pittsburgh Case Study

Pittsburgh is a city with a unique topography. A typical visitor is likely to get lost in this complex landscape of rocky hills and surrounding waterways. These natural resources provide a multitude of barriers for roads, bridges, and neighborhoods. In a similar manner, the political landscape is defined by an insular system of tacit hierarchical leadership with the capacity to confound even the most agile political analyst.

Allegheny County’s waterways and lush green hills provide boundaries that make routine land navigation difficult, but these features also provided a fertile environment for heavy industry during Pittsburgh’s early years. As the twentieth century unfolded, leaders in highly profitable heavy industry established and cultivated a hierarchical managerial style that excluded the public from important policy decisions.

Although political leaders were popularly elected, they often quietly struggled to pacify captains of industry, cognizant that the economic might of such luminaries as Charles Schwab and Andrew Carnegie could determine the overall stability of their political future. The result of this social and political landscape in the first half of the twentieth century was a Pittsburgh polluted and blighted, but it was also a city highly profitable for business elites.

After World War II, the prior successes of the steel industry made change seem unlikely, but as the American economy shifted away from an industrial manufacturing base and automation increased public leisure opportunities, people became less tolerant of pollution and blight. Within this context difficult decisions had to be made regarding the future of Pittsburgh. Legendary Mayor David Lawrence’s ability to convince Pittsburgh business leaders, most notably Richard King Mellon, to reduce air pollution helped to make Pittsburgh a cleaner city, while his downtown construction agenda reshaped the city’s commercial center. Lawrence’s transformation of Pittsburgh from a pollution-laden industrial eyesore faced both grass roots and corporate opposition, but the mayor was able to prevail by carefully selecting corporate and political allies while using the media as a vehicle to sway the public to his side.

In 1955, Lawrence and Mellon again teamed up, not to address pollution or economic issues, but to discuss the idea of a municipal stadium that would presumably enhance the national stature of Pittsburgh. It was the first time that the notion of a civic sports palace was entertained by Pittsburgh’s elites, but before it could be built, a number of other city projects
were undertaken. This building boom, focused primarily on Pittsburgh’s downtown area, is commonly called “Renaissance II” by those familiar with Pittsburgh history.

This transformation of Pittsburgh brought some level of pride to a city that was on the verge of economic decline. Nevertheless, Pittsburgh’s reputation as a dirty steel town persisted outside of Pennsylvania, and this negative reputation did much to hurt potential non-industrial growth in the region. The population base which increased dramatically during the Progressive Era contracted in the latter half of the twentieth century as educated children of older mill workers frequently looked outside of Pittsburgh’s borders for employment opportunities when area steel mills closed down. Political leaders such as Pittsburgh Mayor Lawrence worked hard to shed the image of a “rust-belt” city that was incapable of adapting to change. Three Rivers Stadium was constructed in the late 1960s at the end of the Lawrence-inspired construction boom of downtown Pittsburgh.²

Three Rivers Stadium was completed in 1970, at a time when the thoroughly modern stadium was a prized symbol of community pride. David L. Lawrence was no longer mayor of Pittsburgh as the stadium project neared completion. Joseph Barr had been mayor of Pittsburgh during much of the initial planning and construction of the Three Rivers project, while Peter Flaherty was at the helm when the stadium was finally opened to the public.

Early Stadium History: Pittsburgh Leisure and Forbes Field Construction

In Allegheny County, the public has some input on policy decisions, but the ultimate shape of public policy is often determined by selected community elites with access to political leaders. As a result, leisure has often served as a hegemonic barometer for public resistance to leadership in Allegheny County. In the Progressive Era, citizens flocked to commercial leisure options as a means of resisting the moralistic direction of elite-inspired public parks and libraries. In the 1960s picketing and labor strife during stadium construction served as an indicator of public distaste for corporate restructuring that cost many citizens their livelihood in neighborhood steel mills. At the end of the twentieth century, opposition to new stadium construction became a means of resistance for a number of citizens who felt that community elites, team owners, and athletes were exploiting popular cultural institutions for personal gain.

Pittsburgh struggled to shed its image as a technological dinosaur in the second half of the twentieth century, but it was at the center of a high tech revolution in the nineteenth and early
twentieth century. The national shift from iron to steel production during the Progressive Era helped the railroad and coal industries emerge as major regional powers that impacted the broader national economy in significant ways. In many regards, Pittsburgh area steel and coal were at the core of shaping the first half of twentieth century America.

Technology was an integral part of Pittsburgh culture in the early decades of the twentieth century. The telegraph made it easier for captains of industry to manage their vast resources from a distance, while an emerging film industry created cheap commercial entertainment that helped Pittsburgh area blue collar employees forget the intense rigors of the workplace.3

Not surprisingly, technology was also woven into the sports institutions of the region. Forbes Field was a technological marvel when constructed in 1909. This ballpark was one of the first steel reinforced concrete sports facilities in the nation. It included on-site telephones, automated laundry machines in the clubhouse area, rest rooms for ladies (a feature previously not offered in ballparks), and an underground parking garage for the few citizens in 1909 who owned automobiles.

Press coverage during construction and completion of the Forbes Field project revealed a level of community pride that exceeded previous stadium projects throughout the country. Nevertheless, boosterism in press coverage was a gradual process during this particular project. Until it was clear that Forbes Field would be a unique source of civic pride, local media were reluctant to categorize its construction as a success.

Various factors encouraged downplaying the initial construction of Forbes Field. A most pragmatic concern was the practical politics of ballpark construction in 1909. During the Progressive Era, open competition between rival sports leagues placed politicians in a much more secure position to extract demands from team owners. Simply put, if the more established National League placed a team in a prosperous market, an entrepreneur in Ban Johnson’s upstart American League might be enticed to host a competing franchise. In some circumstances, politicians served as gatekeepers with the ability to delay or block the entry of a competing franchise.4

As such, it is not surprising that early sports franchise owners treaded reluctantly on political turf. A tactic used by some owners was to keep a relatively low profile on a personal level, while pushing hard to obtain positive publicity for the sports franchise. Such a strategy
may have also been encouraged by reluctance of an earlier generation to accept professionalism in athletic endeavors. Simply put, until the success of the legendary 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings, most sports fans regarded professional athletes with disdain. Even during much of the Progressive Era, intolerance for professionalism in athletics was evident.

Only after somewhat prolonged marketing of baseball as a quintessential American sport did a broader acceptance of professionalism in baseball gain currency. Steven Riess suggests that press coverage of professional baseball was skewed to position owners as “public-spirited citizens whose primary concern was the welfare of the community.” In reality, owners were guided more by self-interest than any other factor. Regardless, this positive image seemed both useful for ticket sales and as a defensive mechanism to minimize unreasonable demands from local politicians.

Since several owners faced political complications related to less elaborate ballpark construction, it was not surprising that Pirates’ owner Barney Dreyfuss maintained a relatively quiet posture with the Pittsburgh media before groundbreaking at the Forbes Field site. Such a position stood in marked contrast to the fanfare surrounding planned construction of Three Rivers Stadium in the late 1960s and the extensive local coverage of funding debates for two new Pittsburgh facilities scheduled for completion in 2001.

On October 26, 1908 Dreyfuss was reported to have purchased land in Pittsburgh’s Oakland neighborhood. Reporters erroneously stated that this land was intended to serve as the future site of a football field for the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Tech. Although subsequent news coverage suggests that Dreyfuss disclosed his intent to build a ballpark for his team, this was curiously omitted from news coverage on this day. At the time of the announcement, both universities were in the process of situating their campuses in the more rural “East End,” now known as Oakland. In 1895 Andrew Carnegie chose Oakland to build a variety of cultural facilities, including a large library, a music hall, and an art institute. These cultural assets made such a move simultaneously attractive to local universities and to Barney Dreyfuss. Similarly, evidence suggests that the ballpark might also serve Carnegie’s interests, attracting traffic to his recently constructed cultural monuments.

Cognizant of an eastward migration of an upwardly mobile middle class, Dreyfuss saw the Oakland site as a potentially profitable venue. The installation of a reliable streetcar system
near the site provided a flexible transportation network that would allow the ballpark to draw from a broad audience, but the team’s proximity to a more affluent clientele would better position Dreyfuss to maximize his profit, while preventing the less desirable working poor from routinely crowding out affluent patrons. Despite this marketing strategy, he suggested that his motives were democratic, calling “the transportation facilities... in Oakland [better] than in any other part of the city.”

Unlike today’s stadium-related coverage which has been punctuated by months and years of planning stories, newspaper coverage of Forbes Field construction began in earnest on December 15, 1908, a mere 17 days before groundbreaking. The initial story proudly boasted that “Pittsburgh’s new park will likely eclipse all other major league plants in the land.” Two days prior, the Pittsburgh Athletic Association, a newly created organization, announced unfulfilled plans to build a stadium in nearby Schenley Park with confidence that the site would serve as a venue for the 1912 Olympics. The first reports of ballpark construction were somewhat low-key but tended to receive large top-page headlines. Two stories on surveying and grading the land received as prominent coverage as the actual groundbreaking. Four days before groundbreaking, the Pittsburgh Post reported new ballpark plans in Boston, Chicago, and St. Louis, and proudly repeated that “after next July the Smoky City [Pittsburgh] will be able to boast the best baseball plant in the world.” This report also provided a rationale for lack of media coverage prior to groundbreaking. Despite Dreyfuss’ earlier announcement of his intent to build, “many refused to credit the story.” In other words, until the team’s surveyors and heavy equipment were in Oakland, a number of reporters were skeptical that Dreyfuss’ plans would ever come to fruition.

The evolution of ballpark construction during the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era offers another explanation for limited press coverage prior to this groundbreaking. The first professional teams were a mere generation removed from Dreyfuss’ squad. These pioneers tended to play a limited home schedule, deriving much of their revenue from barnstorming tours in venues that were constructed of simple stockade fencing and hastily constructed wooden seats. Michael Benson’s comprehensive encyclopedia of North American ballparks is scattered with “name of park unknown” entries for a number of Gilded Age and Progressive Era venues.

Before ballparks were constructed of concrete and steel, many professional teams erected
unimpressive wooden structures that were not symbols of community pride. Some of these facilities were never given formal names, and local reporters did not seem to care. Professional sports franchise owners were also rather dependent on the vagaries of local politicians, so it was not unreasonable for a team to abandon a politically desirable site for another location in mid-season. It might seem odd today, but in a number of instances owners expected players to assist in both ballpark construction and intermittent field maintenance, further diminishing the shrine-like qualities that we have come to associate with older ballparks.

As electric streetcars permeated the urban landscape, more intricate wooden structures such as New York’s early Polo Grounds emerged, giving a level of permanence to franchises in key metropolitan areas. The popularity of tobacco products combined with wooden architecture, conspired to make masonry structures more appealing for obvious safety-related reasons. Four separate fires in 1894 caused Baltimore’s team to build cement and steel stands after insurance coverage became prohibitive. Later that year, sections of Philadelphia’s Baker Bowl were also victimized by fire, so a large brick, steel, and concrete grandstand was subsequently built.

Philadelphia and Boston preceded Pittsburgh in opening large concrete and steel stadiums, the former in April 1909 for the Philadelphia Athletics, the latter in 1903 for the Harvard University’s football team. With the exception of student newspaper boosterism at Harvard University, Boston and Philadelphia’s reporting tendencies were generally less aggressive than media routines in Pittsburgh as Forbes Field prepared to open in June 1909.

Initial coverage of the Forbes Field project took a similar low-key approach. Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss received largely positive press coverage of groundbreaking on January 1, 1909, but, remarkably, was not even on hand for the event. Instead, he chose to vacation in Louisville, Kentucky where his family initially settled as German immigrants. Like other ballparks built at that time, there were no formal ceremonies when heavy machinery began operations in Oakland. The *Pittsburg Press* gave more prominence to the city marathon, but did include coverage of groundbreaking on the first page of the “sporting section.” Early newspaper coverage tended to emphasize pragmatic construction issues, with boosterism increasing as the park began to take shape. The *Press*’ and the *Post’s* groundbreaking coverage stressed field drainage issues, highlighting the multi-year experience of Chief Engineer C.E. Marshall during Panama Canal construction. This was a predictable response in light of the
perennial drainage problems at the Pirates’ current home, Exposition Park.  

Progressive Era newspapers straddled the line between catering to elite interests and appealing to the broader and less predictable masses. Pittsburgh’s press was no exception. In a generation prior, newspapers maintained a very clear ideological posture, often serving as an organ of a specific political party. As the Progressive Era unfolded, journalism was gradually shifting to a more fact-based “objective” style that allowed a newspaper to sell to the masses while minimizing alienation of civic leaders responsible for a large portion of highly coveted advertising revenue. Sizzling murder plots or far-fetched medical news often competed with political stories since eye-grabbing headlines helped spur sales. Although the Pittsburg Press [sic] and Pittsburgh Post were still considered much more partisan to Democratic party interests, non-partisan boosterism, seen as a less risky substitute for political ideology, became a more common quality in news reporting. In an attempt to humor its audience, the Pittsburgh Post composed the following verse encouraging acceptance of this booster-oriented trend:

\[ \text{Pittsburgh is old and smokey,} \\
\text{Is full of fog and wealth;} \\
\text{Not because of foreign aid,} \\
\text{But because it boosts itself.} \]

Pittsburgh was a city that prided itself as an industrial leader, and papers reflected that pride. Occasional calls for pollution control might be found, but more often than not, the term “Smokey City” was used by reporters as a term of endearment. Unlike post World War II Pittsburgh, the city’s problems and uncertainties were exacerbated by an expanding population. From 1870 to 1910 the city’s population ballooned from 139,256 to 533,905. An influx of immigrants from eastern Europe created vast tenements of citizens unfamiliar with American culture while it heavily diluted the old-guard ethnic mix of English, Irish, Scots, and Germans.

For newspapers, this increase in population offered profitable opportunities, but it presented uncertainties. Sports helped to build Progressive Era newspaper circulation, but also served as a subtle battleground for class distinction. The entire leisure landscape served as a hegemonic struggle among class interests. Affluent citizens pursued two different trajectories in this clash. Some followed the path outlined by Thorstien Veblen in his sociological classic, \textit{Theory of the Leisure Class}, shutting out the unwashed rabble while retreating to hunt clubs and
exclusive resorts. More progressive citizens pushed for improved leisure options for the masses, with the hope that the uplifting inspiration of such endeavors would result in a more productive citizenry. Some of these efforts were inspired by the type of idealism that led to the opening of Jane Addams’ Hull House in Chicago, while industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford were propelled by a desire to control the ideology of recreation in a manner that helped foster a more productive and less cantankerous workforce. \(^{23}\) Francis Couvares cogently points out that Carnegie’s construction of a museum, music hall, and library for the citizens of Pittsburgh had “an explicit social agenda: to define, create, and disseminate ‘the highest culture’ and thereby to civilize the inhabitants of the industrial city.”\(^{24}\)

In a similar vein, Roy Lubove argued that “public recreation posed no threat to private economic prerogatives, and had positive advantages as social control mechanisms.”\(^{25}\) Many of Pittsburgh’s workers resisted the moralistic intentions of elites, however, including Mary Schenley’s donation of 300 acres for a city park in 1899. The city’s use of some parts of the land for elite leisure activities such as golf and genteel bridle paths further distanced this segment of the populace from partaking in potentially wholesome public recreation.

Newspapers of the Progressive Era tended to give more space to park development and high culture leisure activities than to ballpark construction. The popularity of the park movement was spurred in part by a Progressive Era belief that such cultural assets could tame and civilize unruly children, while providing an uplifting recreational experience to individuals challenged by the rigors of work. This call for open spaces, reduced media enthusiasm for ballpark construction to some degree. Championing this cause was a Pittsburgh Post editorial which argued that open play spaces provided a child an outlet “to train himself and be trained for future health and usefulness.”\(^{26}\)

Frederick Law Olmstead’s park design successes in Boston, Chicago, and, most notably, at New York’s Central Park spurred an outpouring of media support for new pastoral recreation areas throughout the nation.\(^{27}\) But in Pittsburgh, working class skepticism about elite intentions drove many workers to consumer-driven recreational options. Some of these entertainment choices were gritty and tawdry, such as the corner bar, the pool hall, the prize fighting ring, and the nickelodeon. Others offered a bit of rural greenery and the veneer of upscale environs with greater freedom and less threat of well-intentioned upper class moralizing. Kennywood, an area
amusement park featuring assorted mechanical rides and a pastoral backdrop, provided one such outlet when it opened to the public in 1898.28

Major League Baseball provided another attractive commercial venue for citizens. With this in mind, it is not surprising that media coverage gained momentum as construction progress neared completion. In a sense, coverage of ballpark construction was a relatively safe issue for Pittsburgh area newspapers. Forbes Field’s fusion of architectural innovation with the ballpark’s pastoral green appealed to a broad segment of the community in differing ways.

For the elite industrialists of Pittsburgh, baseball might have been regarded as a back door opportunity to introduce proper values to less privileged spectators. Baseball cultivated acceptance of a meritocracy, where production standards, in the form of player statistics, were accepted. More important, baseball’s system of managerial hierarchy and specialized position play may have taught the notion of bureaucratic efficiency more effectively than a post-game lecture from Max Weber. The focus on technology in construction and management of the ballpark served to cultivate passive acceptance of elite-inspired innovation. Finally, the pastoral setting of the baseball field may not have been as uplifting as an elite country club, but the carefully manicured diamond may have inspired while it inculcated workers with the elite’s Progressive Era notion of man’s ability to master nature.

For blue collar mill workers, the new ballpark might be an upscale experience and a chance to visit a well-heeled neighborhood that had amenities unavailable in rickety ethnic tenements. For recent immigrants it was an opportunity to engage in activity that was thoroughly American and to participate in a community-binding experience. For veterans of the modernized steel mills, watching skillful ballplayers may have evoked memories of an earlier era when craftsmanship was respected in industrial production. By the turn of the century, skilled workers such as iron puddlers and glass shapers were a dying breed, replaced largely by interchangeable semi-skilled labor that better served management. These new and more efficient steel and glass making techniques distanced many of the workers from their craft and shifted power from the individual worker to a Tayloresque supervisor. This reduced job satisfaction for many workers.

Pittsburgh’s working class often regarded free leisure offered by elites with suspicion. Many correctly determined that the same individuals responsible for oppressive working conditions and repressive labor tactics, including the highly publicized Pinkerton violence at the
Homestead mills in 1892, had ulterior motives in their philanthropy. This attitude provided an opportunity for commercial entities, including but not limited to sports venues, to attract the patronage of working class citizens. Skeptical of the philanthropic intent of the Carnegies, the Mellons, the Schwabs, and a host of upper class moralists, Francis Couvares cogently asserts that “leisure reform only accelerated the rush of [Pittsburgh’s] working people into the arms of merchants of leisure who were fashioning a new mass culture.”

In response to this emerging mass culture, early sports sections catered to a broad range of recreational interests. Boxing held appeal for the male bachelor subculture that grew with the influx of mass immigration. College football, particularly the Ivy League variety, appealed to an upper class audience fearful that technology and new riches were softening youthful offspring. Hunt club events, yacht racing, and a number of other activities appealed to a select elite who wished to partake in an excessive level of conspicuous consumption. Coverage of these activities could all be found in Pittsburgh newspapers during the Progressive Era.

In this vast matrix of recreation choices, professional baseball was a sport that appeared to be a safe haven or at least an acceptable compromise for all classes. Not surprisingly, baseball received prominent coverage even when a newspaper’s self-interest was not directly tied to the financial success of the home team. Barney Dreyfuss was not personally invested in the local media, yet press coverage of Forbes Field construction was universally favorable. As the project took shape, a number of local editorials and articles praised professional baseball for its positive influence on the populace.

Press coverage of the ballpark project seemed to take three paths: one focused on technology and innovation, the second exhorted community pride, the third praised Dreyfuss or the Pirates’ staff for either civic mindedness or business acumen. Often these three recurrent themes were intertwined. Dreyfuss, a shrewd entrepreneur, intuitively understood the significance of technology in shaping the urban landscape. He was not afraid to employ new technological solutions to baseball-related problems, turning these innovations into positive press coverage for his team. When Exposition Park’s drainage problems threatened his attendance revenues, he was the first owner to use a special tarpaulin to cover the infield, a standard practice today. In designing Forbes Field he placed laundry facilities in the clubhouse. The Pirates also gained press coverage for use of special “box” seats, installation of public telephones, designing
public lavatories for ladies, importation of special turf from an Ohio sod farm, design of an underground automobile parking garage, and use of innovative crowd control devices such as turnstiles and exit ramps. One story even focused on electric lighting for the new ballpark, with a Cincinnati inventor suggesting that night baseball might be possible. Pittsburg Press reporter G.H. Gillespie called the ballpark project “the acme of modern skill and science.”

As Forbes Field neared completion, newspaper coverage of ballpark construction frequently trumpeted the world-class status of this enterprise. One report, replete with pictures, used the exact phrase “finest athletic field in the world” three times in opening paragraphs, only to rephrase this assertion several times later. If the repetition did not convince the reader, comparative arguments were included specifying why the construction was superior to other cities including Philadelphia’s popular venue. Pittsburgh press coverage revealed haughty boosterism that suggested a broad level of community pride. One story boasted that “nothing advertises a city like a good baseball team.” Another quoted a St. Louis sportswriter asserting that “there is nothing in the United States that even approaches Forbes Field in size, accessibility, cost, or location.”

The excitement surrounding the ballpark’s opening was palpable, as ticket requests from distant locations were reported. A common theme was how Forbes Field would positively reflect upon the city. Precisely one month before construction finished, President William Howard Taft helped increase interest in the Pirates, sitting with fans in the old ballpark as the Cubs defeated the Pirates. Newspaper accounts chronicled spectator and celebrity visits to the work site. On June 13, 10,000 fans were estimated to visit the construction area, many so excited that they were seen “climbing into the grandstand and sitting for some time.” Explicit instructions regarding ticket purchasing policies were offered frequently. Opening ceremony plans included a concert with two bands, introduction of various dignitaries, including the league president and a parade of ex-players. The mayor threw the ceremonial first pitch to the city’s director of public safety.

Opening day at Forbes Field received lead story status with several photos on page one, a level of coverage not previously granted to ballpark dedications. An editorial triumphantly asserted that “opening day certainly justifies the management’s judgment in erecting so worthy a monument to America’s most democratic pastime.” The opening weekend featured record daytime baseball crowds and a highly publicized evening fireworks show. Tickets for the
fireworks offered Pirates’ management additional Fourth of July revenue since games were over before sunset. Dreyfuss later utilized the ballpark for a variety of non-baseball events when the team was on the road, including “the Hippodrome,” billed as “Pittsburgh’s combination vaudeville and circus.”

Newspapers announced that a key condition of these non-baseball events was that “scenery must be moveable so as not to interfere with pennant baseball.” Such precautions were prudent, as the Pirates concluded the season in storybook fashion with a World Series victory over the Detroit Tigers. The series created a national showcase for Forbes Field and the city of Pittsburgh, and the booster press was certainly evident during this historic event. According to one reporter, the series added luster to Pittsburgh because “in every city and town throughout the United States, an army of fans await[ed] the result of each contest.”

Barney Dreyfuss’ plan to create a ballpark that would attract a more upscale audience was intensely visionary. His success at attracting an upscale audience was so profound that Giants’ legend Christy Matthewson joked that players could easily “lose a fly ball in the glint of diamonds in the stands.” By adding more luxurious amenities, Dreyfuss was able to attract women and families to the ballpark. The result was a more civilized atmosphere. Pirates shortstop Honus Wagner confessed this new clientele changed the attitude of ballplayers, forcing them to “stop cussin’” during games.

The unintended consequences of this cultural shift may have been media coverage that was more inclined to support professional sports as an integral part of a community’s culture. In such a scenario, sports gradually became a key “quality of life” issue in many major metropolitan areas, including Pittsburgh. With the drumbeat of the booster press, it was probably only a matter of time before the popularity of sports in America led to significant taxpayer subsidy for ballpark construction. Such subsidies led to a fundamental change in how owners and sports teams were covered in newspapers and on television.

In Pittsburgh, the result was a more critical press when new stadium projects were proposed in the decades ahead. When Three Rivers Stadium was under construction in 1968, 1969, and 1970, the media were generally supportive of the local sports franchises, but gone were the days of absolute unquestioned support for team owners. As construction progressed, journalists covered issues such as minority hiring practices and disagreements about political
control of the stadium project.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{Pittsburgh’s Second Era of Stadium Construction History: Three Rivers Stadium}

Media coverage of the Three Rivers Stadium project was still less prominent than current day stadium coverage. Front page coverage was considerably less frequent and stadium planning did not include recognition of public input to any appreciable degree. The passage of stadium funding through creation of a stadium “authority” was one mechanism used by political leaders to distance the public from decision making. A possible result may have been limited media input as well. This political strategy was initially popularized in the New York metropolitan area by Robert Moses in shaping the direction of parks and transportation infrastructure.\textsuperscript{51} Moses’ immense success in reshaping the New York metropolitan area inspired administrative imitation in the form of unelected regional “authorities.”

After limited discussion of a new municipal stadium in the 1950s, Pittsburgh’s stadium planning began to gain momentum in 1963, but was brought to a standstill because of a legal challenge brought forward by the Civic Club of Allegheny County. Its members argued that the newly created stadium authority created an “illegal debt.” The debt was challenged since the city would be held accountable for construction expenditures that were in excess of amounts allocated to the newly created stadium authority. If stadium revenues did not make up the difference, taxpayers would be forced to cover the difference. The issue reached the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on January 11, 1966 and was subsequently dismissed.\textsuperscript{52}

The anti-construction position was hurt by the Supreme Court’s rejection of taxpayer challenge to a similar stadium construction project in Philadelphia one week earlier. Nevertheless, anti-stadium leaders suggested that the Pittsburgh case could face a very different outcome because the Philadelphia project was approved by the voters in a referendum, while the Pittsburgh project was routed through administrative channels that circumvented citizen input.

The overall tone of early comments by Pennsylvania Supreme Court justices provided a foreshadowing of the pro-construction decision that would follow. Justice Herbert Cohen compared the financing plan to “a school district that has an authority build a school for it.” Prior to introduction of that analogy, Justice Michael Musmanno pointedly asked Civic Club Attorney John Neely “do you think that today a city can hold its head up in the nation without an adequate stadium?” Immediately after Neely’s response that many citizens “who don’t believe
this...haven’t had a chance to voice their objections,” Musmanno tersely countered that “I think it is just as important for a city to have a stadium as it is to have parks.”

The court challenge to stadium construction slowed stadium progress and revealed some degree of public opposition to construction. Nevertheless, most coverage of the Three Rivers Stadium project portrayed this new stadium as a positive development for the Pittsburgh region. The stadium was touted as an engine for economic development and a means for urban renewal. As specific construction plans were being made in 1968, the proposed stadium construction area was described as “a combination junkyard and industrial slum” that was badly in need of repair.

Before the construction of Three Rivers Stadium, the Pirates utilized Forbes Field. The Steelers were in a less advantageous position regarding facilities. Initially, they played in Forbes Field, but later shared Pitt Stadium with the University of Pittsburgh’s football team, an arrangement that relegated the professional football franchise to second class stature since this facility was owned and operated by the university.

The issue of public subsidy was not generally criticized as construction neared, largely because stadium advocates framed construction as a profitable venture for local government. Nevertheless, up-front financing by the taxpayers forced reporters to cover the overall project with a greater level of public scrutiny than might have occurred if the project was entirely funded by team owners. As was the case in Cincinnati’s stadium construction, once the court decision eliminated any legal construction constraints, the public tended to be left out of the construction planning process. Instead, civic leaders, elected officials, and experts were primarily utilized for quotations.

As the bidding process neared finalization, elected officials and civic leaders took a back seat to Stadium Authority officials and construction professionals. A March 15, 1968 article focusing on the bidding timetable, heavily quoted Burrell Cohen, the Stadium Authority’s project director, while closing with a quote from John Matheson, Jr., construction director of the project. Cohen set April 20, 1968 as a tentative groundbreaking date with a caveat that construction bids entered by the March 28, 1968 deadline would determine whether this timetable would remain in place. A previous attempt at construction bidding which began in 1966 resulted in only three bids and cost estimates of at least $31.3 million, far in excess of the $28.5 million that the stadium authority had budgeted for this purpose.
The groundbreaking as an event involved public hoopla, but once construction was underway, public participation in news coverage tended to give way to bureaucratic and technocratic control. After the groundbreaking, the public, frozen out of traditional news reporting channels, utilized a variety of other methods to put their views of the project on the table. Public opposition to the construction itself was marginal. Instead, public comment focused on issues related to construction procedures, what to name the stadium, and labor-related issues. Reflecting the sensibilities of America in the 1960s, pickets, organized public marches, and letters to the editor were most commonly used as forms of public expression. News articles did not include evidence of extreme opposition to the project itself, but very limited evidence of distaste for stadium construction could be found in the letters to the editor section of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

One letter of this type that preceded groundbreaking argued against “spending the money of future generations” after creating an autonomous “authority.” Another letter published five days after groundbreaking ceremonies was critical of political priorities, tersely wondering “how many sub standard slum-lord tenements...could be torn down and replaced by the $29 million that our splendid, shiny new stadium will cost.” Three weeks later, another citizen attacked local neglect of education. According to this individual, this neglect stood in contrast to “the prime concern of our city [which] is allocation of nearly $30 million for a baseball field.” In a move not generally practiced by the editorial staff, this letter was followed by an italicized explanation of their editorial position on education and an explanation of the stadium’s funding mechanisms. According to the “editor’s note” the stadium debt “would be retired through contracts with the ballclubs who use the stadium. The city’s only financial obligation in the stadium deal is to backstop to the bond issue. Hopefully, it will not cost the city a penny.”

Letters critical of the decision to construct a new stadium were rare, however. Instead, in the early period of construction, the public was much more captivated by the debate over a new stadium name. On the day before groundbreaking, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* helped stir up interest in this endeavor with an editorial that vigorously argued that the stadium should be named after David L. Lawrence, the charismatic political figure who was instrumental in reshaping Pittsburgh after World War II.

Coverage of the stadium groundbreaking in the next day’s news section focused heavily
on momentum that was building to name the stadium after Pittsburgh’s former mayor and Pennsylvania’s former governor, David L. Lawrence. In this ceremonial coverage, the current mayor, the city council president, and several other politicians were listed among individuals in concurrence with the notion of naming the stadium after David L. Lawrence. Three days after coverage of the groundbreaking ceremonies, a letter to the editor asserting that David Lawrence deserved to have a stadium named in his honor was offset by two letters that advocated simply “Pittsburgh Stadium” and “Pittsburgh Memorial Stadium” respectively. Approximately three weeks later, a letter from David L. Lawrence’s son indicating that his family “would be honored” if the name of his deceased father was adopted. A year later, after the Lawrence idea was clearly moribund, another editorial reiterated its initial stadium naming proposal while lamenting Pittsburgh’s inability to properly recognize David L. Lawrence’s legacy in any civic structure.

Citizens expressed a range of opinions on what the stadium should be named. Most seemed to hold little enthusiasm for naming the facility after a political leader. Many suggested that the name should reflect taxpayer desires since they would be providing the initial financing for the project. Before the David L. Lawrence suggestion was made, one citizen suggested naming the stadium after Jonas Salk, a local medical legend responsible for inventing the polio vaccine. Once the pro-Lawrence editorial was published, an array of citizen ideas emerged. For those focusing on individuals, Hall of Fame ballplayer Honus Wagner, Pirates announcer Rosey Roswell, former Pirates manager Bill McKechnie, and civil rights activist Martin Luther King were recommended. Several suggested that the stadium should be named in memory of American soldiers, reflecting a tradition that was popular in stadium and arena naming in the 1950s and early 1960s. Some argued for names with a civic orientation while others simply questioned the prudence of naming the facility after any politician.

Three Rivers Stadium, the name ultimately selected for the stadium, emerged as a result of an evolutionary process that appeared to result from public input. On May 6, 1968 George Dorondo, a citizen from Butler, Pennsylvania, suggested the name “Mon-All-O,” derived from the first syllable of each of the three rivers which surrounded the site. In his letter he argued that “the three rivers were there long before our time and will be there long after.” Howard Burgwin of Pittsburgh appeared to be the first citizen to publicly suggest the “Three Rivers Stadium” name. In a letter published on Wednesday, May 22, 1968 Burgwin argued that unlike
all of the suggestions to name the stadium after an individual, the “Three Rivers” name “couldn’t offend anybody- alive or dead.” Since a few area businesses were named after the “three rivers,” including a local car dealership, such a name was already familiar to the public.

Those in charge of the stadium construction process did not let the public prodding on this issue push them into a quick decision. Instead, the final stadium name was announced months after public input on this issue had died down. Letters on the naming issue continued into the early summer of 1968, with the official naming announcement coming in a relatively subdued fashion on February 12, 1969 after months of public silence on the issue.

In making the decision, the leaders appeared to recognize public opposition to the use of a specific politician’s name, but they framed the choice in terms of broader national trends in order to avoid alienation of elites who may have lobbied for a specific dedication. Stadium Authority Chairman Arthur Gratz indicated that the board “considered naming the stadium for an individual, such as a sports figure, a statesman, or a businessman who may have dominated the Pittsburgh scene,” but “the trend in the big leagues to name new stadiums for identifying geographical figures...‘tipped the scales’” in favor of the Three Rivers Stadium name. The article cited Cincinnati’s Riverfront Stadium, currently under construction, as well as the already constructed Chavez Ravine (Dodgers Stadium) in Los Angeles and the Astrodome in Houston. The low key announcement may have been a strategic move to limit criticism for their decision from both the general public and elites. If so, it was an apparent success, as very little objection was raised in the months following this naming announcement.

In a small way the stadium naming issue may have given the public a sense that they were part of the construction process even though significant stadium-related decisions were largely made by political appointees, construction professionals, and civic leaders. The fact that an elite-inspired suggestion to name the stadium after a politician was thwarted may have given some Pittsburgh residents a sense that their enthusiasm for this issue was somehow confronted by area leaders. Nevertheless, the months of relative silence before an official announcement was made provided the public a tangible indication that appointed officials of the stadium authority controlled key stadium-related decisions.

Team owners almost certainly had input on a number of important policy decisions, but their position in media coverage was considerably downplayed compared to more recent media
coverage of stadium construction. The typical threats of franchise relocation that have become commonplace with modern stadium building decisions were absent from the dialogue in this instance. Rather than making demands as is the case in current stadium negotiations, sports franchises tended to be pressured to act in a more civic minded manner.

When it appeared that the stadium financing could not be completed without entering into a deficit, the Galbreath family, owners of the Pirates, agreed to increase their rental fees from $355,500 per year to $405,500 per year.70 Unlike more recent stadium negotiation coverage, owners were not generally quoted in stories about design or stadium construction matters. Instead, their role was largely to serve as tenant and to be present and visible for ceremonial functions such as the formal groundbreaking festivities for the new stadium.

During the groundbreaking ceremonies for Three Rivers Stadium, the owners were presented in a manner that helped humanize them within the larger metropolitan community. As part of the festivities Steelers owner Art Rooney kicked a ceremonial first field goal and Pirates owner John Galbreath caught ceremonial pitches tossed by Pittsburgh’s Mayor Joseph Barr.

Pittsburgh’s groundbreaking ceremony on April 25, 1968 were orchestrated to achieve a variety of goals. First, they helped to celebrate the culmination of many years of planning. Second, they were an opportunity for politicians and local celebrities to publicly take the stage. Third, they served as a public relations vehicle for team owners who were less visible in media coverage than present-day owners. Finally, the groundbreaking ceremonies presented an opportunity for elites to symbolically reach out to the community in ways that may have been more sophisticated than the public would recognize.

Concerns about problems related to race relations in the Pittsburgh area serve as a cogent example. Instead of selecting the typical political figure or league executive, Olympic hero Jesse Owens was chosen and heavily publicized to be the “principal speaker at the event.”71 In his remarks, he stated, “as long as men of all creeds and color can play football and baseball together here..., this hallowed ground is worthwhile under the eyes of God.” 72

Racial tensions were a key concern throughout the nation as the city of Pittsburgh prepared to break ground on the new stadium project. Civil rights marches and concern over lack of equity in hiring practices were part of the national political landscape in 1968. While blacks were often frozen out of high paying construction positions, newspaper articles from as early as
1966 chronicled a shortage of Pittsburgh area skilled construction labor. In addition, the murder of civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968 brought racial tensions to a most ominous level as Pittsburgh moved ahead on the stadium construction issue. The Post-Gazette’s front page lead article announcing formal bidding results on the stadium was visually juxtaposed by photos of civil rights protests in Memphis a mere five days before King was killed by an assassin’s bullet. Riots broke out throughout the nation after King’s death, and although Pittsburgh’s situation was tame compared to many American cities, a genuine fear persisted that race relations might divide and destroy the country.

The symbolic move of inviting a prominent black man to be the keynote speaker during the stadium groundbreaking ceremony may have helped alleviate racial tensions somewhat, but activist citizens were less than satisfied with mere symbolic representation at such events. Instead, leaders in Pittsburgh’s minority community attempted to make the issue of discrimination in the workplace a hot-button issue. Activists looked at the symbolic importance of the stadium to the community in tailoring a strategy that would draw attention to their political agenda.

Prior to construction, civic leaders took steps to address minority hiring issues, but some of these steps served to demonstrate the limits of minority progress. A 1966 accord between the Pittsburgh Baseball Employees Union and the United Negro Protest Committee to hire minority workers at Pirate games in Forbes Field highlighted the fact that minority workers were hired previously to serve as maids, porters, guards, and cooks, but were unable to apply for other more visible positions. Until the agreement, no blacks were ever hired as ushers or ticket takers.

After being frozen out of a number of low-skill positions for decades, Pittsburgh’s minority community was now ready to push hard for inclusion in higher paying skilled construction positions. An early agreement to hire minority workers to operate heavy machinery provided some hope that protests might be unnecessary, but lack of immediate, tangible progress in this and other areas prompted more militant action in Pittsburgh. The stadium job site became the protest venue of choice because of its importance as a symbol of progress for the entire community. The symbolic value of this venue also seemed to increase the chance of media coverage of protests. Media coverage of this issue often lacked the typical author’s by-line offered in other news stories of similar length, perhaps an indication of this issue’s volatility.
Progress on the minority hiring issue was limited and constrained by bureaucratic inflexibility. Construction management and political leaders expressed a desire to help minorities move into more skilled labor positions, but indicated that their hands were tied because qualifications required to fill the jobs were set by the unions responsible for the various workplace tasks. Union leaders indicated that they had to adhere to hiring guidelines that required apprenticeships and specific training procedures before individuals could advance to higher paid skilled positions. With a multitude of unions to handle a broad range of construction occupations, the ability to negotiate was often an uphill battle despite efforts by political leaders to coordinate meetings in a manner that included all parties. When it seemed clear that progress would not be made, minority activists took to the streets, mobilizing protests around the stadium construction site.

These protests were blamed for “causing delays” according to Sam Casey, vice chairman of the Stadium Authority. Robert Collins, the project manager, estimated that a single day shutdown caused a $20,000 to $25,000 loss as well as major problems with supply deliveries. To avert further delays and financial loss, an August 12, 1969 court order was rendered by Judge David Fawcett, Jr. that required picketers “to keep moving, spaced 10 feet apart and told to ‘peaceably advertise their cause without injury or violence to any person or property.’”

A subsequent court order from Judge Fawcett, rendered on August 15, 1969, further restricted the protests. The terms of this order restricted the Black Construction Coalition to a total of twelve pickets on the stadium’s West General Robinson Street entrance and eight pickets at the Manchester entrance. Michael Dismond, a spokesman for the coalition, argued that “all legal means have been exhausted,” further stating that the situation is so serious that there is “nothing but mass force left to stop it.” He further vowed to “stop the stadium job and all other construction jobs within the city” with a mass protest that was set for August 25, 1969.

A day after the first court order, Broadway Maintenance Corporation, an electrical contractor, indicated that they would not send trucks through picket lines, slowing construction and giving the Black Construction Coalition a victory. The picketers’ cause was further fortified by a news story focusing on data compiled by the mayor’s Commission on Human Relations. According to the report, “most of the unions listed...had a black membership of under two percent. The story further indicated that seven unions “refused to reply...to the commission’s
request for figures.” Four of the unions reported all white memberships, two unions of which had total memberships that exceeded 1,000.82

In the wake of such evidence, public opinion appeared to favor those pushing for greater minority representation in the workplace. Anticipating a highly volatile situation on August 25, the construction site was closed down by the mayor. Citing public safety concerns, construction was also suspended for one day at the US Steel, the Pittsburgh National Bank, Bell Telephone, and Westinghouse buildings.83 This action prompted construction workers to launch a protest outside the mayor’s office. The massive volume of both white and minority picketers resulted in greater media coverage of these protests.

The protests received prominent news coverage and included a mix of minority and non-minority participants. In light of court-ordered restrictions around the stadium construction site and various violent incidents, numerous arrests were made. Thirty two injuries resulted, including twelve police officers, from the highly emotional August 26, 1969 protests. According to reports, 180 arrests were made after police were pelted with rocks and protesters were attacked by club-wielding police. Among the arrests were three Catholic nuns, providing an indication that some of the individuals arrested were non-violent citizens marching for social justice.84 On the opposite end of the spectrum was an array of militant protesters, some equipped with riot gear and chemical crowd-control agents that were reported to be more powerful than the police department’s Mace. Other protesters sporting black uniforms brought German shepherds with them, presumably for protection or as a tool of intimidation. Because no laws prohibited dogs in public streets, some of these protesters escaped arrest.85 Nevertheless, those who were arrested were processed quickly and some faced the wrath of David Fawcett, Jr., the judge who issued two prior rulings sternly limiting protests around the stadium construction site. He swiftly sent a dozen protesters accused of “indirectly blocking the stadium entrance” to the county jail.

The arrests and jailings served as an immediate deterrent for high-volume, stadium-related protests in the days and months ahead. During the August 26 demonstrations, protesters moved from the stadium to the US Steel Building, also under construction while the stadium was being built, presumably because of the powerful symbolic value of this venue. After that, the stadium lost its place as the central protest site for the minority rights issue, but it served as a starting point for dramatic mass action. By September 15, 1969, one march, centered in
Pittsburgh’s downtown area and comprised of a mix of white businessmen, housewives, hippies, and blacks, was estimated to include between 5,000 and 9,000 protesters. The crowd volume seemed to increase after union leaders and construction industry officials called for further study of the issue by state officials, something that infuriated black leaders. This call for a state study of minority hiring issues was perceived as stonewalling and served to mobilize many participants to join the march.\(^86\) One enthusiastic protester argued that the crowds exceeded the volume of civil rights marches in Selma, Alabama and were “bigger even than the march after Martin Luther King was shot.”\(^87\)

Although local-level public opinion polls were not yet a journalistic routine in the late 1960s, letters to the editor, typically skewed to represent more affluent interests, were frequently highly sympathetic to job-related discrimination faced by less affluent inner-city blacks. Letters in favor of greater minority representation in the workplace outpaced letters supporting union or industry action by at least a two to one margin. This support was evident even after protest marches and occasionally included evidence of tangible political mobilization to support this cause. A citizen from Mt. Lebanon, an affluent Pittsburgh suburb, touted an organization called Mt. Lebanon Citizens for Community Relations as “friends of the Black Construction Coalition and... solidly behind the coalition’s efforts to open up more jobs for blacks in construction.”\(^88\)

Appeals to social justice were also common with the Vietnam War used at least twice to defend minority hiring. One letter rhetorically asked “are we really going to tell the black fighting man returning from a distant war that he can’t climb a steel girder or wear an electrician’s badge?”\(^89\) Similarly, another letter asked “if black men can operate equipment in Vietnam, then why can’t they operate construction equipment in Pittsburgh?”\(^90\) Some signs of distaste for offering minority opportunity were evident in the wake of the 1968 riots shortly after Martin Luther King’s death, but by 1969, despite vocal protests by white construction workers, public opinion in the Pittsburgh area seemed to mobilize solidly behind the minority position.\(^91\) The limited support for union voices prompted a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article that offered opinions from construction workers who had picketed City Hall while the Stadium site was closed down due to protests.

Despite the clear public opinion momentum on the minority hiring issue, dramatic progress was not made. Instead, a few gradual victories worked to slowly disengage public anger,
diffusing the issue to a degree that made mass protests unlikely. A few December articles suggested that progress had been made and an agreement was pending. Among the key features of the agreement was federal backing for minority training in the construction trades.92

A number of stadium work stoppages and protests unrelated to the minority hiring issue seemed to further diminish public intensity for this issue. An early work stoppage was prompted by an effort to phase out ten-minute coffee breaks.93 Days earlier a dispute between cement finishers and stone masons caused 20 cement laborers to briefly stop working.94 Another work stoppage was caused by a union-based jurisdictional dispute over scoreboard installation.95 Safety issues, union wage disputes, and demands for concession area upgrades also caused stadium construction delays.96 A local official in the United Brewery Workers Union added yet another distraction to the project, threatening pickets if local beers were not placed on the concession menu.97

Despite all of these issues, minority issues seemed to require the continued attention of public officials. Sometimes officials acted in a delayed response to this issue’s prior resonance with the public. Newly elected Pittsburgh Mayor Pete Flaherty appointed John Henry Johnson, a black ex-Steeler running back, to serve as his representative on the board of directors of the Pittsburgh Stadium Authority.98 Minority-related negotiations were still taking place in 1970, weeks before the stadium was scheduled to open. While it many have been too late to increase minority representation on the stadium construction site itself, some agreements were reached to ensure that black applicants would be considered for various stadium-related positions once Three Rivers Stadium was opened.99

The actual decision to build Three Rivers Stadium was not generally questioned. Instead, construction procedures, stadium amenities, naming decisions, and hiring practices dominated many debates about the facility. In light of present day controversy about stadium construction, this might seem odd, but can be explained by a variety of factors. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a period of intense social unrest, but civic leaders looked at stadium construction as possible means of building bridges within the community. The public may have hoped that such construction could eventually alleviate community friction, but also understood that fairness in hiring and construction practices were needed if this were to occur. Furthermore, the rhetoric of growth that surrounded the construction process may have led many citizens to believe that such
construction would advance Pittsburgh’s economy in a tangible way.

Citizens also seemed to regard a new stadium as something that a community automatically did to assert its major league status. James Michener’s 1976 text, *Sports In America*, seems to capture this attitude. Michener asserts that he “would not want the building of great stadiums to be subjected to picayune supervision by the general public. Let the project be explained, justified and funded honestly; then let the men and women of vision proceed with the actual work.”

Explanations of how the project would be funded led many taxpayers to believe that the process was virtually risk free. On January 13, 1968, the stadium was described as “a self-amortizing, non-subsidized program.” Stadium Authority Executive Director Burrell Cohen indicated that the stadium would produce “$1,670,000 in rental, parking revenues, and other income sources” while $1.6 million per year was required to amortize the stadium debt. Furthermore, as the stadium financing plans were initially laid on the table, John Mauro, director of city planning, told reporters that “$500,000 a year in additional taxes will come in because of the stadium.” This claim of a self-funded stadium was repeated frequently prior to the stadium’s completion in 1970.

In addition, as the stadium was under construction, new opportunities for stadium revenue were occasionally announced. Some of these plans were ahead of their time, including “special boxes” and integration of a lavish, upscale club within the stadium with windows overlooking the field of play. The upscale club, to be called the Allegheny Club, would add at least $100,000 a year to stadium authority revenues. In addition, the cost of furnishing and maintaining the club would be drawn from club members dues, a move that would save the stadium authority $1.5 million dollars in club construction costs.

The special boxes, a prelude to the commonly utilized “skyboxes” of today, were expected to add $277,500 to the stadium authority’s coffers. Over a five year period, this would help reduce the overall cost of the stadium by almost $1.4 million. Stadium-related advertising, including scoreboard revenue was claimed to be a means of further enhancing the stadium’s revenue generating possibilities. In each case, it appeared that the stadium authority, not the sports franchises, would be the principal beneficiaries of these new revenue streams. In light of this, the stadium construction appeared to be a win-win proposition for the entire Pittsburgh
As expenses increased for projects within the stadium, officials displayed sensitivity to public concerns about subsidy. In almost all cases, these officials quickly offered rhetoric that assured taxpayers they would not be forced to subsidize any construction overruns. In a rare exception to this general rule a city councilman charged on November 26, 1969 that stadium cost overruns would result in dramatic subsidies for the Steelers and Pirates over the forty years of the lease. Within a week of this claim, John Mauro, the city’s planning director, forwarded a plan to city council that would hike ticket prices by ten to twenty-five cents to "eliminate the need for an annual city subsidy." The plan was endorsed by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette as a prudent move to avoid future subsidies and was subsequently approved. Both sports franchises agreed to the additional fees despite the potential that it could slightly diminish ticket sales. The total stadium cost was now projected to be $35 million, $6.5 million more than the original $28.5 million estimate, yet the public was consistently assured that they would not have to subsidize the project.

As the stadium neared its grand opening, demands from a New York concessionaire to substantially improve the facilities prompted further concern about overruns and taxpayer subsidy. The public was quickly told by several stadium officials that the estimated $1.3 million overrun “won’t cost the public a dime.” Instead, the costs for construction overruns in this area would be paid by the Pirates since their “failure to hire a concessionaire until only five months ago led to the problems they are now having.” No comment from Pirates officials was offered.

Beyond that, the Pirates and Steelers reportedly signed 40 year leases that were expected to keep them in the facility until 2010. As a result, citizens would have been left with the comfortable belief that professional sports would remain in Pittsburgh for an entire generation. A few isolated complaints about spending priorities could be found if careful examination was undertaken, but by and large, the public was given information that calmed them into a belief that the stadium project would not require taxpayer subsidy of any kind. A January 7, 1970 editorial argued that the new stadium would bring the city an annual tax windfall of $1.2 million.

In this light, citizens may have regarded the stadium as a risk-free opportunity to achieve national recognition for construction of a world-class facility. Citizens were further enticed to support the project as a result of various unique features that would help set the stadium apart
The integration of the Allegheny Club into the facility promised to deliver an upscale touch of class to a community that was nationally stereotyped as ruggedly blue-collar. Having a club-style restaurant overlooking the field of play offered a sports-crazy community an amenity that was highly innovative at the time. Although the fees to join this club would probably limit membership to wealthy community elites, reports that the revenues from such an endeavor would revert to the stadium authority minimized potential objections from the less upscale citizenry. Furthermore, such a facility might have helped improve the overall perception of Pittsburgh as a community that fostered more desirable white-collar occupations. This served to offset the undesired “rust-belt” stereotype as corporate leaders from around the nation visited and were entertained in the stadium by Pittsburgh-based executives.

The stadium would also feature advanced lighting that would be developed by engineers at Pittsburgh-based Westinghouse Corporation. These innovative mercury vapor floodlights would presumably enhance the ability of television cameras to showcase Pittsburgh during national telecasts. Tartan turf, an artificial surface intended to replace grass, gave the stadium another high-tech feature. Although artificial turf became less desirable in later years, in the late 1960s and early 1970s such features were regarded as cutting edge. A set of docking facilities would also be installed to allow boats to drop off passengers at the stadium entrance. A new highway with ramps to the stadium would eventually permit easy stadium access, but stadium planners admitted that parking facilities would be in short supply around the stadium for at least a year.

Austerity measures reflecting the region’s unstable economy caused cutbacks in projects intended to beautify the area surrounding the stadium, including a riverfront park. Despite this, as the stadium prepared to open, community pride was evident. Although some parts of the stadium were yet unfinished, media coverage suggested nearly universal praise for the new facility. In a front page lead story on July 17, 1970 the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* indicated “it obviously made a big hit with the first nighters. Clearly they fell in love with it. They used adjectives such as terrific, great, and fantastic. But the most commonly heard word was: beautiful.” Since construction was still in progress as the stadium opened, officials posted a large sign that welcomed fans but also asked them to “Please excuse the temporary inconveniences. When it is finished YOU’LL LOVE IT.”
The Obsolete Ballpark: The Campaign to Replace Three Rivers Stadium

Pittsburgh’s media has frequently suggested that the public’s love affair with Three Rivers Stadium was not long-term. Its circular design, a compromise to accommodate both football and baseball, limited the number of top-quality baseball seats to less than 15,000. While a significantly better design for football spectatorship, the circular configuration pushed upper deck fans situated on the highly coveted fifty yard line twenty or thirty feet further away from field action than might have occurred in a rectangular stadium configured for football alone.

In 1990 Pittsburgh sportswriter Bob Smizik argued that “almost from the day it was opened, Three Rivers was detested in Pittsburgh.” According to Smizik, “it was more suited for football than baseball..., parking cost too much..., the concessions were too expensive..., and most of all, [it was not] a cozy little ballpark” like its predecessor, Forbes Field. Smizik is correct in asserting that the public did not generally regard Three Rivers Stadium as a good venue for baseball, but many Pittsburgh fans regarded Three Rivers Stadium as a spectator-friendly facility for football.

As Three Rivers Stadium closed its doors to the public on a rainy Saturday afternoon on December 16, 2000, many football fans offered indications that they would miss the thirty year old facility, which was scheduled for demolition on February 16, 2001. Some fans stood on the pedestrian walkway sadly taking pictures as they walked to or from the stadium. Vendors did a brisk business hawking disposable cameras and specially-made Three Rivers Stadium t-shirts as people crossed the river. Some spoke freely about how they would miss the place where Steeler history was made and several Super Bowl champion teams were assembled. Despite heavy rains on that day, people came early and stayed late as the Steelers trounced the Washington Redskins by a 24-3 margin.

As people funneled out of the stadium, the frivolity and tailgating that usually follow a Steeler victory was tempered by a somber uncertainty regarding what would replace Three Rivers Stadium. The rain and chill of a December in Pittsburgh and the intensity of an emotional post-game celebration may have put some damper on the final exodus. The celebratory enthusiasm that often followed late season Steelers victories was a bit more subdued than usual as Three Rivers Stadium finally closed its doors to the public.

Area residents were cognizant that a local landmark faced the wrecking ball, and many
fans seemed to understand the broader implications of this issue. The new football stadium, under construction just feet away from the old stadium, would certainly include amenities unavailable at the old stadium, but some wondered whether it would have the same electrifying atmosphere that permeated football Sundays at Three Rivers Stadium.113

With few exceptions, the press continued its tendency to portray Three Rivers Stadium as a cold and impersonal building that inadequately served area fans.114 Editorials following the stadium’s closure seemed to hammer this message home. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* described it as “a venue that many people found unsatisfactory,” while the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* described it as “a vast, uncomfortable, public gathering space.”115

The call to replace Three Rivers Stadium had little to do with the building’s structural integrity which, despite labor controversies, was solidly constructed and could have remained useful for decades into the future. Instead, this stadium became economically obsolete for the owners of Pittsburgh’s baseball and football franchises. As other sports franchises around the country were signing heavily subsidized sweetheart deals, leases that offered major revenue streams from advertising, skyboxes, parking, and concessions, the terms offered to the two professional teams in Pittsburgh looked inadequate. A new stadium with highly attractive lease terms became the quickest route to remain fiscally competitive with other teams in each respective league. In short, new taxpayer subsidized facilities became the easiest way for owners to maximize their own revenue streams simply because construction costs would be borne largely by citizens, while in the newly negotiated contracts the owners, not the stadium authority, would retain the lion’s share of stadium-generated revenues.

The campaign to build two new sports facilities took several twists and turns, including an overwhelming public rejection of a referendum to increase sales taxes to make these facilities a reality. The sales tax formula had proven successful in several stadium referenda throughout the nation, but Allegheny County citizens rejected this idea despite a carefully crafted media campaign that focused on referendum approval as necessary to economically revitalize the entire region.

By September 1997 the media campaign was played out daily on the pages of the local newspapers and in the reports on area television news. But before the campaign drew largely positive coverage from media practitioners, initial calls for a new stadium in the early 1990s
were ridiculed and regarded as far-fetched and illogical.

Media practitioners, political leaders, and most citizens did not embrace the first attempts to replace Three Rivers Stadium with a new ballpark which would be built exclusively for the Pirates. Pittsburgh Mayor Sophie Masloff’s September 1991 proposal for a $100 million old-fashioned, natural grass stadium was warmly received by Pirates management, but the idea was portrayed as foolish by almost everyone else. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* Sportswriter Ron Cook called Masloff’s stadium idea “ludicrous” citing respectable attendance figures as evidence that Three Rivers Stadium could adequately serve the Pirates needs in the years ahead. Political columnist Tom Hritz mocked her idea as financially unsound. A day earlier, Associate Editor Tom Waseleski argued that building a baseball stadium would result in choking off more important “financial capital...for transportation.” Editor John Craig suggested that a second stadium might be acceptable, but pontificated that teams shouldn’t “look for ways to build new facilities..., but, instead, [should] try to figure out how to get government out of such involvements.”

Several citizens offered similar analyses in letters to the editor while a number of politicians were quick to criticize the idea. Allegheny County Commissioner Tom Foerster argued that the region has “some priorities that are way ahead of something like that.” Foerster further suggested that any attempt to build a new stadium should be the result of private funding. Tom Murphy, serving a term as a Pennsylvania State Representative at the time, pointedly said the idea of a newly constructed, natural grass stadium for baseball only “doesn’t seem to make any sense.” Masloff quietly withdrew her idea less than two weeks after making it public. She received praise from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*’s editorial staff for recognizing the “widespread negative response” to her idea. As her mayoral tenure came to a close, Masloff pushed through legislation for major renovations to Three Rivers Stadium.

Ironically, Tom Murphy, a vociferous critic of Masloff’s 1991 stadium proposal, emerged as the most prominent cheerleader for much more ambitious new stadium construction several years later. Before his emergence as a leader on this issue, Murphy publicly announced opposition to new stadium construction, citing city finances, job creation, and transportation infrastructure as more pressing community needs. At the time of this announcement, Murphy was Pittsburgh’s leading candidate for mayor. He would assume that position in January 1994.
Murphy continued to argue for measured caution regarding stadium construction until early into his mayoral tenure. An August 3, 1994 announcement that the Pirates ownership would sell the team forced Murphy to become directly involved in negotiations to find a new owner for the Pirates.126 Ironically, the sale was triggered by attempts to renegotiate more favorable stadium lease terms with the owners. Failure to attract an investor with ties to Pittsburgh could have placed Murphy in the unenviable position of being at the helm as this major league franchise moved to another city. Entrepreneurs in Charlotte, North Carolina and Washington, DC were already expressing interest in bidding for the Pirates, prompting Murphy to quickly rearrange his earlier stated political priorities.127 Stadium building moved from a marginal concern to the top of his agenda.

The Pirates’ ownership in 1994, comprised of a consortium of local business leaders, expressed dismay at their inability to maintain the club at break-even levels. The continued loss of money was caused, in part, by an unattractive stadium agreement, the economic direction taken by competing Major League Baseball owners, and unsupportive fans who were spoiled by the team’s recent ability to consistently produce winning teams. Owners in larger markets and owners with newer facilities in comparable markets began to bid more aggressively for free agent talent, prompting several of the Pirates’ best players to move out of Pittsburgh. As the team’s on-field success declined, so did public enthusiasm for the Pirates.128

With the loss of nationally-known players such as Barry Bonds to larger market teams, the Pirates payroll declined from eighth to twenty-first among Major League franchises from 1992 to 1993, yet Pirates management still argued that they were losing money.129 Before putting the team up for sale, Pirates’ management took a number of steps to improve their financial situation, but each move seemed to further alienate them from the blue-collar citizens of Pittsburgh. In 1993 Pirates management unsuccessfully took the city of Pittsburgh to court, arguing that a 1985 verbal promise by former Mayor Richard Caliguiri to provide subsidies to the team legally entitled them to a $4.2 million payout.130 The team also placed restrictions on in-stadium catering that made outside food and beverage illegal in private lounge boxes. This was criticized by both small and large business owners as a measure that would double or triple the cost of stadium-related entertainment.131 As these actions were taken, the team continued to publicly emphasize the need to obtain a heavily subsidized new ballpark. Steve Greenberg, the
Pirates vice president for marketing and operations, argued that without a new stadium, the Pirates would lose a percentage of current attendance to nearby Cleveland as a result of their new ballpark.

The experience and overall quality of Pittsburgh’s new players diminished as successful Pirate veterans signed multi-million dollar contracts with larger market teams. In turn, the team evolved from a top-tier squad into one that struggled to stay out of last place. This created a fan backlash that eroded overall ticket sales. Fan support for baseball was further hurt by a labor dispute which took place shortly after the 1994 All Star Game, ironically held in Pittsburgh’s Three Rivers Stadium. This labor dispute, described as a strike by many, but technically a “lockout,” ended the 1994 baseball season and carried through into the start of the 1995 season.

Pittsburgh’s citizens, many only one generation removed from the intense rigors of steel mill employment, were reminded that two World Wars and the Great Depression could not prematurely cut any baseball season short, but for the first time ever, players and owners, fighting over how to split up over millions of dollars of television and ticket revenue, had terminated the season before a World Series could bring proper closure to the national pastime. Pittsburgh, a passionate sports community, began to turn its back on baseball. The Pirates’ 1995 attendance was the lowest of any Major League Baseball franchise, dropping from over two million in 1991 to a mere 905,517 in 1995. The Pirates finished in last place in their division in 1996, dimming fan enthusiasm considerably, but the team continued to make overtures for a new stadium.

It was in this complex landscape that Pittsburgh’s Mayor Tom Murphy asked Pittsburgh area citizens to support new stadium construction. Murphy’s about-face on the stadium subsidy issue was a gradual process which received extensive airing in local media coverage. His initial opposition was softened by a trip with Pirates’ management to Cleveland’s newly constructed Jacobs Field in March 1994. Murphy’s personal struggle to secure a prospective owner willing to keep the Pirates in Pittsburgh may have had the most impact on his change of perspective. After the Pirates went up for sale in August 3, 1994, Murphy struggled with a variety of strategies intended to keep the Pirates from leaving Pittsburgh. He developed further empathy for the Pirates management after a national magazine’s financial analysis indicated that the commercial value of the franchise was among the lowest in Major League Baseball, yet despite
the discount pricing, the city still struggled to find a new owner.\(^{134}\)

Murphy’s first sports-related task as mayor, was to work with community leaders to ensure that the Pirates were sold to an individual who would be willing to keep the team in Pittsburgh. After failed attempts to pin down bids from several prospects, Murphy worked to successfully convince Kevin McClatchy, heir to the Sacramento-based McClatchy Communications empire, to acquire the Pirates for $85 million.

Ironically, the $85 million price paid for the team was less than half the cost of a new ballpark. Allegheny County could have purchased the team for much cheaper than it would cost to construct a new stadium, but Major League Baseball by-laws did not permit community ownership of teams. Pittsburgh area politicians were unwilling to confront this issue, presumably because such a challenge would almost certainly trigger a highly negative response from Major League Baseball’s hierarchy. Such a challenge might have resulted in an aggressive effort by wounded team owners to relocate the franchise elsewhere.

Part of the Pirates’ sales agreement required local politicians to move forward on funding plans for a new baseball-only stadium within three years or risk sale of the franchise to another individual. Major League Baseball pushed for a two-year window on the stadium authorization, but backed down without explanation. Approximately two months later, the city’s stadium authority altered the team’s lease agreement, offering the Pirates a bigger slice of concessions, luxury box revenue, and advertising income.\(^{135}\) These lease concessions were considered to be worth $6.5 to $7 million per year.\(^{136}\) McClatchy’s West Coast roots caused street-level speculation that this purchase was undertaken as a first step to moving the franchise elsewhere.

As these transactions transpired, Pittsburgh’s football team, the Steelers, did not sit idly by and watch. Team President Dan Rooney and his staff began to jockey for stadium-related subsidies that would enhance his own team’s profitability. Rooney was a tough, thick-skinned, parsimonious owner, much in the mold of the NFL founding fathers. Nevertheless, Rooney was much more focused on a long-term business strategy than his father, Art Rooney, the original Steelers’ owner, and other early NFL team owners, struggled to survive at a time when baseball was more clearly recognized as the national game. These owners often made decisions collectively and positioned themselves as integral members of their community. Many of these old-guard owners were not particularly adept at management, but they benefitted from
community allegiance to the local team. Dan Rooney often urged restraint and cohesiveness among team owners, in a manner that was similar to his father, but as a new generation of owner emerged, he adapted to the changing landscape, avoiding some of the managerial pitfalls of other old-guard owners.

Rooney’s initial public response to the stadium situation was pragmatic and civic minded. In February 1995, he questioned the need to construct a new ballpark, suggesting that Major League Baseball should address deeper economic problems instead of relying on stadium construction as a panacea for new revenue generation. He pointedly asked “whether Pittsburgh can afford to finance a new ballpark when they are having trouble financing...[Three Rivers] stadium?”

As the Pirates obtained major stadium lease concessions and Rooney watched many more NFL teams move into brand new facilities, he started to look for specific infrastructure advantages for his franchise. He began this process with the subtlety of a sledgehammer. In an October 10, 1995 article, Rooney argued that “government officials needed to make a decision ‘immediately’...on what he estimated would be, at minimum, a $75 million face lift for Three Rivers Stadium” so that it would be more football friendly. Rooney further argued “that the Steelers needed control of the parking as an income producer,” making a demand for a revenue stream previously intended to defray Stadium Authority expenses. Rooney cited economic competition with other NFL owners as the primary reason for making these demands. Because the Stadium Authority had recently approved a multi-million dollar stadium renovation, administrative response to these demands were restrained and non-committal.

A month later, Rooney used Art Modell’s decision to move Cleveland’s NFL franchise to Baltimore to further gain leverage for stadium-related subsidies. He indicated that the lucrative deals made by other NFL teams could affect the ability of his team to successfully compete in the league. Once construction of a Pirates ballpark gained serious political momentum, Rooney attempted to influence the location decision so that it might work to his advantage. He had been working to gain a foothold in retailing on Pittsburgh’s north side, the area near Three Rivers Stadium. As a result, in April 1996 he offered a strong recommendation that a ballpark for the Pirates be situated near Three Rivers Stadium in order to make the area “a destination site.”

Rooney conducted behind the scene lobbying efforts as well. In June 1996, the Rooney
family contributed $25,000 to Pennsylvania Governor Ridge’s reelection campaign, as part of a
golf outing. Steeler management participation in the select “Governor’s Club” golf outing was
not generally covered by Pittsburgh media, but this involvement may have offered the family
important access to Ridge, a supporter of state-level stadium subsidies. Steeler and NFL
officials also visited the mayor’s office on July 2, 1996 to improve their chances for future
stadium subsidies. NFL President Neil Austrian told reporters that the Steelers ranked “among
the NFL’s bottom ten in local revenues.” Austrian pointed to the stadium as a key factor in
limiting Steelers’ revenues. Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy agreed, stating that the Steelers
“have to play in a competitive facility.”

Working through his son, Rooney continued to remind the public about his earlier
demand for a $75 million renovation of Three Rivers Stadium. While doing this he prepared the
public for an increase in the overall renovation cost, but continued to show a commitment to
renovation rather than new construction. On November 21, 1996, Art Rooney, Jr., Steelers’ vice
president and general counsel, announced that “the true costs are coming in somewhat higher
than anybody anticipated.” HOK Sports, a Kansas City-based stadium architect, offered a
preliminary renovation estimate range of $111 to $121 million. A brand new football stadium
was estimated to cost between $160 and $180 million. Three weeks later, the $121 million
became the estimate that would be perpetuated as the HOK report was being constructed. The
public was told that part of their research would determine costs for a new stadium on a site near
Three Rivers Stadium. The Steelers agreed to pay half the costs of this study, again performed
by the nation’s largest stadium designer, HOK Sports. HOK’s final report, released in April
1997, did not deviate from the $121 million figure by a single penny. In addition, they pegged
the price of a new stadium at either $197 or $203 million depending on the precise site
location.

Media practitioners did not question the figures offered in the HOK studies, generally
trusting the architectural authority of the company, despite their vested interest in maximizing
the size and scope of the project. Approximately two and a half years before the renovation
report was released, HOK Sports presented a report to Cincinnati officials for strikingly similar
renovations to Riverfront Stadium, a facility which was very similar to Three Rivers Stadium.
They pegged costs for football renovations at $48.1 million. By April 1997 the estimate for the
Pittsburgh project was $121 million, a 250 percent increase.

With the estimate gap closing between renovation costs and new construction, new construction may have appeared inevitable. Nevertheless, Steelers management held back on its decision to request a new stadium until September 19, 1997, a mere two months before voters would go to the polls to decide whether to fund this project. As this announcement was made, new construction estimates were lowered to $185 million while renovation estimates were rounded down by $1 million to $120 million. The new construction option was chosen because the renovation figure “did not include infrastructure improvements or much work on the upper deck.”148 Presumably, the bulk of the renovation costs were cosmetic and aimed at field and lower deck improvements. These assertions were not heavily challenged by reporters.

As the Pirates and Steelers jockeyed to obtain new facilities, others in the sports community worked to upgrade their physical plant. The Pittsburgh Penguins, the city’s National Hockey League (NHL) franchise, succeeded in acquiring $10.5 million in taxpayer subsidized improvements to their home, the Civic Arena. Despite this investment, citizens were warned that “it could cost $75 million more to make the Civic Arena a financially attractive venue for another ten years or more.”149 Not to be outdone, the University of Pittsburgh requested $25 million in state aid for construction of a $52 million convocation center that would serve as home to several university-level sports teams.150 As these actions were taking place and being publicized in local media sources, the public was being asked to dig deeper into their pockets to fund two brand new stadiums intended to replace Three Rivers Stadium.

The Push to Mobilize Media: Selling the Public Two Stadiums

Some politicians hoped to circumvent the referendum process entirely, but offering citizens a vote on this heavily publicized issue may have been seen as a way to avoid the political fallout that might have transpired if unilateral action was taken. Leaders in favor of stadium subsidies hoped that the referendum process could offer the same election result as the Cincinnati referendum. In Cincinnati’s 1996 referendum, public opinion was heavily stacked against the stadium issue at the outset, but a well orchestrated media campaign set the stage for victory at the polls. Because Pittsburgh’s sports team owners were generally liked by the public and had a less confrontational history than Cincinnati’s Marge Schott and Mike Brown, some leaders may have felt that the Pittsburgh situation was likely to move in their desired direction. A 1995 public
opinion poll revealed 60 percent support for a new stadium “if it were the only way to keep the Pirates here.” This suggested that the veiled and overt threats similar to those made by owners in other cities had the potential to work in Pittsburgh.

In referendum campaigns organized in other cities, success at the polls was often predicated on carefully orchestrated media campaigns. No matter how dedicated a region is to its sports teams, most stadium-related tax hikes are unpopular with voters in early public opinion polling. Without an intense, well-conceived selling effort, obtaining public funds for new stadium construction is highly unlikely. Public distaste for the sports subsidy issue generally dictates that other issues be introduced as part of the overall legislative package. The Pittsburgh initiative followed this pattern.

In the early stages of the Pittsburgh initiative, organizers recognized the importance of a highly effective media campaign as a means of achieving success. The Regional Renaissance Partnership, a coalition of business leaders willing to lead the initiative battle, hired HMS Partners, the Columbus, Ohio based advertising and public relations firm with a reputation for running successful media campaigns for stadium sales tax hikes in Tampa, Florida and Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Partnership was guided by community elites. It was chaired by USX chief Thomas Usher. When public opinion did not appear to move in the desired direction that these elites wanted, primary responsibility for the public relations campaign was shifted to the California-based firm Winner, Wagner and Mandabach. This firm was chosen for their experience with referendum campaigns, but much of this experience was accumulated in California-style referendums which often focused on social issues, not stadium-specific campaigns.

Prior to the referendum, some efforts were made to resolve the issue without a ballot initiative. At least one Pittsburgh area legislator proposed a lottery aimed at sports facility funding. Because Pennsylvania had a lottery in place with proceeds that helped senior citizen programs, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge vigorously opposed the measure. In its place, he proposed privatizing the Pennsylvania liquor stores, auctioning off individual state-controlled liquor stores. According to this proposal, proceeds generated by this transfer would be dedicated to infrastructure improvement to cultural assets and construction of new sports facilities. The state would provide a match to local investment in facilities with the newly acquired funds.
Presumably, this “match” would serve as an enticement to communities to ante up some money for sports facility construction. The governor’s proposal was met with heavy grass roots resistance. One poll revealed a 70 percent opposition to the measure. After multiple attempts to link state subsidy to high-profile construction projects and liquor store transfer, the governor dropped his proposal, but pledged continued support for stadium construction. The referendum process emerged as Ridge was still attempting to push his liquor proposal though.

A June 10, 1997 Associated Press article suggested that the Pittsburgh vote was a particularly tough sell since, unlike Cincinnati, the state legislature had to formally approve the ballot initiative before it could be offered to voters. Nevertheless, the proposal sailed through the state house and senate, making public opinion the most visible and difficult barrier for passage. Both Tampa and Cincinnati faced uphill battles and early polls were negative, so the likelihood of passage in Pittsburgh, although difficult, appeared achievable.

The Pittsburgh initiative faced an additional difficulty because it covered a much wider geographic range than Cincinnati or Tampa. Legislators and business leaders decided to offer the initiative in ten counties surrounding Pittsburgh as a means of raising additional funds for Pittsburgh metropolitan area projects. The legislation was made more palatable to surrounding counties through creation of a formula that promised that 75 percent of all revenues to the county collecting the tax and allowing some degree of flexibility in how these monies were spent. An additional boost was given to the campaign when Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge frequently declared that $361 million in matching funds would be available for area projects even though such approval required formal legislative approval.

As with other stadium initiatives, an effort was made to tailor this proposal to address other local concerns with the hope that it would help defuse the stadium controversy. The Regional Renaissance Partnership expanded the program to include an array of infrastructure concerns aimed at revitalizing the area economy. In addition to two new sports facilities, the proposal called for expansion of the area convention center, monies for the arts, and funding for a variety of attractive construction programs in each county voting on the legislation.

In a move that backfired in the later stages of the campaign, the partnership failed to consult surrounding county commissioners for input regarding the legislation. Such input may have severely strained the ability to craft a workable proposal, but such inclusion would have
reduced political fallout, limiting the chances that this initiative would be publicly perceived as the product of Allegheny county elites. Not surprisingly, several county-level politicians openly opposed the proposal, reducing the chances for passage in surrounding counties substantially. Of the 29 elected county commissioners outside of Allegheny County, only three went on record in support of the plan.

As the campaign closed in on election day, Regional Renaissance Initiative advocates focused on media purchases and carefully targeted press releases with a war chest that had ballooned to more than $4 million. One of the more compelling television ads featured World War II era factory footage, followed by a carefully crafted montage that suggested a more modern and optimistic future. The voice over compellingly stated "we can continue to live in the shadow of the past and go downhill, or we can change and make our region strong again." The piece didn't include a single stadium image, focusing instead on job, technology, and infrastructure footage. In another ad, Kevin McClatchy and Dan Rooney touted their proposed $85 million commitment to the stadium projects and their willingness to "sign a 25 year ironclad lease to show that we want to be here long-term." These ads ran frequently during the final days before the vote. The initiative gained further publicity when popular Steelers' Coach Bill Cowher openly endorsed the plan in the last week of October. NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue publicly stressed the importance of a new stadium for the future of the Steelers. While the commissioner's intent was to spur public support, the likely public response was either neutral or negative. On the evening before the vote, the Steelers appeared before a national audience on ABC’s Monday Night Football. Steelers President Dan Rooney was interviewed and used this program as a platform for a last minute appeal.

Opponents of the measure relied on door to door handbills, sales of bumper stickers, t-shirts, and yard signs, small personal donations, and an energetic, yet loosely organized effort that included letters to the editor and talk radio call-ins. Initiative opposition recognized the significance of media access. Without adequate funding to produce and air television commercials, alternative means of public communication were sought by anyone passionate about blocking the proposal. Web site information was made available by the Allegheny Institute, a conservative think tank. Good Sports, a grass roots organization, also attempted to inform voters via computer terminal, creating an attractive web site dedicated to referendum opposition.
Both sites featured varied font sizes, attractive graphics, and access to various other resources that were aimed at educating voters in a way that would further their cause. Opposition leadership used their Good Sports homepage to advocate media exposure for their position. They asked supporters to participate in talk show call-ins and to submit letters to local newspapers.\textsuperscript{159}

Initiative supporters offered their own web site, a rather simple looking, yet efficient site that included detailed information in a format that, ironically, had a more "grass roots" look than their underfunded counterparts.\textsuperscript{160} Surprisingly, the page was pulled down on the day after election day, a move which limited post-election web browsers to opponents’ sources. Such a move might be understandable if the Regional Renaissance Initiative passed, but the issue was soundly defeated at the polls in every county throughout the Pittsburgh metropolitan region. If the pro-stadium forces regarded public opinion as an essential element in a long range plan to obtain stadium funding, they needed to push hard now to develop some form of goodwill.

Despite being outspent by a better than sixty to one margin, opposition forces handily won in the November 4, 1997 election. The measure was soundly defeated in all 11 counties in which it appeared. In some counties, the initiative was outvoted by close to a four to one margin. Even in Allegheny County, the initiative's strongest base, the gap was a sizable 16 percent margin with 58 percent voting against the half-cent tax.

\textbf{Content Analysis: Data Overview and the Limitations of Media Influence}

If mass media is such a successful vehicle for advertisers and is often considered a powerful mobilizing force for successful political campaigns, why didn't it alter the direction of public opinion on the Regional Renaissance Initiative? After all, the pro-initiative lobby had a $4 million war chest and the tacit support of many local news organizations. They had dramatically outspent their opponents. Closer examination of media coverage and the audience it was aimed at may shed some light on this question.

News coverage of the stadium issue in the months preceding the referendum was more heavily skewed to favor pro-stadium voices than was reflective of public opinion on the issue. A content analysis of \textit{Pittsburgh Post-Gazette} news coverage in the months prior to the referendum shows that representation of pro-initiative voices outpaced anti-stadium voices by slightly less than a two to one margin. If the ten neutral voices were taken out of the totals, 66 percent of the quotes utilized in analyzed news stories emanated from individuals supporting the Regional
Renaissance Initiative; 34 percent of these news story quotes reflected the views of anti-initiative voices. A total of 190 quotes were examined from August 1, 1997 through November 2, 1997, a period representing slightly more than three months immediately preceding the referendum.\textsuperscript{161}

News coverage remained skewed to favor pro-initiative voices with the proportion of pro-initiative and anti-initiative voices remaining relatively stable throughout the process. Breakdown of the quotes utilized in news coverage is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time frame:</th>
<th>pro-initiative voices</th>
<th>anti-initiative voices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct./Nov.</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coverage of the anti-stadium viewpoint picked up slightly greater representation as the referendum neared. Because of a relatively small sample size, the percentages have been rounded. In addition, November results were combined with October because they represent coverage through November 2, 1997, a period too limited to evaluate as a separate month.

These figures suggest a sharp contrast between news reporting and street-level community values. Public opinion polls and election results offer clear evidence that the region’s general population did not buy into the Regional Renaissance initiative. Fifty-eight percent of the population voted to defeat the initiative in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s primary distribution area, Allegheny County. Opposition to the plan was more intense outside this region. This disparity demonstrates a clear incongruity between reporting choices and public opinion.

Articles clearly unrelated to stadium funding were excluded from this analysis, but if added, may have further skewed coverage to favor the initiative by an even greater margin. Some examples include an article focused on convention center expansion, an article trumpeting the potential for funding new projects in Pittsburgh’s downtown cultural district, and articles in the sports section that were primarily concerned with day to day sports coverage but included sports officials’ comments on the stadium issue.

Further examination of how media practitioners prioritized quotes in October and November reveals further slanting of news favoring the pro-stadium position in the weeks leading up to the referendum. Because the neutral quotes were a mere five percent of the news coverage total, they have been eliminated from the percentage analysis offered in this text.
Positioning bias in favor of pro-initiative supporters was even more profound than the direct quote figures previously disclosed. Of the first quotes in a news story, 77 percent reflected a pro-initiative stand, while 23 percent opposed the stadium funding position. Second quotes were slightly more even, as a somewhat common reporting tactic was to lead with a pro-funding voice, followed by an anti-funding voice, but even in the second position, pro-initiative voices outpaced anti-initiative voices by a 16 percent margin; the difference here was a 58 percent margin for stadium funding, and 42 percent opposed to new stadium-related taxes. Third position quotes favored pro-stadium voices by a three-to-one margin, 75 percent of these third position quotes were allotted to stadium construction advocates, while 25 percent included direct quotes from the opposition.

The wide margin of voices favoring stadium construction in news coverage is significant when a correlation is made with known public opinion on this issue. A poll conducted approximately two weeks prior to election day revealed that support of the Regional Renaissance Initiative was a mere 38 percent in Allegheny County, while surrounding counties revealed a paltry 22 percent support for the proposal. Those opposed to the legislation comprised 50 percent of the Allegheny County constituency and 66 percent of voters from surrounding counties.

Local television coverage, which appeared to be even more skewed in favor of stadium advocates, did little to sway the general public to vote for the stadium construction projects. The election day results confirm that public opinion had not switched dramatically in the two weeks between the poll and the referendum. Such disparities between public opinion and reporting tendencies suggest an agenda setting function of the press. The press slanting of the stadium story failed to convince many voters to support the referendum, confirming the limited ability of the press to alter ideological patterns, a clear hallmark of agenda setting theory.

Closer congruity between measured public opinion and the opinions represented in news coverage would have given a greater level of credence to agenda building, a process whereby the press and a variety of publics work to actively shape the direction and focus of news coverage. Instead, these results suggest a somewhat closed loop, with those within the loop maintaining greater access to press coverage. The following represents a breakdown of coverage tendencies in all examined Pittsburgh coverage periods:
One clear concern relative to the maintenance of democratic integrity is the composition of individual representation in media coverage of the stadium issue. In the period before the referendum, sports industry personnel, including owners, athletes, and sports management, comprised 48 percent of the total output of remarks favoring stadium construction. In looking at total figures, political officials in favor of stadium construction were quoted 12 percent less than members of the sports industry during this time. Elected officials in opposition of stadium construction were given 9 percent less visibility than the sporting fraternity. Average citizens and activist citizens on either side of the issue were almost three times less likely to be quoted as unelected members of the sports industry.

In this case, a highly skeptical public was not sold by sports industry involvement in the Regional Renaissance Initiative, but it is unclear whether the composition of those receiving public access created some level of mistrust for media institutions. Potential public resentment related to limited press access over a sustained period might diminish perceived voter efficacy in ways that elude currently available methods of social scientific measurement. Furthermore, repeated claims by various political leaders that this initiative was “not a stadium tax” probably backfired, in part, because of the heavy representation of sports industry officials. Campaign coordinators and team owners compounded this problem by maintaining high visibility in advertising and orchestrated campaign events that received prominent broadcast coverage.

How the message was conveyed in media coverage may shed light on public opinion relative to stadium construction. Proponents of stadium construction argued most vociferously that a new stadium would provide economic benefits to the community; 40 percent of pro-

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### Pittsburgh News Coverage Quotation Source Categories:

*Breakdown of Individuals Quoted According to Stadium Development Position*

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</table>

*Data include 1997, 1998, 1999 coding periods which are described at bottom of next chart (p. 218).*
initiative appeals were specifically dedicated to the highlighting economic growth that would presumably result upon new stadium construction approval. Opposition voices’ most frequent appeal seemed to be ethical, with 46 percent of the total anti-initiative remarks dedicated to normative concerns. With overwhelming scholarly evidence supporting the limited economic value of stadium subsidy, economic appeals comprised a mere 22 percent of anti-initiative quotations. Many of these quotes argued that the economic claims of stadium proponents were false, exaggerated, or speculative. It is uncertain whether media personnel acted as gatekeepers to limit quotes of this nature that would support the anti-stadium position.

**Pittsburgh- News Coverage Appeals Based on Stadium Development Position:**  
*Table 7: Individual Breakdown of Three Coding Periods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>50</td>
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</table>

*Code for Appeals*  
A- Economic  
B- Authority  
C- Community Bond  
D- Community Needs/Values  
E- Technical Expertise  
F- Ethical/Conscience  
G- Social Order  
H- Making Progress  
I- Not Making Progress  
J- Status  
K- Other  
L- Total  

NOTE: Coding includes three months before the 1997 vote, 20 days before the 1998 RAD Board vote, and two weeks prior to 1999 state-level subsidy approval, a period of about four and a quarter months.
A common theme that could not be cavalierly refuted by pro-stadium advocates was the assertion that subsidy for stadium construction would benefit a relatively affluent pool of athletes and sports franchise owners. In light of this certainty, it is not surprising that a mere 8 percent of pro-construction appeals focused on the ethical domain. For subsidy advocates, some ethical appeals were based on comparisons to subsidies received by other professional teams. Pro-initiative voices pinned their hopes on economic arguments, but also regarded community-related appeals as a potentially useful way to deflect normative arguments forwarded by the opposition; a total of 24 percent of the pro-stadium appeals were aimed at community cohesion, community needs, and community values.

It is likely that a more sustained utilization of community-related appeals might have been more prudent than the campaign’s focus on economic appeals for a variety of reasons specific to the western Pennsylvania demographic. Among the most salient is the timing of Pittsburgh’s construction of Three Rivers Stadium during the late 1960s. The merit of economic arguments was severely constrained by collective community memory of a shattered economy that was not turned around until more profound structural changes occurred in the regional economy over a decade later. Letters to the editor occasionally reminded readers that the construction of Three Rivers Stadium did little to enhance the region’s economy.

Many arguments were made by civic leaders that economic vitality would result both during and after construction of Three Rivers Stadium. After opening in 1970, sustained economic development surrounding the stadium’s North Shore never took hold, while the regional economy continued into a downward spiral. Despite championship teams hosting the newly constructed stadium, steel industry output was curtailed and in most cases shut down. The broader economy of Pittsburgh struggled to keep pace with national economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s, often losing a percentage of its youthful population to more prosperous metropolitan areas.

Overall, close examination of the general indicators in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s coverage lends credibility to assertions of a booster press in this instance. First, the clear pro-construction bias and heavy representation of community insiders suggests that enhancement of area institutions is a news and editorial department priority. Second, the nature of pro-stadium appeals are also congruent with a desire to enhance community institutions. With 43 percent of
the pro-construction appeals aimed at economic enhancement and 24 percent tied to either community cohesion, community needs, or community values, it is evident that support of Pittsburgh-area institutions is a desired reporting strategy. At least three out of four pro-stadium appeals were aimed either directly or indirectly at overall enhancement of the region.

### Percentages of Total Appeals in Pittsburgh News Coverage:

*Appeal Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Categories</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Bond</td>
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<td>Community Needs/Values</td>
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<td>Ethical/Conscience</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Order</td>
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<td>Status</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*see previous chart on page 218 for a breakdown by coding period (note: percentages are rounded.)*

### Opinion Columns, Gatekeeping Bias, and the Failure of the Referendum

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*'s editorial staff displayed a similar tendency to favor the pro-sales tax position in their editorials and actively solicited opinion columns, but they did not stack the deck against stadium foes in nearly as profound a manner as the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in the 1996 Cincinnati referendum coverage. Opinion-related content in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* between September and election day reveals that approximately 57 percent favored the referendum, 27 percent clearly opposed the initiative, while 15 percent offered a neutral perspective. If the analysis phased out neutral submissions, opinion-related percentages are similar to news coverage with 68 percent favoring the proposed legislation and 32 percent in opposition, a somewhat similar ratio to what was reflected in news coverage quotation selection. Since the Post-Gazette editorial staff openly endorsed the Regional Renaissance Initiative, this
disparity between public opinion and newspaper opinion content is not surprising.

Opinion content is generally consistent with news content in its tendency to favor pro-construction voices to an even greater degree as the November referendum neared. Fourteen October 1997 opinion pieces, including two editorial page cartoons, focused on the Regional Renaissance Initiative, nine were in favor, two were neutral, while three served to hurt stadium-related construction. One of the neutral pieces, a sports opinion piece suggesting that the Pittsburgh Steelers could move from the region if the referendum did not pass, failed to offer overt support for construction, but could be perceived as a veiled attempt to sway public opinion in a pro-construction direction. Another, a review of television advertisements of initiative supporters, attacked the credibility of these media productions. The presence of three October anti-construction pieces, 21 percent of the total editorial output on the subject during this important pre-referendum time-frame, offers strong evidence that the pro-construction bias in news coverage has institutional roots which may be cultivated from within.

In spite of overall media bias favoring the referendum, why did it fail? Much of the answer rests in the elusive nature of hegemony. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge and Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy, strong advocates of the initiative, pushed the measure as a way to revitalize the region. At the same time, the governor's office was running radio advertisements stating that lower taxes were responsible for attracting new businesses to the state. The logical consistency of conflicting pro-tax, anti-tax arguments left the public angry or confused. An October 30, 1997 letter to the editor cited this conflicting logic and argued that "the outspoken proponents of the stadium tax are their own worst enemies. Their threats and outlandish comparisons...are not only annoying...they also show the level of incompetence we have to deal with in Pennsylvania politics."163

In a similar example, proponents of the initiative often cited Cleveland as a clear example of a "regional renaissance," but failed to address that city's recent loss of their football franchise to Baltimore. When Allegheny County Coroner Cyril Wecht argued that Pittsburgh would be similar to a "jerkwater town in Mississippi" without the Steelers and Pirates, one letter writer quipped that "the last time I looked, the streets of Cleveland didn't fill with tumbleweeds and Mississippi hayseeds after the Browns' departure."164

A by product of this public skepticism was a willingness to listen to opponents of the
initiative who could offer an explanation that appeared to be ideologically rational. This opened the door for the Allegheny Institute's negative campaign against higher taxes. Over the years, a consistent rejoinder of area businesses was that low taxes were needed to maintain their competitive stature. Their attempt to reverse this basic argument fell on deaf ears for many Pittsburgh region residents on limited incomes.

The initiative was also hampered by the imposition of a one percent sales tax hike in 1994 which was not offered as a voter referendum. Predictably, the Allegheny Regional Assets District tax (RAD) was unpopular when instituted, particularly because many citizens felt that they were frozen out of the approval process. For some residents, the request for a half-cent increase was simply too close chronologically to the mandated additional sales tax.

Many Steeler fans considered the potential for a Robert Irsay (Colts/Baltimore) or Art Modell (Browns/Cleveland) style move from the region highly unlikely because of the long standing commitment of the Rooney family to the Pittsburgh area. In essence, loyalty may have become a liability for team owners. Previous comments by Rooney regarding NFL franchise relocation give fans some credible reason to believe that the Steelers would not choose to move without offering advance warning. Prior to the introduction of the initiative, Rooney stated that "moving should be a last-ditch option when there's no other way to make a franchise work." On the whole, many Pittsburghers are skeptical that the Steelers will ever move, despite their historically lower than average performance as revenue generators in the NFL.

Another key factor in the vote result is the blue-collar mentality of the Pittsburgh area electorate. While passionate about sports, Pittsburghers can be more captivated by a lower payroll team of overachievers than a high payroll team of superstars. Unlike other cities, fans' complaints are limited when the Steelers or Pirates release high payroll players. When quarterback Neil O'Donnell and outfielder Barry Bonds left the Pittsburgh market to pursue lucrative free-agency contracts in larger cities, a common fan attitude was "don't let the door hit you on the way out."

With such a parsimonious mind-set, the need for two new facilities when one was structurally sound seemed highly wasteful. Many fans suggested options that were less extravagant. Some suggested an overhaul of Three Rivers Stadium. Others irrationally suggested that "millionaire ballplayers" pay the entire cost for new stadiums. One individual
foreshadowed a future alliance, suggesting a shared arrangement between the Steelers and University of Pittsburgh as a way to save money for both the university and the NFL team. Some voters might have been convinced to consider a compromise of a single new stadium, but the thought of two brand-new facilities seemed ostentatious for a population used to blue-collar sports teams.

Proponents of the initiative frequently argued that the referendum was not a stadium tax, but the public was consistently offered appeals from franchise owners, coaches, and others related to the Steelers or the Pirates. Despite advertisements that excluded the stadium issue and news coverage of events unrelated to stadium construction, public appeals from team owners and coaches served as a repetitive reminder that new stadium construction was at the core of this referendum. Letters following the vote suggested some would have supported higher taxes for job creating infrastructure projects if stadium construction could be set aside.

Despite a general tendency to favor stadium construction prior to the vote, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette itself may have contributed to public opposition for the referendum with its news coverage. To its credit, the Post-Gazette took several aggressive steps to educate the public about all aspects of the stadium issue. Three of these strategies, in particular, may have limited the power of stadium advocates to convince wavering voters to support the sales tax proposal. First, some reporting weeks before the referendum prepared citizens for the heavy media campaign that was to follow. Second, the news staff produced an outstanding set of stories which focused on various cities that have made the commitment to stadium construction, offering both positive and negative aspects of this decision. Finally, even though the paper strongly supported the referendum, they did make a more profound effort to involve minority viewpoints in opinion-based content than their colleagues at the Cincinnati Enquirer.

A variety of Pittsburgh Post-Gazette articles openly revealed campaign strategies that were aimed at obtaining support for stadium construction. Once the public became aware they were the target of specific campaign tactics, the strategies employed by campaign professionals may have been neutralized by public skepticism.

The very thorough series of articles about other cities put a positive spin on some stadium construction, but it showed that a number of alternatives were available that may not have been discussed by Pittsburgh’s civic leaders. Citizens learned that Atlanta and San Francisco managed
to build facilities through corporate subsidies. Even though Atlanta’s Olympic model and San Francisco’s relative affluence made implementation of these ideas less likely for Pittsburgh, the series may have inspired some citizens to believe Pittsburgh could find a way to make corporate sponsorship work. This series also alerted many about the public relations process behind acquisition of stadium subsidies in other cities. In some cases, once these techniques were out in the open, they were less effective tools for opinion change. Explanation of the Cincinnati campaign on May 19, 1997, for example, unveiled key strategies used by David Milenthal, the public relations consultant retained in both Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. This particular article also hurt the cause by making reference to the high costs of construction. The story ominously closed with a quote from Hamilton County (Ohio) Commissioner John Dowlin lamenting that the two Cincinnati stadiums “will never pay for themselves.”

The choice of appeals by stadium construction proponents may have hurt their effort. The focus on job creation and economic growth in Pittsburgh’s campaign could be contrasted to Cincinnati’s greater tendency to emphasize the symbolic importance of a projecting a major league image to a national audience. Despite use of sophisticated economic projections from university experts and industry consultants, inflated long-term job creation claims were correctly challenged by the citizenry. Moreover, the opposition’s heavy reliance on ethical appeals seemed to resonate with the public. Pro-stadium forces in Cincinnati tended to deflect this issue with a “just hold your nose and vote for it” attitude that emphasized retaining a “major league” image. Cincinnati opinion pieces frequently indicated that the logic of sports subsidies could not be justified on economic grounds, but should be overlooked to achieve a greater good for the region. Pittsburgh journalists seemed to emphasize the economic impact of sporting institutions. They were more reluctant to emulate the Cincinnati Enquirer’s approach, leading some skeptical citizens to believe that media representatives were acting as shills for the sports lobby.

Finally, too many people correctly believed that an alternate plan would surface if the referendum failed, giving the public a better choice than the single option offered in the referendum. Evidence of this could be seen on October 30 when Post-Gazette Columnist Bob Smizik wrote "don't believe there's not a 'Plan B'....Not to have an alternative course of action would be less than smart, and that's a phrase that can't be used to describe the people behind this proposal.” The public and Bob Smizik were right to make this assumption, as plans were
undertaken shortly after the failed election to secure construction funding for Pittsburgh stadiums.

The Election Aftermath: Bypassing Direct Democracy to Secure Stadium Funding

After the Regional Renaissance Initiative failed, stadium subsidy opponents celebrated, some incorrectly feeling the victory was permanent, while team owners quietly withdrew from the public spotlight. The battle was not over, however, and key elites remained firmly committed to obtaining the new stadiums that were presented to taxpayers in the unsuccessful 1997 campaign. A week after the election, Governor Ridge reintroduced his failed plan to auction state liquor store licenses while indicating that he would push for a greater level of state support for a single multi-use facility in Pittsburgh. Both ideas went nowhere. A Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editorial correctly indicated that national stadium trends did not bode well for any multi-use proposal. Recent construction in other communities appeared to move only in the direction of single use facilities. The editors challenged the possibility of developing a workable facility that would satisfy team owners stating, “If the governor has such a proposal in his pocket, we’d like to see it.”

Instead of scaling down expectations, stadium construction proponents worked on strategies to obtain similar levels of funding in ways that would bypass direct democracy. Eventually, stadium proponents succeeded, and a Pittsburgh public, used to generations of a hierarchical leadership model, stoically watched as this process unfolded. Many citizens had tired of the bitter, long, and protracted stadium referendum odyssey. Letters to the editor about the stadium issue slowed down to a minor trickle, but an occasional angry volley could be found, particularly during periods when legislative action was pending.

Leaders described the failed initiative as a message from the public that new stadiums needed to be constructed with existing revenue streams, not as an outright rejection of new stadium construction. They did not explore the possibility that the public may have wished for a less ambitious agenda that might be limited to construction of a single stadium. Despite that, periodic letters to the editor suggested that the public might be satisfied with one new stadium followed by renovation of Three Rivers Stadium. News coverage did not challenge leadership assumptions about the failed referendum. In addition, media-based public opinion polls were not conducted to validate the assertions and broad public input was not sought in determining the
validity of leadership claims.173 As a result, once the referendum strategy was abandoned the shape of stadium construction policy was elite-driven.

What transpired was a meandering array of actions that took 15 months to unfold, but resulted in a funding plan for the construction of two brand new stadiums. The funding package that was eventually determined involved a mix of local, state, and private funds. Prior to approval, Pirates Owner Kevin McClatchy revealed plans for the team’s new ballpark. His revelation was given prominent coverage. Striking visuals were provided, presumably as a way to convince the public that this project merited substantial public subsidy.174

The initial political step involved gaining approval of new stadium funding by the Regional Assets District (RAD) Board on July 9, 1998.175 This board is responsible for oversight of regional asset funding, including stadium and recreational facilities, that is supported through Allegheny County sales tax revenues. Prior to this approval, agreements were reached with both sports teams to increase their contributions to the projects. The Steelers pushed their contribution from $50 million to $76.5 million, while the Pirates moved from $35 million to $40 million. Much of this extra funding would come from fans, or taxpayers in the form of ticket surcharges, personal seat license fees, or naming rights funds which would be retained by team owners. To make the agreement more attractive to citizens, team owners verbally agreed to cover all cost overruns and to remain in Pittsburgh until 2031.176

Once a regional funding strategy was in place, stadium advocates needed to acquire state resources to complete the funding picture. Without a state subsidy, the project costs would have been too high to fund through Allegheny County’s existing revenue structure. Although Governor Ridge frequently discussed providing a state match for major projects, such action required legislative approval. Efforts to arrange for state-level legislative approval ran into several difficulties. After failure to secure house support for a state subsidy package in November 1998, Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy attempted to resurrect a piece of legislation that appeared to offer back-door funding for the project.

While evidence suggests that a court challenge would have invalidated this legislation, this legislation allegedly gave Governor Ridge the authority to commit funds without legislative approval. Intense media publicity compelled Governor Ridge to quickly veto the legislation. Political analysts and legislators later offered evidence that the legislation could not have held up
to court challenges if allowed to pass. Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy subsequently apologized for his attempts to strong-arm the governor into moving forward on what was frequently called “stealth legislation.”

With the votes lacking for legislative approval, Pennsylvania’s House and Senate closed out 1998 without taking action on the stadium subsidy issue. Subsidy opponents in the Pennsylvania House made attempts to push a vote forward in an effort to cripple future legislative attempts for stadium subsidies. Those in favor of new stadium construction fought to prevent voting on the issue in order to give state subsidies a reasonable chance for passage in early 1999. After dramatic, emotional, and unsuccessful attempts to persuade colleagues to support the issue, the pro-stadium legislators succeeded in pulling legislation off the floor before it could face almost certain defeat.

Because legislators could not muster the needed votes for stadium subsidies, behind the scenes meetings and mobilization of public opinion among select publics became important. Courting minority support, as an example, became critical in order to gain uncertain borderline votes. Pittsburgh’s African-American newspaper, *The Courier*, was an important media source that conveyed information that could conceivably mobilize public opinion to support stadium subsidies. Political leaders tailored their message to reach out to this constituency.

After months of debate, maneuvering, and political horse-trading, Pennsylvania legislators approved a package on February 3, 1999 that had ballooned from $150 million in Pittsburgh stadium subsidies to $650 million in state projects, many unrelated to stadium construction. According to the agreement, $320 million was to be allocated to financing four new stadiums in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Pittsburgh would receive $75 million per stadium, about a third of the total costs, while, Philadelphia would receive a total of $170 million for two new stadiums for the Eagles and the Phillies.

Monies were also in place to assist Pittsburgh in convention center expansion, an item that was on the wish list in the November 1997 ballot initiative. The $330 million allocated for non-stadium projects allowed some legislators to argue that the legislation was more broad-based than mere stadium support. This legislation also gave supportive legislators in rural districts an opportunity to bring funding for pet projects back to their districts, minimizing fallout that might have occurred if stadium subsidy alone was supported.
Cincinnati’s ballot initiative marked the first time in the United States that legislation was passed to simultaneously authorize funding for two professional-level sports stadiums. Pennsylvania had raised the stakes without direct voter action, agreeing to offer simultaneous funding for four stadium projects. The funding was introduced to the public not as a subsidy, but as a “loan” that would only require repayment if sufficient tax revenues were not generated to repay the funds. The terms of the loan were sufficiently generous so that even moderate levels of repayment by team owners would be unlikely.

The plan was cleverly shaped for maximum public relations value more than economics. If revenues fell short, payment would not be made until the end of ten, twenty, and thirty year increments. Inflation was not part of the calculus, meaning that owners would likely repay shortfalls in a highly discounted manner. In addition, higher ticket and concession prices and the “novelty effect” of a new stadium would minimize the chances of any payout. Dan Rooney took more dramatic steps to ensure that a payout would be even less likely. His football franchise worked out an agreement with the University of Pittsburgh to share the new football facility. The university would phase out its aging stadium, giving the Steelers control over the only major football stadium in the city. Although new revenues streams would not be created since the university squad previously generated economic activity in another section of the city, the Steelers would be credited with the revenues earned from these games as part of their commitment to the state’s very generous “loan” agreement.

Owners received further insulation from any future stadium-related payouts. On May 28, 1999, months after all the legislation was in place and preparations were in full swing for both new facilities, the Public Auditorium Authority raised the estimated total costs for both new stadiums by between 10.5 and 12.2 percent. Football stadium costs were now listed at $261.6 million. The baseball facility estimates were raised to $252 million. Because team owners promised to pay for any “cost overruns,” Authority Director Stephen Leeper carefully indicated that these new estimates were not cost overruns, but the result of increased loan financing costs. As a result, taxpayers, not franchise owners, would absorb these increased expenses.

Pre-referendum news coverage favored the stadium subsidy position, but subsequent coverage became significantly more pro-subsidy when compared to the quotation averages provided in the following table:
Pittsburgh News Coverage Orientation to Stadium Development:

Total Number of Quotations for All Coding Periods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Percentages of Quotations:

Pittsburgh Case Study: All Coding Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Pittsburgh coding totals include the three months before the 1997 referendum, 20 days before the 1998 RAD Board vote, and two weeks prior to 1999 state-level subsidy approval, a period of about four and a quarter months. This was done because of the unusual route taken for stadium subsidy approval. The totals combine these three periods. An individual breakdown of these three coding periods is provided on page 218.

Media coverage during the RAD Board action in 1998 and Pennsylvania legislature voting in 1999 continued to favor the stadium construction position, but to a much greater degree than before the 1997 referendum. In the twenty days preceding the RAD Board vote, the pro-stadium position drew eleven times more quotations in Pittsburgh Post-Gazette news coverage than the anti-stadium position. News coverage was generally less detailed and tended to receive less prominent placement than the 1997 referendum coverage.

As the RAD Board vote approached, a fundamental shift in representation also occurred. Political leaders were positioned in the center of this issue, pushing out many other voices. Sixty-seven percent of the pro-stadium quotes came from political leaders compared to just 35 percent of similar quotes in 1997. One hundred percent of the anti-construction quotes came from a single politician, Allegheny County Commissioner Larry Dunn. Sports officials represented 28 percent of pro-stadium voices, down from 46 percent in news coverage prior to the November 1997 referendum.

The nature of rhetorical appeals shifted as the RAD Board’s vote approached. Economic appeals were much less prominent, used as the foundation for only one quotation. Pro-stadium advocates emphasized that progress was being made in 43 percent of the pro-stadium quotes. The next most popular appeal for stadium advocates was ethical, representing 19 percent of pro-stadium quotes. In these ethical appeals, politicians and team owners tended to argue that the
proposal was both reasonable and fair to taxpayers.

No quotes were allocated to average citizens or activists in the news articles examined during this period. Despite this, the anti-stadium viewpoint outpaced pro-stadium submissions by three to one in letters to the editor during the days preceding the RAD Board vote. Editorial and opinion columns reflected a reverse of this trend, with the pro-stadium position maintaining a three to one margin over anti-stadium voices. Despite this disparity, slightly more opinion-based column space was offered to the anti-stadium position. The *Post-Gazette* pro-stadium editorials were relatively short, yet the newspaper offered a lengthy negative article from Allegheny County Commissioner Larry Dunn on the Sunday preceding the vote.182

The 1999 coverage of the Pennsylvania State legislature’s vote to allocate funds for stadium construction followed a similar coverage pattern. Pro-stadium voices continued to receive more prominent coverage, but an alternative to the construction of two brand new stadiums finally emerged. The introduction of this proposal was made just days before the final piece of legislation was introduced to subsidize two brand new stadiums. This eleventh hour reporting of an alternative to the elite-driven stadium proposals made its adoption highly unlikely. Nevertheless, this proposal’s more moderate subsidies offered a clear indication of how far the stadium subsidy debate had shifted in Pittsburgh. According to news reports, this plan was similar to a proposal under consideration by the Allegheny Institute, a group that was most vociferous in opposition of any stadium subsidies during the 1997 referendum. According to the terms of this proposal, taxpayers would allocate $100 million to new stadium construction, $65 million to renovation for Three Rivers Stadium, and $65 million to a major overhaul of Pittsburgh’s hockey arena. As the stadium legislation neared passage, Pittsburgh’s National Hockey League franchise, the Penguins, increased their lobbying for new facilities and increased subsidies for their existing arena.

Media coverage of state legislative action on the stadium subsidy included numerous references to undecided individuals, but those pushing for new stadium construction were much more prominently positioned than clear opponents of stadium subsidy. On the eve of the vote, a legislative aid argued that the legislation “will provide the strongest taxpayer protections in the country.”183 State legislation authorized subsidy for two new stadiums in Pittsburgh and two new stadiums in Philadelphia on February 3, 1999. Passage of this legislation was celebrated in news
coverage, but opposition voices were more prominently represented here than in news coverage leading up to the vote.\(^{184}\)

Once all stadium funding was in place, the stadium construction process in Pittsburgh was not without controversy, but it paled in comparison to the highly negative response that followed in Cincinnati. Some vendors were upset at the bidding process, prompting unsuccessful court challenges. In an ironic twist, some of the structural steel for the Steelers’ stadium would come from Texas, home of the dreaded rival Dallas Cowboys. Minority groups correctly complained about lower than agreed levels of minority representation in the construction process, but these complaints failed to draw the intense emotional response that was evident in Three Rivers Stadium construction three decades earlier.\(^{185}\) Construction generally continued without major concerns about cost overruns.

When PNC Park opened to the public, media coverage was largely positive. In addition, citizens attending the early games spoke in awe about the beauty of the new facility. Many of the stadium features were designed to replicate the Forbes Field experience, bringing back many older fans’ memories of the Progressive Era ballpark that served Pittsburgh baseball fans until it was phased out in 1970.

Politicians who were supportive of the construction felt vindicated, but there were some signals that the overt boosterism that accompanied stadium construction had a political price. Stadium construction as a political issue had changed dramatically since the construction of Forbes Field in 1909 and Three Rivers Stadium in the late 1960s. No longer could politicians happily ride the coattails of popular regional sports teams.

Allegheny County Commissioner Bob Cramner chose not to seek the county executive position, citing negative public reaction to his aggressive support of Plan B as a reason for backing away from public service.\(^{186}\) In a 2001 primary campaign, Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy barely edged out Councilman Bob O’Connor in his reelection bid. Murphy cited his vocal support of new stadium construction as a reason for his failure to win more convincingly. On the field of play, the Pirates and the Steelers failed to distinguish themselves in 2000 and 2001. Whether long-term on field success will follow new stadium construction is uncertain, but baseball’s highly competitive free agent bidding and football’s changing managerial landscape offer little indication that Pittsburgh will reemerge as “a city of champions” any time soon.\(^{187}\)
In many ways the region’s citizens cultivated a skeptical attitude regarding claims made by civic leaders. The successful behind-the-scenes political campaign to construct two new facilities despite voter rejection of the Regional Renaissance Initiative helps to feed a stoic skepticism among the general populace regarding political solutions to community problems. Citizens will attend Steeler and Pirate games at each new stadium; it is likely that they will enjoy the new facilities in many ways, but they are not likely to forget that the choice of whether to build, renovate, or to let a franchise move to another locale was effectively taken out of their hands by legislators and community leaders bent on controlling the outcome and the political process itself.

The press’ role as a conveyor-belt for pro-construction civic leaders in the most critical periods of legislative debate may have diminished the level of anti-stadium discourse after the referendum, with some citizens regarding opposition attempts as futile. A sharp dip in the number of letters to the editor following the referendum suggests the credibility of such a posture. Media practitioners might be wise to examine how typical routines and internal management practices lead to journalism that limits balance and reduces debate on key issues. Reductions in newspaper readership are often attributed to the emergence of new communication technologies such as television and the Internet. Nevertheless, it is possible that some public mistrust and loss of newspaper readership could be the result of public distaste for journalistic routines that appear to skew coverage in ways that favor community elites.

The Pittsburgh case study offers a mixed set of messages. The decision to construct Forbes Field and Three Rivers Stadium were largely unquestioned by journalists of the time, but such a position would have been much tougher to justify in the 1990s. This recent news coverage offers some evidence of a clear desire to educate the public in a manner that was admirable and should be commended. The special reports on various cities’ struggles with stadium construction and the gatekeeping decisions to include some stadium opposition in the opinion pages were positive steps that the staff of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette took to provide citizens with useful information.

Nevertheless, the tendency to favor stadium construction in news coverage, despite evidence that the public may have wished to move in another direction, suggests that the staff also struggles to satisfy the desires of powerful civic and political leaders. The dramatic shift of
coverage in 1998 and 1999 to a more intense pro-stadium position offers evidence that key elites can have dramatic and potent influence in media coverage decisions. As the referendum failed at the polls, it appears that the *Post-Gazette* backed off from attempts to clarify why the public responded as it did on election day.

It was unclear whether the public wanted two stadiums, one stadium, a major renovation of Three Rivers Stadium, or no new construction at all. Such a clarification could have been achieved with more aggressive follow up, but the message that would have been uncovered may not have been a comfortable one for pro-stadium elites.

Pittsburgh is a city that is often insecure about how it is perceived nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, it is a city with a multitude of assets that are unavailable in many other communities. Its move to build new stadiums should keep it on the sports pages as a major league city for decades to come. Whether it can maintain a national reputation as “major league” in other areas is much less certain and will be more dependent on how it faces political challenges that are entirely unrelated to its sports infrastructure.
Sources: Chapter Five:


3. Charles Schwab, as an example, created a lavish retreat in bucolic Loretto, PA, approximately 80 miles east of Pittsburgh. His estate featured a Donald Ross designed golf course with a clubhouse that provided cutting edge technology, such as a stock ticker, needed to closely monitor his steel empire while away from the city.

4. In a clear example of this see Riess, Stephen. Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980. p. 71. Riess describes Ban Johnson’s protracted difficulties with establishing a New York franchise due to demands for ownership by local politicians. Johnson acquiesced on this demand in 1903; subsequently the Yankees were formed.

5. Riess, p. 49.

6. Riess provides numerous examples of political chicanery that negatively impacted on owners. Zoning legislation was a commonly used tactic to extract political favor from owners. See Riess, pp. 49-84 for specific examples.


8. Carnegie Tech’s football team played a game against the University of Pennsylvania on the site of the future Forbes Field on October 31, 1908, giving reporters the impression that the site would become a football stadium. With this in mind, it is unlikely that Dreyfuss could have consummated the deal for the property in October 1908 without the imprimatur of Carnegie, whose influence in Pittsburgh and at Carnegie Tech was vast. News accounts fail to establish a close relationship between Dreyfuss and Carnegie, but historian Michael Benson firmly states that Dreyfuss “was guided in his purchase by friend Andrew Carnegie.” Benson, Michael. Ballparks of North America: A Comprehensive Historical Reference to Baseball Grounds, Yards, and Stadiums, 1845 to present. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1989. p. 312.


Forbes Field was generally less thorough than The Pittsburgh Post.


14. For examples of this citation tendency, turn to almost any major city in Benson’s text and look at the earliest listed ballparks.


18. In one humorous example, a front page headline announces: “Surgeon Adjusts Brain; Patient’s Morals Improve.” Pittsburgh Post, October 31, 1908, p. 1. This front page also offers a Democratic presidential endorsement. Nevertheless, the same paper gave highly positive coverage to Republican President William Howard Taft when he visited Pittsburgh on May 29, 1909.


27. Olmstead briefly visited Pittsburgh, preparing a twelve page plan to improve Pittsburgh’s parks in 1910. His most sweeping ideas were not considered by Pittsburgh area planners until after 1945.

28. Ironically, Kennywood was the product of ultra-rich Andrew Mellon’s desire to attract more customers to his Monongahela Street Railway Company. In 1906, the railway company fully withdrew from day-to-day amusement park management, leasing the park to A.S. McSwiggin and Fredrick Henninger. Kennywood Web Site [available: www.kennywood.com\history.html].

29. Couvares, p. 120.

30. For more detail on boxing and bachelor subcultures see: Gorn, Elliot. The Manly Art of Bare Knuckle Prize Fighting in America. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986. By 1909 boxing in Pittsburgh was increasingly controlled by wealthier fans. Working class boxers frequently became pugilistic cannon-fodder for these moneyed individuals.


34. For editorial examples, see: *Pittsburgh Post.* December 11, 1908, p. 4; March 8, 1909, p. 4; June 1, 1909, p. 6; June 21, 1909, p. 4. See also: October 9, 1909, p. 4.


37. Gillespie, G.H. “Forbes Field.” *Pittsburg Press,* June 27, 1909. The use of a by-line was not as common in Progressive Era news coverage as in today’s news reporting, suggesting that this story merited greater attention than many other issues. *Pittsburgh Post* coverage offered a by-line for its ballpark story on this same date.

38. Jerps, James. “Forbes Field: The World’s Finest Baseball Grounds.” *Pittsburgh Post.* June 27, 1909, p. 6. Claims that the ballpark would be the finest in the world were routinely repeated in a host of shorter articles.


40. “Warm Tribute is Paid to Steel City by Nation’s Chief Executive: Taft Asks for Seat Back of First Base at Ball Ground.” *Pittsburgh Post,* May 30, 1909, p.1. Taft’s brother was a part owner of the Cubs.


42. “World’s Greatest Baseball Park to be Dedicated This Afternoon.” *Pittsburgh Post.* June 30, 1909, p. 9.

43. Shibe Park, opened to the public on April 12, 1909, received limited front-page coverage and much less column space and photos on its opening day. *Philadelphia Inquirer.* April 12, 1909, p. April 13, 1909, pp. 1, 10. On April 12, 1909, The *Pittsburgh Post* described Shibe Park as “the largest and most ornate monument to sports in this country on April 12, 1909. Area reporters knew that Forbes Field was a significantly larger project, reporting on February 28, 1909 (*Post,* Section 3, p.1) that almost three times more steel would be utilized in construction.

45. The fireworks show took place on Monday, July Fifth and was heavily advertised in the newspapers on Sunday, July, 4, 1909.

46. “Audience of 15,000 Sees Hippodrome Open.” *Pittsburgh Post*. July 27, 1909, p. 2. The Hippodrome included an array of acts, including animal trainers, human cannonballs, marksmen, and dramatic acts. Many of the props and stage settings were highly elaborate. It was exceedingly well publicized, with newspaper stories throughout July and August.


50. For examples of this coverage see: *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. October 1, 1969, pp. 1, 4; October 9, 1969, p.33.; November 27, 1969, pp. 1,9.

51. Robert Moses was never elected to office, but may have been New York City’s most powerful public servant. He was the city’s Park Commissioner and Planning Commission chief, but through government “authorities,” retained veto power over projects that were beyond the borders of the city. The power of these newly created authorities escaped the attention of many citizens. For a detailed account of Moses use of the public authority as a method of limiting public scrutiny and accountability see: Caro, Robert. *Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1974.

52. The stadium authority was initially established in 1964.


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59. Grandy, G.L. “Money for Stadium, None for Schools.” [Letter to the Editor]. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. May 23, 1968, p.16. Letters of stadium opposition seemed to disappear after this letter which was the first letter listed in “The People Speak” section. It is uncertain if the sharply worded editor’s note had a chilling effect on subsequent criticism of the stadium project.


64. “Where Is Lawrence’s Legacy?” [Editorial]. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. June 18, 1968, p 12. The editorial argues that “nothing public has been done to honor the memory of the public official who did most to rebuild this worn-out city after World War II.” Years later, the city’s convention center would be named in his honor.


67. Dorondo’s suggestion took the first syllable from each of the three rivers. The rivers that merge near the stadium site are the Monongahela, the Allegheny, and the Ohio. Dorondo, George. Name Stadium for the Rivers [Letters to the Editor]. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. May 6, 1968, p. 12.


71. A photograph of Jesse Owens kneeling to greet a four year old white child from Pittsburgh’s South Side was included in the sports section coverage as a supplement to the news section coverage of the groundbreaking ceremony. In the opening page of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s* second section, the following sub-head is included in the preview to the event: “Scores to Witness Ground Breaking, Hear Olympic Star.” “Stadium Here Today Becomes Reality.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* April 25, 1968, p 17. National League President Warren Giles and the mayor were on hand for this groundbreaking ceremony.


75. For an example of this see: Green, Sterling. “Racial Probers Fear Split into Two Societies.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* March 1, 1968, pp. 1, 18. The article’s lead reported that “a presidential commission said that racism and riots will split the nation into two societies, one black, one white-- separate and unequal.” National guard troops were dispatched to minority communities in April 1968 and some violence was reported.


77. Browne, Joseph. “Contractors Join with Union in Negro Job Plan.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* April 5, 1968, p 21. Mayor Joseph Barr was involved in brokering this agreement. One issue that was difficult to resolve for those wanting immediate, tangible results was the requirement of 52 weeks of heavy equipment training before union membership could be assured. Individuals were paid while receiving this training, but the pay scale for trainees was not specified in the news reports about the program.


99. “Stadium Job Talks Nearing Completion.” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. April 14, 1970, p. 21. This article indicated that several black ushers, ticket takers, and ticket sellers had already been hired. According to a city official, “if qualified blacks are recruited for [other] jobs, the unions-Local 508, Service Employees, and Teamsters Local 250- have agreed to accept them.”


102. Daniel, James. “The Allegheny Club: Its Contribution” [Letter to the Editor]. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 13, 1968, p. 12. [Daniel was president of this club.] Ironically, the forward thinking of the Allegheny Club would be one contributing economic factor in the call for a new football-only stadium. The club was situated in some of the most valuable stadium real estate (i.e.: the skybox area) and attracted some of Pittsburgh’s most affluent corporate leaders. As a result, Steelers management could not easily lay claim to revenues generated in this area of Three Rivers Stadium unless dramatic changes could be effected.


113. The description of the last game at Three Rivers Stadium was the result of personal conversations with area residents before, during, and after the final game at this venue.

114. An exception to this trend was a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review story that quoted several fans who regarded Three Rivers Stadium as a very good venue for football viewing. See: Steigerwald, Bill. “Saying Goodbye: Emotions Mixed on Stadium’s Demise.” *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review.* December 17, 2000, pp. G1, G8.


116. Cook, Ron. “Sophie’s Choice: Stadium of Dreams.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* September 6, 1991, p.11. Even the headline of this article, “Sophie’s Choice,” cleverly juxtaposing the proposal with a William Styron novel of the same title, may have been chosen to suggest that Masloff was committing political suicide in making this proposal. In Styron’s novel, the fictional protagonist, a troubled concentration camp survivor, commits suicide in the final chapter.


118. Waseleski, Tom. “If We Build It, They Won’t Come...At Least Until the Bottom of the Third- Because They’ll be Stuck in Traffic on I-279.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* September 11, 1991, p.9.


120. Three letters were published in the *Post-Gazette* on September 14, 1991 (p. 6). One mocked the stupidity of building an old fashioned stadium when Pittsburgh tore down Forbes Field almost twenty years earlier. Another offered an ad hominem attack that called Masloff “senile” and called her stadium idea “hare-brained.” A final letter simply argued that her priorities were wrong.


129. “Bucs Drop to 21st in Salary Average.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 8, 1993, p. D-2. The average player salary had declined from $1,206,012 to $761,073. Pittsburgh’s blue collar tradition strained the potential for public acceptance of such “averages,” even with the decline.


132. Schmitz, Jon. “Pirates Fans Buy Tickets, But Don’t Show Up.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. October 20, 1995, p. B-4. If turnstile activity determined actual attendance, as was Major League Baseball policy before 1993, Pirates attendance would have dropped further to a mere 763,458 in 1995. This is a dramatic attendance drop off from the 2,065,302 mark that was achieved by the Pirates in 1991.


134. According to *Financial World* magazine, the Pirates value slipped from $95 million in 1993 to $79 million in 1994, to $70 million in 1995. This analysis of all Major League teams was publicized locally. Halvonick, Steve. “Pirates Slip to Last in Baseball Franchise Value.”


138. Bouchette, Ed. “Steelers Drive for Stadium Upgrade for Financial Health.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* October 10, 1995, p. A-1. Interestingly, in this article Ed Bouchette also introduced NFL Senior Vice President of Communications and Governmental Affairs Joe Brown who indicated that the NFL considered Pittsburgh’s stadium among the worst in the league.


152. USX was formerly U.S. Steel. It is a company with a legendary impact on the Pittsburgh area.


161. Appendix totals for Pittsburgh include this slightly more than three month period and the two very brief coding periods prior to the 1998 RAD Board vote and the 1999 vote for State-level subsidy approval. Because media coverage after the failed referendum took a more decidedly pro-stadium direction, the totals in the appendix reveal a higher percentage of pro-subsidy quotes than was displayed in the 1997 pre-referendum period.


172. “Stadium Stand: The Governor Spells Out His Position for Pittsburgh” [Editorial]. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. November 26, 1997, p. A-22. Note: creative new compromises such as one facility with two separate fields and a shared retail concourse were never introduced into the media coverage. Instead, Pittsburgh area officials tended to move in the same design direction as other cities around the nation. A unique design strategy may have separated Pittsburgh from other areas, likely offering fans outside the region greater reason to visit the region. David Orlowski, senior vice president for Ellerbe Becket’s sports architecture division, indicated that shared facilities were relatively easy to design, but shared revenues limited the appeal to franchise owners. Schmitz, Jon. “Ridge Sees One Ballpark for Bucs, Steelers.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. November 23, 1997, pp. A-1, 15.

173. An alternative plan for one new stadium for football and a renovated Three Rivers Stadium for baseball was publicized approximately a week before final Pennsylvania legislature approval on the state stadium subsidy package on February 3, 1999. By then, it was much too late to implement such an option. Earlier options for a Three Rivers Stadium renovation were offered in small weekly papers, but did emerge in the more widely distributed *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.


177. Robert Jubelirer, President Pro Tempore of the Pennsylvania Senate, provided personal correspondence to this researcher indicating that the “stealth legislation” would not have withstood legal challenge, so it was quickly dismissed by legislators.

178. The assertions here were derived from observation of live coverage of the Pennsylvania Cable Network in late 1998 and through discussions with some political leaders and lobbyists as efforts were being made to secure commitments from state legislators. Mayor Tom Murphy did a great deal of lobbying in areas throughout the state during this period. In one example, he presented an overview of stadium construction plans in Cambria County, about 90 miles east of Allegheny County, asking participants to personally contact their legislators to support the subsidy plan. Murphy, Tom. The Robert and Thelma Gleason Lecture on American Politics and Government. Saint Francis College, Loretto, PA, November 23, 1998.

179. Toler, Sonya. “Third Renaissance Inclusion: Joint Effort to Push for Support of Stadium Funding Plan Announced.” *Pittsburgh Courier.* January 27, 1999, p. B1. Borrowing from rhetorical strategies used by Martin Luther King and other African-American leaders, Allegheny County Commissioner Chairman Mike Dawida stated “African-Americans must play a key role if we are to overcome as a region.” Agreements were made to actively involve minorities in the construction process. During stadium construction limited media coverage pointed to potential improprieties in contract awards which were allegedly given to minority firms. According to the reports, some firms may have received contracts based on their minority status, but then turned the work to non-minority firms, circumventing the spirit of earlier agreements. Although team owners had obtained construction oversight in exchange for responsibility for cost overruns, they did not publicly comment on the specifics of this issue.

180. Such an arrangement was also beneficial for the Steelers as it would prevent upstart professional football leagues from gaining a foothold in Pittsburgh. When the USFL temporarily placed a football team in Pittsburgh, the Rooney family expressed discontent with the stadium authority for permitting usage of Three Rivers Stadium for games.


Post-Gazette. February 4, 1999, pp. A-1, 10. A large photo of stadium supporters celebrating the approval was included in this front-page coverage.


186. Belko, Mark. “Cramner to Sit Out County Race.” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 5, 1999, p. A-1. Prior to the RAD Board vote, Cramner pressured a RAD Board appointee to resign so that he could replace this individual with someone who was more supportive of stadium subsidies. After his term expired, Cramner accepted a consulting position with L.Robert Kimball Associates, a design and architectural firm directly involved in Pittsburgh’s stadium construction projects.

187. Pittsburgh was dubbed the “city of champions” in the late 1970s after local teams won a World Series title and a Super Bowl championship in the same year.
Chapter 6: The Boston Case Study

The Boston metropolitan area provides visitors with a unique mingling of historic quaintness and cutting-edge modernity. The ancient ships in Boston harbor offer a dramatic contrast to the world-class robotic research taking place at M.I.T.’s campus on the nearby shores of the Charles River. Many of Boston’s downtown office buildings might buzz with high-tech efficiencies, but the individuals in these offices can look upon the waterways below and see the synchronized motions of the Harvard sculls repeating an activity that has been a tradition for over a century and a half. Harvard may not be known today as a hotbed of athletic prowess, but this Boston-area institution helped to shape the direction of modern athletics in a number of ways.

The 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings paved the way for professional athletics to prosper in the United States, subsequently prompting new commercial opportunities and construction of more elaborate ballparks in major cities throughout America. Boston was part of that process. The construction of Fenway Park in 1912 marked the city’s commitment to the first era of brick, steel, and concrete ballpark construction. Before that, the Boston’s Americans, the forerunners of the Boston Red Sox, played in the wooden-framed Huntington Avenue Grounds located about a half mile away. In 1903 the team distinguished themselves as professional baseball’s first World Series champions of the twentieth century. In these early years, the Boston-based team was also called the “Pilgrims” and the “Puritans.” John I. Taylor, the team owner, renamed the franchise the “Red Sox” in 1907 after giving some thought to renaming the team the “Speed Boys.”

On the surface, the culture and history of New England appeared to limit the potential for regional advancement of professionalism in athletics. The Puritan ethos which produced Jonathan Edwards’ and Cotton Mather’s legendary homilies emphasized stoic self-sacrifice and piety. In such an environment leisure for leisure’s sake was frowned upon, but properly calculated recreation was tolerated and eventually accepted by New Englanders. A philosophic requirement of such recreation was that it allowed for greater subsequent productivity or that it contributed to one’s moral development. Under such circumstances leisure in the form of athletic activity was perceived to be a prudent and acceptable use of one’s personal energies.

This recreational philosophy would hardly seem to contribute to the development of a highly commercial athletic culture. However, a competing New England cultural dynamic that
involved profitable trade with old world merchants during the colonial era offered one avenue for acceptance of mercenary compensation for athletic competition. David Cressy compellingly demonstrates that active recruitment of old world labor by John Winthrop and his colleagues contributed to successful commercial trade with England. Colonial New England may have been imbued with the trappings of Puritanism, but Cressy argues that “from the employers’ view, [actively recruited] servants were a valuable investment.” This respect for commercialism by civic leaders created an environment where paid athletic endeavor could be philosophically reconciled.

The Yale vs. Harvard rivalry further spurred New England’s citizens to bend the rules of amateurism toward the direction of athletic professionalism. This heated Ivy League rivalry included both high-level political maneuvering and low-level pranks. In 1933, Harvard’s young athletes were so determined to demonstrate their superiority that they kidnaped Yale’s Bulldog mascot bringing him to their Cambridge, Massachusetts campus. The unfortunate creature was subsequently photographed licking the boots of the famed John Harvard statue after it was smeared with hamburger grease to achieve the desired effect. Harvard alumni, coaches, and administrators frequently took action to benefit the institution’s athletic program, bending generally accepted rules of amateurism to achieve success on the field of play. Some of these early actions included awarding academic scholarships to individuals with clear academic limitations but substantial athletic abilities.

The emergence of social Darwinism, Progressive Era concerns over the “feminization” of young boys, and the influx of immigrants, particularly workers from Ireland, further softened the ability of New England to remain an enclave of amateur athletics. Some Irish immigrants created bachelor subcultures that resulted in athletic sponsorship from local pubs for individuals with superior athletic abilities. After living in Boston and contributing to professional baseball’s popularity in the Hub, both Albert Spalding and George Wright moved out of the city to establish nationally recognized sporting good companies. Spalding established his highly successful firm in Chicago, Illinois. Wright’s company, Wright & Ditson, moved to nearby Providence, Rhode Island.

An Overview of Early Twentieth Century Stadium Construction History

The first fully steel-reinforced concrete stadium to be built in America was constructed in
the Boston area. It had little to do with professional baseball, however. Instead, Harvard University’s alumni, in an orgy of pride for their gridiron legacy, provided the enthusiasm and the resources for a football field that was to become the model for future collegiate and professional football facilities. Constructed in 1903, almost six years before professional baseball moved into its first fully fireproof ballpark, Harvard stadium was lauded in the *Boston Herald* as a “monster amphitheater for football games.” A project that would take current builders at least a full year to finish was completed in six months. Among the creative tactics that made this possible was an on-site foundry and extension of rail lines into the construction site. Both strategies made it possible for workers to achieve high levels of speed and efficiency.

With no comparable architectural parallel in North America, reporters struggled to explain the structure to a curious public, describing it as similar in design to “the old Greek or Roman amphitheaters.” As was a familiar Progressive Era tactic, defaulting to science proved somewhat helpful as one story referred to scientific tests which demonstrated the superiority of steel reinforced concrete as both “stronger and more economical than stone.” The Boston media cited spectator safety and crowd management as principle concerns, while also joking that Harvard Professor I.N. Hollis’ meticulous design and supervision of the work provoked some to suggest abandoning the “stadium” moniker for the more personable “Holliseum.”

The university’s student newspaper, *The Harvard Crimson*, was intensely enthusiastic about this project. This publication frequently featured stadium construction photos and stories on its front page. Boston’s commercial media demonstrated less overall enthusiasm for the project. They tended to give stadium coverage above-the-fold placement in less visible locations. Pictures were often included. The new stadium received a very brief front page mention in the *Boston Herald* after a stadium opening loss against Dartmouth. A single paragraph describing the partially completed stadium was relegated to page five, and no major ceremonies or festivities related to the facility’s inaugural event were mentioned.

Fenway Park’s construction in 1911 and 1912 received a greater level of traditional media coverage in Boston newspapers than the Harvard project. Like many ballparks of this era, Fenway Park was constructed with unique dimensions and quirks that set it apart from all other major league ballparks. Many ballpark analyses suggest that Fenway Park was uniquely tailored to fit in its urban location. While generally true, Fenway’s design could have been less unique if
not for architectural choices made by the Taylors early in the design process. Shaughnessy and Grossfeld indicate that “Fenway could have been more symmetrical, but concessions to the street layout had to be made once the Taylor family called for team offices on the Jersey Street side.”

In addition, one of Fenway’s most unique features, “The Wall,” also known to many current fans as the “Green Monster,” was vastly different than it is today. Instead of a stark green left field wall, the height of the wall was visually minimized by the presence of an outfield hill that sloped ten feet upward. It also contained various advertisements rather than its current plain green background. The purpose of this huge left field barrier was not to prevent an inordinate amount of home runs, as is its primary function today, but rather to keep fans from peering into the ballpark without paying for admission. The high hill created some odd fielding situations and resulted in unexpected media coverage for Fenway Park. Left fielder George “Duffy” Lewis had mastered the art of fielding on this hill in Fenway’s earliest years. He was often portrayed in newspaper cartoons as a “mountain climber making catches amidst sheep and snowcaps.” The left field area became affectionately known as “Duffy’s Cliff.”

The Taylors broke ground on the Fenway Park project on September 25, 1911. Fenway Park may have received increased publicity during the 1911 and 1912 period because prior construction of ballparks in other major cities cultivated a public desire to read about such issues. The front page coverage in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia in 1909 offered clear evidence that stadium construction had evolved into a matter of community pride. After Pittsburgh’s Forbes Field and Philadelphia’s Shibe Park were completed, the days of haphazardly constructed wooden facilities were numbered.

Some of the publicity for this project could have been fueled by self-interest rather than broader national trends. The Red Sox were controlled by John I. Taylor, the son of General Charles Taylor. Charles Taylor was editor and publisher of the Boston Daily Globe. General Taylor had hoped to sell his control of the Red Sox to someone else and profit as landlord of the property. John I. Taylor had developed a reputation as a carefree playboy. This may have had some bearing on his father’s decision to sell the Red Sox. The transfer to new owners was regarded as favorable to American League Commissioner Ban Johnson who hoped to cultivate a positive reputation for his fledgling organization. In 1947, Red Sox historian Frederick George Lieb asserted that “this deal was engineered by Ban Johnson, and...he was behind the scenes all
the time during the brief [James] McAleer, [Robert] McRoy, [Jake] Stahl ownership.”14 The Taylors remained influential in Red Sox operations despite their sale of the team. John I. Taylor was appointed the club’s vice president while General Taylor served as a member of the team’s board of directors.

Continued involvement of the Taylors made this deal feasible. It allowed the family control over real estate development in the Fenway area. Charles Taylor was a major stockholder in the Fenway Realty Corporation. Prudent development of property in Boston’s western wetlands area had the potential to increase the value of land in this sparsely populated section of the city.15 Not surprisingly, John I. Taylor’s role as vice president of the Red Sox was primarily focused on supervision of the ballpark construction project. Such oversight gave General Taylor more direct control over how Fenway area real estate would be developed.

Rail transit was scheduled to be installed in the area, in part because of Taylor’s ballpark project, making the surrounding property ripe for commercial and residential development. Years prior, Frederick Law Olmstead had hoped to develop much of this area as a park, but the potential for profit clearly took priority in this instance. Some evidence suggests that construction projects in the Fenway area faced opposition because of Olmstead’s publicly stated development desires, but such opposition was not reported in news coverage of the ballpark project.16

General Taylor’s chosen name for Fenway Park may have been the first attempt to use “naming rights” for commercial gain.17 The “Fenway” name represented more than a section of Boston; it was also the name of Taylor’s real estate firm. The new name helped to build recognition of Fenway Realty Corporation and expose citizens to Boston’s Fenway section. Both of these outcomes directly benefitted Taylor. Fourteen years later, Chicago chewing gum magnate William Wrigley renamed his team’s ballpark Wrigley Field, a step that raised the visibility of his commercial product.18 Major companies presently pay millions of dollars today for the right to affix their name to a stadium in order to generate name recognition. Media coverage of sporting events helps to ensure that the stadium name is repeated within the community and occasionally on a national level.

Shaughnessy and Grossfeld described Boston Daily Globe’s coverage of the new ballpark’s construction and planning as “exhaustive.”19 The overall coverage may have been
more detailed than rival Boston newspapers, but there were limits to the amount of coverage that this project received. At times, ballpark construction coverage was simply inserted into the closing paragraphs of stories unrelated to ballpark construction. A September 16, 1911 story focusing on transfer of the team’s control to new management offers an example of this coverage strategy. The article opened with information about the team’s overall management strategy and closed with a paragraph about the ballpark. According to the article the ballpark would be “the very best in the country” and it could be “reached as quickly” as the Huntington Avenue ballpark. The overall reporting marked an unprecedented level of media coverage for a Boston ballpark up to this point, but the amount of total column space devoted to this venture was not quite as dramatic as more recent stadium coverage in Boston and in many other major American cities.

After Taylor’s initial announcement to construct Fenway, an October 15, 1911 story in the *Boston Daily Globe* offered a large architect’s drawing of the new ballpark. According to the *Globe*, the ballpark would cost $1 million to construct and would provide seating accommodations for 28,000 fans. The ballpark would be built by the Charles Logue Building Company with design assistance from Osborn Engineering Company, the same company responsible for construction design of Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds in New York City. The bulk of the facility was constructed with brick, concrete, and steel, but outfield bleacher sections were assembled of cheaper wooden materials.

Coverage of the first regular-season game at Fenway Park was limited by several factors. First, rain twice forced cancellation of the original opening date. Second, news about the sinking of the Titanic broke at the time that the original ballpark opening was scheduled. The Titanic coverage squeezed other news items to less prominent locations for at least a week. Pre-game coverage of the ballpark’s inaugural game was pushed to the internal pages of the sports section due to extensive front-page coverage of the Titanic event. On Sunday, April 21, 1912 the Titanic sinking was still the lead story, but coverage of the opening game at Fenway Park was given above the fold placement on the *Boston Daily Globe’s* front page. Boston’s first game, an April 9, 1912 exhibition with Harvard’s baseball team drew only 3,000 fans, while the April 20 regular season game was reported to include 24,000 fans. Photos of the game showed enthusiastic fans packing the ballpark with overflow crowds left standing in the outfield to watch the game.
Fenway was not immediately regarded as a revered Boston landmark, but in its first few years it was a venue that Boston citizens enjoyed. The Red Sox World Series victory during Fenway’s inaugural 1912 season helped to emotionally link the community to their baseball team, but the new ballpark was not a revered part of Boston yet. In its first decade of service the ballpark achieved Taylor’s development goal. Property value around the ballpark had increased dramatically, prompting speculation in 1917 that new Red Sox owner Harry Frazee would tear down the park, “move to Braves Field, sell the property and reap a gigantic profit.”

Braves Field was built in 1915 and served as home to the rival Boston Braves until their departure in 1953. After this franchise move, Braves Field was transferred to Boston University where it remains a useful sports facility today. The Braves struggled with attendance, never topping the one million attendance mark until 1947. The ballpark contributed to that low attendance figure. It was built with cavernous dimensions at the end of the “dead-ball” era. When the home run became a defining fan attraction, Braves Field was poorly suited to entice attendance. Ron Smith, author of the *Ballpark Book*, described the facility as “an outdated, oft-renovated dinosaur” that was “the victim of bad timing and ownership without vision.”

*Boston Globe* sportswriter Harold Kaese indicated that some of the same issues which prompted the construction of Fenway Park, also led to the construction of Braves Field. As with Fenway Park, commercial considerations were most important to team owners. James Gaffney, the majority owner of the team, sought real estate profits in his initial plans for the facility. Gaffney took over the team after experience in New York City as a building contractor. His company had strong Tammany Hall connections, so he was savvy in both real estate and politics. To maximize his return on land adjacent to the ballpark, Gaffney placed the ballpark in the back of the property, selling smaller commercial parcels that fronted the site. According to Kaese, “he was able to sell the frontage at a handsome profit.” Gaffney’s real estate profits did not result in turnstile profits for the team, however. Instead, the Red Sox traditionally outperformed the Braves in attendance. Fenway Park’s more cozy dimensions may have contributed to the attendance disparity.

Fenway Park’s first massive revision took place in 1934, shortly after Tom Yawkey purchased the team. A May 8, 1926 fire did damage to some of the bleachers on the left field side, but Bob Quinn, the struggling owner of the Red Sox, collected insurance money but never
replaced the stands. One *Boston Globe* reporter speculates that the fire may have been instigated by the “cash-strapped” owner. The Red Sox of this period were not a good ballclub, so they did not draw many fans. Ironically, New York Yankees owner Jacob Ruppert held the mortgage on Fenway Park through the 1930s. As part of the 1920 deal that sent Babe Ruth to New York, Ruppert extended a loan to former Red Sox owner Harry Frazee at better terms than the team owner could obtain from a bank.27 The loan obligation remained with the team when Frazee transferred the Red Sox to new ownership.

Tom Yawkey purchased the Red Sox from a cash-strapped Bob Quinn shortly after his thirtieth birthday.28 Several analyses heaped effusive praise upon Yawkey for his extensive 1934 renovations of Fenway Park, but the decision to make dramatic improvements were also inspired by necessity. If changes were not made, the Red Sox would fold for lack of public interest, be forced to leave town, or simply linger as an embarrassment to the community. Beyond that, Yawkey inherited millions of dollars from a vast estate that emanated from his grandfather’s timber and mining empire, so the renovation of Fenway did not substantially diminish his personal fortune. Stout and Johnson argue that “what Vanderbilt was to the railroad and Carnegie to steel, Yawkey was to lumber.”29

Previous owners left Fenway in extremely poor shape. A1926 fire in the wooden outfield bleachers rendered them useless. At a bare minimum, Yawkey would have to replace these seats and repair smoke damage in other areas of the facility. Renovations were further compounded by a January 5, 1934 fire. Some speculated that the fire was intentionally set. The Depression Era ballpark renovation was the largest privately funded construction project in the Boston metropolitan area. With jobs hard to come by during this economic downturn, many workers wanted to keep the project going for as long as possible. Completion of the project might mean daily soup kitchen visits for many of the workers. Under such conditions, it is not difficult to understand how a fire may have been purposely set.

The new Fenway opened up on April 17, 1934 to rave reviews. “Duffy’s Cliff” in left field was replaced by the massive thirty-seven foot high wall that became affectionately known years later as the “Green Monster.” It was more commonly referred to as “The Wall” for the next fifteen years because massive billboards for various products interrupted the green background until advertising was phased out in 1947. With vast personal wealth, Yawkey may not have
needed the advertising revenue, but it helped to bring in extra money at a time when he was spending lavishly on both the ballpark and acquisition of players. He spent $1.25 million to give the facility a complete makeover. The expenditure was almost double the original $650,000 cost to construct the ballpark in 1912. Yawkey was also pushing hard to acquire high-caliber players with the hope that he could assemble a team capable of winning the World Series.

The renovation thoroughly modernized Fenway Park, but it also locked Tom Yawkey into a long-term tenancy at the ballpark. In later years he would regret that constraint. In 1958 he lobbied the city to extend the park into Landsdowne Street at a time when construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike threatened to change the neighborhood. His request for expansion was rejected. Yawkey saw more and more teams obtaining public subsidies for ballparks. Some teams received land, others were offered publicly funded facilities. By the late 1950s Yawkey seemed convinced that some government subsidy was in order even if Boston politicians were unwilling to accommodate him.

When Yawkey died in 1976, Fenway Park was a cherished part of Boston history. The nation’s bicentennial brought national attention to Boston. The unveiling of the Faneuil Hall Marketplace further contributed to Boston’s image as an historic city. The city that previously lacked confidence in its image began to more proudly revel in its past. Boston had rebounded from the urban mistakes of its West End modernization program. It had rebuilt its downtown center, but at its core, it was a city with an abiding respect for its history.

Boston’s pride in its role as a historical locale would present problems for those wishing to replace Fenway Park in the 1990s and beyond. After Yawkey’s death, financial control of the team was transferred to his wife, Jean, until she passed away in 1992. From 1992 onward the team has been held in trust with controlling power in the hands of the Yawkey Foundation, a charitable trust. The Yawkeys’ hand-chosen administrator, John Harrington, has presided over the foundation’s management. Attempts to sell the franchise have been complicated by calls to replace the ballpark. In recent years this has become a hotly contested civic issue that has been played out on talk radio, in newspapers, and on the local evening news.

Professional Football in Boston: From Stadium Itinerants to Suburban Tenants

For more than seventy years the Red Sox were paragons of stability with their ballpark situation. On the other hand, Boston’s many football franchises had a long history of difficulties
with their stadium arrangements. These difficulties prevented Boston from cultivating and maintaining a strong professional football franchise until the Patriots were firmly established as New England’s team in the 1960s. Even after the Patriots won the hearts of many New Englanders, the stadium situation still festered, remaining unresolved until 1970.

Unlike many team owners, Billy Sullivan did not have deep pockets. He began his career as Boston College’s first sports information director and enthusiastically worked as publicity director for the Boston Braves until the baseball team moved to Milwaukee in 1953. The move was prompted by the promise of a municipally subsidized ballpark and poor attendance in the Boston market.30

After the Braves’ departure, Sullivan became president of a Boston-area petroleum company, but he never lost his enthusiasm for sports. With the Yawkey family firmly controlling the Red Sox, Sullivan saw limited opportunity for advancement in local baseball.31 This belief may have been reinforced in April 1958 when Sullivan made a highly publicized attempt to construct a suburban multi-sport facility that would house the Red Sox and a yet to be established professional football team. The proposal was released less than seven months after Sullivan’s alma mater, Boston College, opened a 26,000 seat stadium to much fanfare and publicity.32

The proposal was prematurely released before formal meetings could be set with Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey. Using his considerable public relations skills Sullivan did his best to put a positive spin on this early release. Models of the facility were displayed and front page coverage was achieved. According to a cautiously supportive editorial “the architectural plans have just enough bizarre touches needed to heighten the fashionable appeal of the palace.” Among the ideas under consideration were a retractable roof, $5,000-a-year deluxe boxes, a nearby golf range, and an adjacent bowling alley that would include a glassed-in nursery to provide on-site child care.33 Despite the visionary nature of the proposal, it died a quick death when the Red Sox management indicated that they preferred to stay in Fenway Park.

Despite this setback, Sullivan correctly determined that Boston was a market ready to support professional football. Several professional football teams in the Boston area failed to catch on in years past, but Sullivan believed that the emergence of television cleared the path for more enthusiastic regional support for the game.34 After failing to acquire an NFL franchise in the late 1950s, he settled for a less prestigious AFL franchise in November 1959. He started the
team with an initial investment of $25,000.35

In contrast to the Red Sox, the Boston Patriots struggled from year to year to find a permanent home. The first game in the Boston area, an August 13, 1960 exhibition game against the Dallas Texans, was played at Harvard Stadium in nearby Cambridge, Massachusetts. The game would mark the beginning of a ten-year odyssey that would have the team haphazardly moving from one venue to another. Four weeks after the initial exhibition game, the Patriots regular season home opener took place before 21,597 fans in Boston University Stadium. Although renamed, it was the same facility where Sullivan worked as public relations chief for the Boston Braves baseball franchise. The university purchased the facility after the team moved to Milwaukee.

In an effort to permanently resolve the stadium issue, Massachusetts Governor John Volpe appointed Sullivan to chair the Greater Boston Stadium Authority in August 1962. The appointment did little to move stadium construction plans forward. In 1963 the Patriots moved to Fenway Park where they remained until 1968. The team then moved to Boston College’s Alumni Stadium for a single season, and then struggled to find a home in 1970.36

The Patriots attendance was constrained by their stadium situation. The venues that they played in were smaller than other professional football facilities throughout the nation. Because of professional football’s revenue sharing arrangement, low attendance limited visiting teams’ game-day profits substantially. When the AFL was in its infancy, the mere struggle for survival pushed this issue to the back burner. But as the AFL established credibility and eventually planned to merge with the NFL, team owners and league officials seemed to grow increasingly impatient with the Patriot’s stadium arrangements. Some team owners bristled at the small payouts that followed games against the Patriots in Boston. If the smaller market AFL teams were going to share attendance revenues with more prestigious NFL markets, then Boston, one of the AFL’s “large market” cities, would have to correct its low stadium capacity problem. At the time, Boston was the nation’s sixth largest television market. Because market size helped generate higher national ratings, league officials did not want to move the team unless no solution to the stadium issue could be found.

Billy Sullivan, worn down over years of lobbying and bickering with city and state leaders, regarded this as an opportunity to leverage himself to secure a more permanent stadium
deal that would improve his bottom line. He had been pushing since 1960 to secure a permanent stadium arrangement, but, unlike Tom Yawkey, he did not have sufficient personal wealth to bankroll a new construction project by himself. On May 15, 1968, AFL and NFL owners unanimously approved a measure that required stadium seat capacity “in the vicinity of 50,000 by 1970.” Sullivan was described by reporters as “pleased by the warning.” He further announced that this requirement was “far overdue and fully justified.” He optimistically predicted that he “could get a stadium underway quickly.” What transpired for the next two years was a highly unpredictable and often heated political dialogue between various neighborhoods, politicians, civic leaders, and the Patriots.

Coverage tended to focus on political elites and Patriots owner Billy Sullivan. The public was frequently frozen out of discussion in this 1968 media coverage. On the heels of the football owners’ policy announcement, Massachusetts Governor Volpe asserted that a new stadium was needed “if we are to retain our major league sports teams.” Other political leaders argued that “we can’t afford to lose the Patriots” while reminding citizens that “we have lost several football teams in the past.” Despite these words of support from political leaders, a state proposal to purchase a stadium site and lease it back to the team failed to gain momentum. A year earlier, another proposal made by the governor passed in the House, but was defeated in the Senate.

Sullivan may have believed that he could use league regulations to gain public subsidies, but the many twists and turns of Massachusetts politics rendered such an assumption suspect. Any effort to build a stadium that would involve government subsidies raised complicated political questions. Boston area politics seemed to be uniquely parochial. Unlike some city governments, Boston’s city counselors represented specific sections of the city forcing them to consider the quirky political fallout of their specific communities. Such a political system encouraged cautious horse-trading and periodic stonewalling. Statewide decisions were often driven by similar prejudices and local self-interest. In such an environment, legislators in western Massachusetts could reflexively vote against spending that was focused on the Boston metropolitan area unless specific incentives for cooperation were somehow built into the legislation. *Boston Globe* sportswriter Bob Ryan passionately argued that “everything in Massachusetts must come down to back-scratching and quid-pro-quoing [sic] in some way, and you can never get a straight answer from a major politician.”

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Thomas “Tip” O’Neill, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, often quipped that “all politics is local.” He developed this somewhat simplistic political theory while observing his father who served as superintendent of sewers in Cambridge. O’Neill’s theory was reinforced as he worked his way through the ranks of the Boston-area political structure. Constituent services, neighborhood preferences, and sober recognition of back-room politics continues to drive Boston area politics, making it one of the toughest areas to achieve consensus.

Elite-driven attempts at urban renewal, including the bulldozing of Boston’s West End neighborhoods in the early 1960s, remained firm in the memories of citizens faced with the prospect of stadium construction in their neighborhood. The West End project had the early support of Boston area media, but urban scholar Thomas O’Connor argued that once it was underway, the ruthless displacement of citizens created “such a wave of horrified revulsion that the future of any ‘urban renewal’ projects in Boston was much in doubt.” After the West End was bulldozed, newspaper reporters were more inclined to examine elite-driven construction proposals with greater levels of skepticism.

In such a setting, fighting to build a stadium was an uphill battle. Boston’s urban neighborhoods almost always responded with disdain to construction proposals that involved increased traffic and the potential for future inconveniences. The aggressive construction policy of the last decade further intensified the likelihood of public opposition to anything that had the potential to negatively impact an inner-city neighborhood. In 1968 legislators suggested sites in Dedham, Fenway, and South Station. Dedham seemed to be the favored site because it did not tie up already valuable commercial land and it was in close proximity to rails and highways. By January 1970 the Massachusetts State Legislature had killed 23 different stadium proposals.

Sullivan was running out of options. To enhance his negotiating leverage, he attempted to use daily media coverage to publicize various offers that were made to entice the Patriots away from Boston. Invitations from distant cities and states trickled in throughout 1969 and in the opening months of 1970. A January 17, 1970 report listed “Tampa, Memphis, Birmingham, Seattle, Toronto, Montreal, and North Carolina” as viable options for the Patriots. According to the article, if a stadium solution was not forthcoming, the Patriots would “weigh offers” from each of these locales.

As the 1969 season concluded, the Patriots did not have a stadium lease and were unable
Major League Baseball’s move to a longer playoff system diminished the possibility of cooperation from the Red Sox. The team’s executives were fearful that even if a shared arrangement could be made, a torn up and overused field could jeopardize their chances of success if they qualified for post-season play. The high level of political concern and the subsequent publicity generated for the Patriots’ stadium situation seemed to irritate Red Sox management. When confronted about the Patriots, Red Sox General Manager Dick O’Connell irately barked, “we own Fenway Park and we pay taxes on it....I’ll listen to hear what they have to say, but I’m sick of hearing about the Patriots. I’ve been hearing their crying and begging and threatening to leave for 10 years.”

The Patriots faced the prospect of a 1970 season without a home field. After every reasonable possibility appeared to be exhausted, the Patriots attempted to strong-arm Harvard University into using its historic football field for the 1970 season. Harvard refused to cooperate, denying the Patriots access to the field because, according to Harvard’s president, it would “cause serious disruption of our athletic activities and a very serious problem of congestion.” The Harvard Business School, located adjacent to the stadium and a powerful force on campus, publicly opposed the proposal because it increased “traffic and parking problems on autumn weekends.”

Despite evidence that the Red Sox might be convinced to allow the Patriots to use Fenway Park for another year, Sullivan publicly stated that he had exhausted all options for his team. He set a March 15, 1970 deadline for resolution of the problem. If a solution could not be found, he stated that the team would move out of Boston.

Some politicians proposed using the powers of eminent domain to take over Harvard Stadium. On January 27, 1970 the Massachusetts Joint Legislative Committee on Federal Financial Assistance voted 20-1 to use eminent domain to force Harvard to accommodate the Patriots. Massachusetts Governor Francis Sargent criticized the university’s “provincial point of view,” but indicated that he would veto such legislation since it could not be legally justified. Presumably, a court challenge would favor Harvard and waste valuable time that could be better spent addressing other stadium options. Harvard’s tax-free status was frequently cited as a reason that the university was obligated to help out the Patriots. Sullivan argued that unlike many urban areas, Boston was unable to afford stadium construction subsidies, in part, because tax exempt
institutions like Harvard prevented leaders from collecting property taxes on vast areas of land. Boston Mayor Kevin White argued that “the least that the school can do in exchange for this tax exemption is to render a helping hand so that Boston can retain one of its most prestigious and entertaining attractions.”

As this issue was being debated, a front-page Boston Evening Globe article touted the economic benefits of sports to the region. The article was the first in a three-part series intended to educate citizens on the value of professional sports to the community. The final piece in this series focused on the ability of sports teams to bring Boston revenue from non-city residents.

This boosterism was offset by criticism of the Patriots for their limited commitment to privately funding stadium construction. In a column advocating voluntary public contributions to fund a new facility, Harold Kaese openly criticized local politicians, but also questioned the Patriots’ commitment to the region. Kaese rhetorically asked “if in 10 years they have contributed so much as a bag of cement towards the construction of a new stadium, where is it?” Kaese offered to put $10,000 of his hard-earned money on the table if Patriots management and over 4,500 citizens and local businesses stepped up to the plate with donations.

Media response to the Harvard decision was mixed, but tended to favor the position that Harvard acted arrogantly in shutting out the Patriots. News stories more frequently quoted voices that were critical of Harvard, and many opinion columns tended to attack the decision. Mayor White was quoted shortly after the decision stating that the action reflected “the university’s hardened indifference to community problems.” An editorial page cartoon featured a caricature of Billy Sullivan in front of the famed John Harvard statue with an arrow labeled “Harvard” piercing his chest.

The Boston Globe’s editorial board and a few opinion columns supported Harvard’s right to lock out the Patriots. The editors argued that “Harvard baiting is a...form of amusement more time-honored than...professional football and probably on a level of antiquity with public execution of witches.” They sternly advised “public officials...to get cracking at last on a responsible plan to build a stadium.”

Letters to the editor also seemed to favor Harvard’s right to deny access to their facilities. In one of the few news articles to inject public voices into the stadium issue, several Harvard students were quoted supporting the university’s decision to keep the Patriots off campus. Another article, focused on lobbying Massachusetts Governor Francis
Sargent to support new stadium construction, included quotes from a number of citizens. In the piece one citizen stated “this town will be bush league if the Patriots go.” Another threatened the governor with the claim that “we’ll have a stadium in September or Sarge will go in November.”

After Harvard formalized their decision to lock out the Patriots in a February vote of the Harvard Corporation, various other ideas began to emerge. Compelling legal evidence existed to render the eminent domain proposal useless, so this hotly contested issue quickly dropped from public view. Instead a series of proposals were offered. So many proposals were put on the table that the issue was certain to confuse the public. One called for renovation of Fenway Park to expand its capacity and make it more football-friendly. Another proposed a $5 million renovation of White Stadium, a high school facility. Southern New Hampshire, the Dover Street Railroad Yards, and East Boston were also mentioned as potential stadium sites.

After these ideas were pulled off the table, Boston Redevelopment Authority Chairman John Warner prepared a $16 million proposal for a 55,000 seat stadium at a site near Neponset Circle in Dorchester. The plan was pitched as “the last hope for keeping the Boston Patriots in Boston.” The Neponset plan called for “a spartan-like bowl with no architectural frills.” It was strongly opposed by Boston politicians and citizens in the Dorchester area. The primary fear was that the project would aggravate an already congested section of the city. State Senator George Kenneally reported that he had received “a lot of calls from constituents...worried that their streets will be turned into parking lots.”

The Neponset plan ran into financing problems, particularly in light of Governor Sargent’s often repeated directive to steer clear of taxpayer subsidies for the project. To make the project more palatable to state legislators outside the Boston area, several individuals proposed a shared arrangement between the University of Massachusetts and the Patriots. Financing turned out to be a trickier issue, however. After numerous ideas failed, Bill Veeck, owner of Suffolk Downs Race Track offered a proposal that he claimed would eliminate the need for public subsidy. Veeck’s formula would require state approval for an additional 12 days of racing, with the net proceeds allocated to retiring stadium construction bonds. Veeck indicated that he would not profit from this arrangement, but it is likely that concession revenues and the goodwill created by this gesture would help to improve Veeck’s future earnings. The idea was attacked for
several reasons, but the most widely publicized argument was that it would not fully fund the new stadium, forcing the need for some taxpayer subsidy for the facility.

Veeck was a thick-skinned promoter of legendary status, but the brutal nature of Massachusetts politics had him confessing that “I should have known better than to get involved ...especially in an election year.”67 Legendary sportswriter Red Smith, in a column that was distributed nationally, attacked Massachusetts legislators who were opposed to Veeck’s proposal. Smith peppered his column with sarcasm aiming it at local political leaders. He concluded that since “the state government contributes nothing and takes about $7 million a year from Suffolk, Veeck had the naive notion that nobody would mind seeing the stadium project helped.”68

The Boston City Council Committee on Home Rule voted to abandon the Neponset site for another city location. As this occurred, Billy Sullivan looked more aggressively outside the city for stadium sites.69 A day after the city council abandonment of the Neponset site was reported, Boston Globe Sports Columnist Bud Collins reported that the tiny community of Foxboro, Massachusetts wanted to serve as host site for a new stadium. According to Collins, one of the most important benefits of the Foxboro site was its distance from Boston because “Massachusetts pols [are]...the masters of obstruction.”70

Other sites continued to be discussed and many small suburban communities expressed active interest in hosting a stadium site. Billy Sullivan continued to remind the public of the many offers he had received from cities outside the Boston area, but he also indicated that interest from area suburban communities was strong. On April 3, 1970, the Patriots owner stated that in ten days he “had 60 offers of land in New England.” Reveling in his good fortune, Sullivan gloated that “what they say in effect is, ‘the Lord put this land here for a stadium.’”71 By April 4, 1970, site selection had become so divisive and so uncertain that a Globe editorial chided that “every cow pasture in eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire is under surveillance as a possible site.”72

A day later the Patriots ended debate, selecting Foxboro as their site for the new stadium. Sullivan predicated the decision on citizen approval, knowing in advance that this would not be a problem. The deciding factors included the donation of free land by a wealthy businessman and an excited local citizenry that actually wanted to serve as home to an NFL franchise. Unlike previous Boston proposals, the Foxboro site drew few objections from the local citizenry. A
preliminary head count conducted by Foxboro selectmen showed that residents favored hosting the stadium by a 2900 to 400 margin.\textsuperscript{73} This site also benefitted by its proximity to major highways and its ability to draw simultaneously from both Boston and Providence, Rhode Island. After the citizenry formally approved the stadium site in a “special town meeting,” all debate about stadium site selection ended.\textsuperscript{74}

Stadium funding was finalized on September 19, 1970, and ground was broken the following Wednesday.\textsuperscript{75} Construction controversies that occurred on other stadium sites around the nation were not generally reported at the Foxboro construction site. Private financing and suburban location served to minimize reporter inquiries and investigations. The stadium’s projected cost, a paltry $5.5 million, was less than one-quarter the cost of some recently constructed taxpayer subsidized facilities.\textsuperscript{76} Architectural design strategies and very limited amenities helped to significantly limit overall expenses. Because public funds were not used for the project, extreme journalistic scrutiny may have been more difficult to justify.

The stadium’s first game, an exhibition contest against the New York Giants, took place on August 21, 1971, approximately eleven months after formal groundbreaking ceremonies. The Boston Globe did not hype the opening, keeping it off the front page on game day, but they did offer a special multi-page stadium section ten days before the facility was publicly unveiled. The special section was extremely positive in tone, generally praising those responsible for construction, financing, and design of the facility. Advertisements were abundant. Involvement of political leaders was limited. Governor Francis Sargent was credited for bringing several major investors together at a time when “the project faltered quietly.”\textsuperscript{77} The political leaders and citizens of Foxboro were also offered positive press coverage for stepping in when Boston officials were unable to establish a workable city stadium site. But the section focused primarily on stadium amenities and praise for the private sector individuals responsible for the project.

The coverage also served as a vehicle for positive corporate public relations for the companies involved in funding the facility. One article speculated that the stadium would lead to a building boom in Foxboro. Gerald Rodman, a Foxboro selectman, emphasized media coverage as a rationale for supporting the project. He rhetorically asked, “how can you put a price tag on the number of times Foxboro will be mentioned on national TV?”\textsuperscript{78}

Construction of Schaefer Stadium in Foxboro is often touted as one of the best examples
of private sector stadium financing. Days after construction began, Will McDonough argued that “Schaeffer Stadium in Foxboro seems sure to be a forerunner for many other stadia around the nation.”\textsuperscript{79} Instead, future stadium construction was typically driven by public subsidy rather than private sector ingenuity. Clearly, the Patriot’s commitment to cost containment was outstanding not because they wanted to cut corners, but because of their inability to attract construction-related subsidies. James Quirk and Rodney Fort argue that the construction of this stadium “should be studied by anyone who thinks that the free enterprise system can’t work to keep costs down.”\textsuperscript{80}

Such analysis fails to examine the dramatic down side of private sector financing from the perspective of NFL owners. Taxpayers clearly benefitted when private sector funding eliminated the need for substantial subsidies, but for team owners, the stadium at Foxboro was not a long-term success story. Cost containment resulted in a facility that had far fewer amenities than a typical NFL stadium. The press facilities were limited and the seating was austere. Fans sat on cold aluminum benches, not the personally assigned chairback seats typically associated with a professional football facility. Revenue generating amenities such as luxurious skyboxes were also lacking. The facility allowed the Patriots to remain in the Boston metropolitan area, but twenty years later it is probable that no NFL owner would have traded facility arrangements with the Patriots.

Stadium construction had placed a heavy burden on Patriots owner Billy Sullivan. To construct the Foxboro facility with private funds, Sullivan made a variety of deals that diminished his percentage of team control. In the early 1970s his ownership status was sufficiently diluted that he lost decision-making control of the team. He had parceled out ownership stock to enough individuals that they eventually had the power to outvote him. While other issues may have contributed to Sullivan’s awkward financial situation, the stadium project was his most prominent single expense and obligation.

Years after the stadium project, Sullivan lamented that in his deal-making during the early 1970s, “I saved the stadium, but I lost the ball club.”\textsuperscript{81} To regain control of the Patriots, he had to ante up $10 million in 1975, buying out shares of several individuals including two major New York investors. Sullivan explained the absurdity of his personal situation, stating “I owned this thing originally, lock stock and barrel, for twenty-five thousand dollars....I ended up
spending $10 million to buy back what I once totally owned. That’s how smart I am.”

Sullivan was eventually forced out of the NFL after his Stadium Management Corporation declared bankruptcy. The league stepped in, released $4 million in contingency funds to meet team payroll obligations, and sought new leadership for the team.

Future NFL owners would take Billy Sullivan’s lesson to heart in future efforts to construct new stadiums. By the 1990s they would also consider the many political difficulties faced by Sullivan as his stadium became a reality in the early 1970s. The changing economic landscape in professional sports made it more likely than ever that a replacement for Billy Sullivan’s stadium would include taxpayer subsidy of some kind.

The Patriots and Red Sox Push for Modern Facilities

The Patriots went through several ownership changes in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Victor Kiam, owner of Remington Products Corporation, purchased the team in 1988. He was the first NFL owner to be given an offer to play in a rent-free facility. Kiam rejected this proposal since it would have required extending his commitment to play in the Foxboro, Massachusetts stadium for 19 years. As this offer was put on the table in 1989, Kiam indicated that he wanted a new stadium and hinted at moving the team from the region if public support for a new stadium was not forthcoming.

Boston media seemed to regard Kiam’s quest for a new stadium as quixotic in light of the many difficulties faced by Billy Sullivan two decades earlier. In a 1988 opinion column, Leigh Montville mockingly suggested a cooperative arrangement between civic and political leaders to build a massive new sports complex that would serve the Patriots, the Bruins, and the Celtics. Montville sarcastically parodied Kiam’s rhetorical efforts to appeal to local leaders. According to Montville, “all of this is possible, Victor. Yes it is. The vision is shared. The vision is within reach.....Hell will freeze over any day now. Then we can get started.”

Michael Madden also mocked Kiam’s effort, calling him a “fuzz-cheeked novice...speaking like a Rotary Club president in Phoenix.” According to Madden “all the buzzwords that fool the rubes in Memphis and Birmingham and Orlando and Jacksonville” would not succeed in Boston.

The barbs aimed at Kiam may have furthered his resolve to succeed. His early attempts to push for a new stadium included soft-peddling the idea on local talk shows and orchestrated attempts to compare Boston’s situation to other metropolitan areas. In March 1989 Kiam spoke
to the media at a hospitality suite in Baltimore as he was munching on crab cakes and examining that city’s plan to construct a new stadium. This strategy brought limited progress. On August 25, 1989, Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn announced that the Boston Redevelopment Authority would secure the services of HOK Sports of Kansas City “to lay the groundwork for a possible new stadium.” Flynn indicated, however, that if a stadium was built “it’d have to be privately financed.”

After Kiam’s soft-sell failed to produce the desired subsidy results, he shifted into a more aggressive mode. In December 1989, he indicated that he would only stay in the current stadium arrangement for “three or four years.” If movement was not made on the stadium issue he threatened to sell the franchise to “someone from another city seeking a franchise.” After three unsuccessful years of stadium lobbying, Kiam transferred the team to someone from outside the region. Kiam was burdened by limited personal funds and a previous agreement to buy out a minority owner.

He also struggled with public relations issues. Kiam was criticized nationally after failing to act decisively after an incident involving a female reporter’s access to post-game interviews in the Patriot’s locker room. He also faced some criticism for renaming the team’s home field “Foxboro Stadium.” Schaeffer Stadium had been renamed Sullivan Stadium after the brewery failed to renew its naming rights agreement with the team. This was done in the final years of Sullivan’s involvement with the team. Some perceived Kiam’s renaming as a negative act aimed directly at former owner Billy Sullivan. Kiam denied this allegation, but struggled to convince a skeptical public. His company, Remington Products, did not need negative publicity. Since Kiam had positioned himself prominently as a corporate spokesman in his company’s national advertising campaigns, negative publicity for the Patriots could only hurt his ability to increase market share of Remington’s consumer products. The combination of limited financial resources and bad publicity pushed Kiam to permanently step away from NFL team ownership.

James Orthwein took over the Patriots on May 11, 1992. He continued the push for a new stadium. Orthwein made it clear from the outset that he would be an interim owner. Will McDonough reported that Orthwein “moved in to the picture to bail out his friend/partner [and minority owner] Fran Murray for two years.” Presumably, Orthwein would hold the team temporarily while Boston area leaders developed a strategy to purchase the team. Nevertheless,
his stated long-range goal was to establish an NFL franchise in St. Louis. If he intended to position himself in St. Louis, this temporary ownership arrangement would allow him to cultivate ties with other owners, giving him an inside track on procurement of a new expansion franchise. If he intended to transfer the team to a new ownership group, it was likely that Orthwein’s motivation in seeking a new stadium was to maximize the resale price of the franchise. This was hardly an incentive that would inspire taxpayers to lobby for such a project.

Orthwein paid $106.5 million to buy the Patriots, but an expansion NFL franchise would reportedly cost at least $140 million in league franchise fees. If Orthwein could boost the value of the Patriots to $140 million or more, it would make sense to sell the Patriots to obtain a St. Louis franchise. Without a new stadium, however, it would be more cost-effective for Orthwein to simply move the New England football franchise from Massachusetts to Missouri. To someone unfamiliar with the political machinations of the region, transferring the Patriots to Orthwein seemed to be a clever way to steer Massachusetts and metropolitan Boston legislators into taking action on the stadium issue. Individuals with more insight about Boston area politics knew that the situation could only get more complicated.

As the Patriots’ sale was consummated, the Red Sox began to make overtures for ballpark subsidies. Plans for construction of a new facility for Boston’s hockey and basketball teams were also underway. The potential for the Patriots to move out of New England kept the football stadium issue alive, but getting political action on the team’s stadium was clouded by the complexity of Boston’s professional multi-team sports landscape.

Politicians began talk of constructing a massive complex that would simultaneously serve as a convention center and sporting venue. Red Sox management indicated that the multiplex concept would only be acceptable if part of the facility was earmarked for sole use by the Red Sox. Politicians countered that convention center space was a greater priority than athletic facilities. One option discussed was temporary use of the multiplex by the Red Sox while Fenway Park received a thorough two-year refurbishing. Red Sox President John Harrington cautioned that a ballpark renovation would fail to permanently address the Red Sox problems because Fenway Park “has only 10 to 20 years of life remaining because of structural deterioration.”

The community’s affinity for Fenway Park and its ability to generate respectable revenues
despite its small size kept most stadium-related discourse focused on the Patriots situation in the early 1990s. After the NFL awarded expansion franchises to Jacksonville, Florida and Charlotte, North Carolina late in 1993, rumors began to intensify that James Orthwein’s connections to St. Louis would prompt a westward franchise move. Cleveland Browns owner Art Modell made this somewhat surprising NFL Expansion Committee announcement. Orthwein was already personally involved in a St. Louis stadium construction project that was intended to house an NFL expansion franchise. With knowledge of this public, some individuals speculated that this could be the last season of professional football at Foxboro Stadium. Baltimore officials made an effort to lure the Patriots as rumors of a St. Louis departure continued to swirl.

When Robert Kraft took over the team on January 14, 1994, he was perceived as a savior by many Massachusetts sports fans. The team’s official web site credits Kraft with “saving the team from a possible move outside of New England.” Fans and media tended to agree with this assessment in 1994. As Orthwein was making plans to take over the team in 1992, well-connected reporters argued that a franchise move out of the Boston area was probable. Will McDonough asserted that “either a new stadium has to be built or the Patriots will be sold out of town.” McDonough was so confident of this claim that he advised readers that they could “bank on it.”

Public sentiment regarding Kraft would eventually change as a result of his intense drive to construct a new stadium. Before Kraft took over the Patriots, he was critical of attempts to build a new stadium for the football franchise. Part of the reason for taking such a posture may have been self-serving. His firm, Foxboro Stadium Associates, was responsible for management and control of the Patriot’s stadium when Victor Kiam and James Orthwein owned the team. By December 1994, months after taking the reins as owner of the franchise, Kraft argued that building a new sports “megaplex” in Boston “may be essential to keeping the team in Massachusetts.”

Robert Kraft decided early in his tenure that the financial viability of his franchise was predicated on acquisition of a new stadium. His experience in stadium management put him in an ideal position to understand the revenue potential that a brand new facility could offer. As a result, Kraft was aggressive in his push for a new stadium. In one NFL pre-game show, he described the Foxboro facility as a “high school” stadium that was totally inadequate for the
needs of modern professional football. He had little desire to follow the private sector path initially carved out by John I. Taylor, Tom Yawkey, and Billy Sullivan. Instead, Kraft believed that the next facility would include some form of taxpayer subsidy. He was willing to fund stadium construction costs, but felt that much of the land acquisition and surrounding infrastructure work could be borne by taxpayers.

Billy Sullivan made multiple attempts to publicize his ability to profit if he moved the Patriots, but he was emotionally wedded to the Boston metropolitan area. With several NFL teams receiving record-breaking subsidies in new cities during the 1990s, Kraft and other team owners had greater incentive to consider outside offers. Al Davis’ success against the NFL in the courtroom further cleared the way for franchise movement. Subsidized stadium construction deals brokered in major cities throughout America prompted Robert Kraft to pursue a new facility that offered better opportunities for revenue enhancement. His initial goal was to remain in the Boston area, but after numerous efforts to negotiate with local politicians predictably failed, Kraft began to consider opportunities away from metropolitan Boston.

Many aspects of Foxboro Stadium limited the team’s ability to maximize profits. Concession options and skybox amenities were limited. The aluminum bench-style seating also hurt the owner’s abilities to generate game-day income. The separate seats offered in other NFL stadiums offered clear demarcations for personal space that fostered greater levels of food and beverage consumption. Simple amenities such as cup holders on the back of typical stadium seating were unavailable in this budget-priced facility. Skyboxes were integrated into the stadium design, but this “premium” seating arrangement was considerably less luxurious than skyboxes in other NFL cities. The facility was so spartan that fans and reporters routinely joked about various inadequacies. The Boston Herald’s Gerry Callahan recalled his first visit to the stadium in 1971. He stated that a trip to the stadium bathroom could be a harrowing and traumatic experience. Callahan recollected that “after my first experience in the [stadium] men’s room, I just kind of sat there like Marlon Brando in Apocalypse Now.” Plumbing problems also reportedly prevented players from access to hot showers on numerous occasions.

Kraft was determined not to move forward without some help from local officials. At a bare minimum, some form of land acquisition help and support for the infrastructure surrounding the stadium was expected. His demands were not as aggressive as other NFL owners, but in the
crucible of metropolitan Boston politics, satisfying Kraft was not going to be easy. Kraft used the possibility of moving the franchise to either Connecticut or Rhode Island to try to gain leverage in discussions about the sports megaplex. Citizens and political leaders reacted with a jaded yawn to the potential for a team move. Boston’s Mayor Menino joked that “next week it’s Maine,” publicly making light of Kraft’s threats to relocate the team.¹⁰²

In Kraft’s early years as Patriots’ owner, much of the sports infrastructure headlines focused on replacement of the Boston Garden, a venerable facility that initially served as home for the Bruins and later the Celtics after opening to the public in 1928. When this facility’s replacement, the Fleet Center, was completed in 1995, the push to address baseball and football facilities intensified.

Sullivan’s inability to get Boston officials to move on the stadium construction issue should have pre-empted attempts to propose Boston as a site for a football facility to replace Foxboro Stadium in the late 1990s. Sullivan’s equally tough time with the state legislature in the 1960s suggested that the new team management would face a profound challenge if state subsidies were desired. By the mid 1990s, however, franchise free-agency had given team owners more negotiating leverage than ever before, prompting Kraft to believe that he could turn Sullivan’s earlier failure to construct an inner-city stadium into a reality.

He pushed hard in 1995 and 1996 to construct a stadium in South Boston. The NFL attempted to help Kraft, offering to build an indoor NFL theme park in Boston if the Patriots succeeded in obtaining funding for a city-based stadium project.¹⁰³ Kraft made several mistakes that hurt his ability to gain support. He underestimated the intensity of vocal opposition from citizens in South Boston. He further underestimated the ability of provincial Boston politicians, whose ability to get reelected was dependent on neighborhood-level community support, to block his plans. Equally important, he made tactical mistakes in dealing with his allies. He harshly criticized Massachusetts Governor William Weld, a supporter of his construction agenda, for publicly releasing South Boston stadium plans instead of consulting him in private.¹⁰⁴ He called a rather negative public opinion poll “very encouraging” in an attempt to put a positive spin on negative numbers. The poll revealed that 54 percent of those polled opposed taxpayer subsidies for stadium construction. His logic was that the 93 percent response rate meant that only seven percent fully opposed new stadium construction.¹⁰⁵
Kraft’s push for a new stadium in South Boston was sharply criticized by local citizens and Boston area political leaders. It drew mixed reviews from the press. In the Boston Globe, Bob Ryan offered enthusiastic support for Kraft’s attempt to build a new stadium, while Dan Shaughnessy criticized Kraft’s “thinly veiled threats” to leave the Boston metropolitan area. According to Ryan, the poor facilities in Foxboro meant that “the paying customer is, sadly, not as important as a guy sitting in front of a television set 3,000 miles away.”

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino displayed a willingness to listen to Kraft’s plans, but indicated a preference for a convention center on the proposed South Boston site. Menino cautioned that the citizens of South Boston were an important part of the political process, allowing himself an exit strategy if political fallout became intolerable. After political resistance in South Boston appeared to stall Kraft’s plans, Governor Weld attempted to broker an acceptable substitute, offering the Patriots state-owned land at a former incinerator site in Boston’s South Bay. Weld proposed the land giveaway instead of a monetary subsidy as a way to make the deal palatable to reluctant state legislators who would have to sign off on the deal. Newly elected House Speaker Thomas Finneran opposed the deal, suggesting instead that a land sale at “fair market” prices would more appropriately serve Massachusetts taxpayers.

Kraft attempted to make the South Boston site work despite clear evidence that support for this location was waning. According to sources close to Kraft, he believed that “the people are not going to decide this issue;” instead, the decision would be made by key legislators. He pinned his hopes on formation of an alliance between Governor Weld and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino. Weld supported Kraft, while Menino opposed stadium construction in South Boston. Kraft was unable to convince Menino to fully support the South Boston project. In early 1997 Menino pointedly argued that the Red Sox situation deserved greater attention from city leaders.

Sensing a repeat of the 1970 site selection debacle, cities on the outskirts of Boston indicated a desire to accommodate the Patriots. Quincy, Worcester, Springfield, Randolph, and Uxbridge expressed a willingness to serve as home to the Patriots, while political leaders in Providence, Rhode Island began to more actively court Kraft. NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue stepped into the situation with a pre-Super Bowl announcement that an unresolved stadium situation would hurt the long-term viability of the team. While not overtly threatening a
franchise shift, he indicated that league officials hoped to situate teams in Los Angeles and Cleveland. He also suggested that other New England stadium sites might be considered, including Pequot tribal land that rested near the Connecticut-Rhode Island border. While within driving distance of Boston, such a move would be inconvenient to Massachusetts citizens.

With the Patriots set to play in the 1997 Super Bowl, citizens and politicians may have determined that franchise movement out of reasonable driving range of Boston was an unlikely scenario. Few individuals seemed concerned that the tribal land scenario had any chance of occurring. Regardless, some players and fans indicated that they would not mind seeing a stadium constructed in the Providence metropolitan area. Scheduled meetings between team officials and Rhode Island leaders did not seem to register significant concerns with Boston area citizens or Massachusetts politicians.

Media coverage did little to support the project. After the Patriots were defeated in the Super Bowl, the Boston Herald suggested that momentum for stadium construction was lost. One article offered a quote from Boston City Council President Robert Kelly indicating that he and others were relieved that they did not have “to deal with Bob Kraft the hero.” Editorials and opinion columns tended to indicate that the South Boston project would not work while calling for owner financing of any new stadium construction in the city. Both constituencies seemed to discount the idea that the team might move to Providence, Rhode Island.

After hopes were raised that the Massachusetts Port Authority would provide a long-term lease for stadium land in South Boston, the U.S. Army announced that a five acre parcel would not be available to the team for stadium-related parking. Public opposition from South Boston citizens further complicated Kraft’s plans. Although citizens were not generally quoted, local news reports frequently indicated grass roots opposition to stadium construction in South Boston.

Boston Mayor Tom Menino sidetracked the issue even further, suggesting that the Red Sox ballpark issue required more intense attention from city leaders than the football stadium issue. Menino seemed uncomfortable with the level of city involvement that might be required for new stadium construction. At least one reporter suggested that the mayor dragged the Red Sox into the equation to forestall moving forward on the football stadium issue. This argument gained credibility when Red Sox President John Harrington stated “we’ve got no deadline and no timetable. We are not doing a lot of effort on this.” The Red Sox received large headlines for
eventual plans to address their ballpark inadequacies, but the team was in no position to offer tangible construction plans at this time.

As a result, the football situation eventually gained greater prominence. By the end of February it became apparent that political support for the South Boston plan was not forthcoming. Construction within Boston city limits was abandoned by the Patriots. Despite his earlier belief that grass roots politics would have little to do with the stadium construction outcome, Robert Kraft announced that “the people have spoken and I have heard them....Now we are literally back to the drawing board.” Kraft had invested approximately $4 million of his team’s funds to pursue the city site and had nothing to show for the effort and little chance of winning over a reluctant public and traditionally hesitant Boston politicians.

Prior to the South Boston failure, Foxboro repeated its desire to continue its tenure as the team’s stadium host. Renovation of Foxboro Stadium was frequently suggested by several individuals both before and after the Patriots’ Super Bowl defeat. The Foxboro site appeared to become the favorite of many Massachusetts legislators. Thomas Finneran, the newly installed house speaker, publicly supported a Foxboro plan, but cautioned that taxpayer subsidies for a new stadium would be very difficult to justify. According to Finneran, “we have more serious challenges that affect six million citizens, not just the Kraft family.” In response to subsidy uncertainties, Robert Kraft announced ticket price increases that would bring in an additional $3 million in revenue for his team.

Finneran continued to insist that stadium construction subsidies be entirely avoided. As the Massachusetts house speaker dug in his heels, the Patriots publicly announced that they would consider plans to shift the franchise to Providence. Kraft used media sources to indicate that his preference was to remain in Massachusetts, but that a move to Rhode Island would be very seriously examined. Rhode Island officials similarly used the media as a platform for self-promotion. A *Boston Herald* article spoke of Providence Mayor Vincent Cianci “mugging for Katie Couric on The Today Show.” By late September, news coverage tended to suggest that a move to Providence was likely. Sports columnist Will McDonough argued that “there really is no comparison between the [Rhode Island] offer on the table...and the Massachusetts counterproposal...designed to keep the Patriots in Foxboro.”

According to news reports, Rhode Island would provide the Patriots with a $135 million
subsidy for land and infrastructure for construction of a brand new stadium, while the Massachusetts legislature was gearing up to offer a less generous renovation package to remain in Foxboro. Public opinion against heavy stadium subsidies remained one dark cloud that complicated the feasibility of a Rhode Island move. According to a Brown University public opinion poll, 57 percent of those questioned were “against the state paying so much for a football facility.”

Kraft pulled out of the Providence deal before it could backfire on him, but in doing so, he faced a tough Massachusetts legislature that seemed intent on holding the line against stadium subsidies. Despite the close call, Finneran failed to show any willingness to accommodate Kraft’s subsidy requests. Kraft responded to the political hard line with an indication that he would be willing to revisit future proposals from Rhode Island and a caution that “I’m not going to...let anyone put me in a position to do something that isn’t good for this franchise long-term.” Kraft also announced plans to broaden the appeal of the Foxboro stadium site, suggesting that the area surrounding the field could be expanded to include a NASCAR track, a waterslide park, and shopping outlets. Boston’s mayor cautioned that he was not interested in providing a stadium site for the Patriots, arguing that a professional football facility “isn’t the economic engine that people think it is.”

The Foxboro Stadium renovation concept was just one of several possibilities for the football franchise. Kraft left the door open for outside offers. As 1997 concluded no single idea seemed to gain full credibility with the media and the public. This left a Foxboro renovation or a dramatic franchise shift to another area as the most viable option for the team. As an uncertain stadium situation was unfolding in the Boston area, a lavish NFL television contract was announced. According to the terms of the contract, the NFL would receive about $2.2 billion per year for the next eight years. Reporters were quick to note that even if players gobbled up 70 percent of the revenue in this contract, owners would still receive at least $12 million a year from the deal.

The effect of this announcement was to raise the level of expectations in the Boston metropolitan area for owner contributions to any future professional football construction projects. Citizens and politicians may have also been lulled into a secure feeling that the team would be shielded from the type of financial crisis that plagued Billy Sullivan in the 1970s and
1980s. In early 1998, political solutions to the Patriots’ stadium subsidy requests were moving further away from Kraft’s desired outcome.

On February 10, 1998, Massachusetts Senate President Thomas Birmingham suggested that instead of a stadium renovation, the Patriots should consider a long-term solution to the stadium issue. He told reporters that the team might be better served with construction of a new $200 million stadium on the land next to the existing stadium. Birmingham’s press announcement marked the first time in almost a year that new stadium construction was put back on the table. Patriots management did not greet the idea with enthusiasm. Birmingham presumed that the Patriots would pay the entire $200 million construction expense. *Boston Globe* reporter Tina Cassidy indicated that “Kraft...has said he cannot afford that.” A Patriot spokesman stated that the idea “seems like a long shot at best.”

Two days after the public was introduced to Birmingham’s suggestion an Op-Ed piece argued against taxpayer subsidies not just for stadium construction, but for the roads surrounding the stadium. The author argued that “it is absurd enough that the state, the same state that...just avoided a slashing of special education, is even considering paying $52 million a year to repair roads for Foxboro Stadium when Kraft now shares in a new $17.6 billion National Football League television contract.”

Since it appeared that renovation was more feasible politically than new construction, state-level legislators hammered out a formula that called for $52 million in subsidies. This support would be offered to cover road work and infrastructure support around the stadium but could not be used for stadium renovation or stadium-related construction. The subsidies were predicated on the logic that improvements to roads and surrounding infrastructure could benefit Massachusetts citizens, but that stadium-related subsidies would only benefit football ticket holders and Kraft, the team owner. State legislators presumed that the $50 million figure which was suggested for stadium-specific renovations would be covered entirely by Kraft. He negotiated a deal for a $70 million subsidy which received sufficient support for passage in the Massachusetts Senate, but the deal fell through in the state’s House of Representatives. The key sticking point was the state’s purchase of stadium land and subsequent rental of the land to Kraft for below market rates. House Speaker Thomas Finneran countered with an offer of $57 million for infrastructure support, but Kraft deemed the proposal inadequate.

Kraft expressed dismay at the prospect of renovation, but public opinion was firmly
positioned against him. According to a February 1998 poll, “55 percent opposed using tax money to keep the Patriots, while just 34 percent favored the idea.” The poll also showed that 58 percent opposed subsidies for construction of a new Red Sox ballpark, but 58 percent of the same individuals “would approve of public funding to renovate [Fenway Park,] the venerable inner-city diamond.”

Kraft’s position was clouded by indications that the Red Sox were now more aggressively seeking public subsidies for their sports infrastructure needs. The Red Sox could not claim the same level of television revenues as the Patriots. Beyond that, the baseball team’s century long tenure in the area made them a more revered part of the community in the eyes of many citizens than the professional football franchise. On March 31, 1998, the Red Sox told reporters that they hired numerous consultants, including HOK Sports Facilities Group of Kansas City and three local companies. Among them were two urban design firms and a historic preservation consultant. Their mission was to determine the best strategy for approaching the team’s long-range sports infrastructure needs.

A Beacon Hill Institute poll revealed that “only 20 percent of respondents said they favored a new ballpark” while 58 percent indicated a willingness to subsidize renovation of Fenway Park to avoid construction of a new facility. Team management appeared to be more cautious than the Patriots in their approach to community relations. Although a Red Sox spokesman indicated they didn’t “have a specific plan right now,” reporters announced that the “Red Sox are determined to move slowly and are concerned about frightening the neighbors with large-scale expansion and rebuilding plans.” Several citizens announced formation of a grassroots group named “Save Fenway Park!” The group promised to offer a report that was intended to explain “why rebuilding Fenway is the most viable option in terms of economics and urban planning.”

Many citizens, including Boston Mayor Thomas Menino offered vigorous support for renovation of Fenway Park instead of construction of a new ballpark. Despite his skepticism about new construction, Menino promised to keep “an open mind” as the Red Sox consultants moved forward with feasibility studies. The Red Sox were significantly more cautious than the Patriots in their approach to community relations. They periodically suggested that a new ballpark in the same neighborhood might be a better long-term strategy than a renovation to the
old facility. According to team management, a decision to move forward on new construction would include recreating the best features of Fenway Park and citizen input would be carefully considered if this occurred. While media coverage in early 1998 seemed to favor voices calling for renovation, coverage appeared to be moving slowly in the direction of greater tolerance for new construction. An April 16 *Boston Globe* editorial cautiously suggested that “it is better to start anew than to renovate the life out of the old ballpark.”

The Red Sox tended to repeat the idea that renovation of Fenway Park was less likely to be feasible while cultivating expectations that taxpayer subsidies would be required for any construction scenario. The team deflected attention from the Patriots’ stadium issue, but did not seem to be in a hurry to push any specific plan forward. The Red Sox continued their attempt to maintain positive community relations, but refused to commit to a specific construction strategy. A July 6, 1998 *Boston Globe* article revealed a poll by pro-renovation activists in which a mere nine percent supported construction of a new ballpark. This article offered several quotes from area businesses suggesting that they might be hurt in a significant way if Fenway Park was to be replaced by a new facility.

The Red Sox suffered another setback in December when members of the Fenway Action Coalition, staunch critics of new ballpark construction, accused the team of treating “Fenway neighbors like campesinos in a Banana Republic” after cancellation of a meeting with the grassroots organization. A Red Sox spokesman indicated that a children’s Christmas party at the ballpark prompted the cancellation, and that the team held meetings with other groups, including Save Fenway Park!, an organization openly opposed to new facility construction in the Fenway neighborhood. The Red Sox closed out 1998 without specific plans for Fenway Park.

In November 1998, the Red Sox situation was overshadowed in press coverage by an announcement that the Patriots would be moving to Hartford, Connecticut after protracted attempts to renovate Foxboro Stadium fell through. Patriots Owner Robert Kraft was stung by failure to gain House approval for a Senate negotiated $70 million infrastructure subsidy in Foxboro. As Finneran and state-level officials bickered about the philosophic problems of stadium subsidies, Connecticut Governor John Rowland quietly worked to forge a personal relationship with Robert Kraft. Rowland appeared poised to use the symbolic power of major league sports to demonstrate that his state was an emerging economic force. Ironically, the city of
Hartford was unable to retain a less prestigious National Hockey League franchise, losing it to another city earlier in the decade.

Although the Massachusetts House appeared willing to offer a $57 million subsidy to Kraft, the deal paled in comparison to the Connecticut offer to provide $350 million in subsidies for a new stadium in downtown Hartford. The deal was reported to include various guarantees including 90 percent of stadium-related revenues, subsidies for unsold skyboxes, and land development opportunities for Kraft. A study by KPMG Peat Marwick indicated that the project “would create 4,600 jobs during construction...[and] 2,700 permanent jobs.” Connecticut officials argued with confidence that the stadium could be paid for “by fans attending Patriot games-- not by taxpayers who never go to the stadium.” Armed with figures that had the potential to convince taxpayers this was a prudent move, Connecticut legislators easily approved Governor Rowland’s plan to construct a Hartford football facility.

Boston media appeared stung by the franchise shift. News coverage tended to retain a fact-based tone of impartiality, but opinion columns were peppered with insults that were more frequently directed at Patriots’ management and the citizens of Hartford than Massachusetts house speaker Thomas Finneran, the hard line opponent of stadium subsidies. While evidence of distaste for Finneran’s position could be found, public opinion appeared to side more with the house speaker than with the Patriots ownership. Some individuals remained skeptical that the deal with Connecticut would ever come to fruition. Long-time Boston sportswriter Dan Shaughnessy concluded one piece with the prophetic assertion that “I still say the Pats never will play a game in Hartford.”

The new stadium arrangement in Hartford faced several difficulties, despite overwhelming passage of legislation to subsidize the team. Cost estimates had to be adjusted upward to confront the reality of inflation. Public opposition to heavy subsidies also became more evident as citizens had time to contemplate the decision. In addition, the National Football League, on the heels of losing teams in large market cities such as Los Angeles and Houston, became increasingly uncomfortable with the long-term ramifications of a franchise shift away from another top ten media market. Finally, logistical site-related difficulties emerged, presenting Patriots management with an opportunity to back out of the deal. Environmental cleanup costs at a CTG Resources, Inc. steam plant threatened to raise basic infrastructure costs
substantially beyond the $55 million already allocated for that purpose. The company expected a $48.8 million payout to move from the site, a figure that was almost double what the state was willing to pay.\textsuperscript{140} 

According to the terms of the agreement between Connecticut and the Patriots, the team could back out of the contract if the state could not clearly demonstrate the ability to complete construction by 2002. The contract obligated the team to “establish an office with marketing, public relations, and community affairs staff in Hartford,.no later than April 2” if the team did not exercise its “sole and absolute discretion” to terminate the agreement.\textsuperscript{141} The April 2 deadline was also set as the timetable for a report by Connecticut’s governor. After presentation of the progress report, Patriots officials were granted 30 days to consider whether to continue with the agreement.\textsuperscript{142} 

Uncertainties regarding the Hartford site pushed Massachusetts legislators to move forward with plans to lure the Patriots back to the Bay State. In a surprise reversal of long-standing opposition to a football stadium in Boston, Mayor Menino indicated that he could be convinced to support a stadium within the city limits. After a mid-April indication that a Boston incinerator site might be feasible, talk shifted to a more practical location in Foxboro. The NFL actively supported a move that would keep the Patriots in Massachusetts, offering attractive loan terms that would be tied to new skybox revenues. Under the terms of Robert Kraft’s agreement with the State of Connecticut, Patriots management could not legally negotiate with Massachusetts leaders, yet the media became an ad-hoc negotiating tool that was used frequently by political and civic leaders.

When it became clear that Hartford would have difficulty meeting the 2002 construction deadline that was also part of the Connecticut agreement, Kraft exercised his option to terminate his contract on April 30, 1999. Although no stadium plans were set when Kraft made his announcement, it was presumed that a Foxboro stadium deal would be worked out, with Kraft receiving a $70 million infrastructure subsidy for his project. If such an agreement could not be reached, team officials suggested that a franchise sale or relocation would take place. The $70 million subsidy was approved by state legislators on May 18 and signed by Governor Cellucci on May 24.

Boston area coverage celebrated the decision while Connecticut media reacted with
disappointment. Kraft had turned his back on a $374 million subsidy in order to stay in his home state. Opinion columns tended to speculate that Kraft’s decision was more rooted in concern for his long-term legacy than bottom-line profits. If Kraft’s primary concern was immediate profits, the Hartford deal was considerably more attractive. The political controversy surrounding the football stadium issue was finally put to rest on December 6, 1999 when Foxboro residents voted by a 93 percent margin to approve construction of a $275 million facility on land adjacent to the present stadium. Sewers, roads and other infrastructure costs would be subsidized by state taxpayers, but stadium construction would be paid for entirely by Kraft with financial assistance from the NFL.

As the Patriots moved forward with their stadium deal, the Red Sox struggled to convince an unenthusiastic public to approve ballpark subsidies for their team. The Red Sox moved forward on ballpark plans in a cautious manner that reflected team president John Harrington’s personality. By 1999 it became evident that the team had to make specific plans public or face long-term arrangements in a facility that Red Sox management considered hopelessly obsolete.

The stadium issue was complicated by the arrangements made by Tom and Jean Yawkey to transfer the team to a family trust after their death. In essence, after Jean Yawkey passed away, the team was not owned by anyone. Instead it was managed by the Yawkey Trust which is supervised by Red Sox president John Harrington. Since 53 percent of the team is owned and controlled by the Yawkey Trust, much of the team’s sale price would benefit community charities. Nevertheless, attempts to sell the franchise have been clouded by the inability to lock in a profitable ballpark deal, the political whims of minority owners, and a variety of other complications.143

The Red Sox’s long record of community philanthropy limited public calls to speed up sale of the franchise. Since the 1950s, the Red Sox have raised millions of dollars for the Jimmy Fund, an anti-cancer philanthropy which provides direct benefits to the Dana Farber Institute. In Yawkey’s early years as team owner, philanthropy was limited and the team’s public relations were suspect on several fronts.144 But when the Braves left Boston in the 1950s, the Red Sox took over fund raising for the Jimmy Fund, a move that has helped solidify the teams bond with the community which has been passionate and emotional. Ted Williams was among the first ballplayers to sell his autograph to fans, but unlike more mercenary ballplayers who sell
autographs for personal gain, the proceeds from these autographed baseballs were directed to the Jimmy Fund charity. For many years Fenway Park restricted ballpark advertising for commercial purposes. One exception to this rule were the many signs and boxes throughout the facility that encouraged fans to contribute loose change to the Jimmy Fund while in the ballpark.

Red Sox President John Harrington announced his intention to sell the franchise in December 2000, but no progress on the sale of the team has taken place since then. It is possible that until the future of Fenway Park is resolved, the sale of the team may be put on hold. Harrington has been more cautious than Patriots management in his attempts to resolve the ballpark issue. Although hints and suggestions of a new ballpark were offered from the mid-1990s onward, tangible plans for a replacement to Fenway Park were held back until May 1999.

Part of the rationale for this cautious approach is the volatility of Boston’s political landscape. But this caution was also fostered by Harrington’s personality and the reality that the team’s subsidy expectations to remain in metropolitan Boston were considerably more ambitious than the Patriots. Robert Kraft turned down a $374 million stadium subsidy in Hartford, Connecticut after plans were put in place for a $70 million infrastructure subsidy in suburban Foxboro. Red Sox management appeared to set minimal expectations for infrastructure subsidies at $200 million dollars while they also hope to obtain taxpayer protection from uncertain cost overruns.

In 1997, the Red Sox were dragged into the ballpark construction issue by Thomas Menino. The Boston mayor determined that such a strategy would help to limit political fallout that he might face as he wrestled with the football stadium issue and attempts to move convention center construction forward. After Menino’s action, Red Sox management offered evidence that they were more than willing to move away from Boston’s Fenway neighborhood than to renovate the old ballpark or build new in the same area, despite Fenway’s preference as a site by Menino and several other political leaders. South Boston was prominently mentioned by John Harrington. The thought of movement was predicated on a general belief that “rebuilding Fenway would be too complicated, too costly, and, ultimately, inadequate, for the team’s needs.”

If not for public opinion and political leadership which appeared stacked against moving the team from Fenway, it is likely that the team would have pushed harder to move the team out
of the neighborhood. In 1998, the Red Sox seemed poised to state their position on Fenway Park, frequently suggesting that new construction would be needed to keep the team financially competitive. During this year, professional consultants were hired and reports were generated that could be used to present a case to the citizens and leaders of Massachusetts.

By 1999, Red Sox management was ready to formally present its case to the public. Unlike the Patriots who seemed to treat the public with monolithic uniformity, the Red Sox carefully chose public relations strategies that were designed to appeal to diverse constituencies. Newspaper coverage reported many of these strategies, allowing an attentive public to understand how the carefully planned attempts to sell the stadium subsidy were unfolding.

Approximately two months before officially releasing design plans to replace Fenway Park, the team hired BSMG Worldwide, a public relations firm with expertise in campaigns targeted at women. The team also obtained endorsements from former athletes shortly after the ballpark plans were released. The team also made the expected rounds within the business community, and worked to be sensitive to supportive political leaders. In addition, the team made multiple attempts to cultivate local citizens.

The team’s overall public relations strategy was not without flaw, however. In its attempt to carefully avoid errors, management often excluded outside input. Steve Wolf, president of Fenway Community Development Corporation, expressed frustration with team attempts to micro-manage the ballpark issue. Wolf, a civic leader and Red Sox fan, offered skepticism that team management would truly involve the community in the planning process. He offered an alternative to the careful public orchestrations which were intended to minimize controversy: “instead of presenting us with their idea of a perfectly baked cake, why not let us help them figure out the ingredients.”

The team made numerous other public relations errors including a policy announcement a week before Christmas in 1998 to prohibit street vendors from the front of Fenway Park, eliminating a commercial institution that had been part of Fenway lore for generations. Although unrelated to ballpark construction, the decision hurt the team’s effort to position itself as a good neighbor. The franchise struggled with a prior reputation as unresponsive and often callous to those in the Fenway area. Such a reputation was difficult to shed even if Red Sox management attempted to address various neighborhood concerns in formulating its ballpark proposal. The
team also faced criticism for avoiding meetings with staunch opponents. Although difficult to address all constituencies, the team also appeared to lack a tangible strategy for minority inclusion. This population was frequently noted as marginal patrons of Red Sox games.

The ballpark plans that Red Sox management unveiled on May 15, 1999, called for a “new Fenway Park” that would attempt to replicate the features most cherished by Red Sox fans. On the day that plans were unveiled, the Boston Globe provided John Harrington space for an Op-ed column that articulated the Red Sox position on phasing out Boston’s ancient landmark. In the column, Harrington argued that numerous consultants advised the team to seek new construction since the structural integrity of the old facility was insufficient to support the type of additional seating that would be needed to make the team more financially competitive. He finally indicated that the team would work with community members to find “the best way to preserve the Red Sox experience for both our current fans and for generations to come.”

Despite arguments by some baseball experts that the ballpark, not the “curse of the Bambino,” was a key reason that the team was unable to achieve a World Series victory after fielding winning teams for most of the twentieth century, team executives pushed to pacify those most moved by the tradition and charm of Fenway. The team planned to install a replica of the original “Green Monster” in the outfield, transfer “Pesky’s Pole” to the new facility, and even move the sod from the old ballpark so that it would be replanted in the new structure. The structure would need a larger footprint than the old facility, requiring more land while presenting unique architectural challenges. To ensure that the new ballpark did not overpower the existing architecture of the neighborhood, the team agreed to situate the playing field twenty feet below street level. The new facility was estimated to cost $545 million. Team officials stated that with the proper support, the facility could be completed by 2003.

Content Analysis: Examination of Boston News and Opinion Coverage Tendencies

Quantitative analysis of stadium construction in the Boston region is fraught with difficulties that were not generally faced in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. In these two cities, a voter referendum offered a clear time-frame for analysis. The Boston metropolitan area did not have a broad-based referendum. Instead, the votes on the stadium issue were left to area legislators.

In addition, local leaders appeared to more readily qualify their support or opposition for stadium construction in ways that complicated the simple support or non-support categories
utilized in coding up to this point. As such, nuanced explanations from political leaders have resulted in a higher level of appeals that would fit in the “neutral” category. This higher level of “neutral” voices on the stadium issue will be more rigorously addressed in the qualitative analysis of the coding results.

The first problem, the time frame of analysis, was confronted by picking April through July 1999. During this coverage period both the Red Sox and Patriots stadium issues were often lead news stories. The Red Sox were prominently covered because May 14, 1999 marked a time when team management formally released design plans for a new ballpark, fully abandoning plans to renovate Fenway Park. During this time, the Red Sox worked to establish political support for land acquisition subsidies for the project. The Patriots stadium situation was prominently covered during this same period because it marked a time when Hartford’s bid to attract the team faced dramatic construction site constraints, allowing Massachusetts politicians another chance to entice the Patriots away from Hartford’s $374 million stadium offer.

During this period, the Massachusetts state legislature hammered out a stadium infrastructure deal that was voted on and approved by both the house and senate. Although not a referendum, as was the case in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, this time-frame presents media coverage of specific legislative action that offered citizens an opportunity to mobilize and lobby in a manner that was somewhat similar to what might occur during a referendum vote.

It was one of the rare occasions when news coverage of the stadium issue was both heavy and almost equally balanced between Boston’s baseball and football franchises. During the four month period, a total of 65 news stories were examined. Thirty two focused on the Red Sox, 30 focused exclusively on the Patriots and 3 stories provided either shared coverage of the two teams or examination of stadium coverage from another city.

Opinion columns were also widely available during this period, with 22 examined as part of this analysis. The stadium-oriented opinion columns provided a relative balance of views. Thirty-two percent of the columns (7) supported stadium subsidy, 41 percent (9) opposed taxpayer funding for sports facilities, while 27 percent (6) offered mixed opinions that were categorized as neutral. Columns that were labeled neutral failed to identify a favored position, but often offered opinions on specific aspects of ballpark construction. One example examined the heavy traffic problems surrounding the Fenway Park neighborhood. Another neutral opinion
column focused on stadium location issues. In light of the low number of coded opinion articles, the overall focus is generally balanced, with a very slight tendency to oppose stadium construction.

The high level of neutral coded opinion columns fit a similar pattern that extended to stadium-related news coverage. Political and civic leaders were more inclined to take a neutral position in quotes, doing so in 22 percent of the examined quotes, than in any of the four markets examined in this study. At least two factors may be at hand in prompting a high level of neutral observations. First, Boston coverage appeared to seek out a higher level of industry experts than other markets. These experts, representing 13 percent of the quotation total, were almost twice as likely to adopt a neutral position instead of taking a specific stand.

Political and civic leaders also contributed to the neutral category. Part of this reluctance to offer opinions may be the result of Boston’s traditionally contentious political landscape. Some individuals may react to the high level of political conflict on a range of issues with a greater degree of caution. Another factor may have been situational. The potential loss of the New England Patriots to Hartford, Connecticut may have caused some individuals traditionally opposed to stadium subsidies to limit inflammatory rhetoric or the articulation of extreme opinions. When it became clear that the Patriots might return to Massachusetts, individuals such as House Speaker Thomas Finneran steered clear of controversy, despite evidence throughout the process that he was willing to take bold positions on public policy issues.

**Boston News Coverage Orientation to Stadium Development:**

| Total Number of Quotations: |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Positive                   | Negative        | Neutral         | Total           |
| 164                        | 40              | 57              | 261             |

**Percentages of Quotations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</table>

The uncertain status of the NFL franchise and the highly orchestrated public relations effort of the Boston Red Sox helped to skew news coverage dramatically in the direction of
stadium subsidy support. Sixty-three percent of all quotations examined were in favor of stadium construction. With the high percentage of neutral quotations (22 percent), a mere 15 percent of the quotations used reflected the anti stadium position. Positive response to stadium construction was four times more common than opposition to these projects, a ratio higher than any city examined.

Stadium supporters were most inclined to use three appeal categories with 58 percent of the pro-stadium appeals coming from these three areas. The most heavily utilized appeal categories were appeals to social order, a call to include others in the process, and the “making progress” claim. These were utilized in 21 percent of all pro-stadium appeals. The economic appeal category was used in 16 percent of all pro-stadium quotations. Pro-stadium voices tended to use economic appeals less frequently than anti-stadium voices. Percentages for all appeals, positive, negative, and neutral, are as follows:

**Percentages of Total Appeals in Boston News Coverage:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Categories</th>
<th>20%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Bond</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Needs/Values</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Expertise</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical/Conscience</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Order</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making Progress</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Making Progress</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above lists the percentages of each appeal category in the total number of appeals in Boston news coverage.
News Coverage Appeals Based on Stadium Development Position:

Breakdown of Quotations for Boston Case-Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>L</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Code for Appeals**

A - Economic
B - Authority
C - Community Bond
D - Community Needs/Values
E - Technical Expertise
F - Ethical/Conscience
G - Social Order
H - Making Progress
I - Not Making Progress
J - Status
K - Other
L - Total

Red Sox management made frequent use of the social order appeal, in an attempt to convey inclusiveness, as they were unveiling their plans for a new stadium. The political realities of the Boston political landscape, in general, and the Fenway neighborhood, in particular, prompted the use of this strategy. The team struggled to counter accusations from opponents that Red Sox management was insensitive to the community concerns. Supporters of the football team also used such appeals, but their rationale was different. Advocates of a new football stadium for the Patriots wanted to demonstrate that the Boston area could ensure the team substantial luxury seating revenue in a new stadium. The goal was to convince team owners to abandon earlier established plans to establish roots in Hartford. The appeals may have been of an invitational nature, but, realistically, individuals who lacked substantial funding would not be part of this process.

The “making progress” appeal was tied with the social appeal category as the most common for stadium advocates, also representing 21 percent of the total. This appeal did not convey specific information. Instead, these were simple indications that the goal of ballpark construction was moving forward. Economic appeals were the third most commonly used strategy for stadium proponents. The economic appeals utilized in Boston coverage were vastly different than the economic appeals offered in Pittsburgh and New York. In these cities, claims of economic growth and job creation were touted. In Boston coverage tended to focus on the
economics of modern professional sports or the economic viability of the project. The routine use of experts versed in the economics of stadium construction during the multi-year campaign to build new facilities served as a deterrent for absurdly optimistic economic claims. Stadium opponents most frequently focused on ethical appeals, utilizing them in 38 percent of the quotes. Community needs/values marked the second most used appeal category for stadium subsidy opponents, with total usage of 15 percent.

Although media coverage of the Boston stadium issue tended to focus on political leaders and team officials, a range of public voices were included in the debate. Thirty percent of the voices quoted in articles were politicians or political appointees and 26 percent were either team owners, sports industry representatives, or athletes. Civic leaders were quoted in 22 percent of the quotations. As was common in other case studies, citizens were not frequently quoted. This group was approached for 9 percent of the quote total.

Despite a limited number of average or activist citizens in the examined quotations, Boston Globe coverage was willing to look at the issue in a broader manner than some cities, offering commentary from citizens, but also raising more questions about limited funding for the arts, city services, and social programs than occurred in Pittsburgh or Cincinnati. Individuals from a diverse range of constituencies were given brief opportunities to explain their position while opinion columns offered a broad array of perspectives. News coverage representation is as follows:

**Boston News Coverage Quotation Source Categories:**

*Breakdown of Individuals Quoted According to Stadium Development Position*

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In stadium-related stories, anti-stadium voices were utilized more than four times less than proponents of construction. Boston area journalists offer some evidence that they were not blindly acting as shills for team owners. Nevertheless, media routines that favored often-
approached institutional actors conspired to keep members of the public on the sidelines in many news stories focusing on the stadium issue. Activist citizens and average citizens represented less than 9 percent of the quotation total. Boston media coverage tended to blend quotations from a more varied set of actors than Cincinnati or Pittsburgh, but both the activist and average citizen categories were less likely to be quoted than any other category except athlete.

Quote positioning bias for Boston area media coverage was similar in nature to the total percentages allocated to pro-stadium, anti-stadium and neutral positions in news coverage. The pro-stadium position was slightly more than three and a half times more likely to be found in the first quotation of an article than the anti-stadium or neutral position. Sixty-four percent of the first position quotes were pro-stadium, while 18 percent were anti-stadium and 18 percent were neutral. Quote positioning for the second and third quotations in *Boston Globe* news stories were similar in an overall tendency to favor pro-stadium voices. Sixty-seven percent of the second position quotations were pro-stadium in nature, while 18 percent and 16 percent respectively were anti-stadium or neutral. Sixty-five percent of the third position quotations were pro-stadium, with 15 percent and 20 percent allocated to the anti-stadium and neutral categories.

During the content analysis coding period Boston area coverage tended to favor pro-stadium voices by a wide margin, while limiting public participation in the stadium construction debate. The coverage was unique in its somewhat balanced involvement of politicians, civic leaders, sports officials, and experts. Boston reporters appear to maintain a more diverse rolodex than some media markets, a clear benefit to its readership. But those readers, if they are typical citizens, are less likely to be included in stadium-related articles than citizens in Cincinnati or Pittsburgh.

**The Legislation Aftermath: The Red Sox Dilemma and the Patriots’ Progress**

As with many Boston political issues, local constituencies conspired to complicate the Red Sox’s carefully laid plans to build a new facility. A local hotel owner presented evidence that he had made expansion plans as early as 1990, complicating the team’s desire to obtain the property through eminent domain. Many smaller businesses registered complaints that they were not happy over the prospect of displacement, a necessary step if a new facility is to be completed in the Fenway neighborhood. A health care facility also targeted for ballpark use was regarded as a possible environmental hazard problem since it was uncertain whether medical waste from
decades earlier was present beneath the property.

A final important complication was the vocal opposition of Stephen Mindich, a Boston weekly newspaper publisher, whose property was also a target for eminent domain takeover.\textsuperscript{151} The publisher became a difficult adversary, using his distribution network and press leverage to repeatedly attack plans made by the franchise. The publication framed the issue as a David versus Goliath battle that could be won at the grass roots level, prompting many Fenway area residents to more vigorously challenge the need for new ballpark construction in their neighborhood. On the eve of legislative consideration of the Fenway subsidy the \textit{Boston Phoenix} offered a special section entitled “Fenway Pork” which offered readers mobilizing information and a variety of arguments intended to sway citizens to oppose the subsidy plan.\textsuperscript{152}

The Red Sox quest for subsidies was also hurt by dramatic cost overruns on a massive Boston road project informally known to the public as “the Big Dig” and a financial crisis involving Harvard-Pilgrim Healthcare, the state’s largest healthcare provider. Both crises left state and city legislators uncertain about available revenue for a Red Sox ballpark while putting the public in a skeptical mood about any project involving public funding. The reluctance of Red Sox management to put a specific funding plan in front of the public further diminished chances of new ballpark construction coming to fruition. \textit{Boston Globe} columnist Eileen McNamara offered a February 16, 2000 political analysis which argued “if the team delays delivery much longer, its plans for public financing of a new ballpark could be stillborn.”\textsuperscript{153}

Despite the pessimism, \textit{Boston Globe} sportswriter Will McDonough described the Red Sox as “upbeat” and on target to push legislation through the state legislature before the summer session concluded on July 31, 2000. According to McDonough, the Red Sox established a conservative timetable that set groundbreaking for 2002 and project completion for 2004 or 2005.\textsuperscript{154} A month later, McDonough suggested that a new ballpark was among the most important element needed for the Red Sox to compete with the rival New York Yankees. After comparing known financial records of both teams, McDonough concluded that “until the Red Sox get into a new ballpark that can produce more revenue, they’ll be chasing the Yankees in vain.”\textsuperscript{155} The Red Sox were able to meet their deadline, receiving state-level approval on July 29, 2000 for a stadium plan that offered them $312 million in taxpayer subsidies. According to the agreement which was methodically hammered out in multiple closed door meetings, the state
would offer the Red Sox $100 million in infrastructure subsidies for construction costs that were unrelated to ballpark construction. The city would provide $212 million with $140 million allocated to site preparation and land acquisition and $72 million set for construction of a parking garage adjacent to the ballpark. The massive 3,000 car garage would be controlled by the Red Sox, but would provide a mechanism for recouping the city’s initial investment in the project. According to the plan, the city would be refunded for its investment by parking fees, ticket surcharges, and ballpark concession taxes which would be collected by Red Sox management. The garage could possibly create a revenue stream that could help the Red Sox offset some of the estimated $353 million that the team would pay for ballpark construction. The total cost of the entire project was estimated at $665 million.

Because the agreement held the Red Sox responsible for all cost overruns, the project has languished and has faced an uncertain future. Two problems have limited movement on ballpark construction. First, the potential for astronomical environmental costs in cleaning up the Harvard-Pilgrim medical facility has left the Red Sox gun-shy about moving forward. Second, the uncertainty of land acquisition costs, in part because of numerous threats to litigate eminent domain actions, have created another dilemma for Red Sox management. Attempts to seek liability limits for unanticipated overruns have failed to gain momentum as skeptical taxpayers and cautious politicians are reluctant to allow taxpayer funds to be used for additional project costs.

The stadium subsidy legislation, although agreed to by the Red Sox, created a Trojan horse for team management. It gave them a generous handout, but unlike stadium funding arrangements in cities such as Cincinnati, it made the sports franchise fully responsible for factors that could not be predicted. As a result, private investors have not stepped forward with offers to provide financing for the stadium project. With no assurance of an adequate return on investment, the financial community, even those supporting the Red Sox, have steered clear of heavy financial involvement in the project. The traditionally conservative management style of the Red Sox and Boston’s history as one of the nation’s most expensive cities for real estate development have stalled construction to this day. Many citizens and political experts doubt that a new ballpark will ever be built in the Fenway area.

The Red Sox have reacted with frustration to the constraints that they face. In October
2000, John Harrington publicly unveiled plans to sell the team. Weeks later he sought assistance from friends within the business community to obtain political concessions on the initial ballpark agreement. The team’s chief executive sought legislative amendments that would cap the team’s portion of construction-related liabilities and property tax relief that would freeze the team’s tax expenses at current levels into the foreseeable future.

Sale of the Red Sox was regarded as leverage in these negotiations since “a new owner could take the team out of town.”156 Despite several indications of interest in the team, attempts to sell the franchise have also stalled. The expense and uncertainty of building in Boston’s Fenway section have prompted talk of construction in other areas of the city, but little has occurred to this day that would suggest that the Red Sox will be playing outside of their old home as the 2005 season gets underway. Meanwhile, the Patriots continue to build their suburban stadium with the expectation that it will be available for occupancy in time for the 2002 football season. Their threats to move to Connecticut prompted Massachusetts legislators to provide infrastructure subsidies that may not have been as lavish as the Hartford stadium proposal, but they were more than acceptable to Patriots owner Robert Kraft.
Sources: Chapter Six


4. During the Progressive Era many New Englanders were concerned that young males were being negatively influenced by female attempts to civilize them. For at least one scholar, G. Stanley Hall, one solution was to challenge boys to act aggressively in competitive athletics. Theodore Roosevelt’s male-centered philosophy drew from the scholarship of Hall. An in depth look at this issue can be found in: Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995.


7. “Harvard’s Big Stadium, Where Wearers of Crimson and Blue Will Move.” *Boston Sunday Herald*, November 8, 1903, p. 42. This story included four pictures of the facility including a large panoramic photograph.

8. Front page stadium stories were included in the *Harvard Crimson* on April 6, 1909, September 29, 1909, October 5, 1909, October 28, 1909, November 14, 1909, and November 16, 1909. The two November articles included photos. Photos were not common in the 1909 *Crimson*.


11. Fenway was constructed during the “deadball” era, so home runs were rare. Fenway’s outfield dimensions were rather generous when compared with other ballparks of the period. The high wall eventually called the “Green Monster” was created when the ten foot hill was eliminated in the 1934 renovation of the ballpark and a new 37 foot wall was installed in place of the previous barrier. Large billboard advertising was common on the wall until 1947. The pristine green wall has been part of Fenway since then.

13. The newspaper was named the *Boston Daily Globe* until 1960 when its name was simplified to the *Boston Globe*.


16. For examples of reported Fenway development opposition, see: “Would Keep Parks Sacred.” *Boston Daily Globe*. June 27, 1911, p. 10; “Site in Fens Selected.” *Boston Daily Globe*. June 27, 1911, p. 5. The second article states that “the fight over the site of the [high school] building has gone on about a year.”


19. Shaughnessy and Grossfeld, p. 36.


23. When capacity crowds prevented seat sales, it was common during this period to either place fans deep in the outfield or along the sides of the field of play. Because this was the “dead ball” era, the outfield fans were not generally in the way of players. Balls hit deep into the outfield during this period were rare.

24. Stout and Johnson, p.117.


27. Wildly inaccurate historical claims have been made over the years about Ruth’s move to New York. The version commonly repeated in sports literature is plainly false. Even Major League Baseball continues to report these inaccuracies in officially licensed publications. For an example see: Gillette, Gary. *Total Red Sox 2000*. New York: Total Sports Publishing, 2000. For a more thorough and much more nuanced recounting of the events leading to this transaction, see: Stout and Johnson, pp. 137-156.

28. Yawkey’s thirtieth birthday was significant in that it marked the time when he was legally entitled to take full control of the assets in his father’s estate. See: Schoolboy of 16 Inherits $20,000,000. *New York Times*. March 18, 1919, p. 6. Tom Yawkey’s father was an early owner of the Detroit Tigers. This served to fuel his enthusiasm for baseball.

29. Stout and Johnson, p 179.

30. The Braves later moved to Atlanta in the mid 1960s. Greater potential for broadcast revenues is what prompted the second move.

31. Yawkey tended to surround himself with friends and individuals willing to agree with him. Working for Yawkey presented limited opportunities for decision making. With contrasting personalities and goals, it appears that Yawkey and Sullivan would have been a bad fit. Stout and Johnson’s book, *Red Sox Century*, provides a highly critical, yet thorough, analysis of Yawkey’s management style.

32. For multi-page coverage including many pictures of the stadium opener see the *Boston Daily Globe* on September 21, 1957 and September 22, 1957. On April 1, 1958 the *Boston Daily Globe* presented a news story on a career promotion for Sullivan. In the article, Sullivan was credited with assisting Boston College “in bringing Navy’s football team here...in the dedication of the stadium...last fall.”


34. The NFL’s Redskins got their start in Boston, playing at Braves Field, but shifting to Fenway Park after facing a rent increase. The team’s name was changed from Braves to Redskins when they switched facilities. Keeping a similar theme saved the team the expense of uniform replacement, a clear consideration during these austere early days of professional football. For a brief history and rundown of the various professional football teams that failed to catch on in Boston, see: Kaese, Harold. “Hub Trio Seeks NFL Team.” *Boston Globe*. February 5, 1970, p. 25.

36. In some seasons, the Patriots played in two different facilities. As an example, the team used Harvard Stadium for single games in 1960 (exhibition) and 1962 (regular season). For simplicity, the primary stadium used for the particular season was listed using Munsey and Suppes ballparks web site information for a reference. [Available: www.ballparks.com].


49. Boston Evening Globe. January 28, 1970, p. 3. Prior to the Harvard debate, the Patriots stadium debate tended to be isolated to the sports section unless the story earned front page status. As the Harvard Stadium issue unfolded, these stories were more frequently inserted into the news section.


70. Collins, Bud. “Foxboro Plus: It’s Far from Hub Pols.” Boston Globe. March 20, 1970, p. 28. NOTE: the city which served as site of the Patriots new stadium has been spelled two different ways. In 1970, the simple “Foxboro” was the norm. By the 1990s, references to the town were typically spelled “Foxborough” but the football facility was known as “Foxboro Stadium.” To prevent confusion, the more simple “Foxboro” spelling has been retained in references to both the town and the facility throughout this chapter. Footnote references to specific sources will retain the spelling used at the time of the report, however.


81. Fox, Larry, p. 167.

82. Fox, Larry, p. 173.
83. Sullivan’s problems were aggravated by losses related to concert events that were promoted by his son, Charles, but stadium expenses may have been the reason that Sullivan became involved in concert activities in the first place.


86. Madden, Michael. “Nothing to Build On.” *Boston Globe*. September 19, 1989, p. 69. The “fuzz-cheeked” reference may have been intentionally placed since Kiam’s company, Remington Products, Inc., manufactured men’s electric shavers.


90. McDonough, Will. “Kiam Has Bottom Line for Flynn.” *Boston Globe*. December 20, 1989, p. 87. Note: extracted quotes are from McDonough’s column. They are not direct quotations from Victor Kiam.

91. Kiam was personally featured in television commercials that aired on network television. His strategy was a direct sell from Remington’s CEO with a catch line “I liked the product so much that I bought the company.” The incident which involved Patriot’s tight end Zeke Mowatt confronting reporter Linda Olsen had particularly negative ramifications for products aimed at women. It is likely that financial consideration played a larger role in Kiam’s decision to sell, but the negative publicity that Kiam received for failure to aggressively reprimand Mowatt may have intensified his desire to pull out from Patriot ownership.


93. The deal was complicated by heavy debts and deals that Kiam made to keep the team solvent. Victor Kiam’s poor stadium arrangement contributed to the complexity of this sale agreement. To consummate the deal Orthwein paid Kiam $23.5 million for his share of the team, assumed $45 million in team-related debts, and paid $39 million to satisfy a previous agreement with Fran Murray, a minority team owner. Borges, Ron. “Patriots Complete the Pass; Orthwein Takes it From Kiam.” *Boston Globe*. May 12, 1992, p. 65.


96. Many people felt that St. Louis and Baltimore were best positioned to win the NFL franchise sweepstakes but that only one of these cities would be chosen. The well-connected Will McDonough made several indications that St. Louis was favored to receive an NFL expansion franchise. Baltimore officials also offered a particularly strong proposal. Whether expansion committee members thought about the consequences of leaving Baltimore and St. Louis open is uncertain, but such a move created more profitable opportunities for team owners willing to move to these cities. Modell, a member of the expansion committee, did take advantage of Baltimore’s availability, moving his franchise from Cleveland in 1995. For a detailed overview of this period in NFL history, see: Morgan, John. *Glory For Sale: Fans, Dollars, and the New NFL.* Baltimore, MD: Bancroft Press, 1997.


120. Grunwald, Michael. “Beacon Hill Warm to New Stadium at Foxborough; Finneran Cites ‘Easiest Deal,’ Rules Out Tax Subsidy.” *Boston Globe*. February 27, 1997, p. A1. Note: The Foxboro spelling has been retained in the body of the dissertation text for consistency. In the 1990s the *Boston Globe* used the Foxboro spelling for the stadium and the Foxborough spelling for the town. The Foxboro spelling was used exclusively for both applications in the 1970s, however. The Quincy, MA based *Patriot Ledger* seemed to retain the Foxboro spelling for both situations in the 1990s.


135. “Pats Plan Jumps $25 M; Conn. Officials Add Cost of Inflation” [Associated Press]. Boston Globe. November 30, 1998, p. B2. The estimates on this appear to be highly inflated. Even though the Patriots would have played only eight regular season home games in Hartford, the report estimated that 2,700 full-time jobs would be created. This would assume a ratio of approximately one full-time position for every 22 stadium seats. It is unlikely that the Patriots would subsidize such employment levels and it is equally unlikely that six additional home games, presumably played by the University of Connecticut football team could increase full-time employment to the levels estimated in this report.
The final tally was 97-49 in the House and 27-8 in the Senate.


“Poll Conn.-cludes [sic] Support Slipping” [Associated Press]. Boston Herald. April 1, 1999, p. 40. The poll, conducted by the University of Connecticut for the Hartford Courant, revealed that support for the project had slipped from 58 percent in December 1998 to 45 percent in March 1999. Opposition to the project had increased from 35 percent to 48 percent.


Charges of racism in ballplayer hiring may have been the most difficult to defend public relations problem faced by the Red Sox in the 1950s and 1960s. Many baseball writers have chronicled this problem over the years.


For an example of this argument, see Stout and Johnson, pp. 442-443. The “curse of the Bambino” is a legend perpetuated by Red Sox fans that they were forever doomed to fall short of a baseball championship because of a decision to send Babe Ruth to the Yankees in 1919. The team has not won a baseball championship in over eighty years.


Chapter 7: The New York Case Study

New York is a city with a brash arrogance that is detested by many, but such an attitude often inspires its inhabitants to act as national leaders on a variety of fronts. Carl Abbott’s analysis of boosterism described Chicago as “notorious throughout the [old] Northwest as a loudmouthed city.” If Chicago was a city filled with “loudmouthed” civic boosters, as Abbot suggested, New York was a city of loudmouths with the ability to amplify their message beyond what was possible in Chicago. New York’s position as a national center of commercial trade gives its citizens a unique platform to routinely showcase its assets and its civic identity. New York’s locus as a national media center makes it virtually impossible for those uninterested in this city to avoid hearing about its unique features.

Major television networks routinely cover New York-based stories in greater detail than more distant cities, in part because it is more convenient and such newsgathering is cheaper. But because it serves as home to much of the corporate community that has been the primary revenue stream for commercial media enterprises in America, it may also receive a greater level of reporting resources than other cities.

Anyone looking for evidence of New York boosterism can readily find it by talking to a cab driver, watching local television news, or reading the pages of the local newspaper. Boosterism is woven into the fabric of the community. In one recent article focusing on reduced city tourism, New York Post columnist Cindy Adams demonstrates ebullience that is typical of New York boosterism. Adams argues “we are the capital of the world....We are Attitude City...We’ve got it all. If we ain’t [sic] got it, you don’t need it....The boonies have Motel 6. We have The Plaza, Pierre, Waldorf, St. Regis, [and] Four Seasons....They have Main Street. We have Wall Street.” This particular column is peppered with celebrity names and nationally known landmarks to let others know of New York’s superiority to other locales.

Similar examples of civic brashness are not difficult to find. A t-shirt that enjoyed brief popularity on city streets politely stated “Welcome to New York” on its front, but offered a less friendly “now go home!” message on its back. Ironically, New York is also a city of transients. Many New Yorkers come from distant locations, and some of the city’s most jingoistic civic boosters are transplants from other locales.

New York City landmarks often become recognizable on a national level by virtue of the
city’s economic and communication strength. The development of skyscrapers became a defining feature for New York in the twentieth century. The Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, and the now destroyed World Trade Center were major architectural achievements that reflect the era of their construction. Many surrounding architectural landmarks have become national symbols for various constituencies. Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty became two important landmarks for immigrants. The narrow canyon known as Wall Street became a defining symbol of the nation’s financial community. Broadway has become a symbol for live performing arts and a haven for theater aficionados. Saint Patrick’s Cathedral is an architectural landmark for America’s Catholic Church. Yankee Stadium has become a symbol of grandeur and tradition for sports fans.

**Early New York Stadium Construction History: An Overview**

Steven Riess argues that New York “has historically been the center of organized sport in America, the locus of national media, and the urban area most intensely studied by sports historians.” New York has often served as a leader in shaping the sports landscape. In the earliest days of organized professional sports, New York led the way in construction of new venues that predicated enjoyment of sport on payment of an admission fee.

Stephen Guschov traces the first baseball admission fee system to a 1858 game between New York and Brooklyn on the Fashion Race Course in nearby Long Island. New York also became the site of the first commercial ballpark, the Union Grounds, which opened to the public in 1862. The facility was located in Brooklyn’s Williamsburg section.

The spectator model established in these early years of sports in Gotham became further entrenched in the psyche of the American public when New York-based corporations created and perpetuated a paid rights-based model for national commercial sports broadcasting. The emergence of modern media systems heightened the importance of the ballpark as a symbol of the community’s commitment to “major-league” status.

In the nineteenth century New York’s coverage of sports venues paralleled the low-key coverage that could be found in other major American cities. Media coverage of the early New York stadiums was generally limited. *The New York Times* and *New York Herald* did not provide any coverage of the Union Grounds’ opening on May 15, 1862. Both papers understandably focused more prominently on the Civil War, the key story of this era. Each of these newspapers
offered little coverage of sporting and leisure activity. The emergence of more comprehensive sports pages did not occur until a multitude of urban citizens became more comfortable with the penny press. Organized team sports were not formally accepted as a part of American culture during the Civil War and the early years of the Gilded Age.

The Union Grounds was formerly a skating rink that was converted into a ballpark by William Cammeyer, the owner of this property. His initial strategy was to shrewdly offer free rent in exchange for the ability to pocket all admission proceeds. This arrangement ceased when Brooklyn’s Union Nine refused to play unless given a share of the gate revenues. The result contributed to the emergence of American sport as a profit-making institution.

Cammeyer renovated the ballpark in 1869, and the work received some press coverage. It marked one of the first instances where an athletic facility seemed to be regarded as a potential symbol for civic pride. On April 19, 1869, The Standard asserted that “these grounds, if properly managed...could be made not only to prove very profitable, but a credit to the section in which they are located.” Capacity for the ballpark was a mere 1,500 people. The New York Mutuals moved into the ballpark in 1871. This team, underwritten by the infamous “Boss Tweed,” included a number of professional ballplayers who were given no-show jobs in City Hall. Henry Chadwick, the inventor of the “box score,” frequently served as official scorer at games in this ballpark. For years the Mutuals were one of the nation’s best baseball teams. They were typically regarded as the best team on the east coast.

Washington Park became a popular baseball site after the Union Grounds closed. First opened in 1881, the facility had a capacity of 2,500. It was located on a revolutionary battle site and was the initial home to the Brooklyn Superbas, a team later known as the Trolley Dodgers. This name was subsequently shortened to Dodgers. The team derived its name after fans affixed the nickname to the team based on neighborhood characteristics. A trolley line complicated street crossing in the ballpark neighborhood, so anyone heading to the ballpark, including the players, had to “dodge” trolley cars and cross trolley tracks to get to the ballpark.

Washington Park offered a more casual and less organized environment than current ballparks. When fan turnout exceeded seating capacity, it was not uncommon for some local spectators to bring their own chair stools and camp chairs to the park. Two fires forced repair of the facility. Charles Ebbets was a ticket seller and maintenance worker at this ballpark. Years
later, he bought the club and moved the team to Ebbets Field.

The team moved into a new Washington Park across from the original location in 1898, remaining there until Ebbets Field was built. The second Washington Park marked a significant improvement over the first ballpark. It was built at an initial cost of $60,000, a large sum for ballparks of this time. A $22,000 renovation in 1908 expanded its capacity to 20,000. On April 11, 1908 the *Brooklyn Eagle* described the various ticket options which included 25-cent outfield seats and more appealing seats for 75 and 50 cents. Charles Ebbets, the team owner, was such a mercenary that seats were made available just 15 feet from home plate.⁶

During the Progressive Era no facility could match the aura of the legendary Polo Grounds. The Giants were the city’s most popular team, as the Yankees were relative newcomers to baseball, and the Dodgers were from outlying Brooklyn. The Polo Grounds’ Manhattan location gave them an advantage in both media coverage and in fan loyalty. Despite that factor, coverage of Polo Grounds construction was limited. It is likely that the simple origins of the Polo Grounds contributed to this rather sparse coverage.

The original Polo Grounds were first used for baseball on September 29, 1880 when the New York Metropolitans hosted the Washington Nationals. This park was located on 110th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The grounds were used by newspaper magnate James Gordon Bennett, Jr. and his buddies for polo, not baseball; by 1883, baseball supplanted polo but the name remained. In 1884, the Polo Grounds were split into two ballparks and separated by a simple canvas barricade. The new field was built over a garbage dump, so it was not a popular site and attracted fewer fans than the original field. The first Polo Grounds were quickly dismantled in February 1889 after New York politicians, upset at the limited number of tickets received for the 1888 World Series, decided to take action. Giants owner John B. Day made a last minute offer to donate $10,000 to “city charities” to prevent the field’s demise, but the offended politicians were intent on teaching the team owner a severe lesson for his transgression.⁷

After the team was pushed out of the facility, the Giants played ball in Jersey City and Staten Island. The Giants later moved to Manhattan Field in September 1889. Manhattan Field was so close to the new Polo Grounds, a facility that was completed in 1890, that one Giants player hit a home run into the Polo Grounds, drawing simultaneous applause from fans in two
different ballparks. The new Polo Grounds was initially called Brotherhood Park and used by the Players League. This league dissolved at the end of the 1890 season, paving the way for the Giants to move into Brotherhood Park for the 1891 season.8

Shortly after the Giants moved into this facility, it became known as the Polo Grounds. Constructed on 155th Street and on the shores of the Harlem River, by 1908 the facility evolved into a massive 30,000 person capacity wooden structure. At the time it was only eclipsed in total capacity by Harvard Stadium. The vast wooden ballpark suffered serious fire damage in 1911 and a new facility was rebuilt on the same land where it remained a New York City landmark for over 50 years.

An effort to change the facility’s name to Brush Stadium, in honor of team owner John Brush, failed miserably in 1911. Despite the effort, fans and press continued to refer to the site as the Polo Grounds, so the name change was dropped.9 Until the wrecking ball hit the ballpark in 1964, citizens of New York knew this ballpark only as the Polo Grounds. The name has not been reused since, but in a brief moment that mixed nostalgia and commerce, some thought was given to using this name for the new ballpark in San Francisco. This new facility, now named Pac Bell Park, is inhabited by the Giants, the baseball franchise which was originally located in New York. The idea died a quick death when Ralph Lauren could not be coaxed into paying a substantial sum for the long-term naming rights to this new facility.

**Stadium Construction in the New York: From the Progressive Era to Shea Stadium**

If New York City was a national leader in many aspects of professional sports, it was a laggard in media coverage of stadium-related issues in the early twentieth century. Coverage of new stadium construction was typically less prominent than the reports of similar construction offered in other cities. New York’s preeminence as a commercial capital for the sporting industry may have lulled reporters, and possibly citizens, into a belief that sports infrastructure was not important.

Strangely, when a new ballpark was built in the New York market, its opening was covered, but typically with less attention and detail than would have been given had the ballpark been located in another city. Other cities did not provide extensive ballpark construction coverage in the early years of baseball, but a bit more depth tended to be offered in these local stories. The gulf between limited stadium-related reporting in New York City and coverage of
other venues outside New York further widened when concrete and steel stadiums began to emerge in 1909. *New York Times* reporting tended to focus much more on game coverage itself, integrating comments about a ballpark into that game-related story. The *New York Tribune* and *New York Herald* seemed to follow a similar coverage pattern.

The 1886 opening of a ballpark in Staten Island provided an exception to this overall trend. It was one of the first examples of a major Manhattan newspaper’s coverage which offered a ballpark opening as evidence of civic pride. A brief *New York Times*’ article provided game coverage, but led the story with a focus on the ballpark itself. The headline called the new ballpark, located in the upscale St. George area of Staten Island, “one of the finest baseball fields in the country.” The article explained how the grandstand overlooked the bay. It also emphasized fan comfort and good spectator sight lines. The ballpark served the New York Metropolitans baseball club. The positioning of the story on page three demonstrated that the New York publications of the era still considered new stadium construction less significant than many other issues. Coverage of ballpark construction by major New York newspapers after this unusual burst of enthusiasm for a new facility tended to downplay infrastructure and focus more intensely on game reporting and team strategy.

New stadiums were regarded as an index of progress in other cities, but in New York, the stadium appeared to be considered an expected part of commercial sport, not a tangible symbol of progress. For New Yorkers, it is probable that a fancy “world class” stadium was not needed to demonstrate the civic pride that came with attainment of major league status. Citizens may have imperiously assumed that they were “major league” and did not need tangible evidence such as new stadiums to demonstrate this.

It is also possible that the diverse cultural landscape of the city limited focus on sports infrastructure. New York newspapers had a multitude of cultural products competing for headline space. Central Park, a massive park designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, siphoned off some of the column space devoted to leisure. Broadway shows, the symphony, the public library, and world-class museums were some of the other entertainment options that received routine coverage. Celebrities and business elites provided another form of competition to stadium construction coverage. If sports editors had to make a choice between coverage of a notable sports figure or stadium construction, the victor in the Progressive Era was personality rather
than place. The influx of immigrants, the certainty that other construction projects were in progress, and a wide array of crime reports, house fires, and other human interest stories may have collectively conspired to further minimize coverage of stadium construction projects.

In addition, New York City fielded more professional teams for each sport than any other city in America. This divided fan loyalties, making it more difficult for an entire city to rally around a given franchise. In cities such as Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, a single team simplified the linkage between sports coverage and civic pride. In the early years Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago may have fielded two professional baseball teams, but until the 1950s New York always had at least three. Furthermore, in most years one of these two-team cities fielded one very weak team that was not very popular with local fans. New York’s ability to frequently field several competitive teams complicated the coverage choices of reporters.

As the Progressive Era unfolded New York was slower to move forward on construction of modern concrete and steel facilities than some major metropolitan cities. Pittsburgh and Philadelphia’s use of steel and concrete construction in 1909 did not inspire New York owners to follow their lead. This suggests that New York City teams may not have felt the need for the additional status that a new facility might provide. Owners appeared satisfied to simply add wooden sections as needed along the fringes of their ballparks. It also suggests that the city did not have to provide unique and modern amenities to attract fans to the ballpark. New Yorkers were rabid sports fans despite lagging behind some cities in stadium construction. Giants and Dodgers fans were legendary for their enthusiasm during the Progressive Era. As a result, New York did not enter the concrete and steel era of stadium construction until a severe fire forced one owner to rebuild.

The Polo Grounds, New York’s most popular baseball venue during the Progressive Era, remained primarily a wooden structure until it was decimated by fire in 1911. The Polo Grounds fire received a high level of prominence in many New York newspapers. It was a clear exception to the general coverage tendency that downplayed stadium infrastructure issues while providing more extensive game-related coverage.

Detailed coverage of the April 14 fire was on the front page of almost every daily newspaper in the city. The New York Tribune speculated that the fire was caused by a cigarette that ignited peanut shells after a game on Thursday, April 13. They also indicated that the blaze
was discovered by a night watchman a few minutes after midnight and that Giants manager John McGraw was among the first to be contacted because he was in a pool hall that he owned at the time. McGraw was hopeful that the debris could be cleared quickly and that the Giants could play later that day in the heavily charred facility.12

McGraw’s reaction to the fire offers an indication of the little regard that some in the New York sporting community had for sports infrastructure. The Polo Grounds were so severely burned that playing ball any time soon was unwise and unlikely. Further evidence of this attitude could be found in some of the follow-up stories about the Giants. Two days after the fire gained front page headlines, a New York Times reporter joked about the fire in the lead paragraph of game coverage of the team. The reporter wrote, “maybe it is a good thing that the fire at the Polo Grounds burned up the Giants’ bats. With a new collection of smooth ash sticks, the hometown team won its first victory of the season at the American League Park yesterday.”13 Another New York Times feature, offered three days after the blaze was contained focused on fan disappointment regarding the blaze. The story argued that “New York without its Polo Grounds would not seem the same to the vast army of baseball fans.” While generally serious in tone, the story contrasted this seriousness with accounts of “youngsters who furnished...comedy...while the stands were burning down with their shouts ‘get a score card; you can’t tell the players without a score card,’ and ‘fresh roasted peanuts; get ‘em while they’re hot.’”14

In the months ahead, the team played its games in the same facility used by the New York Highlanders, a financially insecure team that was later renamed the Yankees. The fire prompted Brush to build a new concrete and steel facility. Even though the facility was only partially completed, Brush opened the new Polo Grounds to the public on June 28, 1911. Construction continued as the Giants finished the season. The team moved into this new facility a mere two and a half months after the old ballpark burned down.

Stew Thornley, author of the most comprehensive historical overview of the Polo Grounds, indicates that “Brush had ambitions for a stadium...that would surpass all others in terms of size, structure, and design.” Thornley describes several steps that were taken to achieve this goal. One included designing the box seats “upon the lines of the royal boxes of the Colosseum in Rome.” The structure seemed to succeed. It attracted attention in the building community, receiving a write up in Architecture and Building magazine in 1912. It was also
called “the mightiest temple ever erected to the goddess of sport” in the April 1912 issue of *Baseball Magazine*.

Capacity of the new stadium, once completed, was 38,281. Subsequent additions to the ballpark expanded the facility’s capacity to over 55,000 by 1923. In keeping with New York’s reputation as a communication Mecca, the Polo Grounds became the first ballpark to utilize a public address system. The microphone was not managed by an announcer, but instead “attached to the mask of the home plate umpire.”

The construction of a new and more modern Polo Grounds pushed other New York team owners to consider their sports infrastructure needs. The Highlanders were not financially stable enough to construct a lavish new facility. The Superbas, owned by Charles Ebbets were better positioned financially. After struggling through land acquisition issues, the Superbas opened Ebbets Field on April 6, 1913. The *New York Times* kept coverage of the Ebbets Field opening off the front page, giving it a prominent location on the first page of the sports section. The *New York Tribune* offered a front page crowd photo and an adjoining story about the ballpark opening. Both papers gave brief preview stories on the ballpark’s inaugural day, but once the facility was christened, coverage fully shifted to the field of play. Coverage of ballpark construction prior to the opening was limited. Four days before the opening, brief stories about ballpark inspection appeared.

A major ballpark construction project did not occur again in New York City until team owners Jacob Ruppert and Tillinghast Houston made the commitment to build Yankee Stadium in 1921. The Yankees were the last team in major league baseball to construct a concrete and steel stadium. They were the first team to call their facility a “stadium,” a term that reflected a transition from the more rural term “ballpark” to a more openly urban terminology. The stadium was opened to the public on April 18, 1923 with much fanfare. New York Governor Al Smith threw out the first pitch and sat in the owner’s box. Music was provided by the Seventh Regiment Band under the direction of legendary John Phillip Sousa.

The *New York Times* provided front-page coverage of the opening day festivities and offered several feature stories in the sports section. Other papers, including the *New York Post*, also offered front-page reporting on the stadium opening. With a reported 10,000 fans turned away due to excess capacity, it is likely that this news coverage was popular among Gotham’s
citizens. The opening day crowd was listed as 74,200 which some subsequent analysis speculates was inflated. The attendance figure remains an opening day record for a New York City ballpark. With fire codes and the existing stadium situation, it is unlikely that this attendance figure will be broken at any present venue.

The *Times* described the festivities and the overall enthusiasm of the crowd. In keeping with the majesty of the day, Babe Ruth helped guide the Yankees to victory on this opening day with a home run. The newspaper account described the park as one that “towers high in the air..., a skyscraper among baseball parks.” The analogy might seem unimpressive today, but in 1923, the skyscraper was the pinnacle of urban construction technology.\(^{20}\) It was also an apt analogy because Yankee Stadium was one of the first ballparks to truly revel in its bigness. It was a massive facility that made the celebrated ballparks constructed a decade before look small.

Prior to the construction of Yankee Stadium, the Yankees played in Hilltop Park, a run-down facility that was built on uneven land previously owned by the New York Institute for the Blind. It had a masonry foundation, but the park’s construction above this foundation was spartan and entirely wood. Ironically, Yankee Stadium, a replacement for this wooden facility, was built on an old saw mill site on the Harlem River shores of the Bronx.

Yankee Stadium made a profound architectural statement which, when combined with the assembly of a championship caliber team that included Babe Ruth and local hero Lou Gehrig, put the Yankees in serious competition to draw fans from the traditionally more popular Giants. A week after the Yankees christened the stadium, U.S. President Warren Harding attended a game, offering public evidence that the stadium had elevated the stature of the ballclub significantly.

It is probable that Yankees co-owner Jacob Ruppert intuitively knew the statement that this grand edifice would make to the baseball community.\(^{21}\) Ruppert was a brewery owner and a former four-term U.S. Congressman with a wealth of political and commercial connections. Such connections were important in New York City as the strength of Tammany Hall politics could make life exceedingly difficult for those without the right contacts. Ruppert and his partner Tillinghast Houston’s ability to fund stadium construction during Prohibition serves as a testimony to the extent of Ruppert’s personal wealth and abundant connections. After all, the 1920s was a time when a brewery was not a legal enterprise.

For all of Ruppert’s connections, he was highly practical, and he had a pragmatic
understanding of what he was getting into when he took over the Yankees. Years after the success of Yankee Stadium was firmly established, Ruppert stated that when he teamed up with Houston to purchase the franchise in 1915, “we got an orphan ball club, without a home of its own, without players of outstanding ability, without prestige.” The new stadium and the signing of Babe Ruth in 1919 were probably the two most important steps taken to acquire that prestige.

It is likely that Ruppert, aware of the Giants’ status within the community, reveled in Yankee Stadium’s location right across the river from the Polo Grounds. After all, the intensely competitive John McGraw, the legendary Giants manager, believed that the Yankees would be unable to attract fans if they were chased out of the Polo Grounds which they shared with the Giants from 1913 until 1922. McGraw believed that if the Yankees were unable to find a Manhattan location, they would be out of business in a few short years. Although McGraw got his wish, the Yankees did not wither and die as McGraw had speculated. Beyond that, the new stadium, just a stone’s throw from the Polo Grounds, became a daily reminder of the rival Yankees. Giants fans would have no choice but to see it when attending their team’s games. Such visibility was fine with Ruppert, whose intensity in competition rivaled the legendary McGraw.

From an architectural standpoint, Yankee Stadium was vastly superior to the bathtub-shaped ballpark on the other side of the Harlem River. In the initial years, mass transit to the stadium was available, but it was not as convenient as it might have been. By 1926, new subway lines simplified the commute from any point in Manhattan.

The Yankees did expand their popularity throughout the city in the years after Yankee Stadium’s construction. Because the project was fully funded by the team owners, newspaper coverage related to the project was predictably positive. On the field, championships contributed to this popularity, but the improved respect that followed stadium construction may have helped increase the level and quality of press coverage received by the team. The signing of local sports hero Lou Gehrig, a Columbia University product, in June 1923 helped to solidify the bond between team and community. The stadium itself made it possible for new fans to feel as though they were part of an emerging Yankee tradition. Years later, the monuments in the outfield, the classic looking overhead facade, and the total environment of the stadium helped to reinforce loyalty and sway some former National League fans across the Harlem River to the Bronx.

The Giants and rival Brooklyn Dodgers were still popular decades after the construction
of Yankee Stadium, but the majestic ballpark on the banks of the Hudson helped to make both teams less prominent in the total New York sports landscape. New York City still had the capacity to support three high-quality professional baseball teams, but the eventual departure of the Giants and Dodgers to the West Coast would mark a distinctive moment in sports history. It would be the first time in the post-World War II era that baseball teams decided to leave their community despite both popularity and profitability. The Braves had left Boston for Milwaukee before the Dodgers and Giants moved to the West Coast, but the trek to Milwaukee was the result of years coping with empty seats at Braves Field.

While impossible to determine the role of Yankee Stadium’s construction in the departure of the Giants and Dodgers over three decades later, it was clear that Giants management did not want to share the spotlight with another nearby team. At the same time, Dodger owner Walter O’Malley had grown tired of trying to cut through the political red tape presented by New York’s powerful construction czar, Robert Moses. O’Malley wanted a new stadium, was willing to pay for it himself, but was denied city help in his attempt to acquire land via eminent domain proceedings.

According to Moses, land could not be obtained for building a new stadium unless it were part of a considerably larger public works project. Although Moses acted as though he was taking a moral high ground on this issue, his decision was more motivated by a personal desire for housing and highway projects in Brooklyn, a construction agenda that in his mind left little room for new stadium construction. A long range goal of Moses was to create a municipally controlled stadium in a more wide open section of Queens. Such a maneuver would put him, not team owners, in control of the facility. In addition, the facility location would be better suited to motorists which would help Moses to further push forward his highway construction agenda.

Inner city ballparks, Moses believed, reflected a bygone era that relied on mass transit instead of the modern automobile. After an initial rebuff by Moses, O’Malley’s push to connect the project to a new railroad terminal which made use of eminent domain increasingly unlikely so long as Moses controlled Brooklyn’s land use decisions. The railroad terminal idea may have linked ballpark construction to a larger public works project, a move that was in keeping with Moses’ earlier specifications, but Moses had no desire to move the New York metropolitan area into greater reliance on mass transit. For Moses, the future of America was linked to expansion
of automobile use and the construction of new urban highways. This policy had underlying class and ethnic implications. Affluent, entrenched white citizens were much better prepared to take advantage of this urban policy emphasis. Minorities and low income, ethnic whites, in contrast, were likely to be constrained to a specific neighborhood as highways supplanted the streetcar and the railroad.

Robert Caro provides ample evidence that Moses had the capacity to help O’Malley, but lacked the political desire to do so. In an August 20, 1955 *New York Times* article, Moses taunted O’Malley’s desire for an Atlantic and Flatbush Avenues site, asking “then, if you don’t get this particular site, you’ll pick up your marbles and leave town?” Although O’Malley denied the desire to follow through on such a strategy, in approximately two years, the pieces were in place to move the Dodgers to Los Angeles. O’Malley made numerous attempts to push New York legislators toward helping him to purchase stadium land at fair market value, suggesting that a moderate level of political cooperation would keep the Dodgers in Brooklyn.

After several futile efforts to work within the political system, O’Malley attempted to change his tactics. In August 1955, O’Malley announced that the Dodgers would play seven home games at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City, New Jersey during the 1956 season. The move was an attempt to push New York politicians into recognizing O’Malley’s desires. It is likely that O’Malley wanted to also demonstrate that the Dodgers were not wedded to Brooklyn, but this tactic had negative consequences in regional press coverage. *New York Times* sports columnist Arthur Daley subsequently argued that “O’Malley’s frantic reach for the extra dollar had gone beyond the bounds of decorum and common sense.” A Brooklyn fan was quoted stating that O’Malley’s attempt to shift games to New Jersey was “a dirty trick.”

O’Malley may have been disappointed by adverse publicity, but the announcement did prod the city’s Board of Estimates to publicly recognize O’Malley’s demands on August 19, 1955. Nevertheless, instead of moving to quickly appease the Dodgers’ owner, the board chose to further study the stadium issue as part of a larger development program in the area.

Although O’Malley took a number of steps to remain in New York, continued failure with the ballpark issue prompted the Dodgers owner to become more serious about options outside of New York. Throughout the process he continued to stress his desire to control and fund stadium construction of his own ballpark in Brooklyn. Conceivably, his circuitous
negotiations with New York City officials prompted him to avoid pursuit of any construction proposal that he could not fully control.

In February 1957, O’Malley traded his Fort Worth, Texas minor league farm club to William Wrigley, obtaining in this exchange the Chicago Cubs’ minor league affiliate, located in Los Angeles. The move prevented territorial conflict with other baseball owners, but would also serve to motivate Los Angeles politicians to respond politically to lure a major league franchise westward now that O’Malley controlled the rights to this burgeoning west coast market. Los Angeles officials pushed hard to convince O’Malley to move, while New York’s politicians acted with lethargy. Some Los Angeles officials also considered pursuit of a plan to lure the Washington Senators to Los Angeles.

Ironically, O’Malley’s negotiations with Los Angeles officials initially centered on building a publicly financed ballpark, something he had no desire to do in New York. After negotiations in New York became intractable, O’Malley moved his team to Los Angeles with no stadium construction deal firmly established. Instead, the Los Angeles city council approved a land swap deal that gave O’Malley the rights to a substantial portion of land at Chavez Ravine, the eventual site of Dodger Stadium. To compensate the city of Los Angeles, O’Malley was expected to swap a less desirable piece of land that he obtained in his minor league team swap with Chicago entrepreneur William Wrigley. The deal was approved by city council just hours before the National League’s October 1, 1957 deadline for submission of franchise relocation application, causing O’Malley to settle for less than he might have received if given more time to manipulate key political leaders.

During this process, O’Malley had the firm support of key Los Angeles politicians and media practitioners. Among the more rabid supporters of the Dodgers’ relocation scheme was Los Angeles Times sports reporter Paul Zimmerman, later a nationally recognized writer for Sports Illustrated, and members of the newspaper’s editorial staff. On September 29, 1957, hours before the league’s relocation deadline, the newspaper offered an enthusiastic lead editorial pushing for approval of the O’Malley land swap. Cognizant of powerful press support, several political leaders indicated that they would do everything possible to help make O’Malley’s plans for a new ballpark a reality, but direct ballpark subsidies were not part of the city council approved plan. The city did offer substantial funding for site preparation and connecting roads.
The stadium construction was left to O’Malley and Dodgers’ management. O’Malley appeared sufficiently comfortable with Los Angeles civic leaders to welcome a municipally funded stadium, but his eventual west coast resolution, acquisition of stadium land, was precisely what he could not obtain in Brooklyn. During the first years of play on the west coast, his team was placed in the cavernous and, rather ironic, publicly owned Los Angeles Coliseum.

Although unlikely that New York officials would have considered public stadium funding in the 1950s, a philosophic shift to publicly funded ballparks reflected an emerging demand of professional baseball ownership. The Los Angeles stadium arrangement may have been a largely privately funded affair, but San Francisco’s Candlestick Park, completed in 1960, relied entirely on municipal funding.

By 1961, public subsidy in New York began to gain political credibility. Robert Moses, although weakened by political squabbles in the late 1950s, still had the power and capacity to bring such a project to fruition. His answer to the ballpark void created by the departure of the Dodgers and the Giants, was construction of a massive publicly subsidized stadium in the Flushing Meadows section of Queens.

Moses hoped that such a project would contribute positively to his legacy. If linked with the enthusiasm of the 1964-1965 World’s Fair, he believed that the ballpark could be part of a massive park that might replace Manhattan’s famed Central Park as the city’s most coveted public asset. Total acreage available for the entire park area exceeded what was available in Central Park by 50 percent. In addition, the location was closer to the center of New York’s five boroughs than Central Park, and with much of the city’s affluent and middle class population moving eastward into Long Island, Moses believed that Flushing Meadows could become a park that would be heavily utilized for generations to come.

Coverage of the Shea Stadium project was often overshadowed by the presence of the New York World’s Fair, a pet project of Robert Moses. At times coverage of stadium progress was intertwined with World’s Fair coverage, but a few stories could be found that focused exclusively on this new facility in Queens. In 1962, New York Times coverage focused on a general description of the stadium and political attempts to have the stadium named after prominent attorney William Shea. Articles tended to focus on more tangible construction issues in 1963. One article emphasized construction of the world’s largest escalator system.
within the facility. \(^{30}\) Others focused on funding issues, construction timetables, and concerns about on-site hiring bias. \(^{31}\) No stadium-related articles received front page coverage in the *New York Times* during these two years. In addition, articles did not appear to ever challenge whether stadium construction should take place and the general public was typically squeezed out of the reporting process.

Part of the reason that Shea Stadium received such limited coverage could be attributed to the New York press, its relationship with Robert Moses, and the political landscape of New York City during that period. The press was reluctant to intensely investigate high-level city officials unless the evidence was clear or the smell of scandal was impossible to avoid. The press might report small instances of corruption, offering the public a sense that the press served a watchdog role. But big stories involving important individuals often required overwhelming evidence or the investigation would cease or, worse, never take place at all. Shea Stadium did not appear to fit the profile of something that should gain reporter attention under this criteria. No blatant corruption or improprieties could be found on the surface, so further digging was unlikely. The 1964-1965 World’s Fair was another story, forcing reporters to investigate further. Heavy focus on the World’s Fair made more careful coverage of Shea Stadium construction less likely. Even though the opening of Shea Stadium was integrated into the World’s Fair site in Flushing Meadows, it was a tangible, visible project that would serve the city for years to come. Reporters had a more difficult time with intangibles related to event administration.

Robert Moses was often a beneficiary of New York City reporting tendencies that favored elites with sound reputations, but Moses had gradually tarnished his reputation in several ways late in his career. The problems he faced earlier, when linked with problems related to the World’s Fair revenue shortfalls and attendance problems, left him open for press criticism.

Over the years, Moses displaced tens of thousands of individuals in the many projects he supervised. He was able to do so with little controversy because he kept projects tightly insulated from the press and moved quickly with demolition and construction. By the time the press may have reacted to a Moses-related story, it was too late. The bulldozers had moved in, the displaced families were moved to other sections of the city, and the area that might have been contested was reduced to construction rubble. Unless a reporter wanted to do extensive research, something that many newspapers were unwilling to support, Moses was able to move ahead without
incident or challenge. Even in cases when a newspaper allowed a reporter to conduct an investigation of Moses, the coverage tended to be downplayed and he was given greater opportunity to defend his position than less prominent city politicians.32

In most city construction projects, the people being displaced by Moses were lower or lower-middle class individuals, so they could not access the media loop with any degree of proficiency. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the New York press often reacted as a lapdog, not a watchdog, when it came to high-level city administration. Although exceptions could be found, the New York media did not tend to challenge high-level officials unless a pattern of impropriety emerged until the roof caved in on city finances in the mid-1970s. Even then, the press reaction was often reflexively defensive in its support of the city. The comfortable relationship that Robert Moses had with the New York press began to break down in the early 1960s as New York newspapers began to more carefully investigate both Moses and the World’s Fair.

Moses reputation was first tarnished by negative coverage of his handling of parking lot construction in Central Park’s Tavern on the Green facility.33 His mistake in this instance was trying to jam a project down the throats of well-connected, affluent citizens. A *New York Times* editorial published less than a year after this controversy speaks volumes about how the New York press covered Moses and other high-level political leaders with sound reputations. It also demonstrates a pattern of coverage that tended to defend high-level New York City officials when faced with challenges from the outside. At the time of the piece, a Moses project was under investigation by Home Finance Administrator Albert Cole. The 1957 editorial argued that:

Mr. Cole had better face the fact that New York City is not going to drop Bob Moses as a public servant as long as he is willing to keep working for the city....It’s possible to find a mistake and failure here and there. But look at the long, long record of successes. You don’t bench Babe Ruth because he strikes out once in a while....The Federal Government is not going to change Mr. Moses. It had better try to get along with him, for that is the way we will travel farther fastest for the public good.34

It might have made more sense for Moses to milk the Shea Stadium construction issue for more extensive local press coverage early in the process, but that was not his style. Moses did not like to struggle through the ugly battleground of consensus-building once a project was on-line for completion. Beyond that, Moses’ large ego prompted him to develop grander visions about
press coverage of his World’s Fair. He believed that this event would define his legacy. A surrounding staff familiar with his ego worked to massage that ego in lining up press coverage for the event. They pushed beyond local coverage to secure national magazine articles and network television coverage. The local press was part of the process, but Moses and his staff had less patience with them, treating them shabbily at various intervals. In one case, Moses walked out on the *New York Times* editors early in a scheduled luncheon at a site that he determined. The meeting was arranged to “clear the air” with several new editors who had replaced former friends of his at the newspaper.35

Local newspapers tended to fall in line with Moses’ coverage desires up until then, so Moses responded to a skeptical press corps by attacking them at every turn. Moses seemed more focused on the overall success of the 1964-1965 World’s Fair than the stadium project. This might seem odd since the size and scope of a stadium project was massive, but throughout Moses career he juggled various huge projects with little fear of political fallout. When the press attacks began, the World’s Fair received a greater degree of media scrutiny, much of it undesired, than the stadium construction project.

By the time Shea Stadium was completed, Moses’ reputation was much more tarnished than a decade before. The New York City press corps may have felt that the stadium was a larger part of Moses’ desire to build a long-standing legacy that would continue beyond the fair’s closing date. After repeated daily attacks by Moses, it is possible that many of these reporters had little desire to help perpetuate a positive Moses legacy. As a result, stadium construction in Flushing Meadows received the limited press coverage that appeared to be a hallmark of New York’s limited focus on sports infrastructure. Despite a lukewarm press reception, the building did contribute to the future design of several stadiums throughout the country. Ron Smith describes Shea Stadium as “the trigger for the so-called cookie-cutter ballpark explosion in the late 1960s and ‘70s.”36

**Yankee Stadium Renovation and the Departure of the Giants.**

The decision to renovate Yankee Stadium in the 1970s was not the brainchild of New York Yankee management. Instead, New York Mayor John Lindsay made it a personal agenda item. It is doubtful that the massive renovation project would have ever taken place without Lindsay’s involvement. At the time, the New York Yankees were then owned by CBS Inc., a
highly profitable broadcasting company that did not need a taxpayer subsidy. The stadium project and issues surrounding this dramatic renovation drew substantially more media coverage than the initial construction of Yankee Stadium in the early 1920s.

The mayor approached Mike Burke, president of the New York Yankees in 1970 with a clear mission to acquire Yankee Stadium and devote massive resources to a major renovation project. Although the city was struggling with financial obligations, Lindsay improved the possibility of success with this project by framing it as one that would place the Yankees on equitable terms with the Mets. In his meeting with Burke, Lindsay did not discuss the issue by suggesting the Yankees would be receiving a subsidy from the city. Instead, he told Burke that he wanted to provide the Yankees with the same level of financial help that was accorded to the Mets when Shea Stadium was constructed less than a decade earlier. He indicated that he planned to spend $24 million on the project, a sum that matched the city’s earlier commitment to the Mets.37

Since that point, the mind-set of Yankees’ management shifted from that of tenants in a privately held facility to an organization that was entitled to a share of city resources that were already allocated to sports infrastructure. At the time, the stadium was owned by Rice University, with the land under the stadium owned by the Knights of Columbus.38 The renovations that Lindsay planned were so extensive that they would require the Yankees to play outside of their stadium for at least two seasons. Yankee management had reservations about renovation because of concerns that the neighborhood surrounding Yankee Stadium offered a less than desirable atmosphere for attracting patrons. Lindsay incorporated the addition of 6,000 parking spaces into the area to limit apprehensions about the plan. The Yankees also proposed a more thorough and detailed examination of the stadium issue, but Lindsay instead preferred to take an incremental approach that would simply move ahead without expert analysis.

In his initial public pronouncement on the specific renovation plans, Lindsay argued that a key factor in the renovations was to keep both the Yankees and the Giants, the region’s NFL franchise, in New York City. The Giants shared Yankee Stadium with the baseball team at this time, but were discussing the possibility of moving out of the 47 year old facility. To ensure that the renovation would take place, the city would fund 25 percent of the project through the capital budget, with 75 percent emanating from “anticipation notes” that would be paid off with parking,
concession, and lease-related revenues.39

The decision to renovate Yankee Stadium was greeted with opposition by several New York City columnists and some political leaders, but Bronx legislators and residents almost universally praised the project.40 Dick Young, one of New York’s most influential sportswriters, offered another perspective. He argued that the stadium’s attendance problems were the result of location in “a lousy neighborhood,” something that renovation could not resolve. He suggested moving both the football and baseball franchises to New Jersey and bulldozing Yankee Stadium so that “some decent dwellings” could upgrade the area.41

One city councilman received headlines for suggesting that the city abandon Yankee Stadium, devote greater resources to the much newer Shea Stadium. He further argued that the city should attempt to work out an agreement to share the facility with the Yankees, Mets, Jets, and Giants.42 Months later, Mets chairman M. Donald Grant stated that he would recommend moving his baseball team to New Jersey if they were forced to act as co-tenants with the Yankees.43 This threat seemed to solidify the commitment to stadium renovation in the Bronx.

Shortly after New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller approved the city’s plan to purchase the stadium, news coverage of the stadium issue intensified.44 The Yankees decided to stay put and take advantage of the city subsidy to their home, but the Giants were lured into the New Jersey Meadowlands location after being actively courted by New Jersey political officials. The Yankee Stadium renovation and the Giants Stadium project both received front page headlines that had not been rivaled in New York newspapers since the fire in the Polo Grounds in 1911. Yankee Stadium coverage mixed pro-subsidy sources with political opposition who believed that the stadium was obsolete.

The media coverage after the Giants Stadium decision, however, took a different trajectory. The Giants signed a thirty year lease in August 1971 and appeared to be enthusiastic about the prospect of their “first real home.”45 Up to this point, the Giants always served as tenants in parks that were constructed for baseball teams. The football stadium project coverage focused much more intensely on civic pride and the loss of a New York cultural institution to nearby New Jersey. Many New Yorkers regarded New Jersey as a cultural wasteland. Such residents contrasted the suburban focus on shopping malls to the many activities and events that could only be found in the city. Some cosmopolitan residents sneered at New Jersey culture as an
oxymoron.

Early articles on the topic resonated with confidence about the possibility of retaining the Giants. Once the team’s departure to New Jersey appeared to be inevitable, a shift in tone occurred. Some articles focused on threats to take specific actions if the Giants did move to New Jersey. Other articles discussed legal options that were under consideration to either prevent the move or to cause the move to be less tolerable for the team. Mayor Lindsey pushed to evict the team from Yankee Stadium when the title to the facility was obtained by the city.46 New York officials also threatened court action if the Giants moved and retained the “New York” name. Another strategy broached by political leaders was attracting another football team to replace the Giants. One article suggested that the city seek an expansion NFL franchise. A less plausible proposal was broached by the city’s deputy mayor. He actively considered luring a Canadian Football League franchise to New York. He went so far as to seek out individuals willing to invest in this idea.47 The CFL commissioner looked at the proposal with pessimism, arguing that the league could lose its unique Canadian identity if such a relocation were to transpire. A 1974 proposal to move a WFL franchise to the stadium was also discussed, but the league’s economic demise preempted this proposal.48

As stadium renovations moved forward, the Giants became sporting vagabonds. The Yankees played exclusively in Shea Stadium as the renovations were underway, but the football franchise was forced to move from Shea Stadium to another site after the city decided to lock the exiting team out of a temporary rental situation. The Giants considered several alternate sites, including Princeton’s Palmer Stadium and the Yale Bowl, two relics built prior to U.S. entry in World War I. Although far from ideal, the Giants shifted their temporary home to New Haven, Connecticut, playing in the Yale Bowl until Giants Stadium was completed.

The Giants move across the river intensified the importance of keeping the Yankees in New York. The decision was based on psychic factors, not rational economics. The city was in a very difficult period and the city’s urban core was on the decline. If one of New York’s most impoverished neighborhoods could be revived and perhaps thrive, it might lift the spirits of a city population that was questioning its future. The psychological dimension of Major League Baseball and stadium revitalization made it easier to justify the vast sums of money that were being thrown into this project.
As the stadium project moved forward, evidence suggested that Mayor Lindsay knew from the outset that his initial estimates were severely inadequate to complete the project. He pegged the initial project at $24 million in March 1971, but cautioned at this time that expenses could balloon to $27 million. By November 7, 1973 Lindsay indicated that combined renovation and acquisition costs had risen to $39.8 million, almost sixteen times the original $2.5 million cost to construct the stadium five decades earlier. Days later, approval of additional funding was granted by the New York City’s Board of Estimates. As this approval was made, costs were feared to be closer to $50 million. Charges swirled that Lindsay had concealed the real cost of the project.

Less than two months later, Lindsay was replaced as mayor by Abe Beame. On August 10, 1974 the new mayor pushed to contain costs in this project so that they would not exceed $55 million. By 1975 that figure had increased to $66.4 million. Inflation and engineering difficulties were cited as contributors to the increase. Shortly after this estimate was put on the table, the city dropped plans to purchase and demolish decaying properties surrounding the stadium, abandoning a major part of the urban renewal component of the renovation, an idea that helped make the total project more acceptable to the public. The New York Times reported that some of the funds saved in this cost-cutting measure would be used to buy equipment for the baseball franchise. Five days later, Yankees general manager Gabe Paul claimed that various inaccuracies surrounding the stadium renovation issue had placed the team in a negative light. Angry South Bronx residents reacted to the cutbacks in a New York Times article published four months after stadium renovations were completed.

Renovation of Yankee Stadium proceeded even though the city’s resources were so limited that all other large municipally funded construction projects were aborted. The city’s fiscal crisis was so intense that by 1975 “the city deferred even routine maintenance functions” on public buildings. Yet by this time, New York was so far into the Yankee Stadium project that backing out would have provided the entire nation with a clear symbolic indication of how desperate the city’s finances were. On the eve of the April 15, 1976 reopening of the stadium, Mayor Beame estimated that the project costs had spiraled to more than $70 million. An incomplete tally from the New York City Public Works Authority pegged final costs for the project at between $91.4 million and $97.4 million, approximately 400 percent more than the
initial low-end estimate. Neil Sullivan in his examination of the stadium renovation project, pegged the final renovation cost at $100 million, but some have argued that the cost may have been as high as $150 million. It is unlikely that a definitive price on these expenses will ever be known.

_The New York Times_ did not avoid putting news about unpopular cost overruns on the front page, making news judgements that may not have transpired when Robert Moses controlled the city’s construction agenda. An increased level of frustration with the project also appeared to be evident in opinion columns as the project progressed. Although the project was intended to revitalize the morale of a city facing severe financial hardship, the renovation became an often discussed example of the city’s inability to properly manage its affairs. Suburban residents looked at the project as a validation that their decision to inhabit the suburbs was prudent.

The Yankee Stadium project offered a tangible demonstration of just how important sports had become in the 1970s as an index of a community’s status as “major league.” A key motivating factor for this massive renovation project was the desire to demonstrate to the nation that New York was a vibrant leader, not a weakened dinosaur. City leaders wanted to show that they could keep up with less populous urban areas that had successfully completed stadiums, even if the fiscal reality suggested that such a move took valuable resources away from more important city services. According to Neil Sullivan, “cities kept building stadiums as a sign of confidence in the future....[Recessionary] downturns were particularly hard on New York [in the 1970s], but it too kept building. To do otherwise would be to admit that the city was in an especially grim position. Lindsay would have to admit that the city could not compete with the burgeoning cities of the Sunbelt, and he could not concede that.”

Widespread national media coverage of sports made it easier for political leaders to favor sports-related projects, even though New York’s diverse cultural landscape could prompt some individuals to suggest reallocation of such resources to renovation of museums, Broadway theaters, local landmarks, or a multitude of other venues. Broadway shows and museums might have attracted tourists, but they did not garner the kind of extensive daily coverage in publications outside of New York that was accorded to sports. If New York did not have a crisis of confidence in the 1970s, it might have been more cautious in its approach to stadium renovation.
Even though the nation and the New York metropolitan area was struggling through a recession and high inflation during the 1970s, stadium construction continued at a brisk pace. New York’s impending loss of its football team, the Giants, to New Jersey intensified the resolve of city leaders to complete the Yankee Stadium project at almost any cost. Even though New York still had the Mets and Jets, loss of the tradition-rich Yankees to suburban New Jersey would be psychologically devastating to some citizens and many political leaders. The city was able to prevent such a scenario, but the political cost was high. The Yankee Stadium renovation truly created a gem in the Bronx, but cost overruns and the failure to address the surrounding neighborhood problems had long-term political consequences. News coverage of such issues also moved into a more skeptical mode as construction overruns became evident. The combination of a skeptical media and a public that was largely excluded from the decision-making process put a damper on stadium-related construction in the New York metropolitan area.

It is not surprising that major stadium construction proposals were avoided by city officials for at least a decade. In 1984 the New York Jets moved from Shea Stadium to the New Jersey Meadowlands, agreeing to serve as co-tenants in Giants Stadium. Prior to the move, Jets owner Leon Hess periodically used the media to express his displeasure with Shea Stadium’s amenities. Hess was a petroleum executive with a chain of local gas stations that were noted for their overall clean appearance. His decision to move out of Shea Stadium came after frequent attacks, often reiterated in media coverage, of Shea Stadium’s cleanliness, particularly the restrooms.

New Jersey’s ability to attract a second NFL team gave some individuals at the New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority the confidence to believe that they could also host a Major League Baseball Franchise. By 1987, they had received authorization from the New Jersey Senate to offer the public an opportunity to vote on whether they wanted to support a new 45,000-seat baseball stadium with tax dollars. The facility would be funded through $185 million in general obligation bonds. Construction would not occur unless a team was committed to play at the site. Robert Mulcahy, III, the New Jersey’s Sports and Exhibition Authority chief, announced selection of a 246-acre stadium site near the Meadowlands Sports Complex prior to receiving state approval for the ballot initiative. New Jersey leaders believed that isolation of a specific site enhanced their chances of attracting a major league team. Talk about attracting the
Yankees occurred, but the state gave more serious consideration to the possibility of attracting an expansion franchise after indications from baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth indicated that expansion franchises would be considered in the near future.  

The baseball stadium referendum failed to gain momentum. Press coverage was considerably less profound than the coverage received for similar proposals in major urban areas during the 1990s. The public did not seem to regard the idea with any level of enthusiasm and area journalists did not make independent attempts to manufacture public interest. New Jersey’s electorate was divided by small communities that did not have a single urban center that served as a core for civic pride. Its division as suburban terrain for New York and Philadelphia further complicated chances of passage. The Northern New Jersey site location stifled enthusiasm in South Jersey communities, whose primary urban allegiance was to Philadelphia.

On the eve of the New Jersey baseball stadium vote, the New York Times offered op-ed coverage to New Jersey Bell President Anton Campanella, a supporter of the plan, and U.S. Congressman Robert Torricelli, an opponent of the referendum. A front page story in the same publication announced an agreement between the Yankees and New York City to extend the Yankee Stadium lease through 2032 in exchange for $90 million worth of infrastructure improvements to transportation and the neighborhood surrounding the stadium. The agreement effectively diminished New Jersey’s chances of attracting an existing baseball franchise considerably and may have eroded already weak public support for the project to an even greater degree. The initiative was defeated by a two to one margin, a level so overwhelming that talk of Major League Baseball in New Jersey generally ceased.

Perhaps to keep the crosstown Mets satisfied with their status in Queens on the heels of the Yankee agreement, Shea Stadium received a facelift and minor renovation during the off season in 1988. Calls for construction of new facilities or major stadium renovations in New York City failed to gain momentum until the 1990s. Even then, team owners and city leaders were unable to gain public support or form meaningful political coalitions for any proposals.

**The 1990s and the Push to Build New Ballparks**

CBS sold the Yankees to a little-known Cleveland shipbuilding executive named George Steinbrenner as stadium renovations were nearing completion. The network paid $14.9 million for the franchise, but sold it for a mere $10 million. Tax laws that favored sports franchise
owners allowed the network to do slightly better than breaking even on the transaction after player deprecation and other expenses were included, but it was one of the few times in the modern era that a sports franchise appeared to diminish in value. The Yankees were a wounded team with no star players and an uncertain future. George Steinbrenner made a name for himself by bidding on free agent players. At the time, Marvin Miller, baseball’s labor leader, was changing the future of baseball economics. Steinbrenner was among the first individuals to respond the these changes.

If Marvin Miller changed the dynamic for ballplayers, George Steinbrenner changed the dynamic for fellow owners. In attracting such baseball superstars as Jim “Catfish” Hunter and Reggie Jackson, Steinbrenner was able to build a championship caliber team that brought World Series crowns back to the Bronx. Competing owners were now forced to bid against Steinbrenner for talent. When Steinbrenner took ownership of the Yankees in 1973, he had the benefit of a meticulously renovated stadium, a generous lease agreement that would carry him through 2002, and a team in the largest media market in the nation. Unlike football, which shared broadcast revenues equally, baseball’s media bidding structure was more localized, giving the Yankees a dramatic edge in accumulating revenues that could be used to attract high-priced free agent players. To keep pace with the Yankees, other owners had to come up with some strategy to attract the best players. Since the economics of the media market could not be changed, smaller city owners eventually looked to new stadiums as a way to keep pace.

As other teams earned more stadium revenues, Steinbrenner began to look at Yankee Stadium as a liability. Its limited number of skyboxes and older construction offered fewer amenities and creature comforts than the newer ballparks such as Baltimore’s Camden Yards. Even though Yankee Stadium had the potential to generate levels of revenue comparable to the newer parks because of its New York setting, Steinbrenner was confident that he could earn more money in a new stadium situated in a better neighborhood.

Steinbrenner thanked the city for the generosity of taxpayer subsidized renovations early in his tenure as Yankees’ principal owner, but he never really liked his inherited arrangement in the stadium’s run-down Bronx neighborhood. During the 1980s he intensified his talk about problems with the neighborhood while suggesting that the perception of South Bronx crime chased suburban fans away. Talk of moving the team to New Jersey began to surface in media
reports and in street-level conversations.

In the early 1990s, the Yankees had been a difficult tenant for the city, often arguing that the city owed them money for tenancy in Yankee Stadium because of an agreement that gave them substantial latitude over facility maintenance costs and the ability to deduct them from their contracted rent total. By 1993 the city was claiming that the team owed $6.1 million, but the Yankees argued that the city owed them $8.7 million “because of the costs of maintaining Yankee Stadium.” Team management took a hard line with the city. Yankee officials often reiterated claims that the location of the Bronx stadium caused attendance problems since suburban baseball fans were often reluctant to travel to the neighborhood surrounding the stadium. At the same time, U.S. Congressman Guy Molinari, whose district included Staten Island, New York, extended the team an offer to consider moving to this outer borough.

Despite questions about the Yankees rent status, New York Governor Mario Cuomo met with Yankees owner George Steinbrenner to discuss the possibility of a new ballpark “at a 30 acre railyard on the western edge of midtown Manhattan.” News Corporation President Ruppert Murdoch was rumored to be included in these talks as a way to “give the vastly expensive project a financial anchor.” Murdoch’s interest was reported to be either in building an “entertainment center, television studios, or an arena” on the site. Local media practitioners seemed generally unconcerned about the meetings. New York Times sports columnists Harvey Araton, for example, called Murdoch’s “tormenting [of] New York politicians...the nicest thing he has done for his baseball team in more than a decade.”

The railyard talks did not gain momentum, even though some believed that it was the only long-term solution that would keep the Yankees in New York City. Steinbrenner had periodically discussed moving the franchise to New Jersey as he would take aim at his displeasure with the South Bronx. In spite of this, Cuomo opened talks with the Yankees about stadium renovation. Approximately $150 million in renovations were considered in order to make the stadium more appealing to Yankee officials.

The 1993 elections changed the stadium dynamic. New Jersey’s Governor-elect, Christie Todd Whitman, was perceived to be much less likely to offer the Yankees generous subsidies if they were to move across the river than lame-duck Governor James Florio. The incoming governor’s press secretary indicated very early that New Jersey was willing to talk with Yankees
management, but that “the line in the sand is that we won’t use public money.”

Another new player in the stadium dynamic, New York City’s mayor-elect Rudolph Giuliani, was described as a “Yankee nut” who occasionally shared the owner’s skybox with George Steinbrenner prior to his election as mayor. As Giuliani took over as mayor, New York Governor Cuomo backed off of his negotiations with the team, suggesting that the future of the Yankees hinged on the new mayor’s public policy agenda. Giuliani attempted to push stadium renovation plans forward, but as renovation estimates increased, Major League Baseball labor problems conspired to sabotage both public opinion and political support. A baseball labor dispute that resulted in early cancellation of the 1994 season put plans for stadium renovation subsidies on hold. After the strike was settled, the public was in no mood to support baseball-related subsidies.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani made several aggressive attempts to subsidize stadium construction for the Yankees and Mets, but has been unsuccessful in each effort. In April 1998 a 500-pound steel beam crushed a seat below, prompting fears that Yankee Stadium’s physical condition could present a safety hazard and force eventual replacement of the facility.

Media coverage initially suggested the stadium’s days were numbered, but the nature of coverage changed after a couple weeks. The follow up on the steel beam accident was one of the most intensive periods of media coverage for the stadium issue, but within several weeks the stadium issue was shifted to the background of New York’s highly varied media agenda.

The incident caused national media to follow the New York stadium issue much more closely. ESPN and Fox Sports Network offered stories on their national sportscasts, while CNN and major networks covered the event. Comedy Central’s news parody, The Daily Show, offered satirical commentary from anchor Craig Kilborne. While presenting a news story about the stadium, Kilborne joked that Yankees owner George Steinbrenner could not be reached for comment because he was “at Sears returning a blow torch and a hacksaw.” New Yorker magazine presented readers with a comic of individuals at an upscale bar, with one person asking the other “Am I a bad person if I don’t care what happens to Yankee Stadium?” Time magazine offered an essay on New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani which focused on a number of issues but concluded with satirical comments about his relationship with George Steinbrenner.

Even though local coverage of the stadium issue was not as intense as what transpired in
smaller media markets, New York’s several week spotlight was enough to bring national attention to the issue. After a thorough city inspection, reopening of the ballpark, and philosophic reflection about the physical decay of other New York structures, the pendulum appeared to swing back to support for continued maintenance of Yankee Stadium. Some individuals reflected on the physical decay of some New York facilities that continue to serve the city. The condition of public schools, including one in which a brick fell and fatally injured a youngster, was cited. One individual compared the call to replace Yankee Stadium as illogical as replacing the entire Brooklyn Bridge after cable damage caused a fatality several years earlier. Support for a new stadium never gained momentum, so the issue was pushed to the media background.

Attempts to place the stadium subsidy issue on the ballot resulted in political maneuvering between New York’s city council and the mayor. The mayor opposed a ballot initiative because such a move would have meant certain defeat for his plan to construct a new ballpark on Manhattan’s West Side for use by the Yankees. The city budget was held up briefly, the mayor considered plans to change the city charter in order to use a technical procedure to eliminate the issue from the ballot, but eventually the issue died when a judge ruled against permitting the stadium subsidy issue to go before the voters in November 1998.

After repeated attempts to help the Yankees and Mets to receive stadium subsidies, Giuliani shifted gears and made a proposal to build an indoor football stadium that would attract the Jets to Manhattan. The structure was described as one part of a major “sports corridor” that the mayor suggested “would pay for itself many, many times over.” The domed stadium would be built adjacent to the Jacob Javits Convention Center. In addition, the site would become home to a new Madison Square Garden. Giuliani talked of attracting the Olympics, NCAA Championship games, and Super Bowls, arguing that moving forward on this project would “create the most famous sports facility in the world.”

New Yorkers did not regard the plan with the level of enthusiasm for which he hoped. While Giuliani touted this plan, he worked with minor league baseball executives to successfully bring baseball teams to Brooklyn and Staten Island. Two heavily subsidized ballparks were constructed for minor league teams, but Giuliani continued to strike out on plans for a new major league facility. The New York stadium controversy continues to linger despite widespread public opposition to such a project. Rudolph Giuliani is currently serving his last term as New York
City mayor. It appears unlikely that his successor will be a strong advocate of new stadium construction, particularly after terrorist attacks destroyed the city’s World Trade Center complex on September 11, 2001. The enormity of this event is likely to prompt many citizens to focus on rebuilding the city’s financial center before any thought of stadium construction takes place.

Wealthy communication magnate Michael Bloomberg was the only candidate among a long list of contenders to openly admit supporting new stadium construction. 78 Bloomberg, a political outsider, received an important endorsement from Giuliani in October 2001. With Giuliani’s support and a sizeable campaign war chest, Bloomberg managed to defeat heavily favored Democratic opponent Mark Green in the New York City mayoral election on November 6, 2001. Nevertheless, to win this election in the aftermath of the September 11 World Trade Center destruction, Bloomberg downplayed the stadium issue substantially. He invested approximately $50 million of his own money into an aggressive media campaign that focused on rebuilding New York’s financial district and the need to stabilize an ailing metropolitan economy.

As Bloomberg prepares to take over as mayor, the stadium construction issue will probably be placed on the back-burner despite his earlier support for stadium subsidies. New construction proposals are unlikely to gain meaningful public support unless New York City succeeds in obtaining the right to host a Super Bowl, the 2012 Olympics, or a compelling case can be made that such construction would lift the spirits of a city decimated by terrorist attack.79 If any of these scenarios is realized, a shift in public opinion might be possible. In any case, legislation that would be desirable to the Yankees or the Mets is unlikely. If either team determines that a new stadium is a necessity, it will probably be constructed with limited infrastructure-related subsidies unless the political landscape changes in an unanticipated manner.

**Content Analysis Overview: New York Media Coverage**

The New York City media environment is difficult to compare to other media markets around the country. The newspaper environment is extremely competitive, yet the contrast between the more prestigious *New York Times* and the two tabloid-style newspapers, *The New York Post* and the *New York Daily News,* is dramatic. Suburban newspapers such as *Newsday* or *Star Ledger* may have more in common with typical newspapers offered in other metropolitan
areas, but neither has caught on as a popular reading option within New York’s five boroughs. *Newsday* attempted to expand its reach into Manhattan during the 1980s, but abandoned this aggressive venture and now allocates the bulk of its resources to its Long Island readership. The *Star Ledger*, a Newark, New Jersey-based publication, has not pushed hard to extend its reach across the river, correctly recognizing that many New Yorkers would not consider routine reading of a New Jersey publication.

The *New York Times* has a reputation for providing in-depth coverage of national, global, and local issues. The *Times* also has a reputation as a paper that favors high culture, rather than popular culture. It avoids the gossip columns that are popular in the tabloids. Its sports section is less edgy and more high-brow in its opinion content. The columnists tend to dabble in sociology, psychology, and economics as they approach various sports themes. The tabloids, with an edgier, more assertive tone, tend to focus to a greater degree on personalities and controversy.

Because of these emphases, it is difficult to determine which type of publication would better cover the stadium issue. One might expect a greater level of stadium subsidy coverage in the *New York Times* because of the political and economic nature of the issue. Nevertheless, a case could be made that the *New York Post* or the *New York Daily News* would provide more extensive coverage due to the controversy and the personalities involved. After all, Yankees owner George Steinbrenner and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani have been a source of tabloid headlines for many years.

In recent examination of both types of publications, neither is as thorough regarding this issue as newspapers which are published in smaller markets. A typical New York tendency is to offer an article on the issue, but once that article has been presented, to abandon the issue for a week or often much longer. Boston, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati routinely offered periods where the stadium issue was a lead story for several days each week. In contrast, from 1995 onward, it is difficult to find sustained coverage of this issue in any New York publication.

The tabloids may occasionally offer splashy lead coverage for the stadium subsidy issue, but the content is more driven by enticing graphics than a desire to offer in-depth information. The tabloid’s typical lead article when focusing on the stadium issue is almost always less than 700 words. The *New York Times*, in contrast, may relegate the issue to less visible internal pages and utilize less striking headlines, but an article in this publication has a better chance of offering
more depth and detail, periodically exceeding one thousand words in the coverage. For this reason, the content analysis for the New York case study will focus on the *New York Times*.

Examination of the three New York publications offers some important similarities in overall coverage tendencies. The three publications tended to offer a somewhat greater voice to key individuals pushing for stadium construction, but this was offset by aggressive opinion columns that were heavily skewed against new ballpark construction. The *New York Post* differed from the other publications because its editorial staff publicly supported the construction of a new stadium on Manhattan’s west side as a replacement for Yankee Stadium. This editorial position did not prevent *New York Post* columnists and invited opinion commentators from adopting a more frequent position of opposition to new construction. As an example, Phil Mushnick, one of the paper’s most popular sports columnists, was consistent in his opposition to stadium subsidies for a new ballpark in Manhattan.

The *New York Post* also seemed to do a more effective job of involving the public in the process than the *New York Times*, but no New York newspaper appeared to employ the best aspects of civic journalism as a way of facilitating public dialogue about this important policy issue. All newspapers fell short on in-depth coverage of public response, but the *New York Post* seemed to be more willing to seek out average citizens to solicit a very superficial set of public views on stadium construction. In some instances, this use of the public may actually be a crass circulation building strategy rather than an attempt to involve the public in the democratic process.

As an example, on May 2, 2001, the *New York Post* used public reaction to questionable journalism to obtain opinions about stadium construction for the New York Jets. The news article indicated that the Jets might contemplate a move to Los Angeles, but failed to publicly cite a specific individual. The publication instead suggested that the information was obtained from someone close to the new team owner, offering a strategy that some reporters might classify as “deep background.” The entire story was based on speculative remarks by someone described as one of the Jets owner’s “social chums.” The huge front-page graphic and page three headline devoted to this “exclusive” story took up three times more space than the brief article itself.

The story was not even carried by the *New York Times*. It was subsequently refuted by Jets team management. Yet in the uncertain times of today’s fast-paced news world, the
unsubstantiated rumors were offered on several national news outlets, including MSNBC and Fox News. As part of the coverage, the Post included highly visible opinions from seven citizens who offered specific input about the future of the team’s stadium situation. The front-page headline about the possible move of a New York sports team to rival Los Angeles likely generated high levels of newspaper sales from a community that often purchases a newspaper while riding mass transit to and from the workplace. News Corporation chief Rupert Murdoch has a less than stellar journalistic reputation and has been frequently accused of placing profits ahead of news values.

Recent New York media coverage of the stadium issue has been limited, but the combination of two events caused heavy sustained coverage of the stadium issue for a brief period. Both occurred in April 1998. The first event was a falling 500 pound steel expansion joint which was followed by the closing of Yankee Stadium for various safety inspections. This event prompted intense debate about the future of Yankee Stadium. The other event was the announcement of Mets co-owner Fred Wilpon that he wanted to work with the city to construct a new ballpark to replace Shea Stadium. The combination of events prompted front page coverage in all the New York newspapers. It also received sufficient coverage levels to motivate the New York Times to create a page on its web site that listed various stories related to the stadium issue. Even though coverage of the issue diminished dramatically in May and June, it remained in the headlines and did not completely die for an extended period, as has often happened in New York stadium coverage. The New York press appears comfortable with a cycle of somewhat aggressive coverage, followed quickly by limited coverage after lack of dramatic action takes place on an issue. This cycle appears to unfold in this three month period, making it a good illustration of how the New York press has handled the stadium issue in recent years.

New York did not have a public referendum, complicating the analysis of the issue, but neither did Boston, and its coverage of the stadium controversy was typically more detailed than New York’s. Boston has a tabloid and a traditional paper, much like the New York market. In addition, the Boston Globe is perceived to be the newspaper of record for many New England citizens in the same way that New Yorkers regard the New York Times as a national newspaper of record. Beyond that, the New York Times and Boston Globe are owned by the same parent company, so differences in reporting priorities would not be the result of high-level managerial
decision making.

Public input was generally excluded from the news reporting during the period examined. Four percent of those quoted in the news article total were activist citizens or average citizens. Not one individual from these categories actively supported new stadium construction. Such exclusion of the public from the dialogue suggests that news routines and contacts are predetermined and difficult to change. Some evidence exists to suggest that greater public involvement is possible within the context of the *New York Times* newsroom. A humorous article that speculated on the Yankees owner’s possible role in the accident that closed Yankee Stadium included quotes from several citizens, many indicating that they believed he orchestrated this construction-related problem.

Of the quotes evaluated from news articles, 68 percent, more than two-thirds of the quotation total, were from politicians. In some cases the quotes came from spokespersons in the offices of politicians, but in *New York Times* coverage, political voices were heavily privileged. Three-quarters of the quotes from pro-stadium sources came from political voices. This would provide evidence that reporters depend on political voices substantially more than other sources.

**New York News Coverage Quotation Source Categories**

*Breakdown of Individuals Quoted According to Stadium Development Position*

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Team owners and team management provided 11 percent representation in the isolated news quotes. All but one sports source was categorized as pro-stadium. The one voice that did not fit into this category was a San Francisco Giants representative who indicated that his team was forced to find higher levels of private funding due to political difficulties in obtaining subsidies. This quote was coded as neutral. Experts comprised 14 percent of those quoted. Experts offering opposition to stadium subsidies were slightly more than twice as likely to be quoted. Three experts offered neutral observations. The rhetorical appeals used were wide-
ranging. No single appeal category dominated, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the overall strategy of the campaign to build a new stadium in New York. The most heavily utilized appeal category probably offers the most fruitful opportunity for analysis. Economic appeals were the most popular argument made, representing 21 percent of the total amount quoted. Individuals arguing for stadium subsidies fell into this category. They used this appeal 23 percent of the time. Use of this strategy to mobilize public opinion is interesting in light of the steady stream of expert evidence offered by the New York Times throughout the 1990s indicating that stadium subsidies do not tend to provide tangible economic benefits for taxpayers. Pro-stadium employment of this rhetorical strategy was frequently challenged in opinion-based columns, with stadium experts occasionally cited in these pieces. Letters to the editor also frequently reiterated expert claims which discount the economic wisdom of taxpayer subsidies.

Despite this drumbeat of resistance on several fronts, those pushing for stadium subsidies found financial professionals willing to produce economic projections that countered the prevailing scholarly position on this issue. Stadium construction advocates suggested that their economic forecasts were reasonable, arguing that locating a ballpark in Manhattan would create unique synergies unavailable in other urban areas. The “uniqueness of Manhattan” argument may have been regarded as potentially effective in light of the pride that many New York residents have regarding their city. Public opinion polls offer tangible evidence that these arguments were ineffective in convincing New Yorkers to support new stadium construction.

Appeals to authority and appeals to social order were the second most popular appeal used in the New York City analysis. A total of 15 percent of the quotes utilized these strategies. Authority-related appeals attempted to close off dialogue, while appeals to social order were efforts to invite those outside normal policy channels to participate in the process. Individuals arguing to build new stadiums were four times more likely to use the authority appeal. The desire to block a voter referendum on this issue is the likely cause of this disparity. Although fewer quotes were available for the anti-stadium position, invitational appeals to social order were more common for these individuals by a three to two ratio. The desire for a voter referendum may have prompted greater use of this appeal strategy for stadium construction opponents. Ethical appeals provided 14 percent of the appeal total. Stadium opponents used this appeal more frequently relying on it 50 percent more frequently than those in support of new stadium
construction. Other appeals were used, but with smaller frequency. The overall distribution of appeals in the New York case study are as follows:

**New York Case-Study**

**Breakdown of Quotations**

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Community Bond</th>
<th>Community Needs/Values</th>
<th>Technical Expertise</th>
<th>Ethical/Conscience</th>
<th>Social Order</th>
<th>Making Progress</th>
<th>Not Making Progress</th>
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**Percentages of Total Appeals in New York News Coverage**

- Economic: 23%
- Authority: 19%
- Community Bond: 7%
- Community Needs/Values: 7%
- Technical Expertise: 0%
- Ethical/Conscience: 14%
- Social Order: 16%
- Making Progress: 4%
- Not Making Progress: 4%
- Status: 0%
- Other: 5%
A Forum for Anti-Construction Voices: Gatekeeping Bias against the Stadium

During the April, May, June 1998 period, the New York Times offered almost as much opinion-based content as news coverage. If one were to add unsolicited letters to the editor, the opinion content would be more frequent than news coverage. However, when looking only at content that was actively solicited or produced by the newspaper, news stories outpaced opinion pieces for the period by a close 22 to 21 margin. The number of news stories during this period was moderately heavy in April, but dropped off substantially in May and June. A total of 15 news articles were obtained in April, an average of one every two days. Inclusion of opinion-based content would have pushed the April total to approximately an article per day, a dramatic amount for New York stadium coverage. Three news articles were examined in May. The average had slipped to one news article every ten days. In June, the average went up slightly to four, a news article every seven and a half days. The mix of letters to the editor, news articles, and opinion-based content gave readers more frequent access to stadium-related information, but the pattern of brief intensity followed by limited coverage appears to be reflective of New York media coverage of this issue within the last five years. New York is unlike other urban areas which have produced sustained long-term periods of stadium-related coverage.

New York News Coverage Orientation to Stadium Development

Total Number of Quotations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>95</td>
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</table>

Percentages of Quotations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

New York Times news articles favored institutional voices who wanted new stadium construction, but opinion-related content is dramatically skewed against new construction initiatives. News articles were almost twice as likely to offer a voice to pro-subsidy advocates; 58 percent of all appeals were from this group, while 30.5 percent of news article appeals came from
anti-subsidy voices. Neutral individuals comprised 11.5 percent of the appeal total. If neutral voices were excluded from the analysis, 66 percent of those quoted were pro-stadium, while 34 percent represented opposition. Even though the *New York Times* staff and the general public were vehemently opposed to stadium-related subsidies, the news-related quotes obtained during the coding period fail to reflect that tendency.

Opinion content offered a balance to this disparity. Only two opinion articles favored new stadium construction, while 16 were opposed to subsidized stadium construction. Two pieces offered mixed opinions, so the net effect of these articles was neutral. The eight to one ratio of anti-stadium opinion to pro-stadium pieces offers a contrast to the Cincinnati case study which offered a nineteen to one pro-stadium ratio in the final weeks before the referendum.

Overall, however, the tone of New York stadium opposition appears to offer a more assertive anti-stadium posture than the qualified style of support offered by many Cincinnati columnists. In Cincinnati, opinion columns were often couched by admissions that support of the stadium subsidy was not fair to taxpayers, but columnists offered a reluctant claim that such subsidies were needed if Cincinnati intended to maintain its major league stature. In New York, the overall attitude tended to be that such subsidies were foolish and entirely unnecessary.

One particular piece argued that the Yankees do not need a new stadium because “Mr. Steinbrenner is making money hand over fist.” It proceeded to document specific income figures which put the Yankees at the top in revenue generation for all teams in baseball. The article concluded by showing ways that the Yankees were manipulating bookkeeping on stadium maintenance to ensure a “city rent in the last decade that is a paltry average of $210,000 per year.” Based on a conservative average of two million fans at the turnstile, readers could easily calculate that such rent payments amount to about ten cents per ticket.

Another opinion piece offered considerable evidence of stadium subsidy horror stories in other cities and pointedly argued that “Mr. Steinbrenner should be told to pay for his own ball park.” The editorial desk was slightly more cautious when examining both the Mets and Yankees projects. The editors indicated a reluctant willingness to listen to owners regarding subsidies, but skeptically argued that “when club owners in lesser markets raise huge amounts of private capital to finance stadiums, owners and politicians have to explain why that will not work in the city.”
An article favoring stadium construction offered specific qualifications to the support. It specified that New York City should support limited subsidies to the New York Mets since their management offered a more reasonable willingness to accept responsibility for some costs associated with their construction proposal. According to Harvey Araton, such a policy would send a clear message to the Yankees’ owner that the city “would be rewarding professionalism, a willingness to compromise.” The other pro-construction article suggested that the stadium may be too old to renovate, arguing metaphorically that “even the vain and wealthy eventually face the reality of too many face lifts.” Both pro-stadium articles were produced within a week of the steel beam accident in Yankee Stadium. After this time, the publication’s opinion columns and editorials moved more aggressively in the direction of stadium subsidy opposition.

**The Aftermath of New York Stadium Coverage: Limited Enthusiasm**

It is difficult to determine precisely why the *New York Times* would strongly favor inclusion of voices that are in direct contrast to the opinions adopted by the publication’s editors and staff. Media routines are one plausible explanation. An abundance of communication scholarship tends to demonstrate that institutional actors with greater levels of power are frequently given more extensive access to media channels. These individuals are frequently integrated into the fabric of daily news gathering routines, making access to their offices more likely. The mayor and his staff were among the most vociferous advocates of new stadium construction and by virtue of their role in city management, they are most likely to be available to reporters on a daily basis.

The profile of individuals quoted in news coverage offers plausibility for such an assertion. The extremely heavy use of political voices provides evidence that *New York Times* coverage is more reliant on institutional voices than any of the markets examined. The focus on politicians resulted in emphasis of the New York mayor’s pro-stadium rhetoric; but this focus was minimized by the sparse level of coverage in the New York market.

Attempts to explain why New York’s media coverage of the stadium issue has not gained the kind of momentum that has occurred in other cities is problematic. A number of factors may come into play, but isolation of just one is unlikely to adequately explain the cause of this limited coverage. New York’s highly diverse cultural landscape is probably a key reason that stadium construction coverage has been limited. The tendency of publications such as the *New York*
Times to pull in experts who almost universally offer opinion-based content critical to the stadium construction issue is yet another factor that may limit citizen concern for the issue.

Another possibility may come from an idea forwarded in the community-based research of Phillip Tichenor, George Donohue, and Clarice Olien. They conclude that media coverage of conflict tends to “contribute to the legitimation of the conflict and/or certain points of view that are part of the conflict.”

Although media coverage frequently seeks out conflict to build audience share, it is possible that in this case, those in decision-making roles at the New York Times have determined that the stadium issue does not merit further legitimation.

The New York Times’ tendency to favor traditional institutional actors such as politicians is equally problematic. The data offered in this chapter’s content analysis provides an indication that deep-seated media routines may be at the core of coverage tendencies. Nevertheless, other explanations are plausible. The analysis is complicated by the favoring of pro-stadium quotes when anti-stadium opinions were prevalent in opinion-based content.

An alternative explanation would be that the publication made a conscious decision to balance its opinion content with more prominent coverage of opposing views than was evident in news stories. It is unlikely that the linkages between news and editorial staffs are sufficiently close to achieve such an outcome, however. It is also possible that the practitioners involved with this issue believed that giving stadium subsidy advocates a more prominent platform would be a way to allow the public to fairly determine whether these proposals had merit. Since the ideas never gained broad support, reporters may have believed that increasing coverage of the other side was unnecessary.

It is most likely that the coverage provided was simply skewed to reflect typical media routines of the New York media market. Just as the Washington press corps offers more extensive coverage of the President than Congress, the New York press corps is more inclined to quote the mayor’s office than individual members of city council.

The quest for a new stadium has not moved forward in New York despite Rudolph Giuliani’s aggressive attempt to obtain funds for such construction. The city has provided subsidies for stadium construction of minor league ballparks in Staten Island and Brooklyn, but these projects are small with funding levels that pale in comparison to major league construction. Efforts to make stadium construction a reality for the Yankees, Mets, or Jets, the region’s major
league teams, have failed to move forward. The public’s appetite for new stadium construction appears to be minimal. In light of the 2001 terrorist attacks and Giuliani’s lame-duck status, stadium construction in the near future appears unlikely.
Sources: Chapter Seven


10. “New St. George Grounds.” *New York Times*. April 23, 1886, p.3. The upscale nature of the facility seemed to be a primary reporting attraction. Manhattan residents needed to travel to this facility by ferry from docks located near Whitehall Street on the southern tip of the borough.

11. No one ever uncovered the cause of the blaze, but street-level speculation included a broad-range of theories. Most appeared to be focused on the team’s dreaded rival, the Cubs. According to “one popular yarn...a platoon of hated Cubs fans had put a match to the vendor’s stand.” Another story was that “Cubs’ manager Frank Chance, a bitter enemy of [John] McGraw, had actually lit the match himself.” Other theories included a Bolshevik plot and the notion that the fire was set by Ban Johnson, head of the rival American League. Robinson, Ray and Christopher Jennison. *Yankee Stadium: 75 Years of Drama, Glamour, and Glory*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1998. p. 4.


16. “Ebbets Field Opening Day Victory for Superbas.” *New York Times*. April 6, 1913, Sporting Section, p. 1. Note: a Sunday picture section (April 6, 1913) offered team photos and photos of an empty Ebbets Field with a similar sized photo of an empty Polo Grounds. No photographic coverage of the opening game was provided.


20. “74,200 See Yankees Open New Stadium; Ruth Hits Home Run.” *New York Times*. April 19, 1923, pp.1, 15. The *New York Times* did not provide front page coverage to preview the opening. Only coverage after the event received front page placement. The quote is from page one.

21. Ruppert’s initial partner was Tillinghast Huston, an engineer and millionaire with wealth that came from public works projects. After stadium construction was complete, Ruppert successfully made bought out Houston’s share of the team.


24. Caro, Robert. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1974. p.777. According to urban expert Charles Abrams, as quoted by Caro, Moses’ power was so extensive under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 that “in my opinion....Macy’s could condemn Gimbles- if Robert Moses gave the word.” W. Kingland Macy stated that “Mr. Moses told me personally that his power was such that he could seize my house, put me out of it, and arrest me for trespassing if I tried to get into it again.”


27. “Fans Are Frantic Over Game Shifts.” *New York Times*. August 18, 1955, p. 26. This was a rare article that included typical citizen’s response to the stadium construction issue. All those quoted were from the Brooklyn area. No New Jersey baseball fans were quoted.


32. An investigative series of Moses, run by the New York World-Telegram and Sun, relegated some of the stories to inside pages, making some available only in the Brooklyn edition. For information of how editors limited the coverage of this rare journalistic investigation into Moses, see: Caro, pp. 1005-1013. Note: much of the information related to Moses and his relationship with the press is based on Caro’s extensive examination of this issue.

33. For a detailed overview of one of Moses’ first public relations defeats see: Caro, Robert. The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974. pp. 984-1004 [Chapter 42]. Even though Moses got the parking lot that he wanted on Central Park property, the victory was Pyrrhic. Moses was portrayed in this instance as a “bully” and a “sneak” (Caro, p. 994).


35. Caro, p. 1099.


38. This unusual ownership structure was the result of an estate settlement. Yankee Stadium had been owned by John Cox, a wealthy Texas executive, prior to this arrangement.


43. Durso, Joseph. “Yankees and Mets Oppose Sharing of Shea Stadium.” *New York Times.* August 28, 1971, p. 52. “New Jersey Mets Team of the Future?” *New York Times.* September 1, 1971, p. 29. In the September 1, 1971 article Grant argued against claims that the Mets were unfairly benefitting in their deal with the city. According to Grant, “we put two or three million dollars of our own money into dining rooms and extra toilet facilities. The city will own all of this at the end of 30 years.”


51. Carroll, Maurice. “Demolition Urged of Tweed Court.” *New York Times.* August 11, 1974, p.60. Ironically, the stadium-related content of this article was hidden in material related to demolition of a building that served as a monument to the ‘Boss Tweed’ era of New York history.


58. Sullivan, p. 143. Raymond Keating, a policy analyst who has published for the CATO Institute and in the *New York Times* is one of the individuals who has placed the final renovation expense at $150 million.


60. Hess’ concern for cleanliness was evident his use of white uniforms as an overall policy in his facilities for low-level gas station attendants during the 1960s and 1970s.


65. Verhover, Sam Howe. “Yankees to Stay in New York City; Agreement Lasts Until 2032, Parking Garage is Included.” *New York Times*. November 1, 1987, pp. A1, A49. Although this may appear to lock the Yankees into the South Bronx location for at least forty years from the date of this report, sports franchise owners often back out of leases with various strategies. Some contracts may allow owners to exit after a certain period if specific conditions are not met. In some cases owners will exit a lease through the use of complex legal arguments that assert that some action on the part of the lessor has constituted a breach of the contract.
66. The Yankee’s stadium lease was extended to 2032 by New York City in 1987. In 1973, when Steinbrenner took over the team, the lease was set to expire in 2002.


68. This would have rekindled Staten Island’s link to major league baseball which was established in 1886 but abandoned before the twentieth century as rapid transportation to population centers became a more important commercial consideration for team owners. The overture to the Yankees may have been part of a more complex series of political moves intended to apply pressure to the city for concessions that would benefit the citizens of Staten Island. The borough was contemplating a move to secede from New York City.


79. Securing a Super Bowl is unlikely to be sufficient to turn public opinion around unless accompanied by a specific long-term NFL enticement such as financial assistance or positioning a permanent NFL entertainment theme park in the area as was unsuccessfully proposed in Boston. The Olympics could have a greater capacity to change public opinion on the issue since this sports spectacle takes place over an extended period and might allow for external subsidies

80. Note: Fox News and the *New York Post* are owned by the same parent company. MSNBC is not directly affiliated with either organization.

81. The words “somewhat aggressive” are carefully chosen. The level and depth of April 1998 stadium coverage is not on par with peak local coverage in some other cities, but April 1998 tends to reflect the local press’ most aggressive focus on this issue.

82. Figures are rounded. As a result, the total is 99 percent in this instance.


Chapter 8: Conclusion

This study examined media coverage of stadium construction from two perspectives. The first perspective was aimed at uncovering the long-term historical development of this issue. The second attempted to isolate more recent coverage in an attempt to make comparisons of media coverage tendencies across differing media markets. The intent of combining these two analyses was to provide a richer and more meaningful overall analysis that would be more useful in educating individuals about media involvement in the stadium issue. The goal of this research was to determine whether media coverage favored stadium construction initiatives.

The historic information provided a longitudinal overview that allows individuals to understand that the citizens involved in the stadium issue and the priorities that have been assigned to issue coverage are likely to change over time. Some elements related to media coverage have remained consistent, but detailed historic documentation suggests that the future of stadium construction coverage will differ from what we have seen in the very recent past.

Careful examination of more recent stadium-related news coverage is intended to provide a better understanding of where we are now with this issue so that scholars, policymakers, and the public can comprehend how media involvement has been part of shaping recent stadium construction policy.

History as a Barometer for Stadium-Related Media Coverage

Historic examination of media coverage permits a better understanding of what has changed and what has remained constant in stadium construction coverage over the last century. Detailed examination of this nature helps to make analysis of the present and suggestions for the future more coherent and more practical. A firm historical grounding serves to rein in a natural human tendency to look at the past with naive idealism. When one looks at the role of the public in construction of these new facilities, historic analysis suggests that public input has typically been pushed to the margins throughout the history of this issue. Coverage bias favoring selected community leaders has existed throughout the history of media coverage.

The linkage between civic pride and ballpark construction emerged during the Progressive Era. Prior to that period, isolated evidence could be found linking community pride to ballpark construction. Until the steel and concrete era of ballpark construction supplanted the rickety wooden structures that served the early pioneers of the game, there was little reason for a
community to have pride in its ballpark.

Progressive Era coverage tended to support a hierarchical society in a manner that was consistent with the managerial imperatives of the time. The rise of Taylorism, a scientific approach to factory production, shifted labor from craftsmanship to specialization. In the same manner, ballpark construction emphasized the specialized skill of the architect and the various building trades. The construction of Forbes Field focused on the specialized box seating and acquisition of the various building materials that were necessary for project completion. These materials were obtained from a diverse range of vendors and shipped to the community via railroad. Citizens may have developed a sense of awe for the project. More importantly for the leaders of the day, these same individuals may have been prompted to accept scientific management in the workplace even if exposed to the traditional apprenticeships and old methods of labor for several generations. Media coverage of stadium construction helped to reinforce broad sociological changes that were taking place in major urban areas.

Media coverage also helped to cultivate baseball as an important cultural institution. The recognition of the local ballpark as a symbol of civic pride helped to cement the relationship between a community and its local baseball team. The team owner became a local figurehead and received highly positive coverage throughout the process. Because taxpayer subsidies were not sought, press coverage steered clear of critical remarks about baseball owners during this time. Nevertheless, owners were established as mercenaries, much as others in the business community. Publicity about renting the stadium for other entertainment performances gave Progressive Era citizens a firm understanding that the profit motive was the driving force behind new ballpark construction.

Franchise owners made a number of savvy moves to solidify their position within the community as facility construction unfolded. Many of these moves involved inclusion of key leaders in the process. The ceremonial involvement of key politicians in opening day events and carefully orchestrated stadium inspections from league officials helped enhance the credibility of team owners at a time when some citizens may have looked with suspicion on professional athletics. Such coverage also served as a latent lesson in community power. Owners may not have been at the top of the pecking order, but they gained credibility through publicity that chronicled their limited access to these dignitaries.
When possible, visits from national political leaders such as the President worked to further heighten this credibility. Such visits also served to build a sense of civic pride that allowed citizens to believe they were involved in a community that was truly special. The opening of Yankee Stadium in 1923 involved New York’s popular governor as well as world renowned maestro John Philip Sousa. At the time, the Yankees were not nearly as popular as the rival New York Giants. Such a blend of political and cultural institutions helped the Yankees to eventually solidify their role within the community, but it also gave many New Yorkers a sense of community pride. After all, if the Yankees, perceived to be a second class team by many citizens, could attract such luminaries, the status of the city must be secure.

News coverage in the second era of modern stadium construction differed in many ways from Progressive Era coverage. Civic leaders were more profoundly integrated into the process. Planning became a more important issue. Taxpayer subsidies emerged as a core ingredient in arranging for new stadium construction. Even though the public was not a major part of most stadium-related news coverage, the subsidy component opened the issue to a greater level of public scrutiny.

The Pittsburgh construction of Three Rivers Stadium offered an indication that the public could become a major factor in media coverage of stadium building. The civil rights marches that used the stadium as a backdrop demonstrated the symbolic power of sports within a community. The Cincinnati coverage during the construction of Riverfront Stadium demonstrated the power of media institutions to shape public policy on stadium construction issues. Cincinnati Enquirer management was at the forefront of pushing for stadium construction. When it looked as though taxpayer funds for stadium planning would stop, top executives at the Enquirer actively rallied the business community for support. It is possible that without their direct involvement in the project, public policy would have moved in a different direction. Such involvement raises questions about whether voices opposing new stadium construction were marginalized in news coverage. After all, the executives at the Cincinnati Enquirer were publicly committed to support of this project and examples of stadium opposition in the newspaper during this era were rare.

New York and Boston coverage of stadium construction during this era served to demonstrate the dramatic political difficulties of publicly sponsored stadium projects. The site selection debacle in the Boston area and New York Mayor John Lindsay’s severely miscalculated
Yankee Stadium construction estimates revealed the limitations of political officials in major urban areas. Both projects took place at a time when large American cities faced dramatic financial and social crises. In both cities, key political leaders were unable to inspire public confidence in urban management. In the Boston case, the result was team movement to suburban Foxboro. In the New York case, the result was a very expensive renovation of an area landmark at a time when essential city services were under siege. In light of what transpired as the Yankee Stadium project unfolded, it was not surprising that the city lost an NFL franchise to the neighboring New Jersey suburbs.

The third era of stadium construction revealed a shift in power from political leaders to sports franchise owners. By the early 1990s, team owners were making demands for both new stadiums and a larger portion of the revenue streams that came from these facilities. Cities that were insecure about their status as a “major league” city often caved in to such demands. Cities with greater levels of confidence resisted giving owners multi-million subsidies. In some cases, cities that did not acquiesce to team owner demands lost their teams to other cities. Houston lost its NFL franchise to the smaller Nashville market. Los Angeles lost two NFL franchises to smaller markets in Oakland and St. Louis. During this time frame, many cities included substantially more focus on team owners in media coverage than ever before. Public resistance to stadium subsidies intensified, but nervous political leaders often gave team owners what they wanted to avoid political fallout associated with the loss of a major league franchise. The stadium building continues at a brisk pace throughout the nation as the third major era of stadium construction unfolds.

In some complicated and esoteric issues, the public may have an insufficient level of expertise to comment on public policy in a coherent and responsible manner. With sufficient education, most issues do not fall into that category. The stadium issue is one in which the public can be easily educated and should be regarded as participants in the decision making process.

Such public involvement often complicates the lives of team owners and political leaders, but the result of not incorporating the public into the process could be lower levels of political efficacy in cities where individuals are locked out of the process. Furthermore, the ramifications of behind the scenes maneuvering might be more corrosive over time than civic leaders might realize. New York’s inability to construct a major new sports facility is understandable in light of
what is known about stadium economics. But the citizens of New York might be even more reluctant to jump on board of any major project requiring extensive public support, in part because of the legacy of closed-door decision making that was spearheaded for years by Robert Moses and perpetuated in the Yankee Stadium renovations that were initiated by Mayor John Lindsay. With the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 as part of the New York City policy landscape, stadium construction may be a much more distant possibility at the present time.

Cincinnati’s citizens may feel that they were duped by city leaders and team executives in the construction of Paul Brown Stadium, but they know that they were, at a minimum, invited into the process, however flawed that process might be. Citizens in Pittsburgh may not have that feeling. Instead, they know that the decision to build new facilities was initially triggered by the Allegheny County RAD Board, a collection of appointed bureaucrats. They are not elected and are shielded to a great degree from political fallout. RAD Board members are rarely examined by journalists in routine reporting assignments and their names are largely unfamiliar to anyone except those who are extremely well-connected or exceedingly attentive. Just as the steel titans of the Progressive Era guided policy without input, local political and civic leaders in Pittsburgh have succeeded in getting their way without pushing hard to understand what alternatives might have been palatable to the public. The end result has been the construction of two state-of-art facilities, but another by-product may be a public that is highly skeptical about the governing system that triggered the construction.

Skepticism of this nature can manifest itself in unanticipated ways. The heavy administrative hand of Pittsburgh steel magnates was countered by public resistance to their philanthropic efforts. Such actions may have been part of a series of good-faith efforts intended to improve the quality of life for the less affluent in the city, but many of these citizens reflexively chased less cultured commercial recreation, in part, because of a skepticism about the intentions of affluent citizens with power.

The popularity of baseball was one result of these citizen choices. Baseball became an acceptable activity for both elites and the broader public for vastly different reasons. For elites, it inculcated a set of ideologies that served their capitalist mind set. For less prominent citizens, it provided an opportunity to bind with fellow citizens in a ritual that may have been influenced by elites, but was not fully controlled by them. Pittsburgh’s Barney Dreyfuss may have been
friendly with Andrew Carnegie, but the affluent steelmaker did not measure his status within the community by his ability to obtain skybox seating at major sporting events.

Now that this dynamic has changed and the trappings of sports spectatorship have become a more tangible measure of one’s status in the community, it is possible that those unable to play the game will simply turn away from it entirely or watch only when it is convenient. Evidence of this is already available. Television ratings for professional team-oriented sporting events have slipped in recent years. Alternatives such as golf and auto racing have increased their market share. Sales of skateboarding equipment now outpace sales of baseball equipment in sporting goods stores. Soccer has also emerged as a more popular youth option than in generations past. Participation in youth soccer has tripled from 1980 to 1995.¹ Parents may not fully understand this game, but they seem supportive because soccer does not remind them of multi-million stadium subsidies or millionaire ballplayers.

The recent dedication of $3 million in resources to construct a New York City Little League field offers evidence that some powerful individuals are willing to push very hard to ensure that traditional sporting institutions retain their popular appeal.² These efforts may help preserve the status quo in sports, but there is no assurance that the public will continue to support sports such as baseball and football with the same level of enthusiasm as prior generations. If the value of traditional team sports is diminished as a publicly marketable commodity, it is possible that media emphasis of these sports will also change.

**Examination of Stadium Coverage Hypotheses**

Quantitative analysis of recent stadium coverage in four major urban areas was intended to uncover overall tendencies in media coverage of this issue. The attempt to determine whether smaller cities offer a greater level of pro-subsidy stadium coverage has yielded mixed results.

The first hypothesis to be examined asserted that “both large and small urban markets would be influenced by a booster mentality that encourages new stadium construction.” Quantitative examination of the evidence would suggest that this hypothesis was supported in news coverage of stadium construction. In New York, Boston, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh institutional actors quoted in news stories were more likely to favor stadium construction subsidies. Those calling for stadium subsidy were offered more profound media access such as first or second quote positioning than those opposed to stadium construction in all media...
markets. Examination of four distinctively different case studies yielded the following results:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Coverage Orientation to Stadium Development</th>
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<tr>
<td>percentage of total quotations analyzed from news coverage for each media market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh</td>
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* does not total 100 percent due to rounding of numbers for each category.

Yet simply examining these raw numbers fails to tell the full story. The first hypothesis may have been supported by quantitative data, but when comparative analysis of these data are examined through a qualitative prism, support for the first hypothesis is less certain. The clear opposition to new stadium construction in New York newspapers’ opinion content suggests that the correlation between boosterism and the inclusion of pro-subsidy voices is not such a simple matter. The “booster mentality” assertion was problematic in light of differences among media markets. The emotional attachment to a given locality, a key ingredient of boosterism, is an elusive variable that may be difficult to isolate with quantitative measures. Broader examination of reporting content suggests that a booster mentality can exist in spite of stadium opposition.

Calls for new stadium construction are not always the only method of determining whether boosterism is evident in a community. Pro-community media support for other projects such as business-related construction or funding of unique cultural institutions may offer indications that boosterism is present and healthy in a community. Careful scrutiny of evidence throughout this study suggests that qualitative methods may be better equipped to determine whether boosterism is evident in media coverage of an issue.

New York’s highly jingoistic belief that it serves as a national cultural center appears to be at least partially responsible for limitations in coverage of the stadium issue. Careful examination of New York media content unrelated to stadium construction suggests that New York’s media practitioners and their urban customer base regard blind imitation of trends in other cities as unacceptable. Boosterism in this instance is predicated on New York’s role in setting
trends, not demonstration that they have the capacity to parrot building trends which have become commonplace in other cities. Because new stadium construction elsewhere would place New York in an imitative mode, it would conspire to make such construction less appealing for its citizens. Many New Yorkers might enjoy visiting Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, or similar cities on occasion, but many of these same individuals would react with horrified revulsion if asked to use such locales as a source for establishing trends within their larger community.

In many ways, New York regards itself as more than just a national city. It is a world city, a metropole that projects culture on a global scale. Arts and other forms of cultural entertainment dwarf those of moderate and smaller cities. The nonprofit cultural institutions, art galleries, auction houses, commercial theaters and road companies, and motion picture and televsion production institutions sustain New York elites with forms of cultural capital that render them, if not impervious, less bound up with the professional sports stadium as the ultimate source of civic pride.

When the economists of culture and arts James Heilbrun and Charles M. Gray compared direct per capita expenditure on the arts in New York with Minneapolis-St. Paul and five other small to medium-sized U.S. cities, they found “the differences in magnitude to be striking.” According to their data from two decades ago, “the arts in New York annually generate $182 of direct expenditure per capita, compared with only $15.24 in Minneapolis-St. Paul and $9.96 in the six cities as a whole.” The five other cities included Columbus, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, and Springfield, Illinois. With a budget of $103 million in 1998, New York City’s Department of Cultural Affairs actually outspent the National Endowment for the Arts, and the city’s capital budget claimed to have funds in the range of $164 million available, if necessary, for construction projects by cultural institutions.\(^3\)

Boston’s boosterism appeared to be highly localized in some instances, but a more broad-based regional boosterism could be uncovered that tied into the area’s focus on history and heritage. This dichotomy further complicated the application of this term. The citizens of Foxboro used their suburban football stadium as a platform for community boosterism. Other sections of the city regarded their neighborhoods as sufficiently developed and not in need of a new stadium to define their cultural identity.

Some citizens regarded the thought of a shiny new facility as something that would be
incongruent with the city’s sense of reverence for history. This attitude made it possible for the Save Fenway Park! organization to mobilize grass roots interest in Fenway Park preservation. This activism was periodically justified because Fenway Park as an historical landmark served as a tangible way of presenting Boston’s uniqueness to the rest of the nation. Many citizens were subsequently convinced that a new Fenway Park should be constructed, but only after a carefully orchestrated media campaign was undertaken to present the new ballpark as an attempt to preserve the historic charm and tradition which was created by the old ballpark. Some Boston-area decisions were predicated on a parochialism that is the antithesis of boosterism. Boosterism of a traditional nature was clearly exposed in the Cincinnati and Pittsburgh case studies. Signs of civic boosterism were also evident in New York and Boston, but uncovering their presence required further examination of the broader cultures of each city.

The second hypothesis, the notion that smaller markets would more profoundly reflect a pro-stadium slant in news coverage, was refuted by the data, particularly if examining the percentages offered in the Boston case study. This finding requires qualitative explanation, however, since these reporting percentages have the capacity to deceive. Boston coverage that focused on stadium issues favored pro-stadium voices by more than a four to one margin; 63 percent of Boston’s quotations were from individuals supporting facility construction, with only 15 percent opposing such construction. The 22 percent of neutral voices was, in part, the result of a high number of experts cited in news coverage and an uncertain franchise relocation situation.

But Boston Globe coverage of social issues unrelated to stadium coverage provided not-so-subtle arguments that were anti-stadium subsidy in nature. These indirect attacks of stadium subsidies would not have been uncovered in a quantitative comparison of similar stadium-oriented stories. As an example, one news story focused on lack of affordable housing for the poor, and the efforts of Julie McKinney, a local Habitat for Humanity director. Her attempt to raise $300,000 to pay for unexpected infrastructure expenses was contrasted with pending approval of $70 million for a new stadium for the Patriots. The article closed by stating that “while John Harrington was selling Bostonians on a new ballpark and Bob Kraft was accepting taxpayer contributions to his new stadium, Julie McKinney was wondering where in the world she would find enough money to build...a roof.”

New York news coverage was considerably less detailed than stadium-related coverage in
Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Boston. The number of news stories that were analyzed reflected less than half of the total provided in all of these other case studies. Because the New York market is a national media center, brief periods of intense stadium-related coverage at the local level prompted national attention, providing the false impression that New York coverage was extremely extensive. In reality, all three New York newspapers provided much less coverage of the stadium issue than publications in the other examined markets.

The lack of a New York stadium referendum may have contributed to the less extensive coverage, but the lack of enthusiasm for the 1987 New Jersey ballpark referendum suggests that even if a stadium initiative was injected into the media landscape, it would not have dramatically altered New York’s tendency to minimize this issue. Limited discussion with individuals in the New York metropolitan area tends to support the hypothesis that a new stadium is not perceived as an important regional concern. Evidence of an exceedingly strong commitment to cultural assets unrelated to sports seems to suggest that stadium coverage limitations in New York accurately reflect public priorities on this issue. Media practitioners in New York do not appear to be unfairly suppressing coverage of the issue, nor do they seem to be giving the public more detail on this issue than the public would like to see.

If one were to examine the overall volume of coverage in each case study and reexamine the intent of the second hypothesis [i.e.: that small markets would be more committed to voices supporting stadium construction in news coverage], it is evident that the smaller media markets do give greater overall opportunity for expression of ideas to those who support stadium-related subsidies, but both news and opinion content must be examined for this assertion to be credible. The smaller markets offered less of a pro-stadium slant on a percentage basis in news coverage than larger market Boston. New York, with a ratio of two voices advocating stadium subsidies to each voice of opposition, was less supportive of stadium construction than Pittsburgh but was less likely to privilege anti-subsidy voices than small-market Cincinnati.

Large-market cities were significantly less receptive to stadium subsidies in opinion-related content than small-market cities. Pittsburgh and Cincinnati gave readers much more opportunity to hear a greater number of pro-stadium voices in opinion columns. If news coverage and opinion-based coverage were to be combined, the percentage of pro-stadium voices offered in larger markets would diminish while the percentage of small market voices supporting
stadium construction would increase. Even though the Boston metropolitan area was faced with the strong possibility of franchise relocation for its NFL team, the Patriots, opinion content was stacked against stadium subsidy during the coding period by a nine to seven margin.

Boston’s high level of neutral voices might have reflected a high level of experts which were cited in the study, but many of the neutral quotes came from non-expert categories. Some of the neutral quotes may have reflected the difficult situation faced by area leaders. Inflammatory statements had the potential to push the Patriots in the direction of the highly-subsidized Hartford stadium plan. Opinion expression in the Boston case study may have been constrained by this reality. Under such circumstances, civic and political leaders may have minimized public pronouncements of stadium subsidy opposition.

The institutional actors in the examined small-market publications were given greater levels of opinion-related support than was evident in larger-market publications. Large-market publications were more likely to vehemently oppose the call for stadium subsidies, as evidenced by the eight to one ratio of anti-subsidy columns offered in the New York Times. The Cincinnati Enquirer offered its readership opinion content that was dramatically skewed to favor the pro-construction side by a nineteen to one margin, while Pittsburgh and Boston opinion content fell somewhere between these two extremes.

The nature of opinion-based content renders suspect connections of pro-stadium news coverage percentages to the assertion of a “booster mentality.” Qualitative examination of New York coverage revealed that a “booster mentality” and support of stadium construction are not necessarily automatic linkages. A booster mentality and opposition to stadium construction appear to intermittently shape the New York market’s news content in areas outside the realm of stadium construction, but media routines that favor institutional actors seems to guide stadium news coverage more so than the ideological predispositions of news gathering personnel.

Quantitative examination of opinion content in all publications provides evidence that the editorial posture of smaller market publications was skewed to support stadium construction. Based on percentages, the New York market’s news coverage of the stadium issue more heavily favored pro-stadium voices than smaller-market coverage offered in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, but when balanced with New York’s very negative opinion content, media coverage in smaller markets offered news and opinion content that was more ideologically consistent and potentially
less confusing to the public. New Yorkers might be able to make sense of the discrepancies between Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s frequently emphasized quotations in the newspaper and editorial opposition to these statements, but in smaller markets it may be even easier to understand that newspaper opinion columns and the individuals emphasized in news coverage speak with a similar voice.

The third hypothesis, that news coverage of stadium construction initiatives would favor pro-construction, pro-subsidy voices at a level that exceeded the desires of the broad community, was generally supported, but the Cincinnati case study may offer limited evidence that the hypothesis was not fully supported in every instance. Cincinnati’s correlations were almost perfectly matched with public opinion data, but even in this case, the percentage of pro-stadium individuals used in opinion columns offered a clear slant that favored stadium construction in a dramatic manner. Pro-subsidy voices in news stories were slightly greater than the percentage demonstrated in the 1996 referendum vote but too close to comfortably be regarded as supportive of the hypothesis. If neutral or uncommitted voices were deleted from the analysis, Cincinnati news coverage favored stadium advocate voices by a 62 percent to 38 percent margin. The election results were 61 percent and 39 percent respectively, a margin that is extremely close to public opinion on this issue.

Because of Cincinnati’s difficulties with cost overruns on Paul Brown Stadium, the referendum vote totals represent a period of peak support for stadium construction. Public support for new stadium construction was severely challenged later by repeated post-referendum coverage that isolated stadium-related problems.

Pittsburgh’s dramatic defeat of the stadium referendum, when contrasted with heavy media over-representation of pro-construction advocates, offers compelling evidence that pro-construction voices were favored in news coverage to a much greater degree than public opinion would warrant. Metropolitan Pittsburgh’s strongest base of referendum support was Allegheny County which still opposed the stadium issue at the polls by a very strong margin. In this county, 58 percent of those voting rejected stadium funding, while 42 percent voted in favor of the Regional Renaissance Initiative. Prior to this vote, Pittsburgh media coverage was skewed to favor stadium construction by a 62.5 percent to 32.5 percent margin. Ten percent of the quotes during this period were neutrally coded. After the stadium vote, public opinion content
suggesting a dramatic shift in public attitude never emerged, yet pro-stadium voices received even greater prominence from this point onward, elevating the total percentage of Pittsburgh quotations to 68 percent favoring stadium construction with a mere 27 percent expressing opposition.

Boston and New York coverage of stadium-related public opinion offers a less certain analysis. The nature of the debate in both cities was clouded by the lack of a voter referendum to serve as a specific benchmark. Boston area public opinion was also complicated by the potential loss of an NFL franchise and emotional nostalgia for an old ballpark. In spite of these issues, one public opinion poll taken during the coding period revealed that the surveyed Boston area residents opposed stadium subsidies, but were willing to assist with non-stadium infrastructure subsidies. According to the poll, conducted by RKM Research and Communication for the Boston Herald, 60 percent of those questioned “opposed....public spending on the bricks and mortar of a stadium, while just 32 percent support[ed] it.” Infrastructure support for public transit, parking, and roadways surrounding a stadium site received more enthusiastic support, with “62 percent supporting the idea and 30 percent opposing it.”

Even under the second scenario, infrastructure-related subsidies, the Boston Globe’s ballpark-specific quotation content featured a more skewed 63 percent to 15 percent difference between pro-construction and anti-construction voices. Neutral voices represented 22 percent of the total. The slightly greater than two to one ratio favoring infrastructure in the public opinion poll is less dramatic than the more than four to one ratio of pro-stadium quotes uncovered during the content analysis coding period.

New York’s 58 percent to 35.5 percent of news source quotations favoring of the stadium construction issue contrasts sharply with public opinion on the issue. Specific polls on stadium subsidy were not available during the actual coding period, but some related polling information, when linked to interpretation of political activity at the time, provides strong evidence that public opinion was not particularly favorable to stadium-related subsidies. A Marist Institute poll, released ten days after news about the defective Yankee Stadium steel beam was made public, showed that 76 percent of those surveyed favored keeping the team in their current Bronx location. A mere 21 percent supported Mayor Giuliani’s proposal that would move the team to Manhattan, while a minuscule three percent wanted the team to move to New Jersey. The
structural integrity of the stadium was not perceived to be a public concern, with 85 percent of those polled indicating that they had little worry about the future safety of the facility.6

Peter Vallone’s push for a public referendum on the stadium issue and Rudolph Giuliani’s vehement opposition to this action offers clear evidence that public support for the stadium issue was marginal. Newspapers frequently indicated that the public overwhelmingly opposed stadium construction subsidies. The level of public distaste for the idea appeared to be so strong that newspapers did not feel the need to examine this issue more deeply in the period that content analysis took place. In spite of these indicators, New York stadium coverage provided more voices who favored stadium construction with 58 percent of those committed aligned to this position, 30.5 percent opposed, and 11.5 percent adopting a neutral position.

Examination of media appeals tended to support the growth-oriented direction of urban media coverage. In each of the four case studies, economic appeals were the most heavily utilized. This would tend to support Harvey Molotch’s “growth machine” hypothesis. Institutional actors that support growth-oriented community projects, appear to have greatest ability to shape the media agenda. Boston and Cincinnati coverage was less focused on growth than New York and Pittsburgh, however. Many of the Boston and Cincinnati economic appeals did not tend to try to convince the public that stadium construction would provide dramatic economic benefits. Boston’s economic appeals often more narrowly focused on the unique domain of the sports industry rather than community-based economics. Stadium advocates in Cincinnati occasionally used a similar strategy, but also made the attempt to claim broad-based economic advantages to stadium construction in a manner similar to New York and Pittsburgh. An implied rationale of the sports industry economic appeal might be that support for stadium subsidies should be undertaken, not for economic reasons, but as a means of maintaining community status.

Of the other categories, ethical appeals, such as an attempt to point out the inequity of subsidizing a privately held sports team, ranked in the top four in every single case study. These appeals were particularly popular with stadium subsidy opponents, but were used on occasion by stadium subsidy advocates. The broad popularity of such appeals should not be surprising in light of the polarizing nature of stadium subsidies. Pittsburgh had the highest level of ethical appeals with 20 percent devoted to this category. Appeals usage based on stadium development position
in news coverage in each case study are as follows:

**News Coverage Appeals Based on Stadium Development Position:**

*Breakdown of Quotations by City*

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<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
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*Code for Appeals*

A - Economic

B - Authority

C - Community Bond

D - Community Needs/Values

E - Technical Expertise

F - Ethical/Conscience

G - Social Order

H - Making Progress

I - Not Making Progress

J - Status

K - Other

L - Total
**Percentages of Total Appeals in News Coverage:**

*Appeal Categories According to City*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boston</th>
<th>Cincinnati</th>
<th>New York</th>
<th>Pittsburgh</th>
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<td>Economic</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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*Note: percentages are rounded*

Each city had their own particular appeal emphasis, reflecting the unique nature of the community. Economic and ethical appeals were consistently popular across differing environments, and no other appeal categories emerged as heavily utilized in all examined case studies. New York’s use of appeals to authority and appeals to social order indicates that a rhetorical battle was underway to either engage or disengage the public. The New York City Council’s push to inject a voter referendum into the process tended to heighten the popularity of these appeal categories. A common strategy of Peter Vallone, the most vociferous referendum advocate, was to offer an appeal that invited citizens into the process. This might be countered with rhetoric from the other side which attempted to exclude such involvement.

Boston’s frequent use of the social order appeal was somewhat disingenuous in several instances when directed at the Patriots’ stadium issue. The call for inclusion in this case was
driven by the desire to sell corporate skybox seating to elites within the community. With such seating costing significantly more than the typical area citizen earned in a year, the inclusive rhetoric offered in this instance was, ironically, limited to a select few. The heavy emphasis of the community needs/values appeal in Cincinnati tended to reflect the community’s perception that sports was an important part of the region’s cultural landscape. Pittsburgh’s focus on making progress, the community’s third most popular appeal, reflected the intensity of political and civic leaders’ steadfast commitment to new stadium funding despite public opposition to such proposals.

The appeal categories reflect unique characteristics of each case study. The use of appeal categories, while helpful as a quantitative analytic tool, can be improperly interpreted without an insightful qualitative effort to clarify the rationale that might have inspired an appeal’s use.

**Media and the Public: An Indirect but Powerful Influence on Policy Formation**

The role of mass media as a force in shaping public policy in issues such as stadium construction is complex and may be impossible to describe with full precision. In many policy issues, the role of media coverage is one of a gradual and methodical cultivator. The effects are often slow and indirect, but over extended periods of time these effects can be profound.

Paul Lazarsfeld is often categorized as the pre-eminent leader of limited effects theory by individuals offering an overview of media theory. His categorization as a limited effects theorist is well deserved. Lazarsfeld frequently defined the impact of mass media messages as “limited” in his own writing. But some of his most significant studies offer evidence that another outcome was possible if his data were interpreted differently. Close scrutiny of his *People’s Choice* study suggests that media effects on public policy might be much more profound than Lazarsfeld himself recognized if media effects in his studies were to be examined over a much longer period.

Lazarsfeld’s notion of a “two-step flow” of information, suggests that many individuals seek out “opinion leaders” to muddle through the complexities of a difficult policy landscape. These opinion leaders are individuals within the community whom individuals trust to interpret complex issues that might require greater research skills than the typical citizen is willing to employ in order to understand a given issue. Lazarsfeld argued that this interpersonal transfer of information offered evidence of “rather small” media effects, but within his own research lies the
elements for a very different interpretation.\textsuperscript{7}

Opinion leaders do not draw their conclusions in a vacuum. Instead, as Lazarsfeld points out, these leaders are much more frequently influenced by media sources as they formulate their world-view than are those who look to them for guidance. When examining the 1940 national political campaign in their landmark \textit{People’s Choice} study, Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Helen Gaudet concluded that “opinion leaders read and listened to campaign material \textit{much more} [emphasis added] than the non-opinion leaders. What is more, the non-opinion leaders who considered their interest only ‘moderate’ or ‘mild’ still managed to read more and listen to more [campaign material conveyed via media sources] than non-opinion leaders who thought they were ‘greatly interested.’”\textsuperscript{8}

In other words, uninvolved individuals often derive their political information from those in the community with the \textit{most} proficient media monitoring ability. In such instances, isolated accounts of political action are limited in their capacity to shape public policy, but multiple stories on a specific issue have the cumulative ability to profoundly impact individuals who might not ever be exposed to these media materials. Lazarsfeld’s research did not generally attempt to clarify the subtle complexities of the media’s role as an influence in policy formation, a key criticism of his work by critical-cultural theorists, but subsequent political research offers evidence which suggests that linkages between media messages and public policy outcomes can be significant in the long-term.

William Mayer’s 28 year longitudinal study of American public opinion provides evidence that media coverage can serve to shift public opinion on issues in ways that eventually shape public policy in a profound manner. Mayer carefully examines almost three decades of data on an extremely diverse assortment of policy issues, ranging from national defense spending to domestic drug enforcement policy. His data reveal that in such matters as defense spending, a single heavily-covered issue, such as the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979, can trigger increased public support for defense spending, but as defense spending levels increase over time, as was the case during the Reagan administration, public tolerance for such spending increases diminishes. The result is a gradual adjustment by legislators to eventually curtail the level of spending increases, which, in effect, may cause public opinion changes that create a new public policy landscape. In short, Mayer describes public opinion as a temporary snapshot of
continuously moving events, but without media involvement, formation of public opinion would be a vastly different process. According to Mayer:

> Journalists are not just innocent by-standers, who simply observe the events occurring all around them and then transmit full, accurate, and unbiased accounts of those events to a mass audience. Instead, the media have an enormously important role in determining the information, ideas, and images that the public receives. They exercise this influence in a variety of ways: by deciding which stories to cover and where to place them..., by emphasizing some aspects of a story and slighting others..., by providing background information that can give meaning and perspective to a story, by choosing which sources to consult and whether or not to treat them as credible, by deciding how to handle situations in which the truth is uncertain and the evidence is conflicting, and by word choice, tone, and editorializing...These decisions...have profound effects on the programs and stories the public will receive, and, thus on what Walter Lippman calls “the pictures in our heads.”

Mayer offers three factors that impact public opinion: “media coverage patterns, conversations with friends and relatives, and personal experiences.” The latter two of these three factors are heavily emphasized by Lazarsfeld. Unlike Lazarsfeld, Mayer more profoundly links media coverage with shaping long-term public opinion formation on tangible policy issues. In this regard, Mayer’s more recent scholarship draws more accurate conclusions about how media messages affect policy outcomes.

Mayer does not analyze the limited media exposure of many somewhat apathetic individuals to policy content, as Lazarsfeld did, but of those unlikely to read news content, it is reasonable to expect that most would shape their political ideologies based on personal experiences and individuals that they turn to as “opinion leaders.” Since some of these less informed individuals are a critical constituency in close election campaigns, their influence on the political process should not be overlooked. Opinion leadership’s credibility from these apathetic individuals is likely earned within their tightly-knit communities, as a result of an opinion leader’s more extensive media landscape monitoring in the same manner explained by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet in their *People’s Choice* study approximately six decades ago.

For issues such as stadium subsidy policy, brief campaigns may be an effective way to
gain temporary public support, particularly when the threat of team relocation is made. Owners and select community elites may gain slightly more than 50 percent support at ballot box, getting precisely what they want from less connected citizens, but such orchestrated victories may be Pyrrhic. The elite voices may have successfully controlled the news agenda, receiving the bulk of news coverage quotations, but they can not alter the fundamental outcome of their policy victories.

The result of stadium subsidies, tax revenues funneled to wealthy sports franchise owners and the ironic increase of ticket prices after these subsidies are arranged, are also embedded in media messages that are interpreted by less privileged opinion leaders throughout each community. Because of this, it is highly unlikely that broad-based, long-term public satisfaction for a policy that transfers millions of dollars in taxpayer resources from all citizens, including lower and middle class individuals, to a select group of wealthy citizens, can be sustained. Owners who have obtained their desired subsidy may feel short-term benefits of these subsidies, but a long-term erosion of community support may occur in communities throughout the nation as the novelty of shiny new facilities wear off and the bills for such facilities continue to be paid.

If the American economy softens substantially, falling into an extended recession, long-term disenchantment with such subsidies may be intensified. The softening of the American economy in 2001 has offered evidence that in cities currently contemplating stadium construction, political caution is necessary. Failure to consider the economic landscape in such instances appears to be a recipe for political suicide. In Missouri, earlier overtures by the state legislature to fund a baseball complex for the St. Louis Cardinals have faced increasing uncertainty. Sensing public distaste for stadium subsidies, the Missouri legislature intentionally kept it off the agenda in their final 2001 session. Eric Stern, a reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, described the stadium subsidy as “one of the most politically unpopular ideas they will be facing next year [in 2002].” Politicians are aware that their votes on the stadium subsidy issue have the potential to backfire when reelection time comes.

The long-term impact of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States are largely unknown, but could also have an effect on stadium subsidy policy. These events may prompt some Americans to regard such allocation of public resources as frivolous when compared to a range of more sobering domestic needs. Sport, once used by politicians to earn
easy political points with the public, has now become a most difficult terrain for elected officials.

Other scenarios are certainly possible, but at the core of any long-range policy outcome will be media coverage which will serve to connect attentive segments of the public to those directly involved in policy formation. Although society may be more suburban and insular than it was when Lazarsfeld conducted his well-chronicled election studies, the significance of media saturation may make opinion leadership an even more significant factor today. The availability of cellular telephony and widespread use of the Internet has extended communication in ways that help facilitate the effectiveness of opinion leadership beyond one’s primary group. Opinion leaders, society’s most media-attentive individuals, may ultimately hold policymakers accountable for tangible policy decisions, passing their knowledge of what has transpired to less motivated individuals within their immediate community and beyond.

**Directions for Future Research**

One of the issues that was carefully explored in this study is whether public opinion data and media coverage were in relative harmony. In each case study, those favoring the stadium construction position received greater levels of news coverage than voices opposing such construction. The broader, overarching question of whether public opinion and news content should be in relative balance is a philosophic issue that merits further examination. After all, media coverage that is a perfect reflection of society would not in and of itself guarantee positive public benefits. On a number of issues, squeezing out minority voices could certainly lead to deTocqueville’s popularized notion of a “tyranny of the majority.”

The stadium issue is not one in which such an outcome is likely. Even if pro-stadium voices represent a minority viewpoint in a given media market, they are typically a well-connected set of community elites with clear access to media channels. Even if press systems were reconfigured to better involve a wider range of public voices, those currently involved in the push to build new stadiums would still be sought out and quoted, although possibly to a lesser extent than at present. Simply put, team owners, city mayors, and wealthy civic leaders will almost certainly be a part of any type of media coverage that focuses on this particular issue even if a more diverse range of public voices are represented.

Nevertheless, the basis for reporting decisions should be examined with greater scrutiny, making scholarship focusing on media routines extremely important. The media scholarship
provided in this study found that in many cases, less powerful public voices were minimized while elite voices were privileged. The following breakdown reveals individual quotation sources for each stadium-related case study:

**News Coverage Quotation Source Categories:**

*Breakdown of Individuals Quoted According to Stadium Development Position by City*

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The limited involvement of citizen voices and the extensive representation of political and civic leaders provides an avenue for future research that focuses on source bias in news gathering routines. In a media landscape that is congested with university-trained public relations professionals and media consultants, idealistic notions such as objectivity and Milton’s self-righting principle may be illusive and unachievable ideals. Media scholarship that further examines the results of traditional reporting methods while exploring alternative models has the potential to reshape the direction of American media institutions.

Further exploration of ways to adapt stadium-related coverage to new media routines offers one avenue for future research. An area of interest might be research which correlates media market size with quote representation. In this particular study, the largest media market, New York, featured the lowest percentage of representation from citizen categories, while the smallest market, Cincinnati, had the highest. Whether a source attribution pattern related to market size could be uncovered in other case studies may warrant further scrutiny, particularly since smaller media markets have shown a greater willingness to employ new media routines, including adoption of civic journalism strategies.

Future stadium-related research might improve by more carefully examining whether adoption of news coverage alternatives would improve civic dialogue on this important issue. One possibility might be research that directly focuses on the producers of such media content in a manner that is more direct than the methods used here. Media surveys, ethnographic research, and interviews that help to understand why media coverage on this issue is shaped in such a manner might be helpful in determining whether new journalistic routines are needed or whether minor adjustments to the current reporting paradigms are sufficient.

One limit to this study is its intense focus on print media. Further study of television’s impact on this issue would offer fertile ground for new forms of meaningful research. It is important to recognize that print is just one choice in a vast range of media options currently available to citizens. During the course of this research attempts to monitor electronic media resources provided preliminary indications that television and radio coverage of stadium construction issues may be even more skewed to favor institutional voices than print media options. Television’s focus on visuals and extremely brief actuality gives newspaper a probable edge in policy-related depth, but the potential power of television news to impact the policy
landscape can not be overlooked. With newspaper circulation limited by actual desire to purchase and television availability nearly universal, cross comparisons between television and print coverage could be extremely beneficial.

Another area that could be further researched are the effects of stadium-related media coverage. A deficiency of content analysis is that it is unable to ascertain specific audience responses to given media messages. Qualitative examination offered in each of the case studies attempted to examine media effects in a limited manner, but highly specific determination of media effects would require a study that focused exclusively on this goal at the outset.

The research design needed to accomplish this goal is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, an effects-oriented study would be beneficial and contribute to a better understanding of the stadium issue. A particular concern is whether communities are cultivated to accept specific media-driven ideologies related to the stadium subsidies or whether community-specific public opinion is the result of a combination of factors of which the media are minor contributors. With sharply divergent messages about the economic role of stadium construction in cities such as Pittsburgh and New York, the potential for a comparative effects-oriented study exists.

Stadium-related research has focused primarily on economic issues and the public policy implications of community investment in stadium infrastructure. This research has produced consistent evidence that investment in stadium infrastructure does not yield the dividends that are typically claimed in feasibility studies and economic analyses that are prepared for and funded by self-interested parties. When a team owner or a political advocate of stadium construction hires a team of financial experts, these individuals utilize sophisticated economic methodologies to arrive at rosy economic conclusions that can not be validated by independent external accounting methods.

Media coverage of sports has intensified the significance of stadium construction in large metropolitan areas. The substantial volume of economic scholarship has addressed one important aspect of this issue, but in the process, has often shortchanged closer examination of the cultural significance of stadium construction. More research is needed which addresses how the cultural importance of sports institutions inspires communities to construct new facilities when an existing sports venue may be structurally sound. The studies of George Sage and Stephen Hardy
are examples of research that uncovers the importance of major league teams to community identity, but more needs to be done. Research of this nature could move beyond the individual case study to more tangible comparative analysis across several case studies. The research provided in this dissertation is an attempt to address this need, but the focus on four case studies has limitations that might be addressed with additional stadium-related research in other metropolitan areas. Individual case studies of a single community are abundant, but cross comparisons of several communities are not. Comparative examination of cities in the east with major metropolitan areas in the west and south would expand the level of knowledge about this particular topic.

Additional historic research that traces long-term trends in stadium construction policy would further benefit the field. This is the first media-oriented study to integrate multiple case studies in a manner that extends beyond a single generation of stadium construction. It offers thorough analyses of media-related coverage, but research in this narrowly focused direction could be improved with a greater level of focus on areas that may not have been examined as part of this analysis.

One possible direction for future research might be application of the content analysis methods utilized in this study to the stadium construction campaigns of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and possibly even the Progressive Era. If this analysis were undertaken, it would permit comparison to the more current campaigns that were quantitatively examined in this particular study. Such analysis would allow for more precise longitudinal information about the nature of stadium construction coverage of previous generations. In general, a greater focus on long-term historic examination of stadium construction coverage would enhance the richness of scholarship in this very specific area of media studies.

**Stadium Coverage and Public Policy: Implications for Journalistic Practices**

The stadium subsidy issue has emerged as an issue that resonates with many Americans. Media coverage of the issue reflects a variety of institutional and personal biases. Gaye Tuchman’s landmark examination of media routines attempts to politely couch such biases as the media’s tendency to “frame” an issue, much in the same way that a window offers a framed view of a landscape but limits the parameters of what is viewed.

Despite the limitation of a media “frame,” media coverage allows us a great deal of
latitude for interpretation within the context of that particular frame. Tuchman asserts that this interpretive ability is limited, however. According to Tuchman, the news reporter’s focus on “facticity” distances the public from involvement in the political process while giving special status to facts produced by institutional leaders. She argues that the “reification of social phenomena” tends to limit the ability of the public to take specific action on key political issues. According to Tuchman “reification affirms that the individual is powerless....The news consumer is encouraged to sympathize or rejoice, but not to organize politically.” As institutional actors retain their foothold on the media agenda, the public is typically left on the sidelines and kept out of the policy-making process.

The stadium issue appears to offer a potential exception to this tendency. The public’s familiarity with the sports landscape and the basic knowledge of what is at stake offers the possibility of a more active role as participants in the democratic process. The public outcry regarding stadium subsidies in various media markets suggest that this is a topic with which the public is willing to invest personal capital in order to contribute to decision making on the issue.

Despite evidence of public enthusiasm, traditional news routines, as outlined by Tuchman, appear to have produced the same effects of curtailing citizen involvement on the stadium issue. Dramatic public outcry against stadium subsidies were effective in defeating Pittsburgh’s Regional Renaissance initiative at the polls in November 1997, but once the debate shifted to implementation of “Plan B,” the public was frozen out of the process by media reporting that offered considerable advantages to individuals who have routine institutional contact with the press. New York residents with a desire to get involved in the stadium issue were also locked out of the process by a media system that confers authority onto a limited number of recognizable community leaders. A dramatic 68 percent of those quoted in New York news coverage of the stadium issue were political figures of some type. A mere three percent of the quotations gathered came from average citizens.

That a limited number of elite voices receive more profound access to media coverage should be of little surprise to anyone immersed in careful study of media reporting trends. The scholarship of Warren Breed, C.Wright Mills, Gaye Tuchman, Michael Schudson, Ben Bagdikian, and many others offer compelling longitudinal evidence that media patterns have been established for decades that offer a more visible platform to a limited number of powerful
individuals. This stadium-related research, using different methodologies than used by these previously mentioned scholars, presents data supporting assertions they have made about elite control of the media agenda.

In order to overcome this constraint, it might be helpful to offer an examination of the media models that have shaped the American press. Three models that have served as a framework for American media institutions include the advocacy model, the muckraker model, and the fact-based objective model. The civic journalism model is a relatively new fourth model that has gained limited recent recognition among media practitioners and media scholars.

The advocacy model shaped the nineteenth century American press. Political parties and individuals with specific agendas were at the core of this model. In a typical example, a newspaper would be published by individuals with an allegiance to a given political party and would shape the news so that it was favorable to the interests of the party chosen by the publishers. The muckraker model is based on the notion of the press’ role as a public watchdog. It became popular in the Progressive Era when Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, and others produced searing stories that uncovered public corruption, corporate impropriety, or both.

Neither of these models served the commercial imperatives of American journalism, so a fact-based objective model was almost universally adopted by media entrepreneurs in the early twentieth century. The public has been cultivated to believe that this model was established so that the press would provide the public with fair and balanced news coverage, but the overriding rationale of such a coverage strategy was to create a news product that could be sold to both advertisers and a broad public. Fact-based journalism also reduced the cost of news gathering at a time when heavy telegraph and telephone usage reduced bottom-line profits for media entrepreneurs.

The advocacy model was abandoned because it provided ideological barriers to improved circulation. Individuals unwilling to read news skewed to favor a political party that they disliked were less likely to subscribe to a publication. The muckraking model was phased out because its focus on exposure of corruption limited its potential to raise advertising revenues. The fact-based objective model permitted the press to sell a product to both advertisers and a broad public while providing a more economical method for news acquisition. Its emphasis of media routines which favored official sources allowed the press to balance the potential for commercial gain with a
commitment to inform the public. While this model began to emerge in the Progressive Era, it was not fully entrenched in American journalistic routines until the 1920s.13

The civic journalism model has a more recent pedigree and is less known outside of journalistic circles. It is based on the notion that journalists should serve as involved facilitators in the democratic process, bringing in voices that may have been ignored in previously established journalistic routines. The reporter is not the self-interested individual offered in the advocacy model, the swashbuckling crusader popularized in the muckraking model, or the dispassionate observer found in the fact-based objective model. Instead the reporter’s role is to sift through the various community voices, offering the traditionally privileged individuals a role in the process, but also including others who may have ideas that were not previously considered. The model is based on the philosophy of John Dewey. Some of the staunchest supporters of this model use strategies employed in small-town community journalism. Its recent emergence has created some opposition and controversy, but a core of scholars and media practitioners have pushed hard for greater application of its use.

As with any journalistic model, it is not a panacea and it is subject to commercial exploitation on many levels. In addition, such public involvement has the potential to complicate the democratic process in a variety of ways. Many of the same individuals currently in the media pipeline will almost certainly make adjustments that will prevent a loss of power. The current fact-based journalism model will never achieve its impossible ideal of objectivity, and many of the most skilled and capable journalists in America understand this. A civic journalism model that seeks to fairly expose a diverse range of community viewpoints may be better suited to an age in which access to professionally-managed elite sources is within the reach of anyone with a computer terminal but access to the viewpoints of less powerful individuals is increasingly elusive.

Understanding of the assumptions and tendencies of each model may help to determine how to configure a press model that might better serve the public. I would propose that the aim of any new model should be involvement of a range of publics in a way that fosters broad community dialogue rather than closed-door policy making. As such, I would heartily recommend application of a civic journalism model for issues such as stadium construction. The model should not include journalistic advocacy as some proponents of civic journalism might
suggest, but instead should be one in which media practitioners strive to include a full range of community voices so that a wide-ranging dialogue can determine the policy outcome instead of leaving such decisions in the hands of a small assembly of political and civic leaders.

Political officials, civic leaders, and technical experts would be an important part of this journalistic process, as is currently the case, but the range of individuals previously marginalized when traditional journalistic routines are employed would be included in the process of determining what is best for the community. Such a model would be rooted in John Dewey’s argument that “intelligence is dormant and its communications are broken, inarticulate, and faint until it possesses the local community as its medium.”

If after inclusive debate and dialogue a community wishes to allocate vast amounts of its budget to building sports infrastructure, such a decision should be implemented as public policy. But many communities that have built stadiums in recent years may have preferred to allocate such resources to other budgetary concerns. The recent tendency to allow closed-door meetings and carefully-orchestrated news conferences to dictate the direction of public policy on stadium construction is simply wrong. The real losers in this issue are the public and the democratic process.

It is possible that the public may make poor choices if given greater input in such decisions, but it is unlikely that the decisions made by the public could be substantially more flawed than many of the decisions made by team owners and public policy professionals. The same civic leaders who decided to dismantle many of the classic historic ballparks during the 1960s and early 1970s subsequently pushed for the replacement of newer all-purpose circular stadiums because they were deemed both impersonal and inadequate as revenue generators.

While some of the ballparks being built today have the potential to become long-term landmarks, many of them are built with such formulaic routine that they lack charm and identity. In a few short decades, a public bored with these facilities may be asked to replace them with heavily subsidized versions of the latest trend in new stadium construction. The cycle for stadium replacement has shrunken from 50 years during the 1960s to a more recent standard of 25 to 30 years. This cycle will likely shrink further rather than expand unless substantial public outcry forces change to the policy landscape.

The creation of sports facilities that are deemed disposable after a generation of use
creates an ironic paradox that has become the central logic of new stadium construction. Two key arguments made when building these facilities are attracting tourists dollars and creating a national profile that distinguishes the community from other urban areas. It is likely that the opposite effect will occur over time. Because so many cities have bought into new stadium construction, those with newer facilities are less distinguishable from communities who have chosen to preserve the past.

Although it may seem outlandish now, it is possible that in twenty or thirty years, the only remaining “cookie-cutter” ballpark built in the 1960s will become a tourist attraction while the retractable domes so popular today will be regarded as boring. The determination to preserve older ballparks has diminished in recent years, but the abandonment of the old in favor of the new may not be in the best interest of the community and the sporting institutions in which they function. Boston’s pride in its historic past was created, in part, by its inability to attract substantial federal subsidies at various intervals in its history. As a result, many older buildings remained intact, while other cities demolished blocks of historic architecture to pursue what was perceived at the time to be “progress.” It would be wise to consider that athletic facilities which have stood for thousands of years in Rome and Greece remain popular tourist attractions today while the Detroit Tigers struggle to attract fans to a shiny new facility that includes all the latest amenities.

No one can predict the longevity of the current group of professional stadiums, but a 20 year replacement cycle could be possible if public officials are unwilling to place limits on the demands of team owners and if media routines continue to place limitations on public input. Involving the public in the process is one way for those involved in stadium construction decisions to avoid the pitfalls of the past. For media practitioners, such involvement has the capacity to increase public demand for their product. Falling newspaper circulation may be the by-product of a multi-channel media environment, but some of the declines may also be the result of some individuals who believe that media practitioners are hopelessly out of step with the average citizen. A recent Ford Foundation/American Journalism Review examination of public attitudes to newspaper content indicated that 64 percent of those surveyed believed news stories were either “very biased” or “somewhat biased.”

The bias issue is problematic in analysis of media coverage. Even the most professional
and seasoned reporters will be accused of news coverage bias despite good faith efforts to present material in a thorough manner. But existing media routines conspire to prevent reporters from integrating a broader array of community voices into media coverage of this issue. With the dominant model of media coverage today, reporters often serve as conveyor belts, delivering the message of elite interests instead of actively engaging the public to participate in the democratic process. The system as it is currently structured is cost-effective, but it does not integrate the public into the political process in a meaningful manner. Ideally, new media models would balance the desire of elites to control the policy agenda with good faith efforts to integrate the public into the process. The considerable influence of community elites, particularly in issues such as stadium construction, makes adoption of such models less likely; but courageous journalists and editors have the capacity to make such models a reality.

News routines are one factor, among many, that determine how public policy unfolds on stadium construction and other issues. In spite of some public skepticism about news reporting, over time journalists have the capacity to powerfully shape how a community perceives an issue. Because media institutions are socially constructed and media practitioners offer a socially constructed view of reality, communities may have different perceptions about similar issues. In New York, few citizens regard stadium construction as an engine of economic growth. Even though such claims have been repeatedly made by selected civic leaders, these assertions have been neutralized by the voices of experts and opinion columns that challenge the credibility of such claims. In Pittsburgh, by contrast, clear evidence exists that a large percentage of residents perceive stadium construction to be an engine for real economic growth. The opinions of anti-construction experts were offered to a Pittsburgh public very early in the stadium referendum process, but these voices were marginalized after the defeat of the 1997 Regional Renaissance Initiative. After this election defeat, media coverage routinely privileged those calling for new stadium construction. This has gradually cultivated some individuals to accept evidence that runs counter to most independent scholarship on the issue.

Media coverage of stadium construction in major metropolitan areas has had another impact on public policy that may not be easily perceived. As Major League teams have used media resources to create a culture of stadium construction which is beneficial to the revenue imperatives of team owners, smaller, less publicized sporting institutions have tried to follow
suit. Minor league baseball has received millions of dollars in public stadium subsidies from small and mid-sized communities in suburban, urban, and rural areas across the nation. Local little leagues and organized football teams have devoted thousands of dollars in community resources to construction or renovation of facilities so that the youngsters within the community have a facility that better replicates the professional model.

Such imitation is hardly new. One model for sports administration emanated from other institutions’ desire to replicate the Ivy League model that was prominent during the Progressive Era. This model gained credibility through sustained media coverage in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Public support for this form of sports administration was fortified by the direct public involvement of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905. A move to a more blatantly commercial sports paradigm gradually replaced the pseudo-amateurism of this collegiate model, gaining momentum as new ballparks were constructed several years later.

More recently, current U.S. President George W. Bush has served as an ambassador for baseball, visiting ballparks around the country and inviting children to play T-ball on White House grounds. If not for personal experience gained by Bush in a successful political campaign to heavily subsidize a Major League Baseball stadium in Arlington, Texas, it is possible that the political landscape would be different in Washington, D.C.16 Ironically, the free market fiscal conservatism espoused by the current administration can be sharply contrasted to the multi-million dollar taxpayer subsidies that have become the norm in modern day professional sports.

It may seem that the managerial structures of media and sports institutions have become so entrenched and are so interconnected to powerful interests that dramatic future change is unlikely. Yet both sports and journalism are in precarious positions at this time. The sporting world is struggling to offset attendance declines and diminished public interest in the same way that traditional media institutions are battling declining audiences.

The historic record offers tangible evidence that alterations to the policy landscape will take place. Although it is difficult to predict where we are headed in each of these areas, the paradigms of journalism, sports management, and public policy will change in some manner. Failure to understand that the public should have a role in each of these settings may contribute to the eventual decline of those individuals and institutions currently dictating policy in these vastly diverse arenas.
Sources: Chapter Eight


15. Stepp, Carl Sessions. *Signs of Progress*. College Park: MD: American Journalism Review/Ford Foundation, March 2001, p. 5. The eight page report summarizing the poll results was optimistic about the newspaper industry’s ability to maintain public trust, with some information that a segment of the public sees levels of accuracy in reporting improving. But
overall, the results of the survey suggest that the newspaper industry is making very limited progress at best. One telling example of information that would challenge the optimism of the report had 70 percent of the 1174 poll respondents indicate that the “believability” of the news had not changed “in several years;” 12 percent believed their local publication was “less believable” and 11 percent felt the publication was “more believable.”

16. President Bush’s ballpark campaign was followed by the sale of his $606,000 investment in the Texas Rangers to new ownership. He was able to secure $14.8 million dollar for this transaction, largely because a new taxpayer subsidized ballpark increased the market value of this professional baseball franchise.
News Coverage Orientation to Stadium Development:

*Table 1: Total Number of Quotations:*

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*Table 2: Percentages of Quotations:*

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*The Pittsburgh coding totals include the three months before the 1997 referendum, 20 days before the 1998 RAD Board vote, and two weeks prior to 1999 state-level subsidy approval, a period of about four and a quarter months. This was done because of the unusual route taken for stadium subsidy approval. The totals combine these three periods. An individual breakdown of these three periods is provided on the final two pages of these appendices.*
News Coverage Quotation Source Categories:

Table 3: Breakdown of Individuals Quoted According to Stadium Development Position by City

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Percentages of Total Appeals in News Coverage:

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News Coverage Appeals Based on Stadium Development Position:

*Table 5: Breakdown of Quotations by City*

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*Code for Appeals*

A - Economic  
B - Authority  
C - Community Bond  
D - Community Needs/Values  
E - Technical Expertise  
F - Ethical/Conscience  
G - Social Order  
H - Making Progress  
I - Not Making Progress  
J - Status  
K - Other  
L - Total
Pittsburgh Stadium Coverage- News Coverage Quotation Source Categories:

Table 6: Breakdown of Individuals Quoted During Three Coding Periods

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The Pittsburgh coding includes the three months before the 1997 referendum, 20 days before the 1998 RAD Board vote, and two weeks prior to 1999 state-level subsidy approval, a period of about four and a quarter months. This was done because of the unusual route taken for stadium subsidy approval.
### Table 7: Individual Breakdown of Three Coding Periods

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**Code for Appeals**

A- Economic  
B- Authority  
C- Community Bond  
D- Community Needs/Values  
E- Technical Expertise  
F- Ethical/Conscience  
G- Social Order  
H- Making Progress  
I- Not Making Progress  
J- Status  
K- Other  
L- Total

The Pittsburgh coding totals include the three months before the 1997 referendum, 20 days before the 1998 RAD Board vote, and two weeks prior to 1999 state-level subsidy approval, a period of about four and a quarter months. This was done because of the unusual route taken for stadium subsidy approval.
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Vita

Robert Trumpbour currently teaches radio production and media studies classes at Southern Illinois University’s Edwardsville campus. He was graduated from Saint Francis College in Loretto, PA in 1979 with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. He received a Master of Arts in English Literature from Western Illinois University in 1981. He has made numerous presentations at national conferences, including recent presentations of stadium-related research at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH). He is currently working on a chapter for inclusion on a forthcoming book which will focus on the history of Pittsburgh’s Forbes Field. He has served on the faculty of Pennsylvania State University’s College of Communications. He has also taught classes in the English departments of Saint Francis College and Western Illinois University. His broadcast experience includes eight years of full-time employment with the CBS Television Network and the CBS Radio Network. He was supervisor of broadcast operations at CBS Radio until 1989 and has periodically assisted the network as a field coordinator for CBS Radio Sports since then. He served as Director of Alumni Relations at Saint Francis College in Loretto, PA from 1989 to 1994. He currently lives in Glen Carbon, IL with his wife, Jill, and son, Luke.