

July 08, 2011

## The Business of Baseball — It Pays to Host Spring Training, All-Star Game

Baseball is one of the most popular sports in America, with dedicated fans willing to travel around the country to watch their beloved teams and star players in action. As a result, towns hosting off-season events, such as spring training, or special competitions like the Major League Baseball (MLB) All-Star Game, are able to profit from the increased visibility and rise in tourism revenue to their local economies.

Scott Dunn, associate director of communications at the [Greater Phoenix Convention & Visitor's Bureau](#), says that the media exposure generated for the city as a result of hosting the 2011 MLB All-Star Game is almost incalculable.

When St. Louis hosted the All-Star Game in 2009, approximately 2,000 journalists visited the city to cover the event, which was watched by 14.6 million people worldwide, Dunn says.

Phoenix is expecting a total of 200,000 – 250,000 people to attend the week-long [activities](#) leading up to the July 12 All-Star Game, such as the FanFest, Home Run Derby, and All-Star Legends & Celebrity Softball game.

Dunn estimates that the All-Star Game will generate approximately \$67 million in direct spending for the city, creating a real boom for the hotels and restaurants in Phoenix.

Dunn predicts that fans visiting the city for the All-Star Game will occupy between 14,000 – 16,500 of the city's hotel rooms.

“For Phoenix, it's very important for us because [the All-Star Game] comes in what is generally our down season for tourism,” Dunn says. “In July here the temperature warms up, so summer is always a time of year when our hotels and resorts are discounting rates and we're aggressively seeking convention business.”

## Baseball Spring Training is Big Business

Nick Gandy, director of communications at the [Florida Sports Foundation](#), says the way a professional baseball team chooses a Florida city to host their spring training camp varies from team to team.

“In the end, it would probably depend on what kind of deal the community was ready to offer the team, whether that be the stadium and training complex, the financial benefits, and something that has become a pretty big deal lately, proximity to other teams,” Gandy says.

Gandy says a 2009 survey showed that spring training baseball had a \$753 million economic impact on the state of Florida as a whole that year.

“At that time, there were 16 teams in Florida and that breaks down to \$47 million per team in its host community,” Gandy says.

The biggest benefit for towns hosting a spring training team is the sales tax generated by hotels,

restaurants, and attractions within the community, Gandy says.

“Something that has worked to the benefit of several communities lately is a marketing partnership with the host team giving the community an identity in the regular season hometowns,” Gandy says. “St. Petersburg/Clearwater is featured at the Philadelphia Phillies park and in other forms of advertising. The Baltimore Orioles and Sarasota have the same kind of deal to entice baseball fans to Florida during other times of the year, besides the month of March for spring training.”

Gandy says that several former and current Minnesota Twins players have taken up residence in Fort Myers since the community became host to the team’s spring training camp, which helps to entice fans to want to visit the area.

“One of the original benefits of spring training was for the radio and television announcers to tell the baseball fans back in the home markets in the Northeast and Midwest about the wonderful Florida weather,” Gandy says. “To this day, during games, the public address announcers always give the game time temperature and forecast at the stadium and then in the home market. There is usually quite a difference.”

Not only do spring training towns benefit from the sales tax generated, Gandy says that local hotels and restaurants also see an increase in business from fans visiting the town to cheer on their favorite baseball team.

“The 2009 survey showed 48% of fans are from out of state,” Gandy says. “With that in mind, the 2011 season had a total attendance of 1,571,452. Using that percentage, that means 754,296 fans were from out of state, spending their money in Florida at hotels and restaurants.”

Gandy says that other areas where spring training fans spent a good deal of money were transportation, shopping, golf, museums, and groceries.

Gandy says that when a professional baseball team decides to move to a different spring training town — as with the Los Angeles Dodgers 2009 move from Vero Beach, Florida, to Glendale, Arizona, — the loss of the sales tax generated by the out-of-town fans is one of the biggest effects.

“I’ve read articles where local businesses no longer hire extra seasonal workers to handle the influx of visitors, so the local folks lose revenue,” Gandy says. “Vero Beach lost a part of its history with the Dodgers going to Arizona.”

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