

**BLACKSBURG-CHRISTIANSBURG-  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
REGIONAL TOURISM**

**OUTDOOR RECREATION AND SPORTS  
TOURISM ASSET INVENTORY**



**May 23, 2024**

**POWERED BY THE HUDDLE UP GROUP**



May 23, 2024

David Rotenizer  
Executive Director  
Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Regional Tourism  
200 Clay Street SW  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Dear David,

Thank you for your efforts on our recent work in your community. Your team and your stakeholders have been quite helpful throughout this process. The groundwork we have set with your local leadership will serve as a strong foundation for future sports tourism, venue, and event development efforts in the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County area.

Enclosed is the report (which we call the “playbook”) detailing our findings. The playbook includes a SWOT analysis of your organization and destination as it relates to sports tourism, an overview and evaluation of the venue inventory in the area, benchmarking of your organization’s sports tourism efforts, and recommendations to enhance your destination’s sports tourism “tool kit” moving forward. Both the SWOT analysis and the recommendations are built on a “powers of three” foundation. That is, in most cases, no more than three focus areas are offered for each section.

Please let me know if you have questions about the enclosed recommendations leading up to the roll out of the report. We are looking forward to our final presentation and follow-up discussions.

Thank you again for all your support throughout this process!

Yours in Sport,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jon Schmieder', is positioned below the text 'Yours in Sport,'.

Jon Schmieder  
Founder + CEO  
Huddle Up Group, LLC



**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Executive Summary**

In the opinion of the Huddle Up Group (hereafter the “Consultant” or “Consultant Team”), there is an opportunity for the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County area CVB (“BCMT”) to improve its position among sports tourism destinations in the region. This can be achieved through the implementation of a focused and intentional sports tourism development agenda. Throughout this process, BCMT’s community leaders showed a desire to grow sports tourism in the region and for BCMT to become more engaged with the area’s stakeholders. Both characteristics are positive signs the region is ready to grow its sports tourism impact.

This outdoor recreation and sports tourism asset inventory project was conducted with the input of two (2) members from the Consultant Team and included the following:

- A rating of BCMT and the destination through the Sports Tourism Index™.
- 13 phone interviews and receipt of twenty-nine (29) electronic survey responses.
- One (1) in-person town hall meeting with local stakeholders.
- Tours of 32 sports and event venues.
- Benchmarking against high performing destinations and venues both regionally and nationally.

The full report (what we call the “playbook”) is detailed in the following pages. The playbook includes a SWOT analysis, recommendations for an enhanced sports tourism marketing program (near term), and suggestions for facility development and enhancement (longer term). The playbook offers depth on each recommendation along with backup research and benchmarks that support the suggestions made by the Consultant Team. In summary, there are three (3) primary and three (3) secondary recommendations, each of which is detailed in the full playbook:

**Primary Recommendations – Organizational Strategies (Shorter Term)**

1. Enrich Human Capital
2. Enhance Relationships with Community Stakeholders
3. Enhance Marketing Strategies

**Secondary Recommendations – Facility “Tool Kit” (Longer Term)**

1. Optimize the Aquatics Facility
2. Enhance Existing Outdoor Venues
3. Develop a Regional Sports Tourism Facility Master Plan

The opportunity at hand is to put in place an enriched sports tourism support system, engaging all stakeholders throughout the region to drive more economic development while also improving opportunities for community user groups. Through a community-wide effort, BCMT can drive increased economic activity through sport in the form of additional overnight stays and visitor spending. This effort will result in more lodging and sales tax revenues being collected year over year. Given the opportunities that exist and the numerous organizations that could play a key role, the Consultant Team believes BCMT is the ideal entity to lead the community’s sports tourism charge in the region.



**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Synopsis**

The sports tourism industry has grown consistently over the past 20 years. A study by the Sports Tourism and Events Association – *State of the Industry Report 2021*, states that the participant driven portion of the domestic sports tourism sector was responsible for more than \$39.0 billion in direct spending in 2021. This direct spending generated a total economic impact of \$91.8 billion to local economies, driving over 635,000 jobs, and contributing \$12.9 billion in taxes. Add to this industry growth the increased popularity of emerging sports such as pickleball, BMX, and Esports, the opportunity for the continuing expansion of economic development through sports tourism is tangible and ever-expanding.

Throughout the research process, it became apparent to the Consultant Team that there is an opportunity for BCMT to enhance its presence in the sports tourism marketplace. The key moving forward will be for community stakeholders to work together in developing and maintaining tourism driving assets (sports venues) that can deliver upon the sports tourism mission of BCMT from one year to the next. Through the execution of a strategic and targeted game plan, BCMT can strengthen its position as a national player in the sports tourism and events industry.

**Methodology**

The Consultant Team conducted an assessment of the current sports tourism work of BCMT and an analysis of the area’s sports venues. The project was led by Huddle Up Group Founder + CEO Jon Schmieder (Phoenix, AZ) and Data and Communications Manager Kevin de Lange (Wilmington, NC). The project followed a six (6) step process that included:

1. An evaluation of BCMT and the destination through the Sports Tourism Index™ (a proprietary benchmarking tool developed by the Huddle Up Group, summarized in Appendix E).
2. An organizational audit on the current sports tourism work of BCMT, including a review of previously conducted relevant research, as well as input from the thirteen (13) phone interviews and a robust twenty-nine (29) electronic survey responses from key community stakeholders. Individuals engaged included, among others, BCMT staff, elected officials, community leaders, venue managers, athletic administrators, event owners, hospitality industry executives, and local sports club leaders.
3. A multiple day market visit (February 25-27, 2024) that consisted of one (1) community presentation and a sports tourism facility audit. The audit included tours of 32 existing or planned sports and entertainment venues.
4. The creation and delivery of a outdoor recreation and sports tourism asset inventory plan (the “playbook”) for an improved sports tourism program and an enriched venue “tool kit.”
5. An in-person delivery and presentation to members of BCMT staff and community stakeholders outlining the findings and recommendations outlined in the playbook.
6. A follow-up conversation with BCMT staff 30-days following the delivery of the playbook and presentation of the findings to discuss new developments and next steps.

The facilities visited in step three (3) are listed below and in Appendix D. The Appendix includes a current and potential rating for each venue should tourism-focused enhancements be made.

- Blacksburg High School - Diamonds
- Blacksburg High School - Football Stadium
- Blacksburg High School - Tennis Courts
- Blacksburg Municipal Park - Diamond
- Blacksburg Municipal Park - Flat Fields
- Blacksburg Municipal Park - Tennis Courts
- Christiansburg Aquatic Center
- Christiansburg Recreation Center - Indoor Courts
- Eastern Montgomery High School - Diamond
- Eastern Montgomery High School - Flat Field
- Eastern Montgomery High School - Tennis Courts
- Golden Hills Disc Golf Course
- Harkrader Complex - Diamonds
- Harkrader Complex - Flat Fields
- Harkrader Complex - Tennis Courts
- Huckleberry Park - Diamonds
- Huckleberry Park - Flat Fields
- Kiwanis Park - Flat Fields
- McDonald Hollow
- New River
- Old Town Fields - Flat Field
- Radford University - Arena
- Radford University - Diamonds
- Radford University - Flat Field
- Radford University - Tennis
- Roanoke River
- The Hill Golf Course
- Virginia Tech - Conference Center
- Virginia Tech - Flat Fields
- Virginia Tech – Golf Course
- Virginia Tech - Football Stadium
- Virginia Tech - Tennis Courts
- Whitethorne – Boat Landing

The scope of the project focused on five (5) key areas:

1. Evaluating the current sports tourism efforts of BCMT and comparing “Best in Class” sports tourism organizations in similar destinations to offer recommendations for an improved sports marketing and business development strategy.
2. Assessing the outdoor recreation inventory and the current facility inventory in the region and benchmarking those venues using the Sports Tourism Index™ as a scoring tool.
3. Providing a gap analysis and recommendations for new sports facility developments and existing facility enhancements that would drive the largest ROI to the community through sports tourism.
4. Identifying available organization and venue funding mechanisms, management models, and public/private partnership opportunities.
5. Creation of an economic impact analysis for the top facility opportunity recommended by the Consultant Team.

Discussions were held around national best practices and focus was given to applications for BCMT. The intent of this process was to create community support for an increased sports tourism and venue development effort in the region by giving local stakeholders a voice and fostering a teamwork mentality throughout the area.

The Consultant Team took the results from the stakeholder interviews, data from the Sports Tourism Index™, and the site visit to the region, then overlaid national best practices from several event rights holders and “Best in Class” sports destinations to develop and deliver the enclosed recommendations. These recommendations are intended to spark a dialog within the community’s leadership hierarchy to build a framework for next steps on an expanded sports tourism marketing effort.

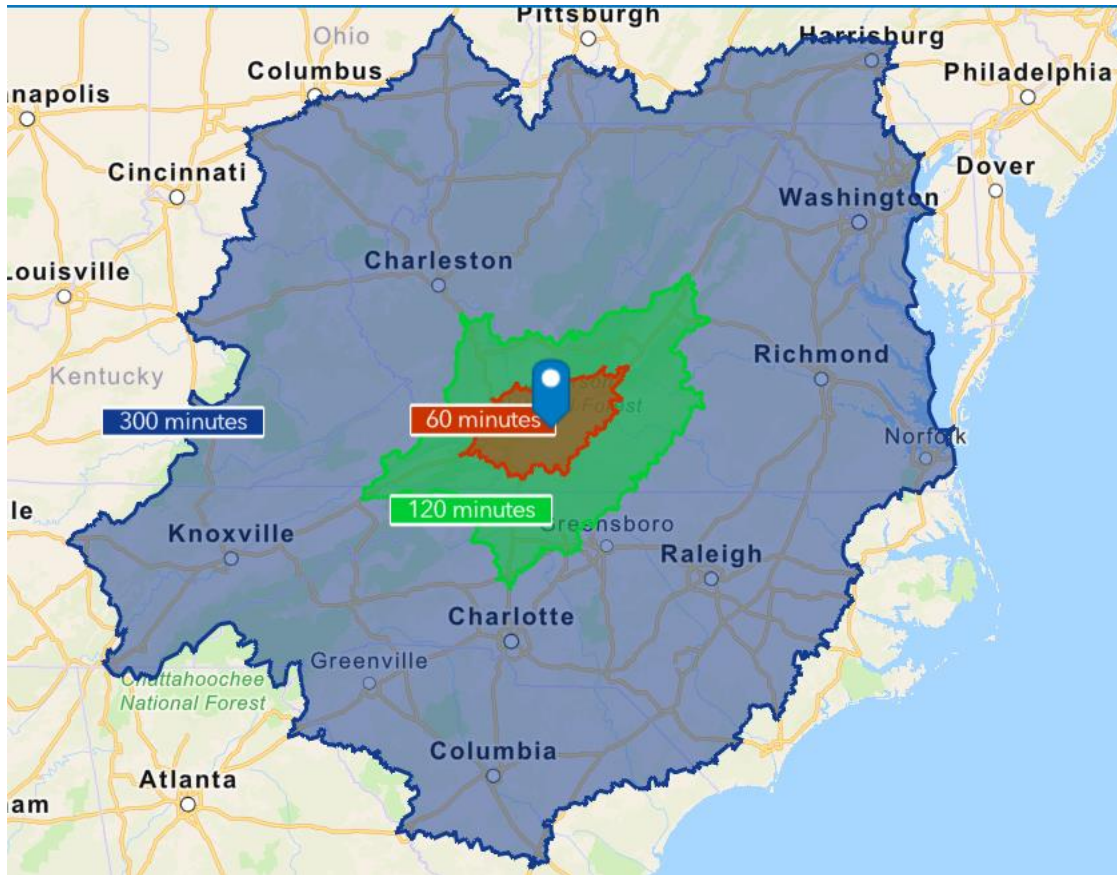
The recommendations presented here are based upon what the Consultant Team believes are five (5) universal truths about BCMT’s sports tourism market position:

- Sports tourism is important to tourism and economic development for the destination.
- Outdoor recreation (leisure tourism) is an opportunity.
- The regional competition is fierce.
- Facility access can be challenging for BCMT.
- BCMT should continue to strengthen relationships within the community to avoid working in silos.



**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Market Analysis**

Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County’s geographic location brings with it a wealth of opportunities to attract visitors to the area. As you can see from the map below, there are several large population centers that can reach Montgomery County within a five-hour drive. Notable cities include Charlotte, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville, Knoxville, Norfolk, Raleigh, Washington.



Utilizing data from ESRI reports, the following table provides insights into the markets that are reachable within a day's drive. It outlines key demographic factors such as the number of households, median household income, as well as the attendance and participation rates in sporting events throughout 2023.

<b>Driving Distance</b>	<b>Households</b>	<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>Attended a Sporting Event in 2023</b>	<b>Participated in any Sport in 2023*</b>
60 Minutes	214,121	\$58,504	50,184	654,742
120 Minutes	944,734	\$54,196	212,914	2,736,921
300 Minutes	14,178,014	\$70,469	3,303,592	43,803,242

\* = Participants may be counted double if they engaged in multiple sports during the year.

**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**SWOT Analysis**

It is the opinion of the Consultant Team that there is an opportunity to grow sports tourism in the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County area. Through our extensive analysis and our knowledge of the national marketplace, we believe there is an opportunity for BCMT to deliver additional overnight stays to the destination through an enhanced sports tourism strategy. This expanded effort will lead to increased economic development and will positively impact the community over time.

In a market the size of the Montgomery County area, with its numerous positive attributes, it is critical that grassroots sports tourism, as well as special events, continue to serve as economic drivers for the local economy. Keeping these objectives in the forefront while focusing on both an enhanced sports marketing program and long-term facility development, below is a SWOT analysis on the current position of BCMT and the region as a sports tourism destination. This analysis was derived from a combination of the before mentioned surveys, individual interviews, the site visit, and data collected through the Sports Tourism Index™.

**Strengths**

1. Outdoor Recreation Assets – The Montgomery County area has numerous outdoor recreation assets, providing a wide array of opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of the region. The area boasts several hiking and mountain biking trails that are well-suited for outdoor enthusiasts of all skill levels. These trails have a history of hosting mountain bike rides, attracting individuals seeking adventure and exploration experiences in the scenic surroundings. Furthermore, the presence of the New River enhances the outdoor appeal of the BCMT area. With its meandering course through Montgomery County, the New River serves as a potential venue for water sports events. Activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and fishing find a natural home in the tranquil waters of the river, offering opportunities to attract tourism through leisure travelers. These natural assets contribute to the BCMT area's reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation, providing residents and visitors with access to nature-based activities and experiences. Leveraging the insights from Esri data (shown in the table below), which highlight a significant population engaging in freshwater fishing and hunting activities well above the national average, presents a clear opportunity for the Montgomery County area to capitalize on these outdoor pursuits.

<b>Driving Radius</b>	<b>People Participated in Freshwater Fishing</b>	<b>Compared to US average</b>	<b>People Participated in Hunting</b>	<b>Compared to US average</b>
60 Minutes	55,683	25% More	33,174	34% More
120 Minutes	255,726	32% More	161,773	50% More
300 Minutes	3,318,202	11% More	1,941,516	17% More

2. Location – Montgomery County benefits from its geographical location, situated within driving distance of several major cities including Charlotte, Charleston, Columbia, Knoxville, Raleigh, Richmond, and Washington D.C. As the sports tourism industry has trended towards a drive market focus for competitions, the destination’s location should prove to be a geographic advantage. This favorable geographic location positions the destination as an accessible hub for regional sports tourism competitions, offering convenience and ease of travel for participants and attendees alike.

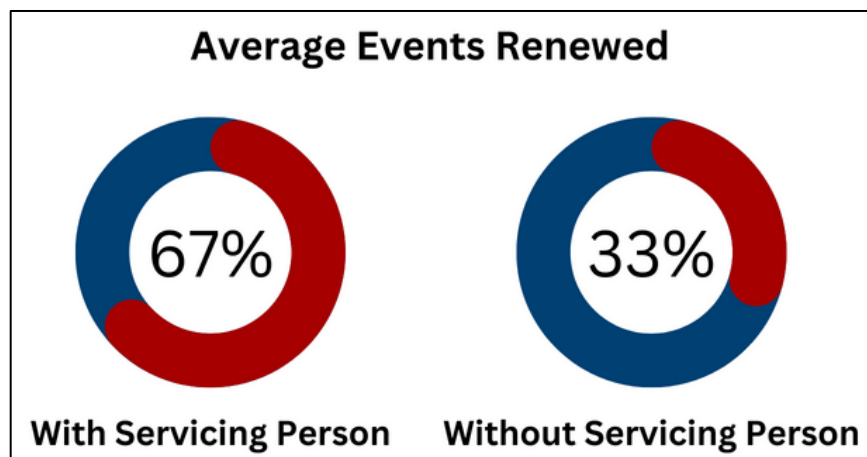


3. **Hotel Inventory** – The Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County area boasts a robust hotel infrastructure, with an average occupancy rate of 53.3% in 2023. While this figure represents a slight decrease from the previous year, the area demonstrates promising potential for growth. Despite BCMT's occupancy rate being lower than Virginia's average of 61.8% and the US average of 63%, this variance highlights an opportunity for expansion in hotel occupancy. The existing hotel infrastructure indicates ample capacity to accommodate increased demand, positioning BCMT favorably to attract more visitors and events. With hotels operating below maximum occupancy levels on average, BCMT stands ready to leverage its strengths and capitalize on opportunities for enhanced tourism and event hosting.

### Weaknesses

1. **Human Capital** – BCMT faces a significant challenge in terms of human resources dedicated to sports tourism. With no designated individual overseeing sports activities, any positive movement forward in the sports tourism market is lost. This lack of dedicated personnel not only hampers proactive marketing and sales efforts but also compromises event servicing upon their arrival. The absence of a full-time equivalency in this crucial role underscores the pressing need for a dedicated staff person(s), along with dedicated marketing/promotion funding. It is imperative to recognize the seriousness of this situation and the potential impact it has on the organization's ability to effectively compete in the sports tourism industry. Analysis of Sports Tourism Index™ data reveals that organizations in the Southeast with a specific sports development person get awarded 2.8 times more events than organizations without, and these organizations have 4.4 times more events contracted for the next two fiscal years. Additionally, organizations with a dedicated sports servicing person tend to exhibit higher event hosting rates and greater event renewal percentages compared to those without.

On average, organizations in the Southeast with a servicing person host 7.3 times more events annually, demonstrating a higher level of activity compared to those without dedicated personnel. In addition, organizations with a dedicated sports servicing person renew 67% of their events, compared to a 33% renewal rate for those without a service focused staff member. Adding a services position will likely lead to more hosted events year over year according to these two data points.



Further, the understaffed Parks department exacerbates this issue, compounding the strain on resources available for event support and facility management. The absence of a volunteer base compounds the problem even more. This has shown to be a challenge with the various swim meets held in the aquatic complex, as not enough trained and qualified timers are available to support those events. These human capital gaps represent a critical weakness, hindering BCMT's ability to effectively promote and host sports tourism driving events and capitalize on growth opportunities for the destination.

2. Tournament “Friendly” Facilities – BCMT faces a challenge due to the scarcity of tournament-quality facilities suitable to host sports tourism driving events. While Huckleberry Park and the Christiansburg Aquatic Center offer some potential, the overall landscape is characterized by a proliferation of single-field facilities that are dispersed throughout the area. This fragmented infrastructure poses logistical challenges for event organizers and limits BCMT's capacity to attract and host large-scale tournaments or competitions. Without adequate facilities to accommodate a diverse array of sporting events, BCMT may struggle to compete with other destinations that boast more comprehensive and centralized sports venues. Addressing this limitation is essential to enhance BCMT's appeal as a sports tourism destination and capitalize on opportunities for growth in the market.
3. Inactivity of the Sports Advisory Group – BCMT encounters a significant challenge due to the prolonged inactivity of its sports advisory group, which has not convened for an extended period of time. This lack of engagement impedes BCMT's ability to harness the collective expertise and insights of key stakeholders from various industries pertinent to sports tourism. As previously emphasized, an active and engaged advisory group is instrumental in providing invaluable guidance and strategic direction to bolster BCMT's sports tourism offerings. By reconvening the sports advisory group and fostering regular collaboration and dialogue, BCMT can tap into a wealth of knowledge and perspectives to identify opportunities, address challenges, and chart a course for the continued advancement of sports tourism in the area.

The original plan for the sports advisory group aimed to include representatives from Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County Parks and Recreation departments, Christiansburg Aquatic Center, Virginia Tech Recreational Sports and Club Sports, Radford University Recreational Sports and Club Sports, local hotels, local sports organizations, and the tourism office. While the intention was for the group to meet four times a year, stakeholders revealed during interviews with the Consultant Team that the group has not been meeting regularly, with some noting that it may have been two years since there was a meeting of these entities.

During the Consultant Team’s process, a relaunch of BCMT’s sports advisory committee took place. The committee was renamed Sports Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee (STORC) and held their first meeting in March 2024. The next meeting for the group is scheduled for June 2024.

The short-term goal of the group is to participate in Sports Virginia, a division of Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), as a formalized entity. This regional tourism program endeavors to act as a central point of contact for event leads, particularly for "city-wide" events requiring multiple competition venues and hotels for housing throughout the area. This aligns with the concept of a full-service Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). To achieve this goal, collaboration with

local sports venues and hotels is essential to respond to RFPS and work with local sports organizers to bring appropriately sized sports events to Montgomery County. The VTC also offers grants specific to sports tourism and special events, which could be a new source of revenue for BCMT to lean into going forward.

(Additional background information provided by BCMT staff: The original sports advisory group, which began meeting in 2019, included representatives from Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County Parks and Recreation departments, Christiansburg Aquatic Center, Virginia Tech Recreation and Club Sports, Radford University Recreation and Club Sports, local hotels, local sports organizations, and the tourism office. The group met on a quarterly basis.

There was interest in the tourism office pursuing the Sports Index & Strategic Plan on behalf of the committee, but funding was an issue. On April 22, 2021, a presentation from the Huddle Up Group was heard by the sports advisory committee. Shortly thereafter in May 2021, a committee structure was developed and proposed, creating a Sports Marketing & Outdoor Recreation grouping, but it was not executed.

The last official meeting of the sports advisory committee was held in August 2021 due to COVID-related disruptions and staff turnover. When ARPA funding became available to pursue the Huddle Up Group project, the Tourism Operating Board was anxious to relaunch the committee, and the tourism office advised that the relaunch of the sports advisory group be aligned with the rollout of the Huddle Up Group project to maximize its impact.

The relaunch of this sports advisory committee will give BCMT the ability to harness the collective expertise and insights of key stakeholders from various industries pertinent to sports tourism. As previously emphasized, an active and engaged advisory group is instrumental in providing invaluable guidance and strategic direction to bolster BCMT's sports tourism offerings. By reconvening the sports advisory group and fostering regular collaboration and dialogue, BCMT will tap into a wealth of knowledge and perspectives to identify opportunities, address challenges, and chart a course for the continued advancement of sports tourism in the area.)

### Opportunities

1. Non-traditional Sports – Embracing non-traditional sports, particularly "silent sports," presents a promising opportunity to attract both competitive athletes and leisure travelers to the BCMT area. Silent sports, including hiking, mountain biking, and kayaking, offer a unique and immersive experience appealing to a diverse range of outdoor enthusiasts. BCMT can leverage its abundant natural assets, such as hiking trails, mountain bike routes, and scenic waterways, to position itself as a premier destination for silent sports enthusiasts. Building on the success of existing events, like the Rowdy Dawg mountain bike race and cross-country event held in Montgomery County, provides a ripe opportunity to expand BCMT's presence in the silent sports market. These two events typically draw 120-130 participants for the mountain bike portion and 75-80 participants for the cross-country portion of the Rowdy Dawg event. While these athletes are primarily day-trippers, there are some attendees from outside of Virginia. BCMT could replicate and host similar mountain bike and cross-country events, attracting participants from across the region and beyond. By extending marketing efforts beyond state borders and encouraging participants to stay overnight, BCMT can enhance its

impact in the silent sports arena, fostering economic growth and community engagement. Through targeted marketing strategies and strategic partnerships with outdoor sports organizations, BCMT can capitalize on this opportunity to diversify its sports tourism offerings and broaden its appeal to a wider audience, cementing its status as a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

2. **Leverage Existing Assets** – BCMT can leverage its abundant natural assets, including its renowned trail systems to elevate its sports tourism offerings. Huckleberry Trail, the New River Water Trail, and Brush Mountain Park are all prime assets that could drive additional overnight stays to the market. The Huckleberry Trail, stretching over 10 miles from Christiansburg to Blacksburg, offers scenic views and recreational opportunities for hikers, bikers, and nature enthusiasts alike. The New River Water Trail expansion provides a picturesque pathway along the New River, showcasing the region's natural beauty and offering a serene setting for outdoor activities. Brush Mountain Park offers diverse trails for mountain biking and hiking, with varying difficulty levels to cater to enthusiasts of all skill levels. By promoting these iconic trails and nature areas as premier destinations for outdoor recreation, BCMT can attract visitors seeking immersive outdoor experiences. Investing in trail maintenance, way finding signage, and additional amenities at these locations can further enhance the visitor experience and encourage longer stays in the area. Through strategic partnerships with outdoor recreation organizations and targeted marketing campaigns showcasing the unique allure of Montgomery County's trail systems, BCMT can establish itself as a top-tier destination for outdoor enthusiasts. By harnessing the potential of its existing assets, BCMT can not only bolster its sports tourism appeal but also stimulate economic growth and foster community engagement, solidifying its reputation as a premier outdoor destination in Virginia.
3. **Virginia Tech** – BCMT has the advantage of being situated near the impressive sports facilities at Virginia Tech. While these facilities offer significant potential for hosting sports events and attracting visitors to the area, there appears to be minimal collaboration or communication between BCMT and Tech. This presents a promising opportunity for BCMT to establish partnerships and foster a dialogue with the University to capitalize on their sports infrastructure. By leveraging the facilities on campus and aligning efforts with the university's sports programs, BCMT can unlock new avenues for hosting events, attracting athletes, and enhancing the overall sports tourism experience in the region. Proactive engagement with Virginia Tech can lead to mutually beneficial partnerships that elevate BCMT's sports tourism offerings while showcasing the university's facilities on a broader stage. Through strategic collaboration and coordination, BCMT can maximize the potential of Tech's facilities, driving economic growth and enriching the sports tourism landscape in Montgomery County. Moreover, by hosting sporting events in collaboration with the University, participants and attendees will have the opportunity to experience the campus firsthand, potentially sparking interest in enrollment and further strengthening the ties between BCMT and Virginia Tech.

### Threats

1. **Regional Competition** – Beyond its neighboring counties, BCMT faces robust competition from established destinations in Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina, who have made significant strides in the national sports tourism arena (see Appendix B). This competitive landscape poses challenges for BCMT as it strives to carve out its niche locally, regionally, and nationally. With limited resources at its disposal, BCMT must strategically identify key focus areas to maximize its impact in the sports tourism market. Navigating this competitive environment requires BCMT to

make intentional choices and allocate its resources wisely to capitalize on opportunities that align with its strengths and objectives. By carefully selecting its target markets and prioritizing its initiatives, BCMT can effectively position itself as a formidable player in the dynamic sports tourism landscape, distinguishing itself amidst formidable competition and driving sustainable growth in the region.

2. **Community Alignment** – Community stakeholders interviewed routinely cited that there is a need for increased communication and engagement from BCMT. With each jurisdiction operating independently and pursuing its own objectives, there is a lack of cohesive alignment and coordination in sports tourism efforts across the region. This fragmented approach hinders the ability to leverage collective resources, synergize initiatives, and maximize the overall impact of sports tourism for the community. The divergent goals and strategies of the cities and counties within the BCMT area may result in duplication of efforts, inefficient resource allocation, and missed opportunities for collaboration and partnership. Addressing this challenge requires fostering greater cohesion and alignment among stakeholders, establishing common goals and objectives, and creating collaboration opportunities to ensure that sports tourism initiatives are effectively coordinated and mutually beneficial for all entities involved. By developing a unified vision and concerted effort among all stakeholders, BCMT can overcome the threat posed by community misalignment and harness the collective strength of the region to drive sustainable growth and success in sports tourism.
3. **Sustainable Funding Source** – BCMT faces a critical challenge in the absence of a sustainable funding source for staffing and marketing endeavors. The existing sources that fund BCMT could also be at risk (example: Christiansburg’s recent Town Council vote to cancel its funding of BCMT). Lack of a consistent and strong funding mechanism puts BCMT in a precarious position to compete in the sports tourism space. Insufficient funding limits the ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel, resulting in staffing shortages and impeding the execution of marketing strategies to support tourism-related activities, sports or otherwise. Furthermore, the shortage of human capital at parks and recreation and BCMT compounds the challenges faced by the community when considering an intentional entry into the sports tourism marketplace.

This financial constraint jeopardizes BCMT's competitiveness and its capacity to meet evolving market demands, thereby impeding its long-term sustainability and growth. Without a dedicated funding stream, BCMT risks lagging behind competitors and missing opportunities to drive sports tourism to the Montgomery County area. To address this threat, BCMT must explore alternative funding mechanisms and diversify revenue streams, ensuring its continued viability and success in the dynamic sports tourism landscape.

**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Competitive Set Analysis**

As part of the analysis, the Consultant Team utilized the Sports Tourism Index™ to evaluate BCMT’s current position within the sports tourism marketplace, benchmark the organization against its competitors, and provide a baseline to measure future growth. As the sole proprietor of this platform, the Consultants have exclusive use of the trademarked tool to determine the destination’s strengths, competitive set, and areas of opportunity. This analysis produced a score and ranking based on the organization’s answers to questions addressing four major theme areas or “buckets.” The questions and scoring method were derived from responses by leading event rights holders across the country when asked for their most important criteria in placing events in a particular destination. Benchmarking and rankings are generated from responses by 380+ destinations and over 6,000 facilities across the country. The four buckets, each with a maximum score of 25, are represented as follows:



Bucket	BCMT	Overall Average	Midwest Average	Under 500k Pop. Avg.
Facilities	5.78	9.58	9.68	9.14
Destination Strength	4.80	11.79	11.18	10.66
Organization Structure	2.36	11.63	12.65	11.21
Events	3.10	8.01	8.21	7.80
Overall	16.04*	41.01	41.72	38.81

\*Each bucket has a maximum score of 25, for a total of 100 points overall.  
 For a further breakdown of BCMT’s scores, and their meaning, refer to Appendix E.

Using the scores generated by the Sports Tourism Index™, the Consultant Team was able generate a competitive set of destinations within the sports tourism market. Below is a list of organizations with similar scores to BCMT.

- **Overall:** Charlottesville (VA) Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau, Conyers (GA) CVB, Douglas County (GA) Travel & Tourism, Jackson County (NC) Tourism Development Authority, Newport (VA) News Tourism, Visit Luzerne County (PA).
- **Facilities:** DistiNCTly Fayetteville (NC), Douglasville (GA) CVB, Explore Newnan-Coweta (GA), Jackson County (NC) Tourism Development Authority, Prince William (VA) Sports, Visit Fairfax (VA).
- **Destination Strength:** Athens (GA) CVB, Jacksonville-Onslow (NC) Sports Commission, Visit Bainbridge (GA), Wilson County (NC) Tourism Development Authority.
- **Organization Structure:** Boyd County (KY) Tourism & Convention Bureau, Douglas County (GA) Travel & Tourism, Kentucky Lake (KY) CVB, Visit Bainbridge (GA).



- **Events:** Charlottesville Albemarle (VA) Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cobb Travel and Tourism (GA), Danville (VA) Office of Economic Development & Tourism, DistiNCtly Fayetteville (NC), Prince William (VA) Sports.

Finally, as BCMT begins to undertake the steps outlined in the recommendations in the following sections, there are several high-performing sports tourism organizations, similar in size and makeup to the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County area and BCMT's structure. These organizations and destinations should be viewed as best-in-class examples for BCMT. These include, but are not limited to, the following (in alphabetical order):

- Athens CVB (GA)
- City of Salem (VA)
- Economic Development & Tourism, City of Lynchburg (VA)
- Visit Oxford (MS)

**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Primary Recommendations**

The enclosed primary recommendations include three (3) opportunities for an enhanced sports tourism marketing program. While the scope of work for this project also had a focus on facility development opportunities, it is likely that an enhancement to the sports tourism marketing program would deliver returns much earlier than the development of an entirely new venue or enhancing existing facilities. The recommendations are listed on the following pages along with more detail for each concept.

**Primary Recommendations – Organizational Strategies (Shorter Term)**

1. **Enrich Human Capital** – To strengthen BCMT's capacity in sports tourism, it will be essential to focus on increasing the investment in human capital. One crucial step is to hire a dedicated sports sales and services manager who can effectively drive sports tourism events to the area and ensure seamless support of events hosted in the community. Alternatively, exploring a partnership with an experienced third party to fill this role (such as Airstream Ventures) could provide valuable expertise and resources to enhance sports tourism in the region. Airstream Ventures focuses on building a community's sports profile with event rights holder relationships that Airstream currently maintains. In just over four years, Airstream Ventures has led 95 events, with 20 being televised nationally, and they have created an economic impact of over \$55 million in eight different communities they currently serve. Should BCMT not be able to hire its own sports staff member, the Consultant Team believes that if Airstream Ventures filled this role, they would likely attract and support a handful of new events to the area each year.

Additionally, supporting parks staff is vital for efficient event support and facility maintenance. Allocating funding for weekend positions to assist with events could significantly improve operations and enhance the overall quality of events, thereby benefiting both the community and the visitor experience. Moreover, establishing a volunteer program presents an opportunity to engage community members in supporting sports tourism events.

Finally, BCMT can explore collaborations with local universities such as Virginia Tech or Radford University to create internship positions. These internships could provide valuable support to BCMT or parks and recreation while offering students practical experience in sports tourism management, event planning, and marketing. By leveraging such partnerships, BCMT can not only address staffing needs but also contribute to the development of future professionals in the field, fostering a talent pipeline and enhancing community engagement in the process.

2. **Enhance Relationships with Community Stakeholders** – Executing the recommendations in this playbook will take an intentional effort by the BCMT team to be externally focused with the community's sports and events stakeholders. The Consultant Team calls this role serving as the community's "connective tissue" in this area. This strategy requires an ongoing and consistent outreach program to the area's venue owners, sporting clubs, high schools, colleges, elected officials, hospitality members, community leaders, and citizens, to ensure continued access to the resources needed to accomplish the mission of BCMT. By focusing more time on the larger conversation relating to sports tourism, BCMT can connect the dots between various community

partners and uncover more collaboration opportunities in the future. Furthermore, as BCMT strengthens its partnerships within the community, some stakeholders may better recognize the value of sports tourism and become more supportive of BCMT and their initiatives in the future.

To foster greater connectivity and strategic alignment in sports tourism initiatives, the Consultant Team strongly advises prioritizing the reactivation of a sports specific advisory group (best in class: West Michigan Sports Commission). The top performing sports organizations in the country have created such a strong advisory group that very few sports-related moves are made in their communities without their consultation. Therefore, it is imperative for BCMT to strive towards creating an environment where key sports related decisions are deliberated and determined by its own sports advisory group. To effectively establish this framework, careful consideration should be given to the following attributes when structuring the advisory group:

- The group's makeup should provide an environment for community leaders that touch sports tourism, events, economic development, and the business community to connect in one meaningful and intentional place.
- The group should consist of 7-15 members.
- Members should be decision makers for their respective organizations.
- The group should be diverse in several areas, including, but not limited to the following: race, sex, age, skill sets, industry, background, and political connectivity.
- Members should be willing to commit their "time, talent, and/or treasure" (financial, volunteer time, fundraising, networking, etc.).
- Members should actively participate in meetings, discussions, and collaborative efforts, fostering open communication, mutual respect, and constructive dialogue among board members and stakeholders.
- Members should actively engage with the broader community, seeking input and feedback from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to help with informed decision-making and ensure that sports tourism initiatives align with community values and aspirations.

A sports specific advisory group can be tasked with leading in the creation of a regional sports tourism facility master plan, helping build created events, supporting bids, fundraising, sourcing grant opportunities, prioritizing event opportunities, reviewing grant requests, and/or lending political capital to BCMT and other members of the group when needed.

Additionally, BCMT should implement externally facing programs that will help enhance relationships with community stakeholders. A few examples of such programs are the "4-Touch Rule", "6&6" luncheons, an annual sports award breakfast, and/or having bi-monthly facility meetings.

Implementing the “4-Touch Rule” program is paramount for maintaining strong relationships with key stakeholders. The essence of this initiative lies in regularly engaging with stakeholders through one-on-one meetings, solely focused on updating them about the organization's activities and garnering their feedback. It is essential to emphasize that these meetings should not include any sales pitches but rather serve as information-gathering sessions to keep stakeholders informed and connected. Tracking these interactions is crucial. The best tactic to track “touches” throughout the year is to maintain a visible chart in the office where dates and details of each meeting are recorded. This ensures transparent accountability and encourages team-wide participation. With a concerted effort from the entire team, successful follow through on these touches can be achieved, and solid community relationships can grow.

The “6&6” lunch program offers a strategic platform to engage with stakeholders and the broader business community. The concept is to invite six existing stakeholders to each invite a guest that knows little to nothing about the organization’s ongoing efforts. These informative luncheons create opportunities to educate attendees about the significance of sports tourism and events and the work of BCMT in this space. Hosting these gatherings quarterly (or monthly if resources allow) provides a consistent forum for introducing the organization's mission and ongoing initiatives. Over time, this initiative can cultivate a knowledgeable cohort of community leaders who may potentially advocate for the organization in the future, amplifying its reach and impact.

Hosting an annual sports breakfast, coupled with an awards ceremony, could serve as a meaningful gesture to recognize and celebrate the contributions of partners and key performers in driving sports tourism efforts throughout the Montgomery County area. This type of an event not only fosters a sense of appreciation but also reinforces the collaborative spirit among stakeholders. By highlighting achievements and acknowledging the dedication of individuals and organizations, BCMT can strengthen relationships and inspire continued support for its initiatives.

3. Enhance Marketing Strategies – To enhance marketing efforts and attract new sporting events to the area, the Consultant Team recommends leveraging four key opportunities: (1) the implementation of the Scout platform or a similar technology, (2) the creation of a specialized visitor guide for visiting teams to the high schools and colleges, (3) tapping into Virginia resources like the VTC grant and Sports Virginia, (4) prioritize marketing outdoor recreation assets in the region.

First, the Scout platform (and other tools like it) serves as a powerful online event matchmaking tool, offering a cost-efficient solution to identify relevant sports events that align with the destination's venue offerings. While dedicating a staff member solely to the sports market may not be feasible in the near term, Scout provides a valuable resource for business development, connecting with event organizers, and quantifying the economic impact of sports tourism. In addition to event matchmaking, the Scout platform features an Estimated Spending Calculator, providing insights into the economic impact of sports events on the local community. By leveraging this tool, BCMT can quantify the value of sports tourism and effectively communicate its benefits to stakeholders and potential partners.

Second, to capitalize on the significant sports tourism activity generated by local colleges and high schools in the region, BCMT can collaborate with its scholastic partners to create a specialized visitor guide tailored to visiting teams playing area high schools and colleges. This guide will serve

as a valuable resource for enhancing the experience of visiting teams and their supporters, providing them with comprehensive information and recommendations to make the most of their stay in the BCMT region. The guide will also drive value back to BCMT's partners, including area hotels, restaurants, and attractions.

The visitors guide should be developed and marketed with the team manager in mind, aiming to streamline the planning process for visiting teams and facilitate a seamless experience during their stay. The guide should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- **Comprehensive Accommodation Listings** – Provide a curated list of team-friendly hotels and lodging options in the County, offering convenient accommodations for visiting teams and their supporters. This section will highlight hotels with amenities such as group booking options, proximity to sporting venues, and special rates for scholastic sports events.
- **Dining Recommendations** – Feature a selection of team friendly restaurants and dining establishments across the County, catering to the needs and preferences of visiting teams. This section will include information on restaurants offering group dining options, pre-game meals, and post-game celebrations, ensuring that visiting teams have access to quality dining experiences during their stay.
- **Transportation Resources** – Offer guidance on transportation options available in the County, including directions to sporting venues, shuttle services, and public transportation routes. This section will help visiting teams navigate the area efficiently and conveniently, facilitating seamless travel arrangements during their visit.
- **Local Attractions and Activities** – Highlight a range of attractions and activities available in the community, including outdoor adventures, cultural experiences, downtown/main street type destinations, and recreational opportunities. This section will showcase opportunities for sightseeing, shopping, hiking, biking, and exploring the natural beauty of the region, allowing visiting teams and their supporters to make the most of their downtime between games.

By developing a specialized visitors guide for visiting teams, BCMT can enhance the overall experience of scholastic sports events in the region, foster positive relationships with local schools, and position BCMT as community leader to area stakeholders. This initiative has the potential to evolve into a long-term marketing program, providing ongoing support to local schools and strengthening BCMT's reputation as a sports-friendly destination over time.

Additionally, BCMT should explore opportunities to tap into available Virginia Tourism Corp (VTC) grants, which can provide valuable funding support for sports-related initiatives and marketing efforts. Furthermore, joining Sports Virginia would present a significant opportunity for BCMT to expand its reach and visibility within the sports tourism industry. By becoming a member of Sports Virginia, BCMT can benefit from increased exposure at industry trade shows and events, leveraging the organization's promotional efforts to market the BCMT region to a broader audience without significant financial investment.

To complement its marketing strategy, BCMT should capitalize on the region's abundant outdoor recreation assets, which play a pivotal role in attracting visitors interested in sports tourism. With a diverse array of natural landscapes and recreational opportunities, the BCMT region offers something for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages and interests. From scenic hiking trails traversing lush forests to tranquil waterways perfect for kayaking and fishing, the area boasts an unparalleled outdoor playground waiting to be explored.

Additionally, BCMT can leverage the region's reputation as a prime destination for outdoor activities to appeal to sports event participants and their families. By highlighting the proximity of sporting venues to popular outdoor attractions and promoting the region as a hub for both sports competition and recreational pursuits, BCMT can position itself as an all-encompassing destination for sports tourism. Families traveling to attend sporting events can extend their stay to enjoy outdoor adventures such as hiking, biking, camping, and wildlife watching, creating memorable experiences that go beyond the confines of the competition arena.

Lastly, BCMT should explore collaborative opportunities with local outdoor recreation businesses, tour operators, and adventure outfitters to develop inclusive packages that combine sports events with outdoor experiences. Partnering with these stakeholders can enhance the overall visitor experience and provide added value to sports tourism offerings, attracting a wider audience and fostering repeat visitation. By integrating outdoor recreation into its marketing strategy and forging strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, BCMT can maximize its appeal as a sports tourism destination and solidify its reputation as a hub for outdoor adventure in the region.



**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Secondary Recommendations**

Below are three (3) secondary recommendations that focus on opportunities for an improved sports tourism facility “tool kit.” The venue recommendations outlined below are listed in order based on what the sports tourism impact is likely to be for the Montgomery County area should each of these recommendations come to fruition.

**Secondary Recommendations – Facility “Tool Kit” Opportunities (Longer Term)**

1. Christiansburg Aquatic Center – The Consultant Team believes that there is an opportunity to optimize the usage of the Christiansburg Aquatic Center by expanding its capacity for hosting tourism driving sporting events. The Center boasts exceptional amenities and is considered one of the best in the country. Currently, Virginia Tech utilizes the pool for their meets, and the aquatic center is hosting approximately 32-40 events annually. While many of these are local intersquad meets, 8-12 are significant economic drivers, such as state and regional championships. However, the Center faces limitations in maximizing its potential due to staffing constraints and some facility infrastructure that is needed.

Improving human capital (staffing) at the Center could enable the facility to host more events effectively. With the support of trained staff, the Center could expand its event calendar and attract a broader range of competitions, including those sanctioned by organizations like USA Swimming, USA Diving, and AAU Swim and Dive. Specifically, there is a need for more trained timing system workers that would then enable the Center to host more (and larger) championships. BCMT could explore opportunities to assist with compensating the training and retention of officials, addressing a critical need for future event solicitation and execution.

Additionally, the Center identifies parking limitations, the absence of a warm-up pool, and additional deck space, as challenges when hosting major events. Addressing these infrastructure needs would elevate the center's capabilities and enhance the overall event experience for participants and attendees. By investing in facility upgrades and expanding amenities, BCMT can position the Christiansburg Aquatic Center as a premier destination for aquatic sports events, attracting a larger volume of visitors, and generating increasing economic benefit for the community.

Using the Sports Tourism Index™ as a benchmarking tool, the chart on the following page summarizes the key characteristics possessed by the top aquatic focused venues in the country. The second column outlines the characteristics of an average facility of this type. The fourth column shows the difference between a top 10 facility and the Christiansburg Aquatic Center, the darker the green highlights the bigger the gap.

	AVERAGES		Christiansburg Aquatic Center	
	Top 10	Overall	Center	Difference
<b>Deck Space</b>	13	10	10	-3
<b>Pool - Depth</b>	10	11	17	7
<b>1m - Diving</b>	3	1	2	-1
<b>3m - Diving</b>	2	1	2	0
<b>5m - Diving</b>	1	0	1	0
<b>7.5m - Diving</b>	1	0	1	0
<b>10m - Diving</b>	1	0	1	0
<b>Auxiliary meeting rooms</b>	3	2	2	-1
<b>Diving Well</b>	90%	29%	NO	-90%
<b>Hot Tub</b>	70%	26%	NO	-90%
<b>Starting Blocks</b>	100%	92%	YES	Present
<b>Permanent restrooms</b>	100%	99%	YES	Present
<b>Permanent Wi-Fi</b>	100%	86%	YES	Present
<b>Parking</b>	90%	96%	YES	Present
<b>ADA Compliant</b>	100%	96%	YES	Present
<b>Ability to book (Definitely yes)</b>	100%	54%	PROBABLY YES	0%
<b>Score</b>	3.83	2.69	3.30	1.13

Best in Class: Texas A&M Natatorium (College Station, TX), Liberty University Natatorium (Lynchburg, VA), Huntsville Aquatics Center (Huntsville, AL), Florida Aquatics Swimming and Training (Gainesville, FL), Woollett Aquatics Center (Anaheim, CA), Mason Aquatic Center (Mason, OH), Hulbert Aquatic Facility (Fargo, ND).

- Enhance Existing Outdoor Venues – The Consultant Team observed that the existing outdoor venues in the area have the potential to host silent sports events. To capture these opportunities, several of these venues would need investment. During the site visit, inadequate signage and limited parking were noted at the Whitethorne boat launch, which primarily caters to local use rather than tournament-level events. Addressing these infrastructure deficiencies, such as improving signage and expanding parking facilities, could better support the hosting of regional or national competitions at this location.

Additionally, while exploring the upper river access point of the Roanoke River in Montgomery County, the Consultant Team identified the potential for water sports events during certain times of the year. However, the lack of suitable access points poses a challenge to leveraging the river for sports tourism driven events. Enhancing access points along the New River and the Roanoke River could unlock opportunities for hosting a wider range of silent sports events, attracting participants and spectators to the area.

By improving signage, enhancing access points, and implementing effective marketing strategies, BCMT can maximize the potential of existing outdoor venues to become premier destinations for silent sports events. These efforts would not only bolster the area's sports tourism offerings but also contribute to economic growth and community engagement.

3. Develop a Regional Sports Tourism Facility Master Plan –To address the fragmented approach to sports tourism development in the Montgomery County area, the Consultant Team recommends the development of a Regional Sports Tourism Facility Master Plan. Through interviews and surveys, it became apparent that stakeholders across various departments and organizations operate in silos, often unaware of ongoing projects until they are well underway. While individual entities may have venue and marketing development plans in place, the lack of coordination leads to inefficiencies and missed opportunities for collaboration.

The proposed master plan aims to unify the wants and needs of all area stakeholders, fostering better coordination and eliminating redundancies in future facility developments. By engaging stakeholders from the cities, county, parks departments, schools, private facilities, economic development entities, and various sporting club programs, BCMT can facilitate a collaborative approach to sports tourism development, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively, and initiatives are aligned with broader regional goals.

BCMT, in collaboration with a sports-specific advisory board, is well-positioned to lead this initiative and generate community-wide momentum around sports tourism development. The advisory board, composed of representatives from key stakeholders, can provide valuable insights and expertise to inform the master planning process. By prioritizing the development of a regional sports tourism facility master plan, BCMT can lay the groundwork for strategic and sustainable growth in the sports tourism sector, maximizing the area's potential as a premier destination for sporting events and tournaments.

**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Typical Funding Models**

In order to enrich the destination as a desirable sports tourism market, BCMT and its partners may want to identify an additional sustainable funding source to enhance, develop, and maintain tourism driving assets. Numerous markets across the country have implemented a dedicated tourism-based revenue source (a tax) to enhance their sports marketing programs and sports facilities. These revenue streams most often come in the form of a hotel occupancy tax, Tourism Improvement District (TID), or a food and beverage tax that is dedicated to the singular purpose of increasing overnight stays through hosting sporting events. A sample list of destinations that have gone down these funding pathways can be found in Appendix C. As a major point of note, numerous cities are using these revenue streams to put towards the construction and/or operation of new and enhanced sports facilities. In nearly all these cases, the taxes generated to enhance/build these facilities are used to drive incremental overnight stays for the destination. As an example, not necessarily a recommendation, the most common funding mechanisms the Consultant Team has seen implemented nationally include:

- Tourism Improvement Districts (TIDs)
- Hotel/bed taxes
- Prepared food (restaurant) taxes
- Sales taxes

Beyond these traditional funding mechanisms, the municipalities and many of the area's corporate leaders have a vested interest in the sports market and how it can positively impact the area's youth. As a result, a discussion with the area's leaders should be had around what resources could be brought to the table for sports facility and local program development.

**Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB (BCMT)**  
**Sports Tourism Strategic Plan + Facility Recommendations**  
**Conclusion**

For the area to be relevant in the sports market, BCMT and its sports tourism stakeholders must continue to build bridges with key players locally and pave the way for asset development over the long term.

The addition of an improved sports tourism marketing strategy and the execution of the enclosed recommendations will empower BCMT and local event/venue operators to create home-grown participant driven events, enhance their existing venues, and host more bid-in regional/national championships. To achieve these lofty aspirations, BCMT has a heavy lift ahead, but by forging this path, the destination will be better positioned regionally and nationally as a strong player in the sports tourism industry while also providing better opportunities for local youth through sports.

To raise the bar in the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County area, and to positively impact the community, BCMT's leadership should focus its efforts on three (3) overarching objectives:

1. Create a culture of sports and events development. Develop human capital (staff and a volunteer base). Develop relationships (local stakeholders and regional/national event owners). Develop a vehicle to push the tourism agenda through sports (funding). And, finally, develop physical products (venues).
2. Partner with local clubs and venues to build created events that will call the area home long into the future and that will not be subject to an RFP process with BCMT's competitors. There is a major trend in the industry around the created events concept, inclusive of a focus on the regional drive market. This is an area that BCMT should work on with its local event owners and venue managers to evolve in the future.
3. Make the improvement of the destination's venue "tool kit" a priority by adding new venue assets and enhancing the existing assets where necessary. The top multi-sport facilities in the country have spurred private investment in and around them, which is something that needs to be top of mind for regional leadership throughout this process.

As with any new project, there are numerous variables that need to be considered when evaluating the ROI and risk in developing new sports facilities. In the experience of the Consultant Team, destinations who consider the overall impact on their community and its citizens will have more success, and see a higher level of collaboration, than those that measure purely by room nights or bed tax collections. This community-wide effort will help BCMT connect the tourism and business communities in an ongoing and proactive manner into the future.

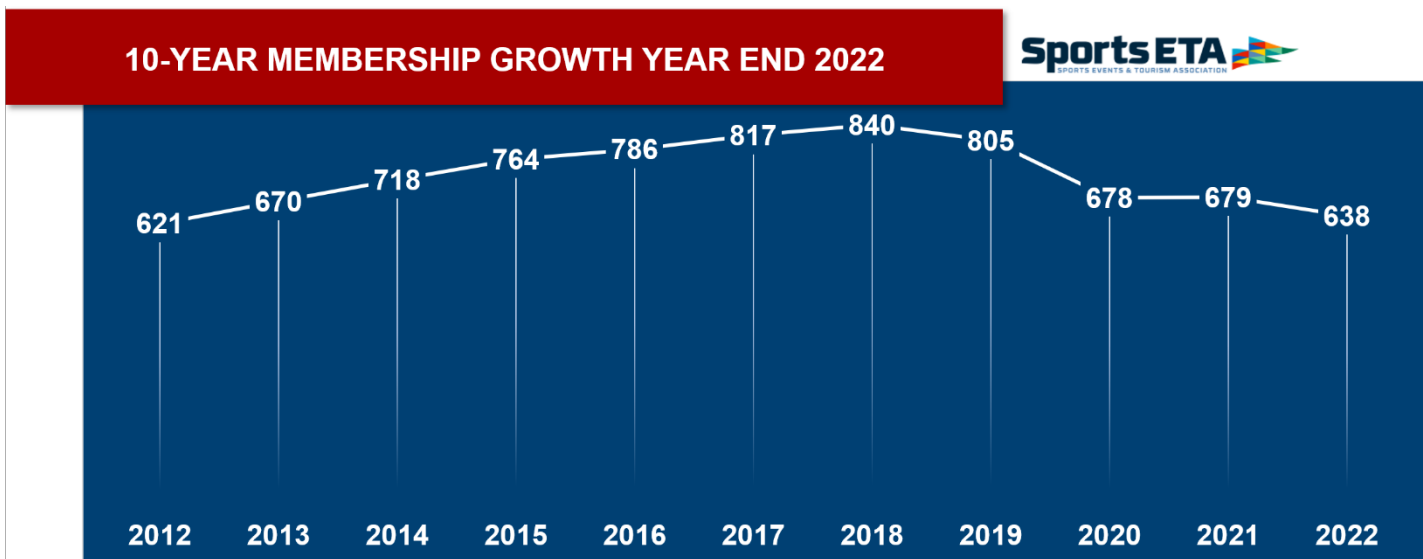
In the eyes of the Consultant Team, the puzzle pieces exist for Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB to expand economic development for the area through sports tourism. The Consultant Team believes it is within the power of the community's sports stakeholders to capture more opportunities in the sports tourism and events market while also enriching the lives of its citizens.

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## Appendix A – SportsETA Membership

Despite the downtick in national membership figures that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sports tourism industry has grown exponentially over the past two decades. The nature of the industry is that it is relatively “immune” to market trends such as troubled economies, war, high unemployment, or similar factors. Projections indicate that the grass roots sports tourism industry (exclusive of mega events like the Superbowl, Final Fours, etc.) is growing at a pace of 12-14% per year, with more growth anticipated in the coming decade.

Today, there are more events, with more participants competing in those events, than ever before. As a result, there are also more organizations placing an intentional effort into attracting these events to their destination than ever before. Below is a chart outlining the growth of membership organizations within SportsETA, which is expected to rebound to pre-pandemic numbers in the near future and is a direct correlation to the growth of the sports tourism industry as a whole.



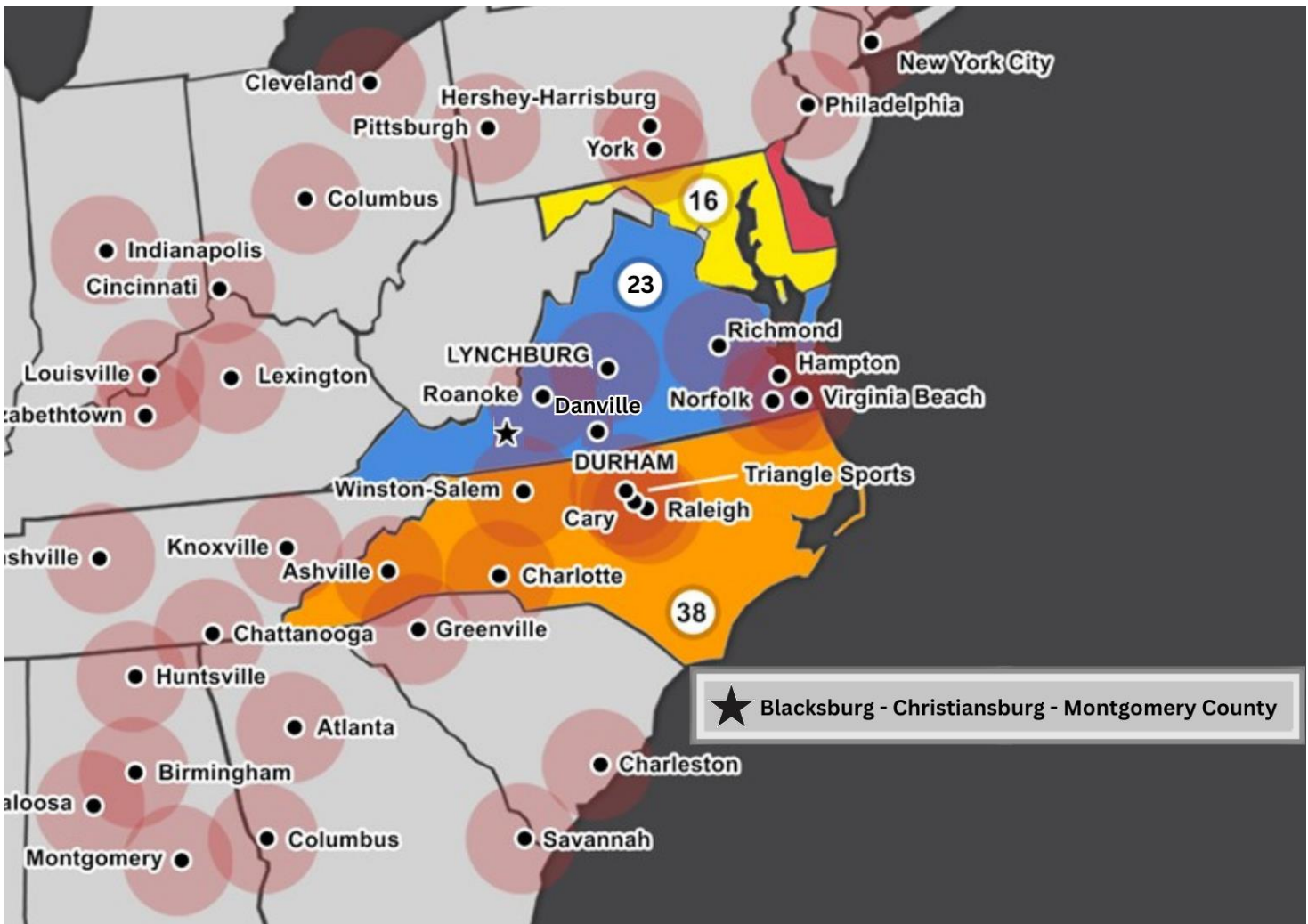


## Appendix B – Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB Competition Map

The sports and events tourism industry is as competitive today as it has ever been. Numerous destinations market themselves in this niche industry in the form of a sports commission, DMO, convention & visitors bureau, city, county, or through an alternative organization.

Below is a visual representation of the various entities in BCMT’s geographic region that are active in the sports tourism and events space. Tournaments often attract teams from as far away as a full day’s drive. This graphic shows the significant level of competition in this industry and the high-level geographic overlap amongst these communities.

(Note: The circled numbers indicate how many destinations are active in that state in the sports tourism and events space).



## Appendix C – Trends in Sports Facility Funding

A funding source that has been growing rapidly in the past few years are Tourism Improvement Districts (TIDs), they are not legal in every state yet, but the states and destinations that do utilize them see a tremendous economic impact from these districts. TIDs use a special benefit assessment to raise revenue to use for destination marketing and tourism promotion. Several of these success stories include:

- Memphis (TN) began their TID on January 1, 2016, assessing \$2.00 per occupied room per night to fund destination marketing programs. Prior to forming the TID, the Memphis bureau projected an annual budget of \$9.4 million in 2017, but with the TID funding, the projected 2017 budget increased to \$14.7 million.
- Sacramento (CA) approved the 10-year renewal of the Sacramento Tourism Marketing District (STMD) on July 1, 2017. The STMD is a variable assessment rate on hotel stays, with the percentage depending on the zone of the hotel. For fiscal year 2022-2023, the budgeted revenue from the STMD was \$6,860,000.
- Denver (CO) created their TID in 2016, with the intent to generate revenue for tourism-related services to increase overnight visitation, including funding capital improvement projects such as the Convention Center. Tourism Economics analyzed the effects of the TID in 2019 and found that Visit Denver's \$36 million budget generated \$73 million in local tax revenue.
- In a 2021 study, Tourism Economics examined a three-year period before and after a TID was implemented in 29 TID cities, and then compared these cities against their non-TID competitors. Tourism Economics found that on average, TIDs produce a 2.1% lift in hotel room demand and an average 4.5% lift in hotel room revenue for their destinations compared to destinations without TIDs. To put this in perspective, lift on hotel room demand and revenue represented an increase in 150,000 room nights and \$51 million, respectively, for the average destination in 2019.
- Lafayette (LA) created the Lafayette Tourism Improvement District (LTID) on September 20, 2023. This 2% self-imposed assessment paid by hotels and motels within Lafayette Parish will generate a staggering \$1,758,356 annually in additional funds. These funds will support the planning of a brand-new, state-of-the-art indoor sports facility, which will drive additional local and national tourism.
- Portland (ME) created Maine's first tourism improvement district called the Portland Tourism Development District (PTDD) in September 2023. The PTDD is not based on a flat percentage or dollar amount, instead it is based on the business activity related to each parcel within the district. This model leverages the average short-term room rental occupancy percentage and the Average Daily Rate as reported by STR, this value is then multiplied by 1.5%. The first full year budget projection of the PTDD is approximately \$2,953,968.
- According to Civitasadvisors.com, the nation's leading firm in TIDs, over 200 TIDs across the globe raise \$312 million each year for destination marketing. One study found that for every dollar raised by a TID, there is a \$70 return for the economy.

## Appendix C (cont'd) – Trends in Sports Facility Funding

The most common funding source for new facilities is a general fund allocation from the city/county where the facility is located as well as a land contribution for the venue to be constructed (again donated by the city or county). Although the level of success is yet to be determined, several communities around the country have already, or are in the process of, raising their hotel/bed (transient) tax collection rate to fund sports-related facility development, including:

- Rockford (IL), having already finished a significant expansion of its outdoor sports venues, used bed tax dollars to bond \$10 million towards a new indoor facility. The Downtown Sports Complex carried a price tag of \$24 million and opened in late 2016.
- Evansville (IN) opened a \$15 million multi-use outdoor sports complex that is entirely funded by bed tax dollars. The future management of this facility will also be funded by bed tax dollars, and it is run by the DMO itself.
- Spokane (WA) bonded \$25 million against future bed tax collections to construct a new athletic field house (The Podium) which opened in December 2021.
- Shreveport (LA) passed a bed tax increase for the expansion of their Convention & Visitor Bureau's national marketing program. This new tax also supports the Independence Bowl (venue enhancements and improved matchups) and the Shreveport Regional Airport (incentives for new airline routes). This combined effort between three of Shreveport's leading agencies shows the economic development impact that sports tourism can have on a mid- or small-size market.
- Fox Cities (Appleton, WI) raised their bed tax rate from 6% to 10% to build a convention center, a new large (hardwood and ice) indoor sports complex, and to renovate three existing sports facilities used to attract regional and national tournaments. The new facility opened in October of 2019 and due to its early success, further expansions are already being discussed.
- Placer Valley (CA) allocated funds from an increased bed tax to develop and open a new indoor hardwood complex in 2018.
- Pasco (FL), in partnership with the Florida Sports Foundation, developed a new sports complex on 120 acres of county-owned property. Pasco County is investing \$11 million to the project, including \$8.5 million in tourist tax funds and \$2.5 million in unrestricted bond proceeds.
- In January 2016, Warren County (OH) raised the lodging tax one (1) percent to finance a \$10 million, 20 field sports complex. The rate hike increased the county hotel occupancy tax from 3% to 4%. The tax will be used over 20 years to pay off debt the Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau will take on to pay for the complex.

## Appendix C (cont'd) – Trends in Sports Facility Funding

In addition to the hotel tax examples noted on the previous page, several communities have implemented a food and beverage tax for the purpose of developing or enhancing sports facilities.

- Elizabethtown (KY) passed a 2% food and beverage tax in 2012 to fund the development and management of the Elizabethtown Sports Park. In the first five years of operations, the “mega complex” generated nearly \$100 million in direct visitor spending to the community (according to studies commissioned with SportsImpacts, one of the top economic impact agencies in the country). Etown as it is known, is currently looking at facility expansion opportunities to capture even more sports tourism activity.
- For the past 30 years, Fort Wayne (IN) has implemented a 1% food and beverage tax that is used for capital projects. This program has funded several new buildings at the site of the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum arena, including a 100,000-square foot expo center and 5,000-seat baseball stadium. These funds have also been used to renovate the arena’s ice floor, to add 2,500 seats and meeting rooms to the arena. The fund generates \$7.5 million per year and is currently being considered to help finance a new arena downtown.
- Ashland (OR) employs a 5% food and beverage tax which garners nearly \$4.5 million a year. Twenty percent of these funds are allocated to the acquisition and preservation of open spaces for parks and recreation, with 80% of the funds used to retire debt for a recently completed community-wide waterway enhancement.
- Historically, King County (WA) has used intermittent funding from food and beverage taxes to build stadiums such as the King Dome. While this program is not active today, it has been a tool the Greater Seattle area has used in the past for venue development to entice professional sports teams to the area. Similarly, the State of Florida has a professional league stadium venue development program that is also funded by temporary food and beverage taxes, when needed. Finally, Milwaukee used a food and beverage tax to build Miller Park, home of Major League Baseball’s Milwaukee Brewers.
- In 2007, the State of New Jersey created the “Sports and Entertainment District Urban Revitalization Act.” Under this legislation, the community of Millville levied a 2% local food and beverage tax to fund a sports and entertainment district including a 500-acre motorsports park that hosts numerous events including NASCAR racing.

It should be noted that different states have different regulations regarding the use of funds generated by bed and/or food and beverage taxes. The cases outlined above are not exhaustive and should be viewed only as examples for further discussion.

## Appendix D – Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County area CVB Venue Summary & Notes

Overall, the Consultant Team toured several facilities in the area. Below is a list of all venues (listed alphabetically) that were evaluated by the Consultant Team and that were added to the Sports Tourism Index™. Using the Sports Tourism Index™, the Consultant Team rated each facility on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being superior) at its current quality (CQ). The Consultant Team also predicted what the potential future quality (PQ) likely could be if upgrades were made to each venue. (DNV indicates the Consultant Team did not visit the facility during its site tours.) The rating system used the following color codes:

Anchor Facility
Tournament Friendly
Overflow or Small Tournament Facility
Not of Tournament Quality

Facility Name	Facility Type	National Average	Index Score & CQ	PQ
Auburn Hills Golf Club	Golf Course	3.53	3.70	DNV
Blacksburg Community Center	Indoor Courts (Basketball/Volleyball)	2.81	2.43	DNV
Blacksburg Country Club	Golf Course	3.53	3.75	DNV
Blacksburg Municipal Disc Golf Course	Disc Golf Course	3.46	2.40	DNV
Blacksburg Municipal Park Tennis Courts	Tennis (Indoor or Outdoor)	2.36	1.55	
Blacksburg Parks and Rec Pickleball Courts	Pickleball Courts	2.44	0.80	DNV
Christiansburg Aquatic Center	Swimming Pool	2.67	3.30	
Christiansburg Recreation Center	Other	2.93	3.40	
Christiansburg Recreation Center - Indoor Courts	Indoor Courts (Basketball/Volleyball)	2.81	2.40	
Christiansburg Recreation Center - Pickleball Courts	Pickleball Courts	2.44	3.05	
Christiansburg Recreation Center-Pickleball	Pickleball Courts	2.44	3.05	
Creed Fields Park-Diamonds	Diamonds	2.26	1.65	DNV
Creed Fields Park-Multipurpose Field	Flat Fields	2.30	1.45	DNV
Crimper's Climbing Gym	Other	2.93	2.70	DNV
Falling Branch Park-Diamonds	Diamonds	2.26	1.20	DNV
Falling Branch Park-Flat Fields	Flat Fields	2.30	1.35	DNV
Golden Hills Disc Golf Course	Disc Golf Course	3.46	1.40	
Harkrader Sports Complex-Diamonds	Diamonds	2.26	2.25	

Harkrader Sports Complex-Flat Fields	Flat Fields	2.30	2.05	
Huckleberry Park-Diamonds	Diamonds	2.26	2.15	
Huckleberry Park-Flat Fields	Flat Fields	2.30	2.30	
Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center	Convention Center	2.09	1.55	
It's Game Time at the Superbowl	Bowling	3.68	3.70	DNV
Jaycee Softball Field	Diamonds	2.26	1.40	DNV
Kiwanis Park	Diamonds	2.26	1.85	
McCoy Park	Diamonds	2.26	0.90	DNV
Motor Mile Park	Diamonds	2.26	1.65	DNV
Nellie's Cave Park	Flat Fields	2.30	1.35	DNV
Pete Dye River Course	Golf Course	3.53	3.80	DNV
Radford Student Outdoor Recreation Complex	Flat Fields	2.30	2.35	
Radford Student Recreation and Wellness Center	Pickleball Courts	2.44	3.05	
Radford Student Recreation and Wellness Center-Indoor Courts	Indoor Courts (Basketball/Volleyball)	2.81	2.63	
SRWC Dedmon Field	Softball Stadium	2.10	1.45	DNV
The Hill/Blacksburg Municipal Golf Course	Golf Course	3.53	2.50	DNV
Tom's Creek Park and Softball Field	Diamonds	2.26	1.40	DNV
Virginia Tech Golf Course	Golf Course	3.53	2.10	





**Appendix D – Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB  
Venue Summary & Notes**

<b>Blacksburg Municipal Park</b>
One big open field that can be used for soccer, soccer lines their own field (once a week). 2/3 fields for youth. For adults they do 2 fields. No lights at the facility. 1 softball diamonds with lights and dugouts. 6 tennis fields without lights but there are a couple of bleachers. The park also has a concrete skateboard bowl.
<b>Blacksburg High School</b>
6 lighted tennis courts. Artificial turf football stadium with light, seating, portable goals, and track around the field. Lined for lacrosse, soccer & football with plenty of parking available. Two grass diamond fields with lights.
<b>Christiansburg Aquatic Center</b>
Small skatepark next to building. 3 different competitor pools. 10 ft diving with 17 ft deep, 2 bulkheads in the middle. Spectator seating around (they can seat 1000/1200), they don't have much deck space (that would bring them to the next level). Cardio room with multiple meeting rooms in the building. Good amount of parking available for small events, but not enough for bigger tournaments.
<b>Eastern Montgomery High School</b>
1 baseball diamond without lights and covered dugouts. The grass quality is not too good. Flat field with stand and old track around it. The quality is not too good but there are goals and goal posts for football. Softball field with bleachers and covered dugouts. 6 lighted tennis courts.
<b>Golden Hills Disc Golf Course</b>
13-hole course. They are 11th rated in Virginia. They have held some local tournaments (80 players). Not enough parking (only 20) with one porta potty and a covered patio with some seating.
<b>Harkrader Complex</b>
3 soccer fields with small goals (no lines), no lights and no bleachers. Two tennis courts. 3 baseball fields with lights and bleachers, covered dugouts, and scoreboard at each field. Not much parking at the field but overflow parking at the school. Central building with restrooms, concessions, and ticket booth.
<b>Huckleberry Park</b>
Plenty of parking spaces with overflow parking available. Each of the 4 fields is lined for football, lacrosse & soccer, with bleachers at each field & goals for each of the 3 sports, scoreboard at each field. Permanent building with restrooms and concession stands.

Kiwanis Park
<p>Two good quality grass fields with lights, bleachers, dugouts, and scoreboard at both fields Not much parking available directly at the fields but there is overflow parking available during the weekends.</p>
McDonald Hollow
<p>6 miles of trails, 3 different difficulty levels. One trail system within brush mountain park. Trail is used for mountain biking.</p>
New River
<p>Oldest river in North America. Opportunity for canoe/kayak. They got a grant to expand/enhance the boat landings and the water trail. (Whitethorne boat launch) Good quality boat launch but signage could be better — this launch might be better for local usage, there is not much access for bigger tournament. Also, not much parking available.</p>
Old Town Fields
<p>1 Old field, goals and posts don't seem high quality. There is lights at the field. A decent amount of parking available. Needs a lot of investment to be used for events. Hotel and restaurants are very far away.</p>
Radford University
<p>Flat Field / Stadium: Good quality turf with plenty of portable goals and lights, lined for youth soccer (3) and full field, lined for lacrosse. Good quality grass stadium field with track around (with sprinting lane), Spectator seating &amp; Lights. Plenty of parking at the stadium and the turf field itself. Practice grass field with portable goals and lights and spectator seating — good quality grass.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tennis: 6 lighted courts 6 courts not lighted.</p> <p>Diamonds: All turf baseball, lights, spectator seating, scoreboard batting cages and covered dugouts. 1 other Grass diamond with lights &amp; 1 grass softball with lights and spectator seating.</p> <p>Indoor Court: Built within a bubble, a lot of spectator seating all around the court with permanent concessions.</p>
The Hill Golf Course
<p>18-hole good quality grass golf course with decent amount of parking.</p>
Virginia Tech
<p>8 outside tennis courts — No lights. 12 recreation courts with lights (6 were pickleball 6 were tennis). They have a decent number of fields that can be pooled together. They have 6 turf fields (no parking at the facility at all, but close by there is a lot) with lights at one lot and across the street 3 fields with lights (lined for lacrosse/soccer. A bunch of portable goals available. Good amount of parking at the 3 field.</p>

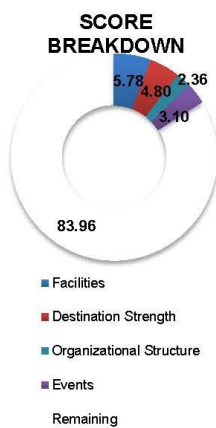
## Appendix E – Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery County Area CVB Sports Tourism Index™ Results

### Montgomery County VA Regional Tourism

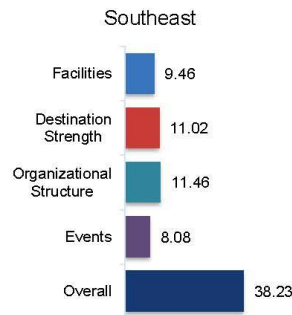


**FINAL SCORE**  
**16.04**

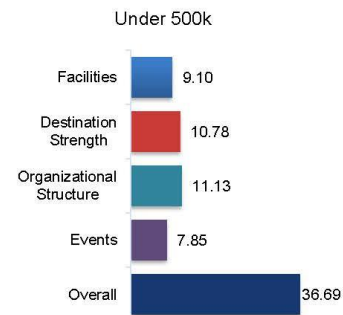
**SPORTS TOURISM INDEX REPORT**  
 Market Size: Under 500k  
 Organization Type: DMO (CVB/Sports Commission)  
 Geographic Region: Southeast  
 Sports Budget: 0-100



#### AVERAGE SCORES



#### AVERAGE SCORES



### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Facilities

Your destination likely has a strong mix of both spectator based and/or participant focused facilities that meet or exceed the standards necessary to host top tier events. Focus should be on continuing to maintain and enhance existing venues and to look ahead and plan for the potential replacement of any aging facilities that will approach its natural shelf life in the next 3-5 years.

#### Destination Strength

Your destination has access challenges that are likely tied to limited air service and a small population within a day's drive. In addition, it is likely that there is a limited number of usable hotel rooms to support larger regional and national events. Lastly, local transportation may also be limited.

#### Organizational Structure

Your organization has limited staff and budget dedicated to the sports market. It is most often the case at this level that the staff member responsible for sports also has other sales verticals which can hinder their ability to consistently build relationships in the sports market. Community wide support for organizations at this level is often a significant challenge. This would commonly include elected officials and corporate leaders in the community.

#### Events

Your organization has likely had limited success in hosting bid-in events, seldom creates or owns its own championships, and limited staffing make servicing competitions in the community challenging. Organizations that score low in this category are often challenged with competing on bids with larger and more well-resourced competitors. It is likely that communities in this category could make strides by working with area promoters to create more tourism driving events than to bid against larger destinations.

5/10/2024

# Montgomery County VA Regional Tourism

## INDUSTRY AVERAGES REPORT



### Overall Scores \*

	Your Score	Average Score	Difference
Facilities	5.78	9.58	-3.80
Destination Strength	4.80	11.79	-6.99
Organizational Structure	2.36	11.65	-9.29
Events	3.10	8.06	-4.96
<b>Overall</b>	<b>16.04</b>	<b>39.14</b>	<b>-23.10</b>

### Facilities Breakdown\*

Participant-Based	Your Score	Average Score	Difference
Golf Course	3.80	3.54	0.26
Golf Course	3.75	3.54	0.21
Bowling	3.70	3.68	0.02
Golf Course	3.70	3.54	0.16
Swimming Pool	3.30	2.66	0.64
Convention Center	1.55	2.08	-0.53

Spectator-Based	Your Score	Average Score	Difference
Softball Stadium	1.45	2.10	-0.65
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-

### Destination Strength

	Your Score	Average Score	Difference
Tourism Drivers <sup>†</sup>	2	2.97	-0.97
Hotels <sup>^</sup>	1.00	1.08	-0.08
Destination Accessibility <sup>•</sup>	0.90	2.09	-1.19

### Organizational Structure\*

	Your Score	Average Score	Difference
Sports Staff	0.00	1.90	-1.90
Grant Program	0.00	1.99	-1.99
Board & Advisory	1.35	0.51	0.84

### Sporting Events

Number on an annual basis	Your Answer	Average Answer	Difference
Local Events	34	23	11
Bid-In Events Hosted	0	7	-7
Events Serviced	0	27	-27

<sup>†</sup> Max score of 5

<sup>^</sup> Max score of 10

<sup>•</sup> Max score of 25