

Frisco's sports depth and breadth is fueling explosive growth in community

Frisco, Texas, is young, dynamic, energetic, visionary and growing fast. It has quickly risen to the top of the sports business ranks, earning its deserved reputation as one of the best markets for amateur and youth sports in the nation.

The city and its leadership, public and private, are not content to rest on their laurels. Instead, the community is committed to continually investing and reinvesting into its diverse array of facilities and community-wide sports amenities.

Take Toyota Stadium, home of FC Dallas, for example. Opened in 2005, Toyota Stadium was a first-of-its-kind marvel, a stadium designed specifically for soccer. A short 13 years later, officials from the city of Frisco and executives from Hunt Sports Group put their heads back together. "Toyota Stadium is great, but how can we make it even better?"

Putting It All Together

For starters, the leadership landed the coveted National Soccer Hall of Fame, the first major sports hall built as a central part of a stadium.

After that, well ... they chopped off the south end of the stadium and put it back together.

The public-private partnership of FC Dallas, the city of Frisco, the Frisco Independent School District and the U.S. Soccer Federation divided the south end's Hall of Fame into two components: The NSHOF Experience and the NSHOF Club.

The Experience honors soccer's past by showcasing decades of memorabilia. It fully incorporates modern technology, using virtual reality, gesture technology and interactive digital boards to celebrate the game as it is today.

The Hall of Fame will begin hosting induction ceremonies this year.

The NSHOF Club includes 3,450 seats for season ticket members, the Hall of Fame Club, the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup Club and the Press Conference Room.

The \$55 million renovation also built in new locker rooms for FC Dallas and additional locker rooms for football.

"They have completely revitalized



Toyota Stadium will house the National Soccer Hall of Fame, the first HOF in professional sports built as an integral part of the facility. The stadium, home of FC Dallas, was one of the first soccer-specific stadiums ever built.

Toyota Stadium," said Marla Roe, executive director of Visit Frisco. "We can now provide MLS fans, as well as NCAA and high-school football fans, with an even better game-day experience."

Toyota Stadium has played host to the NCAA Division I Football Championship, a true 16-bracket tournament. It is also the current home of ESPN-owned Frisco Bowl.

Quality of Life Vision

Bringing a wealth of professional sports franchises to town, along with a slew of facilities for residents, was part of Frisco's leaders' mission to create one of the most desirable, most livable cities in the world. The city has been so committed, in fact, that all of the city's pro facilities have been built through public-private partnerships, benefiting the residents, the pro teams and Frisco schools.

"What stands out is how progressive and visionary the city leaders are in recognizing the important role sports can play in building a great quality of life for their city," said Chuck Greenberg, general partner and CEO of the Frisco RoughRiders.

In the last year, Frisco has added two more pro sports teams to its already hefty roster, giving this small city at the affluent north end of Dallas

a total of seven professional franchises.

The Texas Revolution, an Indoor Football League team, plays at Dr Pepper Arena, already the practice facility for the NHL Dallas Stars, and home to the Texas Legends of the NBA G League.

Major League Lacrosse's Rattlers left Rochester, N.Y., to become the Dallas Rattlers and play at Ford Center at The Star, headquarters of the Dallas Cowboys.

"Our market continues to explode," said Roe. "We have 17 hotels open, six under construction and another four announced. Our fields are at capacity so Frisco's parks and rec department is adding eight more soccer fields to keep up with our growth. The Star continues to expand, too. In the last year, it's added even more restaurants and an Omni hotel."

Collaboration Serves the Community

Not to mention Baylor Scott and White Health's brand-spanking new sports medicine facility. The one-of-a-kind collaboration between an NFL team, a healthcare system and a school district opened in June with the launch of the Baylor Scott & White Sports Therapy & Research.

What a visitor to the medical com-

plex will notice first is ... a football field? Yes, a 50-yard indoor football field, which will be used for sports rehabilitation for athletes of every age, not just the pros.

The facility and its services are open to the public and provide sports surgery, imaging, a sports concussion center, research, outpatient services and the Gatorade Sports Science Institute. In addition, the center provides family medicine, orthopedics, rehabilitation, urgent care and a pharmacy.

The complex will also provide team physicians and concussion experts on the sidelines for all Frisco varsity home games played at Ford Center.

"This facility will play a major role in shaping the future of youth sports to make them safer than they've ever been, so that more and more kids can participate," said Jim Hinton, Baylor Scott & White Health CEO.

Exponential Growth

In the last year, Frisco has launched Sports City, U.S.A., an initiative to educate, highlight and emphasize the significant depth and breadth of Frisco's sports community. In the last couple of years, both Dr Pepper Arena and Dr Pepper Ballpark, home of the AA minor league Frisco RoughRiders, have undergone extensive renovations. And the city's parks and rec department has upended the traditional parks model, clustering like sports amenities with like to create concentrated pockets for soccer, softball and other field sports. The eight new soccer fields will be grouped in a single park.

"Frisco is continuing its exponential growth," said Roe. "Texas is a good climate for business. Frisco is attractive to teams looking for good places to live. Frisco is one of the best school districts in the state. Our city is progressive and our leadership is visionary. And we've had really smart, dedicated people running the ship for a long time. You need all of those factors, combined with decades-long continuity of commitment to achieve Frisco's success. That's why we've become one of the most desirable, most livable cities in the world."





PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA TOBIAS | FC DALLAS

Frisco
SPORTS CITY U.S.A.

HOME TO SEVEN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAMS.

Call it the Frisco Equation. Partnership + Sports = Success. The formula delivers a destination that makes Frisco the perfect sports city for fans and teams, alike. But Frisco does not stop there. Along with the seven professional sports teams, Frisco is also home to a wide variety of world-class sports facilities. **Learn more today by visiting, SportsCityUSA.com**

Palm Beach County wins multiple awards

The Palm Beach County Sports Commission is celebrating another banner year, smashing its own record for sports-related travel room nights and for sheer numbers of events across a wide range of sports disciplines.

Sound familiar? Yes, it is truly déjà vu.

For seven straight years, the county's sports travel market has set new records, besting itself in every category.

For its efforts, the Palm Beach County Sports Commission has been

named as a 2018 finalist for three National Association of Sports Commission Sports Tourism Awards, as well as a recipient of the Florida Sports Foundation Award for "Florida's Best Awarded Event in 2018." Furthermore, the Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department, named the best in Florida, is short-listed for the 2018 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence for Park and Recreation Management for the second year in a row.

The county's sports-travel success stems from the synergy of a wealth of facilities, both private and public; a forward-thinking political and business leadership; a community of residents willing to step forward; and a strong sports commission that can lure the tournaments to town and then turn every one of them into a success for every stakeholder: owners, athletes and parents.

"We've hosted 162 events in 43 dif-



Palm Beach County has hosted 30 amateur baseball tournaments so far this year.

ferent sports disciplines so far this year," said George Linley, executive director of the Palm Beach County Sports Commission. "We've had 30 baseball tournaments alone. We've hosted events from softball and soccer to croquet and AquaX. We've had participants from all 50 states and from 60 different nations. That's translated into a record-setting 220,000 room nights so far this year, and \$340 million in direct visitor spending."

The county's strength, Linley said, is its wealth of diverse facilities. Palm Beach County is probably best known as the only county with two top-quality MLB spring-training facilities, housing a quarter of the Grapefruit League, including the current World Series Champions, the Houston Astros.

"It's incredibly gratifying that the Astros won their first World Series Championship after their inaugural spring training season at FITTEAM Ballpark of the Palm Beaches, which demonstrates that we belong to a championship destination," Linley said.

"We also have the National Croquet Center, the world's largest, that people don't necessarily know about," said Linley. "And we have the International Polo Club, which has been named Florida's top sports venue. We also have the top BMX track in Florida and an incredible facility for waterskiing competitions."

The real workhorse is the parks and recreation department, he said, with nearly a third of all sports events taking place at one of its venues.

"Our parks and rec system is best in class," Linley said. "They have 8,000 acres, 72 boat slips, 83 diamonds, 115 multipurpose fields, 93 golf holes ... the list goes on. More than 40,000 of our room nights have touched parks and rec."

An Exceptional Host for Golf

The Palm Beaches also happen to be the Golf Capital of Florida®, with 170 top-quality courses. The NCAA noticed, selecting the PGA National Resort & Spa as site of five championships from 2019-2022.

"It's been a special year for golf. We've hosted 22 state or national tour-

SEE PALM BEACH CVB, PAGE 37



PALM BEACH COUNTY  SPORTS COMMISSION

NO MATTER THE SPORT, WE'VE ALWAYS GOT GAME.

Palm Beach County is home to some of the nation's premier sporting facilities. Event owners will uncover a variety of high-quality, sports-oriented venues, which will make a perfect fit for both amateur and professional sporting events.



Call **561-233-3174** or visit **PalmBeachSports.com**



PALM BEACH CVB, FROM PAGE 36

naments that have generated significant room nights and direct visitor spending," Linley said.

The PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens is also home of The Honda Classic, the only South Florida stop for the PGA tour, played on the renowned The Champion course redesigned by Jack Nicklaus in 2014 and featuring the famous Bear Trap. Both the resort and The Champion course are currently undergoing renovations to make them better than ever.

"The Honda Classic has transformed into a year-round celebration and is part of our local culture," said Linley. "The Honda Classic includes a variety

of ancillary events that take place throughout the year, which embrace every corner of our county. The Honda Classic attracted over 224,000 spectators, which is one of the largest audiences for sports in South Florida. It's a tremendous resume builder for us."

The PGA National courses are home to other world-class golf events, including the 2018 NAIA Women's Golf National Championship in May. In November, it also hosts the Rolex Tournament of Champions, which is the premier tournament of the American Junior Golf Association.

More than 700 junior golfers from 30 nations will tee up for the Optimists International Junior Golf Championship, one of the largest junior tournaments in

the world at the PGA National in July.

In June 2017, The Bear's Club in Jupiter and Lost Tree Club in North Palm Beach hosted 164 golfers for the Florida State Golf Association's 100th Amateur Championship on its prestigious Jack Nicklaus-designed course.

By the end of 2018, Palm Beach County will boast yet another world-class, Nicklaus-designed course, as part of the Via Mizner Golf and City Club project in Boca Raton.

"I feel blessed to be a part of the momentum," said Linley. "Our leaders, public and private, put financial backing behind their vision to create a tremendous quality of life for our residents. That, in turn, has made us an international hub for sports travel. And that



PALM BEACH COUNTY

With 170 courses, some designed by golf great Jack Nicklaus, Palm Beach County deserves its title of Golf Capital of Florida™.

comes full circle – inspiring our community to invest more time and energy into our facilities and sports for our residents and our visitors." ■

Wilmington and local beaches play host to any sport at any time

A surge of growth in nontraditional sports, such as beach soccer and Ultimate frisbee competitions, is giving stick-and-ball sports a run for their money in Wilmington, N.C., and the surrounding island beaches.

"We're regularly booking large youth tournaments for beach volleyball, beach soccer, Ultimate, rugby and fencing, in addition to baseball, softball and all our other sports," said Robert Cox, director of sports development for Wilmington and Beaches Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We've built top-notch facilities here to accommodate the diversity of interests for our residents. That translates into our ability to bring in diverse sports tournaments and adapt to a continually changing market."

In 2017, the New Hanover County Parks & Gardens department, in collaboration with the Tony Hawk Foundation, opened Ogden Skatepark, a professional competition-level facility.

The city of Wilmington is also building seven additional fields that will accommodate the growth of the



WILMINGTON & BEACHES CVB

With abundant waterways, such as the Cape Fear River, Wilmington and beaches are home to a broad range of sports from beach soccer to fishing tournaments.

annual Seaside Soccer Classic, which is currently capped at 325 teams.

As the NCAA has expanded its slate of sports, kids and their parents are vying for the accompanying sports scholarships, which in turn, is pushing the surge for youth tournaments.

As an example, Cox said, the CVB is working to bring a high-school fishing tournament to the area, reflecting the NCAA's growth of sports scholarships for fishing.

The area's abundant rivers are already a natural draw for pro fishing. In

November, Wilmington and the North Carolina Bass Federation will host The Bass Federation's 2018 District 2 National Semi-Finals, a weekend-long event that will bring 100 top sportsmen to fish New Hanover County's abundant rivers.

Stick-and-ball sports continue to grow, too. The Wilmington area is hosting a new series of girls softball with five tournaments playing 500 athletes each, this summer and fall at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and fields throughout Wrightsville

Beach, Carolina Beach and Kure Beach.

Promoters and organizers, such as USSSA youth baseball and the U.S. Tennis Association, return to the area year after year.

In 2017, triathletes voted IRONMAN 70.3 North Carolina as one of their top 10 favorite spots for swims and runs.

Another 400 hotel rooms will be available in the next two years, said Cox, with the area pushing 8,500 total rooms by 2020. The new full-service Embassy Suites by Hilton Wilmington Riverfront, which opened earlier this year, is adjacent to the Wilmington Convention Center, an easy walk for families attending volleyball, basketball and gymnastics competitions.

"Wilmington and the beaches offer the full package for families," said Cox. "Our facilities, combined with our broad range of accommodations, great year-round weather, the wealth of activities and beautiful beaches, have made us a top choice for amateur-sports organizers." ■

Paddle Racing & Wave Chasing We're always game

From the Carolina Cup paddle races on the World SUP Tour to IRONMAN North Carolina, Wilmington's hosted many diverse events filled with good times. Our welcoming year-round weather, breathtaking beaches and bustling riverfront are crowd-pleasers.

Book off-season for the best savings, and see where the water takes you.

NCCoastalSports.com | 800.650.9064 ext.124

Wilmington.c.
River District & Island Beaches

Panama City Beach – All-Sport, All-Season Ready

Known for having some of the world's most beautiful beaches, Panama City Beach, located on Florida's panhandle midway between Pensacola and Tallahassee, is a hotbed of amateur sports. Most of the city's sports visitors come from Georgia and Texas, followed by Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi; states where, for most people, it's a six- to eight-hour drive.

In the sports world, Panama City Beach, with 16,000 hotel rooms and a population of 14,000, is known for hosting championship events. The city is home base for the Grand Slam World Series of Baseball, which features more than 350 teams in four weeks. The United States Fastpitch Association also calls Panama City Beach home. Its annual World Series draws close to 400 teams. Additionally, the World Sports League holds its annual Gulf Coast National Championships in Panama City Beach, attracting more than 300 teams.

Frank Brown Park, the city's main facility, is booked solid during the summer months. The park, which recently underwent a \$4.5 million renovation, features nine baseball/softball fields, a T-ball field, six soccer fields, a basketball court, tennis courts, Aquatic Center, walking trails and 20-acre festival site. But, to become a year-round



With nine baseball/softball fields, Frank Brown Park boasts a full schedule during the summer.

sports destination, the city needed to create more fields.

In May 2019, the city will celebrate the grand opening of the \$37 million Panama City Beach Sports Park and Stadium Complex. With 13 multipurpose sports fields, including nine with artificial turf and four with natural grass, the city will be able to offer facilities for the "rectangular" sports — lacrosse, soccer, football, rugby and Ultimate frisbee. The fields are being designed so they can also accommodate baseball and softball.

The complex, one of the largest in the southeast, is located on 210 acres of land donated by the St. Joe Company, a land development company

headquartered in nearby Watersound. The complex will be operated by Sports Facility Management, located in Clearwater.

"The opening of the Panama City Beach Sports Complex will help us become a year-round destination because the majority of the rectangular sports take place in the fall, winter and spring," said Richard Sanders, vice president of sports marketing and special events for the Panama City Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Projections call for 29 events in the first year, increasing to more than 50 in years three and four. Through these events, the city expects to fill 60,000-

75,000 room nights, added to the current total of more than 100,000. This will pump an extra \$23.2 million into the local economy in year one. The complex could also generate an additional 100-150 jobs, from onsite management and operational staff, to game officials and concession workers.

"The demand we have from outside organizations is tremendous, so we anticipate we'll open with a good schedule of soccer, lacrosse and flag football," said Sanders, "sports we haven't been able to accommodate in the past because of the lack of quality championship fields."

The city is not stopping with the outdoor fields. Phase two is already on the drawing board. A 108,000-square-foot indoor facility will house a combination of eight basketball courts, 16 volleyball courts and 24 pickleball courts, as well as gymnastics, wrestling and weightlifting. The facility can also be configured for concerts and trade shows.

"These projects will solidify Panama City Beach as a 12-month destination for sports," said Sanders. "The demand has been there for years. This has been a 10-year project in the making that is now real. We're super excited about this new facility."



PLAY BALL!

AT THE **REAL. FUN. BEACH.**

COMING 2019:
PANAMA CITY BEACH SPORTS COMPLEX
AT BREAKFAST POINT

The new sports complex in Panama City Beach is on the horizon!
This world-class, 210-acre facility will accommodate a variety of large-scale sports tournaments, benefiting the local community and also encouraging newcomers to discover even more ways to have fun in the sun at the **REAL. FUN. BEACH.**

PlayPanamaCityBeach.com

or contact Chris O'Brien, Director of Sports Marketing & Special Events at 850.233.5070

