

COVERING THE BASES:  
VARIATIONS IN THE ARGUMENTS TO JUSTIFY PUBLICLY-FUNDED  
BASEBALL STADIUMS

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, most major U.S. cities have invested in major league sports facilities, often with the logic that they will generate significant economic development. Skepticism is growing however, as research refutes the claims of economic benefits. In response to this, team owners have resorted to other tactics to secure public funding, such as threatening to relocate and appealing to “intangible” benefits such as a city’s ego, identity, and “big-league” status. This study, using newspaper coverage of stadium debates, examined the arguments that were used to justify new baseball stadiums in St. Louis and Pittsburgh. The results indicated that St. Louis exhibited a heavy focus on economic arguments, while in Pittsburgh most of the arguments were based on intangible benefits. While many of the same arguments were used in both cities, they were used in different ways based on contextual factors. The results suggest that local factors are more important in stadium debates than national trends.