

# Huntsville Pool Hall Real Estate Feasibility

## 1. Rent Comps (Huntsville Market Rates)

**Lease Rates:** In the Huntsville, AL area, retail-commercial spaces typically lease for around **\$15–\$25 per square foot per year** on a triple-net (NNN) basis <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. The **average asking rent** for retail space is about **\$18–19 per sq ft NNN** <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>, meaning the tenant pays base rent plus property taxes, insurance, and maintenance. Some lower-cost or less central locations can be found near **\$12–\$15/sqft** (especially for larger, older spaces) <sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup>, while premium new construction or high-traffic sites may ask **\$25+**. Full-service **gross leases** (where base rent includes most expenses) are less common, but when offered they typically equate to an effective rate in the low-\$20s per sq ft (since the landlord builds taxes/insurance into the rent). For example, a newer strip-center space might be quoted at **\$20/sqft + \$2.25 CAM** (total ~\$22.25 NNN) <sup>5</sup>, whereas an older standalone could be **\$20–\$22/sqft gross** including everything.

**CAM Charges:** Common Area Maintenance (CAM) fees in Huntsville strip centers generally range **\$2–\$5 per sqft/year** for typical services (parking lot upkeep, landscaping, common utilities) – on the lower end of national retail averages <sup>6</sup>. Higher-end shopping centers or malls with extensive amenities can have CAM in the upper range (up to ~\$6–\$8), but most neighborhood centers in secondary markets like Huntsville stay in the mid-single-digits. One local listing, for instance, had CAM of **\$2.25/sqft** on top of rent <sup>5</sup>, indicating relatively low common area costs. Industrial or warehouse-style sites (if utilized) tend to have minimal CAM (<\$1) due to fewer shared amenities <sup>7</sup>. Always verify CAM specifics, as they add to the effective rent – e.g. a base rent of \$18 with \$4 CAM would effectively cost ~\$22/sqft annually.

**Lease Structure & Terms:** **Triple-net leases are the norm** for retail/entertainment use in Huntsville <sup>8</sup>. Typical initial lease terms run **3 to 5 years** with options to renew <sup>9</sup>. Longer terms (e.g. 5+ years) may be expected for a larger custom build-out, but landlords often balance term length with tenant flexibility. **Annual rent escalations** of ~2–3% or tied to CPI are common. Landlords will usually require a **personal guarantee** (for a new bar operator) and a **security deposit** equal to **1–3 months' rent** depending on tenant credit <sup>10</sup>. (Alabama law for residential leases caps deposits at 1 month's rent, but commercial leases are negotiable and frequently ask for a few months upfront to mitigate risk.) Expect to pay first month's rent plus the deposit at signing, and possibly cover your own **tenant improvement (TI)** costs unless negotiated otherwise. Standard **CAM reimbursement** is pro-rata based on your square footage; CAM is billed monthly or annually as additional rent.

## 2. Utilities Expectations (HVAC & Bills)

**HVAC Needs:** A pool hall/bar of this size will require substantial HVAC capacity to keep patrons comfortable. As a rule of thumb, **1 ton of cooling per ~400 sq ft** is needed in commercial assembly spaces <sup>11</sup>. For example, a 10,000 sq ft venue might use on the order of **25 tons** of A/C (which could be multiple 5–10 ton units). Bars generate extra heat from people, refrigeration, and cooking equipment, so the design may lean toward the higher end of capacity (some restaurant guidelines use 1 ton per 150–300 sq ft for occupied areas). In practical terms, ensure the site's HVAC units are modern and **~20+ tons total capacity** for a mid-

sized hall, with good ventilation (to handle any smoke or odors). High ceilings ( $\geq 10$  ft) also help with air circulation and comfort <sup>12</sup>. Heating in winter (often gas-fired rooftop units) must likewise be sized for the open volume; in North Alabama's climate, heating loads are moderate compared to cooling.

**Utility Costs:** Utilities will be a significant operating cost for a 5,000–12,000 sq ft entertainment space. A realistic planning figure is **\$2,000–\$3,000 per month** in total utilities for this type of business <sup>13</sup>. This includes:

- **Electricity:** Running large HVAC systems, interior and exterior lighting, refrigeration (coolers), and convection ovens. Cooling is the biggest driver in summer – expect high summer electric bills (in the Southeast humidity) and somewhat lower in spring/fall. For ~8,000 sq ft, electricity might be on the order of **\$1,500–\$2,500/month** on average. Efficient LED lighting and programmable thermostats can help control this.
- **Water:** Primarily for bathrooms and dishwashing. Water/sewer bills are relatively minor unless you have high customer volume; budget perhaps **\$150–\$300/month** for a bar with two restrooms and bar sinks (can spike higher if running an ice machine or frequent cleaning).
- **Gas:** If the location has gas service (for heating or hot water), costs will vary seasonally. Winter heating gas might be a few hundred dollars a month for a large, high-ceilinged hall. Cooking equipment in this concept is electric (no gas fryers or grills since no grease trap), so gas usage may only be for HVAC heat. Some operators use all-electric HVAC, in which case the electric bill will be higher in winter instead.

In summary, a **total utilities budget ~ \$2,500/month** is a reasonable starting point <sup>13</sup>. This assumes large HVAC units cycling regularly, long operating hours (afternoon to late night), and dozens of people generating heat. Real-world costs will fluctuate – e.g. summer peak electric demand, or water usage if there's a spike in patrons. It's wise to have **200-amp+ electrical service** to support all equipment (lighting, sound, kitchen gear) with room to spare. Factor in small extras like Wi-Fi, alarm system, and waste disposal too (often ~\$200 for dumpster service).

### 3. Space Program & Layout Breakdown

**Overall Size:** For a poolroom-bar with **10–30 tables**, you will likely need **5,000 to 12,000 sq ft** of space, distributed among play areas and support functions. A smaller hall of ~10 tables can fit in about 4,500–5,000 sq ft if efficiently laid out <sup>14</sup>, whereas 20+ tables plus amenities may push 8,000–10,000+ sq ft. Many successful pool halls in similar markets occupy the **6,000–8,000 sq ft** range for ~15 tables plus a bar/kitchen and seating. Below is a recommended program breakdown:

- **Pool Table Areas:** Approximately **250–300 sq ft per table** is needed, including playing clearance around each table <sup>15</sup>. For example, a standard 8' table ideally needs about **13' x 17'** (221 sq ft) minimum space, and closer to **14' x 18'** (~252 sq ft) for comfort <sup>15</sup>. Ten tables clustered in rows would occupy roughly ~2,500–3,000 sq ft. Thirty tables might need ~7,500–9,000 sq ft solely for table zones. Table areas should be grouped to allow shared circulation space while maintaining at least ~5 feet between tables (edge-to-edge) so players aren't bumping cues. Adequate spacing is critical not just for play but also for **ADA accessibility** – ensure at least one accessible route through the table area with **36" minimum clear width** <sup>16</sup> and turn-around space for wheelchairs. Many halls arrange tables in **pods or rows** with aisles between pods for traffic flow.

- **Bar and Lounge:** A full bar with light food service will need a dedicated section. **Bar counter and back-bar** area might use **200–300 sq ft**, including space for coolers, a sink, glassware storage, and a service aisle. Plan for a bar length of perhaps 20–30 feet to accommodate seating and service stations. In front of the bar, you'll want a **seating/lounge area** for patrons eating or waiting – say **300–500 sq ft** with high-top tables, stools, or lounge chairs. If you envision more of a sports bar atmosphere (with TVs, etc.), this area could be larger. Many pool halls allocate a **raised seating area** or rail around the play area perimeter so spectators can sit and watch games without crowding the tables. Overall, for a mid-size hall, bar/service and seating might occupy ~15% of the floor area (e.g. ~600–800 sq ft in a 5,000 sq ft venue).
- **Kitchen/Food Prep:** Given **no fryers or grease trap**, the food prep can be relatively small. A “**kitchen**” for light food (convection ovens, microwave, sandwich counter, pizza oven, etc.) could be just **100–200 sq ft**, possibly attached to the back of the bar. You'll need space for a triple sink (health code), prep counter, small oven, refrigerator/freezer, and storage for dry goods. Often this can be in a **galley layout** behind the bar or in a rear corner. Without a hood or heavy cooking, you avoid large ventilation systems – but do ensure good general ventilation since ovens still produce heat. Also plan where a **dishwasher or glasswasher** goes (maybe under-bar unit). For primarily warming/reheating prepared foods, a compact area suffices.
- **Storage:** Don't underestimate storage needs for a bar. You'll need a **stock room** for beer cases, liquor, paper goods, pool cue repair parts, etc. Allocate at least **100–200 sq ft** for a lockable storage/office combo. If you plan on selling retail items (cues, merch) or have league equipment, include shelving space. Also consider a small **manager's office** (which might double as the storage room) ~80 sq ft, enough for a desk and CCTV monitor/security system hub. If the bar will have kegs, you may need an enclosed **walk-in cooler** (~8'x8' or 8'x10') which would add ~80 sq ft, ideally placed with a serving tap line to the bar.
- **Restrooms:** For customer service and code compliance, restrooms are vital. Expect to require **separate Men's and Women's restrooms**, each with multiple fixtures. A common recommendation for assembly occupancies is at least **2 fixtures per gender** up to ~100 occupants (check local code). In practical terms, two restrooms at **150–200 sq ft each** (total ~300–400 sq ft) should accommodate a hall of this size. Each should be ADA-compliant (with at least one 5' turning circle and grab bars, etc.), and have durable finishes. Locate restrooms conveniently but perhaps away from the quietest areas of play (often near the back or sides). If your capacity is higher (e.g. 150+ people), you'd need additional fixtures which means larger restrooms. Ensure plumbing provisions are sufficient – adding restrooms later is very costly, so choose a site that either already has adequate restroom buildout or space to add it.
- **Circulation & Miscellaneous:** Beyond these defined areas, remember to account for **walkways, queueing, and idle space**. You should have at least **4–6 ft wide walkways** around clusters of tables <sup>17</sup> to allow people to pass behind players with cue sticks. Main corridors (to restrooms, exits) should be kept clear and likely closer to 6' width. Also plan for the **entrance area** – a foyer or reception counter (if you have a check-in / pay counter or merchandise display) could use 50–100 sq ft at the front. If you host leagues or events, a small **tournament bracket area or DJ booth** might be included. All these circulation and ancillary spaces often consume ~10–15% of the floor area. In design, it's often useful to sketch zones: for instance, *Tables: 60%, Bar/Seating: 15%, Restrooms: 5%, Storage/Office: 5%, Circulation/Other: ~15%*. The goal is a layout that feels open and social but also has

logical separation between playing areas and dining/drinking areas (to keep food/drink spills away from tables, etc.).

**Sightlines and Layout Considerations:** When laying out the space, maintain **clear sightlines** for both customers and staff. Ideally, staff at the bar or a front counter should have a view over most of the tables for security and service. Avoid floor plans with blind corners or isolated rooms – an open plan is preferred so that the energy of the room is shared and supervision is easier. Support columns or low partitions can block views, so if they exist, plan table locations around them (e.g. place seating or high-top tables near columns rather than a pool table that would be obstructed). High ceilings (10–12+ ft) not only improve ambiance but also allow mounting of **overhead pool table lights** at proper height (typically hung ~3 feet above the table bed) without sightline issues. Good lighting design will have focused table lights for play surfaces and slightly dimmer ambient lighting elsewhere, reducing glare. Also consider wall space for scoreboards, TVs, or art – but mount TVs such that glare doesn't hit players' eyes. **Accessibility** must be integrated: ensure at least one accessible route to all public areas (no stepped platforms without ramps), and that seating includes some accessible height tables. Overall, a thoughtful space program and layout will balance the **social hub (bar/lounge)** with the **playing hall**, ensuring neither feels cramped.

## 4. Parking Requirements & Landlord Constraints

**Zoning & Parking Minimums:** In Huntsville and similar Alabama jurisdictions, a billiards/bar use will fall under either “recreational hall” or “restaurant/bar” categories for parking requirements. Expect to need roughly **5–10 parking spaces per 1,000 sq ft** of building area as a guideline. Some municipal codes simply require **1 parking space per pool table** (plus additional spaces if food/drink service is significant) <sup>18</sup>. For example, one Alabama city mandates **1 space per table for pool halls** and, separately, 1 per 3 seats for restaurant areas <sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup>. Another common standard for bar/assembly use is **1 space per 100 sf** of patron area (which equates to 10 per 1,000 sf). In practice, a 6,000 sq ft pool bar may need on the order of **30–50 parking spaces** available to meet code and customer demand. If located in a multi-tenant center, the shared parking lot should have ample spaces especially in evenings (often retail parking requirements are lower at night, which aligns well with peak pool hall hours). Check Huntsville's specific zoning ordinance, but generally ensure the site can provide **adequate off-street parking** – insufficient parking is a red flag for both zoning approval and customer convenience. Also verify if any **parking ratio exemptions** apply (e.g. in downtown zones or if the site is in a district with reduced parking minimums).

**Common Landlord Requirements:** Landlords often have particular concerns with bars or entertainment tenants, so be prepared for extra conditions in the lease:

- **Insurance:** You will almost certainly be required to carry high liability insurance limits and name the landlord as an additional insured. Specifically, **liquor liability coverage** will be required since alcohol is served <sup>20</sup>. The lease may stipulate minimum coverage (e.g. \$1–2 million general liability, plus liquor liability with no assault & battery exclusion) and that the landlord is indemnified from alcohol-related incidents <sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup>. Budget for higher insurance premiums as a bar venue.
- **Hours and Noise:** Landlords in multi-tenant centers may impose restrictions on operating hours (for example, no operating past midnight on weeknights) to prevent disturbances. If adjacent to retail or residential, they might require soundproofing measures. Expect clauses about **noise and music levels** (especially if live music or loud jukeboxes are planned) to ensure neighboring units aren't impacted.

- **Security Measures:** A bar venue might be asked to provide on-site security (e.g. hiring a door person or off-duty police on busy nights) as a condition if the landlord is concerned about crowds. Also, landlords could require a **security camera system** be in place covering entrances and parking areas for safety. They will want to know that the premises won't become a nuisance or safety risk. Some shopping center landlords are wary of pool halls due to perceptions of loitering or unruly behavior, so demonstrating a solid security and management plan will help.
- **Tenant Mix and Use Restrictions:** Many retail leases have exclusive use clauses or prohibited use lists. Check if any existing tenant has an exclusive that might conflict (for instance, another establishment might have exclusive rights to serve alcohol or operate as an "arcade/entertainment" use). Likewise, your lease may explicitly list **prohibited activities** – common ones include no adult entertainment, no gambling, etc. Billiard halls often are lumped into "amusement" uses, so ensure it's a permitted use in that property. Landlords sometimes prohibit "pool hall or arcade" uses in family-oriented centers, so you may need to negotiate an exception by highlighting your upscale concept (e.g. "billiards sports bar" rather than old-style pool hall).
- **Financial Assurance:** As mentioned, expect a **personal guaranty** on the lease if you are a new business, and possibly a larger **security deposit**. Landlords know bars/nightlife venues carry higher risk of default or damage. A deposit of **2-3 months' rent** (or even a letter of credit) is not unusual to see for a bar tenant, even though standard retail might only be 1 month. They may also ask for proof of funding for your build-out and startup costs to be confident you can complete the project and open successfully.
- **Maintenance and Wear:** In an NNN lease you'll handle interior maintenance; however, a landlord might specifically require more frequent professional cleaning of common areas or prompt repair of any damage due to your patrons (for instance, if a drunk customer damages landscaping or vomits in the common area, you're responsible). Some landlords even stipulate the tenant must employ nightly janitorial for their space to avoid pest or odor issues. Ensure you understand responsibilities for things like HVAC maintenance – often the tenant must service HVAC quarterly in NNN leases, and this will be vital given heavy usage in a bar (it's wise to budget for a maintenance contract).

In summary, **landlord concerns** will center on *liability, compatibility, and property upkeep*. Open communication about your concept (emphasize a respectable, well-managed establishment) will help. It's not uncommon for a landlord to request a **business plan or experience summary** for first-time bar operators before lease signing. Being prepared to address these issues will smooth negotiations.

## 5. Site Profile Red Flags (What to Avoid)

Not every empty building will make a good pool hall. Be on the lookout for these **physical red flags** when evaluating sites:

- **Low Ceilings:** A ceiling under ~10 feet can feel cramped in a pool hall <sup>12</sup>. Low ceilings also risk cue sticks hitting ceiling fixtures on elevated shots. Ideally seek high open ceilings (12–16 ft is great). Avoid basement spaces with pipes or ducts hanging down – they'll interfere with play and create a cave-like atmosphere. Adequate ceiling height also improves air circulation and allows proper lighting suspension above tables.

- **Uneven or Sloped Floors:** Pool tables must sit perfectly level. Buildings with sloped floors (sometimes found in older retail or warehouse spaces for drainage) are problematic. Even a gentle grade will require shimming each table extensively. Check that the floor is **level and stable**. Wood subfloors should be solid (no bouncing) or you may need to reinforce to prevent balls rolling off line. Also avoid locations with multiple floor levels or lots of interior steps, which complicate movement and accessibility – a **single-level, flat floor** space is far preferable.
- **Columns and Obstructions:** Structural columns in the middle of the play area can ruin the layout – both by blocking shot paths and by restricting where tables can go. A forest of columns will break up sightlines and limit usable space. If a prospective site has columns, measure their spacing: you ideally need a clear bay that can fit at least a couple of tables wide. One or two columns can be worked around (perhaps used to anchor a seating area or dividing wall), but **columns in critical table zones** are a red flag. Similarly, watch for low-hanging beams, large pillars, or built-in objects (like an immovable bar or stage) that can't be relocated and might impede floor plan flexibility.
- **Inadequate HVAC or Electrical:** Many retail spaces are designed for light boutique use – a pool hall's demands are higher. If the existing HVAC system is undersized (e.g. meant for a small store), you could face expensive upgrades or an uncomfortably warm venue. Signs of inadequate HVAC include very few supply vents, small tonnage units, or an old system at end-of-life. You'll want robust A/C and ventilation (possibly smoke eaters if smoking will be allowed under local law). Also check the **electrical capacity** – you'll need enough circuits for coolers, ovens, amplifiers, neon signs, etc. If the panel is only e.g. 100 Amp for a large space, it's a bad sign. Look for **200 Amp 3-phase service** or better in larger buildings. Upgrading power can be costly, so a site with existing capacity is a plus.
- **Insufficient Bathrooms or Plumbing:** If a building only has one single restroom (or none at all, as in some warehouses), you will spend a lot to add compliant restrooms. Plumbing infrastructure is key – check that there are enough sewer line connections and water lines. For instance, a former retail store with one toilet closet will likely not satisfy code once you change use to assembly (you might need to build new multi-stall restrooms). Also verify the water heater size; serving a bar and kitchen will require a decent capacity for hot water. Lack of a **grease trap** is not a deal-breaker here (since you plan no frying), but if you later decide to expand food offerings, the absence of a grease interceptor could limit you. Thus, a site that already has a basic kitchen or restaurant build (minus the fryers) could save money. Avoid locations where installing new plumbing lines would require cutting concrete slab extensively – that's very expensive.
- **Poor Egress or Code Compliance Issues:** Life safety code must be met. Watch for spaces that have only one exit door – an assembly occupancy with >50 people **legally requires two exits** remote from each other. If the second exit is through the back kitchen or a storage room, that might not suffice without modifications. Also ensure exit doors are at least 36" wide and pathways to them are clear. If the building lacks a fire sprinkler system, check code: in many cases a bar/club space over a certain size or occupant load must be sprinklered. Installing sprinklers after the fact (especially in a one-story standalone) can be prohibitively costly. So, a red flag is a large unsprinklered building if code would mandate a retrofit for your use. Similarly, inadequate emergency lighting, alarms, or old non-compliant wiring are concerns – an inspection by an architect or fire marshal can reveal these. Choose a site that either already meets **Assembly (A-2 occupancy) codes** or can with minimal upgrade.

- **Problematic Location Characteristics:** Consider external factors: **lack of parking** we discussed, but also if the building is in a very isolated or poorly lit area, that's a security red flag. If it's adjacent to sensitive neighbors (e.g. a quiet residential block or a church), expect more complaints or even legal limitations (some cities have distance requirements from schools/churches for alcohol venues <sup>22</sup>). Also check the area's demographics for your target clientele – a site might be inexpensive but if it's far from your customer base, it's a business red flag. Finally, **flooding or drainage issues** (check flood zone maps, or signs of water damage) – you don't want tables in a place that could flood in heavy rain.

In summary, **avoid spaces that would need massive retrofits** (additional HVAC, many new walls or plumbing runs) or that inherently can't deliver a good customer experience (cramped, obstructed, or unsafe environments). It's often worth paying a bit more for a well-suited space than trying to force a poor space to work through costly construction.

## 6. Sample Site Profiles (Comparisons)

Below is a comparison of three potential site types for a poolroom/bar operation, illustrating different sizes and configurations. All costs are estimated for the Huntsville market:

| Site Profile           | Description & Size  | Strengths   | Weaknesses  | Est. Monthly Occupancy Cost<br>(Rent + CAM + Utilities)   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Strip Mall Unit</b> | Inline or end-cap space in a retail strip center; <b>~6,000 sq ft</b> (e.g. former retail store). | <i>High visibility</i> (street frontage, signage on pylon), <i>ample shared parking</i> , existing HVAC and bathrooms from prior retail use. Usually in a convenient location with foot traffic; neighbors can drive incidental business. | <i>Shared walls</i> – noise can affect adjacent tenants (landlord may limit late hours or loud music). Ceiling height might be 10–12 ft with drop ceiling (not as open). Layout could be long and narrow depending on store dimensions. Tenant improvement needed to open up interior (removing partitions) and add any bar infrastructure. | <b>\$12,000–\$13,500/month</b> total. <br> <i>Breakdown:</i> ~\$9,000 base rent (6000 sf @ ~\$18 NNN) <sup>1</sup> , plus ~\$2,000 CAM (common area fees) and ~\$1,500–\$2,500 utilities. |

| Site Profile               | Description & Size   | Strengths   | Weaknesses  | Est. Monthly Occupancy Cost<br>(Rent + CAM + Utilities)   |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Freestanding Retail</b> | Stand-alone building (or large former restaurant)<br><b>~8,000 sq ft</b> on its own lot. | <i>No shared walls</i> – freedom to operate late and make noise. Likely has existing restaurant build-out: plumbing, multiple restrooms, maybe a kitchen (sans fryers). Good branding presence (your own building/sign). Typically has dedicated parking lot. Often higher interior ceilings (open truss or vaulted). | Possibly older building needing remodel (HVAC or roof may be dated). Parking is solely your responsibility to maintain. Slightly off-main-drag locations (many freestanding sites are on secondary roads) could mean you must be a destination. Higher property taxes passed to you if NNN. Larger footprint to clean and cool than a strip unit. | <b>~\$15,000/month</b> total. <br> <i>Estimates:</i> \$10,500 base rent (8000 sf @ ~\$16 NNN), ~\$1,500 CAM/taxes/ins (lower per sf since standalone) <sup>7</sup> , and ~\$2,500–\$3,000 utilities (bigger space with multiple HVAC units) – total around \$15k. |



| Site Profile       | Description & Size  | Strengths   | Weaknesses   | Est. Monthly Occupancy Cost<br>(Rent + CAM + Utilities)  |
|--------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Warehouse Retrofit | Converted light-industrial space, ~12,000 sq ft (e.g. an old warehouse or big-box shell in an industrial park). | Very large, open span (high ceilings 14–18 ft, minimal columns) – allows 20–30 tables plus additional games/amenities. Low rent per sq ft; often <\$10/sf NNN since location is not retail-centric. Can design a unique “industrial-chic” atmosphere. Likely has a loading door for bringing in tables/equipment. | Location is destination-only – usually away from retail hubs (could be in an industrial district), so minimal walk-in traffic. Zoning must allow assembly use (may require a variance if not already zoned for entertainment). Often no existing bar/restaurant build-out: you may need to install all new restrooms, HVAC upgrades (warehouses might have only minimal climate control), and significant interior finish. Also, original parking might be limited (warehouses often have few spaces), so you must ensure or create ~60+ spaces which adds cost. | <b>\$12,000–\$14,000/month</b> total. <br>Example: ~\$8,000 base rent (12k sf @ \$8 NNN), ~\$1,000 CAM (very low common area costs) <sup>7</sup> , and perhaps \$3,000–\$5,000 in utilities (huge volume to heat/cool, though you might not climate-control the entire space fully). Savings on rent can be offset by higher utility for large volume. |

Notes: These scenarios assume market-average rents <sup>1</sup>. Actual costs will vary by exact location (a prime Parkway strip center may be \$20+ NNN, while a fringe warehouse could be \$6 NNN). The **strip center option** is often easiest to renovate (basic utilities in place) but may require soundproofing for neighbor comfort. The **freestanding option** offers operational freedom but watch for building condition (factor maintenance costs). The **warehouse option** gives space to expand (hosting leagues, adding ping-pong, etc.) at a low rent per foot, but initial renovation costs will be much higher (you essentially build a venue from a shell). In all cases, **verify the zoning/use permissions** and parking adequacy early on. Also consider negotiating some **free rent period** or landlord TI contribution, especially for significant build-outs – many landlords will offer e.g. 3–6 months abated rent on a 5-year term to help with your setup costs.

## 7. Layout & Design “Cheat Sheet” (Key Guidelines)

- **Pool Table Spacing:** *Rule of thumb:* allow about **14×18 ft per 8-ft table** (≈250 sq ft) for comfortable play clearance <sup>15</sup>. This provides ~5 feet of cueing space around each side. For 9-ft tables, target ~15×20 ft (~300 sq ft each) <sup>23</sup>. Avoid placing tables closer than ~4–5 ft apart from each other; more space is better to prevent interference. If space is tight, consider using smaller bar tables (7-ft) which

require slightly less room (~12×16 ft minimum). Mark out table footprints during design to ensure no overlaps in cue swing paths.

- **Aisles & Circulation:** Maintain at least **4 ft wide aisles** around table clusters for players and staff <sup>17</sup>. Main corridors (to exits, restrooms) should be **5–6 ft wide** if possible to accommodate two-way traffic. **ADA accessible route** requirements mandate **36" minimum clear width** on paths <sup>16</sup> (can pinch to 32" at a doorway), so never let furniture or decor reduce pathways below that. Provide a turning circle (5 ft diameter) in key areas like near the restroom doors or any dead-end areas for wheelchair maneuvering. Every ~200 ft in length of narrow corridor, a passing space of 60" × 60" should exist <sup>24</sup> – in an open floor plan this is usually naturally met. Essentially, plan a layout that a person in a wheelchair can traverse from entrance to at least some playing areas, the bar, and restrooms.
- **Ceiling Height & Lighting:** Aim for **10' or higher ceilings** <sup>12</sup>. High ceilings make the space feel open and help dissipate smoke/heat. They also allow you to hang pool table lights at the proper height (~30–36" above the table bed) without them being in the line of sight from across the room. Use **dedicated overhead lights** for each table (centered, with proper shades) to ensure even, glare-free illumination on the game surface. The rest of the room lighting can be subdued – a popular approach is pendant lights over tables with LED ambient lighting on dimmers elsewhere. Avoid shiny or mirrored surfaces behind tables that could reflect lights into players' eyes. Also, darker ceiling paint or acoustic tile can help reduce glare and improve focus on the tables.
- **Flooring & Acoustics:** Choose flooring that is **level, durable, and forgiving on dropped balls**. Commercial-grade low-pile carpet or carpet tiles in the table areas are ideal – they reduce ball bounce and noise. Carpet also improves acoustics by dampening echoes in a big open room. In bar or food areas, you might use LVT (vinyl tile) or sealed concrete for ease of cleaning spills, but consider adding acoustic panels on walls or ceiling if those areas get loud. **Sound control** is important: install acoustic ceiling tiles or baffles if the space is a loud echo chamber. This not only helps ambiance but also keeps noise from overwhelming conversation or leaking out to neighbors. If in a multi-tenant building, insulate any shared walls (e.g. use sound-deadening drywall or foam) especially on walls adjacent to other businesses or residences.
- **Bar Design & Amenities:** The bar should have a logical placement – many layouts put it off to the side or corner of the space, not in the center of playing areas (to avoid crowding between drinkers and players). Ensure there's a **direct sightline from the bar to the tables** so bartenders can monitor the floor and so patrons at the bar feel connected to the action. Provide **counter seating** at the bar but also nearby pub tables so groups can sit together. If serving food, include a small **service station** for waitstaff and a pickup counter for food orders. For customer convenience, have **drink rails** or small ledges along walls near playing areas where people can park their drinks while shooting – this helps prevent drinks on table rails (a spill hazard). If space allows, incorporate some **non-billiards games** in dead corners (darts, foosball) but give them their own space bubble to avoid stray darts near pool players, etc. Think about sightlines for TVs – mount televisions in view of the bar and seating, but positioned such that a bright screen won't distract someone aiming on a table.
- **Bathrooms & Patron Flow:** Place restrooms so that players can reach them without cutting directly across playing areas if possible (along a side or back of venue). Clearly sign them. Inside, use durable, easy-clean surfaces (tile or FRP walls, epoxy floor) anticipating high traffic. Ensure **ADA**

**compliance in restrooms:** at least one accessible stall, 60" turning radius, grab bars, sink at 34" height, etc. Hands-free fixtures are a plus in a bar environment. Provide trash cans and coat hooks – the little details matter for patron comfort.

- **Mechanical and Safety:** Dedicate a small closet for your **mechanical equipment** (water heater, electrical panels, IT rack for security cameras/POS). This should be off-limits to customers. Keep fire extinguishers visible and up to code. Check that exit signs and emergency lights are in place and not blocked by decor. Consider adding a key-operated **override switch for music volume** or a cutoff for a DJ in case you need to quickly lower noise (some landlords or local ordinances might require that if near residential). Also plan where **bouncer or ID check** station would go at the entrance if you'll control entry on busy nights – don't let that become a bottleneck or violate occupancy by having too many people queued inside.

This cheat sheet encapsulates the crucial layout guidelines: **ample space per table, wide walkways, ADA accessibility, high/open ceilings, strategic bar placement, and attention to acoustics and lighting**. By adhering to these principles, you'll create a pool hall that is comfortable, compliant, and enjoyable for patrons – setting the stage for a successful operation in the Rocket City market.

**Sources:** Local commercial real estate data and broker insights for Huntsville were used to inform rent and cost figures <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> . Design guidelines were adapted from pool hall planning resources <sup>15</sup> <sup>17</sup> and ADA standards <sup>16</sup> . Financial operating benchmarks were cross-referenced with industry reports <sup>13</sup> . These recommendations are tailored to Huntsville's market conditions as of 2025–2026, but individual site due diligence is always recommended.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> Most Common Retail Property Lease in Huntsville, AL Explained

<https://deancre.com/retail-property-lease-huntsville/>

<sup>2</sup> <sup>4</sup> Huntsville, AL Retail Space for Lease

<https://www.propertyshark.com/cre/retail/us/al/huntsville/>

<sup>3</sup> Commercial lease huntsville al: Find Your Perfect 2025 Space

<https://microflexspace.com/commercial-lease-huntsville-al-guide/>

<sup>5</sup> C:\Users\LISAAD~1\AppData\Local\Temp\mso3167.tmp

<https://images2.loopnet.com/d2/IR73G33kNfUrNoIO2Fsp13FT25MEkc-9u1Hi5TLZin8/document.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup> What Are Average CAM Costs Per Square Foot?

<https://www.hellodata.ai/help-articles/what-are-average-cam-costs-per-square-foot>

<sup>10</sup> Commercial spaces for lease: 5 Smart Steps to Perfect

<https://microflexspace.com/commercial-spaces-lease-guide-2025/>

<sup>11</sup> Is a 10-Ton Packaged AC the Right Size for Your Commercial Space?

[https://thefurnaceoutlet.com/blogs/hvac-tips/is-a-10-ton-packaged-ac-the-right-size-for-your-commercial-space?](https://thefurnaceoutlet.com/blogs/hvac-tips/is-a-10-ton-packaged-ac-the-right-size-for-your-commercial-space?srsltid=AfmBOop90UeI0i_iHYhUT_yaxYGKZK9t4CkZk_cxRaFYs12zDhfROQt)

<sup>12</sup> <sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> <sup>17</sup> <sup>23</sup> How Big Should A Pool Hall Be? — OwnersOasis

<https://ownersoasis.com/fun/how-big-should-a-pool-hall-be>

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<https://abadiaccess.com/clear-widths-along-an-accessible-route/>

18 19 **cityofcalera.org**

<https://www.cityofcalera.org/DocumentCenter/View/1268/PARKING---2023>

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<https://www.mynewmarkets.com/articles/184145/landlords-and-their-tenants-liquor-liability>

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<https://alabamanewscenter.com/2025/01/24/poppa-gs-re-racked-alabama-pool-hall-where-everybody-knows-your-name-returns-after-fire/>

24 **Chapter 4: Accessible Routes - Access-Board.gov**

<https://www.access-board.gov/ada/guides/chapter-4-accessible-routes/>