



The Ballpark District Initiative

Beyond creating digital tools and experiences, I work to expand a company's opportunities by understanding their capabilities. This project demonstrates my abilities to work autonomously to sense a projects intent, explore across industries, and deliver surprising solutions with clearly defined phases and success indicators.

The Problems facing Major League Baseball

Despite having a rich and socially important history, Major League Baseball has faltered. Rapid advances in technology, as well as shifting interests and new competitors have taken the luster from the once sports industry leader.

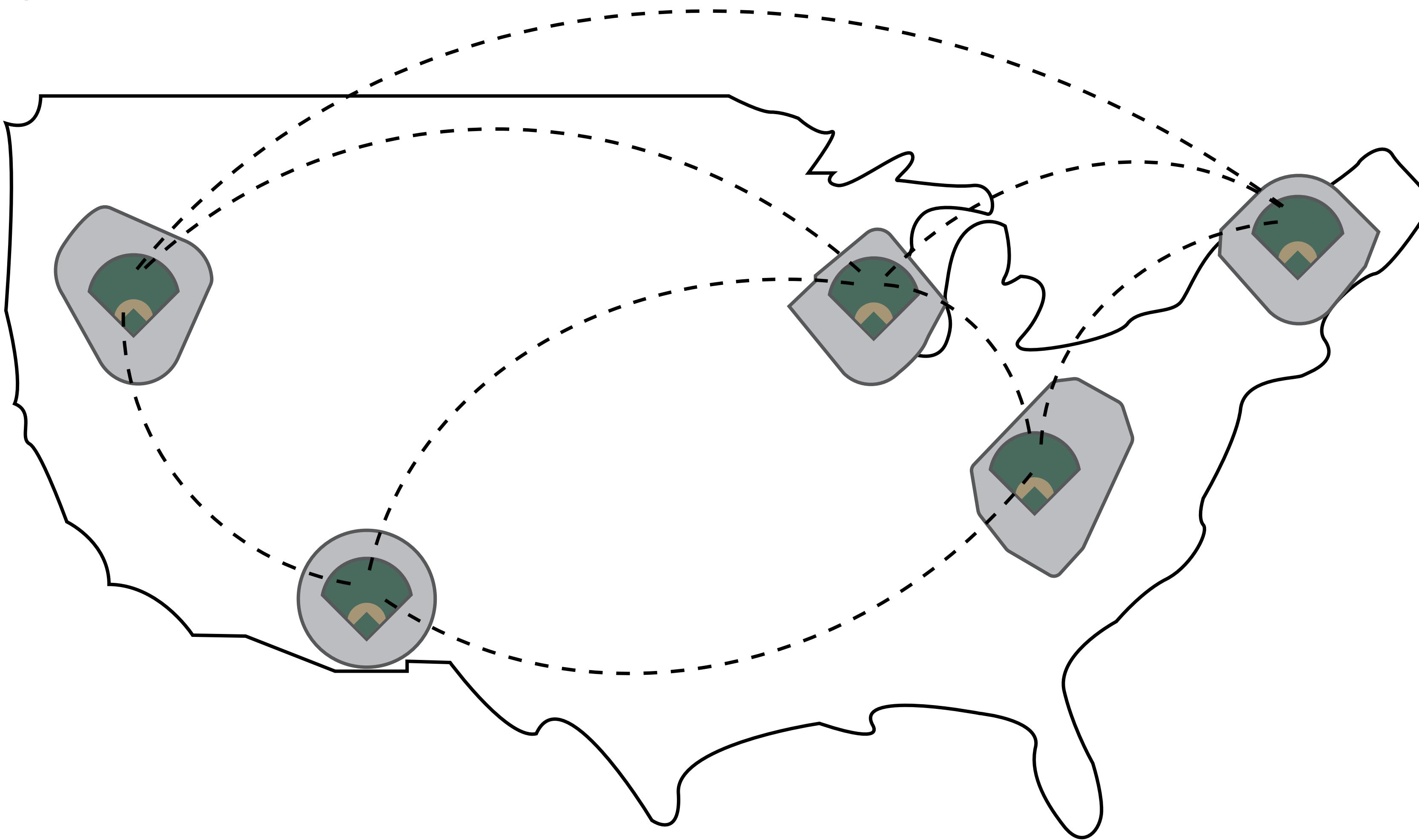


The Ballpark District Initiative

The Ballpark District Initiative is
a neighborhood development
program designed to create the new
community of baseball.

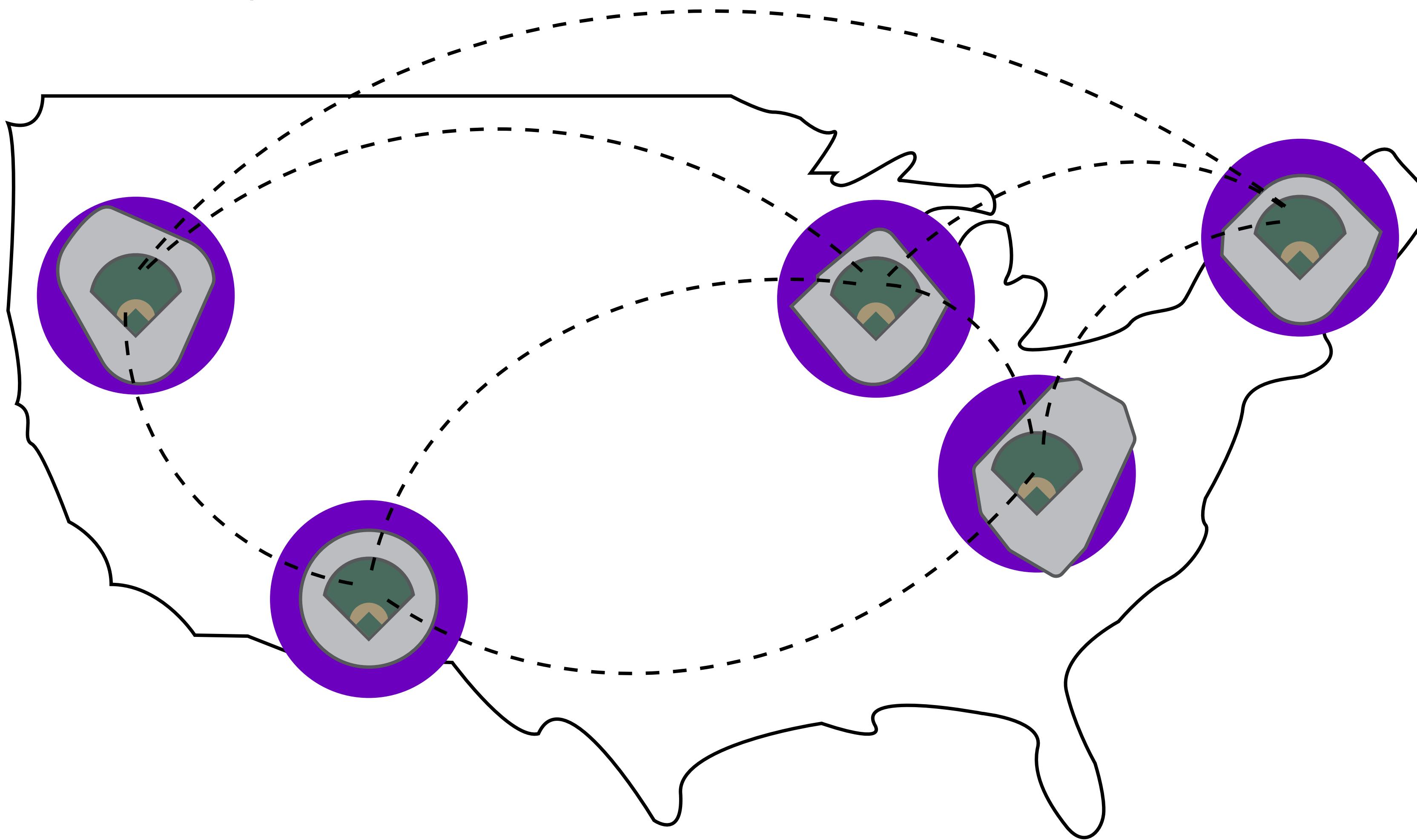
From The Baseball Machine...

Currently, the MLB has set up a powerful national system that delivers baseball content to baseball fans. This is where potential fans struggle to enter.



...To Rooting for the Home Team

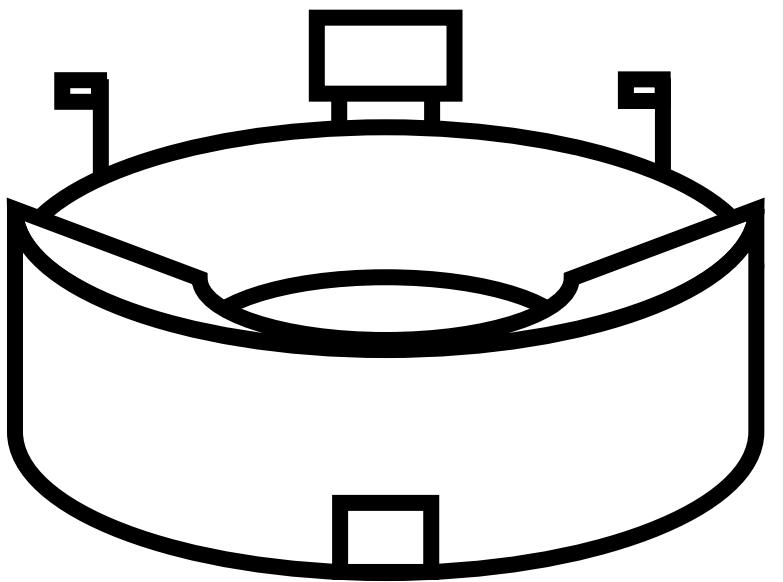
The MLB can utilize their local entry points to engage potential new fans with experiences that are tangential to the stadium experience.



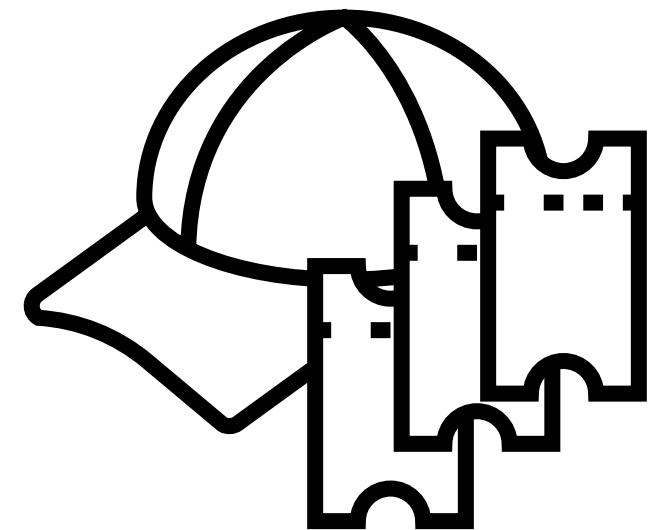
COMMUNITY AS THE MEDIUM

This suggested shift comes from recognizing that the countless applications and dedicated TV networks can't connect with new potential audiences that way a friend taking you to the stadium can. The Ballpark District Initiative is designed to entice current fans to bring friends again and again, even during the off season.

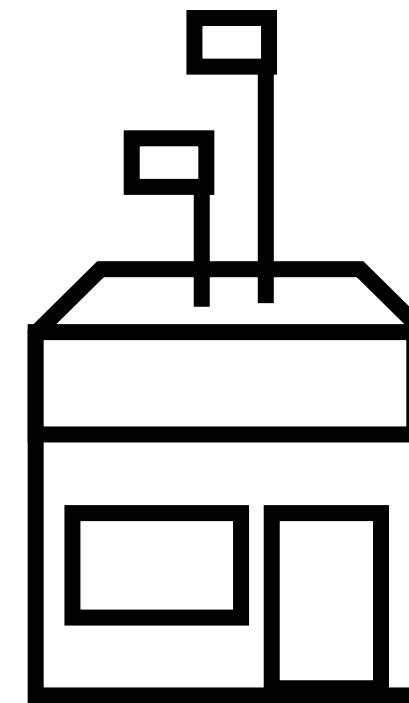
Key Aspects of The Ballpark District Initiative



CREATE TANGENTIAL
STADIUM EXPERIENCES



PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES
TO INHERIT FANDOM



CATALYZE HEALTHY
COMMUNITY GROWTH

CREATE TANGENTIAL STADIUM EXPERIENCES

Providing experiences outside of the stadiums such as concerts, fairs, and movie screenings establish the stadium as a local center for more than just baseball, increasing community engagement and local pride. This creates an avenue for attendees to transition into fanhood and an off season revenue source.



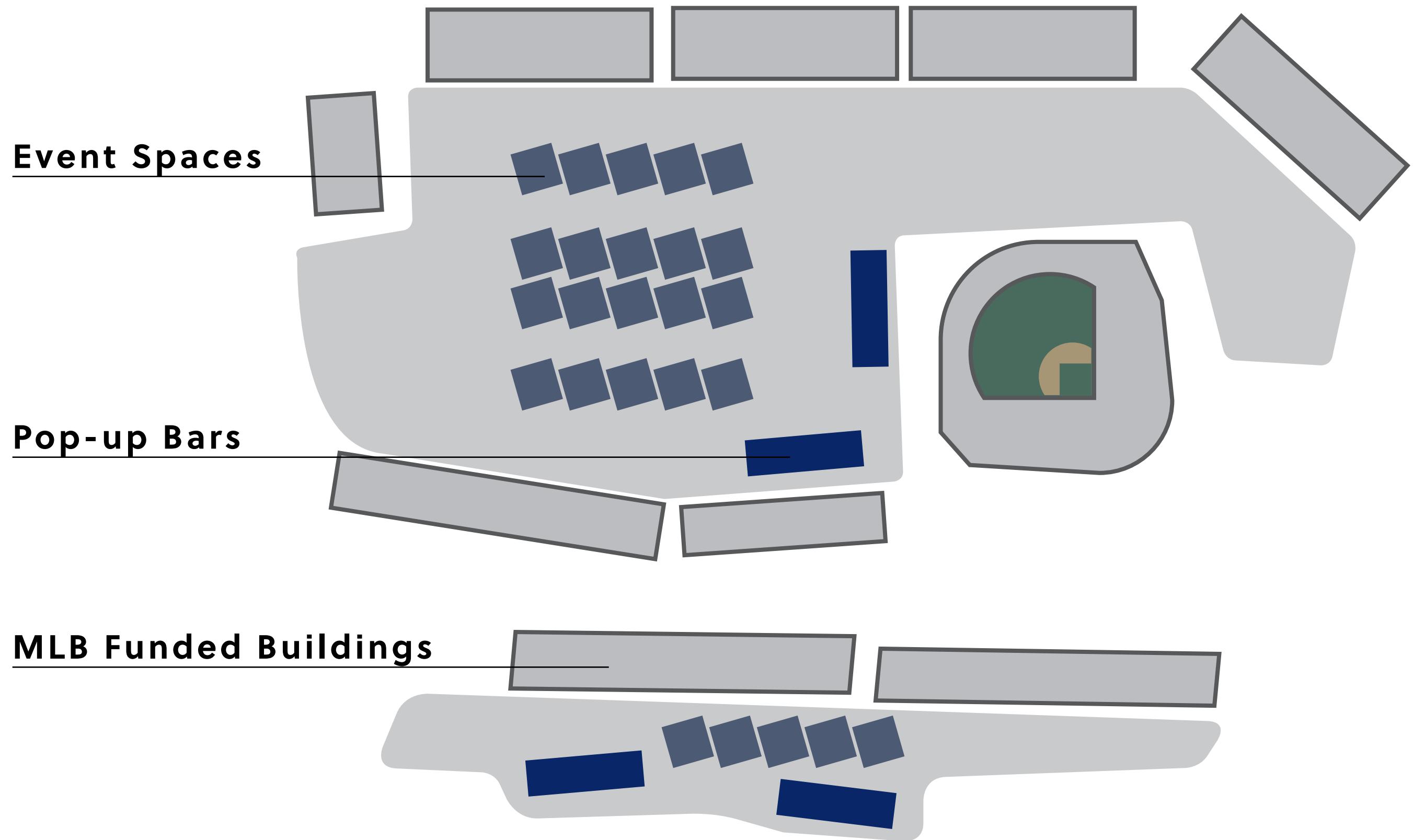
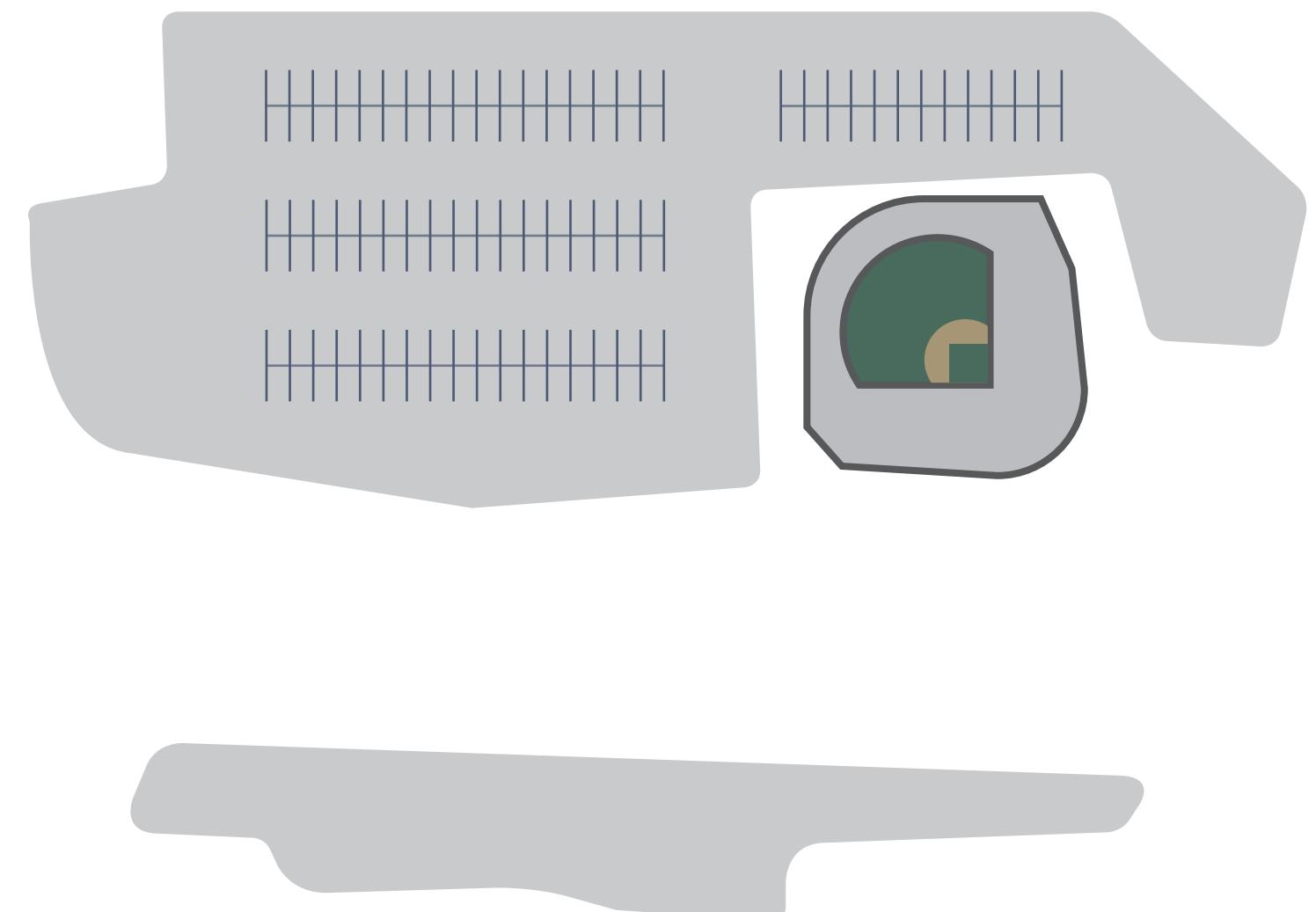
PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO INHERIT FANDOM

Specially priced ticket packages for loyal fans to bring friends would entice current fans with discounted tickets, and gives newcomers a stress free chance to learn the sport and the home team.



CATALYZE HEALTHY COMMUNITY GROWTH

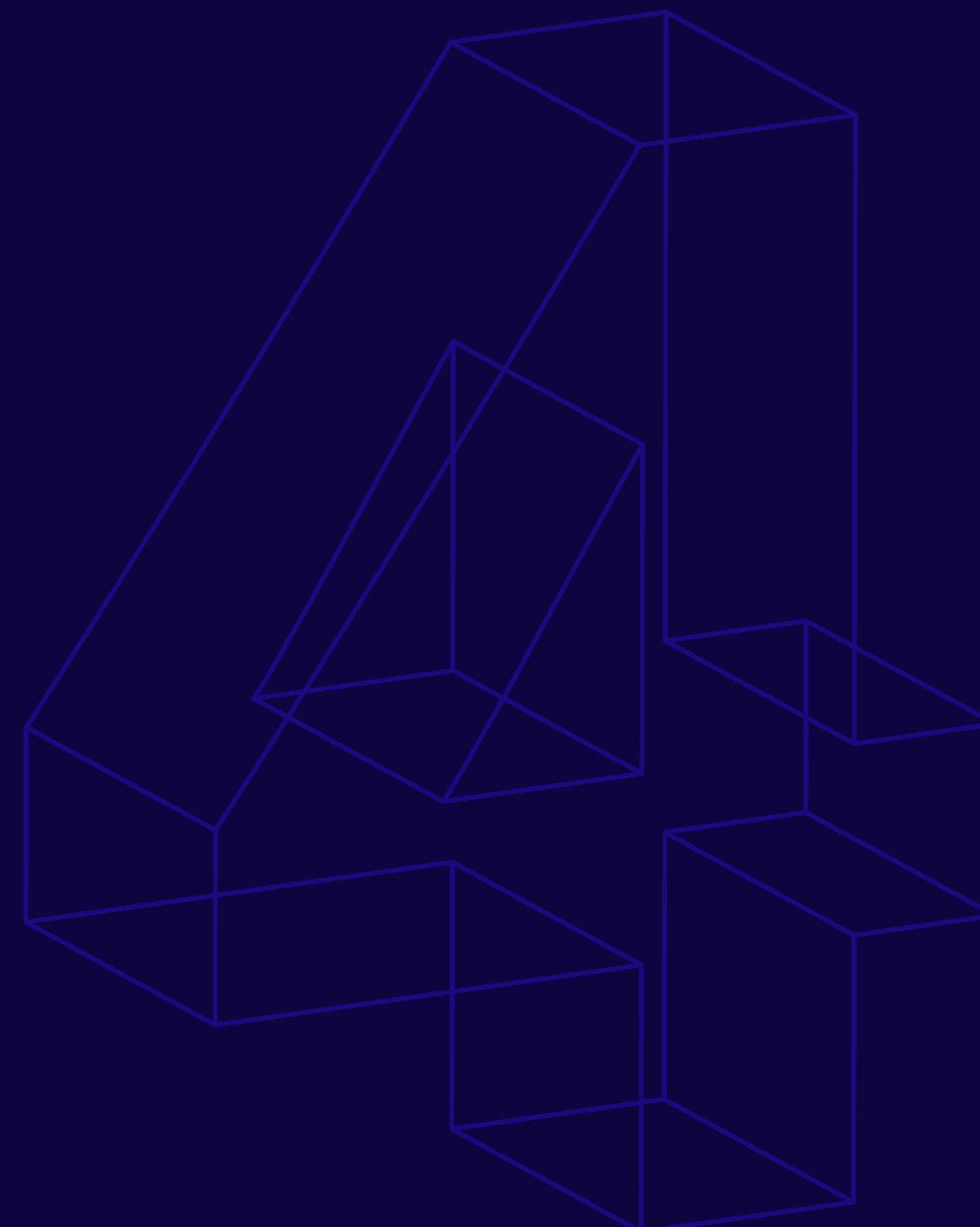
When the team wins the city wins, so why can't the same be true the other way around? By utilizing its substantial means and competencies in legal and developmental project, the MLB could help change the landscape of the surrounding neighborhood. This would encourage new business development and growth for the city, and provide a context for people to be fans of the enterprise that helped them do it.



Turner Field
Atlanta Braves



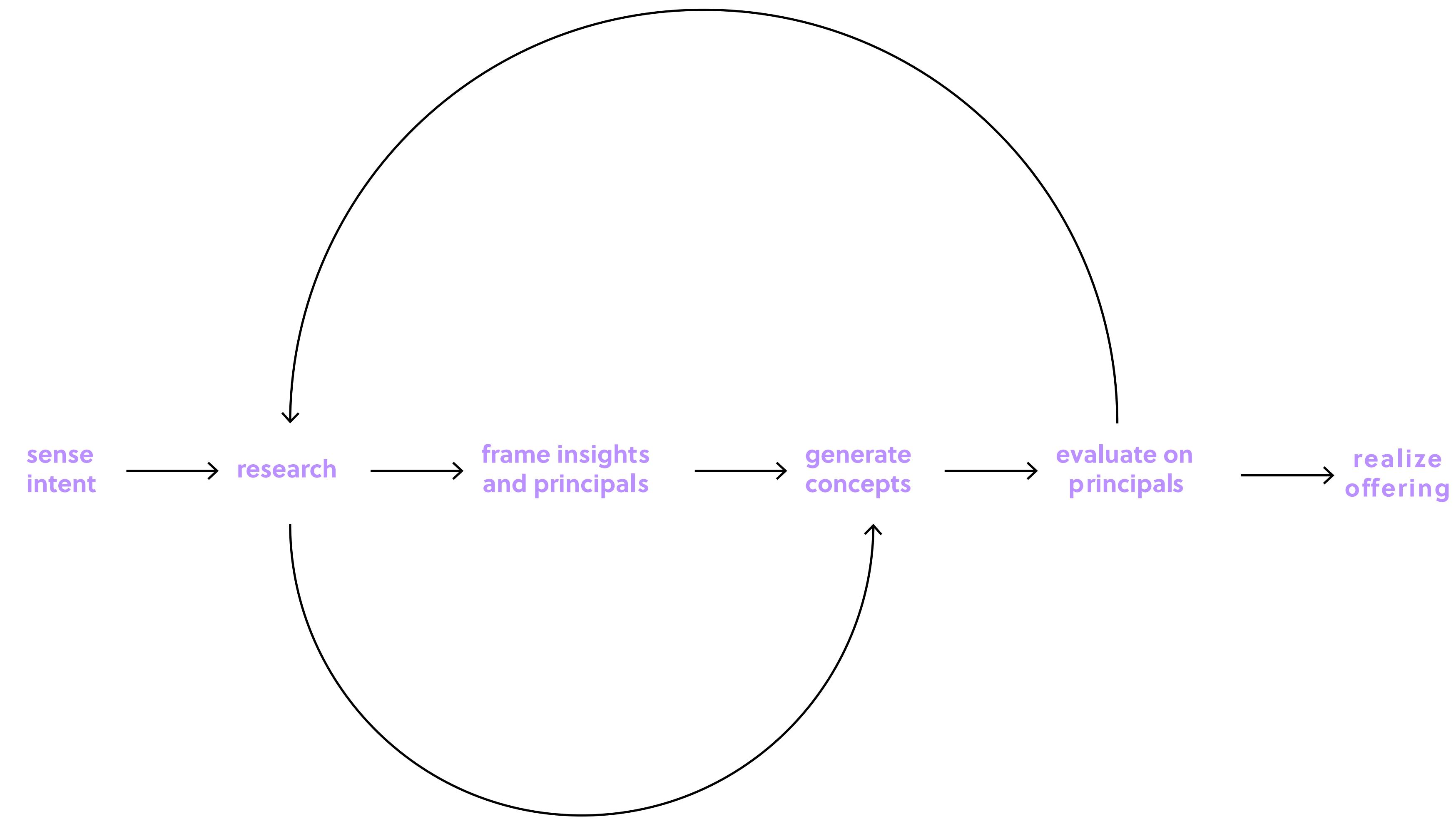
The Ballpark District Initiative



Breaking the Slump

Beyond creating digital tools and experiences, I work to expand a company's opportunities by understanding their capabilities. This project demonstrates my abilities to work autonomously to sense a projects intent, explore across industries, and deliver surprising solutions with clearly defined phases and success indicators.

The Ballpark District Initiative Process



SENSE INTENT

From-To Matrix

	from	trend	to
delivery system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV: national broadcasts, MLB network (whole game) Apps/Sites: MLB At Bat, ESPN SportsCenter, Twitter, Google (game updates, stats) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News: trending towards curated articles, small anecdotes, morning updates Graphics >> Statistics (more engaging) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digestible, engaging, curated updates during games, and recaps after
culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseball had its heyday in radio generation Decline in U.S. interest Not a tailgating culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viral / GIFs / Sound bytes Growth in interest in Asia and Central America 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close the gap from radio culture to internet age Embrace and integrate new cultures with interest in the sport
rules of the game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow place Patience and focus required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise of high octane non-traditional sports Drop in attention span Rise of e-sports (playing and watching) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase speed and pacing of play
environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stadiums (all at least somewhat outdoors) Bars Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift in mall experience to be more engaging than traditional shopping trips Increased "bougie" factor in arenas/stadiums Nostalgia for pre-tech era Outdoor spaces (beer gardens, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of micro-experiences before, during, and beyond the game
marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying hard to use social and video But...mostly traditional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional online advertising is dead Rise in chat services (WeChat, etc.) Social media is a struggle for corporations Viral videos Rise of VR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer opportunities for user/fan-created content Guerrilla micro-experiences
youth engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall off in engagement around age of 12 Rise of expensive traveling teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise of e-sports (12 year old can go pro) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More accessibility to local youth teams

CATCHING TRENDS

Being able to identify trends outside of the sports industry can enable perspective as to what should be explored moving forward. At this stage, we wanted to start understanding the broader spectrum of entertainment and media consumption within in which the sports industry exists.

Intent Statement

Intent statement

Problem MLB has an aging demographic and the smallest female fan base of any major U.S. sport. It needs to revitalize the 'baseball experience' to reach a broader audience.

Audience Changes in sports viewer expectations has isolated younger and female audiences. The MLB must find new ways to engage new demographics without losing the old.

Failures MLB grew up in the age of radio and has failed to escape slow paced rules and antiquated delivery systems.

New Value Other sports born before the internet have found new methods of interacting with and reaching fans.

Opportunities Embracing more digestible and curated updates, the expansion of world interest in baseball, and exploring experiences before, during, and beyond the game.

Risk Isolating older fan base.

CLEARLY DEFINING EARLY GOALS

An important step we took was taking our earliest understandings of the problem at hand and forming hypothesis as to the attributes of a successful offering. We would refer to these simple statements several times throughout the project, not as guiding principles but as a way to constantly check our assumptions against new knowledge that presented itself.

RESEARCH

ERAs Analysis

Birth – Adolescence pre-1900–'30s	Shake-ups (30s - 50s)	Baseball is Booming (early 50s – late 90s)	Everything's Changin' (late 90s – present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st radio broadcast • For early part of this era, only way to see/hear sport is through ballpark attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st television broadcast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cable revolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Bat App • Online streaming • MLB Network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrigley / Fenway built • All male audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives driving game attendance: night games, free admission for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artificial turf • Dual purpose stadiums with NFL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition away from dual purpose stadiums • Frequent park renovations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration (Jackie Robinson) --> decreased Negro League attendance • WW II draft --> loss of +500 players; AAGPBC • Power hitters, first big names (Ruth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pitching dominance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROIDS! (game centered around HRs) • 30% Hispanic players • 8% AA players
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial teams were only in NE, Midwest • Farm system created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 teams in 10 cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crazy expansion (ended up at 30 teams in about 25 cities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some team contraction discussion (Twins, Expos)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of dead ball (clean balls required) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1931-1953: no rule changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70s: Batters required to wear helmet • 1975-2008: no rule changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push to speed up pace • Instant replay review introduced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys club • Lots of leagues; fractured sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of social impact on sports (Great Depression, WWII, Civil Rights) • First Little League World Series • Baseball Hall of Fame introduced • All-Star break started 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golden age of baseball films (The Sandlot, A League of Their Own, Angels in the Outfield, Field of Dreams) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curses (Cubs, Red Sox) discussed commonly in pop culture • Moneyball / statistics • Voted out (then back in) of Olympics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Sox scandal (rigged World Series) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cocaine • World Series cancelled due to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steroids/Doping

UNDERSTANDING "THE PAST TIME"

We used this tool to get acquainted to the long history of baseball.

Professional baseball has long been referred to as "America's Pasttime" and our hopes were to establish an understanding of what that saying means.

Through this tool we developed a strong understanding of the media that baseball grew up during (the radio) and what it represented to the American citizens during challenging times.

Analogous Models



WHAT COULD BASEBALL LEARN

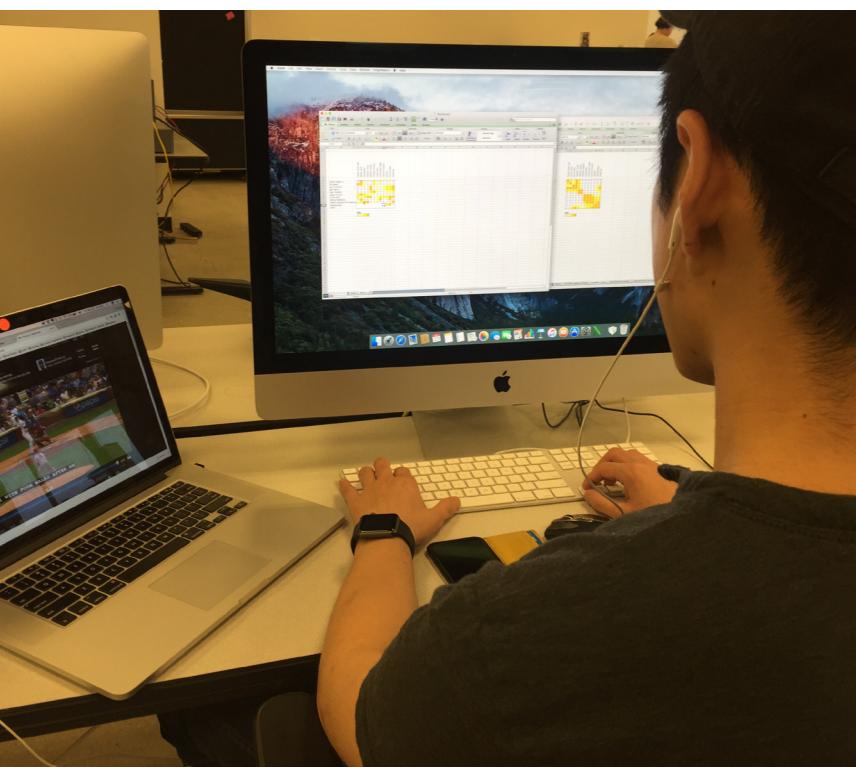
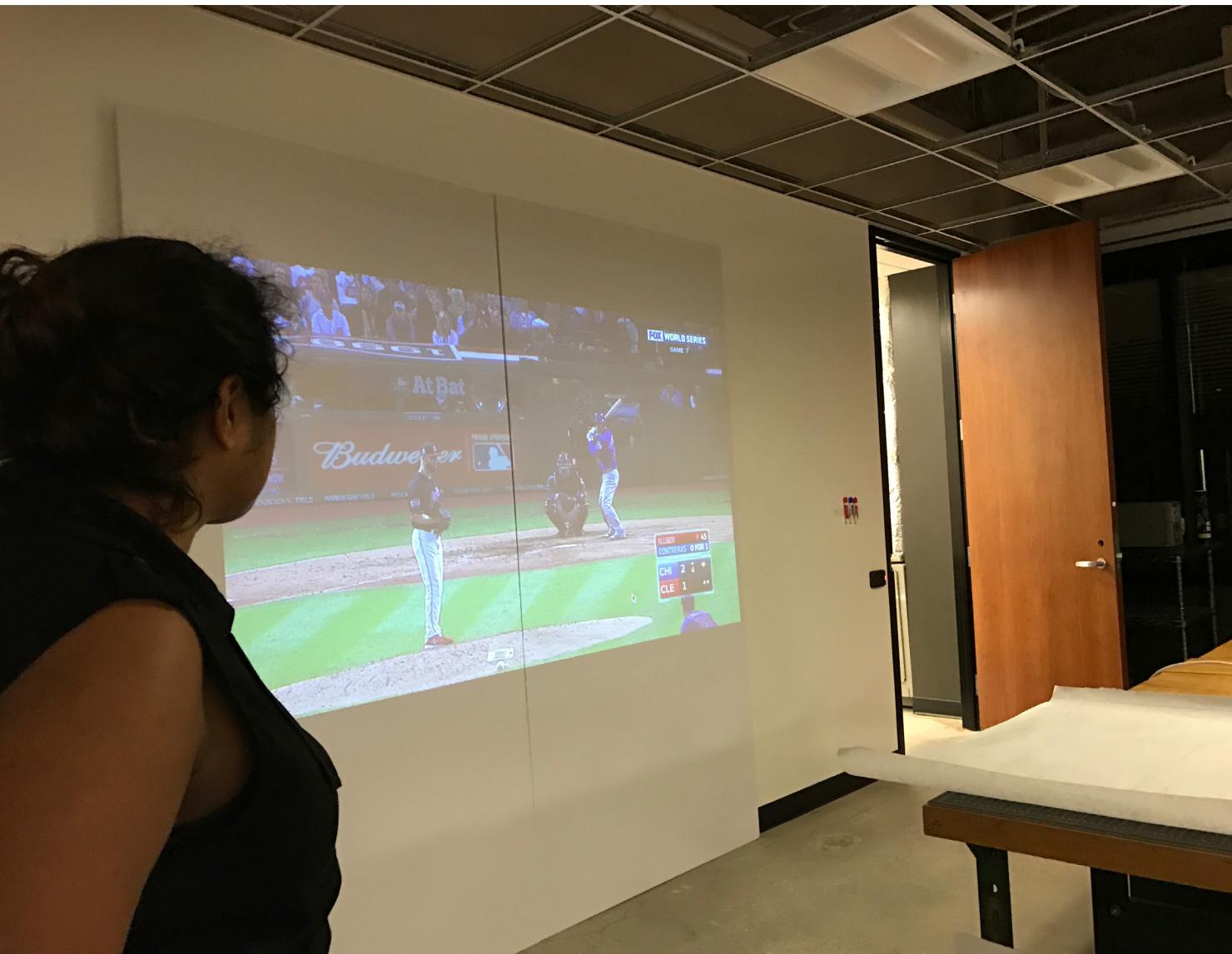
The MLB is struggling with its viewership and young fan adoption. Looking at companies that have found success in revolutionizing those areas provided insight into new potential solutions. The most powerful comparison we found was UFC's rapid growth as a result of growing up with the internet. It was a sport crafted by a dedicated fanbase that could only truly exist through the internet. The MLB has had tremendous success with its fantasy leagues, but would never be able to engage a non-fan the way a UFC gif can.

Intercept Interviews

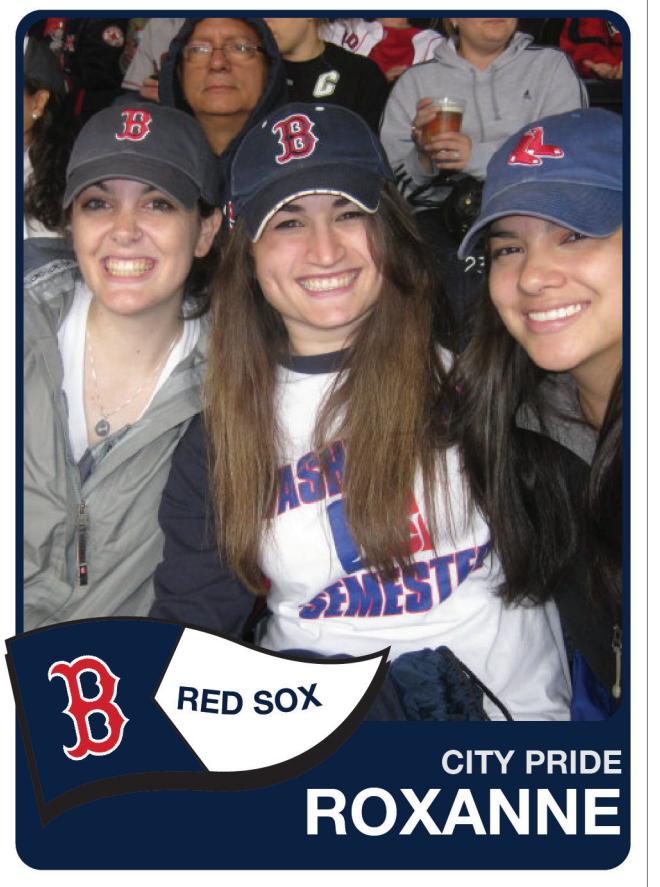
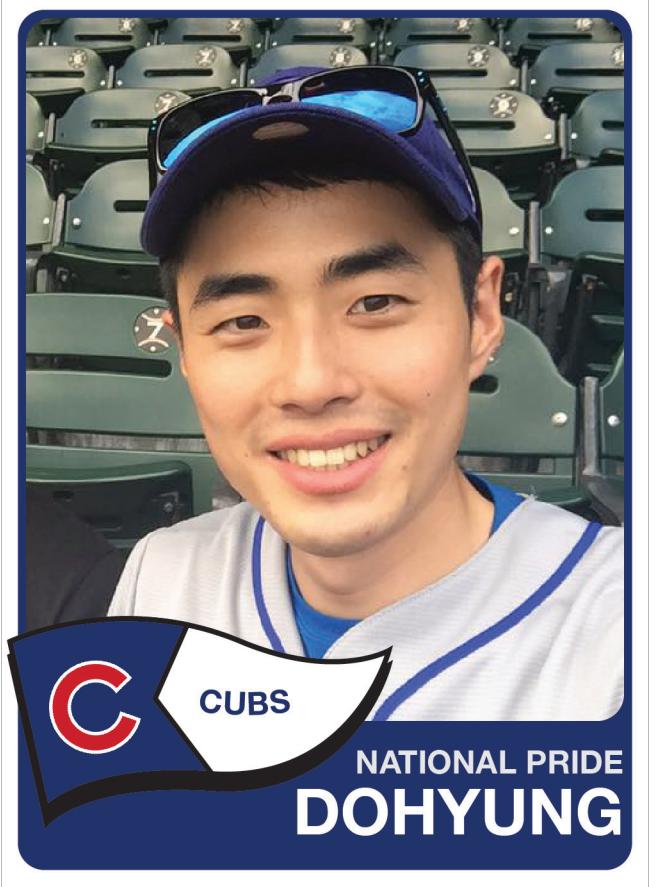
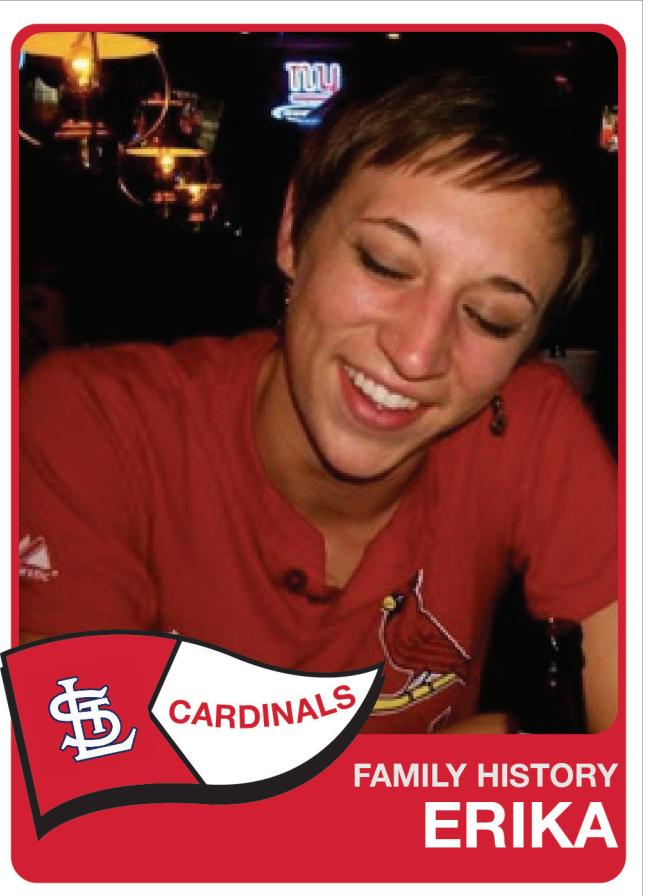
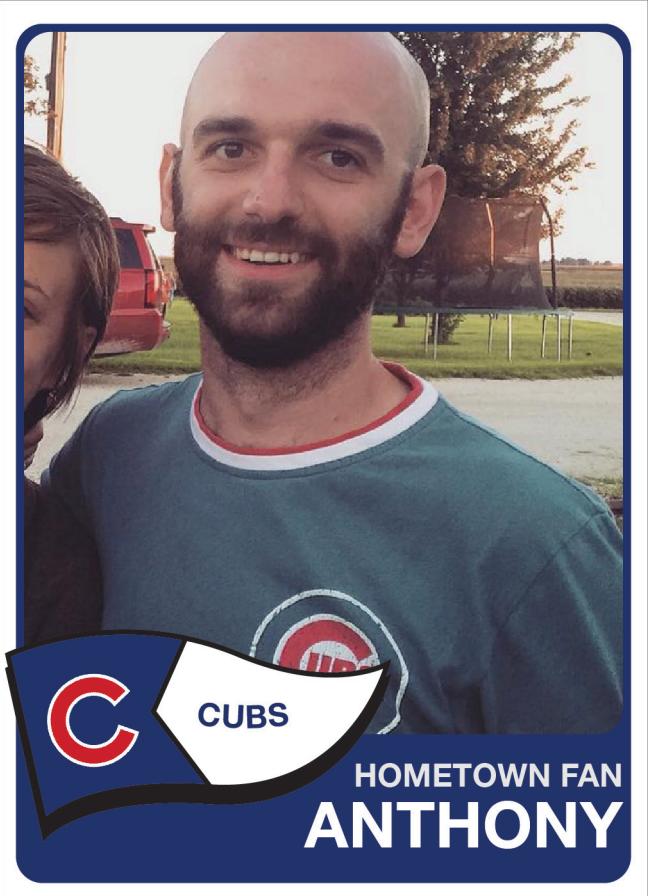
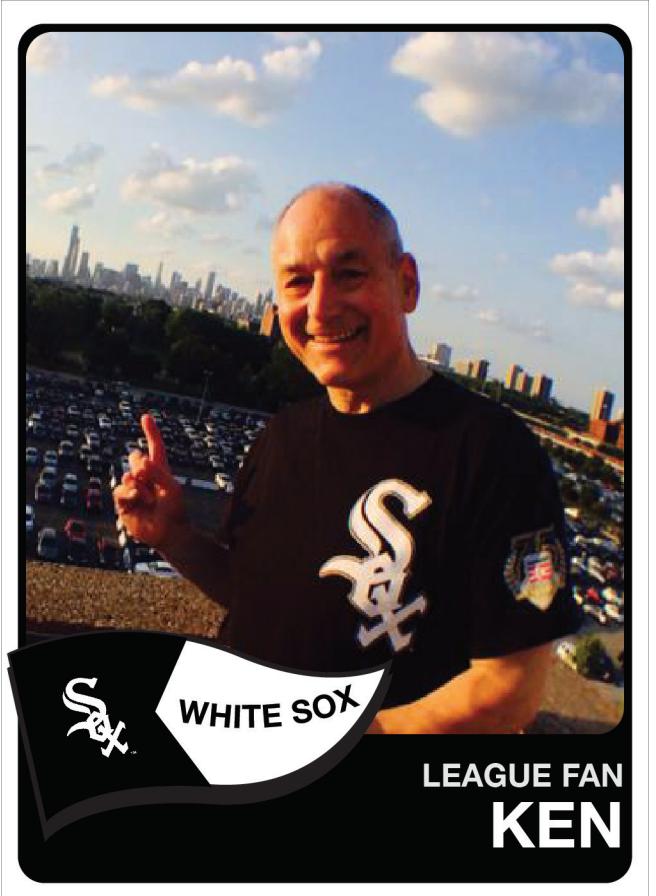


WHY DO PEOPLE GO TO GAMES?

Moving from secondary to primary research, we chose to go to both Wrigley Field and Guaranteed Rate Stadium to understand what attracts people to the live event. For many this was just an opportunity to enjoy a nice day, but for most it was about sharing an experience with friends. Baseball provides a great opportunity for bonding with its slow pacing and casual atmosphere.



Interviews



WHAT MAKES A FAN?

Not only did we want to know what makes a fan, but what stops someone from becoming a fan? Interestingly, many of the people that stated that they "hated" baseball, still enjoyed going to the live games, as it provided a context to gather with friends. Seeing degrees of fandom, we looked for participants that matched the current demographic as well as fans with international backgrounds, and fans that match the desired demographics.

FRAME INSIGHTS

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Watching an MLB game provides a context to gather, where its unique slow pacing and acceptance of rowdiness makes room for social interactions and communal growth.

My sense is that it's what they put their positivity into, even when they're losing, it's what the collective identity of Boston is wrapped up into.
-ROXANNE



INHERITED LEGACY

Baseball fandom is passed between individuals through stories that express the personal impact the community of baseball has had on an individual, drawing in new fans that are seeking that connection to a place or people

In Korea, I bought tickets for my friends if it was their first time because I knew they would want to come back with me [to another game]
-Dohyung



SHARED GLORY

The triumph of a franchise or player, on or off of the field, drives inspiration throughout a community that sees themselves as a part of that success

We become fans of something to get a chance to ride on their success.

-Erika

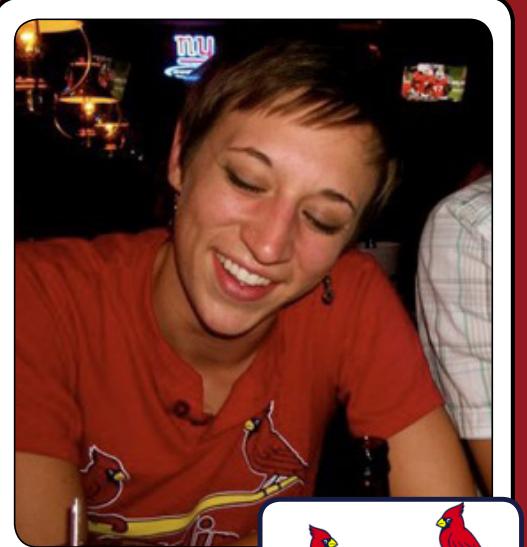


GENERATE CONCEPTS

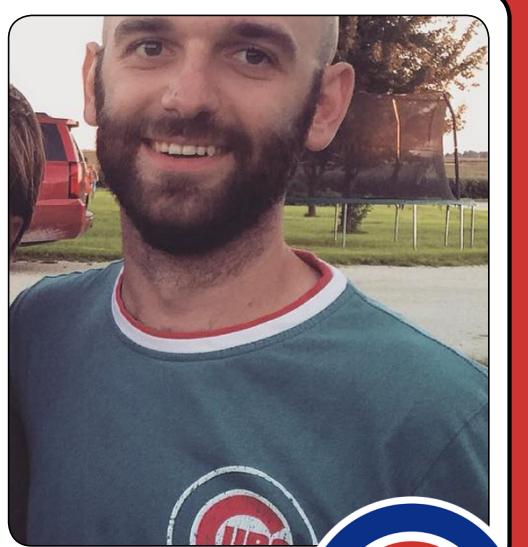
Ideation Workshop



ROXANNE
from Boston, MA
27 years old
grad student in Chicago, IL



ERICA
from St. Louis, MO
26 years old
Video Editor/Producer in Bozeman, MT



ANTHONY
from Central Illinois
26 years old
Comedy/Screenplay Writer



Fan since...she can remember.
"It's a birthright in Boston to be a Red Sox fan. [Even when] we had lost for so long, and in such a spectacular fashion, it was expected, but at least the environment was fun."
Experiences baseball...with friends.
Roxanne's favorite memories of baseball involve specific experiences she had watching or celebrating a win with friends. Her fandom is attached to the people around her at the time.
"My best friends in college were big Red Sox fans, they paid more attention than my friends in high school did. We would watch all the games. They knew more about baseball than I did so I got to learn from them."
"When they won [the World Series], they let us out of our dorms after curfew, which was unheard of. They let us go celebrate. It was really special!"
Ballparks are about...nostalgia and shared experiences.
"Fenway is so beautiful, there's the added nostalgia now that I'm older. Still get a hot dog, now I can get a beer (even though it's \$800). I'll go with friends when I'm home. It's fun getting the Boston experience, being around a bunch of loudmouths. You get indoctrinated in the whole thing."
Living away from her team...reduces her viewership.
"I don't really watch [in Chicago]...I watch at home when I'm home visiting. I downloaded the Bleacher Report app to keep track, but they send so many notifications that I stopped paying attention. There are some Boston sports bars in Chicago that I would go to if there was a playoff situation. [...] because there are fewer games for the Pats, it's easier to commit to going to watch all of them."
Favorite thing about baseball?
"The sense of community."

Fan since...she can remember.
"Baseball is ingrained in my family, my Grandpa was supposed to be in the major leagues, but went to WW2 instead."
Thinks of baseball...as a story.
Erica loves the loyalty fans have for the game, players, teams, and their stories. She pays attention to rivalries, team history, and has an appreciation for players she's watched over the years.
"My favorite part of baseball is in a stadium seeing people watch while listening to it on the radio, and keep score on their own score cards. Such a game of loyalty to players and an organization. I like to keep score because of the memories. It's like in school when you write something down it becomes more ingrained in you and you remember it. Keeping score in a game might help you remember when ____ hit that triple because you were there and so attached to it because you wrote it down."
Listening on the radio...is truly immersive.
"A good play by any player is almost as good as watching it in person. You can see everything that's happening in your head. It triggers your imagination especially when you know each player and you know his swing/pitch/stride. You can play the whole game in your head. It's just an amazing experience."
Going to a game is about...seeing more of the story.
"You can see players moving around in your periphery that you wouldn't be able to see on TV. You can see coaches pointing and you can see shifts happening and that's always really fun because there are things you don't think about while watching on TV but when you see it in person a lot more is happening."
Living away from MLB...makes her seek out baseball experiences.
"We won't be able to go to games which is a huge part of our lives, it's something I will miss. But there is a great minor league system and it will just be a totally different experience."
Favorite thing about baseball?
"Baseball GIFs. Incredible, top tier in the gif world."

Reinvigorated as a fan because of...stats/sabermetrics.
"The first rebirth of the Cubs was what got me back into baseball which at that time was the sabermetric revolution of baseball. Some kids discover the turning point of complex things that really interest you, I had that discovery in baseball and advanced statistics."
Thinks of baseball...as something to analyze.
Anthony is inspired by the numbers involved in baseball, and for him it's a way to further analyze sports.
"I got into fantasy baseball. I have enormous spreadsheets that I like to look at and I look at graphics all the time.
I think really what has made me continue to be such a big baseball fan is just the amount of analysis that can go into it.
I just have a lot of fun reading that sort of stuff which translates into a more enjoyable watch for me."
Ballparks are...all unique.
"I feel like all other stadiums for other sports are just the same. A football stadium is a football stadium. The uniqueness of all the baseball stadiums is just so crazy. You can go to Camden Yards and see they built the stadium into a weird neighborhood building. Or Fenway where all the seats are turned at an angle where you can't see what's really going on. New Busch stadium is really cool, I think it's a really fun environment."
How 'bout them Cubbies?
"There was an article the other day that said statistically the Cubs may have the greatest defense of all time. It's unbelievable. Which translates into why the pitching staff is as good as they are. It's a golden era to be a Cubs fan because you have a team doing this new age Renaissance of how to build a defense."
Favorite thing about baseball?
"It's the most comprehensive sport there is. The ways that you can analyze and talk about baseball and sort of engage with it is so different than any other sport."

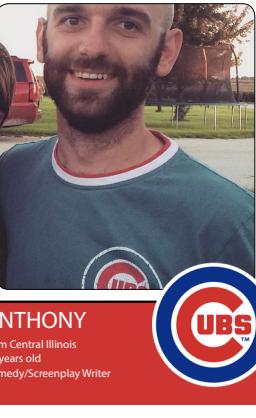
CROWD-GENERATED CONCEPTS

We took the insights developed from the research and presented it to a group of designers that were broken into groups and walked through the same activity. My team and I introduced the project and insights together, and then separated into the groups as facilitators of the workshop

explore concepts

concept generating matrix

How might we enhance the baseball experience...

with better content delivery of information about games, teams, and players?	with tangential experiences at stadiums?	when fans don't have access to baseball/ their team?	with baseball extracurriculars (e.g., intramural league, fantasy sports)?	with non-stadium viewing experiences?	by changing the way the game is played?
 <p>ROXANNE from Boston, MA 27 years old grad student in Chicago, IL</p> 					
 <p>ERICA from St. Louis, MO 26 years old Video Editor/Producer in Bozeman, MT</p> 					
 <p>ANTHONY from Central Illinois 26 years old Comedy/Screenplay Writer</p> 					

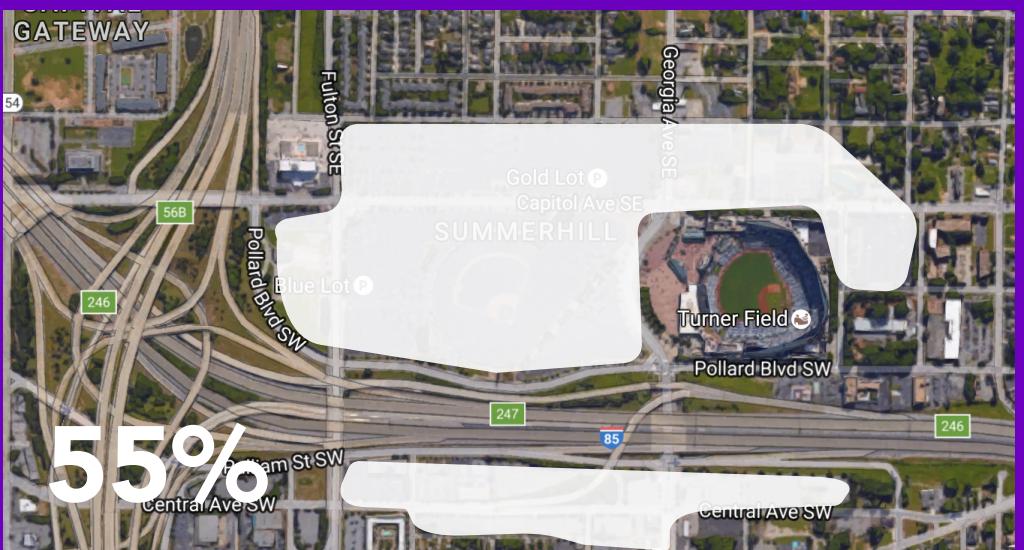
RESEARCH AGAIN...

STADIUM NEIGHBORHOODS

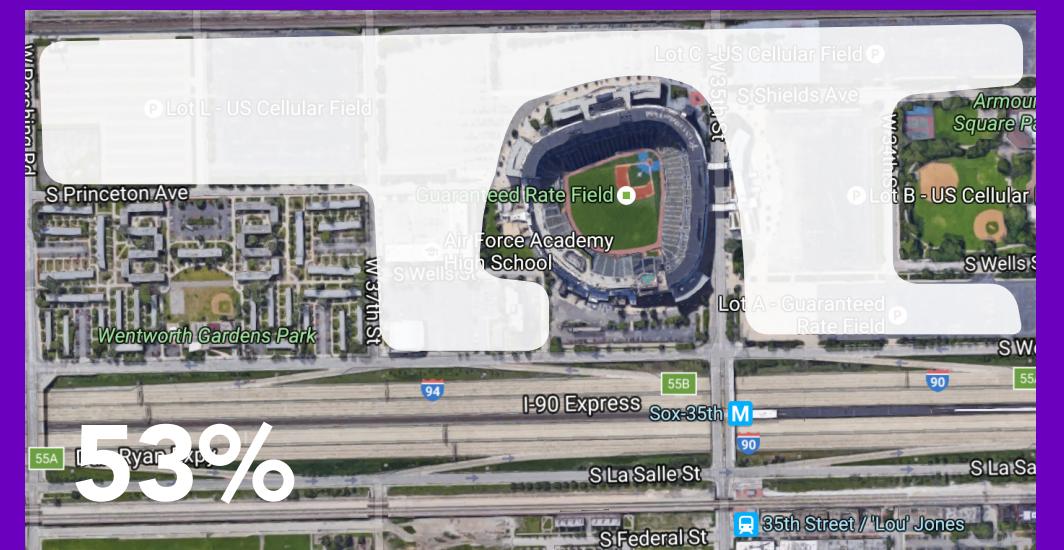
Stadiums like Coors Field and Wrigley Field are situated in lively and vibrant neighborhoods that encourage attendance through the sense of community and camaraderie they provide for fans. However, many team's stadiums are surrounded by parking lots and far from the exciting and compelling parts of their cities, with little reason to attract non-baseball fans.

under-established stadium neighborhoods

Ample parking lot space / underdeveloped or open space, shown to the right in white, surrounding the stadium [number shown in average game attendance]



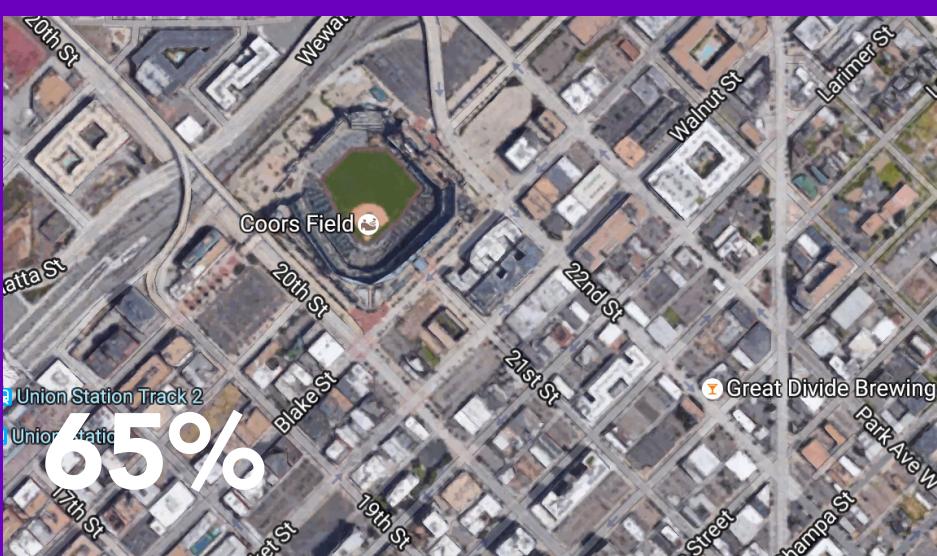
Turner Field
Atlanta Braves



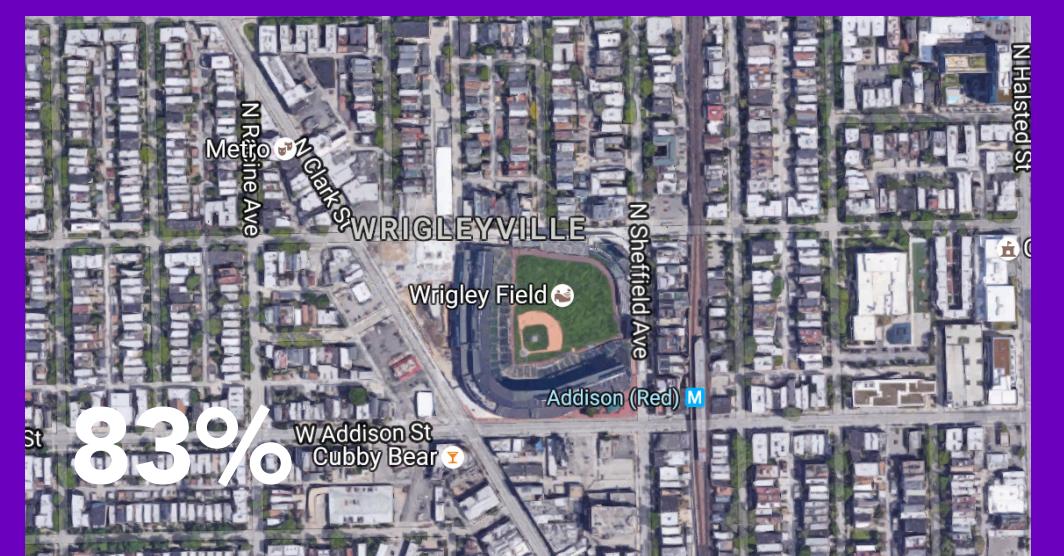
Guaranteed Rate Stadium
Chicago White Sox

well-established stadium neighborhoods

Stadiums with already established ballpark districts boast strong attendance, shown to the right in percentage of average game attendance

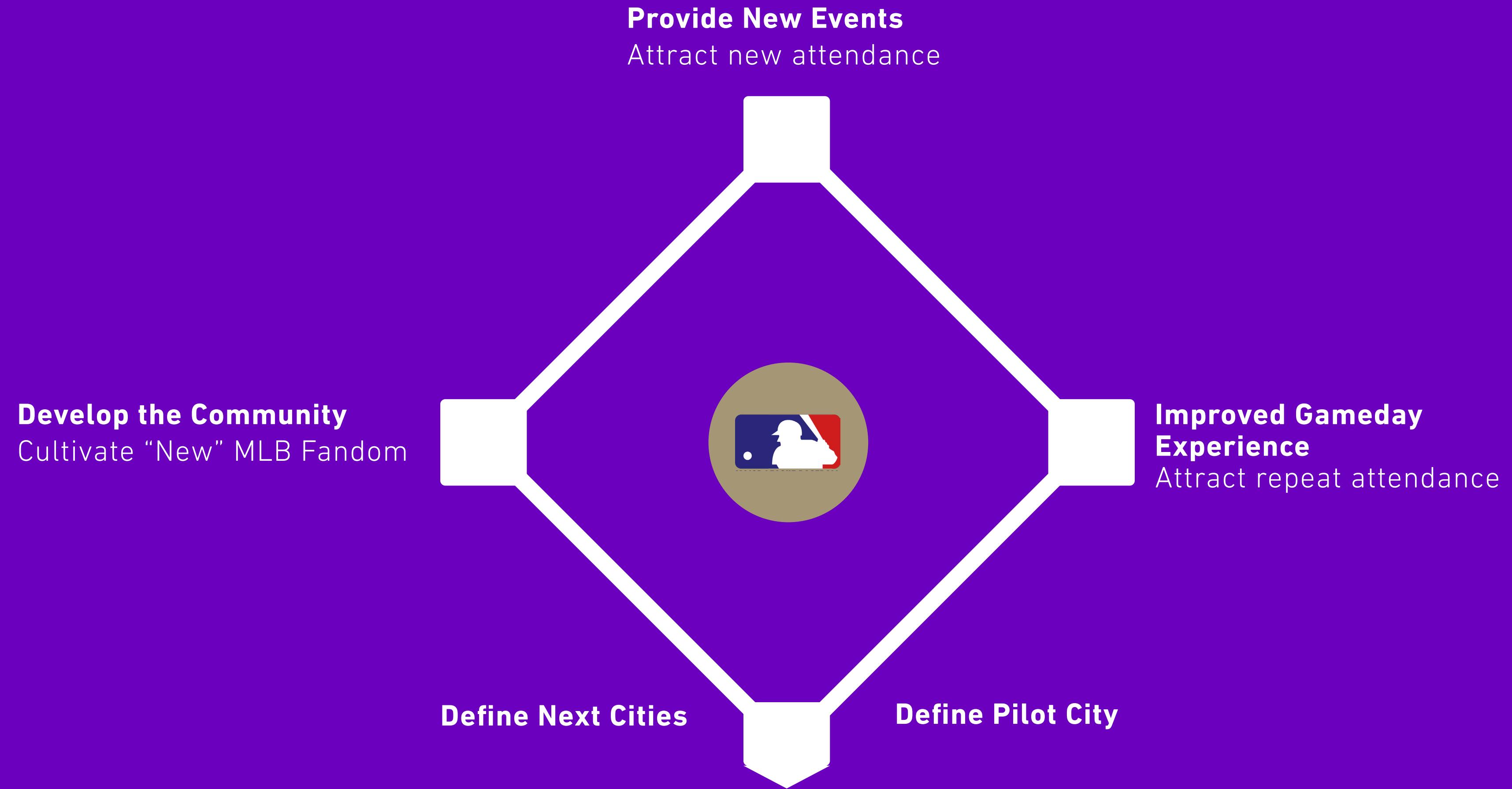


Coors Field
Colorado Rockies



Wrigley Field
Chicago Cubs

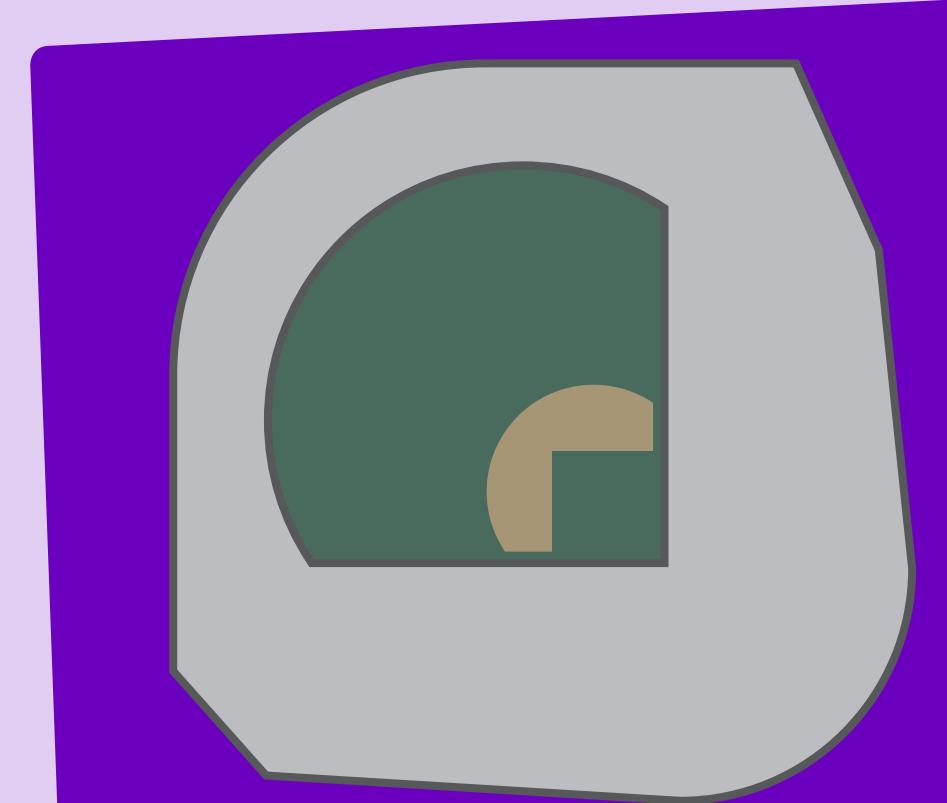
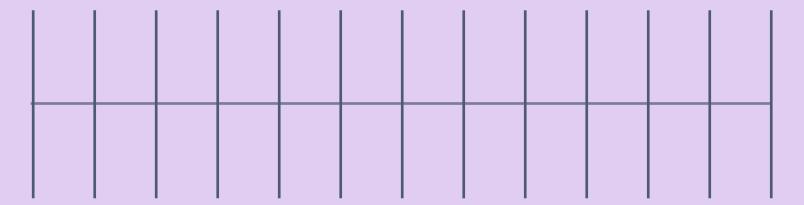
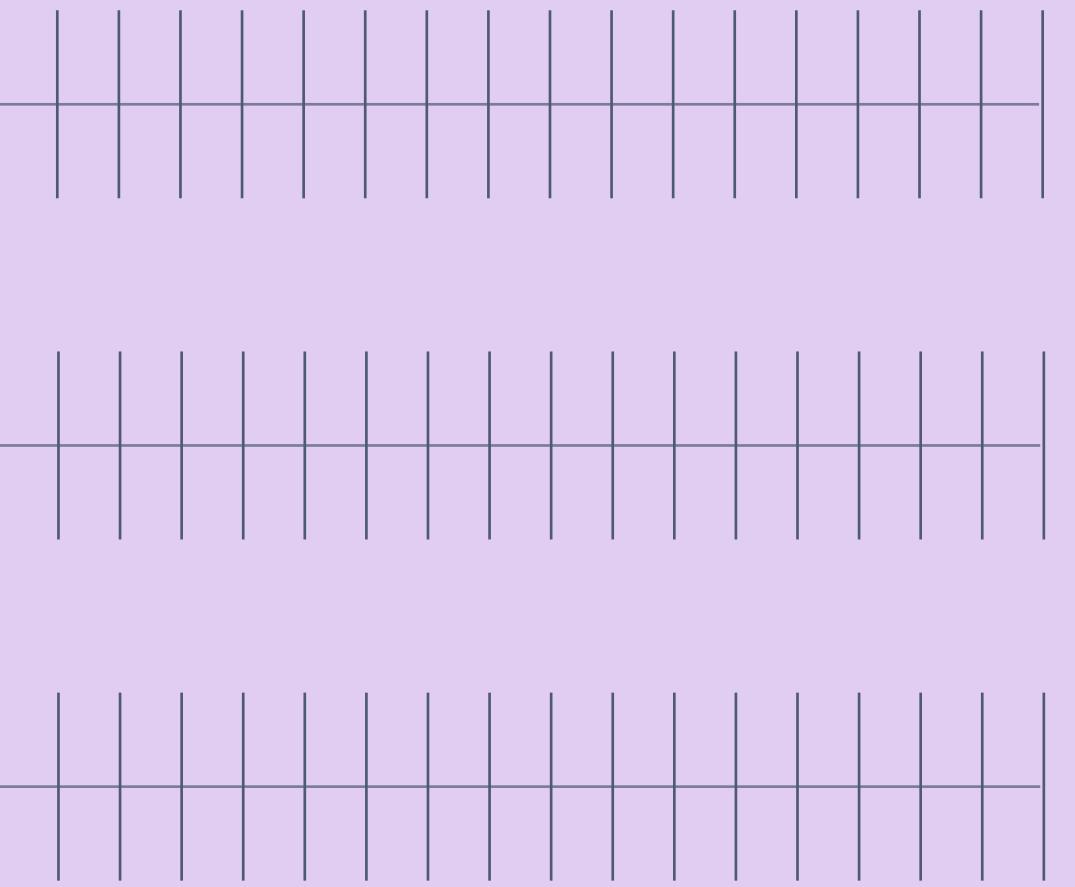
REALIZE OFFERING



DEFINE THE PILOT CITY

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

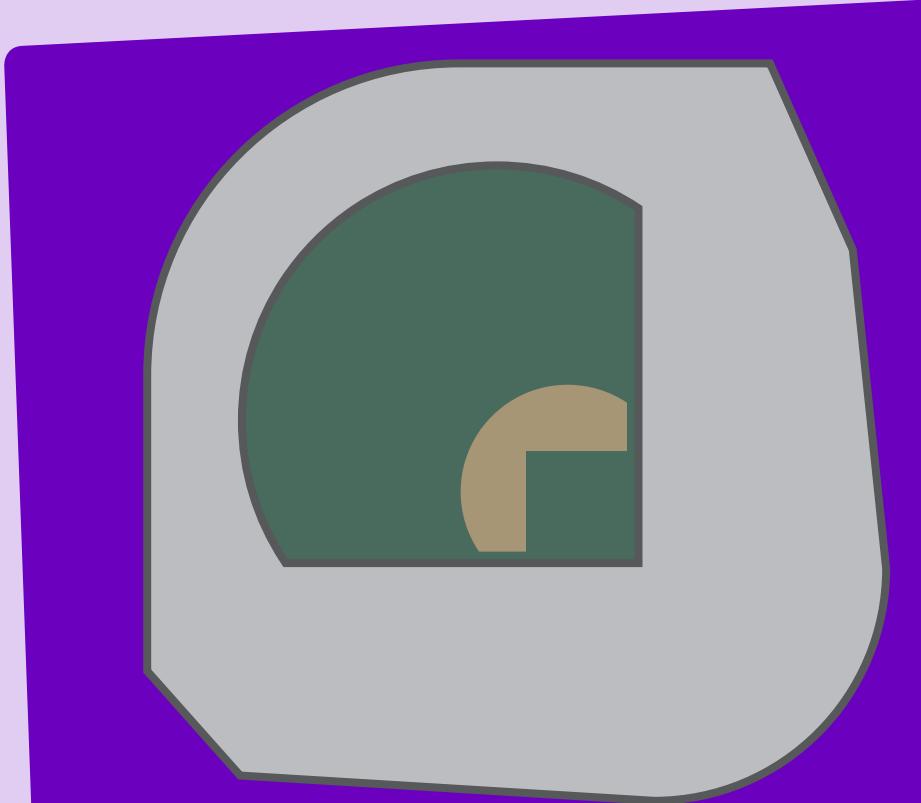
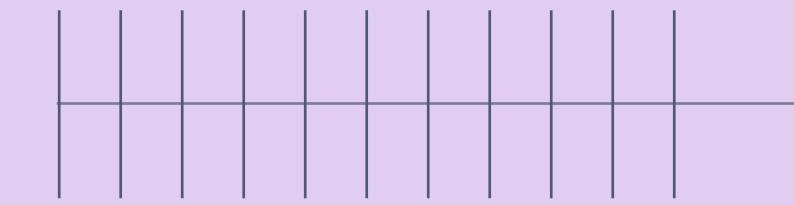
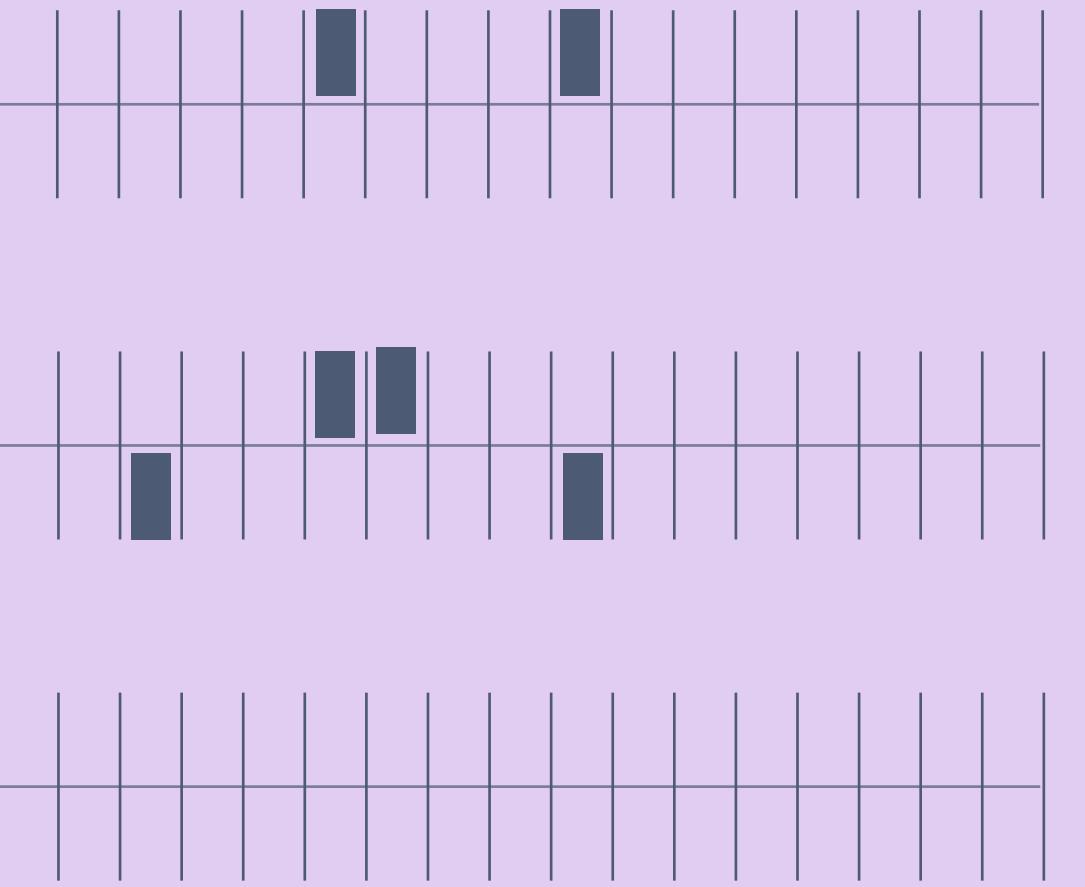
- Low attendance
- Underdeveloped surrounding neighborhood
- Lenient alcohol and development laws
- Mild annual climate



Turner Field
Atlanta Braves

IMPROVED GAMEDAY EXPERIENCE

Before any long-term revitalization takes place, this initiative encourages fans to gather in existing parking lots and open spaces. Temporary bars in parking lots and reduced parking rates for early birds will encourage tailgating, the first steps towards building the stadium and its surroundings as a destination and focal point for the community.



KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

Increased game attendance

Growth in outside game attendance

Boost in alcohol sales

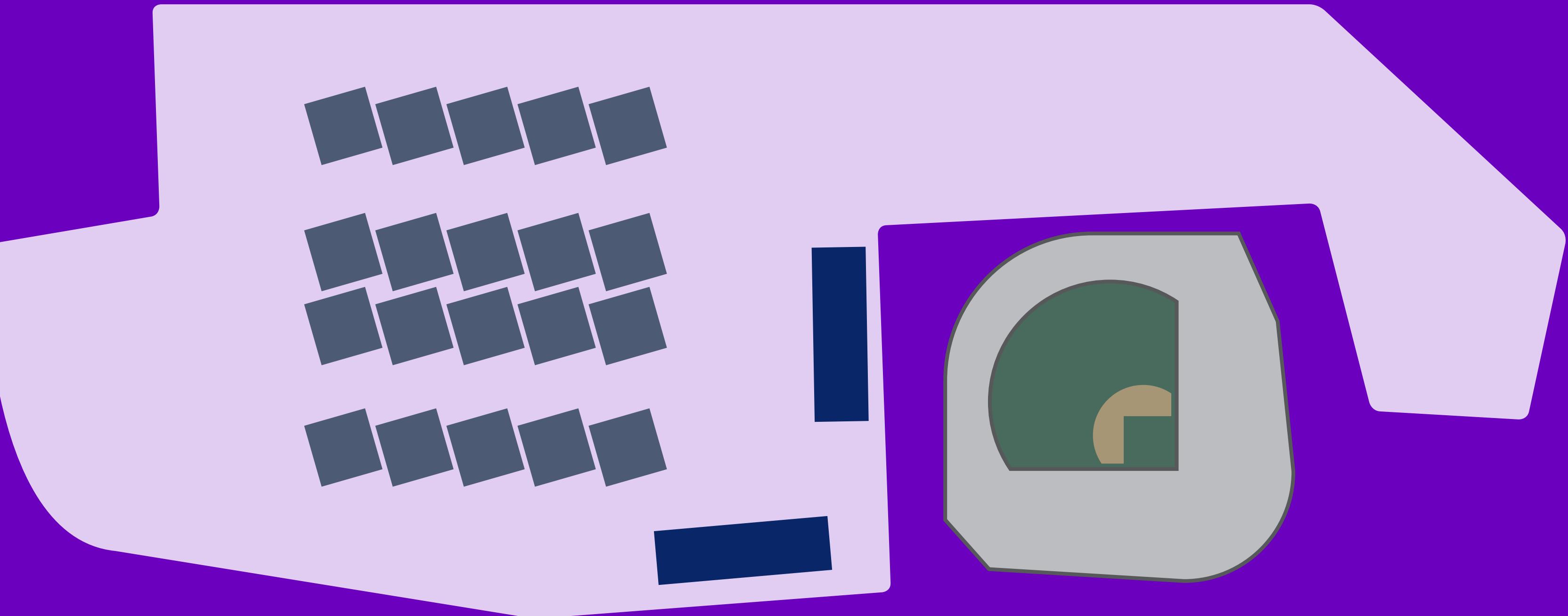
High mobile bar attendance

Turner Field
Atlanta Braves

PROVIDE NEW EVENTS

Though the MLB season is long, 81 home games a season will not sustain a ballpark district as a focal point of its city. This initiative will work with cities to create over 150 events annually, bringing fans to the area. Event options will scale as the neighborhood does, and include:

- concerts
- movie nights
- fairs
- viewing parties
- festivals
- youth baseball



KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

Event attender to game attender conversions

Growth in Event Attendance

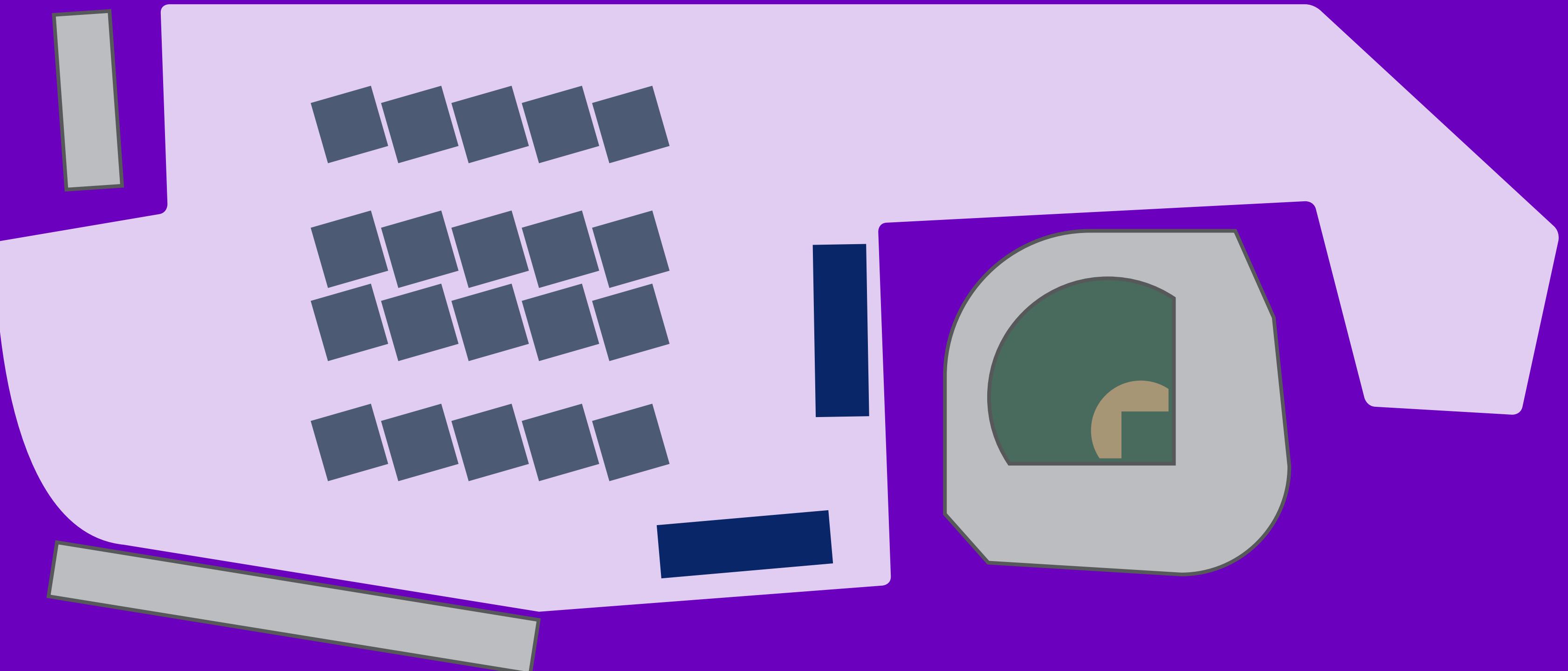
Off Season Employee Retention Rates

Turner Field
Atlanta Braves

DEVELOP THE COMMUNITY

Finally, MLB will work with cities and local businesses to encourage their presence in these ballpark districts as they develop.

- subsidized real estate development around the stadiums (or at edges of their parking lots, if necessary)
- partner with Dept of Transportation for stadiums with no nearby public transportation
- partnerships with local businesses for events from stage two, to encourage patronage



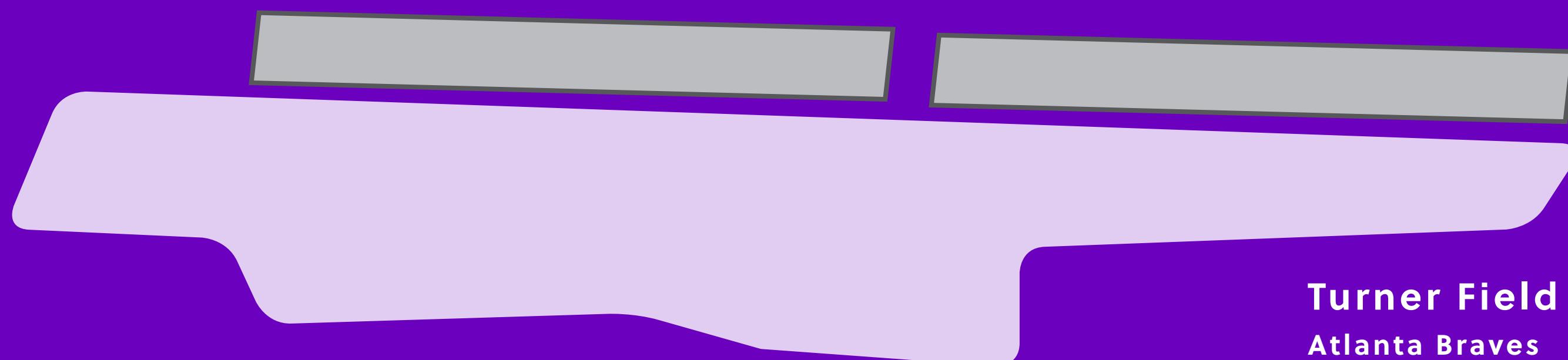
KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

Non-game day public transit trips

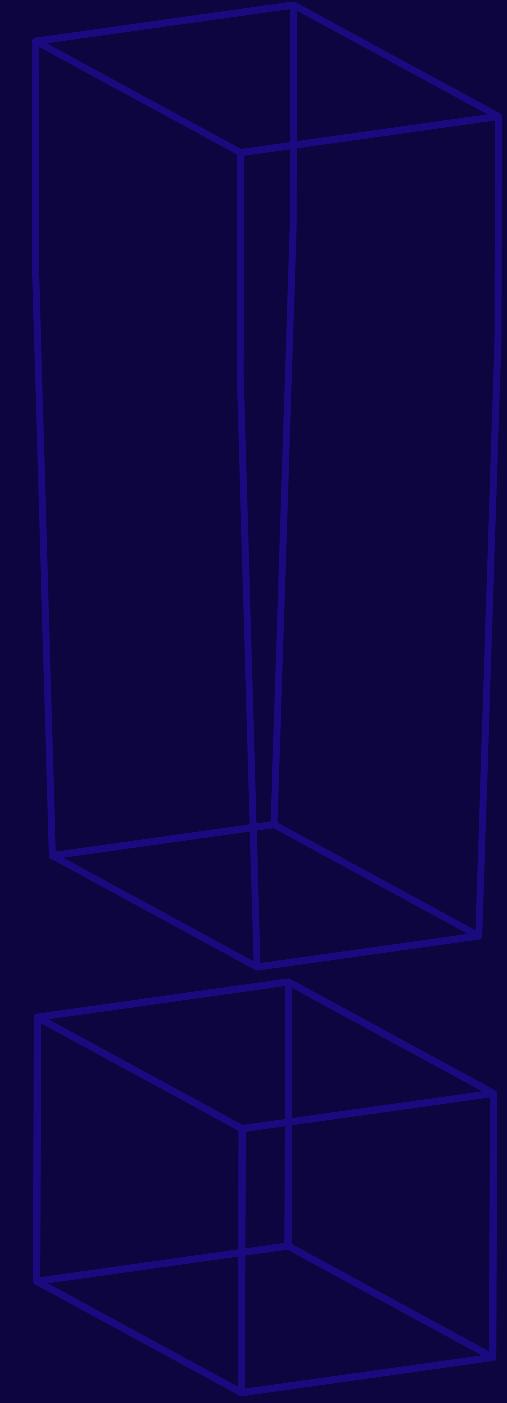
Non-MLB-subsidized growth

Increased demand for off season events

Profit from MLB owned real estate



Turner Field
Atlanta Braves



Thank you!