



Get the latest industry news and trends:



## The RFK Memorial Stadium Redevelopment Story: An Inspiration For Cities With Obsolete Sports Facilities



*Written by William Mykins*

Cities from Atlanta to Oakland are facing the same concern: What happens when your hometown sports facility becomes obsolete when the team relocates? For Washington, DC's Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium (RFK), that concern became a reality. But **Events DC**, the City's convention and sports authority, understood something key: These facilities can be immense opportunities, offering a chance to reenergize core urban

areas. In RFK's case, this thinking has led to one of the country's largest, most impactful urban redevelopments—a model and inspiration for other cities.

Long before RFK lost its last core tenant, Events DC undertook a comprehensive redevelopment planning process to identify the possibilities for a revitalized campus. **The approach was strategic, with B&D helping** shape an initial vision, gather data, engage the community and stakeholders, test the market and financial feasibility of potential offerings, identify funding and transaction structures, and develop an implementable master plan.

The resultant plan provides both short- and long-term visions. The primary focus now is on the **short-term plan** featuring Multipurpose Playing Fields, a Market Hall with concessions and groceries, a large Sports & Recreation Complex, Pedestrian Bridges connecting the campus to nearby areas, and a new Memorial to Robert F. Kennedy. The price tag: \$490M.

Funding and implementation strategies span the spectrum of privatization, from “self-develop” to “public-partnerships” with local and national public sector entities to “public-private partnerships” (P3s) with heavy private sector involvement. The Market Hall and Sports & Recreation Complex, for example, are good P3 candidates due to the equity investment and expertise necessary, and to their revenue generation potential. The Memorial will likely be funded through a not-for-profit entity. And the development of the Fields—

already underway—is being self-developed by Events DC and may contract out operations. In all cases, development approaches are tailored to the individual project, ensuring the best product at the best price.

The redevelopment is already being hailed for its creativity and neighborhood/city-wide advancement. It's intended to serve as a catalyst for the city and to provide job opportunities, youth programs, business development, tourism, and ample community benefits. It is estimated the short-term plan will generate 1,380 jobs during construction, 540 permanent jobs, and \$4.5M in annual tax revenues.

But think even bigger. While it may sound grandiose to suggest that a single redevelopment could affect a country or even the world, remember NYC's High Line, which proved just how impactful redevelopments can be. RFK might just be the next High Line. And after that? Perhaps your city's redevelopment.

---

## UMBC's Event Center Opens, Bringing New Life To Campus



Image Courtesy of CannonDesign

*Written by Bryan Slater*

Earlier this month, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) opened the doors to its new, 6,000-seat **Event Center**. It is the culmination of 6 years of strategic planning and represents a smart, successful project from start to finish—as well as a project whose multitude of benefits could not be captured with

empirical data alone.

UMBC set out to replace its aging Retriever Activities Center with a modern facility suitable for campus activities like athletics and commencement ceremonies, but also for outside events—trade shows, concerts, speeches, and graduations. In B&D's experience, these projects inevitably result in improved institutional stature and greater levels of community engagement; these two benefits, which are unquantifiable but undeniable in their value, will assist UMBC in pursuing today's most valuable higher education commodity—attracting high-quality student applicants.

B&D was originally retained as development advisor in tandem with CannonDesign as architect and, later, Barton Malow as contractor. Thanks to a healthy grant from the state of Maryland, which provided the bulk of the funding package, UMBC's primary question was whether or not the project could find a niche as an external-facing event venue. While the Baltimore–Washington market seemed saturated with venues, there was a clear opportunity for a project in the 5,000- to 6,000-seat range. Competitive venues were dated, cavernous, or lacked the amenities required to host external events. UMBC was also uniquely situated in the Baltimore–Washington corridor to serve both markets, providing the project with an enviable opportunity to serve two of the nation's 20 largest markets.

The 172,000 SF facility cost \$85M and features a practice gymnasium (a near necessity to pursue external event content), a sports medicine suite, multimedia spaces, meeting facilities, and the UMBC Athletics Hall of Fame. UMBC's president, Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, told the *Baltimore Sun*, "It's a new level in our evolving as a major research university. It represents our efforts to build community on the campus and off the campus to be a destination for people from the Baltimore-Washington corridor. And more important, it's taking athletics to the next level." Dr. Hrabowski's understanding of all the benefits associated with this project beyond just the quantifiable impacts was essential to its successful development by providing the political will to push a project that carries even more value in practice than it does on paper.



---

## What Has B&D Been Up To Recently?



B&D is currently in celebration mode! First, we announced our **expansion in Northern California**. Our work in this region will involve college campus and pro arenas/stadia as well as ballparks and convention/conference center projects. Second, we launched our **Higher Ed P3 Resource Center**; stay tuned for articles about on-campus venues and what the higher ed world can learn from the sports venues world. Finally, we kicked off our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations!

Another thing to celebrate: **DC's Entertainment and Sports Arena topped out**. We've been serving as the project's program manager, and look forward to the ribbon cutting this fall for this important project.

In the meanwhile, we're keeping busy. *Sports Business Journal* featured an **article by Bill Mykins and Bryan Slater** on the University of Houston's TDECU Stadium and the value of premium seating. Slater, a recent winner of our **Catalyst award**, also served on a panel at ALSD. **Kim Martin** presented on capacity analysis at Athletic Business Show 2017. **Andrew Lieber** served on the "Sport Event and Facilities Management" panel at SINC. Some of our experts are also fully engaged with the industry on social media; we hope you'll engage with them:

- Bryan Slater is on Twitter [@BryanDSlater](#)
- Kim Martin is on Twitter [@KimMartin\\_Rec](#)
- Andrew Lieber is on Twitter [@andrew\\_lieber](#)
- Bill Mykins is on [LinkedIn](#)

---

*B&D has three quarterly newsletters (Higher Education, K-12, and Venues). [Learn more.](#)*

For more information, contact Douglas Kotlove, Vice President for Business Development & Marketing, at (202) 266-3410 or [dkotlove@programmanagers.com](mailto:dkotlove@programmanagers.com)

Atlanta | Austin | Boston | Charlotte | Chicago | Columbus  
New York City | Northern California | Southern California | Washington, DC

**25 years**  
OF INSPIRING, EMPOWERING,  
AND ADVANCING COMMUNITIES