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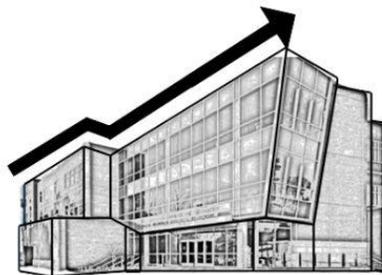
ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY OF A NEW PICKLEBALL FACILITY IN COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

Construction, Operations,
and Tourism Effects



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COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY
TURNER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY



The Butler Center for
Research and Economic
Development

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Economic Impact Study of a New Pickleball Facility in Columbus, Georgia: Construction, Operations, and Tourism Effects

Using input-output models, this study examines the economic impact of constructing and operating a 28-court pickleball facility in Columbus, GA. The research focuses on three primary components. First, it evaluates the economic impact generated by the construction phase of the facility, including expenditures related to the building of the courts, central gathering hub, restrooms, office, concessions, green space, parking, and perimeter fencing.

Second, it estimates the annual economic impact resulting from the facility's operations, including employee wages, maintenance costs, and operational expenditures. Third, it assesses the tourism expenditures associated with hosting pickleball tournaments and events, estimating their influence on the Columbus economy through visitor spending on accommodations, dining, retail, and entertainment. By integrating these components, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the facility's contribution to the economic growth and vitality of Columbus, GA.

Introduction

Despite its growing popularity and numerous benefits, Columbus, Georgia currently lacks dedicated public pickleball courts. As the second-largest city in Georgia, Columbus has a prime



opportunity to enhance the quality of life for its residents by meeting the growing demand for accessible pickleball facilities. With a community of over 500 pickleball players—many of whom travel an hour or more to play in other cities—the need for dedicated courts is evident. Existing options, such as temporary courts on tennis courts, private clubs, or shared gym and recreation center spaces, fall short of meeting this demand due to financial costs and scheduling limitations.

To address this gap, the Columbus Pickleball Association has developed a plan to construct a dedicated pickleball facility in Columbus, Georgia. This facility aims to provide accessible, high-quality courts that can accommodate the growing interest in the sport, benefiting both local players and the broader community.

In December 2022, DSA Sports LLC (DSA), based in Cincinnati, OH, published a comprehensive report for the Columbus Sports Council (CSC) as part of a collaborative agreement between the two organizations. The report aimed to assess Columbus area sports facilities and provide prioritized recommendations for improvements, with a particular focus on enhancing the city’s capacity to host sports events that attract overnight visitors.

As part of their assessment, DSA representatives conducted site visits to local sports venues alongside CSC members, engaging with key stakeholders to gather insights and identify potential areas for development. The ultimate goal of the assessment was to help CSC develop a targeted fundraising campaign, similar to the one that successfully led to significant improvements at the South Commons Softball Complex.



In the DSA-recommended priorities, particular attention was given to expanding public pickleball facilities. According to DSA, the Cooper Creek Tennis Center has limited space, accommodating only up to twelve pickleball courts, which is insufficient for hosting large-scale tournaments. DSA suggested exploring alternative locations, ideally in or near downtown Columbus, that could support at least 18 to 24 pickleball courts. Such a facility would not only provide more opportunities for public play but also enable Columbus to host larger tournaments, driving tourism and boosting local businesses.

DSA emphasized that pickleball is not a passing trend but a sport whose popularity continues to grow nationwide. While it initially gained traction among seniors, it now attracts players of all ages, including former tennis enthusiasts. Moreover, seniors' ability to travel year-round, unrestricted by school schedules, presents an opportunity to attract higher-spending visitors during off-peak seasons, thus increasing local revenue. The report highlighted the importance of both tennis and pickleball to the future of CSC and the broader community, emphasizing that increasing the number of courts would help meet growing demand and support long-term economic benefits through sports tourism.

This study estimates the economic impact of constructing and operating the proposed pickleball facility, focusing on its contributions to local employment, total economic output, the value added (GDP) of the Columbus economy, and the tax revenues generated at the local, state, and federal levels.



Data and Methodology

The data used in this analysis is based on the proposed pickleball facility to be constructed in Columbus, Georgia, situated between 2nd Avenue to the west, 3rd Avenue to the east, and 17th Street to the north. The total estimated construction cost of the facility is \$8 million, with projected average annual operating expenses of \$185,000 over the next five years. The facility will feature 28 courts in total—16 covered courts and 4 located underneath 2nd Avenue—offering ample space for both recreational and tournament play. Additionally, the facility will include a central gathering hub designed to foster social interaction, as well as essential amenities such as a check-in desk, restrooms, an office, and concessions. The design also incorporates green space, dedicated parking areas, and perimeter fencing, ensuring a secure and accessible environment for players and spectators alike. These data points form the foundation for estimating the facility’s economic impact during both the construction phase and ongoing operations.

This analysis employs the input-output IMPLAN model to estimate the economic impact of constructing and operating the proposed pickleball facility and its effect on the Columbus economy. The analysis is conducted using 2025 dollars and presents the results through various economic metrics. The estimated economic effects are reported in terms of: **1)** output (total sales, including changes in inventory); **2)** value added (contributions to gross domestic product); **3)** labor income (wages, salaries, and benefits paid to workers); and **4)** employment (total number of jobs created or supported).

Output represents the total production value or sales, including intermediary goods, employee compensation, and taxes on production and imports. Value added reflects the gross output (sales or receipts and other operating income, plus inventory changes) minus intermediate inputs (consumption of goods and services purchased from other industries or imported). Value

added is equivalent to the contribution to GDP. It comprises several components: Labor Income (LI), Proprietor Income (PI), Employee Compensation (EC), Other Property Income (OPI), and Taxes on Production and Imports (TOPI).

Employee Compensation (EC) refers to the total remuneration paid to employees in return for their work on domestic production. It includes wages and salaries—such as commissions, tips, bonuses, voluntary employee contributions to deferred compensation plans like 401(k)s, stock option gains, and in-kind income—and supplements, which consist of employer contributions for employee pension and insurance funds as well as government social insurance.

Labor Income (LI) is the sum of Employee Compensation and Proprietor Income, encompassing wages, salaries, benefits like health and retirement, payroll taxes (e.g., Social Security and unemployment insurance taxes), and income earned by self-employed individuals and unincorporated business owners.

Proprietor Income (PI) represents the current-production income of sole proprietorships, partnerships, and tax-exempt cooperatives, excluding dividends, monetary interest received by non-financial businesses, and rental income earned by individuals not primarily engaged in real estate. Proprietor income can be negative if proprietors experience business losses.

Other Property Income (OPI) is calculated as gross operating surplus minus proprietor income and includes consumption of fixed capital, corporate profits, and business current transfer payments (net). A negative OPI indicates that an industry spent more than it earned in revenue (i.e., operated at a deficit) during that year. Note that TOPI excludes taxes such as social insurance taxes, which are part of EC, and profit taxes, which fall under OPI.

Taxes on Production and Imports Net of Subsidies (TOPI) include sales and excise taxes, customs duties, property taxes, motor vehicle licenses, severance taxes, and special assessments. For all industries other than government enterprises, subsidies count as a negative value within TOPI, meaning they reduce the taxes paid. As a result, TOPI can be negative if subsidies exceed taxes paid.

The analysis uses these metrics to estimate the economic impacts associated with all spending categories. The IMPLAN model captures three types of effects:

- **Direct Effects:** The initial economic changes resulting from the project's expenditures.
- **Indirect Effects:** The economic effects stemming from business-to-business purchases within the local supply chain, including purchases made by directly impacted industries and their suppliers.
- **Induced Effects:** The economic effects generated by household spending of labor income, after deducting taxes, savings, and commuter income. These effects arise when employees of directly and indirectly affected businesses spend their earnings within the local economy.

The multipliers used in this analysis incorporate key economic factors such as Social Security contributions, income tax leakage, household savings, government transfers, and the effects of commuting. These adjustments ensure that the model accurately captures the flow of money within and outside the local economy, reflecting the true economic impact of the project.

The model also utilizes purchase coefficients to estimate the ratio of locally purchased goods and services to those imported from outside the Columbus area. A purchase coefficient represents the proportion of total demand for a specific commodity that is met by local suppliers. These coefficients are derived from the model's default estimates, which are based on regional economic data. Additionally, the coefficients are adjusted using an econometric equation that accounts for the unique characteristics of the Columbus economy, ensuring that the analysis accurately reflects local supply chain dynamics and consumption patterns.

Results and Discussion

Economic Impact of Facility Construction

The construction of the facility is expected to cost \$8 million, directly creating 45 jobs, with an additional 18 jobs generated through indirect and induced effects, bringing the total employment impact to 63 jobs. The total labor income generated by the project is estimated at over \$3 million. In terms of economic output, construction is expected to contribute \$11.3 million to the local economy, including a value-added impact (equivalent to GDP) of \$5.4 million. The difference between total output and value added is due to economic leakage, as some intermediate goods and services required for construction will be sourced from outside Columbus.

Table 1 summarizes the economic impact of the facility's construction, breaking it down into direct, indirect, and induced effects. Direct impacts include the initial 45 jobs created and \$8 million in construction spending. Indirect effects capture the ripple effects on suppliers and related industries, generating an additional 9 jobs and nearly \$1 million in added value. Induced effects

reflect increased household spending by workers, contributing another 9 jobs and over \$790,000 in value added to the economy. Together, these effects highlight the broader economic benefits of the project generated by the direct construction phase.

Table 1. Economic Impact of the Facility Construction

	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct	45	\$2,136,288	\$3,621,992	\$8,000,000
Indirect	9	\$505,441	\$977,567	\$1,998,674
Induced	9	\$378,073	\$790,871	\$1,344,653
Total	63	\$3,019,802	\$5,390,430	\$11,343,327

Annual Economic Impact of Facility Operation

Beyond the construction phase, the facility's yearly operations will continue to generate economic benefits for the Columbus economy. The ongoing operation of the pickleball facility is projected to directly support six jobs, with an additional two jobs created through indirect and induced effects, bringing the total employment impact to eight jobs per year.

The pickleball facility is expected to hire a director and part-time staff. Over the next five years, the average annual wage for these positions is projected to be \$185,000. Additionally, maintenance and supply expenses are estimated to average \$97,000 per year over the same period. These wages and expenditures will contribute to economic activity by supporting employment, generating local business revenue, and stimulating additional spending in the community.



The total labor income generated by the facility's operations is expected to support the equivalent of eight full-time jobs, amounting to \$266,273 in annual labor income. Additionally, the facility is projected to contribute to a total economic output of \$775,000 per year. Of this, \$436,556 represents value added to the local economy, equivalent to the facility's direct contribution to Columbus' GDP. As with the construction phase, the difference between total output and value added reflects leakage, as some operational expenses will be spent outside the local area.

Table 2 outlines these economic impacts, breaking them down into direct, indirect, and induced effects. Direct impacts stem from facility staff, management, and operational expenses, while indirect effects result from spending on goods and services needed to run the facility, such as maintenance and supplies. Induced effects capture the broader economic activity generated by employee wages as they are spent within the community.

These estimates highlight the facility's long-term contributions beyond its initial construction, ensuring sustained economic activity through both employment and business transactions in the Columbus area.

Table2. Annual Economic Impact of Facility Operations



	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct	6	\$185,386	\$275,486	\$454,078
Indirect	1	\$48,896	\$94,131	\$207,146
Induced	1	\$31,991	\$66,939	\$113,777
Total	8	\$266,273	\$436,556	\$775,001

Annual Economic Impact of Tourism from Tournaments

The facility’s economic impact extends beyond daily operations, as it is expected to generate additional revenue through tourism-driven spending associated with hosting pickleball tournaments. These figures reflect the impact of outside visitors—players and spectators traveling to Columbus specifically for these events—and do not include local spending, which has already been accounted for in other calculations.

The facility is projected to host two tournaments per year, each attracting approximately 400 players and visitors. The influx of non-local participants will drive spending in key sectors such as hotels, restaurants, retail, and local transportation, contributing significantly to the Columbus economy.

Tournament-related tourism is expected to directly support three full-time jobs, with additional employment created through indirect and induced effects. The total labor income generated by these events is estimated at approximately \$109,000, with an overall economic

output of \$402,000 annually. Of this, about \$215,000 represents value added to the Columbus economy, reflecting the direct contribution to local GDP.

The direct impact includes spending on tournament registration fees, lodging, dining, and transportation by out-of-town visitors. Indirect effects stem from increased business for local suppliers and service providers that support the tourism sector, while induced effects capture the ripple effect of employees spending their wages in the local economy.

By attracting visitors from outside the area, these tournaments will provide a recurring economic boost to Columbus, reinforcing its position as a destination for sports tourism and further justifying investment in dedicated pickleball facilities.

Table 3. Annual Economic Impact of Tournaments (Tourism-Driven)

	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct	3	\$69,753	\$142,510	\$266,516
Indirect	1	\$25,862	\$45,414	\$89,090
Induced	0	\$13,027	\$27,255	\$46,330
Total	4	\$108,641	\$215,180	\$401,936



Taxes

Tax Impact of Construction

The construction of the pickleball facility is projected to generate nearly \$1 million in total tax revenue (\$986,266) across different levels of government. The local tax impact, which includes county taxes and sub-county taxes (general and special districts), accounts for \$141,565 in revenue. Meanwhile, the state tax impact is estimated at \$169,572, and the federal tax impact is the largest share at \$675,129.

- Direct tax impacts from construction activities contribute \$590,289 in total taxes, with \$37,586 going to local taxes, \$83,873 to the state, and \$468,830 to the federal government.
- Indirect tax impacts arise from business-to-business transactions and supply chain activities, generating \$224,050 in total tax revenue, with \$58,892 in local taxes, \$48,353 in state taxes, and \$116,805 in federal taxes.
- Induced tax impacts, which result from employee spending within the local economy, contribute \$171,927 in total tax revenue, with \$45,087 in local taxes, \$37,346 in state taxes, and \$89,493 in federal taxes.

Overall, the federal government receives the largest portion of tax revenue (over 68%), while local and state governments together account for approximately 32% of the total tax impact. These tax revenues will support public services, infrastructure, and other community initiatives in Columbus.

Table 4. Tax Impact of Construction

	Local	State	Federal	Total
Direct	\$37,586	\$83,873	\$468,830	\$590,289
Indirect	\$58,892	\$48,353	\$116,805	\$224,050
Induced	\$45,087	\$37,346	\$89,493	\$171,927
Total	\$141,565	\$169,572	\$675,129	\$986,266

Annual Tax Impact of Operation

The tax impact of the facility’s yearly operations reflects the ongoing fiscal contributions generated by its activities. As shown in Table 5, the total tax revenue from operations is estimated at approximately \$109,000 annually, with distributions across local, state, and federal levels.

Local tax revenues, which include both sub-county and county taxes, amount to around \$28,200 per year. These local contributions help fund essential services and infrastructure within Columbus. At the state level, the project is expected to generate about \$22,800 in tax revenue annually. Additionally, federal tax contributions account for approximately \$58,000 per year, representing the largest share of total tax revenues.

These figures highlight the ongoing fiscal benefits of the facility beyond its initial construction. As operations continue, the facility will provide a steady stream of tax revenue that supports local and state government services, further enhancing its economic impact on the Columbus area.



Tax Impact of Annual Operations

Table 5. Tax Impact of Annual Operations

	Local	State	Federal	Total
Direct	\$20,882	\$16,134	\$39,234	\$76,250
Indirect	\$3,490	\$3,455	\$11,219	\$18,163
Induced	\$3,819	\$3,162	\$7,574	\$14,555
Total	\$28,189	\$22,751	\$58,027	\$108,967

Annual Tax Impact of Tourism from Tournaments

The dedicated pickleball facility in Columbus is expected to attract two major tournaments per year, bringing approximately 400 players and visitors per event. The spending by these outside visitors generates additional tax revenue for the local, state, and federal governments. Table 6 presents the estimated annual tax impact from tournament-related tourism.

The total tax revenue generated from these tournaments is projected to be \$56,573 per year. Local tax revenue, which includes sub-county and county taxes, is estimated at \$18,161 annually. This revenue contributes to public services, infrastructure, and community development in Columbus. State tax revenue is estimated at \$13,407, supporting broader state-level initiatives, while federal tax revenue is projected at \$25,007.

Breaking down the tax impact, direct tax contributions from tournament-related spending make up the largest portion, generating \$41,639 in total tax revenue. Indirect and induced effects, which account for additional economic activity and spending by businesses and households benefiting from tourism, contribute an additional \$14,934 to tax revenues.

This demonstrates that beyond boosting local businesses and employment, tournaments at the new facility will provide a steady stream of tax revenue, further benefiting the local and state economy.

Table 6. Annual Tax Impact of Tournaments (Tourism-Driven)

	Local	State	Federal	Total
Direct	\$14,997	\$10,485	\$16,156	\$41,639
Indirect	\$1,608	\$1,634	\$5,767	\$9,008
Induced	\$1,555	\$1,287	\$3,084	\$5,926
Total	\$18,161	\$13,407	\$25,007	\$56,573



Total Economic and Tax Impact

Economic Impact of Construction

The construction of the pickleball facility is expected to generate significant economic activity in Columbus. The total economic impact, including direct, indirect, and induced effects, is estimated at **\$11.3 million in output**, contributing **\$5.4 million in value added (equivalent to GDP)** and supporting **63 total jobs**. This impact includes **\$3 million in labor income**, benefiting workers in construction and related industries. The difference between output and value added is due to intermediate goods and services sourced from outside Columbus.

Tax Impact of Construction

The tax revenue generated from the construction phase is also substantial. The project is expected to contribute **\$986,266 in total tax revenue**, with **\$141,565 allocated to local (county and sub-county) taxes**, **\$169,572 to state taxes**, and **\$675,129 to federal taxes**. These revenues will help support public infrastructure and community services.

Annual Economic Impact of Operations and Tourism

The yearly operations of the facility, combined with the economic activity from tournaments, will provide **an ongoing economic boost to Columbus**. The annual economic impact from both facility operations and tournaments is estimated at:

- **Employment: 12 total jobs**
- **Labor Income: \$374,915**
- **Value Added (GDP Contribution): \$651,735**
- **Total Output: \$1,176,937**

This annual impact reflects the combined effect of facility operations and tourism-driven spending from two tournaments per year, each attracting **400 players and visitors**. The direct economic activity from facility operations supports employment and business growth, while tournaments bring in external spending that further stimulates the local economy.

Annual Tax Impact from Operations and Tourism

The combined annual tax impact generated by the facility's operations and tournaments is estimated at **\$165,540** across local, state, and federal levels.

- **Local Taxes (Sub County and County):** The facility operations and tournaments are projected to contribute **\$46,350** in total local tax revenue annually. This includes **\$28,189** from operations and **\$18,161** from tourism-related tournaments.

- **State Taxes:** The combined annual contribution to state taxes is **\$36,158**, with **\$22,751** generated from facility operations and **\$13,407** from tournaments.
- **Federal Taxes:** Federal tax revenue accounts for the largest share, with an estimated **\$83,034** generated annually—**\$58,027** from operations and **\$25,007** from tournaments.

These tax revenues highlight the fiscal benefits the facility will bring to the local and state governments, with a notable portion coming from tourism-related spending. The impact of tournaments alone underscores the significance of attracting out-of-town visitors, contributing to both local business activity and tax generation.

Conclusion

The construction and operation of the pickleball facility will have a lasting positive economic impact on Columbus, reinforcing both short-term and long-term economic growth. The initial investment in construction will **generate \$11.3 million in total economic output**, contributing **\$5.4 million in value added (equivalent to GDP)**, **\$3 million in labor income**, and supporting **63 jobs** across direct, indirect, and induced employment. Additionally, the project will contribute **\$986,000 in total tax revenue**, with **\$142,000 allocated to local taxes**, **\$170,000 to state taxes**, and **\$675,000 to federal taxes**. These revenues will help support public infrastructure, essential services, and economic development initiatives.

Beyond the construction phase, the facility’s ongoing operations and the tourism it attracts will provide sustained economic benefits. Each year, the facility is expected to **generate \$1.18**

million in total economic output, contributing **\$652,000 in value added (GDP)**, **\$375,000 in labor income**, and supporting **12 permanent jobs**. This ongoing impact reflects not only the direct operations of the facility but also the influx of visitors attending two major tournaments per year, each attracting **400 players and spectators**. The spending from these visitors will boost local businesses, particularly in hospitality, retail, and food services, further amplifying Columbus's economic growth.

The facility will also generate recurring tax revenues, contributing **\$166,000 annually** across all levels of government. This includes **\$46,000 in local taxes**, **\$36,000 in state taxes**, and **\$83,000 in federal taxes**, ensuring continued financial support for public services and infrastructure improvements.

Furthermore, the presence of a high-quality sports facility will enhance Columbus's reputation as a destination for recreational and competitive events, potentially attracting more sports tourism opportunities in the future. Beyond its economic contributions, the facility will offer social benefits by promoting active lifestyles, strengthening community engagement, and fostering local sports development. Overall, the pickleball facility is more than just a recreational asset—it is an economic catalyst that will support local businesses, generate jobs, increase tax revenues, and improve the overall quality of life for Columbus residents.

Sincerely,



Dr. Fady Mansour
Director of the Butler Center

