# MLB STADIUM MODERNIZATION: IS THERE A BETTER WAY?
# PART 2: NFL HISTORY & ITS EVOLVING APPROACH ©

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The first installment of this series described the pursuits of eight MLB clubs to build a new ballpark or upgrade an existing one and the challenges they faced in obtaining public financing. In each situation Commissioner Rob Manfred's involvement was chronicled. The searches of the A's and Rays for a new stadium preceded Manfred's tenure by nearly a decade. His predecessor Bud Selig's approach appeared to be different – less individualized and more global. Selig publicly raised the prospect of "contraction" of multiple teams with substandard attendance. New facilities seemed to largely resolve his concerns, but ultimately the League did acquire the Montreal Expos, move them to Washington DC and then sell the franchise to a new ownership group. While it was clear that organization was floundering, smaller market clubs took note of the precedent. After Manfred became Commissioner in 2015 he had numerous matters to tend to, but early on he displayed a more hands-on manner through his tours of MLB ballparks. Once a new CBA was finalized he assumed an increasingly visible and vocal position with respect to those markets in need of a new venue where taxpayer support was sought. That public approach continues to this day.

In addition, the first part described MLB's facility financing program. That is relatively new with minimal detail publicly available. Nevertheless, there is room for optimism this effort over time will result in alleviating funding issues.

<u>Introduction - NFL</u>

As a different league in another sport, with similar but not identical markets, it should not be surprising that the National Football League's approach to stadiums is distinct from MLB's. But historical events largely explain how the League got to where it is today.

The AFL-NFL merger went into effect in 1970. That combination increased the number of NFL teams by ten, for a total of twenty-six. Half of the clubs were playing in newer buildings built in the 1960s, or would move into a new facility by the first half of the 1970s. As was becoming a trend, these venues were often "multi-purpose" stadiums which also hosted MLB teams. By the early 1980s three additional franchises moved into new structures (the Vikings, Giants and Jets). Yet, at that time about one-third of NFL organizations continued to play in an older building. As explained below, this led to instability in the League.

The NFL in the 1970s experienced relative stability after the prior decade's upheaval from competition with the AFL and then implementation of the merger. The League even added new franchises in Seattle and Tampa. There were no team relocations, an event the NFL had not experienced since 1960 when the Cardinals moved from Chicago to St. Louis. This is in contrast with MLB, where from the late 1950s through 1972 that league endured seven (including moves by two different Washington organizations and the Pilots' bankruptcy after one season and exit from Seattle to Milwaukee). This relative calm in pro football would soon end.

Relocations by Colts, Raiders, Cardinals

As the NFL entered the 1980s the status of the Raiders, Colts and Cardinals became front and center. As each team's owner agitated for a new building or substantial improvements to an existing facility – at public expense - other cities without an NFL franchise were "on the prowl." At the forefront were Phoenix, Indianapolis, Jacksonville and Los Angeles (the Rams had moved to Anaheim in Orange County in the late 70s). The Colts shared Baltimore's aging Memorial Stadium with the Orioles. Those two organizations enjoyed tremendous success on the field through the early 1970s in their respective sports (for the Orioles, that continued for another decade). Similarly, the Raiders were co-tenants at the Oakland Coliseum with the A's, and both were perennial championship caliber organizations (the A's won three consecutive World Series in 1972-74). That city's venue opened in 1966, a decade and a half after Baltimore's Memorial Stadium. The NFL Cardinals also played in the same building as their namesake MLB team. That structure opened around the same time as Oakland's. In contrast to the winning NFL pedigree of Baltimore and Oakland, the football Cardinals had not won a playoff game since their 1947 title, well before moving to St. Louis. On the other hand, the MLB Cardinals had a storied history in St. Louis and were warmly embraced by their hometown. During the 1980s these three NFL markets would lose their team to a new city.

While a common thread among these clubs was a shared stadium, other NFL franchises had a similar co-tenancy with an MLB team, in some cases in an even older venue. Why were these three organizations more receptive targets for a move? Ownership certainly was a factor. The Raiders' owner Al Davis was mercurial, to say the least. Davis seemed to thrive on conflict, particularly with the NFL and Commissioner Pete Rozelle. Like the owners of the two other clubs, he was not a native of his team's hometown. Davis was born and raised on the East Coast, and did not arrive in Oakland until 1963 after a stint with the AFL Chargers. Soon thereafter he gained control of the Raiders and they became one of the dominant clubs in pro football. Their strong following was evidenced by consistent sellouts every season. Yet, Davis was not happy with the Coliseum and his complaints increased over time. In 1980 he announced the team was moving to Southern California to play in the Los Angeles Coliseum, built in 1923. The Raiders decided to move with the promise of improvements to that older facility, which the Rams had just abandoned for Anaheim. It became clear Davis' long term objective was to play in a new venue in that market, as evidenced by his later negotiations for construction of a stadium in Inglewood. In any event, after the Raiders' announcement of their intended move the NFL owners voted to block them. Davis responded by suing the League (technically he joined a pending suit brought by the LA Coliseum), and he eventually prevailed. That litigation and its repercussions for the rest of the NFL are described below.

Robert Irsay acquired the Colts in 1972, right after the team won its first Super Bowl. The franchise had enjoyed sustained success since the 1950s under the ownership of Carroll Rosenbloom, a Baltimore native. Irsay had no background in the NFL or connection with his new city. He was a lifelong Midwesterner who had built a successful sheet metal business in Chicago. Between the gradual decline in the Colts' performance after he acquired the club and his volatile personality, the "outsider" Irsay became increasingly unpopular in Baltimore. Further, Memorial Stadium – one of the oldest venues in the NFL – was deteriorating and attendance was in decline by the late 1970s. The team entered into discussions with the State of Maryland about funding for a new venue. The losing and unpopularity of the owner, coupled with local fiscal and economic challenges, meant that gaining taxpayer support would be a tall task. But Irsay saw other options. For instance, during this time the city of Jacksonville began courting the Colts about a move to the Gator Bowl (with promised upgrades). Over the next three to four seasons, on again, off again negotiations with Maryland officials continued, but they ultimately failed. By 1984 a Colts move to Indianapolis appeared imminent and the State reacted by initiating legal action to stop them. Irsay plotted a quick escape - the team made their infamous, overnight "Mayflower exit" from Baltimore. Right before their departure the city of Phoenix made a last ditch attempt to steer the franchises their way. But the full court press of Indianapolis, with its newly completed domed stadium, clinched it for the Irsay.

The story behind the Cardinals' move to Arizona in the late 1980s was less a matter of an owner's personality and more their building's condition, coupled with the effects of greater civic loyalty towards St. Louis' beloved MLB team. After the Bidwell family moved the NFL Cardinals from Chicago in 1960, there were delays in constructing a promised new home to be shared with the MLB Cardinals. After a new venue finally opened in 1966, it became a bone of contention with the football club that structure had more of a "baseball design. Yet, the two teams peacefully co-existed there until the beginning of the 1980s. At that time the MLB Cardinals' owner, St. Louis-based Anheuser Busch, obtained control of the facility. The NFL club viewed its new status as being relegated to a tenant of the local, popular baseball team's home. Owner Bill Bidwell also complained about the revenue opportunities their MLB counterparts had which his organization did not. He also expressed concerns with Busch Stadium's seating capacity (50,000), below average in the NFL. In that context, Phoenix remained determined to land a franchise after its failed attempt to lure the Colts. Sensing an opportunity, a full court recruiting process of the Cardinals ensued. Eventually in 1988 the club agreed to move to Arizona after obtaining NFL approval. Ironically, their new home in Phoenix was an existing structure of a college team built a decade and a half before Busch Stadium.

## Al Davis versus the NFL

Of these three moves, the Raiders was the most monumental. When Al Davis announced the Raiders were moving to Los Angeles the other NFL owners voted against him. The renegade owner's subsequent litigation against the NFL alleged the ban was an illegal restraint of trade in violation of federal antitrust law. Subsequently at a trial in Los Angeles a jury reached a verdict in favor of Davis and his claims, awarding damages of $49 million. The League appealed and the decision was upheld. Victory in the courtroom meant Davis could finally relocate his franchise. And by the way, while in court the Raiders continued to dominate on the football field as well.

The Colts were a beneficiary of this legal turmoil. Their exit from Baltimore was in process while the Raiders' litigation was proceeding and the timing could not have been better. The NFL owners decided not to block the Colts' move to Indianapolis given this pending antitrust suit.

## Rule 4.3

Directly at issue in the Raiders' litigation was the NFL's Rule 4.3, which required a vote of three-fourths of the League's owners in favor of a relocation. While the Court did find the Rule as applied in that case was an unreasonable restraint on trade, the outcome did not preclude the NFL from adopting a better approval process under the Rule. In fact, the Appellate Court cited various criteria which might be applied by the League including population, regional balance, economic projections and fan loyalty. The Court also suggested adding a "procedural mechanism" and an opportunity for the applicant to present its case. Therefore, the door was not completely shut on the NFL's efforts to control franchise movement, but it needed to act. The stadium situation for several organizations was worsening. The Colts and Raiders had already moved but Phoenix still had its sights on landing a team particularly the Cardinals. Jacksonville and a few other cities were reportedly on the prowl as well.

There were other reasons why the 1980s were a period of uncertainty for the NFL. The nascent USFL increased the competition – and thereby compensation levels - for top talent especially collegiate stars entering the draft. Additionally, there was heightening labor strife in the League, reflected in two different player strikes. As the end of the decade approached Pete Rozelle announced his retirement after nearly thirty years as Commissioner. He was succeeded by Paul Tagliabue, a lawyer who had represented the NFL in private practice (including in the Davis suit). While Tagliabue appeared up to the task, this change only added to the upheaval in pro football.

In the midst of these various headwinds, the League did begin to act. As a first step, the NFL devised a formal application process for teams seeking to relocate under Rule 4.3. Criteria were developed to help curb franchise relocations while at the same time comport with antitrust law. This new framework did help for a while. In the decade after Al Davis' court victory, only the Cardinals changed cities. But then the landscape abruptly changed in the mid-1990s. The three cities which lost organizations in the prior decade would either see that same team return (Oakland) or gain a different club (to St. Louis – the Rams; and to Baltimore – the Browns, renamed the Ravens). The Oilers' departure from Houston to Nashville and rebrand as the Titans via a short stop in Memphis would follow.

Each team's journey was different. Al Davis was thwarted in his attempts to build a new venue in Inglewood (leading him to sue the NFL, again asserting antitrust claims - this time he lost). So the Raiders returned to a renovated Coliseum in Oakland. The Rams moved to St. Louis to play in a brand new, football-specific facility. After years of trying, Browns' longtime owner Art Modell abandoned hope for a new building in Cleveland. The franchise left for Baltimore to temporarily play in ancient Memorial Stadium while a new football venue was finally built in that city. Bud Adams, the original owner of the Oilers, left Houston and the aging Astrodome for similar reasons. The team competed in Memphis until their new home in Nashville was completed. Adding in the new franchises in Jacksonville and Charlotte, within a short time span in the 1990s five NFL teams constructed new buildings in connection with relocations or expansion.

As the end of the twentieth century approached, the demand for new NFL stadiums was not going to subside. Clubs with outdated venues who had begun negotiations with government officials on public financing included Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington. At least a half dozen other teams had facilities at least thirty years old, some much older, which were becoming obsolete. Plus the NFL had lost franchises in cities with proven loyal fan bases in Cleveland and Houston who appeared worthy of an expansion team, but only if new structures were built.

What was the League to do about this recurring demand for new venues? The NFL could not simply rely upon its more refined Rule 4.3 application process to stem the tide of relocations. New stadiums needed to be built, at ever increasing cost, which required funding. Taxpayer support for sports facilities had long been a sensitive topic. Historical struggles to obtain it had been the root cause of the various franchise relocations. With escalating price tags and the growing perception wealthy owners were unworthy beneficiaries of public largess, opposition in many cities had become even greater. The criticism particularly struck a chord with pro football, where each season a team would host just ten or so preseason and regular season games, plus possibly one to two playoff contests. The NFL needed to develop a strategy to address this issue head on and take action. As will be described below, initial moves were made in the 1990s to create new private sources for financing venues. The changes originated from business ventures of two successful clubs and a new team's controversial but creative seating concept. At the end of the decade an NFL-led initiative created a brand new program for private funding.

## Private Stadium Financing

In their first two decades in professional football the Miami Dolphins enjoyed sustained success on the field. However, by the 1980s their home at the Orange Bowl was approaching the half-century mark. The Dolphins were unsuccessful in getting local government support for renovations. So owner Joe Robby decided instead to build a new stadium through private sources. The building's design would be state-of-the art, with the most important features for purposes of financing being the luxury suites and club seating areas. Robby came up with a novel idea - revenue from this luxury seating would finance the cost of construction. As explained in a study by Professor John Vrooman at Vanderbilt, this concept presented an issue for the NFL and its revenue sharing system. (Vrooman, 2012). Specifically the NFL required that home teams share a portion of their game day receipts with visitors – the so-called visiting team share ("VTS"). So the question became: would the League allow a variation of this requirement? In a turning point for the NFL, the other owners agreed to a waiver of the VTS with respect to luxury seating receipts used for this specific purpose. Soon thereafter, another innovative concept (albeit controversial for many fans) was introduced by the expansion Carolina Panthers for funding their new home - personal seat license fees. The League decided to expand the VTS waiver further.

As Vrooman explains in his study, the other significant development occurring in the 1990s involved Dallas Cowboys' owner Jerry Jones. Jones' purchase of the Cowboys included Texas Stadium. After his acquisition he entered into various marketing deals specific to that facility with brands who were direct competitors of the NFL's sponsors. The League sued to stop Jones. The NFL's eventual loss in court led to another significant policy pivot: venue-specific sponsorship receipts would be treated differently than so-called NFL Properties shared revenue. An even broader potential source of funding exempt from revenue sharing became available.

## NFL's G-3 Loan

At the end of the 1990s the NFL adopted a new initiative, the G-3 loan, which greatly enhanced the private funding options for franchises. This lending program allowed teams to borrow through the NFL for the purpose of building or improving a stadium. Initially the League made available loans up to the lower of fifty percent of construction costs and $150 million for teams in the six largest television markets; other clubs could borrow up to the lower of thirty-four percent of the total cost and $100 million. These loans were to be repaid from thirty-four percent of the VTS for premium seat revenue. The G-3 credit lines, as well as their successor G-4 loans described later, were arranged through the League at lower rates than what a team could obtain on its own. Besides incentivizing private financing and thereby reducing financial demands on taxpayers, as Professor Vrooman explains in this study the G-3's design had other effects. First, since clubs in the largest media markets were able to borrow more, this created a disincentive for franchises to move to smaller cities. Vrooman also cites a second effect - wealth transfer. Loans to organizations in larger markets resulted in less VTS monies flowing into the coffers of smaller market teams.

Putting aside these differing market effects, the impact of the G-3 program was material. In just the first decade after inception ten new structures were built by NFL teams, plus Green Bay and Kansas City made significant renovations. $4.4 billion of this construction was privately funded, constituting fifty-nine percent of the total cost; $1.08 billion of such financing, or roughly one-fourth, was sourced through G-3. By comparison, the proportion of private monies relative to aggregate costs was substantially lower for the six new or renovated stadiums financed in the years immediately preceding G-3: specifically, the venues for the four teams who had relocated (Ravens; Raiders; Titans; Rams) and those of the new franchises replacing the two who had relocated (Texans, Browns). Overall, private funding constituted only eighteen percent of the total cost for those six structures during this earlier time frame. G-3 made a difference.

So this initiative introduced right before the turn of the century did alleviate the demand for public funds to back increasing construction costs. That did not mean the controversial topic of taxpayer subsidies went away – it continues to this day, as most teams still seek public sources for at least a portion of their funding needs. In any event, by 2006 the G-3 program had reached its total authorized capacity of just over $1 billion. Twelve stadium projects (benefiting thirteen teams, as the Jets and Giants shared a venue) were beneficiaries. But then there was a lull, as labor negotiations became a priority in the NFL. New Commissioner Roger Goodell had his hands full with that and other issues. The global financial crisis and deep recession likely impacted a restart of a financing program as well. Not until 2011 when a labor resolution was reached did the League announce a renewed credit facility.

## Hurricane Katrina - New Orleans at Risk

At the point where the G-3 program approached its capacity, a natural disaster on the eve of the 2005 NFL season suddenly thrust both relocation and stadium financing back into focus. The catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath created a pivotal moment for the Saints and New Orleans itself. The human toll and property devastation were horrific. The Superdome was not spared – its roof was partly destroyed, interior deluged with water and systems largely left inoperable. That venue's condition after the hurricane was newsworthy not just for NFL fans. The Superdome became a short term shelter for thousands left homeless. Even temporary medical care was staged in the building. Notwithstanding the damage it sustained, the presence of this sports facility lessened Katrina's human tragedy after the storm.

Amid the chaos, the Saints needed a home. That season the team would play its games in both San Antonio's Alamodome and Tiger Stadium at LSU. Fans worried the Saints might never return. Even prior to the hurricane owner Tom Benson broke off negotiations with government officials over funding for renovations for the Superdome. Rumors had begun that the team would move to San Antonio, Albuquerque or Los Angeles. Now with the substantial damage from Katrina, there were serious questions whether the building could be repaired. Yet miraculously the Superdome was fully restored within thirteen months and the Saints remained in New Orleans. Beyond this successful outcome for a professional team and its stadium, many credit this turnaround as playing a big part in the revival of the city of New Orleans.

The cost to retore the Superdome was substantial. Of the $336 million total, roughly half of the funding came from the federal government through FEMA, with state and local government support accounting for most of the remainder. The NFL contributed $20 million, which apparently was not in the form of a G-3 loan. This amount was in addition to the millions donated by NFL owners, players and others in general support of the recovery effort. While its financial contribution was only a fraction of the total cost to restore the Superdome, the NFL under the leadership of Paul Tagliabue (in his final year as Commissioner) earned praise for keeping a team in New Orleans and supporting the area's recovery.

## G-4 Loans, Other Financing

In 2011, in conjunction with various provisions in a new collective bargaining agreement reached with the NFL Players Association, the League did adopt a new stadium financing vehicle: the G-4 loan. Generally, the NFL evaluates requests for these loans on a case by case basis. At the outset the maximum loan was pegged at $200 million for new facilities and $250 million for renovated buildings. In either case the loan must be in support of a "public-private" project costing at least $400 million. The amount of a G-4 loan granted is subject to other limitations and the maximum maturity is fifteen years. Borrowings can be repaid through a more broadly defined VTS (including so-called "incremental gate" revenue). The full details of the G-4 program are complex and beyond the scope of this article. But notable is the fact that these borrowings cannot be used in connection with a franchise relocation, and if a borrowing club later relocates the balance must be immediately repaid.

This updated NFL lending program enabled the construction of five additional venues for six teams in the most recent decade: Atlanta; Minneapolis; San Francisco (Santa Clara); Los Angeles (two franchises); Las Vegas. In each instance except for Sofi Stadium in LA, the team borrowed G-4's maximum of $200 million; for Sofi, home to 2 teams and by far the most expensive project at approximately $5 billion (all privately financed), G-4 loans totaling at least $400 million were granted (according to some reports, the total was even higher).

Currently there are several NFL teams with announced plans to build new facilities – including Buffalo, Tennessee (Nashville), Chicago, Washington and Jacksonville. To the extent these projects will require all or partial private financing by the club, it is highly likely these teams will look to this League-sponsored form of credit like other teams have utilized. Based on an October 27, 2023 release by Fitch, a credit rating agency, as of that time NFL Ventures, L.P.

had extended $1.2 billion in outstanding credit under the "G-4  Stadium Finance Program" – rated by Fitch at A+.

The same report by Fitch rated as "A" two "secured leaguewide credit facilities" totaling $10.9 billion. These facilities appear to offer teams additional, non-G4 credit availability directly from lenders at very attractive rates, for other purposes. Notwithstanding these various lending options, it is important to note the NFL places a ceiling on a team's total debt. Last October the NFL announced an increase in the limit from $600 to $700 million. Considering the price tag for new NFL stadiums can be $1 billion or more, borrowing is not enough. If public monies are not available to "close the gap," NFL owners need to invest their own resources.

To recap, the NFL suffered waves of franchise relocations in the 1980s and 1990s. These situations involved teams unable to obtain sufficient taxpayer funding for a new venue. There were other clubs which, under the threat of moving, did obtain public support. The frequent narrative of taxpayer subsidies for professional teams and their wealthy owners was unwanted publicity for the NFL. After incremental changes prompted by actions of a few owners, the League began to take other affirmative steps through lending programs to temper the issue and better control team relocations.

## Los Angeles – NFL Takes Control

Notwithstanding the historical challenges with team movement and the development of strategies to combat the issue, in the past decade the NFL actually led a process resulting in three clubs moving. Los Angeles, the second largest US market, lacked a franchise as of the mid-1990s after the Rams moved to St. Louis and the Raiders returned to Oakland. This status quo held for two decades. Yet, during this time there was regular speculation about various teams considering a move to LA. The NFL eventually became directly involved, orchestrating a process for returning pro football to this market. Some League history and the circumstances of a handful of clubs help explain how this came about. But the outcome of an NFL-led process was that three cities lost their teams. Consequently the League received a significant amount of scrutiny, and not just from fans in those affected markets. A common critical refrain was Commissioner Goodell and the owners preferred profits over fans. This NFL chapter can be viewed as a cautionary tale for other leagues, including the MLB, in how directly involved they should be in complicated stadium issues. Yet some may see this episode as a model to follow in certain circumstances.

Following their move from Cleveland to Los Angeles after World War II, the Rams' home field remained the Memorial Coliseum for decades. That structure was built in early 1920s and its condition declined over time. In the late 1970s the Rams moved out and began playing at the MLB Angels' home park in Anaheim. They remained there until 1995, when the club moved into a brand new venue in St. Louis. On the other hand, the Raiders began playing at LA's Coliseum in 1982. As described above, after his team settled into that market, Al Davis began searching for a location for a new stadium. Ultimately Davis was frustrated in his efforts. In 1995 the Raiders returned to Oakland. Consequently, as of the mid-1990s, the Coliseum was now vacant and second largest US metropolitan area was without a franchise. Over the next twenty years nearly half of the NFL's teams were rumored at some point to be considering a move there.

Some reports were more serious than others. Each case involved a club seeking a new facility, the precise scenario the NFL wanted to control. But this large, unoccupied market was just too tempting a play. The situation for most teams got resolved and the rumors subsided, with two notable exceptions. The San Diego Chargers and Oakland Raiders continued to play in outdated buildings. Each of these markets seemed to lack the political will to publicly finance a new venue. And ownership was unwilling to pick up the slack with private funding.

Various stadium proposals for Los Angeles were floated by different parties in the years leading up to the NFL's 2016 selection of one. The most serious ones included a proposal early on by AEG and its principal Phillip Anschutz to construct a new facility in downtown LA near Staples Center. For a time that group negotiated with the Chargers' ownership on acquiring the team and relocating it there. Another involved an investor group's plan to build a venue in Carson to host both the Chargers and Raiders. And then there was Stan Kroenke, a Missouri native, whose St. Louis Rams played in a relatively new structure half the age of the buildings in Oakland and San Diego. His grandiose project entailed a substantial investment in a new stadium and surrounding development in Inglewood (the area Al Davis coveted). The problem was his plan did not contemplate hosting the Chargers or Raiders. It was predicated on moving the Rams from St. Louis to Inglewood as a sole tenant in a new venue. Once AEG and Anschutz withdrew their proposal, the competing projects narrowed to the Kroenke and Carson projects. The three impacted teams submitted Rule 4.3 relocation applications to the League.

The NFL assumed full control of the process, forming a committee of six owners to negotiate with these two investor factions. That culminated at the NFL owners' meeting in January 2016, where that committee met to evaluate the two finalists and make a selection. They decided to recommend the Carson proposal to the remaining owners for a vote. What followed had the intrigue of a contested political convention. Despite the committee's recommendation, a majority of the owners preferred the Kroeke project. This was the case even though it only involved the Rams, who would have to abandon St. Louis, leaving out the Chargers and Raiders. Eventually, after quite a bit of wheeling and dealing, a compromise was reached to garner the necessary twenty-four votes for approval. The resolution was the Chargers were offered a one year option to decide whether to become a co-tenant at Kroenke's venue; if the Chargers declined, the Raiders assumed that right. The rationale was this allowed the two California teams a final chance to reach funding deals with their respective local governments. After trying again and failing in San Diego, the Chargers opted to join the Rams. Blocked from Los Angeles, and with it clear Oakland was no longer a viable option for a new facility, the Raiders were already looking elsewhere. The Nevada legislature seized on the opportunity and approved funding for a new venue in Las Vegas for that franchise. After almost four decades of trying, the Raiders finally secured a new building.

The manner in which this situation was handled by the NFL led to heavy scrutiny from the media, the markets impacted and their respective fan bases. Was it fair that the NFL steered a process which resulted in St. Louis, with its publicly funded 20-year old venue, losing an NFL franchise for a second time? Why were the California based clubs stifled in their plans to finally solve their chronic stadium issues through the Carson project – as recommended by the League's own committee? St. Louis took its grievances to court by suing the NFL owners, alleging damages in excess of $1 billion. Outcries that the NFL and its owners only cared about the bottom line grew louder.  Some criticism was directed at Roger Goodell personally.  Setting the attacks aside, the fact remains the NFL under the leadership of its Commissioner imposed a top down approach in addressing the venue situations of three organizations.  Whether the manner in which this was handled was in the best interests of the NFL, its teams and fans in the long term is yet to be determined.

## Conclusion

The NFL has come a long way since a period of chaotic movement of clubs looking for better stadiums.  The Raiders' successful legal challenge forty years ago created an unsettled atmosphere, but it led to the owners and the League taking steps to better manage team movement.  Yet franchises faced growing taxpayer opposition to publicly financed facilities in their home markets.  At the same time, there were other markets without a club who would continue to entice organizations to move there on the promise of a new, government financed building.  The NFL's eventual focus on private lending created a solution for a majority of NFL teams, alleviated the drain on public resources and thereby arrested franchise movement.  But as San Diego and Oakland will attest, not all markets benefited from these changes.

What does this all mean for Major League Baseball?  Suffice it to say its approach with respect to stadiums, described in the first part of this article, is different from the NFL's.  The final installment of this article will compare the two leagues.  Then recommendations will be made on possible changes by MLB to alleviate the substantial and in some cases protracted issues relating to ballparks in certain markets.



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