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Power play: Rangers hope new Texas Live will put more fans in stands



Karen Robinson-Jacobs, Hospitality/Leisure Industry Reporter

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Come Thursday night, the Texas Rangers will trot out a new weapon in the team arsenal that goes beyond new power in batting or fielding: a year-round entertainment district.

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The \$250 million development is a joint effort between the city of Arlington, which kicked in \$50 million, the Baltimore-based [Cordish Companies](#) and the Rangers.

Unlike other "sports anchored entertainment districts," the Rangers organization has an ownership stake in the development, though details on the split were not immediately available.

The move is part of a broader trend nationwide that's seen sports teams look to boost their reach beyond the field of play.

"It's good for business," said Rob Matwick, executive vice president for business operations with the Rangers. "Teams have realized over time that there's tremendous opportunity not only inside the ballpark but outside our doors, adjacent to the ballpark. Our objective is: We want to be a business that's 365 days a year. It's no longer just enough to do 81 baseball games."

Season a mishit

Texas Live's home opener comes near the end of what's been a challenging season on the field for the Rangers. Attendance has reflected that.

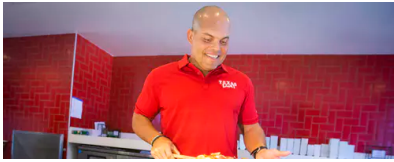
The Rangers' record stands at 50-65, which is one of the lowest winning percentages (.435) through 115 games since the team moved to Texas in 1972.

Through the first 59 home dates, the club was averaging 26,703 fans per game, down by an average of 5,176 fans through the same number of home dates a year ago.

The drop has been more precipitous recently, as the club heads to a last-place finish in the AL West. The Rangers averaged only 20,786 fans for the first five games of the current homestand.

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**RESTAURANTS****Rangers ex Ivan Rodriguez to open 'Pudge's Pizza' at Texas Live**

Maybe a shiny new development, offering pizza backed by Rangers' favorite Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez and burgers backed by Dallas Cowboys hall of famer Troy Aikman, can help.





Construction crews finish the exterior of the Texas Live! entertainment venue, with Texas Rangers branding, in Arlington. (Brandon Wade/Special Contributor)

"We want to expand our fan base," Matwick said, as newly minted servers attended to specially invited guests during pre-launch practice this week. "We want to open the doors wider for more people.

"If people come to Texas Live and they have a great time they might come to a Rangers game. [By that] same respect, if someone comes to a Rangers game and they wander over to Texas Live and they enjoy the experience, we've got a new customer at Texas Live."

Sports-oriented developments have been around for years. [Victory Park](#), outside of the [American Airlines Center](#) in downtown Dallas, aimed to capitalize on the pre- and post-game crowds when it opened in the mid-2000s. However, neither the [Dallas Mavericks](#) nor the [Dallas Stars](#), which call the arena home, have an ownership stake in the adjacent entertainment district.

Rob Hunden is president and chief executive of [Hunden Strategic Partners](#), a Chicago-based "destination development consulting firm" that has worked with developers and teams to create sports based attractions.

Sports teams buy-in

Many or even most of the new sports venues being built or planned today have the team as an equity player, he said.

"The teams are somehow partnering or are taking a lead role in the entertainment district that is outside of the venue," he said. "In some cases, it's 10 percent, others 50-50 and others range up to 100 percent.

"You're starting to see it in more and more places, and it's because the teams realize they've got to do more than just provide the entertainment of the game to make their whole investment in the stadium viable. They need to provide a whole set of activities that really create an atmosphere around the team and traditions and spending time and spending money and making memories.

"The more you can induce people to do that around your team, you're creating brand loyalty. That then leads to positive economic impacts for the team, the developer and the city where it's located."



RESTAURANTS

Four-day grand opening for Texas Live features Toadies concert and more

Some of that spending will come from North Texas consumers who bypass the local restaurant and music hall to head down I-30. That's good news for Arlington, which has paid out the \$50 million, but could be less beneficial to its neighbors.

The percent of out-of-towners is expected to increase next year, when the complex adds the nation's first Live by Loews hotel, with 302 rooms, a two-story, 35,000-square-foot grand event center and a rooftop space for private events.

Hunden counted at least six U.S. developments involving major professional sports teams with a hand in food and drink venues springing up nearby. That includes the [Chicago Cubs](#), which is seeing a new district developing around storied [Wrigley Field](#) and [Ballpark Village](#) outside the home of the St. Louis Cardinals.

Ballpark Village also was developed by Cordish and official Arlington documents that preceded work on Texas Live specified that the project be similar to the St. Louis venue.

The second location of Live by Loews is under construction as part of Ballpark Village.



HOTELS

Loews, Texas Rangers announce 'flagship' hotel for Texas Live

Matwick, who has been with the Rangers for 10 years, recalled the potholed path to getting a development built outside of the Rangers' stadium.

In mid-2006, former Rangers owner Tom Hicks was involved in a proposed half-billion-dollar development known as Glorypark, which called for 1.2 million square feet of residential, retail and commercial space, and a hotel. It was to be located between the Rangers' ballpark and what is now [AT&T Stadium](#), home field of the Dallas Cowboys.

Hicks announced in May 2008 that he was shelving Glorypark because of the economic downturn. The project devolved into a legal battle and was never built.

Matwick said the key this time was picking the right partner.

"In the Cordish Company we know that we have the right development partner," he said. "Cordish is the leader across the country in sports-anchored developments."

The land on which Texas Live stands is owned by the Arlington Convention Center Development Corporation, which was created by the city.

The land is leased, at no cost, to Arlington Live LLC, which was created by Cordish and the Rangers and lists its headquarters as the same Baltimore address as Cordish.

"We're partners in the development first and foremost," Matwick said as the Texas Live sound system cranked out a stream of rock tunes. "So that's number one.

"I do believe it will help us enhance the Rangers game-day experience and the Cowboys game-day experience," he added. "We want to become a driver for Live and we want Live to become a driver for the Rangers."

Staff writer Evan Grant contributed to this report.

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