

New Partner Affiliation to encourage national growth: SFA and RowAmerica - Dave Dickison

In October 2015, Sports Facilities Advisory, L.L.C. (SFA) was engaged by RowAmerica Clubs and USRowing to facilitate a strategic development planning process aimed at identifying opportunities to grow the sport of rowing and determining the steps necessary to achieve that growth. Through this scope of work, SFA was tasked to review existing data related to the sport, conduct an on-site strategic planning meeting with project team representatives from RowAmerica, USRowing, and Rowing News, and produce this strategic development summary report to outline the results and next steps in the process.

About The Sports Facilities Advisory

SFA is a full-service consultancy specializing in the planning, funding, opening, and management of sports and recreation facilities of all sizes and scope. Having served a portfolio of projects totaling more than \$5.5 billion in planned and operational facilities, SFA assists sports tourism destinations, private developers, parks and recreation departments, national/state/ local government entities, universities and educational institutions, and architecture and engineering firms. SFA provides strategic planning, feasibility studies, economic impact studies, funding support, management systems, and optimization for new and existing sports and recreation complexes across the U.S. and worldwide.

About RowAmerica

RowAmerica is determined to nurture the sport of rowing from the bottom up. Driven by the mission to support, promote, and expand the sport, RowAmerica offers a full suite of services for athletes, teams, clubs, and facilities, including:

- **Boat Manufacturing:** Making it easier and more affordable to purchase top-quality shells that improve performance at all levels. Featured boat manufacturers are Wintech Racing and King Racing.
- **Boat Repair:** Keeping shells on the water through structural and cosmetic repairs for all brands.
- **Gear:** Providing the apparel athletes need and desire both on and off the water. Featured gear brand is Skull & Sweep.
- **Club Management:** Setting performance, programming, and management standards for rowing clubs across the country. Locations include Greenwich, CT; Hamilton, OH; North Little Rock, AR; Manchester, NH; Rye, NY; St. Charles, IL; Westport, CT.

The primary action item that was identified during strategic planning meeting is to create a new rowing consulting group utilizing the strengths of the three organizations above in order to represent the sport of rowing to municipal decision makers, private developers, existing clubs, etc. The consulting group will be created to achieve two primary objectives:

1. Increase the number of communities that will consider rowing when thinking about new sport, recreation, and community development.
2. Grow participation in the sport of rowing through the development of new facilities in new marketplaces.

During the strategic planning meeting, the project team began to identify strategies to achieve the objectives of increasing the number of communities that will consider rowing and growing participation in the sport. SFA has added to the strategies identified in that meeting to produce the 10 growth strategies below. They are:

1. Announce the consulting group as USRowing's advisory arm and begin the business development process.
 - Utilize the consulting group as the destination for all inbound inquiries.
 - Utilize the consulting group – and especially SFA's existing relationships/distribution channels – for all outbound efforts; target the most well-regarded organizations/tradeshows/publications for youth and amateur sports, including:
 - National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC)
 - Sports Travel Magazine
 - TEAMS Conference
 - National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)
 - International Association of City Managers (ICMA)
 - U.S. Olympic Committee
 - Aspen Institute
 - Water Keepers
 - Utilize SFA's exposure to communities seeking to invest in sports and recreation by training all SFA Account Executives to represent rowing as a viable, impactful investment for appropriate communities.
2. Communicate the impact of rowing in terms that matter to key decision makers at the community level:
 - Rowing creates sports tourism and economic development opportunities.
 - Rowing is a brand builder for the community.
 - Rowing is tool for improving quality of life.
 - Rowing is supportive of educational objectives.
3. Share case studies and success stories from recent developments in communities that have invested in rowing.
 - Boathouse District – Oklahoma City, OK
 - Benderson Park – Sarasota, FL
4. Pursue opportunities to create strategic partnerships with private and/or other public entities including:
 - Land owners on qualified waterfronts.

- Marinas that are already equipped to serve at water access points and are seeking additional sources of revenue from people interested in water-based activities.
- Resort destinations that cater to the socio-economic groups most likely to participate in rowing.
- Locations with existing infrastructure for guest experiences and prospective customer referrals.

5. Demonstrate the potential for entry into the sport through at least two facility models:

- Entry-Level Centers (less than \$2 million) that feature utilitarian boathouses for storage/basic administration and use existing waterfronts.
- Flagship Centers (more than \$7 million) that feature high-end boathouses with storage, training rooms, meeting spaces, food service areas, etc. and either use existing waterways or require investment in water and/or surrounding land.

6. Position rowing as a year-round, multi-generational sport that creates consistent visits to and utilization of what would otherwise be low-use waterfronts.

- For new markets, there should be a focus on locations in environments that support year-round water-based activity.

7. Package rowing as one of several powerful ways to activate the waterfront, including:

- Rowing
- Stand-up paddle boarding
- Dragon boats
- Kayaking
- Etc.

8. Package waterfront facilities as the hub for multiple outdoor recreation activities, including:

- Water-based activities (above)
- Biking
- Trail running
- Hiking
- Skating
- Etc.

9. Give community leaders a direct experience.

- Demystify the sport by facilitating site visits by key decision makers to events and/or facilities.
- Get decision makers in a shell with someone who is trained to represent the sport.

10. Expand the limited perception that rowing is only possible where there is flat water.

- Present newer, increasingly popular rowing options such as indoor rowing and coastal rowing.