

# **Cheat Sheet – Keep the Crawdads: Strategic Intelligence Brief for Hickory**

## **I. The Crawdads as a Civic Asset**

1. The Hickory Crawdads have served as a cultural, economic, and symbolic anchor for over 30 years
  2. L.P. Frans Stadium is a major community venue—hosting more than just baseball
  3. Minor league baseball provides regional visibility, tourism flow, and economic identity
  4. Loss of the team would damage city morale and reduce Hickory's profile in NC
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## **II. The Broader Context: Structural Risk and Competitive Pressure**

1. Minor League Baseball restructuring post-2020 introduced new facility compliance demands
  2. Hickory faces the same pressures as other markets (e.g., Kannapolis, High Point, Greenville)
  3. Cities that lost teams often saw a measurable civic and economic decline afterward
  4. Regional peer cities are investing in sports and cultural infrastructure to stay competitive
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## **III. Cultural Infrastructure and Community Cohesion**

1. The Crawdads are more than a franchise—they offer shared civic rituals
  2. Events like school nights, civic fundraisers, and local celebrations build unity
  3. In a polarized, post-pandemic culture, few institutions offer cross-class engagement
  4. The team fosters intergenerational value—bringing together youth, families, retirees
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## **IV. Economic and Strategic Value of the Stadium**

1. The stadium is an anchor for hospitality, tourism, and small business opportunities
  2. Investment in stadium upgrades is a strategic reinvestment—not a loss
  3. Economic impact includes:
    - a. Visiting teams and families
    - b. Tourism revenue from seasonal events
    - c. Sponsorship and media exposure
  4. Proximity to Charlotte and Boone amplifies regional branding value
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## **V. The Cost of Civic Drift**

1. Cities that neglect assets experience slow decay of economic and social capital
  2. Cultural losses precede job loss, talent drain, and reputational decline
  3. Absence of civic urgency has left Hickory vulnerable in prior infrastructure decisions
  4. The loss of the Crawdads would be a civic failure—both symbolic and material
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## **VI. Policy Implications and Civic Responsibility**

1. City leaders must weigh future relevance, not just present cost
  2. Funding mechanisms for upgrades should be explored:
    - a. Public-private partnerships
    - b. State economic development grants
    - c. Philanthropic and corporate sponsorship
  3. Transparency, not austerity, should guide stadium planning
  4. Hickory must treat cultural infrastructure as economic strategy—not luxury
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## **VII. Regional Dynamics and Civic Branding**

1. The Foothills Corridor is undergoing realignment—Boone, Morganton, Lenoir rising
  2. Hickory must act like a regional leader or risk becoming peripheral
  3. The Crawdads serve as a regional touchstone for events, media coverage, and identity
  4. Ballpark presence affects Hickory's negotiating position with state and federal actors
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## **VIII. Call to Action**

1. Community stakeholders must advocate to retain and reinvest in the Crawdads
  2. City Council, County officials, and regional leaders must unite around a strategic plan
  3. Media, local businesses, and civic organizations must elevate the urgency of the issue
  4. Public engagement—through forums, comment sessions, and op-eds—is critical
  5. Deliberate, forward-thinking action now will preserve Hickory's civic leverage for decades
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### **Summary:**

The Crawdads are not just a baseball team—they are a strategic civic asset tied to Hickory's relevance, cohesion, and economic future. Losing them would mark a failure of imagination and a retreat from regional leadership.

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### **Key Topics Covered:**

- Civic infrastructure and economic development
- Minor League Baseball restructuring impacts
- Regional competitiveness in North Carolina

- The role of sports in community identity
  - Strategic planning and city branding
  - Stadium financing and reinvestment models
  - Risk of civic neglect and cultural erosion
  - Policy urgency and public mobilization
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### **Hashtag Cluster:**

#KeepTheCrawdads #HickoryNC #CivicInfrastructure #MinorLeagueBaseball  
#SaveOurStadium #FoothillsCorridor #RegionalLeadership #CulturalAssets #HickoryFuture  
#PublicStrategy