

# County secures \$12M in sponsorships for Huntington Park

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by [Jeff Bell](#)

Business First

Franklin County officials have landed another \$12 million in corporate sponsorship commitments for the minor league baseball park they plan to build in the Arena District.

Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co. and Dispatch Printing Co. each committed \$6 million for sponsorships at the proposed Huntington Park, according to a press release from the county. In addition, Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman said the city will invest \$9.3 million for utilities, roads and other infrastructure improvements at the ballpark site.

The 10,000-seat, county-owned ballpark is slated for the northwest corner of Neil Avenue and Nationwide Boulevard. Franklin County Commissioners recently pushed back the expected opening date for the \$55 million ballpark to 2009.

Huntington Park will house the county-owned Columbus Clippers of the International League and replace Cooper Stadium, the team's 15,000-seat home on Columbus' west side.

Nationwide will pay \$6 million for naming rights to the new ballpark's concourse. Its development subsidiary, Nationwide Realty Investors, is also donating its services, estimated at more than \$1 million, to act as the county's owner's representative during the design and construction phases. The Dispatch will pay \$6 million for naming rights to the ballpark's scoreboard.

Earlier this year, Huntington Bancshares Inc. locked up naming rights to the ballpark through a \$12 million sponsorship deal with Stadium Inc., the county entity that will manage the ballpark.

Stadium construction will be financed by the county, which will sell bonds to cover the cost. The bonds are to be repaid with money contributed by corporate sponsors, future ballpark revenues and the sale of Cooper Stadium.