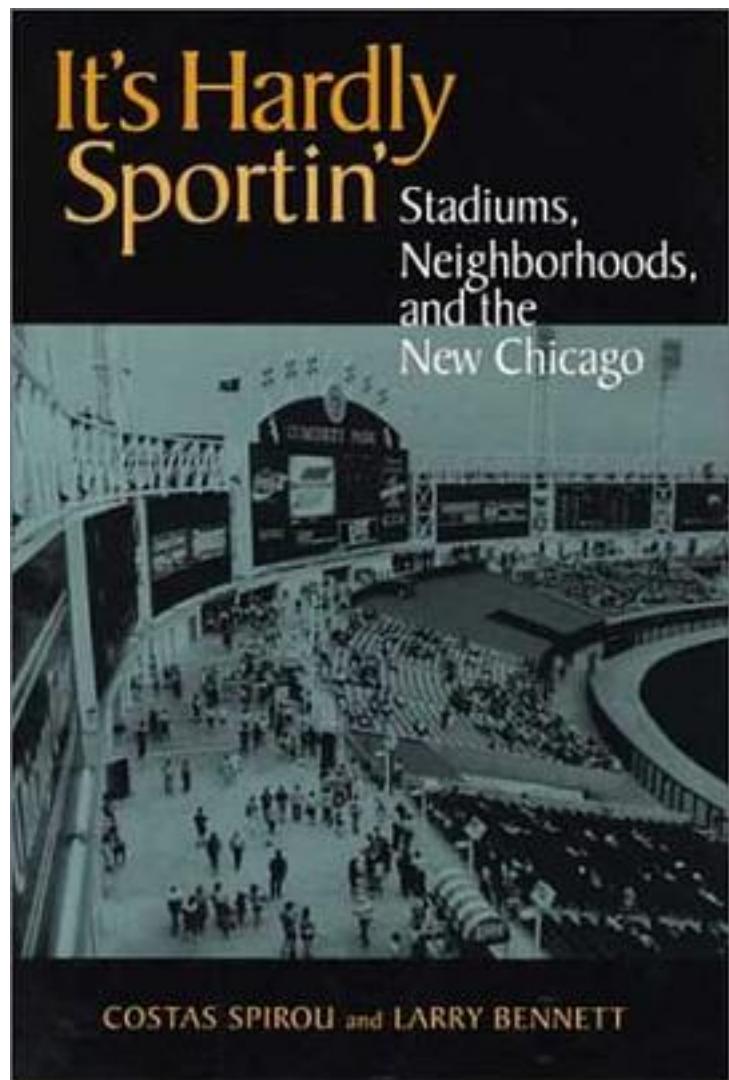


It's Hardly Sportin'



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出版者:Northern Illinois Univ Pr

出版时间:2003-2

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780875803050

Across the nation, stadiums and sports centers have become an increasingly important aspect of urban redevelopment action. How do these projects affect the people in the communities surrounding new facilities? Focusing on Chicago's recent experiences, Costas Spirou and Larry Bennett examine two stadiums - the United Center and Comiskey Park - as well as the installation of lights at Wrigley Field. The authors argue that stadiums can be effective tools for urban revitalization only if community organizations and local conditions are closely involved in the planning process. The execution of these three major Chicago projects occurred over the span of just a few years in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As Chicago sports franchises sought new or improved "home fields," distinctive patterns of planning and negotiation emerged, shifting the dynamics of neighborhood mobilization. Spirou and Bennett explore these projects' impacts on neighborhoods, interpreted in the larger scope of redefining Chicago as an economically dynamic global city. It's Hardly Sportin' challenges the way city officials view the effect of new and redesigned stadiums. Instead of focusing on whether stadiums contribute more money to cities than they cost, cities should give equal consideration to the effects of new sports facilities on area residents and neighborhoods. According to Spirou and Bennett, neither the United Center nor Comiskey Park fulfilled their promise of revitalizing their neighborhoods, in large part because community organizations had little formal role in planning and overseeing the projects. Wrigley Field and its neighboring communities have fared better because of the influence exercised by determined local activists, who played an key role in shaping the debate over ball park modernization in the mid-1980s and have continued to communicate neighborhood concerns to the Chicago Cubs franchise. Using Chicago as a case study, It's Hardly Sportin' suggests fresh ways cities can successfully coordinate the expansion of sports facilities with urban redevelopment.

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