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Where wil the Nartional Basketball Association Go Next?: Study of Potential Cities the NBA Could Move To

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Where will the National Basketball Association Go Next? : A
Study of Potential Cities the NBA Could Move To

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Abstract

In this thesis I will conduct a breakdown of potential cities the National Basketball Association would look at the next time they are thinking about expanding/relocating. Factors of these cities will be compared to those of the five previous cities the NBA has entered to see which cities would best meet the needs of the NBA. The cities that I will examine are the last five the NBA has moved to: Toronto, Memphis, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, and Charlotte. I will compare the information I gain from those five cities to eight potential new cities. Those cities are Louisville, San Diego, St. Louis, Norfolk, Baltimore, Hartford, Pittsburgh, and Las Vegas. The factors that I use to figure out which cities would work best are average income, city and metropolitan population, if there is an NBA caliber arena in the area, if there was a previous NBA franchise in the city, and if there are other "Big 4" franchise located in the city. When all the information is gathered I will compare and contrast the five newest cities with the 8 potential cities and come up with two or three possible future locations for an NBA franchise.

Acknowledgments

First thanks must go to my parents, Bill and Cheryl and my brother and his wife Christopher and Stephanie, who continue to support and push me to succeed in everything I undertake. I would also like to acknowledge the rest of my family and friends, with out all of them I would not be able to

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GO PIRATES!!!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In a 2004 edition of the *Journal of Sports Management* Daniel and Heather Rascher said the following.

“The location model forecasts the best cities for an NBA team based on the underlying characteristics of current NBA teams. The results suggest that Louisville, San Diego, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Norfolk appear to be the most promising candidates for relocation or expansion.”(Rascher & Rascher, 2004, p. 274)

Rascher and Rascher mention San Diego and Baltimore as possible cities, which have both previously been home to an NBA team. Since these cities have already had an NBA franchise that had to be moved I find it difficult to believe that the NBA would award these cities another franchise. I think some possible cities that the NBA could expand to are Las Vegas, Louisville, St. Louis, Hartford, and Pittsburgh, in this Thesis I will examine certain characteristics of these cities and compare them to the same characteristics of the last five cities the NBA has expanded or relocated to. Those five cities are Charlotte, Toronto, Memphis, New Orleans, and Oklahoma City. I will use Oklahoma City because the New Orleans Hornets have been stationed here for the past two seasons.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) currently is made up of 30 teams, the same number as Major League Baseball and The National Hockey League. Like every other major sports league the NBA is looking at different ways to make money and sometimes expansion or relocation is the best way more a sports league to become more profitable. Since 1988 the NBA

has expanded by seven teams, with these teams in Minnesota, Miami, Orlando, Toronto, Vancouver, and Charlotte twice. In this same time period two franchises have been relocated and both of these are recent expansion teams, the Vancouver Grizzlies moved their operations to Memphis, and the Charlotte Hornets moved their franchise to New Orleans. Since Hurricane Katrina the New Orleans Hornets have been operating out of Oklahoma City but the NBA plans on moving the team back to New Orleans when the time is right.

Growing up basketball was one of the most important things to me, whether it was watching it on television, playing with my friends in the driveway or on a team in town, or sitting at my desk designing plays that I thought I would use when I became a coach in the NBA, all I could think of was basketball. Although my life has changed in many ways as I have grown up, little has changed for me when it comes to basketball. Even though the NBA may not be as fan friendly or have as big of a following as the National Football League or Major League Baseball I still look forward to the season and games more than any other league.

In the late 80s and early 90s basketball saw a surge in popularity it had never seen before. Players such as Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Patrick Ewing, and Karl Malone were idols to kids and brought basketball to the next level. Because of these players the grew in popularity and was on par with Major League Baseball and the National Football League. With the added popularity the NBA created Franchises in Miami, Orlando, Charlotte, Minnesota, Toronto, and Vancouver. Then in 1998 the NBA owners and Players Association could not agree on a Collective Bargaining Agreement and there was a league wide lock out. Any time a league faces a problem like this there will always be repercussions with its fan base; Major League Baseball faced the same problems after their 1994 lock out. Half of the 1998-1999

season was lost and following that the NBA saw a hit in its fan base and saw a drop in attendance. Overall attendance dropped by nearly 400 people per game, but the biggest drops were scene in Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, and Washington which all saw drops between 2,500 – 4,000 fans. Slowly the NBA has seen their attendance numbers grow and the past two years have been record-breaking. “The new total attendance record of 21,595,804 eclipsed the previous record of 21,296,497 established last season, and the 1995-96 total of 20,513,218 fans attending regular season games. Overall, this season NBA arenas were filled to 91.4% capacity. (InsideHoops NBA, 2006)” With the high attendance numbers it has to make people wonder if the NBA would consider expanding. Will a league be able to support 33 teams?

Background:

The NBA was founded in 1946 as the Basketball Association of America. Following the 1949 season, the Basketball Association of America agreed to merge with the National Basketball League, and become the National Basketball Association (NBA). The NBA now had seventeen franchises competing in the league and they were located in a mix of large and small cities, as well as large arenas and smaller gymnasiums and armories. In 1950, the NBA consolidated to eleven franchises, a process that continued until 1954, when the league reached its smallest size of eight franchises, those franchise all of which are still in the league are the Boston Celtics, New York Knicks, Philadelphia 76ers, Detroit Pistons, Atlanta Hawks, Golden State Warriors, Rochester Royals who are now the Sacramento Kings, and Minneapolis Lakers who later moved to Los Angeles. While the league was contracting teams they were also relocating teams from smaller cities to larger ones, some of the examples of this are the Rochester Royals were relocated to Cincinnati and the Pistons were moved from Fort Wayne to Detroit.

In 1967 the American Basketball Association was created, this league was created to rival the NBA and tried to distinguish itself by displaying a more of a flashy brand of basketball. The leagues competed for both players and fans, and the main way the NBA could do this was by expansion. Between the years of 1967 and 1976 the NBA had expanded to 18 teams. By 1976 the ABA and NBA merged and the New York Nets, Denver Nuggets, Indiana Pacers and San Antonio Spurs joined the NBA to make the total number of franchises 22. From 1976-1988 the NBA only had one expansion team and this was the Dallas Mavericks in the year 1980. The

Mavericks were a struggling franchise, but on June 14 2000 Mark Cuban, a dot.com-billionaire, purchased the main stake in the franchise for 285 million dollars from the current owner. Since he purchased the team the franchise has turned around and is now one of the model franchises for the NBA, even though some people consider it a toy for Cuban.

After the Mavericks entered the NBA the next wave of expansion happened in the 1988 and 1989 seasons when four teams were created. In 1995 the NBA expanded two more teams, but both of these team were in Canada so this was different then any other expansion the NBA has undergone. 2004 was the NBA expanded when Charlotte Bobcats joined the league.

The current landscape of the NBA looks like this, the teams are in order of the year that the team was founded. Also note that the teams are listed by the city they are currently located in not the franchises original city:

TEAM	Home City	Year Founded
Philadelphia 76ers	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	1939
Detroit Pistons	Auburn Hills, Michigan	1941
Sacramento Kings	Sacramento, California	1945
Boston Celtics	Boston, Massachusetts	1946
New York Knicks	New York, New York	1946
Atlanta Hawks	Atlanta, Georgia	1946
Golden State Warriors	Oakland, California	1946
Los Angeles Lakers	Los Angeles, California	1946
Washington Wizards	Washington, D.C.	1961
Chicago Bulls	Chicago, Illinois	1966

New Jersey Nets (ABA)	East Rutherford, New Jersey	1967
Indiana Pacers (ABA)	Indianapolis, Indiana	1967
Houston Rockets	Houston, Texas	1967
San Antonio Spurs (ABA)	San Antonio, Texas	1967
Denver Nuggets (ABA)	Denver, Colorado	1967
Seattle SuperSonics	Seattle, Washington	1967
Milwaukee Bucks	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1968
Phoenix Suns	Phoenix, Arizona	1968
Cleveland Cavaliers	Cleveland, Ohio	1970
Portland Trail Blazers	Portland, Oregon	1970
Los Angeles Clippers	Los Angeles, California	1970
Utah Jazz	Salt Lake City, Utah	1974
Dallas Mavericks	Dallas, Texas	1980
Miami Heat	Miami, Florida	1988
New Orleans/Oklahoma City Hornets	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	1988
Orlando Magic	Orlando, Florida	1989
Minnesota Timberwolves	Minneapolis, Minnesota	1989
Toronto Raptors	Toronto, Ontario	1995
Memphis Grizzlies	Memphis, Tennessee	1995
Charlotte Bobcats	Charlotte, North Carolina	2004

With the current success the New Orleans Hornets are seeing in Oklahoma City and the purchase of the Seattle SuperSonics by Oklahoma City businessman Clay Bennett many people believe that a move from Seattle to Oklahoma city is in the near future for the club, Bennett said at a press conference “If we weren't able to find a successor facility and relative lease by then, we have the option contractually to ... evaluate our position.” This statement sure sounds as if

his intentions are to move the franchise to Oklahoma City once the Hornets go back to New Orleans.

The NBA's first teams came in to existence in the late 1930s and early 1940s and teams are still being created. It will be interesting to see what the league looks at when they are deciding on a potential city. I hope to come up with some of these potential cities using the different factors I think are important in determining a potential city.

Research and Subsidiary Questions:

The question that I will be researching is when the NBA decides to either expand or relocate a franchise, what cities and states they will be considering and why are these cities and states being considered.

Some of the subsidiary questions I will be focusing on are, will the NBA expand or relocate a franchise in either Asia or Europe, which are two continents that the NBA already has invested time and money in? Does the league office decide what cities they want to move to or does the new owner pick the city? Why do owners pick the cities that they do?

Objectives:

The NBA currently has 30 teams, 29 of which are located in the United States with the Toronto Raptors being the lone team in Canada. In this thesis I will breakdown five specific factors in the last five cities the NBA has expanded or relocated to and then use those same five factors and breakdown the five cities that Rascher and Rascher predicted and 5 cities that I predicted. After the research is completed I will then try and predict the top cities that will be able to support a NBA franchise.

Definition of Terms:

NBA- National Basketball Association

MLB- Major League Baseball

NFL- National Football League

NHL- National Hockey League

“The Big 4”- The 4 major sport leagues in America.

ABA- American Basketball Association

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

When the NBA decides it is time to expand their league it is the league that “controls the supply of teams, the placement of franchises, and the number of teams permitted to locate in any market.(Rascher & Rascher , 2004)” Below are all of the expansion teams the NBA has had, their first season of existence, their record that year and the average attendance of their first year.

Expansion Team	First Season	Record	Average Attendance
Buffalo Braves	1970-71	22-60	4,977
Charlotte Hornets	1988-89	20-62	23,172
Chicago Bulls	1966-67	33-48	4,772
Chicago Packers	1961-62	18-62	NA
Cleveland Cavaliers	1970-71	15-67	3,518
Dallas Mavericks	1980-81	15-67	7,789
Miami Heat	1988-89	15-67	14,945
Milwaukee Bucks	1968-69	27-55	5,942
Minnesota Timberwolves	1989-90	22-60	26,160
New Orleans Jazz	1974-75	23-59	4,955
Orlando Magic	1989-90	18-64	15,064
Phoenix Suns	1968-69	16-66	4,335
Portland Trail Blazers	1970-71	29-53	6,135
San Diego Rockets	1967-68	15-67	4,067
Seattle SuperSonics	1967-68	21-61	8,823
Toronto Raptors	1995-96	21-61	23,179
Vancouver Grizzlies	1995-96	15-67	17,183

Nba.com

The numbers in this chart show the rise of popularity of the NBA in the mid to late 1980s. In 1980 the Dallas Mavericks averaged just under 8,000 fans a game, but in 1988 the Charlotte Hornets came in and averaged 23,000. These numbers have continued to be high since 1988. It

is also no surprise that all expansion teams have horrible records their first year, but in most cases this does not keep the fans away.

A sports franchise will relocate for many reasons; their fan base could be shrinking, they could want a new arena, or a new owner could want to move the team to his hometown. In the article by Daniel and Heather Rascher they say, “One key impetus for relocation is to increase arena-related revenues. Some owners argue that the increased revenues from a new arena put a franchise in a better position to bid for quality players, resulting in a better team, which, in turn, draws more fans, resulting in more revenues.”(Rascher & Rascher , 2004) Revenue is what keeps a professional sports franchise alive. If the revenue for a season is down you will usually see changes occur the following season. Some of these changes can be in the marketing of the team but there will also be changes to personnel. Currently the New York Knicks are seeing their lowest attendance in recent memory and most people think this will be one of the reasons Isaiah Thomas will be fired at the end of the year.

In their article Rascher and Rascher take into account three principle factors when determining a city that could be a possible destination for the NBA. “The choice of a city depends on at least three major factors: the owner’s preference, the political climate, and the economics of the location.”(Rascher & Rascher, 2004).” The reason they think these three are the biggest factors are sometimes a owner just wants to have a team in the area he/she lives in, usually it is the local governments that help finance the building of a new stadium or arena, and when a franchise is in a region with a rich population and large business then their attendance should be higher which will make for better revenue.

In the chart below Rascher and Rascher try to project the potential attendance, gate receipts and total revenue of the NBA teams and what they think are the top 23 cities that the NBA would consider having a franchise in. This chart goes by teams that were in the league in 1999.

City/Team (sorted by gate receipts)	Forecasted attendance	Forecasted gate receipts (\$)	Forecasted total revenue (\$)
Chicago Bulls	20,108	45,283,019	103,944,723
New Jersey Nets	19,667	44,609,289	103,666,295
New York Knicks	18,717	41,543,980	96,906,295
Washington Wizards	19,704	41,358,306	83,281,956
Los Angeles Clippers	17,899	38,422,655	97,575,067
Los Angeles Lakers	17,899	38,422,655	97,575,067
Seattle SuperSonics	19,757	38,312,641	71,904,303
Detroit Pistons	18,249	34,583,135	77,497,291
Houston Rockets	18,325	34,298,557	69,692,269
Boston Celtics	18,218	33,924,509	68,763,022
Indiana Pacers	19,235	32,993,512	66,299,117
Philadelphia 76ers	17,729	32,781,592	75,895,337
Portland Trail Blazers	18,715	32,330,039	64,190,119
Memphis	18,796	31,596,200	59,847,117
Utah Jazz	18,622	31,209,019	62,109,120
Hartford	18,134	30,943,166	56,251,917
Phoenix Suns	18,286	30,498,141	72,479,118
Minnesota Timberwolves	17,526	30,384,199	67,701,633
Miami Heat	18,315	29,977,964	67,583,986
Baltimore	17,560	29,429,689	64,518,291
Louisville	18,311	28,911,371	59,396,878
San Diego	17,372	28,460,087	66,524,446
Las Vegas	17,545	27,242,661	59,699,671
Nashville	17,528	26,882,101	58,132,275
Milwaukee Bucks	16,978	26,290,903	58,624,142
Sacramento Kings	17,138	26,101,881	52,459,725
Golden State Warriors	15,762	26,011,957	63,966,882
Honolulu	16,467	25,830,914	50,552,504
San Antonio Spurs	17,354	25,604,283	54,161,323
Norfolk, Virginia Beach	17,058	24,720,174	59,816,386
Dallas Mavericks	15,907	24,685,943	60,500,450
Charlotte Hornets	16,516	23,644,230	51,580,247
St. Louis	16,074	23,606,227	62,257,248

Atlanta Hawks	15,625	23,464,312	62,783,478
Orlando Magic	16,506	23,263,533	55,287,320
New Orleans	16,314	22,026,250	59,897,920
Jacksonville	16,085	21,331,308	54,111,519
Cincinnati	15,644	20,361,607	53,771,644
Cleveland Cavaliers	15,119	20,272,483	56,035,523
Austin–San Marcos	15,931	19,766,609	49,390,583
Denver Nuggets	14,939	19,541,896	51,326,220
Kansas City	15,280	19,503,955	54,329,534
Albuquerque	15,394	17,362,572	45,547,891
Columbus	13,879	13,684,159	45,976,470
Pittsburgh	13,357	12,543,029	48,788,601
Omaha	13,553	12,345,181	39,255,986
Buffalo–N. Falls	13,659	11,974,656	46,414,481
Oklahoma City	11,432	11,114,854	33,726,430
Tucson	11,071	10,608,078	31,618,100
El Paso	9,311	10,178,875	19,506,282

If you notice in the chart above they thought the number one city for the NBA to move to was Memphis, and in 2001 the NBA did just that. The cities on this chart that are in bold are cities that did not have a NBA franchise when Rascher and Rascher performed their study. Another surprising city is Oklahoma City, it is ranked third from last on this chart but it temporarily has an NBA franchise and heads the list of possible cities the league will move too. There are some cities on this chart that no major professional league would think about moving too, but it goes to show that in most cities a sports franchise will make money and have the support of the citizens.

Rascher and Rascher state that they think the next cities the NBA will expand to are, Louisville, San Diego, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Norfolk. In November of 2005 NBA Commissioner David Stern came out and said that the leading candidate for relocation or expansion would be Oklahoma City, he also said that the NBA was not considering expansion at

the time. San Diego another city mentioned by Rascher and Rascher has had two NBA franchise move on them. The San Diego Rockets played from 1967-1971 before moving to their current home of Houston, and the San Diego Clippers only played from 1978-1985 before moving to their current home in Los Angeles. “However the Clippers would still sink to the bottom of the Pacific Division with a 30-52 record. Following the season the Clippers would set sail for Los Angeles, in the years since the Clippers moved to Los Angeles the NBA has not even considered a return to San Diego (Sportsecyclopedia, 2003).” With the NBA not considering a return to San Diego it shows that Rascher and Rascher might not have taken the correct factors into account when coming up with their formula. Baltimore is another city that Rascher and Rascher said could be a possible location. The Bullets moved from Baltimore to Washington in 1973, once again another city that the NBA has already left.

Pittsburg is another city that appears low on the chart above, but the city has been hosting Preseason NBA games for the past two years. This year the game pulled in an attendance of 9,000 up nearly 1,000 from the previous year. Dave Moser says that Pittsburgh would be a perfect place for an NBA franchise for a few reasons they are: It’s Preseason, Black Community Support, Largest Market with No Team, and Increasing Local Interest and support. The fact the Pittsburgh is right behind San Diego as the largest market in the United States with out an NBA team helps. To back this up Moser says, “But Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Tampa Bay, which are all approximately the same size of about 2.5 million people in the metropolitan area, are right behind San Diego as the next largest markets without an NBA team. The NBA already has some very tiny markets like Salt Lake City, Charlotte, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Oklahoma City and Memphis. So I doubt they can continue to ignore these four biggest markets when it comes time

for expansion or relocation (Moser, 2006).” Moser makes some valid points as why Pittsburgh should have a NBA team. Pittsburgh, a potential NBA city will be examined more in depth later on in this study.

Although NBA Commissioner David Stern has said that the league does not have any current plans to expand right now, people have begun discussing the possibility of the league having franchises in either Europe or Asia. With the number of European and Asian players coming into the league and the extreme popularity of the league in these two continents it might not be a bad idea. Currently during the summer the league hosts camps and exhibition games in these countries but this could change in the future. In 2002 during his state of the league press conference David Stern addressed the possibility of adding more franchise outside of the United States, "It's not anything that I ever thought I would be saying in a public forum, but my sense now is that by the end of this new television arrangement, which is six years from now, there will be a firm set of plans for NBA expansion outside the United States. We think that the internationalization of our sport is 'now at a stage where those are not fanciful discussions or thoughts. I'd say that, realistically, the places where we could place NBA teams would be Mexico and Europe, from a travel perspective. The place that we would consider NBA sponsored-leagues is anyplace, including Asia, Latin America and Europe." Since the 2002 press conference the NBA has continued to work on creating leagues in Asia or Europe but neither idea has come to fruition yet.

Even though nothing has come about with a team or league in Asia, there is still a lot of work being done between Asia and the NBA. In 2004 The NBA and the Asia Society joined to

organize a delegation that visited China in November of that year. The visit coincided with a series between The Houston Rockets and Sacramento Kings that took place in China. “The delegation will be comprised of more than 100 people, including some of the team owners, sponsors and other major stakeholders of the NBA. The trip will give American executives and investors a unique window into the Chinese sports, business policy-making and cultural worlds (Asia Society, 2004).”

The NBA seems to think they are closer to having a team in Europe than in Asia. In 2003 Commissioner Stern said he believes the league will expand overseas to Europe in this decade. He says the main reasons for this are, “the increasing influx of foreign players into the NBA, wider television coverage of NBA overseas, and basketball's introduction to the Olympics(China Daily, n.d.) .” In 2006 the NBA took its first steps by holding training camps in some European countries. The San Antonio Spurs who have French guard Tony Parker on their roster held their training camp in his home country. This is just another way for the NBA to sell their product overseas and to see if it is received well enough that they can take the chance and expand their league into this continent.

Aner Ravon sees the NBA expansion to Europe as both a bad thing and an impossible feat for the league. Ravon argues that even though the popularity of the sport is growing it will never reach the popularity of Europe's favorite sport soccer. He also says that the make-up of the game is completely different in Europe and if you decide to expand there it could be a problem rules wise. One idea Ravon gives the reader that I have not seen elsewhere is that the NBA can convert some of the already existing basketball franchises into NBA franchises.

Although this sounds like a great idea he finds some possible problems with it also, "Let's do the calculation again: An average NBA team's annual budget is \$100 million, with \$50-60 million allocated for salaries. A top Euroleague team runs a budget of between \$12-20 million. None of the Euroleague elite plays in a major city like London, Paris or Munich, meaning that in order to attract a major fan base, new franchises would need to be built from scratch. (Ravon, 2006)." With these points that Ravon makes it seems it will be extremely difficult for the NBA to expand in any other continent than North America, but it is my guess that the league will do anything it can to try and find ways to expand, because in the end it is about making as much money as they can.

With the 2007 NBA All-Star game taking place in Las Vegas in 2007 it has to make one wonder if the NBA is considering moving a franchise to the city. Currently the league runs a summer league in the city, but Commissioner Stern does not see it go any further than that. "David Stern has been publicly against such a move because the casinos take bets on NBA games. But the 2007 All-Star game is scheduled to be played in Vegas--though Stern steadfastly denies that he has retreated at all on his anti-Vegas stance (Schreiber, 2006)." The fact the sports betting is legal in Las Vegas is the main reason the league will not move there. In order to have the All-star game in the city all casinos had to agree to have the game taken off the books. The team to be most rumored to make a move to Las Vegas is the Sacramento Kings. Reasons for these rumors are, the Maloofs who own the Kings also own The Palms hotel and casino in Las Vegas. This added to the fact that the Kings are looking for a new arena and so far it looks like the city of Sacramento does not think a new arena is needed.

It is not widely known that the NBA has actually had a team play some regular season games in Las Vegas. In the 1983-1984 season the Utah Jazz played 11 home games in Las Vegas. The reason for these games was simple, "Eleven games--Jazz "home" games--were scheduled for play in Las Vegas for the 1983-84 season in hopes of generating quick cash (Blackwell, n.d.)." The team did not make any extra money from these games, but the team did begin to win some games so they did not have to be relocated.

Like the National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball has also had its fair share of relocation rumors in the past few years. The Montreal Expos moved to Washington and Maury Brown a writer for *The Hardball Times* says now that Washington has a team the MLB will not move any others because the major markets all have teams now. Brown says this about the biggest factor in relocating a team, "the largest factor for any MLB club in terms of local revenues is not attendance, but rather television broadcast revenues (Brown, 2006)." Brown goes on to breakdown the different cities that have been rumored to be looking to get MLB franchise but says none of them are high enough on the Designated Market Area Ranking that Nielsen Media Research provides. Most of the cities he researched are the same that the NBA could possibly relocate or expand too, Norfolk, Virginia and Las Vegas, Nevada are two of the examples.

Even though Brown thinks the most important factor of relocation is the size of the cities market, the last move by the NBA goes against this. "Team relocations, and the threat thereof, have commensurately increased the value of major league clubs. Moreover, the Hornets move from Charlotte to New Orleans was primarily due to a more appealing facility agreement with

New Orleans for a state-of-the-art facility; however, the relocation placed the team in a smaller media market and a less affluent city (Rascher & Rascher, 2004).” Even though a city may be large in size it doesn’t necessarily mean it will be a great NBA city. San Diego which has one of the highest populations in all of the United States has been the home to two NBA franchises and both have left the city.

Chapter 3:

For this thesis I will be doing a case study of potential cities the NBA would either relocate or expand to. I will take into effect the population of the city, the economic background of the city, the market size of the city within the Nielsen ratings, and if the city has any current major professional sports teams. I will study two different set of cities, the first one will be the cities that I think could be a city the NBA could relocate or expand to they are Las Vegas, Louisville, St. Louis, Hartford, and Pittsburgh. The second set of cities will be the last 5 cities that the NBA has relocated or expanded to they are Charlotte, Toronto, Memphis, New Orleans, and Oklahoma City. For the cities that currently have NBA franchise I will take their information from the year that the franchise started competing in the NBA. In chapter 4 I will put all of the information together and then make a chart to compare the current cities and the possible cities to see if any of them would be capable of supporting a franchise in the NBA.

Chapter 4: Case Study

For a franchise in the National Basketball Association to continue operating the owners usually look directly toward financial earnings. Teams that are not bringing in money usually will be relocated to a city that will better support the team. For an NBA franchise to be financially successful many different factors must exist. The factors that I think are most important are, the franchise must be located in a city that is largely populated, if the city has a large population the chances of getting more people to the games is higher. Another factor will be if the city has ever been the home to any other NBA franchises. The city must also have an arena located close by that will fit all the needs of an NBA team, when the Toronto Raptors joined the NBA they played in The SkyDome until the it was proven their attendance numbers were high enough then they built the Air Canada Center. The city must have shown in the past that it can support a professional or top tier collegiate team, and finally like Rascher and Rascher said the economics of the location mostly focus on average or median income per person or household, a city like Camden, New Jersey would not be a location for the NBA because the economics of the city would not lead to franchise earnings. Within chapter 4 I will break down the five cities I think the NBA would consider, the five cities Rascher and Rascher determined to be the best, and the last five cities that the NBA moved or created a franchise in. I will break the cities down one by one starting with the 5 most recent cities that the NBA has moved or created a franchise in. Please note that all population and income numbers are taken from the US census via Wikipedia.

Five Newest NBA Cities

In this section I will break down the cities that the five newest NBA franchises are located in. Those cities are Toronto, Memphis, New Orleans, Oklahoma City and Charlotte. I will break these and the other cities down by using the five factors that I have mentioned above.

Toronto:

The Toronto Raptors entered the NBA in the 1995-1996 season along with the Vancouver Grizzlies who later moved to Memphis. This was the first Canadian based NBA franchise since the 1946-1947 season when the Toronto Huskies ended operations. The Raptors started the expansion boom of the late 1990's and early 2000's and Toronto was a perfect city to expand too.

In 1996 Toronto had a city population of 2,385,421 and a metro population of 4,263,757, which was the most of any Canadian city in both categories. Added to the population was the fact that Basketball was now becoming a global game so it was the perfect time for the NBA to re-enter Canada. With a population that high and the fact that Toronto has supported other professional sport teams the NBA had to figure that they would get enough attendance to make this franchise profitable.

Toronto is also home to the Maple Leafs one of the most storied franchises in the NHL and the Blue Jays who play in the MLB and have shown that even though baseball is not a huge sport the city of Toronto will support it. These two teams had success and this is another reason that

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the NBA saw Toronto as a city that would be a good place for a franchise. Between the years of 1990 and 1996 the average income per person in Toronto dropped, even though the income had dropped it was still sufficient enough for the NBA. “After adjustment for inflation, the average total income of individuals, 15 years of age and over, was \$25 196.(Abstract, 1996)” In the 1996 seasons the Maple Leafs and Blue Jays played in the Maple Leafs Garden and The Skydome respectively. In its first 5 seasons the Raptors played in both of these facilities until 1999 when the Air Canada Centre was built.

All of these factors plus the fact that the NBA was trying to become global were the reasons why Toronto was a good fit for the Raptors.

Memphis:

At the end of the 2000-2001 season the Vancouver Grizzlies were relocated to Memphis, Tennessee. Although there was thought of changing the name to the Memphis Express named after Federal Express which is located in Memphis the team stuck with Grizzlies. Although Memphis had many professional teams on a smaller level this would be the first team it had in “the big 4”.

In 2001 when the Grizzlies relocated to Memphis, there was a population of 650,100 and a metro population of 1,260,581. This is substantially less than the population of Toronto when the Raptors became an NBA franchise, but Memphis is not even close to as big in size as Toronto is. Even though Memphis had no previous major sport team they did have Memphis

University Basketball, this team has had a large fan base for years and it couldn't hurt to add an NBA team to a city that already supported a top notch college team. Even though the city supports a Memphis University supporting a professional franchise is very different so this was a concern and probably the reason Memphis did not obtain a franchise sooner. Memphis is also located near Arkansas and Mississippi; these states also do not have an NBA franchise so there are even more possible fans.

When the Grizzlies moved to Memphis they played in the Pyramid Arena, which is a 21,000 seat arena located in downtown Memphis at the banks of the Mississippi River. They played there for their first 3 years and then later moved to the brand new FedExForum. The FedExForum is a city owned Arena that was built mainly for the Grizzlies once it was shown that the team would draw good crowds.

When the census of 2000 was taken the median household income was at \$32,285 which came in around the middle of the United States. The demographics of the city were also a plus for the moving a team to the city. African-Americans and Whites make up 96% and these are the two main races that follow NBA.

New Orleans / Oklahoma City:

In 2002 the Charlotte Hornets decided to leave Charlotte and move all operations to New Orleans. This would be the first time that New Orleans would be the home to an NBA franchise. After Hurricane Katrina devastated the city and damaged the New Orleans Arena the NBA

looked for a tentative home for the Hornets, and they choose Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City like New Orleans has never been the home to an NBA franchise and has never been the home to any team in the “big4”.

In 2000 New Orleans ranked as the 34th most populated city in the United States of America with an estimated 484,674 city residents. The New Orleans Metro area had a total of 1.4 million people. Of the city population nearly 150,000 of these residents were between the ages of 25-44 the age range that the NBA targets for its fans who buy tickets. After the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina the population metropolitan New Orleans population dipped to 1.2 million people, but the city which was hit hardest by the hurricane saw its population drop to 223,000 according to an estimate released by the US census bureau in July 2006.

In 2005 the NBA made the decision to temporarily move the Hornets to Oklahoma City, a city that was often discussed as possible destination for a franchise. It was almost like a tryout period for the city and reports are that the Seattle SuperSonics who were recently purchased by Oklahoma City businessman Clay Bennett. In July when the move was official Bennett said he hoped to keep the team in Seattle, “It is not our intention to move or relocate the teams -- as long, of course, as we are able to negotiate a successor venue to the current basketball arena and arrangements to ensure the Sonics and Storm can succeed,” but earlier in the year he said, “The bottom line is, we want a team for this market,(Associated Press, 2006)” that market being Oklahoma City. In 2005 the population of Oklahoma City was 531,324, with a population of 1,172,339 in the metropolitan area; both of these numbers are very similar to those of New Orleans.

For New Orleans and Oklahoma City this was the first time they had an NBA franchise in their city, but New Orleans has the New Orleans Saints, who were perennial losers when the Hornets decided to move. Even though the Saints were known for their losing ways the fans of New Orleans always seemed to support them so the NBA had to see this as a huge advantage. Oklahoma City has never had a team from the NBA, MLB, NHL, or NFL in its city, but the fact that fans have been coming out to support the Hornets has to look good in the eyes of the NBA officials. Both cities also had established Arenas for the newly relocated teams to play in, so the cities did not have to spend any money to build a new arena. When the 2000 census was taken New Orleans had a median household income of \$27,133 and 24% of the population was below the poverty line. Oklahoma City had a median household income of \$37,375 in 2005 when the Hornets entered their city. These are both cities that will have an NBA franchise within a few years.

Charlotte:

Charlotte is one of the biggest enigmas when it comes to the NBA. The city is located in the state of North Carolina that has such a love for basketball yet the Charlotte Hornets could not draw substantial crowds so the team moved to New Orleans. The Charlotte Bobcats became the 30th and newest NBA franchise in 2004 when owner Bob Johnson won the rights to become the owner. Johnson would also become the first majority owner that was African-American, and was a breath of fresh air to Charlotte after Hornets owner George Shinn treated the fans in Charlotte so bad. Other information that lead the NBA to move expand in Charlotte again were, the median household income for Charlotte in 2004 was \$44,674, which was down from the

previous year. Also, when the Bobcats moved to Charlotte they played in the already existing Charlotte Coliseum until construction on the Charlotte Bobcats Arena was completed for the 2005 season.

In the years of 2004-2005 when the NBA expanded to add the Bobcats Charlotte was the 20th largest city in the United States and had a population of 610,949 people and the metropolitan area had 1,794,799 people. The people of Charlotte have shown that they will support their professional sport teams as long as they are treated correctly. The Carolina Panthers are the only other “Big 4” team located in Charlotte, but the Carolina Hurricanes of the NHL are located in nearby Raleigh and both of these teams have every large fan bases. These two fan bases plus the fact that basketball is king in North Carolina it was no surprise the NBA decided to have a team call Charlotte their home.

City	Population City/Metro	Previous NBA Franchises	Current "Big 4" Teams	Arena(s)	Median Income
Toronto (1996)	2,385,421 / 4,263,757	Huskies 1946-1947	Maple Leafs & Blue Jays	Maple Leafs Gardens & Skydome	\$25,196 per person
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Oklahoma City (2005)	531,324 / 1,172,339	None	None	Ford Center	\$37,375 per household

Five Cities Rascher and Rascher Predicted

“The location model forecasts the best cities for an NBA team based on the underlying characteristics of current NBA teams. The results suggest that Louisville, San Diego, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Norfolk appear to be the most promising candidates for relocation or expansion.”(Rascher & Rascher, 2004, p. 274)

In this section I will breakdown these five cities with the five factors I think play the largest role in picking a city and see how these cities compare with the cities of the five newest NBA franchises.

Louisville:

Louisville is a city that is steep in sports history. Louisville is home to the most famous horse track in the world, Churchill Downs, which hosts the most famous horse race in the world, The Kentucky Derby. Louisville is located in northern Kentucky and borders the state of Indiana. Although the city has a steep sports history it mostly revolves around horse racing and the University of Louisville Football and Basketball teams. Louisville men’s basketball team competes in the Big East Conference and is one of the most followed teams in the nation. The state of Kentucky is a basketball heaven with both University of Kentucky and University of Louisville, and this is a great reason for the NBA to look to place a franchise in Louisville.

When the 2005 census was taken Louisville was the 26th most populated city in America with 556,429 city residents and 1,208,452 metro residents. When the 2000 census was taken

Louisville ranked as the 67th most populated city so it is obvious that Louisville is a city that is on the grow. Although Louisville's population is continuing to rise there has still never been a franchise from the "big 4".

If the NBA does decide to move a franchise to the major roadblock will be an arena. Currently in Louisville the best option for a arena would be Alumni Hall on the campus of University of Louisville, but this would be the smallest arena in the NBA and it is an arena that was built to host college basketball. This could be changing though, "Following the recommendation of the Louisville Arena Task Force, Governor Ernie Fletcher has created the Louisville Arena Authority, Inc. to oversee the design, construction and operation of the proposed Louisville Arena complex. Jim Host was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Authority (Arenaauthority, n.d.)." The median household income for Louisville is \$39,457. All of these facts lead me to agree with Rascher and Rascher that Louisville would make a great city for the NBA to have a Franchise in.

San Diego:

San Diego is a beach town that is located in Southern California. San Diego has been home to two NBA franchises that have left after short periods of time in the city. The Rockets called San Diego home from 1967-1971 before moving to Houston, and the Clippers operated out of San Diego between the ears of 1978- 1984 but the team was moved to Los Angles because of poor attendance, "The Clippers' poor play in their final years in San Diego resulted in poor attendance with the team averaging only 4,500 fans per game. Sterling subsequently lobbied the

NBA to relocate the team to his native Los Angeles ("Clippers," 2007)." Even though the Clippers moved out of San Diego, the city has shown that it currently supports its major league franchises in the Chargers and Padres of the NFL and MLB respectively.

San Diego is currently ranks 8th among United States cities with a city population of 1,255,540 and a metro population of 3,066,820. San Diego is also the highest ranking city in population in the United States that does not have an NBA franchise operating within it. This is the main reason why the NBA might look at San Diego the next time they expand or relocate, but the question is will they go back to a city that has already had two franchise leave after short periods of time.

San Diego currently has two Arenas that host basketball games, but each arena is way too small for an NBA franchise to call home. Cox Arena on the campus of San Diego State University holds 12,414 people for a basketball game, and the iPayOne Center holds 14,500. These two arenas would not be able to meet the needs of an NBA franchise and its fans. If the NBA wanted to move a team to San Diego the city or new owner would have to build a brand new state of the art arena. The good thing is that San Diego's median income is \$47,067 which would make the price of building a new arena seem a little more feasible then In other cities. San Diego is a city that has its pluses and minuses but I think there are too many minuses and don't see an NBA franchise operating out of San Diego any time soon.

Baltimore:

Like San Diego Baltimore, Maryland has previously had a two NBA franchises call “The Charm City” home. From the years of 1947-1955 and 1963-1972 Baltimore had two different franchises play within their city, ironically both of these teams were nicknamed the Bullets. In 1972 the Bullets moved to Washington DC and became the Capital Bullets and then two years later changed their name to the Washington Bullets. The Bullets continued to play a few games each season in Baltimore throughout the 90’s.

Baltimore currently has a city population of 635,815 and a metro population of 2,639,213 which ranks the city as the 18th most populated city in the United States and is the 6th highest populated city without an NBA franchise. The median income per household is \$30,078, which is one of the lowest in the nation. The city is currently home to the Ravens of the NFL and the Orioles of Major League Baseball. The Ravens are one of the newer franchises in the NFL and have had great success since moving from Cleveland, the Orioles have been one of the worst franchises in Major League Baseball over the past 5-8 years and the fan base is beginning to become unhappy with ownership.

Baltimore currently only has one arena, and that is 1st Mariner Arena. This arena was home to the Baltimore Bullets, but is no longer a viable option for an NBA team. In 2004 there was talk of replacing 1st Mariner Arena with a new facility but it would not have enough seating for an NBA team, “On October 16th, 2004, *The Baltimore Sun* revealed that an official step has started into replacing the 42-year-old 1st Mariner Arena. The Maryland Stadium Authority recently started soliciting proposals for a feasibility study on building an arena in downtown

Baltimore, the request for proposals are due on November 1st, 2004. According to the request for proposals that was released, the new arena would be built in the same site of 1st Mariner Arena and "would have a smaller seating capacity than would be required for an NHL or NBA team("Baltimore Arena," 2007)." If they do not put a new arena with enough seating then it shows that Baltimore is not in play for an NBA franchise. Baltimore could be a destination for a future NBA team if many things change along the way, but with its track or having teams fail or leave and the fact that there is not arena for an NBA franchise I do not think we will see an NBA franchise in Baltimore any time soon.

St. Louis:

St. Louis, Missouri was called the "Nations Best Sports City" by The Sporting News in 2000. The city is currently home to teams in three of the big four leagues and is one of two cities in America that has a team in the NHL, MLB, and NFL but does not have a team in the NBA. St. Louis once did have a basketball franchise though; the Spirits of St. Louis played in the ABA but did not make the move to the NBA.

St. Louis currently has a city population of 352,572 but has a metro population of 2,786,728. St. Louis does not rank in the top 50 most populated cities. The disparity between the two populations is huge and there is no other city in the top 50 that as such a difference between city population and metro population. The median household income in St. Louis is \$29,156, which is very low. Population and income aside St. Louis citizens love their sports, the

Blues, Cardinals, and Rams are model franchises and their fan bases are known to be some of the biggest and best.

St. Louis has two possible homes for an NBA franchise to play in. The first is Edward Jones Dome; this is the current home to the Rams and could hold 66,000 for a basketball game. Edward Jones dome might be a little too big so the better option would be the Scottrade Center. This arena is home the Blues and St. Louis University Men's Basketball team. The seating capacity here for a basketball game is 22,612, which is right around many of the current NBA arenas.

St. Louis would be a great location for an NBA franchise. There are existing fan bases from all of the other teams, the city is one of if not the best sports cities in the country and they have proper facilities for a team. It would not surprise me to see St. Louis at the top of the list the next time the NBA looks to relocate or expand.

Norfolk:

Norfolk, Virginia is a city that I would never have thought would be a possible location for an NBA franchise. Though in the late 1960's and early 1970' Norfolk was the home to the Virginia Squires of the ABA. The Squires did not move to the NBA when it obtained the rights to the ABA. If Norfolk were to become home to a team the franchise would be located close to the Washington Wizards so they would fight them for fans. Also the city of Norfolk has never

before been the home to a franchise in the “Big 4” they are home to some minor league teams, but it would be very difficult for this city to back an NBA franchise.

The median income in Norfolk is \$31,815 per household. This is similar to many of the other possible NBA cities Rascher and Rascher predicted. Norfolk has a city population of 234,403 and a metro population of 1,645,015. These populations are very similar to the other potential NBA cities, and Norfolk is home to the largest naval base in the world so there is definitely a large group that a franchise can dip into to get fans. Norfolk has one arena located in its city; Norfolk Scope is a 12,600 seat arena that is too small to be the home to an NBA franchise, so if the city is serious about bring in an NBA franchise they will have to build a brand new arena.

Norfolk would be a very poor choice to be the home of an NBA franchise. The city does not have the arena or experience that is needed to host a major league sports franchise. If the city hopes to get acknowledge by any of the “Big 4” to be the home f a franchise they first must show they can support their two minor league teams.

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San Diego	1,255,540 / 3,066,820	Rockets 1967-1971 Clippers 1978-1984	Chargers & Padres	iPayOne Center, Cox Arena	\$47,067 per household
Baltimore	635,815 / 2,639,213	Bullets 1947-1955 1963-1972	Ravens & Orioles	1st Mariner Arena	\$30,078 per household
St. Louis	352,572 / 2,786,728	None	Cardinals, Blues, & Rams	Edward Jones Dome & Scottrade Center	\$29,156 per household
Norfolk	234,403 / 1,645,015	None	None	Norfolk Scope	\$31,815 per household

Five Cities I Predicted

Two of the cities I predicted would be a good home for an NBA franchise were Louisville and St. Louis. Rascher and Rascher also saw these two cities as having great potential. I have already broken down the information for each city and ask that if you want to see that information you go to the previous section and read over it. The other three cities I will examine in this section are Las Vegas, Nevada, Hartford Connecticut, and Pittsburgh Pennsylvania.

Louisville:

Please See Above

St. Louis:

Please See Above

Las Vegas:

Las Vegas, Nevada is the perfect place for a professional sports franchise, except for one thing, gambling. Las Vegas currently is the home to many minor league sports teams, but it has never been the home to a team in the “Big 4”, and it probably never will be while gambling on sports is legal in the town. Las Vegas currently has a city population of 591,536 and a metro population of 1,825,751, these population numbers are similar to the 5 cities that Rascher and Rascher predicted. The median income per household is a very high \$44,069.

Las Vegas does have the Thomas and Mack Center which is located on the campus of University of Nevada Las Vegas. The arena has a seating capacity of 18,776 and it home to

many of the cities minor league teams. If the NBA were to move a franchise to Las Vegas some renovations would have to be done to the arena but it would be a decent home for a team.

In February of 2006 Las Vegas had somewhat of a try-out for the NBA, and the city did not pass this test. Commissioner David Stern allowed the NBA All-Star game to be held in Las Vegas thinking it could be a great chance to see how the city would do. While many of the NBA star loved the idea of having the game in Las Vegas the truth is the event was a huge failure. There were reports that more arrests were made during that three day period then any other in the cities history. Jason Whitlock a popular columnist wrote this statement about the weekend “All weekend, people, especially cab drivers, gossiped about brawls and shootings. You didn't know what to believe because the local newspaper was filled with stories about what a raging success All-Star Weekend was. The city is desperately trying to attract an NBA franchise, and, I guess, there was no reason to let a few bloody bodies get in the way of a cozy relationship with Stern (Whitlock, n.d.)” If you had asked me in January if Las Vegas would have an NBA franchise soon I might have said yes, but after the display in February I can say no and feel confident about it.

Hartford:

Hartford, Connecticut would not strike you as a possible home for an NBA franchise, but when thinking about possible cities it is one that stuck out to me for 2 reasons. The first reason is basketball is very popular in Connecticut, The University of Connecticut men's and women's basketball teams are extremely popular and The Connecticut Sun of the WNBA are one of the

most popular franchises in that league. The second reason is that ESPN's studios are very close to Hartford and it can not hurt to be close to the worldwide leader in sports.

Hartford currently has a city population of 124,397 and a metro population of 1,188,241, these numbers are considerably less than most of the other cities. Along with that population the city has a median household income of \$24,820 which like the population is considerably less than the other cities mentioned. Both of these statistics are very damaging to the city if they would like to have an NBA franchise in their City.

Hartford once was the home of the Whalers a NHL franchise that moved to Raleigh, North Carolina in 1997. The Whalers played in the Hartford Civic Center which is a part-time home to the UCONN basketball teams and has a basketball capacity of 16,294. This capacity is a little to small for an NBA franchise.

Even though Connecticut is a great basketball state and ESPN headquarters is located in the state I do not think it would be a good place for an NBA franchise. The population of the city is a little to low and the fact that a new arena would probably have to be built would not go over well with the residents of the city.

Pittsburgh:

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is the second of two cities to have franchise in the NFL, NHL, and MLB but not have one in the NBA. This city is very similar to St. Louis in that it is know as

a great sports city and has some of the best fans in the world. Pittsburgh is home to the Pirates, Steelers, and Penguins and home too many minor leagues sports teams. The one drawback over the past few years for Pittsburgh has been Mellon Arena.

Pittsburgh has a city population of 316,718 and a metro population of 2,358,695 both of these numbers are similar to those of the other cities that I have researched. To go with the population the median income per household in Pittsburgh is \$28,588 which is on the low end of the cities researched. One place where Pittsburgh does make up some ground is that they currently have a team in the United States Basketball League. This means that they have a solid group of fans already and if you put an NBA franchise in the city you could just build on that fan base.

As I stated earlier Mellon Arena is one of the biggest obstacles if the NBA wanted to put a franchise in Pittsburgh. This all changed on March 14th 2007 when the Penguins reached a deal with the city of Pittsburgh to start building a brand new state of the art arena, “The Penguins and government officials ended months of difficult negotiations, agreeing to a \$290 million arena deal that ensures the team will stay in Pittsburgh. (ESPN News Services, 2007)” The arena is set to open in 2010 and have a capacity near 20,000.

Pittsburgh would be a great city for the NBA to have a franchise in. It now has the arena to go with the great fans. Like St. Louis I would not be surprised if Pittsburgh is on the top of the list the next time the NBA is looking for a new city.

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Louisville	556,429 / 1,208,452	None	None	Alumni Hall	\$39,457 per household
St. Louis	352,572 / 2,786,728	None	Cardinals, Blues, & Rams	Edward Jones Dome & Scottrade Center	\$29,156 per household
Las Vegas	591,536 / 1,825,751	None	None	Thomas and Mack Center	\$44,069 per household
Hartford	124,397 / 1,188,241	None	None	Hartford Civic Center	\$24,820 per household
Pittsburgh	316,718 / 2,358,695	None	Pirates, Penguins, Steelers	Mellon Arena	\$28,588 per household

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Memphis (2001)	650,100 / 1,260,581	None	None	Pyramid Arena	\$32,285 per household
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Oklahoma City (2005)	531,324 / 1,172,339	None	None	Ford Center	\$37,375 per household
Rascher and Rascher's Predictions					
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Norfolk	234,403 / 1,645,015	None	None	Norfolk Scope	\$31,815 per household
Brian Poll's Predictions					
Louisville	556,429 / 1,208,452	None	None	Alumni Hall	\$39,457 per household
St. Louis	352,572 / 2,786,728	None	Cardinals, Blues, & Rams	Edward Jones Dome & Scottrade Center	\$29,156 per household
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Results and Findings:

When considering a new home for an NBA franchise I think the three biggest factors are, if a previous NBA franchise has played in the city, population of the city, and other major sports franchise that play in the city. By using a combination of these three factors you will be able to determine if a team will be able to garner a big enough fan base to make the team profitable. Having a proper NBA arena is also important, but if there is not one in the city, the franchise or city can always build one. The last five cities the NBA has moved to has shown that average income does not mean anything to them, so this is the least important factor that I included.

After studying the information from the chart on the previous page I think if the NBA were to relocate or expand the best two options would be St. Louis and Pittsburgh. I also think Louisville and San Diego can be possibilities but both have some drawbacks. St. Louis and Pittsburgh both meet all of the standards that the previous cities have had and in some cases look even better than those cities. Not one of the previous five cities have had a MLB, NHL, and NFL all operating out of their city. Population wise these two cities are a little lower than the average city population of the previous five but their metropolitan population is higher, and even if the city population is lower the cities have shown that they will support major sports franchises. Both Population and other "Big 4" teams were the two biggest factors when I was determining possible cities. These two cities also have or soon will have state of the art arenas that can be used by the teams, so the cities will not have to raise any money to build a new arena.

Louisville and San Diego have a chance to be the home to an NBA franchise but both have some potential roadblocks. Louisville has never had a major sports franchise operate from its city and it currently does not have a proper NBA arena. San Diego has great population and has shown that it can support major sports franchises, but the city does not have a proper NBA arena and the city has failed two previous times in supporting an NBA franchise. If either of these two cities wants to be home to an NBA franchise it will come down to if the city can have its people come out and support an NBA team

By using the factors that I did Hartford, Norfolk, Baltimore, and Las Vegas will not be considered the home for an NBA franchise any time soon. Hartford and Norfolk are not large enough and have never proven they can support a team, Baltimore does not look committed to having a team, and until Las Vegas can figure out a way to work out gambling on basketball games and showing they can control their streets they will not have a team.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

With the landscape of sports changing almost daily expansion and relocation in all sports has become a very hot topic. The NBA currently has 30 teams, which is a perfect amount and that is why in my mind expansion would not be the correct move for the NBA. However there are still some NBA franchise that are not in cities where they can flourish, and these are the franchises that need to be relocated to cities that better meet the needs of an NBA franchise. If I were NBA commissioner David Stern I would move the Hornets permanently back to New Orleans once the city is ready, move the Seattle SuperSonics to Oklahoma City and finally move the Milwaukee Bucks to St. Louis. I would also keep a close eye on the Charlotte Bobcats because the fans of Charlotte have already proven that they will not support an NBA team if they are not happy with the ownership. With the possibility that the New Jersey Nets could be moving from East Rutherford to Brooklyn there is also a chance that the NBA would want another franchise in New Jersey. The NBA home offices are in Secaucus, New Jersey and it is logical for the leagues to have a team in the same state as its league office.

If I were to speculate on what the NBA was going to do next I think the Seattle SuperSonics would move and that's all. Although I have previously mentioned the Milwaukee Bucks as a team I would relocate I don't think the NBA has the same views as I do. I also think the NBA would think about expansion because when the NBA looks at a franchise they see potential earnings.

Rascher and Rascher's article in *Journal of Sports Management* examine what they think are the factors but it is only one article. Now with there article added to my study it shows a different perspective but some of the results are the same. I think in about five years another study needs to be done, but this study should focus on the expansion and relocation to Europe and possibly Asia. With the growing number of players in the NBA from these two continents the league is becoming extremely popular. If the NBA wants to benefit financially from this they would start to look at expansion to these continents.

Commissioner David Stern has recently come out and talked about his plans to expand to Europe. "NBA in Europe. Write it down. In 20 years, five franchises playing in the NBA (Shoutfan, 2005)." If Stern sees this in the future of his league I think it is a possibility. On the hit ESPN show *Pardon the Interruption* sports columnists Tony Kornheiser and Michael Wilbon spoke about this new development. Both believed it will happen in the future but five years is a little too soon. Some of the cities that they mentioned were London, Barcelona, and Rome. The main reason they gave for the NBA to expand to Europe was the fact that so many Europeans are now in the league.

After the incident in Las Vegas the image of the NBA is not that great right now. With the possibility of some teams moving locations it is possible that some cities may not want to have a team located in their city. If I was the mayor of a major city that the NBA was considering I would have examine what kind of impact the team would have on the city and if their was any chance that it would have been a negative impact I would not want to have a NBA franchise.

Getting the kind of attention Las Vegas did definitely will not be a good thing for a major U.S city.

The future of expansion and relocation in the NBA can go many different ways. It can stay domestic and just go to new cities in America. It can go across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe or they can even try and expand to Mexico. Just recently NASCAR has had their first race in Mexico so it is not impossible to think that some other sports leagues can follow. As long as the National Basketball Association is still making money they will continue to grow and try different things. The NBA is just like any other business they love to make money and will try as many different things as they can to make it.

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