

Securing a Fabulous Venue for Your Next In-Person Event

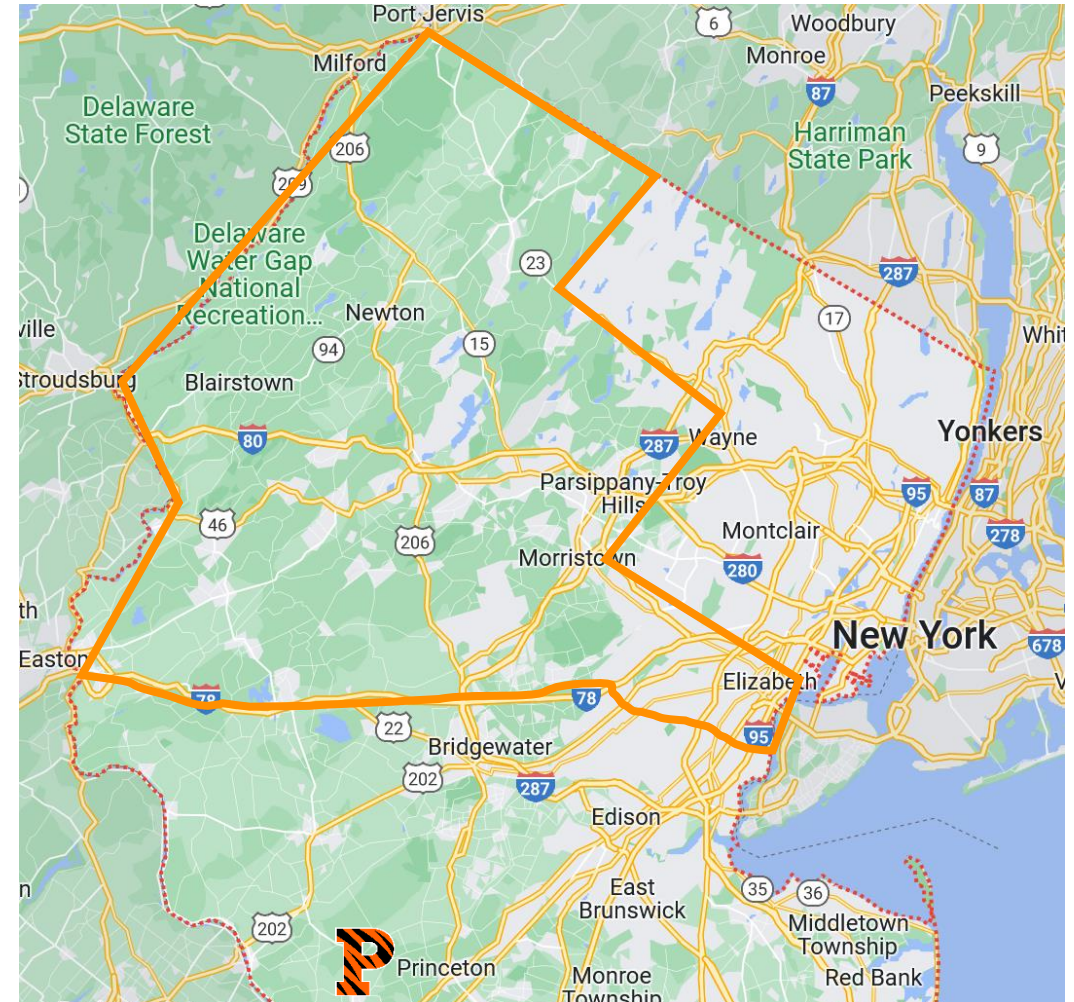
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About PCNWNJ

- Mid-sized regional alumni association with ~1500 Members per Tigernet2
- Northwestern area of New Jersey, plus Union County NJ
- Geographically large (by NJ standards), with most Members residing in the southeast portion of our region



Registration question

“Beyond traditional venues (bar, private restaurant space, room at an alum's office, etc.), what has worked well, or not so well, for in-person events? Briefly describe the event, what you were hoping for from the space, & what made the venue good/not so good.”

Verbatims

- **symphony**- we subsidized tickets for non traditional performance; **pickleball courts**- opened it to all levels/no fee
- Legal office for Biotech panel. Beautiful campus, large meeting room with great tech, supportive staff. Had to **know a partner**.
- **Karaoke Bar** (for karaoke, naturally) - worked great with private room and we brought our own snacks/drinks
- Reception/recital at fabulous homes of **alumni and Princeton parents**
- **Homes of alums** in easily accessible or notable areas of [City]; any **alum-owned business** of esteem
- Through **personal connections**, a bank is hosting a reception at a gorgeous, seaside private club that has attracted a good turnout



Themes

- Princeton network / Personal connections
 - Know a partner
 - Alumni and Princeton parents
 - Homes of alums
 - Alum-owned business
 - Personal connections
- Venue comes with the event
 - Symphony
 - Pickleball courts
 - Karaoke Bar

Princeton network / Personal connections

- Leverage your network(s) to secure a fabulous venue
- Princeton alums are often well-connected and happy to help
- Gain access to premiere non-public venues and/or better terms
- One caution...
- ...Be careful about going back to the same well too many times

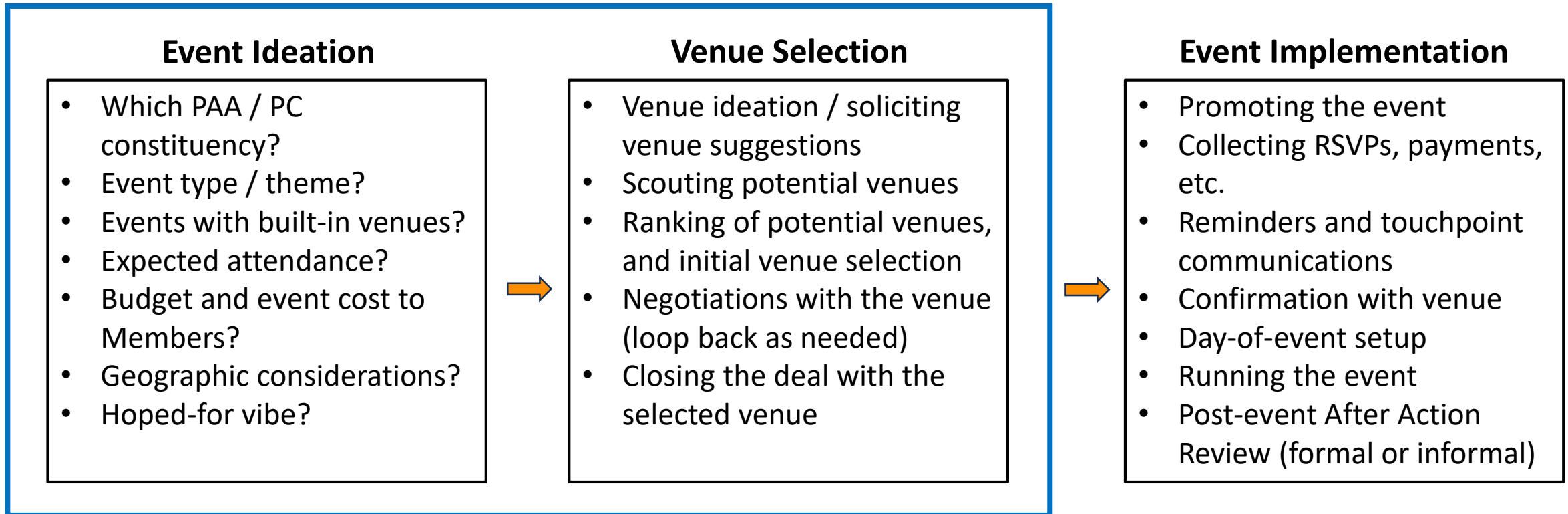


Events with built-in venues

- Securing a fabulous venue is sometimes the hardest (and perhaps most costly) part of event planning
- Consider planning events where the venue comes with the event
- Museums, symphonies, zoos, picnics in parks, sporting events, hiking on trails, etc. – all of these have built-in venues



Event planning process



Today's Focus



Factors which influence venue selection

- Event type / theme
- Expected attendance
- Budget and event cost to Members
- Geographic considerations
- Hoped-for vibe



Event type / theme

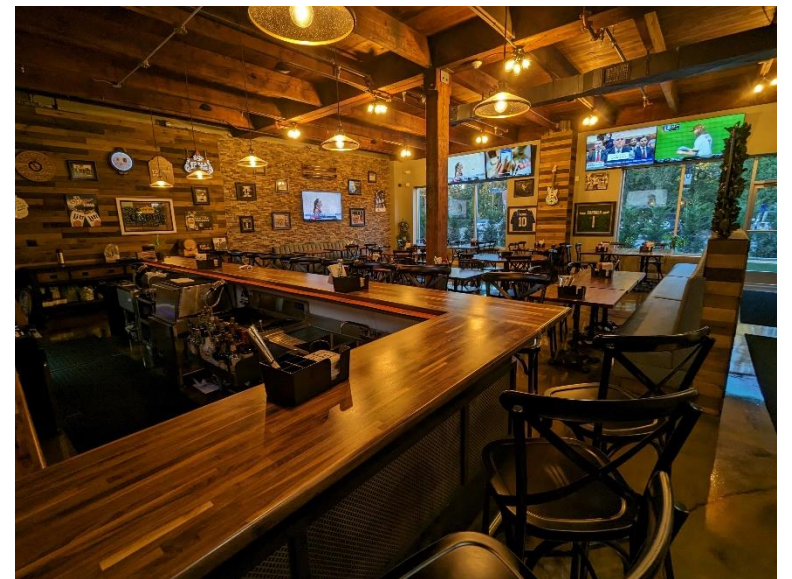
- In-person events which are less structured and more social
 - Happy Hours, social mixers, Recent Alum meetups, hikes, picnics, etc.
- In-person events which are more structured and more informational
 - Formal Member meetings, author talks, panel discussions, Annual Dinners, ASC Admitted Student receptions, etc.
- The Event type / theme suggests more or less suitable venue types



Expected attendance

- Look to your recent event turnout
 - “Past performance is no guarantee of future results.”
- Will you have a great hook to create interest and prompt RSVPs?
 - Great speaker, watch party, famous author, service award, something “exclusive”, etc.
- Will you be partnering with other Princeton groups (other Regional Associations, Princeton Affinity Groups, etc.)?
- Where, how, and how much will you promote the event?

Regardless of the uncertainty involved, you need an attendance estimate



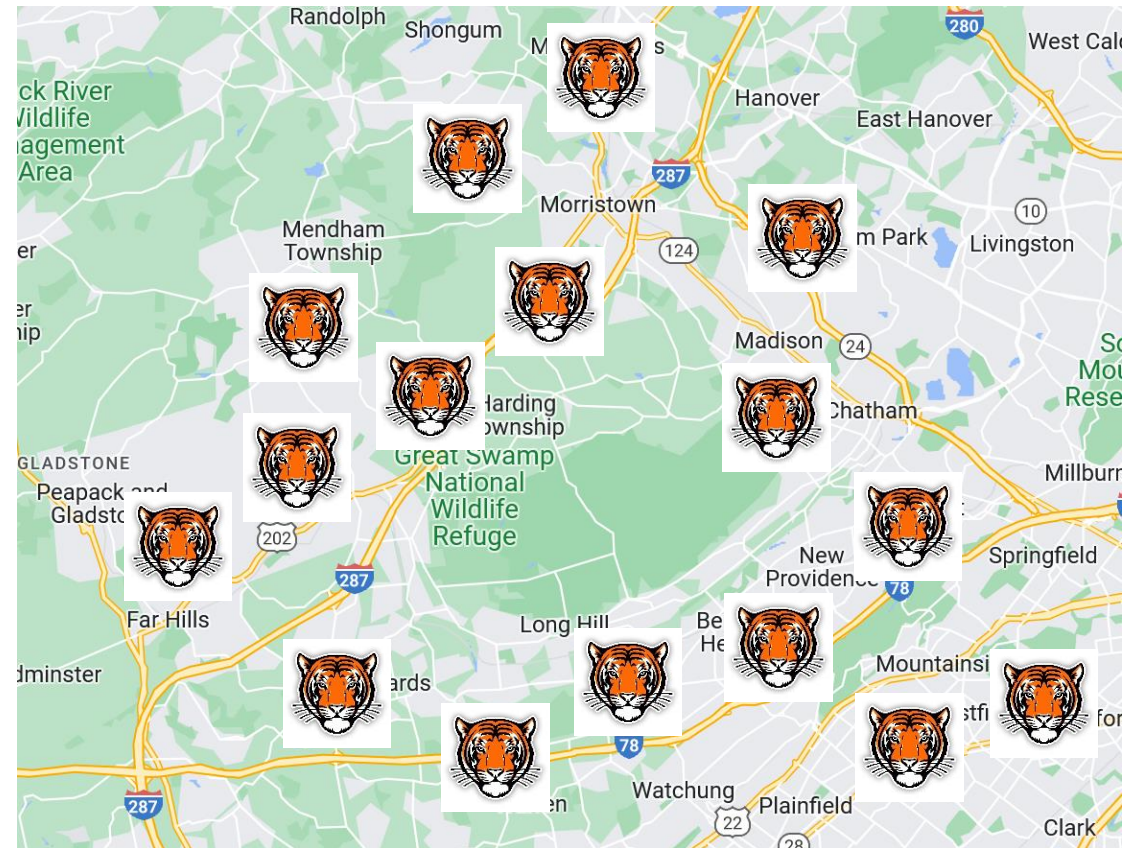
Budget and event cost to Members

- What's your budget?
 - Budget is an important driver of venue selection
 - “Country clubs and wedding reception venues” vs. “corner bars and coffee shops”
 - Venues with prix-fixe and open bars can be EXPENSIVE
 - Can your treasury take the hit?
- How will you price the event?
 - PAA-subsidized or at-cost to Members?
 - Prix-fixe or a la carte? (Example: Open bar vs. attendee self-pay for drinks)
- PCNWNJ believes that event attendance drops as the cost of attendance rises, all else being equal
- Consider “Cheap and cheerful” – Trey Farmer ‘93



Event geography (Part 1)

- Geographic distribution of Members is a planning factor
- This affects travel times
- “Members will travel $< X$ minutes for this event”
- Solve for X
- Have a realistic perspective on willingness to travel

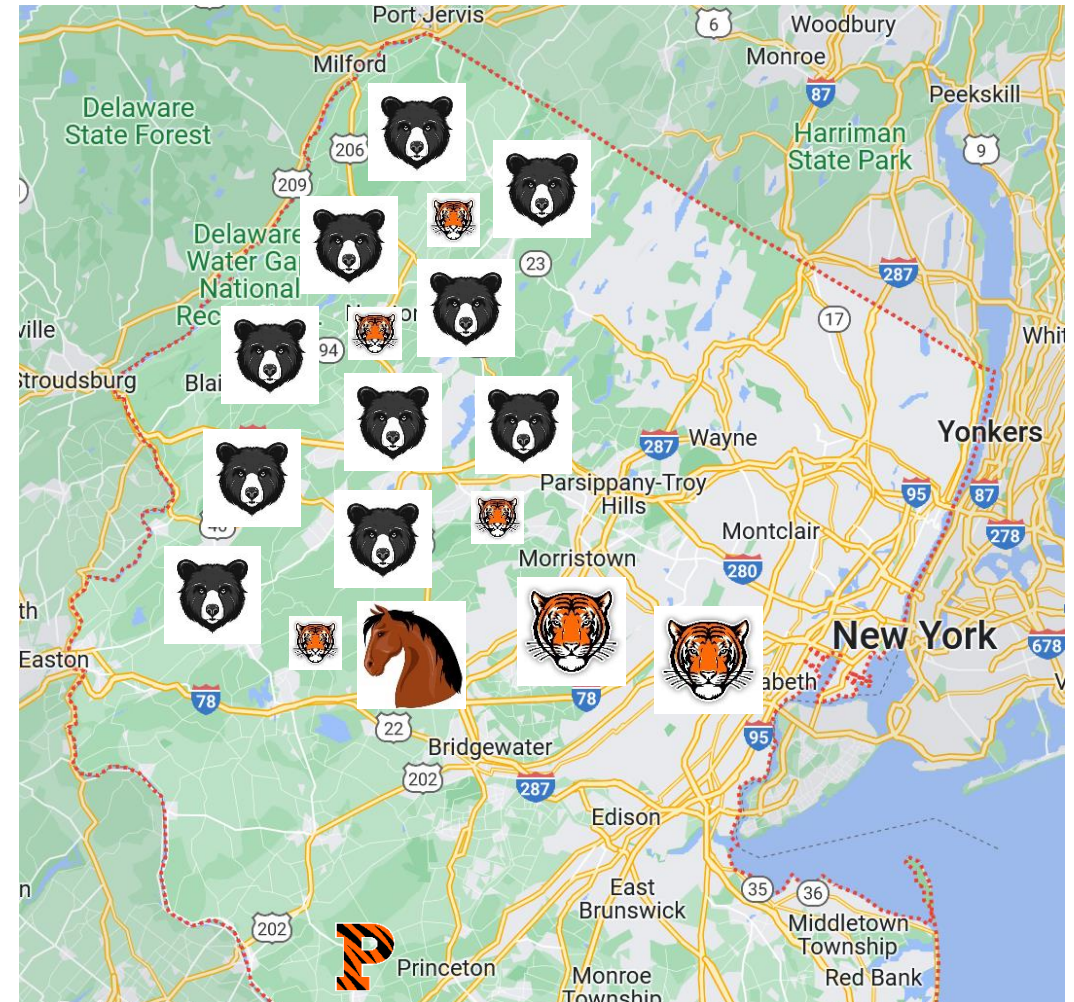


Event geography (Part 2)

- Do you always have your events close to where most of your Members live?
- Should you host some events in the more remote areas of your Region?
- In PCNWNJ, this means Tigers venturing into Bear country

[NJ] Fish and Wildlife biologists have calculated a 2020 population estimate of **3,158 bears** for the [Northwestern NJ] region north of Interstate 78 and west of Interstate 287, which is an increase from the 2019 estimated population for this same region of 2,208.

<https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/black-bear-biology-and-behavior/>



Tigers make friends wherever they go...



Hoped-for vibe from the venue

- “Curb appeal”
- Clean, well maintained, updated, etc.
- Venue shouldn’t feel empty during your event
 - Better 20 attendees in a room for 25 than 30 in a room for 100
- The full range of Princeton’s diverse alumni base must feel welcome at whatever venue is selected
- There should be a visible and cohesive Princeton group presence during the event
- Many other variables for something so subjective
- Remember... It’s a feeling, not a checklist



Venue selection process

Venue ideation / soliciting venue ideas

- Venues from successful past events
 - Lunar New Year Celebration at Qin Dynasty in Parsippany NJ
- “I know a guy...”
 - The Princeton network and personal connections
- Members with special access privileges (country club members, partners at law firms, etc.)
- Suggestions from Members who live/work in the locale you are targeting
 - Especially helpful if you are planning an event in an area you are not personally familiar with



Scouting potential venues

- Visit potential venues to vet them, preferably around the day/time of the planned event
- Beware of incorrect or out-of-date info
- Online photos are often misleading
- Size up the venue as a potential fit
- Casually chat with the venue staff and ask relevant questions



A tiger on the prowl for a fabulous venue

Venue negotiations and closing the deal

- Very situationally dependent
- Commercial venue owners...
 - Want to make money
 - Want to fill their space with paying customers during periods of low demand
- Make the least commitment you can to get the venue you want
- Watch out for commitment contracts and minimum spend amounts
- Payment by cash / check sometimes helps
- Have options and be willing to walk away



PCNWNJ case studies

ASC Admitted Student Reception – Past

- A signature annual event for PCNWNJ
- Hosted at the Morris Museum for several years in the early to mid-2010s
- Convenient and beautiful space often used for corporate events and wedding receptions
- Great events with positive feedback
- These events depleted our treasury due to the high recurring venue cost



ASC Admitted Student Reception – Present

- Needed a less expensive venue
- Selected the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morris Township NJ
- Great location, beautiful grounds, very nice large event room, all the required amenities
- Not as “fancy” as the Morris Museum, but... ~1/3 the cost!
- And we still flip our “Undecideds” to “Matriculated” status



Fall Networking 2019

- Canoe Brook Country Club in Summit NJ
- Secured through a PCNWNJ Member who was a member of Canoe Brook
- Private room, two hour open bar and appetizers for \$30 per person (an incredible price!)
- A fabulous venue, especially considering the price point
- Moderate turnout; a very good event otherwise



Fall Networking 2021

- Fall of 2021, so still some Covid concerns
- Wanted an open outdoor space
- Canoe Brook wasn't an option
- Maribel Abbate '95 graciously offered her home which has a large backyard open air patio
- Fabulous venue, wonderful hosts, great turnout, fantastic event!



O&B Day 2022

- Targeted Summit NJ for this event
- Very good concentration of nearby Members
- Neil Shah '01 knows the owner of the Summit brewpub we chose
- Partnered with PWN of NNJ to boost turnout
- We did a “bar takeover”. CORA paid for the food, and the attendees paid for their own drinks. No venue fee
- Great turnout and lots of fun!



O&B Day 2023

- Partnered with PAA of Essex and Hudson Counties and PAA of Northern NJ-ROC
- Targeted an area central to all three Northern NJ Regional Associations
- Securing a fabulous venue, at little to no cost, was our goal
- We scouted six venue options



O&B Day 2023 – A brewpub

- A brewpub in our target geographic area showed potential
- The brewpub in Summit had worked well for O&B Day 2022
- An Instagram post promoted its beer garden and **Orange** Twist, an Imperial IPA
- Their website looked great
- A scouting trip would be in order



Brewpub – Scouting report

- Set in an industrial park with no curb appeal
- Small taproom
- A little worn looking
- And as for the beer garden...



Moving on



Another brewpub – Scouting report

- Walked in
- Looked around
- Nope!
- (When you know, you know)



Moving on

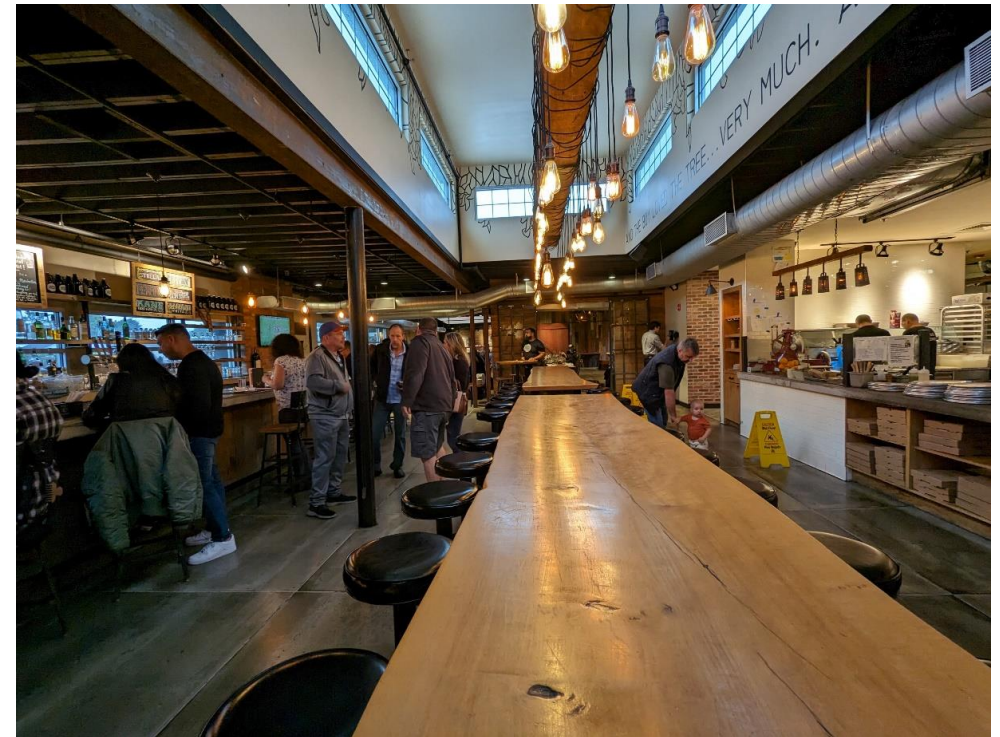


Wood Stack Pizza Kitchen – Scouting report

- Great location, excellent curb appeal, updated interior
- Not crowded on late Sunday afternoons
- \$40/person for appetizers in a non-private area. Drinks would be extra



Moving on



O&B Day 2023 – The Clubhouse

- Upscale golf-themed sports bar
- Great location with curb appeal
- The front room was nearly empty on the two late Sunday afternoons when we scouted
- The staff said we could bring a large group and occupy the front room with no per-head cost and no contract
- Fabulous venue! Excellent event!



Let Princeton help you secure your venue

- Must be a RA in good standing
- Certificate of Insurance from Princeton University
 - Some venues insist on having this
- Letter of Tax Exempt status from Princeton University (to avoid state sales tax)
 - Only valid in some states
 - May only be available if your RA is formally under Princeton's tax umbrella
- Don't wait until the last minute!

The screenshot shows the Princeton University Office of Finance & Treasury website. The header includes the Princeton University logo and navigation links: Our Organization, Forms, Policies, Training, Financial Systems, and Special Information. Below the header is a search bar and a navigation menu with categories: BUYING & PAYING, PAYROLL & LABOR ACCOUNTING, BUDGETING & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, PRIME REPORTING & ACCOUNTING, RISK MANAGEMENT, TAX, RENTS & MORTGAGES, and GIFTS & SPONSORED RESEARCH. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: Home / Risk Management, Tax, Rents & Mortgages / Risk Management and Insurance. The title of the page is "Risk Management and Insurance". A sidebar on the left lists links: Risk Management and Insurance, Fleet Safety and University-Approved Drivers, HIPAA, Insurance Coverage and Options, and Vendor Insurance Requirements. The main text begins with a large letter 'A' and discusses the risks of various activities and the University's insurance policies. It includes a section for "Request for a University Certificate of Insurance" and a "Have questions?" section.

Final thoughts

- Start your planning early
- Tap your (Princeton) network
- Strongly consider planning events with built-in venues
- Be creative and flexible
- Don't take short cuts – do your due diligence
- Maintain your optionality
- Focus on what matters most for the event you wish to host





Thank you!