



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

YOUTH SPORTS COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT & MARKET POTENTIAL STUDY





Mr. Al Moll
Director of Parks & Recreation
City of Fort Wayne
705 E. State Blvd.
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46805

Dear Mr. Moll:

It has been a pleasure for Aquarius Sports & Entertainment (“Aquarius”) and Victus Advisors LLC (“Victus Advisors”) to serve the City of Fort Wayne (“Fort Wayne” or the “City”) on this youth sports community assessment and market potential study. This Executive Summary encapsulates our research methodology, key findings and final recommendations. We have organized this document into the following sections:

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Sincerely,



I. PROJECT BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

Aquarius and Victus Advisors were engaged by the City of Fort Wayne in May 2013 to A) assess the existing youth sports community in Fort Wayne, and B) identify opportunities to increase the market potential for youth sports in Fort Wayne. The primary goal of this project was to develop a realistic road map for Fort Wayne to better serve the local youth sports needs of the community, while also becoming a regional destination for youth sports and sports tourism.

The customized methodology completed by Aquarius and Victus Advisors from May to December of 2013 employed a mixture of public engagement, primary and secondary research methods, and other analytical tools. This methodology was divided into the following two phases:

1. COMMUNITY FACILITY & EXISTING MARKET ASSESSMENT

The goal of this phase of the study was to develop a comprehensive profile of the strengths and weaknesses of the Fort Wayne youth sports market. Project tasks in this phase included:

- a. **Local Market Analysis:** assessment of the Fort Wayne market based upon customized research and analysis of the local market, rather than relying only upon industry averages and national trends.
 - *Demographic/Socioeconomic Analysis:* Compiled demographic and socioeconomic statistics regarding the Fort Wayne Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). These statistics served to quantify the potential baseline support for youth sports events within the local marketplace.
 - *Facility Inventory:* Researched the physical and operational characteristics of existing event venues in the Fort Wayne market.
 - *Major Event Interviews & Profiles:* Compiled a list of the major youth sports events that have been hosted in the Fort Wayne market in recent years, and conducted interviews with the hosts and organizers of these events in order to assess the successes and/or failures associated with each event, and identify potential opportunities for improvement.
- b. **Comparative Market Analysis:** Benchmarked Fort Wayne's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, community venues, and major event history against comparable cities both regionally and nationally.

- c. **Community Interviews & Surveys:** Engaged the Fort Wayne youth sports community to gather local opinions regarding community needs. This public engagement process took part in three overlapping stages:
- *Public Meeting:* Held a public meeting in Fort Wayne to present our approach to the study and gather initial input from citizens.
 - *In-Person Interviews & Focus Groups:* Met with leaders of various Fort Wayne organizations to gather their visions and opinions regarding Fort Wayne's youth sports community.
 - *E-mail Surveys:* Distributed an online survey instrument to members of various local community and membership organizations, with the goal of gathering input from a wider reach of Fort Wayne citizens.
- d. **Marketing & Branding Analysis:** Evaluated the strengths & weaknesses of the City's current youth sports marketing and branding efforts by benchmarking them against best practices identified in comparative markets.

2. MARKET POTENTIAL STUDY

The goal of this second phase of the study was to develop an opportunity profile to utilize, improve upon, or expand beyond existing youth sports facilities in Fort Wayne to better serve the needs of the local community and attract new youth sports events. Project tasks completed in this phase included:

- a. **Market Opportunity Analysis:** Based on the results of the market research, interviews, and comparative analysis conducted in previous phases, identified potential youth sports opportunities and untapped event markets for Fort Wayne.
- b. **Facility Recommendations:** Developed recommendations regarding potential improvements that could be made to existing facilities or development of new youth sports facilities.
- c. **Economic & Fiscal Impact Analysis:** Utilized the results of the Market Opportunity Analysis and Facility Recommendations tasks to prepare estimates of the potential economic and fiscal impacts that could be generated for the community by facility development and incremental event activity.

- d. **Marketing & Branding Recommendations:** Created a series of youth sports marketing & branding recommendations for the City of Fort Wayne. These recommendations encompassed brand positioning, brand values, communications outlines, messaging hierarchy, media strategies and co-marketing opportunities.

II. KEY FINDINGS: MARKET & FACILITY ANALYSIS

The following information represents a summary of key findings from the Local Market Analysis and Comparative Market Analysis:

LOCATION:

- Fort Wayne is centrally located within a 3-hour drive of numerous large markets, including Chicago, IL; Indianapolis, IN; Dayton, OH; Cincinnati, OH; Columbus, OH; Akron, OH; Cleveland, OH; Toledo, OH; Detroit, MI; Flint, MI; Lansing, MI; and Grand Rapids, MI.

DEMOGRAPHICS & SOCIOECONOMICS:

- The Fort Wayne Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has a population of more than 423,000 people.
- Comparative markets were selected for Fort Wayne, ranging from approximately 350,000 to 850,000 people. These six comparative MSA's included: Dayton, OH (850,000 people); Grand Rapids, MI (789,000); Chattanooga, TN (539,000); Canton, OH (403,000); Evansville, IN (361,000); and Rockford, IL (347,000).
- *Population Growth:* Since 2000, the Fort Wayne MSA's population has grown faster (annualized growth rate of 0.63%) than five of the six comparative markets.
- *Median Age:* The Fort Wayne MSA's population skews younger (36.2 median age) than five of the six comparative markets, indicating a greater presence of young families.
- *Child Population:* More than 26% of the Fort Wayne MSA's population is under the age of 18, which is a larger population of youth than any of the other comparative markets.
- *Household Income:* The Fort Wayne MSA's median household income (\$46,200) is significantly higher than any of the comparative markets (ranging from \$41,700 to \$44,000).

LOCAL FACILITIES:

- Analysis of local youth sports facilities was based primarily on interviews with organizers of youth sports events, focus groups with youth sports community leaders, and surveys with local youth sports participants.

- Youth sports events held at Fort Wayne sports facilities typically range from 20 to 500 teams per event, with total attendees ranging from 500 to 5,000 people.
- *Positively reviewed facilities:* Canlan Ice Sports, Spiece Fieldhouse/Gym Rats, Sport One Parkview Fieldhouse.
- *Negatively reviewed facilities:* Kreager Sports Park (not enough fields, poor field condition), Hefner Soccer Complex (renter does not get full control of facility for events).
- *Field Sports (baseball/softball, soccer, rugby, field hockey, lacrosse, etc.):* Fort Wayne lacks large, multi-field venues with 10+ soccer fields and/or baseball fields. Many large events require 12-18 fields, and a single centralized location is preferred. Artificial turf is also frequently preferred because of its reliable condition and ability to withstand heavy usage.
- *Basketball/Volleyball:* Spiece/Gym Rats are considered both regionally and nationally to be a great venue/organization to work with, even though the multi-venue approach for national tournaments that require 20+ courts is not necessarily ideal.
- *Other Key Findings:* Overall impressions of Fort Wayne from organizations that have visited in recent years are positive, however many national-level organizations are not aware of Fort Wayne as a potential destination for youth sports. *Positives:* Fort Wayne is centrally located within the region, and there is a lot of local involvement and enthusiasm for youth sports. *Negatives:* Several events we spoke to indicated that Fort Wayne lacks larger complexes for bigger events and lacks turf fields, and also asked for more advertising help from Fort Wayne to promote their events.

III. KEY FINDINGS: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Over the course of July and August 2013, the following public engagement steps were completed:

- 19 one-on-one interviews completed with key stakeholders.
- Two focus group sessions completed with 27 total youth sports community leaders.
- One open public meeting with over 80 attendees.
- 895 online surveys with local youth sports parents, coaches and participants.

Public engagement topics included:

- Perceptions of the quality of Fort Wayne youth sports facilities.
- Perceptions of other cities and facilities that host youth sports events.
- Perceptions of the strengths/weaknesses of various youth sports in Fort Wayne.
- Opportunities for participation in youth sports in Fort Wayne.
- Local support for youth sports in Fort Wayne (City, business community, media, etc.).
- Marketing of Fort Wayne as a regional/national youth sports destination.

Key findings from the public engagement process include:

- The local community is very happy with numerous youth sports venues around the City (Canlan Ice, SportOne, Spiece, Plex North), especially those that have opened in recent years (ice sports, volleyball, etc.).
- Negative facility reviews were common for the Plex South (outdated, uncomfortable environment) ASH Centre (outdated facility in need of significant physical upgrades) and the Helen P. Brown Natatorium (issues with location, size, management, lack of dedicated diving wells, etc.).
- Many interviewees and respondents believed that adaptive sports have shown incredible success in Fort Wayne in recent years and that the City and community should do more to support adaptive sports organizations such as Turnstone.
- There are positive attitudes towards Fort Wayne as a family destination - i.e. ease of travel access, community support, hotel options, family entertainment options, etc.
- Fort Wayne could do a better job marketing itself as a regional destination for families. Many facilities and infrastructure are in place to do so, but the message can be communicated more clearly outside of Fort Wayne.
- There is a need for a stronger Sports Corporation or new Sports Commission, because there is a lot of confusion about who is currently responsible for marketing, promoting and organizing youth sports events and opportunities in Fort Wayne.
- The Fort Wayne school system provides opportunities for a wide variety of youth from all backgrounds, however the cost of participation on club teams and at private venues can be prohibitive.
- Most respondents (approximately 71% in surveys) emphasized that their favorite youth sports destinations outside of Fort Wayne are primarily driven by the quality of the sports facilities they visit. Similarly, more than 60% of respondents also indicated that they felt the overall quality and quantity of youth sports facilities in Fort Wayne were the primary weaknesses that could limit youth sports as a regional sports destination.
- Survey respondents felt that basketball, soccer and baseball have historically been the most successful youth sports in Fort Wayne, in terms of opportunities to play and learn, hosting leagues and tournaments, and providing opportunities to compete regionally and nationally. Alternatively, respondents felt that the local sports that deserve more support than they have historically received from the local community include swimming/diving, lacrosse, baseball/softball and adaptive sports.

IV. KEY FINDINGS: MARKETING ASSESSMENT

The following bullet points represent a summary of key findings from our initial youth sports marketing assessment of Fort Wayne and comparative markets:

- Most cities rely on Convention & Visitor Bureaus (CVB) and in many cases Sports Commissions to handle the bulk of their external youth sports marketing efforts. However in Fort Wayne, the CVB has a limited budget available for youth sports efforts and the balance of sports tourism advertising is conducted by local venue operators and event organizers.
- According to the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC), the key factors that typically drive youth sports event activity in a community include (in order of importance): #1) quality of venues, #2) proximity/access, #3) hotels/amenities, and then #4) reputation/brand as a family-friendly destination. In Fort Wayne, marketing efforts have historically focused on proximity/access (#2), hotels/amenities (#3), affordability, customer service and media coverage. Venues (#1 driver) have not historically been promoted as a major draw to hold youth sports events in Fort Wayne.
- Sports Commissions in comparative markets are special, dedicated organizations that seek to make sports a major force in economic development or revitalization in a community. They are led by full-time staff members, and often assisted by community volunteers. Sports Commissions require dedicated full-time executives with unique entrepreneurial insights and special knowledge into the sports marketplace, and they are typically formed in one of the following ways: A) chamber of commerce committee, B) division of CVB or tourism department, or C) independent non-profit organization that is privately funded.
- Sports Commissions in comparative markets play a key role in: A) assisting local sports organizations with promotional/advertising efforts, event creation or management, volunteer recruitment, and facility studies and economic impact calculations; B) attracting regional, national and international sporting events; C) assisting out-of-town events with local facility/site selection, regional PR and marketing, procurement of local corporate partners, merchandising, and volunteer recruitment; and D) acting as a managerial or financial partner in the creation of new local events to simultaneously meet the needs of the local community while also drawing sports tourism and economic impact from the local region (or a national stage).
- Based upon our review of youth sports marketing in both Fort Wayne and comparative markets, we believe the following marketing, branding and PR opportunities may exist for Fort Wayne:

- *Branding:* A) Use a strong brand to identify Fort Wayne as the “Premier Youth Sports Destination in the Midwest”. B) Determine who to communicate with outside of Fort Wayne: teams, leagues, sanctioning bodies, national governing boards (NGBs).
- *Venue Promotion:* A) Develop co-marketing partnership opportunities among venues, hospitality and operators. B) Speak more toward range and quality of venues in sports tourism advertising. C) Increase awareness of venues and events as they are happening.
- *Public Relations:* A) Share stories of successful local youth athletes. B) National PR opportunities to promote city’s role in adaptive sports. C) Educate all of Fort Wayne on local youth sporting events.
- *Social/Digital Media:* A) Apps, mobile web sites and social channels focused on youth sports. B) Sharing of multi-media content focused on youth sports.

V. FACILITY & SPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key recommendations are based upon both the industry experience of Aquarius and Victus Advisors, and the extensive research conducted during the Community Facility & Existing Market Assessment phase:

FIELD SPORTS COMPLEX:

- *Recommendation:* Demand exists for a 12-18 field complex that could host local practices and games, as well as large regional tournaments, for sports such as soccer, lacrosse, rugby, field hockey, etc. The complex should include synthetic turf fields, lighting for night time play, a championship field with bleacher seating, and a centralized area with locker rooms, public restrooms and concessions.
- By incorporating synthetic fields, a new field complex could: A) Accommodate more frequent use, without risk of damaging the field due to overuse or inclement weather; B) Allow for usage both earlier (spring) and later in the season (fall) than grass allows; and C) Require less daily maintenance (water, fertilizer, mowing, etc.).
- A new field sports complex would also:
 - Provide more opportunities for a wide variety of local field sports to practice and play.
 - Mitigate the risk of losing current regional events by providing a better experience with turf and modern amenities, and by keeping growing events from leaving for other cities with larger complexes.
 - Attract new regional events that prefer a single, large (12-18 field) complex with turf and modern amenities (locker rooms, concessions, etc.)

- *Conclusion:* Soccer has had success in Fort Wayne, but now it is important to invest in continued growth. A new field complex would address the local need for fields for more sports than just soccer, while also mitigating the risk of losing regional soccer events that currently come to Fort Wayne, attracting bigger and better field sports events, and helping Fort Wayne's soccer community continue to grow from a local success to a regional success.

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL FACILITIES:

- *Recommendation:* Fort Wayne should seek to improve current baseball/softball facilities to meet existing demand, while also pursuing future public-private investment in new larger baseball/softball facilities.
- Baseball and softball are among the most popular youth sports in Fort Wayne, however local youth participants frequently have to travel to participate in regional tournaments (South Bend/Lakeville, Warsaw, Cincinnati, Kalamazoo, etc.) since Fort Wayne lacks a single baseball/softball complex with multiple fields, lighting, and modern visitor amenities.
- Other sports, such as ice sports and volleyball, have received new public-private facilities in Fort Wayne within past 3 years that meet the needs of the local community and also help host smaller, regional tournaments (often in tandem with other local venues).
- Upgrades for existing baseball/softball facilities in Fort Wayne could help bring local baseball/softball facilities up to par with the current state of volleyball and ice sport facilities in Fort Wayne, i.e. providing support for local teams/leagues/camps and also attracting more regional events.
- *Conclusion:* There is a short-term opportunity to bring the current baseball/softball facilities up to par with other local sports, while also keeping a long-term eye on public-private opportunities to grow the sport regionally via a new or expanded complex with 8+ fields.

ADAPTIVE SPORTS:

- *Recommendation:* Fort Wayne should seek to position itself as a youth sports community that is all-inclusive (white, black, hispanic, etc.; any economic circumstance; able-bodied or disability).
- Fort Wayne has a unique opportunity to: A) provide increased access to athletic opportunities for local/regional youth with disabilities, while also B) moving ahead of the curve nationally in terms of attracting and hosting adaptive sports events.
- Local/regional infrastructure for adaptive sports has already been developed by Tumstone that could potentially be leveraged to create a national reach (national tournaments, camps, Paralympic events, etc.).

- Research conducted in the Public Engagement phase indicated that the local community believes that Turnstone has become a national leader in adaptive sports, and they hope more can be done to support Turnstone’s efforts and provide better facilities for their athletes.
- *Conclusion:* Fort Wayne has a unique opportunity to leverage existing programs and operational infrastructure to create a regional hub for adaptive sports with a national reach. Public-private cooperation will be key, as no single adaptive sports organization in Fort Wayne currently has the independent means to fund large multi-purpose sports facilities, attract larger regional/national events, and improve transportation options and accessibility for visitors with disabilities.

VI. ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

SPORTS COMMISSION:

- *Recommendation:* Fort Wayne should create a new Sports Commission that has a strong focus on youth sports. It is important that the commission is: A) Led by an active Board of Directors, including a mixture of business, community and sports leaders (preferably each making a financial contribution to the operations of the Sports Commission); B) Operated by an aggressive, entrepreneurial full-time Executive Director and support staff; and C) Represents the interests of all the key stakeholders, and is not controlled by one interest or ignored by key potential partners.
- A new Sports Commission in Fort Wayne could:
 - *Enhance Local Youth Sports:* A Sports Commission with staff that is dedicated to youth sports could be instrumental with enhancing existing local youth sports events. A well balanced Sports Commission can be an information repository and unbiased ally for challenges or opportunities that face various sports leagues and venues. It could establish itself as the “go-to” organization for all areas related to youth sports in Fort Wayne, including such features as a master website for all local youth sports programs and upcoming events, or hosting frequent local sports fairs or seminars.
 - *Attract New Events:* A full-time marketing effort focused on youth sports will significantly increase the opportunities to attract regional youth sports events to Fort Wayne.
 - *Build Brand/Reputation:* A dedicated Sports Commission could help Fort Wayne become known as a pro-active youth sports community that is capable of hosting successful events in first-class facilities in a community that embraces visiting families.

- *Develop a Fort Wayne Youth Sports Foundation:* Potentially as a sub-organization of the Sports Commission, Fort Wayne should continue to support all local youth sports organizations, under-privileged youth and adaptive sports participants by developing a foundation. This foundation could offer scholarships and supplemental funding to local youth sports initiatives.
- *Create & Develop Unique New Events:* Many Sports Commissions will host their own event. Doing so avoids the bid process and produces annual events without the threat of losing them to other cities. This approach can also drive consistent revenue streams for a Sports Commission’s annual budget.
- *Potential Vision Statement.* “The Fort Wayne Sports Commission seeks to enhance the quality of life for Fort Wayne residents, provide economic benefits for our community, and provide opportunities for athletes of all ages, abilities and economic situations.”

VII. MARKETING & BRANDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Fort Wayne should position itself as the premier regional destination for youth sports in the Midwest, because of its combination of:

- *State-of-the-Art venues:* Fort Wayne is a growing city with newly built, state-of-the-art facilities that feature three sheets of ice, as well as dedicated volleyball and basketball courts and strong community support for a variety of field sports
- *Proximity to other Midwestern cities:* Fort Wayne is accessible within a three-hour drive of cities in Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, as well as within Indiana.
- *Affordable hotels and family-friendly amenities, all conveniently located to athletic venues:* Fort Wayne has fairly-priced lodging, restaurants, shopping and activities all within 15 minutes of most athletic activities, as well as a wide range of things to do for event participants and their families.
- *Reputation among event participants and attendees:* Fort Wayne is a welcoming community to visit for both attendees and their families. It has a neighborly and safe regional reputation and a youth sports-oriented environment. The community is passionate about sports at all levels, from youth to recreational to adaptive to the professional level. For example, Fort Wayne has been named “The #1 City for Minor League Sports” in 2007 and consistently ranks as a top 10 minor league sports city.

VIII. ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF YOUTH SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

INTANGIBLE BENEFITS:

- More opportunities for a diverse set of youth and families to participate in sports .
- Increased quality of life and community pride .
- More attractive environment for businesses and their employees with young families .
- Health benefits of an active community .
- Increased awareness and improved regional/national reputation of Fort Wayne .

QUANTIFIABLE BENEFITS:

- *Construction Spending:* One-time economic and fiscal impacts from construction spending related to youth sports facility development.
- *Visitor Spending:* On-going economic and fiscal impacts from increased visitation associated with regional youth sports events held at new or improved Fort Wayne venues.
- Estimated incremental economic and fiscal impacts within Allen County that could be associated with the construction and on-going operations of youth sports venues would depend on the total amount of construction spending and incremental events/visitation that occurs. Using the IMPLAN system, we have prepared economic and fiscal impact estimates for the following three scenarios (low, medium and high), with figures representing the net present value (NPV) of incremental annual benefits over 20 years :
 - *Low - construction spending of \$10 million and 25 incremental annual youth sports events:* total economic output of \$49.5 million, 78 annual jobs, \$18.5 million in labor income, and approximately \$1.4 million in sales, income and food/beverage taxes.
 - *Medium - construction spending of \$20 million and 50 incremental annual youth sports events:* total economic output of \$99.1 million, 156 annual jobs, \$37.0 million in labor income, and approximately \$2.8 million in sales, income and food/beverage taxes.
 - *High - construction spending of \$30 million and 100 incremental annual youth sports events:* total economic output of \$194.2 million, 277 annual jobs, \$72.1 million in labor income, and approximately \$5.2 million in sales, income and food/beverage taxes.

IX. SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

This section summarizes potential next steps that Aquarius and Victus Advisors believe could be beneficial for the City of Fort Wayne:

SUPPORT FOR EXISTING FACILITIES/ORGANIZATIONS:

- It is important to note that Fort Wayne already has a solid base of existing youth sports facilities, led by passionate individuals and organizations in the private sector that have built teams, leagues and other youth sports programs that provide a great service for the Fort Wayne community. When considering any investments in renovated or new youth sports facilities, the City of Fort Wayne should maintain a focus on opportunities that can enhance or improve upon the existing operations and infrastructure that are already in place.

SPORTS COMMISSION:

- *Sports Commission Feasibility Study & Implementation Plan.* This study would analyze best practices for the establishment and operations of sports commissions, and develop a specific set of projections and recommendations for a successful Fort Wayne Sports Commission. Specific tasks to be completed would include:
 - In-depth analysis of comparable sports commissions, including interviews with sports commission leadership to understand how the commission was established and funded, best practices for on-going operations, financial and operational details, etc.
 - Development of detailed operating projections for a new Fort Wayne Sports Commission, including staffing recommendations, revenue/expense budgets, etc.
 - Creation of a customized implementation plan for a new Fort Worth Sports Commission, including recommendations regarding funding, board representation, commission membership, roles within the local community, roles within the region, etc.

SPORTS FACILITIES:

- *Market & Financial Feasibility Study for a New Multi-Sport Field Complex.* Should the City of Fort Wayne elect to move forward with development of a new youth sports field complex, a market and financial feasibility study could help initiate the planning process. This type of study typically includes some combination of the following analyses:

- Local market analysis (demographics, socioeconomics, competitive facilities).
 - Identification and review of comparable complexes operating in similar markets.
 - Preliminary recommendations regarding building program and amenities.
 - Projections for facility utilization and attendance.
 - Revenue/expense projections.
 - Economic/fiscal impact analysis.
 - Analysis of potential funding sources.
- *Preliminary Site Feasibility & Architectural Design for New Sports Facilities:* If the City wishes to move forward with a feasibility study for a new field complex, it is recommended that site feasibility and preliminary design work (typically including several design charrettes with key project stakeholders and community leaders) be performed in conjunction. This type of study is typically conducted by an architecture firm with previous experience designing sports facilities for youth sports. The goal of this type of study is to analyze the viability of potential sites and begin to identify the type and quality of facility that can be built to meet the needs of the community while staying within the unique financial parameters of the project. We would be glad to work with the City to identify, review and select potential architecture firms, and we could also work closely with the selected firm throughout the feasibility study process.

MARKETING & BRANDING:

- *Fort Wayne Youth Sports Brand Development:* Based on our recommended brand positioning, we can assist with development of a creative brand for Fort Wayne to use in youth sports marketing efforts. This may include the development of print advertising, sales collateral or direct marketing materials, along with a style guide that would include key messaging, font selections, photography recommendations, color palettes and other elements designed to achieve marketing consistency across platforms.
- *Fort Wayne Youth Sports Social Media Road Map:* We can develop a social media road map that would allow the City of Fort Wayne to better use social media as part of their youth sports communication platform. This may include developing social media goals and objectives, developing a strategic plan designed to achieve those goals and objectives, and outlining the social/digital media tactics that may be required. We can also assist with the implementation of these tactics, including the development of apps, mobile websites and social media platforms, as well as train existing staff on social media best practices as it pertains to attracting and publicizing youth sports events.

- *Fort Wayne Youth Sports Public Relations Strategy:* As part of a strategic rebranding focused on youth sports, the City of Fort Wayne should evaluate the opportunity to hire a professional public relations firm. Increasing earned media exposure, particularly as it is relevant to youth sports, can help put the City into the consideration set of those audiences looking for youth sport event destinations. The firm selected should have experience in travel, tourism and/or sports marketing, in order to take advantage of their existing networks within the key audiences identified in the recommendation.

If you have any questions regarding this Executive Summary, please contact:

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