



March 15, 2024
Norman City Council
201 West Gray
Norman, OK 73069

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

It is my pleasure to submit VisitNorman and Norman Sports annual plan of work for FY2025. The marketing of destinations has been occurring for centuries...but the stakes have never been higher nor the opportunity greater than right now. In American cities and counties, the latest iteration of Destination Marketing began sweeping the nation in the 1980s and 1990s as revenues from hotel occupancy taxes became available to virtually every community.

Today, however, the mandate has grown significantly larger as it is increasingly obvious that communities need effective marketing for more than just attracting visitors; destinations need to be marketed to attract investment, workforce, entrepreneurs and future residents. Every community is in a competition to attract the best and brightest as a way to enhance quality of life and long-range sustainability. And, as we emerge from a worldwide pandemic, the mandate is even more crucial to a community's success. Indeed, the road to recovery is through the Visitor Economy.

The realization that a Destination Marketing Organization's (DMO) role has grown stems, in part, from a 2015 study by Longwoods International that proves that tourism advertising has a marked effect on consumer interest in communities as a place to live, go to college and start a business. That means DMOs are far more than just "Heads in Beds." DMOs help plow the road for Economic Development agencies.

It is with these concepts in mind that the Board of Directors of VisitNorman met on May 17th, 2023 to map out a strategy for the evolution of the organization and destination over the next five years. No longer content to continue with traditional destination marketing strategies, the Board has re-imagined the role of the DMO within the greater community development imperatives within the region.

The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan for the Board of VisitNorman includes the following goals:

ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Objective A

Continue to support the expansion of transportation services to Norman

Objective B

Support the expansion of Events and Festivals that could draw visitors to Norman

Objective C

Encourage the City to Enhance Wayfinding Signage and entryway Aesthetics

Objective D

Analyze Opportunities to enhance visitor mobility Objective E Support the development of other Destination Assets to attract visitors to Norman

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF DESTINATION ENHANCING ASSETS

Objective A

Be a Champion for Performance Venues and Entertainment District initiatives

Objective B

Analyze Opportunities for a Norman Convention Center / Expo facility

Objective C

Continue to Analyze Options to Enhance the Cleveland County Fairgrounds

Objective D

Support the Arts Council's efforts to Develop a Center for the Arts

SUPPORT THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION & SPORTS AS A NORMAN ASSET

Objective A

Investigate Opportunities to Develop Lake Thunderbird into an attraction for visitors and residents alike

Objective B

Continue to Support the Parks & Recreation Department in their plans to enhance Norman's Trail System

Objective C

Support the Development of the South Canadian Riverfront Park

INCREASE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Objective A

Enhance the Appreciation and Support of the Visitor Economy and the work of VisitNorman

Objective B

Continue to work with the business community to secure approval of Business Improvement Districts, where appropriate Objective C Work with Community Partners to further enhance commerce and culture in the city

The tactics below outline our plan of work for FY2025 and the steps we are taking to achieve the goals listed above.

As we detailed our marketing plan for FY24, we did not provide a plan for the Norman Sports Commission because of the timing of the May 9 election as FY23 neared its completion. As we head into FY25, we are able to provide a road map for what we intend to accomplish specifically for Norman Sports.

Early in FY24, we engaged a branding agency, Blaze Experts, to conduct a comprehensive branding process for Norman Sports. While creating that branding, we also opened the door for any updating of the VisitNorman branding and logo that needed to take place to keep both brands in harmony. As we head into the FY25 planning, there will be an allocation of \$117,000 dedicated to marketing campaigns.

The Norman Sports part of the campaign will be creating collateral materials for appointment-based trade shows and conferences including print materials but also “booths” and other necessary branding. There will be print ad creation and insertions into the niche markets and outlets to reach sports organizers, tournament directors and other market segments prepared and designed by an agency employing the research and brand guidelines provided by Blaze Experts. Unlike the brand familiarity of VisitNorman, the Norman Sports portion of the marketing campaign allocation will need to establish the brand and build the goodwill and familiarity to make Norman Sports a brand leader in its market segment.

Among the marketing strengths for VisitNorman is the inherited brand awareness that many years of quality earned media impressions and hearty social media followings along with search-engine optimization that have made search-engine marketing, digital campaigns and sponsored social media posts more credible and effective. In FY25, VisitNorman plans to build upon new digital platforms while continuing to move away from traditional print advertising. This includes shifting to more video-focused content and promotion.

Privacy policies may make it harder to collect data from our visitors through their cell phones, but we will continue to use data to analyze best uses and practices for our marketing programs.

Looking forward to FY25, continuing to grow impressions (with an emphasis on the Public Relations efforts to grow engagement) will be the top priority for VisitNorman. Emphasizing impressions, imagining a wind tunnel, will allow secondary efforts like the digital banners and retargeting campaigns to sweep up with overall visibility.

As part of the guest tax increase in late FY23, in FY24 we were able to hire a marketing manager who is devoted to social media marketing. The Marketing and Communications Department has set measurable goals for the social media accounts for VisitNorman and Norman Sports to hit midway through FY25. We will hit these goals through a blend of native boosted posts, influencer initiatives, collaborations and organic campaigns.

Madden Media has been our long-term outsource partner for SEO, SEM and social media sponsorship with Multiview as our long-term digital retargeting campaign partner. These work in concert as a user

searches for Norman and is then directed to our website by Madden and after arrival will be served VisitNorman banners to reinforce the visibility.

We will use Madden Media and Multiview to create parallel digital campaigns for Norman Sports. Using the same account managers who are familiar with the hierarchy and design of our website as well as Norman as a destination should make this side of the campaign creation seamless.

A very successful addition to the Madden Media marketing blend has been the introduction of Google Responsive Ads which began in FY24. We will continue to use this tool as part of the same Madden expenditure.

The Sooner Sports campaign is multifaceted and is led by the Game Day Central page on SoonerSports.com and social media posts that tag and/or identify VisitNorman. Direct referrals to VisitNorman.com is the main goal while adding followers to our social media channels who will year-round follow our messages is the secondary goal. In FY24, we began working through Sooner Sports Properties with the NIL collective to use athletes in influencer campaigns to grow our owned social media platforms in lieu of outsourcing campaigns through out-of-state vendors. The first endeavor in this arena was using OU gymnast Audrey Davis as she presented a Norman Game Day as a college student. We expect that the success of continued influencer campaigns in the latter part of FY24, which have yet to debut, will provide additional momentum and success into FY25.

The continued digital campaign with TravelOK.com not only increases VisitNorman's visibility on the state's tourism website but also allows for a direct click-through to our newly designed website. The display print placement in the state travel guide allows for Norman to be represented at international, national and regional consumer travel shows when we are not able to be present.

We will continue to support our local events and festivals. Being able to provide support to newer initiatives like Brewtoberfest, can provide the seed money to grow our districts. Being able to provide additional cash investments in more established festivals and events can provide the kind of catalyst to ensure endurance.

Long-standing marketing pieces remain in the marketing budget. The state travel bag sponsorship means that VisitNorman has our logo alongside other destination marketing organizations on the recyclable bag that is distributed to various audiences by the state travel office at national and even international consumer trade shows. Our email marketing investment is intended to reach the contacts we have been collecting for more than 20 years and serving them with marketing messages throughout each year. Constant Contact is the supplier we have been using for the last several years and one advantage is that we are able to remain compliant with the evolving legislation regarding privacy, spam, etc.

Our visitors guide will continue to be distributed in all of our welcome bags, at tradeshow and conferences, and through our partnership with TravelOK. The guide is a collaboration with The University of Oklahoma with them providing about a third of the pages and distribution points at the OU Visitors Center along with satellite recruiting offices located out of state. A portion of the printed guides are also warehoused by the state travel office to send out to users who have requested our guide on their website, the visitor guide fulfillment. Guides are also very popular to be added to welcome bags for conferences, conventions, meetings and other gatherings at our meeting places.

For the past several years, we have also invested in an app that duplicates most of the information from our visitors guide and our website. This app is especially important to the younger demographic in our audience. As our content provider has folded into a new product offering, we will not be continuing the app after October 2024.

Norman Sports Commission Plan of Work – 2025

Introduction: The Norman Sports Commission's plan of work for 2025 outlines strategic objectives, initiatives, and actions aimed at advancing the mission of promoting sports events, tourism, and community engagement in Norman.

Mission Statement: The Norman Sports Commission is committed to enhancing the economic and social vitality of Norman through the strategic development and promotion of sports events.

Vision Statement: In 2025, the Norman Sports Commission envisions Norman as a premier sports destination, celebrated for its diverse range of events, world-class facilities, and vibrant community engagement.

Key Objectives:

1. Event Development and Attraction:

- Establish a half marathon race in partnership with the University of Oklahoma to showcase Norman as a destination for endurance sports.
- Create an annual Norman Hall of Fame event to honor outstanding sports figures from the city.
- Develop annual "N.S. Events" across various sports disciplines to diversify the city's sports offerings. N.S. Events are sports events owned by the Norman Sports Commission. These events will encompass various sport disciplines to diversify and enrich the city's sport offerings and provide an exceptional experience for the participants, their families, and spectators.

2. Facility Enhancement and Maintenance:

- Assess and improve the quality and usability of sports facilities in Norman to meet the evolving needs of athletes and event organizers.
- Implement a regular maintenance schedule to ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of our facilities, develop bylaws and establish a selection

process for prioritizing facility improvements, ensuring strategic allocation of resources towards enhancing sports facilities in Norman.

3. Community Engagement and Outreach:

- Explore joining The Visit the Cities of SEC for PR purposes, leveraging the network to enhance visibility and promote Norman as a sports destination.
- Organize community fundraisers such as the Norman 'Office Theme' Olympics and Sports Trivia Night to engage residents and raise funds for the Sports Commission's initiatives.
- Promote active lifestyles and sports participation through community events, clinics, and leagues.
- Foster inclusivity and accessibility in sports programming to engage a diverse range of participants and spectators.
- Continue endeavors by utilizing the Play Easy App offers features such as event promotion tools, scheduling assistance, and data analytics, empowering the sports commission to attract and host a wider range of sports events while maximizing economic impact and community engagement.

4. Economic Impact and Sustainability:

- Maximize economic benefits through sports tourism initiatives, leveraging partnerships and events to drive local economic growth.
- Implement sustainable practices in event management and operations to minimize environmental impact and promote long-term sustainability.
- Utilize the economic impact calculator for all events to accurately measure and showcase the economic contributions of sports events to Norman.
- Emphasize the importance of sharing these calculations with stakeholders, demonstrating the tangible benefits of hosting sports events in the community, including increased revenue, job creation, and enhanced quality of life.

Strategies and Actions:

- Collaborate with the University of Oklahoma to develop and host the half marathon event, showcasing scenic routes and campus facilities, with the final leg of the race finishing inside the football stadium.
- Establish a framework for the Norman Hall of Fame event, engaging stakeholders, and sponsors to create a prestigious platform for honoring local sports legends.
- Identify sports disciplines for annual "N.S. Events" developing event concepts and marketing strategies to attract participants and spectators.

- Utilize the sport planner application Play Easy to streamline communication and coordination with event organizers, simplifying the process of hosting sports events in Norman. By leveraging this technology, the Norman Sports Commission can modernize the event planning process, from initial inquiries and bookings to logistics and promotion.
- Join The Visit the Cities of SEC network for PR purposes, including increased visibility, access to resources, and networking opportunities. This partnership is born from the idea that college sports fans are familiar with the teams, coaches, and rivalries within the conference, but perhaps not as much regarding the places each of these teams call home. The group works together to market the region to fans and potential visitors
- Attend conferences/trade shows in 2025, including TEAMS conference, S.P.O.R.T.S Relationships conference, Sports ETA Conference, Sports ETA Women's Summit, and U.S. Sports Congress conference, to network and attract premier events to Norman.
- Participate in continuing education classes through Sports ETA to stay updated on industry trends and best practices.
- Develop bylaws and establish a selection process for prioritizing facility improvements, ensuring strategic allocation of resources towards enhancing sports facilities in Norman.
- Foster community involvement and financial backing by hosting interactive fundraisers like the Norman Corporate Olympics and Sports Trivia Night, contributing to the financial sustainability of the Sports Commission's endeavors.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress towards achieving objectives.
- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and actions implemented.
- Adjust plans as needed based on feedback, economic impact calculations, and changing circumstances.

The Norman Sports Commission's plan of work for 2025 sets forth a comprehensive strategy to drive economic impact, promote excellence, and foster community engagement in sports. Through strategic partnerships with the University of Oklahoma and community stakeholders, innovative initiatives, and a commitment to excellence, we aim to realize our vision of Norman as a premier sports destination.

FY2025 marks a historic year as OU moves into the SEC and Norman Sports fully hits its stride with all of the Norman Forward venues open. Opportunities abound and we are

ready to work with all of our partners and stakeholders to continue to encourage visitors to come to Norman and experience everything we have to offer. *The Sooner, the better.*

Sincerely,

Dan Schemm