

Secondary Research & Competitive Analysis

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The Boathouse in a Box campaign is based on research and planning to give everyone access to waterways in our community. To better understand this initiative, it is important to explore Riversport America, the organization behind our campaign.

Riversport America, an extension of the Riversport Foundation, is a nonprofit outdoor adventure and sports organization based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Located within a 100-acre development in the Boathouse District, Riversport features boathouses, a four-story finish line tower, a whitewater center, an adventure course, a zip line, a surf wave and an indoor ski slope. The organization offers rowing, paddling, whitewater rafting, and other recreational and competitive activities. Mike Knopp founded the organization and has grown it into a nationally recognized destination for recreation and elite athletic development. Riversport is designated as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic training site and regularly hosts national and international rowing, canoe, and kayak competitions. The Oklahoma City Whitewater Center will host the 2026 Canoe Slalom World Championships and serve as the Olympic venue for canoe slalom and kayak cross during the LA28 Olympic Games.

Extensions of their mission include Thrive Outside, an initiative that provides scholarships to young kids who may not have access, and the Scholastic Youth Rowing League, allowing underserved communities to participate in the foundation's free rowing team. According to Riversport's 2025 Impact Report, the foundation has provided more than 262,000 hours of free programming. Key partnerships play a critical role in bringing the initiative to life. USRowing will provide coaching expertise and educational resources, while the American Canoe Association will deliver paddlesports instruction. Oklahoma City University will support the initiative through an academic program designed to enhance and expand the Boathouse in a Box model. Additionally, the Beach Rowing League will help generate interest in the "mountain

bike of rowing,” increasing awareness of water-based activities and amplifying its visibility. These partnerships provide funding, which also comes from purchased season passes and tickets. “Riversport America is also receiving 1.2 million from the city to do renovations for the upcoming international sporting events. Riversport America’s political influences are the 2028 Olympic partnerships, as well as Riversport having a huge impact on the local youth; participants in their program have earned up to 17 million dollars in scholarships” (Fitz & Pozadas, 2025). Riversport has been featured on ESPN SportsCenter for 50 States in 50 Days and was featured in *Sports Illustrated*. Riversport America also posts news releases for local media to share information about Riversport and the excursions it offers.

One of their primary objectives is to launch the Boathouse in a Box initiative. It will be supported through strategic partnerships, sustainable operations, and community engagement. Its long-term vision is to inspire waterfront stewardship by bringing water sports, including rowing and dragon boating, directly into communities that may not otherwise have access to these experiences. The initiative aligns directly with the Riversport Foundation’s mission to build community through outdoor experiences. Boathouse in a Box represents a strategic next step in advancing the organization’s vision by expanding access to water sports into communities throughout Oklahoma City and beyond. Ultimately, the Riversport Foundation is operating at a pivotal moment in its growth. As a designated U.S. Olympic and Paralympic training site, the organization is positioned to gain increased national and international attention. While the foundation has maximized initiatives and accessibility for people of all ages, its reputation as a destination for rowing, paddling, and other outdoor aquatic activities has outpaced awareness of its broader mission and community impact beyond core audiences.

The Boathouse in a Box initiative presents a strategic opportunity to address this gap by strengthening awareness of Riversport's role in community development and expanding access to outdoor experiences. By extending programming beyond Oklahoma City, the initiative aligns directly with the foundation's mission to build community through rowing and paddle sports. To capitalize on this momentum, a focused PR campaign can increase awareness of the Riversport Foundation's mission and vision, highlight the impact of existing programs and activate strategic partnerships through pilot program promotion of Boathouse in a Box. The campaign can also leverage targeted media outreach and tailored storytelling to engage key publics and position the organization for sustained growth. As the Riversport Foundation enters a period of increased visibility, a strategic campaign around Boathouse in a Box is an opportunity to increase awareness of the Riversport Foundation's mission and to expand water-based communities. Through accessible programming, media outreach, continued partnerships and audience-focused storytelling, the campaign can strengthen Riversport America's organizational growth.

The launch's goal is to democratize access to waterfronts and make water sports accessible to communities around them. Many Americans show interest in water sports (22 million people paddle and 20 million use rowing machines regularly), but there is not enough awareness or programming available. There are many stakeholders involved in this project, but the primary stakeholder groups are corporate sponsors, communities around the water, USA Rowing, and the ACA.

Effective messaging for Riversport America and Boathouse in a Box relies on understanding how Gen Z and Millennials consume and share information. Social media serves as the primary platform for awareness, where visually engaging short-form content and meaningful brand storytelling can drive word-of-mouth promotion. Messaging should emphasize

experience, community and accessibility to resonate with diverse audiences while remaining consistent with the client's mission. As the campaign evolves, messaging can expand to include outreach efforts such as partnerships with schools, guest speakers and potentially organized field trips. Positioning Riversport America as both a recreational destination and an educational resource. Tailoring messages to audience needs strengthens engagement and long-term impact, with the main goal of boosting awareness.

Riversport's crisis management plan could address possible environmental issues, including water pollution that could affect the Oklahoma River. To prepare for potential problems, the organization invests in safety training, emergency response planning and environmental stewardship initiatives, such as its River Protectors program. As part of this campaign, Riversport would have a clear contingency plan in place. Planning and responding quickly would help protect public safety, reduce reputational damage and maintain trust within the community.

Generally, the Riversport OKC facility has a strong reputation as a fun experience for all ages, averaging 4.1 out of 5 on TripAdvisor (based on 183 reviews, 107 five-star reviews) and 3.5 out of 5 on Yelp (137 reviews, 65 five-star reviews). Riversport America differs from other water sport facilities in the United States because it collaborates with the 2028 LA Olympics to not only be an official U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, but also to be the Canoe Slalom venue for the official games (*Olympic Engagement*, n.d.).

As a nonprofit, Riversport's maintenance is funded through the MAPS3, a government-run city tax initiative (*MAPS 3*, n.d.). Similarly, many of Riversport's programs are funded through donations; younger generations are less likely to donate, regardless of income, suggesting potential skepticism and hesitation toward charitable giving (Pollard et al., 2025).

Customers include families, residents, tourists, and visitors whose key characteristic is searching for safe, fun, and affordable activities. Opinion leaders can include travel influencers and white water athletes. These publics are latent, aware of the Riversport facilities, but not willing to go out of their way to participate. Generally, families are stereotyped as hectic and chaotic, especially when traveling or with other leisure activities. Residents are assumed to know all of the “best spots” in town and tend to be guides for visitors, especially when they have been residents for a long time. Finally, tourists and visitors are stereotyped as rude or insensitive to the local culture, but bring in extra money to stimulate the economy.

Producers include the employees of Riversport, who run the facilities, boat and safety gear manufacturers, and volunteers. Riversport collaborates with this public as a mutually beneficial exchange; employees and contractors can maintain their livelihoods and volunteers can fulfill their philanthropic desires. Opinion leaders of this group can be their managers and executives. This public is active, since they directly benefit the client and tangibly contribute to running the operations. In general, this group is assumed to have expertise and knowledge in water sports, the environment or outdoor activities because of their role.

The primary limiters are environmental activists concerned about the effects of water sports. With the use of natural bodies of water, environmentalists are concerned about waste and habitat disturbances. However, they can volunteer as River Protectors and further their environmental activism. Opinion leaders include influential environmental activists and sustainability influencers. This public is active because of their personal ethical responsibilities, and can either be an advocate for or against Riversport. This group is known for its outspoken and fearless nature, with a culture of glamorizing consumerism and wastefulness, which can make this group apprehensive of new initiatives.

Enablers include donors and taxpayers, who fund the Riversport facilities through the MAPS3 initiative, along with sponsors and community partners. All of these groups contribute to the success of Riversport, primarily funding the facilities, maintenance and programming. With their contributions, they feel a sense of pride in providing the necessary resources for Riversport. Opinion leaders include professional water sport athletes and outdoor enthusiasts. This public is aware; they might not necessarily know exactly where their money is going, but are still contributors. Donors are stereotyped as higher-income, older people who have expendable funds. However, they are less likely to participate in the physical activity of Riversport. In general, there is a culture of responsibility to keep funds circulating to operate the facility and an engagement in the well-being of the organization.

Ardmore, Oklahoma, is a city in southern Oklahoma with a friendly community, local shops, parks, and events. The area is known for its outdoor recreation, especially around the lakes. Lake Murray State Park is a major destination with a large 5,700-acre lake for boating, fishing, swimming, camping and even hiking trails. Closer to the city, City Lake offers fishing piers, boat docks, and picnic areas, while Lake Jean Neustadt, Lake Scott King, and Mountain Lake provide more opportunities for fishing, boating, and relaxing outdoors. Ardmore as a whole is a great place for enjoying nature, water activities, and spending time outside with family and friends.

Stillwater, Oklahoma, is a welcoming city known for its friendly community, outdoor spaces, and connection to nature. The city and its surrounding area are home to several lakes that offer a variety of recreational activities. Boomer Lake in the city provides walking trails, picnic areas, fishing, and boating, while nearby Lake McMurtry and Lake Carl Blackwell offer larger outdoor spaces for kayaking, paddleboarding, camping, hiking, and boating. These bodies of

water make Stillwater a great place for families, friends, and nature lovers to relax, explore, and enjoy outdoor fun throughout the year.

Urban Air Adventure Park is a key competitor to Riversport America because it competes for the same optional leisure time among families, youth and Gen Z. Urban Air is a convenient alternative when audiences choose between structured entertainment and outdoor activity. Urban Air maintains high awareness through its national presence with over 150 locations across the United States and Canada. The brand enjoys strong credibility as an established franchise, reinforced by visible safety protocols, trained staff and consistent visitation. Their online audience frequently highlights the variety of attractions and energetic atmosphere, although some reviews note pricing concerns and overcrowding during peak hours. Over the past few years, Urban Air's media coverage largely focused on franchise growth and community-centered announcements, positioning the brand as a family entertainment option and a local economic contributor. Its communication strategy emphasizes messaging prioritizing excitement, convenience and value. On social media, Urban Air uses photo and video content to engage with their audience. Audience interaction is experience-based, as kids and parents share visits and evaluate entertainment value. Common themes and keywords in Urban Air's messaging include indoor adventure, active fun, birthday parties, family entertainment, and memberships. Riversport America can learn from Urban Air's clear value proposition and effective group-oriented offerings. By highlighting outdoor recreation, and water-based skill development, Riversport America can make itself a real competitor with the entertainment chain.

Carlton Landing is a fast-growing hub for on-the-water activities, including motorized water sports, water skiing, tubing, surfing and more. Carlton Landing also has a beach available with kayaks, paddleboards, umbrellas and chairs, life jackets and lily pads. Along with their new

attraction, the Lake Days Aqua Park, their opportunities to get on the water seem endless (Carlton Landing, 2026). Because of their small-town appeal, they have not had very much traction in the media specifically, yet their growth has been tremendous. It has often been compared to Seaside, Florida, in terms of vibe and aesthetic, but it is much more affordable (Bec S., 2025). They got their extreme increase in popularity from a high social media presence, viral videos and word-of-mouth recommendations. Their credibility has also increased along with their popularity. Locals in Oklahoma City and Dallas have referred to Carlton Landing as one of Oklahoma's hottest luxury vacation home markets, attracting buyers looking for a laid-back yet sophisticated retreat (Poindexter, 2026). They are also often referred to in a positive note in many Tulsa, OK news outlets, including Tulsa People, stating they are "provide a relaxing getaway with a focus on family" (Sturdivant, 2025). Their communication efforts are mainly through their website and active social media platforms. Many of their campaign efforts in the last few years have been through attracting news outlets in the Tulsa area and hosting new events. Starting in 2024, they announced new developments in the area, along with countless new events highlighting these new community areas. Their social media presence consists of a cozy, homey and welcoming feel, which is consistent with their reviews (Steuteville, 2023). Especially on TikTok, their socials do a good job at focusing on viral content and aesthetics. Landing does a good job of using word-of-mouth and social media to gain traction and attract audiences. Riversport America can do the same by focusing on connection, viral moments and family fun on their social media platforms and exposure.

Okana Resort in Oklahoma City presents itself as a major competitor to Riversport America due to its prime location, overlapping audiences and broad demographic appeal. Okana is a \$400 million development by the Chickasaw Nation featuring a conference center, adventure

lagoon and indoor waterpark (McNutt, 2025). The resort also sits adjacent to the First Americans Museum, which honors Native American cultures and traditions of Oklahoma tribes (McNutt, 2025). In terms of mind awareness, Okana had a historic launch, generating more than 200 published stories, nearly \$1 million in earned media value and reaching approximately 6.7 million readers (The Chickasaw Nation & OKANA: Elevating OKC, 2025). The resort benefits from strong visibility as a tourism landmark, frequently promoted by lawmakers, the Chickasaw Nation and state media. Credibility appears generally favorable. Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt described the development as “the most expensive commercial development in Oklahoma City history” and noted that “there’s nothing even remotely like the waterpark for 200 miles in any direction” (McNutt, 2025). However, some online commentary has criticized the resort’s design, service and operational logistics (OKANA Resort & Indoor Waterpark, 2021).

Construction on Okana began in October 2022, and following its February 2025 launch, the resort implemented a comprehensive public relations strategy that included press releases, media kits, coordinated interviews, speechwriting and media outreach (The Chickasaw Nation & OKANA: Elevating OKC, 2025). Okana’s messaging frames the resort as a premier destination and “a source of joy and recreation for travelers” as well as “a valuable asset for our community” (OKANA Resort & Indoor Waterpark..., 2025). As of February 2026, Okana has approximately 58,500 Instagram followers, 38,200 TikTok followers and 151,000 Facebook followers. Of 143 Facebook reviews, 54% recommend the resort. The brand maintains strong engagement, frequently responding to comments on Instagram posts. On TikTok, common hashtags include #travelok, #okanaresort, #summervacation and #visitokc. Riversport can learn from Okana’s proactive storytelling and large-scale media push, while further differentiating itself through niche audience targeting and a stronger emphasis on active outdoor recreation.

Frontier City is a Western-themed amusement park operated by Six Flags in Oklahoma City. The park competes with Riversport America as a family-friendly attraction for thrill seekers, with a brand identity rooted in Oklahoma's Western heritage. Similarly, Frontier City offers group ticket packages, school-sponsored visits and multi-guest experiences (Six Flags, n.d.). The park, opened in 1958, draws regional visitors from Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas, building decades of brand recognition and customer loyalty. Frontier City benefits from its affiliation with Six Flags, a nationally recognized amusement park operator. Local audiences generally view the park as a reliable family entertainment option. Positive sentiment often centers on family-oriented programming and seasonal attractions; however, some online reviews cite concerns about recurring ride closures, long wait times and pricing (TrustReviewers 2019). Media coverage over the past three years has focused primarily on seasonal attractions, regional travel features and operational updates. One of the park's most publicized annual events is Fright Fest, which is regularly promoted through tourism outlets such as Visit Oklahoma City (Fright Fest in OKC, 2026). Their communications efforts emphasize seasonal promotions, themed events, group packages and community engagement. Promotional messaging highlights "rides for all ages, live entertainment and delicious food options" (TravelOK, 2026). They have approximately 12,700 Instagram followers, 1,900 on X and 96,000 on Facebook. February posts generated limited engagement, averaging about 70 likes and a small number of comments per post. Common hashtags include #FrontierCity, #OKC, #SixFlags, #themeparks and #thingstodo. Frontier City's long-standing name recognition and recurring signature events contribute to sustained public awareness. Riversport America can apply several lessons from Frontier City's strategy, including maximizing seasonal events similar to Fright Fest and continuing to leverage promotional ticket packages to attract key audiences.

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