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## Investigation of the Feasibility of Reconstructing a School District Owned Athletic Facility

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INVESTIGATION OF THE FEASIBILITY OF RECONSTRUCTING A  
SCHOOL DISTRICT OWNED ATHLETIC FACILITY

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In

Sport Administration

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## **Investigation of the Feasibility of Reconstructing a School District Owned Athletic Facility**

### **James Price**

Frank “Buck” Weeber Gymnasium has been a pillar of the suburban Detroit city River Rouge, Michigan since the 1940’s when the emphasis of athletics became established within the community. The gym is the home of 14 state championship basketball teams (13 boys, 1 girls) and many great athletes. However, in 2000 the gym along with the conjoined high school were closed down due to asbestos and poor piping in favor of a new high school across the street (Price, 2016-1017). The new gym inside the high school lacks the same prestige and luster of the “The Buck.” The purpose of this investigation is to analyze why the gym has been left abandoned for over a decade, has there been any efforts to reestablish, and what problems does one face in pursuit of updating the facility for reopening. There have been efforts to open the gym again under the power of the school district, especially under the leadership of new superintendent Derrick Coleman but the efforts have been futile (Price, 2016-1017). The community cannot support the gym with levies and the like due to economic blight. Investors do not see the promise of “return on investment” from the facility. The community does not spend enough money for a sponsor or sponsors to feel comfortable paying in total of roughly \$2 million to update the facility. The promising factor is the social construct and feeling of pride the venue hosts within the community may be powerful enough to garner support from citizens to the point where community effort trumps economic woes. However, this looks unlikely for the successful natives of the city are likely to leave the city after success, only to return for special events (Price, 2016-1017). These analytical efforts have led to the development of a SWOT analysis after various investigative conversations with city officials and citizens interested in seeing the gym reopen.

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Whether in turmoil or extravagance, a community united in health and commonality will be better suited for advancement. With a new influx of schooling systems in which campuses are the norm, the smaller schools and facilities are succumbing to their larger counterparts. River Rouge (traditionally an average school with enrollment upwards of approximately 400 over the past 20 years) has a unique situation that may be capitalized upon by re-opening the old Frank “Buck” Weeber Gymnasium. The school district has seen an increase in students from 2011 to 2015 and an increasing success in two sports, boys’ basketball and football (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). The citizens of River Rouge and Downriver Michigan do not have a facility to exercise, play and commune together. In addition, the school system needs a gym. However, funding is needed for the renovations. The need for funding leads to whether the community would be willing to financially support the renovation and re-opening of the gym. Although it must be stated that if those in power can find funding for a renovated gym through other sources than the citizens, it will be utilized. Meaning if a business or organization wants to subsidize the funding of the gym, such as a sponsorship, that money will be used according to Superintendent Derrick Coleman (Price, 2016-1017).

The renovated gymnasium would be able to offer flexibility to citizens and students alike within the hands of creative and capable minds. Property/real estate space, nostalgia, great history, and regional uniqueness in regards to the architecture heightens inquiries about the gym’s non-usage. In order to determine if financing the renovation is feasible, several studies have been conducted that are somewhat related to The Buck’s situation.

Crompton (2004) evaluated the mindset of taxpayers and subsequently the impact athletics venues have on the community of the subsidy funders. Four elements are hypothesized to soothe the ache of the financial burden a heavy tax subsidy provides: community visibility,

enhanced community image, stimulation of other development and psychic income (i.e. community pride). Multitudes of cities that host teams in the NBA, NFL, MLB, and NHL have been examined to sufficiently examine the study. Each component of intangible benefits was examined. Community-used ideals like “good news” sections of news reporting associated with the city’s name, especially when the team makes a championship run, garners millions worth of public relations; community image used the first tier city theme, stating that most cities without a major league team will not be considered a “major” city also saying that cities use their teams as business lures such as Detroit used tall buildings and wide space to lure car manufacturers. Furthermore, it is stated that sport franchises mean more to smaller cities than big metropolises (Crompton, 2004). Stimulation of other development regarded two factors that lead one to believe the facility will attract businesses to come. The venue will be a solid mark for the plan to revitalize an area as a whole as in a venue cannot sustain an entire area but if it is a glue piece of a more complete plan with other venues, it can be successful. Indianapolis from 1980-1984 had its sport rejuvenation campaign where sport teams and venues came to town with a synergized plan and subsequently it has been credited with the city’s boom as one of the fastest growing Midwest states. Psychic income or consumer surplus simply is the enhancement of quality of life due to team success, pride in efforts to resuscitate areas, etc. In conclusion, Crompton (2004) made cases for extrinsic and an intrinsic view of a venue, neither of which in the current model deem feasible to require so much from taxpayers; it must be stated that in studies conducted for a subsidy for Lexington, KY’s university basketball team venue, the willing subsidy rate was far less than expected. Psychic income is the new model for responsible pleads for public subsidy dollars.

Inoue and Harvard (2014) looked into the perceived social impact of a sport event by analyzing data from 458 patrons of the 2012 FedEx St. Jude Classic, a PGA Tour event (Inoue & Harvard, 2014). They conducted the study via postgame survey in part of a larger scale assessment by the event organizers. Using a set scale of questions, validated by their intention not to lead answers. Realistically, these following results could lead to organizers making a valiant effort to make the residents of the event's host area perceive a greater experience outside of the actual event. The authors believe "Attendees will perceive a higher level of social impact from the FESJC if they feel a greater sense of social camaraderie at the event." The results were average satisfactory; local attendees were all above the midpoint for satisfaction. It must be stated that it was right after the event, when the intake for information began. Related to the gym in River Rouge, a facility plays a major role in the recruiting of business and events to come to the area hence the study's relevance to decipher community and patron impact. The events that a good facility could draw could entice business and otherwise non-visiting patrons to visit River Rouge.

Ntloko and Swart (2008) were more interested in an event's economical social impact on the host community than just economics. This is a case study used to examine the effects of the large surf exposition sponsored by Red Bull in South Africa. The social benefits are community development, civic pride and event production extension. It was hypothesized that the event would help boost the economy. Social costs include disruption to resident lifestyle, noise, vandalism, crowding, and property damage. Economic benefits include long-term promotional benefits, induced development and construction expenditure, additional trade and business development, and increased property values. Economic costs were sought to be resident's exodus, interruption of normal business, and under-utilized infrastructure. Two-hundred

questionnaires with close and open-ended questions were given in person to local residents verbally. They carried out direct observations through the event. 83% of the residence in the survey agreed that the event gave them a sense of community pride (Ntloko & Swart, 2008). Adversely, most disagreed that the event was a nuisance to the community. The authors seek further examination into this issue to make sure the event is not having negative effects on an underlying level on residence because the balance of this dynamic is delicate and imperative to keep flourishing in order for future events to be successful.

It may be asked why it is so necessary to spend an adequate amount of money on a facility such as The Buck. Llywenn Couper (2011) argued that the school playground enhances and plays a substantial role in early childhood development, specifically of social competence (Couper, 2011). This study is relevant because it must be noted that the study was conducted with the preconceived notion that without a playground (or facility) it would be difficult to develop the skills involved with independence and imagination. Play, games, and sport were all differentiated, each leading to the latter.

Mike Gusweiler, president of the West Michigan Sports Commission, projected that a new \$7.8 million sporting complex could inject \$20 million into the surrounding region (Evans, 2014). It took roughly two years of campaigning to large corporate entities and door-to-door knowledge spreading by the commission to promote the idea in good standing. It is important to state that philanthropic figures Rich DeVos and Peter Secchia both were supportive of the plans for the 60 acres, 8 baseball and softball diamonds. Large furniture supplier Art Van supplied a supplemental approximate \$2 million contribution. Scheduling is already filling. Most of the weekends are filled with teams travelling from all over the Midwest for large leagues and tournaments. The rest of the week is filled with adult slow-pitch, high school and youth summer

leagues. However, I must highlight that there may be room for camps and combines to fill out the schedule. This is something that River Rouge may want to further analyze; the adding of these types of events could open up the facility to a different demographic adding possible revenue not to mention the added marketing values it contributes. Gusweiler emphasized to the budgeters and subsequently contractors a need for high quality playing fields. For the successful marketing and programming implications, Mike believes optimal playing grounds are a necessity when garnering a brand, hence \$500,000 allocated to the fields. Therefore, operations would be important, “we have put a lot of effort into the operations to keep it at a level to be a premier travel tournament type of complex,” Gusweiler stated. The WMSC thinks that the uniqueness of the complex will be its selling point. Sort of similar to the gymnasium in River Rouge’s “pit” style court.

Over one hundred years ago, a concerned citizen wrote to their local newspaper as a plight for social change in the sense of facilities (Evans, 2014). 100 years ago, Chicago was already seeing the fault within a lack of infrastructure for social structure with children. “Social plagues and social epidemics will... be eliminated when the cause of the plagues have been learned and the sources removed,” (Evans, 2014). Note that the children of the time did not have places to play besides the alley. No establishments set apart to lure the children away from pool halls claiming the only race the children would see and participate in is the occasional race against the police (Evans, 2014). The relevance of this article is to state the fact that it has been established for the past on hundred years that facilities for recreational use could keep children out of precarious situations, hence the same relevance today.

River Rouge averages 113 crimes per square mile rate compared to 34 crimes per square mile in Michigan as a state and 37.9 crimes per square mile rate for the country (Location, Inc.,

2015). Lafayette, IN Police Chief Pat Flannelly removed the city's outdoor basketball court rim for two weeks to punish and warn residence that violence will not be tolerated, being that the courts seem to be a lure of such activity, he believes this will deter crime (Attwood, 2013).

Although, it has been proven that the outdoor courts nationally do have slightly higher crime rates, it is relevant to state that any place that draws a crowd garners more likelihood for crime, such as shopping malls or parking lots. Nevertheless, the Windy City Hoops program in Chicago looks to prevent crime with an abundance of programming and guidance. As such, the gym in River Rouge would serve as a haven of sorts and those youths that were inclined to commit a crime may have another outlet for their time and/or aggression. In the 11 areas that the program, Windy City Hoops, were instated crime has gone down reports says Tony McCoy, a supervisor (Attwood, 2013). This article alludes to the fact that the structure and strategies used in Chicago and possible usages in River Rouge could alleviate crime, making it a jewel of the community.

Siegfried and Zimbalist (2000) speak to the "substitution effect" regarding outsiders of the "area" coming to spend money in the area that usually would not travel to such a spot. The authors exemplify such franchises as the Boston Red Sox claiming Fenway Park attracts up to 35% of its game attendance from areas they consider outside of their region. Though it is disputable because most Major League Baseball franchises expect 5%-20% of outsider attendance at games and there is no verification of what the Red Sox's area is. Nevertheless, that impact because of the uniqueness of the event draws thousands of people and an unforeseen amount of revenue that could be spent elsewhere. In regards to a gym being built in River Rouge, the travel will be consistent with the demographics and projections of whatever event the facility can hold. If it is a big AAU basketball tournament, that revenue can be expected to spend in the local area. AAU can travel from state-to-state thus attracting attention from sources that would

never visit River Rouge. The city is also not a cash hub so the event will be the primary concern of the city and its resources creating a major influx of revenue to the city. A surge such as a big event could benefit the city's income; since River Rouge is in need of the facility for its own purposes, the gym could benefit the citizens from a physical usage standpoint and budget standpoint, that is, as stated before if the citizens see value in the facility.

In 2009, a large Alabama high school was awarded through construction bonds by way of the federal stimulus package, \$5.5 million for renovations and upgrades to their main athletic facility (Strickland, 2009). "These Qualified School Construction Bonds provide us the opportunity to complete many aspects of our 5-year capital plan. During these difficult days of proration to our school budget, it would be impossible to address these building needs without the infusion of this interest-free money," said Elmore County Schools Superintendent Jeff Langham," (Strickland, 2009). The programs were fought for and justified by the school due to increasing numbers in student population (200), insufficient size of facilities for the school's population, conflicting interests scheduling facility time, equality with others schools of the like or in the same county, and accommodation for more health and academic courses. The upgrades will create space for an additional 500 people in the facility.

Derrick Coleman, superintendent of the River Rouge School District told me, "if we were literally one-half mile down the street (in Detroit) the gym would have been easily funded by now" (Price, 2016-1017). This ease of financial access becomes obvious when dealing with "war-torn" cities like Detroit and the entire philanthropy or government aide it receives. The rural places of this country also receive preferential treatment because inner cities and rural areas are commonly known to be impoverished. Kneebone and Berube (2013) make a case that the Lyndon Johnson coined "war on Poverty" emphasized so greatly on the inner city and rural areas

of America that it forgot to accommodate or foresee a problem with the newly founded idea of suburbia. There are many programs that have been sorted and classified into two groups: people-based assistance and place-based assistance. People-based can include things like food stamps and place-based are things like public housing towers. The current policies of poverty intervention have not yet caught up with the trend of today's suburban blight (Kneebone and Berube, 2013). However, there are efforts that can be sought out by communities, underrepresented. There are obvious health benefits to physical activity, though not every area has had access to the local venues to aide its citizens in those efforts. In turn, researchers must decipher if citizens are willing to help fund such a gym and will there be aide initiatives to help fund non-rural suburban cities.

The residents of Orange Unified School Districts decided to finally approve a bond that will renovate its high schools, specifically its gyms (Winslow, 2016). Over the next 30 years, the residents of the district will pay \$29 per \$100,000 in income after the measure passed by a 55% positive rate. Is it possible that the River Rouge School district could elongate a bond to ease the stress of the financial burden renovation could accrue? A \$288 million bond will pay back \$590 million if all bonds are purchased and issued. This type of bond or levee can be utilized along with or isolated from other measures to fund a facility for the school district.

In addition, there are budgeting problems as well highly associated with public schooling hence the emergence of a number of charter schools. Though Donna Fuscaldo wrote that going to the gym not only lowers insurance premiums for individuals but it can cut the cost of health plans for the school district if they supply a gym for the workers (Fuscaldo, 2010).

The purpose of this project is to determine if the revitalization of the gym is feasible and would be financially supported by the public.

### *Funding Options*

A levy is an imposed tax, fine or fee set forth by a government usually to fund some municipal act or facility (TheFreeDictionary.com, 2017). With this option, the citizens will vote whether or not they agree with paying for the facility through a bond or levy, usually implemented through taxes. Superintendent of the school district Derrick Coleman estimates that it will take \$2 million alone to get the doors of the facility back open not including up to date enhancements let alone state-of-the-art amenities (Price, 2016-1017). Communities with higher rates of disposable income are more likely to pass a bond or levee. Due to River Rouge's average income, it is unlikely that a bill as such would pass due to its heavy burden regardless of tangible and intangible benefits. These benefits include the new access students of the school district would have to sport. Sport being the ultimate because of its use of oral communication, hand-eye coordination, and role-playing, I perceived as a need for emphasis. Nevertheless, the adults in power if applicable must take upon facilitation of these actions. As a child, I remember programming at the gym; it was a way for kids to meet and learn how to play from good role models. Subsequently, I remember when the programming around the city stopped; the kids who were susceptible to making bad choices did such. Couper (2011) suggests that the type of programming the gym could offer will help the development and mindset of the youths who participate.

The main advantage of this type of funding is that it keeps the full responsibility and power of the facility within the hands of the school district and subsequently the people of the city because it is community funded therefore community ran and oriented. A bond delivers a promise of immediate accessible cash to the government but has to be repaid; a levy offers cash at a slow, steady rate but qualifies repayment as the services provided by the funding (the

facility) (Zacks, 2017). The district is already in a state of searching for more funds thus a bond may not be the best option because of its necessity for repayment. A levy, on the other hand offers the facility and its usage as repayment.

The school district could also look to sell the gym to an individual or group of individuals interested in collaborating with the school board in hopes of creating an environment of fundamental change and individual growth for all parties involved. The recent trend public schools have succumbed to is the implementation of outside sources to help manage critical areas in education. There is a need for innovation in education and “private, for-profit vendors selling lesson plans, educational software and student assessments will be right there to provide,” (Simon, 2012). All types of investors are looking to get into the fruitful sector. “The U.S. spends more than \$500 billion a year to educate kids from ages five through 18...” (Simon, 2012).

This method saves the district money but in turn, takes away from its ability to manage its own destiny. Special contracts and clauses would have to be set about to ensure the stability of the school district’s programming along with the proprietor’s interests. It is quite possible for the school to have no specific rights but to rent the gym when they see fit (maybe at a lower rate) but that still doesn’t guarantee scheduling success if the investors find more fruitful endeavors with which to fill their rental space. Private investors do play a pivotal role, if applied, because they would be inclined to provide state-of-the-art accommodations within the facility for participants and guests. If there were some special deal put into place by the school district and the investors where the school could freely use the facility, it would surely cut overhead costs for the district for the business would handle to operation. Nevertheless, they would also look to take home the check for their work so the extra income athletics provides would become outdated for gymnasium-oriented income. In addition, in the name of education, a for-profit entity is safe

because the emphasis would be to gain test scores but providing a gym for students may not be within the best interests for investors hence there is another option of private donors who see the potential of community impact the facility may have.

The usage of the private donor option could be a great situation for the district. The catch is that unless the donor has an already established connection to the community or the building, random acts of philanthropy occur but hoping for this type of donation is “a shot in the dark,” and unsuitable for a plan. There is a way to become highlighted in the minds of philanthropy. The district could decide to make a pledge of some sort coherent with the ideals of an organization or foundation that would donate heavy funds for the renovation of the facility. Grants fall within the same capacity. You could receive generous amounts of money and once you receive, you are more likely to receive again but you need a person talented and experienced in writing grants who is also very familiar with your organization, there is time consuming research to be done, there is a low success rate for grants and low visibility for philanthropy plus the money may come with stipulations (SNPO, 2016). There is obviously no money owed but there may be stipulations such as yearly requirements or reports on the mission that the grant or philanthropist aimed to soothe. If the goals are not met, there may be negative consequences.

In Port Huron, Michigan, Northern High School was attempting to fund their new gymnasium floor through various ways but most notably, a large corporate sponsor (Ferguson, 2015). The athletic director and vice principal were heading the campaign utilizing tactics of multiple sponsorships in order to fund the \$120,000 renovation; they also did donations and a charity walk. This is not a new idea but there are ways to transcend the idea into a concept able to secure the millions needed to fund the gym. It could be possible to give complete naming rights to a large, national sponsor in exchange for a fully funded facility. It being an educational

facility helps the cause for aid in the mind of a socially responsible corporation. This would be an unprecedented move so it could possibly be more enticing to a business looking for some good PR. The biggest advantage to this type of funding along with it being fully funded is that the business would idealistically utilize funds to make this investment worthwhile thus great equipment and heavy news coverage of the opening drawing income for the district. Since this is unprecedented, the cons can be that there will need to be shared profits with the sponsor or whatever contract clauses they present since they would also be the financier.

There is also an option to tear down the current facility and reconstruct a new building. Greim reports “schools built in the 1950s or earlier have impressive architectural character and often are fixtures in their neighborhoods. They are structurally sound and can accommodate new systems. In addition, there is often strong sentiment to keep them in some form,” (2005). The River Rouge facility was built well before the 1950’s and has the strong characteristics building of that time possess. Therefore, it would be logical that renovations would be in order here. Keeping these schools enhances a community’s traditions and history (Greim, 2005). Yet, new schools still lower maintenance costs and could possibly add the same aesthetic gains the older facility offers. A part of the \$2 million it would take to re-open The Buck would be piping replacements and asbestos removal. Another unforeseen problem could be that older venues rarely have the original building plans causing trouble for new contractors. First, the school district must decide if rebuilding is a viable option then look for specific funding that may be entailed with building a new venue.

### *SWOT Analysis*

Investopedia (2017) defines a SWOT analysis as:

“A process that identifies an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Specifically, SWOT is a basic, analytical framework that assesses what an entity (usually a business, though it can be used for a place, industry or product) can and cannot do, for factors both internal (the strengths and weaknesses) as well as external (the potential opportunities and threats). Using environmental data to evaluate the position of a company, a SWOT analysis determines what assists the firm in accomplishing its objectives, and what obstacles must be overcome or minimized to achieve desired results: where the organization is today, and where it may be positioned in the future.

Pickton, D. W. and Wright, S. (1998) further explain “environmental analysis is a critical part of the strategic management planning process. The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework is proposed by many as an analytical tool which should be used to categorize significant environmental factors both internal and external to the organization.”

#### Strengths:

- Historical Rapport – River Rouge holds the record for state championships in boys’ varsity basketball and has a sentimental feeling for members of the community who have witnessed one (last one in 1999).
- Architectural Differentiation - The venue also has the old architectural structure that new venues cannot replicate; the closed in pit type structure is very similar to an enclosed, less spacious Anderson Gym here at BGSU.
- Geographical Relevance – The Buck is less than one mile away from Detroit’s border to River Rouge. It is located directly next to the police station and has adequate parking

space. It is also in an impoverished area so there may be funding or donators may be willing to help this kind of gym in this area.

- Building Size – This facility holds roughly 600 guests and has room for vendors and concession outside of the gym doors.
- Sporting Culture in Community – Currently, boys’ varsity basketball and football are top contenders in the state and games are often crowded usually with alumni. In 2016, the football team was the runners up in the state. The same year, the basketball team made it to the Elite 8 portion of the state tournament.

#### Weaknesses:

- Renovations Needed – Roughly \$2 million worth of work needed to open the doors again.
- Out of Commission for a Decade – Due to the facility not being in use for so long not only will it be costly to open the doors, it will be costly to promote the opening of the gym as well. In addition, it may not be seen as a necessity because for over a decade, the city and athletic department has managed without the gym.
- First Time as a Business – With several of the funding options, The Buck would need to find personnel and have adequate space for programming and daily business operations. The venue would also need to accommodate for elements of business practices in the “for profit” sector rather than non-profit/school sector.
- Must Update Equipment – the \$2 million is just to get the gym running. It would need state-of-the-art equipment to compete with business that have much more experience and rapport. In addition, a big draw to the facility is supposed to be the fan experience. This will take updated sounds, lights, flooring, and seating.

- One Gym – Most big tournaments and AAU events want multiple courts running at once to get all the games accomplished in good time.

#### Opportunities:

- Downriver is Not a Heavily Marketed Area – Sporting event wise, River Rouge's area is not one where there is heavy traffic or clutter for many other things to do. There are movies, bowling, a little laser tags but sporting events are the biggest crowd grabbers in the area and this venue will allow for huge events.
- Location Has Benefits – This area has all the similarities of an inner-city area but it is technically a suburb of Detroit and has suburban characteristics such as police presence and a different city government. The police station is located directly adjacent to the facility while it still meets poverty and diversity requirements for federal or grant aid plus the looks of philanthropy.
- Open Space - Summer leagues, recreation leagues, AAU all need space and when the facility is not in use, it could be available for rent. There used to be NBA summer pro-am games at the gym in the 80's and 90's.
- 30% of River Rouge is under 18 – This is an opportunity because of the children's programming RR could put into place and expect a certain number of participants. There is also more funding available for children's programming.

#### Threats:

- Poverty Stricken Area – The poverty of River Rouge makes community funding almost impossible. Also, with poor economic situations comes strenuous dilemmas dealing with the community. 22% of the community is under the

poverty line (Location, Inc., 2015). This may also cause concern for potential investors in the area and in the facility itself concerning ROI. River Rouge subsequently does not offer much of a business sector or nightlife.

- Lack of Community/Sponsor Support – Since there is not a striving business district in River Rouge, specifically, then sponsorships may be rare. There is opportunity to expand to the cities outside of River Rouge but it must be proved that those dollars will be able to reach those cities from the facility (which may not be hard).
- Public Transportation – There is not a Detroit bus stop that is within a half mile of the facility. The suburban line stops right by the facility but it takes numerous stops to get to the suburban transportation line.

### *Possible Programming*

Either programming is important to this endeavor because there must be programming to entice investors to come place their money and subsequently receive a good ROI or there must be justification for spending of government or citizen funds. We must also be able to compete with other facilities that look to offer the same type of incentives and space we provide. Rival basketball venues in our class of business will push for tournaments, camps etc. to run their programming at their places of business. We must in turn, figure out why businesses come to certain facilities and try to highlight those qualities within our own infrastructure. During that process, it is imperative to come up with ideas that could impress possible investors or the grant readers also keeping in mind the community that must use the facility along with students of the school district. Separation of our endeavor from other facilities could fall heavily on the shoulders of venue architecture uniqueness and programming success and results.

- Next Man Up Basketball Skills Camp (Boys 13-17) – This will be a skills camp ran by the Boys’ Varsity Basketball Coach. It is sort of a recruiting technique utilized by coaches for it allows parents to meet the coaches, players to become accustomed to other players, see the facilities, etc. Many coaches run camps to gain notoriety in the filed with players and parents alike; it allows them to notice and scout players in environments and situations the coach will try to replicate in real game situations. This program benefits the school and the students who will enter into the camp for even if the player does not attend the schools of the coaches that run the event, they will still benefit from good coaching and good role models courtesy of our programming. This also allows for investors to get a closer look at the workings of the facility and different avenues to promote their own interests outside of the venue such as a Coke sponsorship being able to reach a different demographic within the same setting.
- Individual Training for Various Sports in the Venue – The idea behind this program is to get revenue flowing into the gym by way of contracted personal trainers whom will train specific sports for athletes (whatever sport can be utilized by the gym) and we get a portion of their revenue for facility and equipment usage. This will be one our most simple programs because we will not actually do the programming, just the hiring and scheduling. The most difficult part will be the scheduling; between school oriented events, sponsor or investor priority, and other programming, individual training sessions will be tough to organize for we do not have an abundance of space and once an area of the gym is in use it is hard to give up more area to another program (such as there is one basketball court so individual training may have two people using most of our court

space). Individual time will most likely be on weekends and at very early and late times of day, which will require more staff hours and more overhead costs.

- **Community Based Initiatives: Geriatric Fitness** – This program is specifically for the levy route for it is sort of a repayment for the citizens helping to re-open the gym. Specifically, for the geriatric fitness, the majority of home owners in the city are middle aged and up; furthermore, that is one of the problems River Rouge has, new home owners cannot move in because the previous home owners aren't moving out (Location, Inc. 2015). The program would be held in early mornings and conducted by a trained instructor but not necessarily staff; the instructor could be used as an agent from a nursing home, hospital, etc. Geriatric fitness is important. These are not the people we want to leave out; they have disposable income that we will utilize for the gym and time on their hands to cause problems if they feel they are not being accommodated.
- **Camps via Vendors and Facility Rental** – Companies like Nike or Adidas run camps in local areas before they release invites to players for their national, major camps. This is not our programming in particular therefore we are not responsible for running it but we will provide venue compensation and hospitality. There is a specific option such as renting out the facility to factory workers like UAW for their recreation leagues. This could be in response to their sponsorship of the gym or general business practices. In addition, the option of Pro-Am basketball events is always an option for before its closure, Buck Weeber hosted many summer ball professional runs (games). Nevertheless, it could also be home to conferences, speaking engagements, fairs and parties.

#### Further Analysis

Detroitk12.org is the website where interested peoples apply to rent out facilities under management of the Detroit Public Schools. Two huge competitors of the Buck Weeber gym are housed in this sector, Cass Tech High and Renaissance High. The district charges roughly \$250 per hour and requires insurance for the rental application to be accepted. During the time when Buck Weeber was most sought out, there was not much competition for gym rentals and quality flooring. Since the closing of our doors, facilities like the Catholic school, Country Day, have taken over the market for high profile amateur events in basketball or volleyball such as the Motor City Roundball Classic Tournament. Engaging in tournaments was the biggest draw for the school district. Not only has the tournament left River Rouge but there are several tournaments now in contention for the best high school basketball tournament for that time of the year. Purcell (2015) counts 5 tournaments during the two-week span of Christmas slated basketball tournaments. This advantageous capitalistic market has created a tough environment for Buck Weeber to try to engage.

Corporate sponsorship is an unlikely mission to accomplish. Let's take Pepsi for example and use it in juxtaposition to placement in Detroit. There is not enough room in our gym to support the traffic that would be necessary to support a large investment (donations from corporations are investment in hopes of a return that does not have to be directly monetary). River Rouge does not buy enough Pepsi products to substantiate a \$2 million donation for a basketball venue. Pepsi would look for foot traffic to see its brand on the gym and lots of media attention consistently coming to the venue, which is not guaranteed for this venture. People like Dan Gilbert has Detroit looking like a haven for businesses thus funding has been abundant for the likes of Detroit for investment in business and infrastructure. Let's not confuse corporate

sponsorship or donating as a “free” endeavor; if there is no money to be made for their time with a venture, then the time will not be spent.

Superintendent of the school district Derrick Coleman relayed to me that the alumni board has had trouble getting former Panthers to come back and participate or donate (Price, 2016-1017). Last year, the board had a successful alumni picnic but the events leading up to the picnic, fundraiser events, all lost money trying to prepare for the picnic. The big events – the picnics, the state championship games, the large parades or festivals all attract attention at rates one might expect from a city but the likelihood of consistent traffic to support the gym from the alumni is highly unlikely and could not be depended upon in a business prospectus. Being a largely industrial community, the ones that leave River Rouge to become very successful, highly skilled educated are not coming back to the area to support community initiatives. This is causing the city to grow large in older home owner demographics and youth submerged in low income situations causing a rift in cash flow and economic development. Before anything could be dependent upon local support, there must be an analysis and reformation of policy for the engagement of locals. I have also been privileged to the perspective that the nostalgic feelings and warm memories of the famed gym may have been localized as well. Detroiters and other suburbanites often did not feel welcomed into the River Rouge community (Rouge also had a reputation for being racist specifically to Blacks not from the area). The limited resources of people whom would consistently patronize the facility and the loss of market share on top of a new generation of people whom have no feelings for the gym would make the gym a tough investment plea.

Oxford Dictionaries states “A concept or perception of something based on the collective views developed and maintained within a society or social group; a social phenomenon or

convention originating within and cultivated by society or a particular social group, as opposed to existing inherently or naturally.”

The gym has created a social construct that holds true to most citizens of River Rouge (along with other sporting factors in mostly football). I am led to believe, through personal experience, that the introduction of a new, revamped and revitalized athletic complex will not only financially benefit the community but will also enhance the community’s health and an immeasurable increase in pride. The facility was home to 13 state boys’ basketball champions, one girls’ champion, and a number of All-American boy and girl players plus the many former NBA players, usually playing in the off-season or after their retirement including Detroit basketball legend Isiah Thomas. The River Rouge community is very much known for its sporting culture; the reintroduction of the facility with the add-ons such as batting cages and programming such as geriatric fitness classes along with community member discounts for the programming classes and trainings plus open facility use. Nonetheless, if the citizens are educated about the benefits of the facility, then they will financially back it through subsidies, taxes, bonds or donations... whatever the surveyed peoples deem fitting.

Crompton (2004) explained that there is sustenance in thinking that big events do bring value to the communities that host them that cannot be determined through economic standards. While I helped coach a state championship appearance in 2015, I cannot help but to note that attendance for our football games increased substantially during the playoff run and there were hundreds of fans in attendance to witness the state championship game at Ford Field. The feeling of nostalgia is not the only cause for the gym being an enlightenment to the community. The gym would provide a source of pride whenever it hosts large events that brings in lots of attention from people outside the community. This is proven by the numbers of attendance

during the old high school basketball Christmas tournaments. It gives the citizens a staple to their community, a landmark which provides notoriety far outside municipal factions and an opportunity for a hospitable reputation outside of the negative, crime ridden stereotypes.

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