

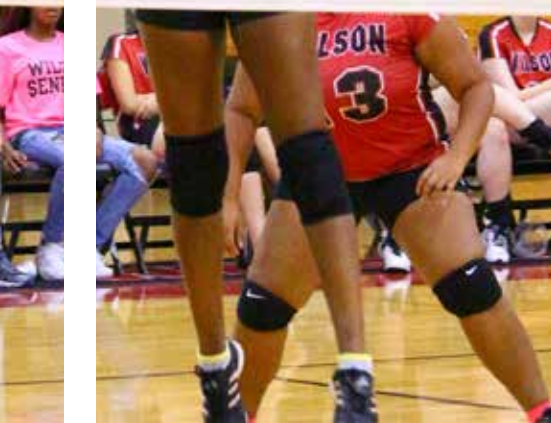


# STATE OF PLAY

**GREATER ROCHESTER  
& THE FINGER LAKES**

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE  
**PROJECT PLAY**  
REIMAGINING YOUTH SPORTS IN AMERICA



# STATE OF PLAY

GREATER ROCHESTER & THE FINGER LAKES

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 THE ASPEN INSTITUTE  
**PROJECT PLAY**



*Report funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, with guidance provided by Rochester Area Community Foundation*

## THE VISION

**Greater Rochester and Finger Lakes communities in which all children have the opportunity to be active through sports**

## WELCOME

For well over a century, Greater Rochester has been an international center of technological innovation. Photonics, the physical science of light generation and manipulation, is an emerging field in which the region is starting to play a leadership role. Understanding how light is emitted, transmitted, and can be directed is key to the development of an array of next-generation products that can improve lives, from laser surgery to quantum computing to consumer photography.

Photonics is a fine metaphor for the opportunity presented within this report. If you played sports as a child, think back on your favorite moment while engaged in activity. Try to recall what it felt like to do something physical that you had never done before. Think about what you learned in the course of chasing a ball, scoring a goal, or setting a personal record. Sport can create light, and that light can be shaped to develop healthy, vibrant kids and communities.

This report offers an independent assessment of the state of play for kids and sports in the six counties within Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes—Livingston, Ontario, Monroe, Wayne, Seneca, and Yates counties. It is anchored in the notion that all stakeholders will benefit if all children in the region, regardless of zip code or ability, are provided access to a quality sport experience. We know this from the body of research that has emerged over the past decade establishing the myriad benefits of physical activity. It's associated with greater cognitive function, positive mental health, better educational outcomes, and lower health-care costs in adulthood. A virtuous cycle gets unleashed, especially if children can be engaged in regular sport and physical activity before age 12.

The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program research team produced this State of Play report, analyzing sport programs and facilities in the region through the eight strategic filters (“plays”) highlighted in the Aspen Institute’s seminal 2015 report, *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*. Supporting Aspen were Rochester Area Community Foundation, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and a task force consisting of youth sport and other leaders from across the region.

We hope the work informs short- and long-term community strategies, as well as public and private investment in the broad spectrum of sports for youth (birth to age 18).

Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes have many dedicated organizations and individuals working to provide youth with quality sports activity. We recognize some of them on the pages of this report. But youth recognize, and stakeholders agree, that there are gaps. When we surveyed more than 100 youth sport providers and other leaders in the region on how well they think adults are doing in getting kids active through sports, the average grade was a C+.

We applaud the desire of the region to do better. We encourage you to seize the opportunity to be a national model. It's in the offing, with collective, sustained action guided by our findings.

We look forward to improving the state of play through public and private collaboration and investment.

Sincerely,



Tom Farrey  
Executive Director, Aspen Institute  
Sports & Society Program



Jennifer Leonard  
President and CEO, Rochester Area  
Community Foundation



David O. Egner  
President and CEO,  
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

# SCOREBOARD

**30+**  
SPORTS OFFERED

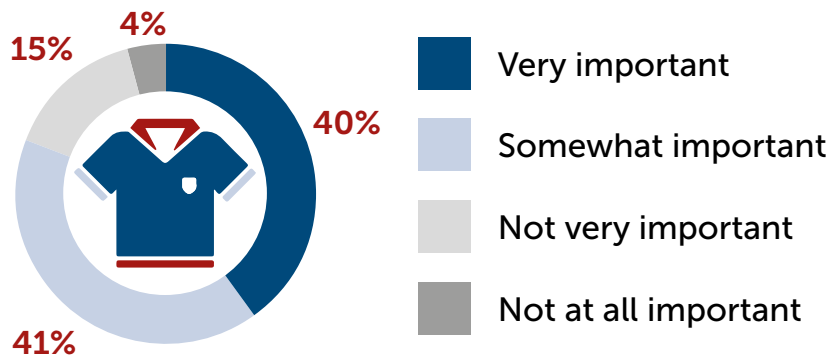
**951**  
COMMUNITY SPORTS  
FACILITIES

**227K**  
YOUTH

The Aspen Institute commissioned the Siena College Research Institute to survey parents in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes on the sport and physical activity patterns of their children. Key findings are below:

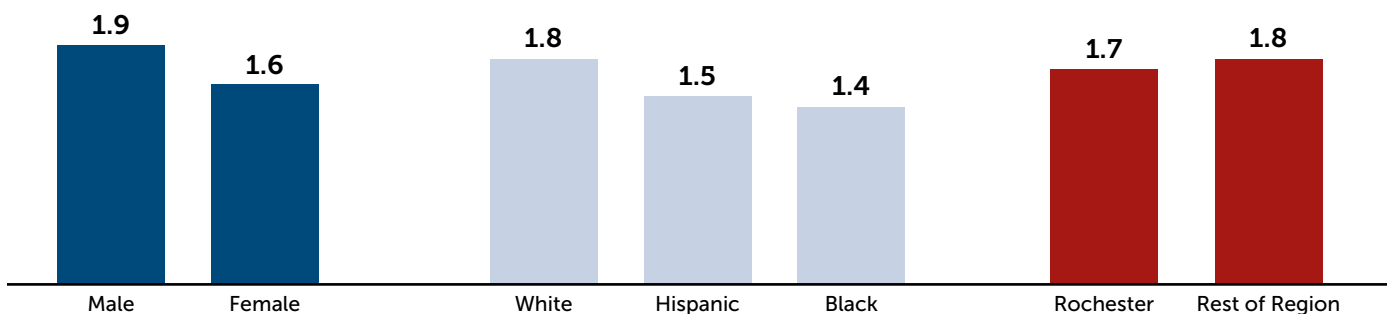
## PARENTS WANT THEIR KIDS IN THE GAME

How important is it to you that your child or children are regularly involved in sports?



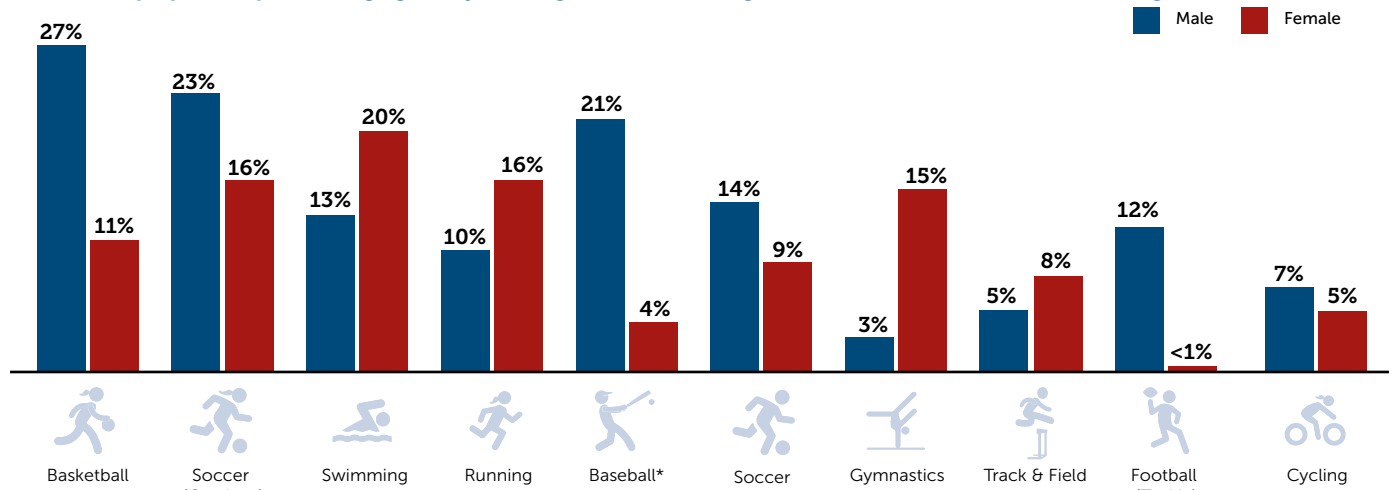
## AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPORTS PLAYED

Among youth who participated in any form of a sport at least 12 days in the past year



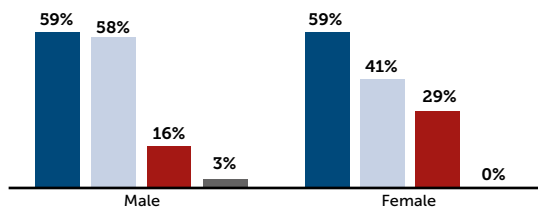
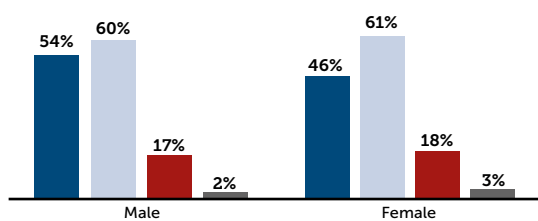
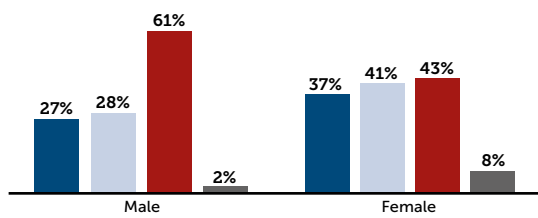
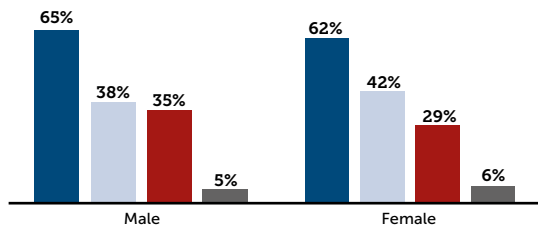
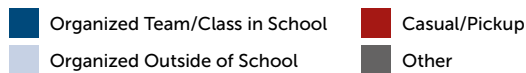
# TOP 10 SPORTS PLAYED BY YOUTH IN GREATER ROCHESTER

The most popular sports engage boys and girls in both organized and unstructured settings

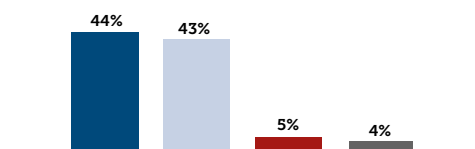
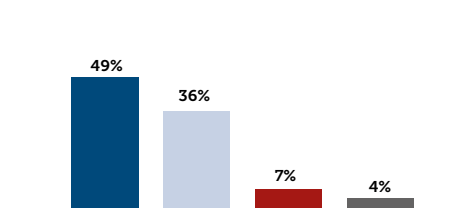
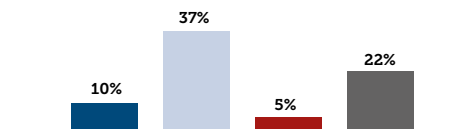
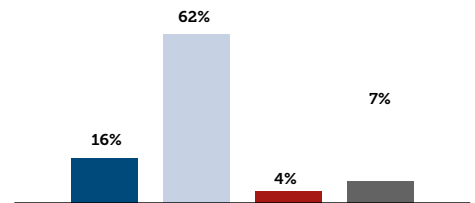


\*Does not include fast-pitch or slow-pitch softball, played by 2% and 3% of youth, respectively, mostly girls

## WAYS YOUTH PLAY



## WHERE YOUTH PLAY

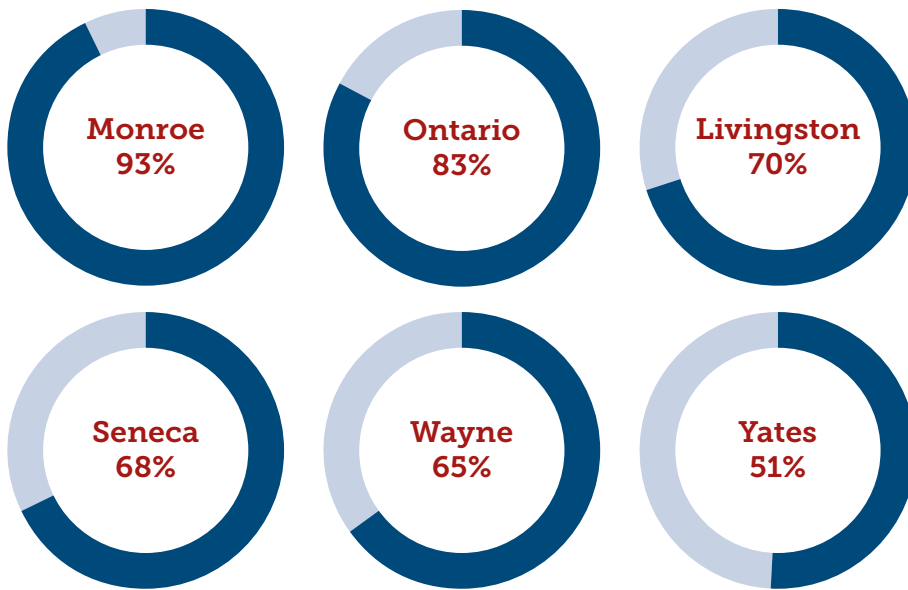


# SCOREBOARD

## PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION WITH ADEQUATE ACCESS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LOCATIONS

Individuals have **adequate access** for opportunities for physical activity if they:

- Reside in a census block within a half mile of a park, or
- In urban census blocks: reside within one mile of a recreational facility, or
- In rural census blocks: reside within three miles of a recreational facility.



This data is drawn from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2017 County Health Rankings report, which assesses various factors impacting the health of youth and adult populations. Locations for physical activity are defined as parks or recreational facilities. Parks include local, state, and national parks. Recreational facilities include a wide variety of nonprofit and for-profit facilities including gyms, community centers, YMCAs, dance studios, and pools.

## WHERE DID THE NEIGHBORHOOD GAMES GO?

Sports and activities that kids do near their homes, according to our household survey



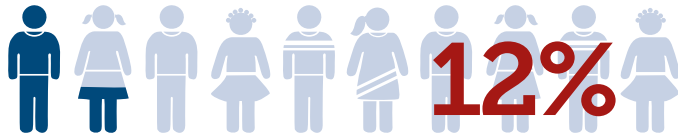
## YOUTH WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

7% of youth in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes have a disability and require assistance to participate in sports. Low-income families (12%) are almost 2x as likely to have a child with special needs.

## ON THE WHOLE, FEW KIDS ARE ACTIVE ENOUGH

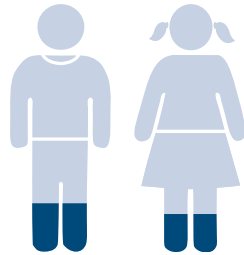
Percentage of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes region youth getting one hour of daily physical activity, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### TOTAL



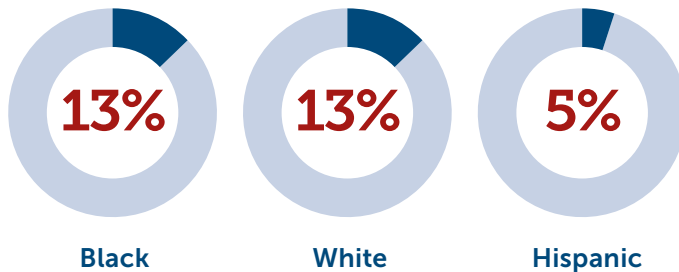
### BY GENDER

13%  
of boys

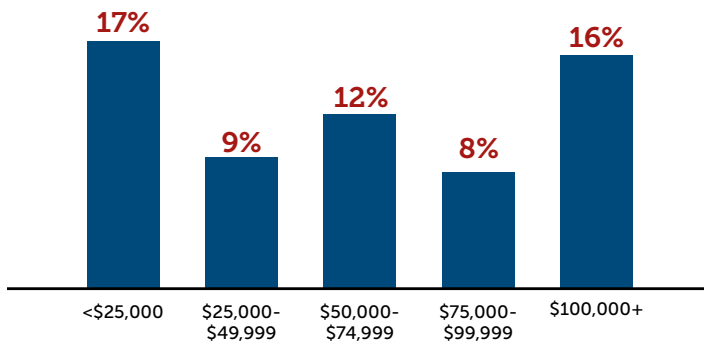


12%  
of girls

### BY ETHNICITY



### BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



While 17% of youth from the lowest-income households are active to the level recommended by the CDC, kids from that income level as a whole are 3x as likely than youth from the highest-income households to be active zero days during the week, and much less likely to be active through sport.

More data in Appendices, p. 30

When asked the question,

**What grade would you give stakeholders in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes in getting kids active through sports?**

103 youth sport providers and other stakeholders in an online survey distributed throughout the region by the Aspen Institute gave Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes an average grade of:

2017 State of Play Grade  
Greater Rochester and  
the Finger Lakes:

C+

### Report Methodology

Data on sport participation and physical activity rates were derived from a household survey conducted by the Siena College Research Institute, as commissioned by the Aspen Institute. During April 2017, a total of 631 parents of youth under age 18 in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes completed an online survey about their child(ren)'s participation in sports-related activities. Respondents were drawn from online panels maintained and benchmarked by Lucid, a global audience platform. A total of 1,059 children from the six counties that are the focus of this report are represented in the survey findings. The total panel is maintained to be reflective of the population measured. Oversampling of ethnic groups took place to boost responses from typically under-representing groups.

Other insights in this report were developed by Aspen's research team over the course of eight months in late 2016 and early 2017. Researchers conducted group and individual interviews; hosted focus groups with urban and suburban youth; toured sports facilities; surveyed leaders of sports facilities, athletics directors, coaches and program administrators; conducted a literature search; and created an inventory of community programs and facilities, among other efforts. Throughout the report, "sport" refers to all forms of physical activity which, through organized or casual play, aim to express or improve physical fitness and mental well-being.

# THE 8 PLAYS

*The Aspen Institute's seminal 2015 report, **Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game**, identifies eight strategies ("plays") that stakeholders can use to get and keep all kids active through sport—regardless of zip code or ability. On the pages that follow are five findings from around Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes related to each "play." The report uses the icons below to identify when a finding is most directly applicable to the area's urban core, suburban neighborhoods, and rural communities.*

1. ASK KIDS WHAT THEY WANT
2. REINTRODUCE FREE PLAY
3. ENCOURAGE SPORT SAMPLING
4. REVITALIZE IN-TOWN LEAGUES
5. THINK SMALL
6. DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT
7. TRAIN ALL COACHES
8. EMPHASIZE PREVENTION

*For more on the framework and each play, see the Project Play report at <http://youthreport.projectplay.us>.*



URBAN



SUBURBAN



RURAL





## Challenge: Youth sport is organized by adults 1 | THE PLAY: ASK KIDS WHAT THEY WANT

### From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

*It's Rule No. 1 in business: know your customer. Video games (and the technology industry more broadly) often get blamed for our kids' sedentary habits, yet they provide much of what children want out of a sport experience, including: lots of action, freedom to experiment, competition without exclusion, social connection with friends as co-players, customization, and a measure of control over the activity—plus, no parents critiquing their every move. Simply put, the child is at the center of the video game experience, all made possible by research and feedback loops that seek input from its young customers. Now imagine if youth sport providers worked half as hard to understand the needs of kids, especially those who are left out or who opt out of sports.*

### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **Youth and parents both value sports.** A 2010 survey of Ontario County high school students found that 63 percent believed sports, clubs, and activities to be among their schools' most important features. When asked about new activities, the students' most common request was for enhanced opportunities to sample sports, including field hockey, rugby, badminton, and archery.<sup>1</sup> The Aspen Institute's 2017 household survey found even stronger support among parents, with 81 percent of parents with youth under age 17 saying it is "very important" or "somewhat important" that their child play sports regularly. Parents of Hispanic youth felt the strongest, at 96 percent, even though—or perhaps because—their children are the least active, with just five percent physically active for one hour daily.



- **Kids are split between favoring in-school and out-of-school programs.** Students at Roberto Clemente School #8, in Northeast Rochester, told our team in a focus group that they felt there were differences between school sports and out-of-school leagues. In-school play offers freedom on the field, but outside leagues offer greater competition and more sport options. One student noted, "In school, you can do whatever you want when you play. In the leagues, it's not like that." Another student countered, "I like ... the leagues better because they have championships." Students at Twelve Corners Middle School in Brighton noted that school sports offerings were preset: "The teams were already here, and they just ask us to play on them." A classmate added that coaches may urge them to play particular sports based on perceived talent: "Coaches and gym teachers ask us to try out for a team if they think we're good at something."



**"Offer more sports to more kids."**

— Rochester student

- **Asking teens about how they want to engage with a program has reversed declining participation rates among older youth.** The Boys & Girls Club of Geneva (BGCG), in Ontario County, noticed that kids left its programs as they entered high school. Through focus groups, Executive Director Chris Lavin learned that in Geneva, high school students were ready to work and begin building professional experience. Enter: The J-Crew program. Students receive a stipend to work as BGCG junior staff, including as coach assistants.



- **If youth help build it, they will come.** In 2010, youth in Canandaigua in Ontario County navigated the city's regulatory process to develop a skate park that has become one of the most popular parks in town. In 2015, in response to high demand, they conducted surveys to help with their pitch to city leaders to expand the park. Said Canandaigua Mayor Ellen Polimeni, "We're giving them a chance to ... [show] how they would handle it." Project organizer Zach Wysong, then 15 years old, appreciated the opportunity. "It's our generation who are the ones trying to do this," he said.<sup>2</sup>



- **Rochester's local government has systems in place to collect youth feedback.** Youth Voice One Vision (YVOV) has officially served as the mayor's youth advisory council since 1996. In addition to the 100-plus member council comprised of youth ages 12-19 from throughout Rochester, YVOV also organizes youth councils in the city's recreation centers (R-Centers), supported by R-Center staff, to create programs at the neighborhood level. Programs created by YVOV councils include support for mayoral initiatives like *Let's Move!*, a natural way to expand YVOV to include support for youth sports.<sup>3</sup>



**“You can take something you don’t like about the game and make it fit to you better.”**

— Brighton student

## Challenge: Overstructured experiences

### 2 | THE PLAY: REINTRODUCE FREE PLAY

#### From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

Today, many parents are reluctant to let children ride bikes across town to play games with friends. Fear of child abductions, while extremely rare, is a psychological barrier, and crime and traffic concerns are real issues in some neighborhoods. Families are smaller, so there are often fewer siblings to play with at home. But experts recognize the need to reintroduce free play where possible, given the science. “To promote lifelong, intrinsically motivated sport participation, it is imperative to build a foundation during childhood,” sports psychologist Jean Coté writes. “Inclusion of high amounts of deliberate play activities early in development provides that motivational foundation.”

#### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes have a robust network of nonprofits, programs, and alliances that could support free play.** Rochester Area Community Foundation created Greater Rochester After School Alliance (GRASA) in 2001 to coordinate exchange of information and decision-making on out-of-school-time programs.<sup>4</sup> A 2015 GRASA report found that only 31 percent of children in the city of Rochester had access to out-of-school-time programs.<sup>5</sup> Efforts to boost those numbers, while prioritizing free play opportunities, will pay dividends.



- **After a period of de-emphasizing recess, school districts are recommitting to the activity period—and kids are benefiting.** The New York State Education Department requires all K-12 students to spend 120 minutes per week in physical education.<sup>6</sup> No similar requirement exists for recess. A 2010 report by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation and local organization Healthi Kids found that two-thirds of suburban school districts had a policy requiring recess, though only one-third of schools in the Rochester City School District (RCSD) did.<sup>7</sup> The organizations worked with RCSD to write a daily recess policy. Coupled with a recent grant from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to support Playworks at city elementary schools, 65 percent of students are now getting daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.<sup>8</sup>



- **Venues for free play, low-cost child care programs across the region get support from nonprofits and local governments.** Wayne County Action Program offers the Advantage After School program at multiple locations across the county and extended school day grants from the New York State Education Department support after-school programs in Rochester, Geneva in Ontario County, Penn Yan in Yates County, and the rural South Seneca district in Seneca County. United Way of Greater

Rochester funds after-school and summer enrichment programs across Monroe County. And in Rochester, R-Centers offer residents After School in the Park at Cobb’s Hill Park. These public-supported programs offer lower-income youth opportunities for supervised free play after school.



- **Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes have the ingredients to be a hub for action sports—known for the freedom they offer participants—but lack facilities.** The area is home to Krudco, one of New York’s oldest retail skate shops, and Kink-BMX, a leading manufacturer of BMX bikes. But just a handful of places across the region exist to enjoy these sports, with five facilities in Monroe County and one apiece in Wayne and Ontario counties.<sup>9</sup> The suburban towns of Gates, Webster, and Greece have public skate parks, but Rochester is one of few large cities in the United States without one. That would be remedied if Roc City Skatepark, which has been on the drawing board for a decade and has yet to be built, can get off the ground.<sup>10</sup> In the meantime, the city’s skaters are embracing Do It Yourself and crowdfunding.



- **In The Strong National Museum of Play, Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes have a key asset in building a culture of free play.** The museum, along with the peer-reviewed *American Journal of Play*, are part of The Strong, an organization that explores and promotes play.<sup>11</sup> Although the National Museum of Play’s exhibits focus largely on toy-based and indoor play, The Strong is also a leader in academic research on the subject, thanks to the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play. Its prominence in the community makes it a potential key resource for developing and reintroducing free play forms of sport in the region.



2017 State of Play Grade

Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

C+



## YOUTH VOICE

### Jean Kennedy, 16

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As the son of refugees, Jean Kennedy views sports differently than most high school students. For him, sports are an opportunity.

“I have to do my best in school and soccer so when I grow up, I can provide for my parents. They can have a better home and have more than what they came from,” said Jean, whose family left Tanzania in 1999.

Jean was born in the United States in 2001. He’s a sophomore at Rochester’s World of Inquiry School #58, where he is among many other refugees and children of refugees. He’s also a midfielder on the varsity soccer team. He has two brothers, Ishimwe, 12, and Alex, seven months. His passion is soccer.

Soccer is the national sport of Tanzania. It’s a popular sport in many of the countries represented by players on the World of Inquiry roster, including Thailand, Malaysia, Liberia, and other African nations. That’s made the school a rising power.

For many of these players, soccer is a way to fit in and find peace in a new country. Jean said that playing for World of Inquiry is special because teammates know what has been sacrificed to be together. And he adds with a laugh, “They know what to do with the ball when you pass to them.”

Jean also plays for the Rochester Jr. Rhinos soccer club. It’s another step in his development as a player—he hopes on his way to a pro career. That’s beyond a longshot for any youth player, but if his chances are measured in love of sport and desire, he may be one of the few to reach the top.

“You have to live, eat, and sleep soccer if you really want to become a professional,” he said. “Every day, you need to get touches on the ball so you can be better as a player and better as a person. You have to be friendly, humble, and not brag about it.”

## Challenge: Sameness and specialization

### 3 | THE PLAY: ENCOURAGE SPORT SAMPLING

#### From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

Most children flow into only a handful of the more than 120 sports played in the United States. And, as early as the grade school years, those identified as having the most promise get the message from coaches and others that they must specialize in one sport at the exclusion of others in order to fully develop their talents and play at a college, pro, or other elite level. It's a myth. ... Grow the menu of sport options, create better connections to vulnerable populations, and more athletes-for-life will emerge.

#### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **Livingston County, Seneca County, and Yates County are the most underserved counties in the region for sports facilities, limiting the variety of sports available to local youth.** With nearly 25,000 residents under 18 (more than 10 percent of the region's under-18 population),<sup>12</sup> these three counties combined account for just 4.4 percent of the total sports assets in the region. In Yates County, a survey by Project Play research partner Sports Facilities Advisory (SFA) was unable to identify any indoor facilities regularly used for organized sports with open community registration. (The survey did not include schools, churches, or other similar spaces.) More public indoor space would expand opportunities for Yates County youth to participate in sports programs year round, not just when the weather allows for outdoor play. The same is true in Livingston County and parts of Seneca County, where similar shortfalls were found. See Appendix A for maps of sports facilities and youth population density.



- **Partnerships among Rochester organizations help connect youth to a wide variety of sports and recreation opportunities.** The Rochester Youth Sports Foundation, founded by former NFL player Tony Jordan, along with the City of Rochester, R-Centers, and RCSD, offers an annual City Youth Sports Showcase for a variety of sports. Representatives of R-Center basketball, Pop Warner football, Little League baseball, youth soccer, and many others give youth the opportunity to get their hands on real equipment and try new sports. The foundation created the event in 2014 in response to lagging registrations across many sports. It has grown to host dozens of programs, drawing hundreds of participants annually.<sup>13</sup>

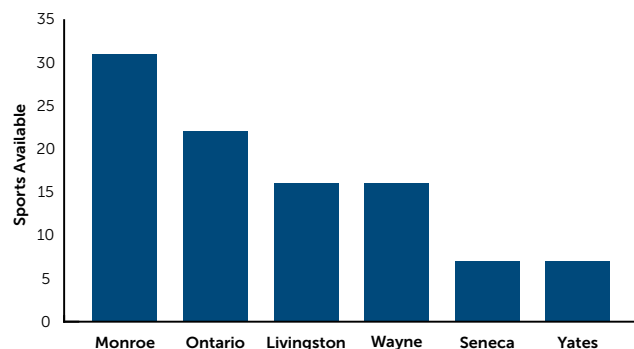


- **Across the region, youth play an average of 1.7 sports.** Those in Monroe County have the most sports from which to choose, but across the region, kids who opt out of team sports have an array of individual sport offerings. Our research shows that at least 30 different sports are offered across the region.<sup>14</sup> Youth in Monroe County have the most access to diverse options, with at least 29 sports from which to choose. Youth in Livingston, Ontario, and Wayne counties can choose from more than 15 options. There is less variety available in Seneca and Yates counties, where fewer than 10 sports are offered in each county. Across the region, 18 different individual (non-team) sports are available. Appropriate for a cold weather community, Rochester Curling Club offers a junior curling program with age-appropriate variations. Fencing, another niche Olympic sport, was made popular by Felicia and Iris Zimmermann, veterans of the US Olympic team who grew up in Rush, a suburb in Monroe County. Iris Zimmermann noted that fencing tends to collect “smart, nonathletic” kids who “didn’t fit with organized school sports.” For athletic kids who don’t fit in with organized school sports, the Rochester Parkour gym trains young people (and adults) in the free running technique that turns ordinary cityscapes into obstacle courses.



FIG. 1 | SPORTS AVAILABLE BY COUNTY

Monroe offers the greatest variety



- **Rochester City School District's expanded school sports offerings have brought more programs to more students.**

Since 2011, the school district's annual athletics budget nearly doubled to \$3.4 million, and almost 100 new programs were added.<sup>15</sup> Nearly 50 percent of students in grades seven to 12 now participate in sports, a 40 percent increase over the 2011 participation rate. A large part of this increase was in programs that provide interscholastic opportunities for students in seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, known as "modified" sports. The district's 2017-18 budget promises to expand extended learning time and community schools, which could support sports and recreation programs.<sup>16</sup>



- **Sprawling Genesee Valley Park in Southwest Rochester offers opportunities for many nontraditional sports and is the city's best resource for sport sampling.**

The indoor Genesee Valley Park Sports Complex includes an indoor ice arena with community open skate and free youth hockey leagues, as well as an indoor court used for everything from indoor lacrosse to roller derby. The park's waterways center offers rowing, sculling, and outrigger canoeing, while the park's fields offer ultimate Frisbee, tennis courts, two golf courses, and a pitch for cricket.<sup>17</sup> The YMCA of Greater Rochester offers free swimming lessons at the park's outdoor pool.<sup>18</sup> In 2016, Genesee Valley Park was the site of Rochester Cyclocross, a mixed discipline of road cycling and mountain biking.<sup>19</sup> While distant from downtown, the Sports Complex is close to the University of Rochester and Strong Memorial Hospital and is served by a number of public bus lines. Fees for youth are as low as \$1 to \$2 per session.



## YOUTH VOICE

### Lydia Culbert, 13

There are no balls or goals in Lydia Culbert's favorite sport. No innings or game clocks either.

In parkour, mostly there are walls to climb and obstacles to navigate. That works for Lydia, a quiet young teenager who isn't fazed by the challenges of her sport. "I love climbing," she said.

Lydia, a seventh grader, lives in Rochester and is homeschooled. Her 10-year-old sister Abigail also is a homeschool student and participates in parkour.

When Lydia was eight, she and her parents began searching for a sport to meet a physical education requirement for homeschooling. When she gave gymnastics a try, she remembers there were too many rules and that the classes seemed strict.

The Culberts then discovered parkour, a sport that develops running, jumping, and climbing skills. It's a sport that requires strength, stamina, and balance. Lydia began attending classes at Rochester Parkour and has been participating for five years. She practices once a week at her gym. At home, Lydia's training consists mostly of climbing trees. "She is such an amazing student [of parkour] and manages to balance her desire for gameplay and creative movement with her technique training," said Lydia's parkour coach, Nicole Suchy.

For the Culberts, being active and outdoors is what's on the calendar as often as possible. Lydia's mom, Cindy, and dad, Rich, are hikers and have shared their passion with their children.

Lydia recently climbed mountains in the Adirondacks. Her favorite places to hike so far have been New Mexico and Utah. She also enjoys skiing and snowshoeing.

"I like places where there are no houses and it's just fields," Lydia said. "It's open and wild. Sometimes you see animals."

## Challenge: Rising costs and commitment

### 4 | THE PLAY: REVITALIZE IN-TOWN LEAGUES

#### From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

*It's been a setting where kids of all skill levels and backgrounds play at the same local field or gym, rarely roaming beyond the town borders. But today, house leagues can be stigmatized as inferior, a casualty of tryout-based, early-forming travel teams that cater to the "best" child athletes. ... Revitalizing recreational leagues depends on improving both the quality of the offering and the quantity of available kids. Parents with means must be given a reason not to flee early for travel teams, through programming that develops their child's skills and provides opportunities for advancement, with fewer impacts on family time. Sport providers need to develop business models that wring less money out of more participants. And organizers must look in new places to grow the pool of players.*

#### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **Given families' limited financial resources, the need is great for low-cost, community-based leagues.** Rochester is the only city of its size in the United States where more than half its children live in poverty,<sup>20</sup> including 55 percent of African American and 56 percent of Hispanic children.<sup>21</sup> But Rochester isn't alone. Across the region, average salaries are \$20,000 below the state average.<sup>22</sup> Local youth need sport options that they can walk or bike to, are affordable, and don't require excessive time commitments by parents.  

- **With many different schools, governments, and nonprofits managing facilities and programs in the region, reaching mutually beneficial use agreements can be challenging—but they have proven successful.** Geneva offers a model. There, the Boys & Girls Club owns and operates the Geneva Community Center gymnasium and sponsors a small number of leagues; the city operates the Geneva Recreation Complex ice rink and soccer fields, along with a wide range of youth leagues; and the Geneva City School District operates four gym facilities that are heavily booked. The puzzle of sport spaces and programs has resulted in a complex, yet mutually beneficial network of use agreements and partnerships. One example: the city-funded youth basketball league for third through eighth grades plays at the Boys & Girls Club-run gym.  

- **Transportation issues are barriers across the region, particularly in Rochester and rural counties.** In the city, many children lack safe play spaces near their homes and the ability to travel outside their neighborhoods. In Rochester, after-school sports participants, whether playing for a school-sponsored team or in an unaffiliated league, are often miles from where they live and without a good option for getting home. Rochester-Genesee Regional Transit Authority is an answer for only a small percentage of youth who happen to live along bus routes, but its spoke-and-wheel route system can be slow and doesn't go all places. Transportation is an issue outside the city, too. Boys & Girls Club of Geneva owns three vans that can be used to provide transportation for their members, but one van attracted suspicion from an unfamiliar parent in March 2017 and resulted in a police alert.<sup>23</sup>  

- **Parochial schools in Rochester are leaders in providing locally based youth programs, despite the recent decline in Catholic education in the city.** Rochester's diocese-led CYO sports program offers soccer and basketball teams on a no-tryout basis. The only requirement: that at least two-thirds of team members be registered with the parish. With dozens of parishes across the six counties of our study area, this guarantees that most teams are locally based. The CYO requires that all team members have the opportunity to play, while good sportsmanship among players, coaches, and parents is enforced. The CYO athletic manual notes, "Playing is more important than winning and winning well is more important than winning. The emphasis rests not on the number of games won or lost, but on the participants' attitude in victory or defeat."<sup>24</sup> In the end, it's a win for area youth.  


- **Youth in the region, especially those outside of Rochester, have limited access to indoor sports during winter months.** Based on Project Play partner SFA's study of the region, indoor sport spaces are concentrated in Monroe County and are sparse elsewhere in the region. In Yates County, the SFA survey was unable to locate indoor courts, turf fields, or ice rinks that are regularly used for organized sports with open community registration, while Seneca County has just two indoor turf fields and Livingston County has one ice rink and one indoor court. (The SFA survey did not include schools, churches, or similar "shared-use" spaces, for which data is not readily available.) Eighty-two percent of the region's indoor basketball-sized courts lie in Monroe County, as do 68 percent of indoor turf fields. Ten of the region's 25 indoor turf assets (40 percent) are in Southeast Monroe County suburbs, which are home to families with higher incomes. The result: A large chunk of the nearly 160,000 youth in Monroe County—most of whom live in urban areas—are unable to participate in year-round long field sports like football, soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey. See Appendix A for maps of sports facilities and youth population density.



## YOUTH VOICE

### Chad "CJ" Thomas Jr., 13

Chad "CJ" Thomas, Jr. and friends who live nearby share a challenge. In their neighborhood, there are few youth sports leagues.

For organized sports, CJ and his parents must drive to suburban leagues a half-hour away in Chili and Gates. When he was seven years old, CJ's parents searched for organized sports in their neighborhood. There wasn't a baseball league nearby. Football leagues in the city are plentiful, but CJ's parents had concerns about the programs' equipment and safety.

"We didn't have a choice other than to go outside the city," said CJ's mom, Jenny.

That's a commitment that lasts nearly year round. CJ is a three-sport athlete. He plays football (cornerback), baseball (center field), and basketball (shooting guard). An eighth grader at East High School, CJ also is an honor roll student.

Passion for sports runs deep in the Thomas family. Chad Sr. played college basketball at the University of Rhode Island. Mandel Thomas, CJ's brother, played basketball at Fordham University.

CJ has his own sports dreams. They include playing sports in college and perhaps beyond. His ambition is to follow the example of his sports hero Ezekiel Elliott of the Dallas Cowboys. "I want to be an NFL player," he said.

He pursues that goal on fields and in gyms that mostly are in the suburbs. And sometimes in a neighborhood play space that is suitable for the pickup basketball and football games he likes to play in.

CJ's participation in suburban leagues has yielded positives. He has met a new and diverse group of friends and played against kids from many parts of Rochester and the Finger Lakes. But those opportunities are out of reach for many in his neighborhood.

**“There is some space around town but, no one wants kids playing around their stuff.”**

— Rochester student

## Challenge: Not enough places to play 5 | THE PLAY: THINK SMALL

### From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

*Growing access to play spaces for most children starts with the small—simple, smart moves that hold great promise. In urban areas, this may mean finding small spaces to develop quarter-sized courts for small-sided play. ... When schools agree to share their playing fields and facilities, it gives families and kids, especially those in underserved communities, more places to play in the evenings, on weekends, and during summer. ... Transportation to parks and school sites is vital, especially in predominantly African American and Hispanic neighborhoods, which often have fewer nearby recreation facilities than other areas. That’s significant, because people living within a mile of a park are four times more likely to use it than those who live farther away. Funding enables, but so do small gestures of other types of support. Which is another way of saying: be creative.*

### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **Staffing neighborhood parks has proven to increase usage.**

In recent years, programming in Geneva had become concentrated around large indoor rec facilities. As a result, neighborhood parks became underused. To address this, a collaboration between the Boys & Girls Club of Geneva, the Ontario County Youth Bureau, and the City of Geneva Recreation Department sent staff to Richards Park, an underused park near the city’s center, throughout the summer of 2015. The new program hosted pickup basketball tournaments on Mondays, arts and crafts on Wednesdays, and community dinners on Fridays, attracting neighborhood residents as well as community leaders. A year-over-year comparison showed a 50 percent decline in police calls to the park, even on nights with no scheduled activities.<sup>25</sup>



- **When barriers keep kids from coming to R-Centers, mobile recreation programs take activities to youth.**

Time, transportation, safety concerns, and awareness are all obstacles keeping kids from participating in R-Center programs. To combat this, Rec on the Move mobile vans bring R-Center staff and equipment into underused parks in Rochester’s urban neighborhoods. The vans bring physical activities to underserved neighborhoods while also increasing awareness of the programs offered at the brick-and-mortar R-Centers. Rec on the Move staffers offer fun, loosely structured sports and group games that can be easily replicated by youth on their own. Founded in 2010, Rec on the Move was an immediate success—the van attracted more than 1,000 visitors during its eight-week inaugural season.<sup>26</sup> In 2011, the New York State Parks and Recreation Society declared Rec on the Move an Exceptional Program. Rec on the Move expanded into winter sports in 2016, offering snowshoeing, sledding, and ice skating.



- **A scalable solution, libraries are being leveraged to make sport and play more accessible.**

Rochester and Monroe County have adapted the Rochester Public Library and Monroe County Library System into spaces for recreation. These library locations now loan more than books, with sporting equipment among the new resources available for checkout. Rochester’s libraries also provide indoor space for sport activities, like Olympic fencer Iris Zimmermann’s fencing demonstrations. The successful proof of concept is good news for the region’s youth, who have access to 77 library locations via the MCLS; the Finger Lakes Library System, which covers Seneca County; the Southern Tier Library System, which covers Yates County; and the Pioneer Library System, which covers Ontario, Wayne, and Livingston counties.



- **Rochester’s well-developed network of nonprofits have experience in developing creative plans for play spaces.**

Between 2010 and 2012, Greater Rochester Health Foundation and Healthi Kids, with the help of a wide network of community partners and resident input, created Playability Plans to identify current and potential play spaces in five Rochester neighborhoods.<sup>27</sup> The plans led to investment in play spaces across the city, such as the new playground at George Mather Forbes School #4, in the Jefferson Avenue neighborhood of Southwest Rochester. As a result, Rochester was recognized as a 2016 Playful City USA by KaBOOM!, a national nonprofit that builds playgrounds and encourages play.<sup>28</sup>





- **Once one-off renovated spaces have grown organically into neighborhood anchors as community demand increased.** Project Hope in Rochester, in partnership with the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, the City of Rochester, and the Genesee Land Trust, redeveloped a residential lot at the intersection of Conkey and Clifford avenues, a neighborhood with a dense Hispanic population. In 2009, Conkey Corner Park and playground was opened. To grow the impact of the new play space, an old, adjacent railroad line was developed into El Camino Trail, an urban bike path that connects the neighborhood with Seneca Park, the Genesee Riverway Trail, and the Avenue D R-Center. Today, the Thomas R. Frey Trail at El Camino is used by the Conkey Cruisers bike club, a free community program that encourages all ages to get healthy through cycling. Project Scion, a similar initiative that is a collaboration between two local landscaping firms, has built upon these efforts to convert an empty lot kitty-corner from Conkey Corner Park into a community garden, continuing the transformation of the intersection.



## YOUTH VOICE

### Joel Alicea, 16

As far back as he remembers, Joel Alicea has loved baseball and has been in the orbit of the Rochester Hispanic Youth Baseball League (RHYBL).

Joel was five when he started in organized baseball at RHYBL. As a child, Joel recalls, "I saw baseball all around me. I saw it on TV. I saw my brother playing. I saw it everywhere I went, and I wanted to try it out."

Now a junior at East High School, Joel stands 5 feet 10 inches tall and is a pitcher and third baseman for his school and club teams. He plays because he loves the challenge and enjoys having success on the field with the friends he has made over many seasons.

Wanting to give back, he recently became a part-time coach in the league, working with seven- and eight-year-olds. He laughs about that role. "I'm trying to improve their skills while they're young," he said, "and to improve them quicker than I did."

He's showing promise as a coach. Last season, Joel was the league's Rookie Junior Coach of the Year.

The Rochester Hispanic Youth Baseball League is a touchstone for many families. The league serves Latino communities and has many players of Puerto Rican and Dominican heritage. But kids from diverse backgrounds and from neighborhoods across Rochester also come to play and learn.

He hopes to continue playing baseball in college because it is a personal dream and would please his parents.

"I love making my parents happy," he said. "They've done so much for me as a kid growing up, I want to give them something back by playing baseball and going as far as I can."

## Challenge: Too much, too soon

### 6 | THE PLAY: DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT

#### From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

*If a local facility is the hardware in a child's sport experience, then a developmentally appropriate program is the software. Leading sport governing bodies recognize it as the organizing framework to deliver what kids need to grow as both athletes and people. Adoption of it is seen as a tool to stem attrition, advance physical literacy, and debunk misperceptions that parents and coaches have about athletic development.*

#### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **The region lacks dedicated spaces for athletes with disabilities, but opportunities are growing.** Aspen's household survey found that seven percent of children across the region need special help to play sports; it's nine percent in Rochester. Yet, the region has few accessible playgrounds designed to serve kids with mobility impairments. In 2013, NPR's Playgrounds for Everyone project, a national report on accessible play spaces, found just four playgrounds with accessible equipment in the region, all located in suburban Monroe County.<sup>29</sup> The good news is that many new accessible playgrounds have recently opened or are under construction, including at Sweden Town Park in Monroe County, Keuka Lake School in Yates County, and Gannett Hill Park in Ontario County. The crown jewel of these new facilities will be the Challenger Miracle Field at Ridge Park in Webster, Monroe County. Opening in 2017, the rubberized baseball diamond designed for individuals with disabilities will serve the region's nine Challenger adaptive Little League programs.<sup>30</sup> The Webster field will be convertible into a rectangular field for football or basketball. Phase II of the project will see the addition of a fully accessible playground.
- 
- **Despite having fewer adaptive facilities, the region's community leaders have created many programming opportunities.** The Genesee Region of Special Olympics New York, which serves all six counties in this study, offers a wide range of programming with the support of the Golisano Foundation, the University of Rochester's Golisano Children's Hospital, and the YMCA of Greater Rochester. Youth with disabilities in Rochester have even more options, including wheelchair basketball, sled hockey, and pickleball—courtesy of Rochester Accessible Adventures (RAA)—and activities on the Erie Canal and towpath—courtesy of a partnership between the Erie Boat Company and RAA. Options will only grow in 2017 when a grant from Disabled Sports USA will allow RAA to offer accessible sports in four Rochester R-Centers.<sup>31</sup>
- 
- **The region's refugee and Native American communities face barriers to accessing sport.** Rochester saw nearly 1,200 refugees arrive in 2016, including significant populations from Somalia, Cuba, Bhutan, Nepal, Iraq, Syria, and the Congo.<sup>32</sup> Many are unfamiliar with the youth sports system and face language and cultural barriers to participate. Abubakar Amin, who fled Somalia as a young boy and works at the Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services, organizes a youth soccer program for his community. Having a relatable leader has made the program more accessible to Somali refugees, but not every ethnic group has such a resource. Native Americans in the region also seek culturally relevant youth sports opportunities. Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) people consider lacrosse their national sport, and the national lacrosse team of the Iroquois Nation practices in Victor in Ontario County. The Seneca Art and Culture Center at Ganondagan State Historic Site organizes exhibitions of traditional native sports like longball, doubleball, and snow snake, a winter sport where competitors throw a long wooden dart down a snow track. The goal is to use interest in sports as a gateway to learning Iroquois culture.
- 
- **Local sports programs sponsored by religious communities blend physical activity with secular and traditional values while emphasizing fun and fundamentals.** Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes are well-served by four YMCAs. The locations promote inclusion and positive experiences with sport over competition, as illustrated by programming choices: flag football, tumbling, pickleball, cross country, and track in addition to the traditional baseball and basketball. YMCA programs also focus on age-appropriate play, as Iddy Biddy sports programs introduce kids ages three to five to the fundamentals of sports while building positive relationships and sportsmanship. Similarly, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Rochester, Rochester CYO Athletics, and Rochester Youth for Christ's All-Star Sports Ministries have focused on building positive relationships with teammates and adults.
- 

- **Introductory youth sports programs are available at some facilities, but are limited by staffing needs.** The Total Sports Experience (TSE) facilities in Gates and East Rochester, owned by the developer Andrew Gallina, are examples of facilities designed with age-appropriate play and development in mind. TSE offers micro programs in soccer, basketball, baseball, football, and lacrosse, as well as general physical education designed to teach kids fundamental skills at age-appropriate levels. TSE also offers an adaptive PE program in partnership with Rochester Rehabilitation Center’s SportsNet program and staff. On the border between Rochester and Brighton, Bill Gray’s Regional Iceplex offers Hockey 101 (ages four to seven), Initiation (ages six to twelve), and Pony (ages five and six) programs following USA Hockey’s American Development Model, which features age-appropriate practice plans for teaching a range of hockey skills. Programs that offer age-appropriate play often cite a lack of staff trained in techniques as a limiting factor. Case in point: Many of the preschool and youth sports programs offered by the town recreation departments in Brighton, Pittsford, and Victor are taught by a single shared instructor.



2017 State of Play Grade  
Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

C+



## YOUTH VOICE

### Mary & Keira Roko, 11 & 7

Mary (left) and Keira (right) Roko are athletes—and for that it takes a village. The sisters have severe cases of arthrogryposis multiplex congenita, a rare neuromuscular disease that inhibits the contraction of joints. Because of the condition, they aren’t able to speak. Instead, they communicate using devices on their wheelchairs.

It’s how they cheer for their teammates, too.

The Roko girls play sports for the same reasons most children do. They love the friends they’ve made. They like rooting for teammates and having teammates root for them. “When they’re playing, you see their souls brighten,” says Chaney Roko, their mom. “I’m so proud and happy for them.”

Mary, 11, and Keira, seven, who live in East Rochester, play in the Challenger Baseball League. The league is designed for children with the ambitions and different needs of the Roko girls. Each player has a volunteer buddy, often a student from a local high school. After a hit, the buddy steers the player around the bases. In the field, buddies stand at the side of the players, offering tips and encouragement.

Challenger is the girls’ primary connection to other kids. Because of their disabilities, the Roko sisters spend much of their time at home. Mary is homeschooled; Keira is homebound, receiving instruction provided by the Rochester City School District.

Playgrounds in their neighborhood aren’t accessible. Swing sets lack seats for children with special needs. For months, the ground is too muddy for wheelchairs to reach play equipment. Mary has tried bowling and Keira has tried ice skating, but for both of them, baseball reigns supreme. Mary enjoys zipping around the bases in her wheelchair. Keira, who sometimes hesitates before trying new things, is feeling more confident.

**“A good coach can see athletes for their strengths.”**

— Brighton student

## Challenge: Well-meaning but untrained volunteers

### 7 | THE PLAY: TRAIN ALL COACHES

From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

*Coaches are the delivery mechanism for quality sport programming. They determine how much exercise occurs during practice. Research aggregated by the President’s Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition shows that good coaches also lower kids’ anxiety levels and lift their self-esteem. They help boys and girls enjoy the sport. They can make an athlete for life—or wreck enthusiasm for sport altogether. . . . Trained coaches do best. One study found that only 5 percent of kids who played for trained coaches quit the sport the next year; the attrition rate was 26 percent otherwise.*

#### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **State, county, and city legislatures have successfully used the power of the permit to require coach training.** Since 1974, the State of New York has required any interscholastic team coach, from middle school modified to the high school varsity level, to complete training in first aid, CPR, identifying child abuse, as well as a three-step program in philosophy and principles, theory and techniques, and health sciences.<sup>33</sup> These programs are administered and monitored by local Boards of Cooperative Educational Services. Further, the most recent renegotiation of the shared-use agreement between the City of Rochester and the Rochester City School District requires program and coach certification before using school facilities.<sup>34</sup>



- **High attrition rates among coaches in small communities make it difficult to leverage national resources.** The costs of licensing a national coach training program cannot be justified if a coach’s skills and knowledge cannot be used over several seasons, leaving many coaches untrained. That’s not the case at the Boys & Girls Club of Geneva, however, where Executive Director Chris Lavin has partnered with Hobart and William Smith Colleges. HWS athletes and students in related majors coach in programs with low enrollment at BGCG. The result: Geneva youth get coaches with some know-how and HWS students get hands-on learning.



- **In the absence of standardized coach training for community sports, some league organizers have developed their own strict requirements based on national best practices.** The Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester CYO requires coaches take the diocese’s Creating a Safe Environment training and attend an annual training session. National CYO Sports has developed Catholic Coaching Essentials, a certification program that includes general and sport-specific coaching

training alongside faith-based content.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere, the Rochester Rapids competitive swim club requires all coaches become certified under the American Swimming Coaches Association, which offers a five-level program. And though the New York State West Youth Soccer Association does not require training, they have a culture that supports it, in part due to hosting US Soccer Federation coach training sessions across the region. Youth in these programs benefit from their coaches’ development, but most youth across the region are still playing for untrained coaches.



- **Coaches who are from the same community that a program serves can connect with participants.** Roc Future Boxing Club President Phil Greene, a construction worker by trade, is relatable to his participants.<sup>36</sup> So is the rest of the staff, all of whom grew up in Rochester. The coaching is working—the program sent four youth to the Ringside World National Boxing Championships in 2016—but ensuring that the coaches are trained remains a challenge.



- **Coaches serving urban areas may need to develop different skills than coaches serving suburban or rural areas.** Molly Bailey, program director for Girls on the Run of Greater Rochester (GOTR), has found that those coaching in urban areas are younger and more likely not to have children. In suburban schools, coaches are older, experienced teacher volunteers. The girls also come from different backgrounds, with different needs. Given these differences and coaches’ varying levels of experience, GOTR has found success designing the schedule so that coaches have more opportunities to connect with the youth they’re serving.



2017 State of Play Grade

Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:



# YOUTH COACHING IN GREATER ROCHESTER AND THE FINGER LAKES

Key findings from our online household survey, conducted by the Siena College Research Institute  
For purposes of this survey, "parent" refers to an adult living in a home with children; see p. 39 for survey methodology



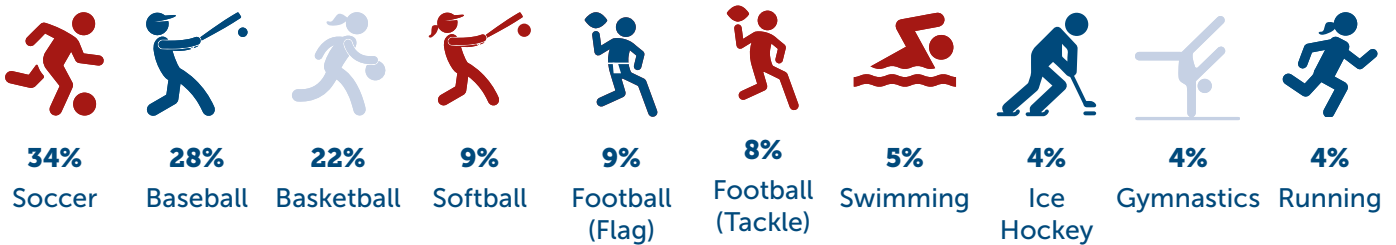
## PARENTS WHO COACH

# 38%

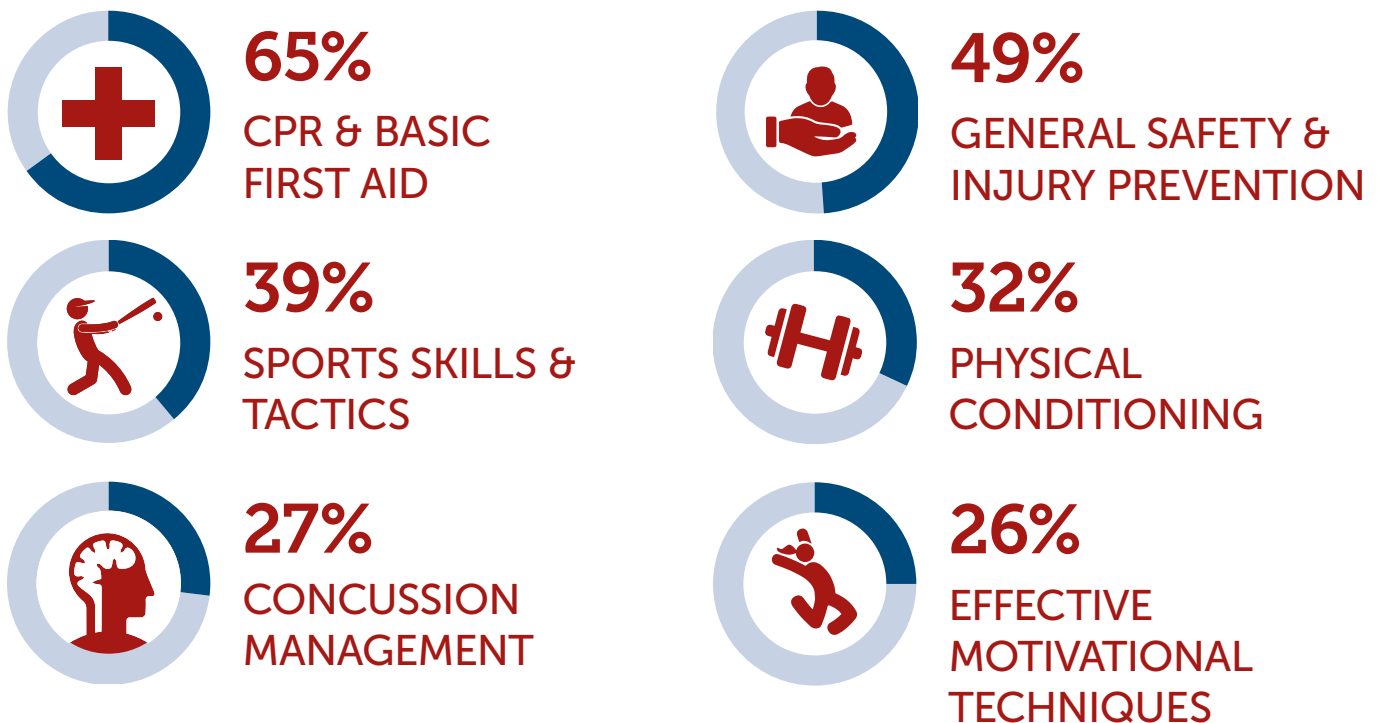
of parents polled have coached at some point in the past five years

## TOP 10 SPORTS THAT PARENTS COACH

The most commonly coached sports among parents who have led or assisted a team



## PERCENTAGE OF PARENT COACHES WITH FORMAL TRAINING/EDUCATION



## Challenge: Safety concerns among parents

### 8 | THE PLAY: EMPHASIZE PREVENTION

#### From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:

*Among the many issues facing youth sports, injury risks trouble parents the most. An espnW/Aspen Institute Project Play survey showed that nine out of ten parents have safety concerns—and half of those describe safety as a major concern. Both mothers and fathers said that concussions are the most worrisome and one-quarter of parents have considered keeping a child from playing because of that. Football, by far, gave parents the most cause for concern. ... Youth sport organizations should err on the side of caution—and ultimately participation—and embrace policies that eliminate or greatly reduce head contact at the 12-and-under level.*

#### Five findings in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes:

- **The region's hospitals and medical schools are ripe for partnerships to prevent youth sports injuries.** The University of Rochester Medical Center's for-profit University Sports Medicine program offers athletic training services and same-day concussion testing at its centers in Rochester, Greece, Penfield, and Brockport in Monroe County. Programs at the centers include classes teaching preventative exercises, sports psychology, and athletic performance training. UR trainers also provide athletic training services for many suburban high schools, including on-field athletic training and free pre-participation physicals. For a fee, physicians and trainers are available to provide educational seminars for coaches and parents. The need within the region is great, as fewer than one in three youth coaches in football, baseball, soccer and basketball are trained in concussion management, and only half are trained in general safety and injury prevention, according to Aspen's household survey.
- **Advocates from the Finger Lakes have made an impact on the state level.** Geneva native and Seneca County resident Ray Ciancaglini is a former professional boxer who struggles with memory loss and Parkinson's-like tremors, which he attributes to sustaining multiple concussions.<sup>39</sup> In 2011, thanks in large part to his efforts, the New York state legislature adopted the Concussion Management Awareness Act. It requires coaches, teachers, and school personnel to be trained to recognize the signs of concussion.<sup>40</sup> The law also prohibits students with signs of concussion from participating in sports until after they have been cleared by a physician.<sup>41</sup>



- **High school athletic trainers are key to preventing, diagnosing, and treating sports-related injuries, but access to them is limited.** As of 2015, 88 percent of high schools in Monroe and Ontario counties have access to a full- or part-time athletic trainer. Rates are much lower in Seneca and Yates counties.<sup>37</sup> It wasn't always like this for Monroe County students. RCSD students benefited from a decision that saw the district hire four athletic trainers before the 2014-15 school year as part of its sports expansion. In addition to school year responsibilities, University Sports Medicine and RCSD trainers host free summer combines on injury prevention, safe exercise routines, and proper nutrition for high school student-athletes referred by coaches or athletic directors.<sup>38</sup> Trainers also collect data on students' injury histories in an effort to detect commonalities among students who suffered similar injuries. The vision for the future: identifying students who may be at higher risk for specific injuries. An even better vision for the future: making this advantage available to youth in currently underserved counties. (See Appendix D for a breakdown of available trainers by county.)



- **Statewide sports organizations have made strides in protecting high school athletes from injuries.** The New York State Education Department implemented the Athletic Placement Process (APP) in 2015. It allows athletes who complete a series of tests to play on freshman, junior varsity, or varsity teams even if they fall outside the typical age range of the level.<sup>42</sup> APP's assessment ensures students don't advance to levels of competition they aren't physically prepared for, reducing injury risks. More recently, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association revised regulations for baseball pitchers. The state's new rule, approved in January 2017, limits a pitcher in a regular season game to the at-bat in which they throw pitch number 105 (in the postseason, a pitcher is permitted to throw more than 125 pitches).<sup>43</sup> It's an improvement, but these pitch counts can still be above the recommendations that Major League Baseball and USA Baseball promote via their Pitch Smart initiative.<sup>44</sup> The state has yet to address pitch counts in softball.



- **Nonprofits in the Rochester community have taken steps to educate parents and kids about how to prevent unintentional injuries.** The Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Rochester, which operates out of Golisano Children’s Hospital at the University of Rochester Medical Center, consults on the construction of new, safer playgrounds. In partnership with Kohl’s Corporation, the coalition also offers the Kohl’s Pedal Patrol bike safety program, donating helmets to children who come to the hospital after being injured on a bicycle, skateboard, or other wheeled sport. Distributing helmets proactively—rather than after an injury—is another strategy worth considering.





## CALL FOR LEADERSHIP

As noted at the beginning of this State of Play report, Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes has long been a hub of innovation. Embracing that spirit of enterprise, of looking forward to what's next, will be essential in growing access to quality sport options for youth. Based on our analysis of the unique characteristics of the region, below are five recommendations of systems-level interventions that can help leaders develop healthy kids and communities through sport:

### Partner with colleges

Every community needs coaches, and those who are trained in the essentials of working with youth do best. Kids have more fun, and they're more likely to sign up again the next year. Most stakeholders whom we spoke to appreciate the value of coach training, and some providers have taken assertive measures to arm their coaches with key competencies. The challenge now is to create a culture of coach training across the region in which quality coaching is the expectation.

Greater Rochester, in particular, has the assets and characteristics to deliver on such a vision. It is populated in part by educated professionals who, as parents and volunteer coaches, can appreciate the benefits of quality training. They also have the resources to afford a \$25 training course, if packaged well. Providers in lower-income communities have fewer resources to tap, but are not without assets that can be deployed to fill gaps—most notably area colleges and universities.

We are inspired by the model embraced at the Boys & Girls Club of Geneva, in Ontario County. As noted in the Train All Coaches section of this report, Hobart and William Smith Colleges asks its physical education and kinesiology students to volunteer as club coaches and tutors. At a school committed to community service, HWS athletes are among the most committed volunteers.<sup>45</sup> “Student-athletes have many opportunities for service learning in the community,” said Sophie Riskie, Assistant Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development at William Smith College.

Imagine the possibilities: Eleven colleges and universities in the region offer college athletics. In 2015, their aggregate population of student-athletes was 4,719.<sup>46</sup> Develop opportunities to engage more of these young people, who already have the sport knowledge to teach a sport and the credibility to be effective role models. Encourage the schools to partner with coaching organizations to provide modules that can train coaches in safety and age-appropriate play, while systematically connecting students with youth organizations. Create a pipeline that will only enrich the youth sports culture over time, as these athletes cycle out of college and move back into communities, now with more tools to promote quality activity.

### Innovate around transportation

Transportation was identified by stakeholders as a major challenge in connecting youth to sports programs, as not all parents are able to drive children to practice or pick them up after a game. Fortunately, the region has a track record of finding creative solutions to transit challenges. Recently, the city and Regional Transit Authority launched Van Pool, a pilot rideshare program for transporting residents from neighborhoods to their jobs.<sup>47</sup> The city provides a new van. Drivers are volunteers commuting to work.

**5 recommendations  
for stakeholders in  
Greater Rochester  
and the Finger Lakes**





Could Van Pool—or something like it—address the youth sports conundrum? With modifications, it could. Consider: Faith-based organizations and other nonprofits spend a lot of time and money on transportation. Many use vans to drive groups to various activities across the region. They're constantly in need of replacing vehicles and upgrading their fleets.<sup>48</sup>

A foundation could donate vans to churches (or other not-for-profits) that commit to using them to give kids lifts to their games and practices. It's a model that could promote incentives and efficiencies on both sides. Youth sports leagues save the expense of keeping a van in running order, buying gas, and scheduling drivers. Meanwhile, the church acquires much-needed transportation that most hours of the day is available for shuttling its members and builds goodwill throughout the neighborhood. A relatively modest investment is needed—\$32,900 for a Dodge Express Passenger van, for example—and could be piloted in four or five local churches.

Details of such a program would need to be worked out, of course. How many hours each week? How would the program be monitored? Who would the drivers be and how would they be vetted? But the concept is worth exploring, as the need for solutions is well-established, especially for children growing up in single-parent homes with the least ability to ferry kids around.

## Be Abby Wambach

That is to say, the region should commit itself to being the best at girls' sports. It's the rare child with the capacity to achieve as much as Abby Wambach, the Rochester native who went on to World Cup and Olympic soccer fame. But Rochester has tools that can help it deliver on a more important outcome: communities where sports are accessible to all girls, regardless of zip code or ability.

Again, leverage the colleges, where female athletes and role models in two dozen sports can be found. Engage or at least study the model of Coaching Corps, a national leader in coach training that has found particular success at working with colleges to find female students from diverse ethnic backgrounds—athletes or otherwise—who will volunteer as trained coaches.<sup>49</sup> Look at Rochester's climate as an asset, with its array of cold- and warm-weather sports. Assume there's a sport for every girl, so help supply meet demand with events like one recently hosted at Rochester's East High School, where 20 community leagues and 22 school-based programs were represented.<sup>50</sup>

There's much room for growth. In Rochester's public schools, only 13 percent of high school girls say they participate in an hour of

physical activity each day, compared to 22 percent of boys. In the same survey, 38 percent of girls reported watching TV three or more hours a day, compared to 33 percent for boys.<sup>51</sup> These rates are among the highest in the region. These figures should concern, and motivate, every youth sports leader.

## Engage Refugees

Youth sports in the United States were originally promoted, more than a century ago, as a means of introducing immigrant youth to American life. Team sports, in particular, were seen as a tool of nation-building by fostering values such as teamwork, discipline, and resilience. Today, bringing refugees and children of refugees into the circle of organized youth sports can be a challenge. In Rochester, leaders from the refugee community expressed concern that children are reluctant to join large community leagues, instead preferring to play on their own or in small groups of other refugee children.<sup>52</sup> The reason? These children have been subject to bullying and other coercive behavior from classmates in some city schools and fear receiving the same treatment in sports.

Rochester International Academy and World of Inquiry School #58 are exceptional public schools, with cultures in which ethnicity is valued and celebrated.<sup>53</sup> Youth sport organizations could engage these schools to better understand how to create inclusive environments in sports. Those with resources could proactively develop coach training partnerships, encourage cultural sensitivity training for coaches, and offer fee waivers for kids from low-income families.

The benefits of reaching out to refugees are many, from new insights to new friends to new ways of playing a game. (See Appendix B for a map of refugee and immigrant communities and their proximity to city parks.)

## Create a best-in-class model for football

Concerns of head injuries are causing some parents to think twice about letting their children play tackle football. Others are starting with flag football and seeing where the child's interest goes, pushing off the difficult parental decision until later. About 500 youth in Rochester play a version of flag,<sup>54</sup> while 1,100 play tackle, which is down by approximately 15% from 2016.<sup>55</sup> Two dozen leagues in Greater Rochester are registered with NFL FLAG, with programs offered through many local YMCA of Greater Rochester branches.<sup>56</sup> Across the region, flag is more popular now, with 11 percent of youth playing that version of the game vs. eight percent for tackle, according to our household survey.



Limiting head contact at an early age makes sense. There’s no research to support the notion that children need to learn to tackle at an early age to prevent injuries later. Further, multiple concussions can be cause to step away from contact sports altogether, ending participation in such activity before the end of—or sometimes even before the start of—high school.

More can be done to protect young players. Football programs can more aggressively promote flag over tackle before the high school years. If reluctant to move in that direction, then try on the new form of modified football encouraged by USA Football, which sees small-sided games on smaller fields as a way to limit crushing blows for little kids, who have less neck strength than adults and whose brains are still forming.<sup>57</sup>

At the high school level, where football nationally has the highest injury rates, players need the protection and services of full-time athletic trainers. The region lags: Approximately 23 percent of high schools in the six counties covered in this report have them.<sup>58</sup> Nationally, full-time trainers are present in 37 percent of high schools.<sup>59</sup> Most schools rely on part-time trainers.

**FIG. 2 | HIGH SCHOOLS WITH TRAINERS**

County	Full-Time Trainer	Part-Time Trainer	No Trainer	No Data Available	Total Schools	% with Full-Time Trainer	% with Some Trainer
LIVINGSTON	1	2	2	0	5	20%	60%
MONROE	10	20	3	1	34	29%	88%
ONTARIO	1	6	1	0	8	13%	88%
SENECA	0	1	2	0	3	0%	33%
WAYNE	2	5	4	0	11	18%	64%
YATES	1	0	1	0	2	50%	50%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>78%</b>

Cost is a limiting factor. A full-time high school athletic trainer earns approximately \$35,000 to \$40,000 per year plus benefits.<sup>60</sup> It’s often viewed as one more thing that stresses overburdened budgets. But progressive school administrators see it as essential, like the salary of a history teacher or cost of a computer lab. They appreciate that children’s health depends on it—and that their education does, too, since injured athletes may miss school time to recover from injury.





## GAME CHANGER: *The Promise of Teamwork*

In many communities, youth sports are splintered. Leagues go their own ways and are more likely to compete for funding and access to fields and gyms than they are to cooperate and foster opportunities for holistic programming that meets the developmental needs of children. As many reasons as there are for working together, there are more for pulling apart.

The city of Rochester is addressing this issue in a manner that makes it a national model. The Youth Community Committee, a coalition of leaders led by the city's public schools and department of recreation, is a progressive effort to connect local youth sport providers for the benefit of kids. "Our focus is on the interests of children. The children first," said Carlos Cotto, Rochester City School District executive director for health, physical education, and athletics. "As adults, we lose sight of the fact that these programs belong to youth, not us."

The youth committee is young—just three years old. It is informally organized, with monthly meetings open to all youth sport leaders who want to attend. But already it is making a difference, demonstrating the influence that stakeholders can make by simply gathering to share knowledge and develop a shared approach to common challenges.

Take football, for example. Rochester has 11 different youth football organizations and hundreds of children playing tackle football.<sup>61</sup> Many games are played on football fields controlled by RCSD. Issues with inadequate coach training and unacceptable fan behavior plagued some of the teams and became a concern for school and city officials. The city and the youth leagues agreed to work together to address the problems. The leagues agreed to hold themselves accountable. As a condition of using city fields, they adopted codes of conduct for coaches and fans. Leagues also perform background checks on adult volunteers and file security and emergency plans.

Youth baseball was disappearing in Rochester. Leagues were folding. Survivors battled over players and dwindling resources. The Youth Community Committee brought the leagues to the table to settle quarrels. Soon they were working together to grow baseball in the city. In three years, the number of players has risen from about 600 to nearly 2,000.<sup>62</sup>

Our recommendation is to take the next step in the committee's evolution and formalize the initiative. Give it a charter. Create a list of conditions and benefits of membership. Invite the participation of symbiotic initiatives such as the Healthi Kids Coalition that is focused on developing play spaces, as well as stakeholder organizations beyond the community recreation and education sectors: leaders from business and industry, tech and media, public health, even policymakers.

Whatever the youth sport goal, embrace the principles of Collective Impact, a strategy that fosters cross-sector collaboration and which coalitions increasingly use to address complex social problems and strengthen targeted community assets.<sup>63</sup> With two high-profile Collective Impact initiatives—Roc the Future and the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative—Rochester is especially ready to embrace this strategy for youth sports.



## The five conditions of Collective Impact:

- 1. Common Agenda:** Every movement needs a vision shared by all stakeholders.
- 2. Shared Measurement System:** You can't manage what you can't measure. This report offers statistical snapshots of where Greater Rochester and the Fingers Lakes are on various metrics, including those identified by a household survey. What are the numbers that stakeholders most want to move? What goals does the coalition want to set for lifting those numbers, and by when?
- 3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Which local organizations are best positioned to promote coach training, parent education, transportation solutions, and outreach to girls and refugee populations? Where are national partners most valuable? Asset mapping and dialogue can break down silos, focus energies, create efficiencies, and relieve the burden on any one organization to address all of the challenges alone.
- 4. Continuous Communication:** In-person and digital communications on the full range of opportunities identified will be necessary to develop trust, discover resources, and forge partnerships. The Youth Community Committee's monthly meetings already happening are a great start.
- 5. Backbone Support Organization:** Even the most well-intentioned actors get busy and distracted. Someone needs to wake up every morning with the responsibility to advance the work of the local coalition and provide support for the first four conditions above.

Funding will be required to create the backbone support staff to launch the effort. It's worth the investment. From there, many opportunities identified by stakeholders in our focus groups can begin to open, from the development of a youth sports fellowship program that allows local innovators to pursue breakthrough ideas for a year, to more intentional connections being made between after-school providers and sports programs and facilities, to templates that can be shared with leaders in outlying counties who want to form their own Collective Impact efforts.

Leaders we spoke with identified the need for a web portal to identify all youth sport providers in the region. With a Collective Impact effort organizing providers, the creation of or participation in an existing Yelp-style search marketplace becomes viable, with listings sorted for parents by geography, age and gender of child, cost, and other filters. Tech solutions could also be pursued to allow easier scheduling of gyms and athletic fields, recruitment of referees and coaches, and crowdfunding for programs most in need.

**All of this will take work and embracing new ideas. Our bet is the region is up to the task.**





## IDEAS

A few short, crisp ideas to pump into the bloodstream of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, designed to stimulate new thinking among the eight sectors that touch the lives of children:

### Community Recreation Organizations

**League boards:** Reach out to experts in the community. Appoint a pediatrician or sports-medicine physician to the board. Include older parents who can look back at their experience with perspective.

**Youth leagues:** Start an equipment exchange. Before the season, parents drop off pants, fielder's mitts, sticks, helmets, balls, and other items that children have outgrown or don't want. Parents of younger kids choose items they want. Donate the leftovers to an after-school or summer enrichment program to support sports activities.

**Local leagues:** Adopt codes of conduct that rein in overzealous adults. Follow the lead of the Gates Chili Little League whose code states: 1) I will not force my child to participate in sports, and 2) I will remember that children participate to have fun and that the game is for youth, not adults.<sup>64</sup>

### Pro Teams

**In-season:** Add an activity tracker giveaway to the promotion schedule. Anyone attending an Amerks game under age 18 receives a free pedometer. On the team website, youth can compare their results with the players'.

**Out-of-season:** Stage a kids' media day. Invite kids to be the journalists while players and front-office personnel squirm as they answer the questions. The program ends with kid reporters challenging players and staff to a race around the field. Teams have just created a fan for life, and maybe an athlete, too.

**Year-round:** Make free play cool. Create public-service announcements that feature players reflecting on their favorite free-play memories. Red Wings, Knighthawks, and Rhinos players recount long summer nights playing pickup sports with neighborhood friends, for example.

### Education

**Elementary schools:** Prioritize recess and PE offerings. At recess, help students organize themselves into free play or more traditional sports games. In PE, focus on teaching fundamental movement skills that are transferable across sports. BOKS, a Reebok-funded program, offers free curricula that can provide ideas and lesson plans.<sup>65</sup>

**Middle schools:** Set expectations for behavior of youth players. At Canandaigua Middle School in Ontario County, the players' code of conduct states: 1) Remember that participation in athletics is a privilege that is not to be abused by unsportsmanlike conduct, and 2) Deal with opponents with respect. Shake hands after the competition and congratulate them on their performance.<sup>66</sup>

**School boards:** Incentivize schools to form unified sports teams that pair youth with and without disabilities as teammates. Follow the lead of the Gates Chili Central School District, which launched Unified Sports in 2015 after months of planning by superintendents, athletic directors, special education educators, and a representative of Section V of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.<sup>67</sup>

## Civic Leaders & Policymakers

**Government:** Start a regional council on physical fitness, health, and sports. Resources for building skate parks, ice rinks, and indoor turf fields are limited, and an inventory of school facilities and shared use agreements does not exist. Regional coordination doesn't replace decision-making on the local level, but it can inform choices and strategy for the benefit of all in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, especially for those in outer counties.

**Local leaders:** Build support for pocket parks, mini-play spaces in neighborhoods. Kids need recreation places near where they live. Seek out local artists, gardeners, and other activists to ensure that these parks make signature statements. Reach out to refugee leaders to incorporate their cultures into the feel of their neighborhoods and make sure they feel welcome.

**City government:** Use the power of the permit, as the City of Rochester does. Youth leagues that want access to city-owned fields must play by the rules, including appropriate coach training and codes of conduct for fans. (See Game Changer on p. 26.)

## Tech & Media

**Democrat and Chronicle Media Group:** Start a sports blog about kid players for kid players. First post: a child reporter's video story of her first curling competition.

**Local hacktivists:** Develop an app for parents of children with disabilities. Where are the nearest playgrounds with adaptive swings? Which sports leagues train coaches to work with children on the autism spectrum? Connect families with resources and each other.

**Makers:** Make sports more accessible. Tim Jahnigen, founder of One World Futbol Project, created a nearly indestructible soccer ball that never needs air.<sup>68</sup> Imagine how many extra games and scrimmages have come from that idea. One World balls have been distributed free to kids in need around the world. Can similar, cost-effective ideas open sports to kids in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes?

## Business & Industry

**Sports apparel retailers:** Make youth sports a beneficiary of corporate social responsibility programs. In 2016, Patagonia donated 100 percent of global Black Friday sales to environmental causes, totaling \$10 million.<sup>69</sup> This year, a Rochester-based company donates to girls' sports or sports in refugee communities?

**Local business:** Expand workplace volunteer programs to include field upkeep and advising on finances. Youth sport organizations in underserved communities need help in these areas.

**Trophy companies:** Hold a trophy giveback day. Accept gently used trophies (and monetary donations). Refurbish them and donate or sell at low cost to leagues that are financially strapped.

## Public Health

**Hospitals:** Partner with schools to screen athletes for fitness and injury prevention. In 2015, University of Rochester Sports Medicine and the Rochester City School District teamed to host a free clinic for city athletes.<sup>70</sup> Participants ran drills and got tips about nutrition from UR doctors.

**Doctors:** Campaign against energy drinks. Risks from these drinks are well known. Youth who've consumed energy drinks before sports have become seriously ill with heart arrhythmia and seizures due to high levels of caffeine.<sup>71</sup> Yet energy drinks are marketed to children, and it's working. In the Fairport School District in Monroe County, 55 percent of high school students said they've used energy drinks.<sup>72</sup>

**Organizations:** Create safe-sport certification to help parents choosing a league for their child. Accreditation would be based on coach training, field conditions, and policies that promote age-appropriate play.

## Parents

**Adopt Sandlot Day:** Schedule a day each season when coaches and parents step aside and allow players to run the show. They make the lineups, decide on substitutions, and manage the show like in the days of sandlot sports. For kids, it's a lesson in problem-solving. For parents paying attention, it can offer insight into what kids want most from a sport experience.

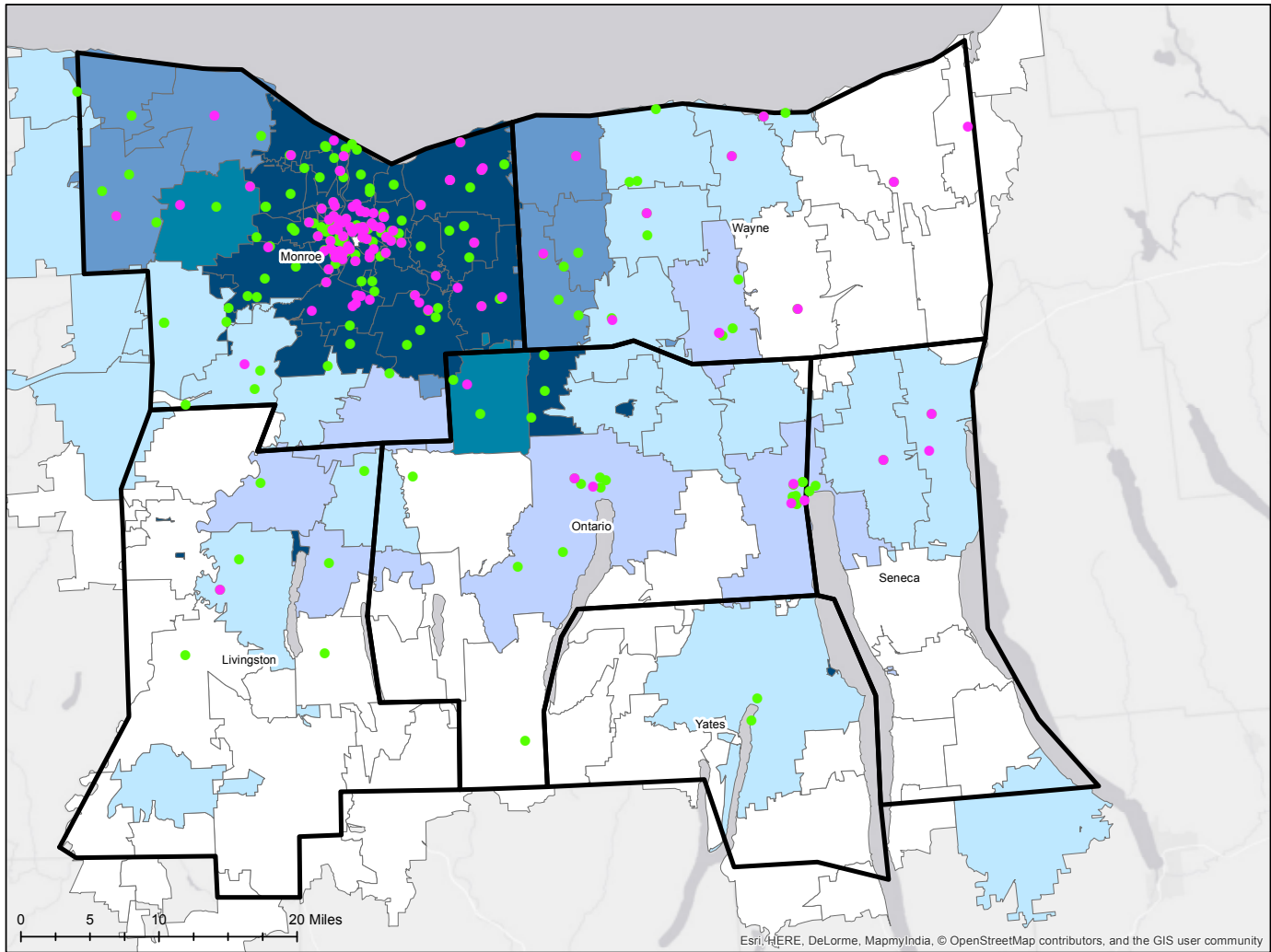
**Embrace rules that calm the sidelines.** On Silent Saturdays, only coaches are permitted to shout encouragement and instructions. Parents, guardians, and others refrain from calling out.

**Choose leagues that play by safer rules.** USA Football, the national governing body of the sport, recently took a constructive step by modifying games for kids: no more kickoffs, fewer players on a team, and a smaller field.

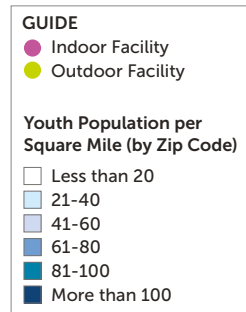
# APPENDIX A

## FACILITY LOCATIONS AND DENSITY OF YOUTH POPULATION

Facilities are clustered around areas with high population density. In many cases, this holds true even in rural counties. However, in the rural counties, there are areas with higher population density relative to their surroundings that have no or few facilities. As this map shows, many children in rural counties must travel considerable distances by car to reach sports facilities.



Source: Sports Facilities Advisory | Sports Facilities Management and the US Census Bureau. Facilities defined as venues regularly used for organized sports/programs with open community registration; this map excludes schools.

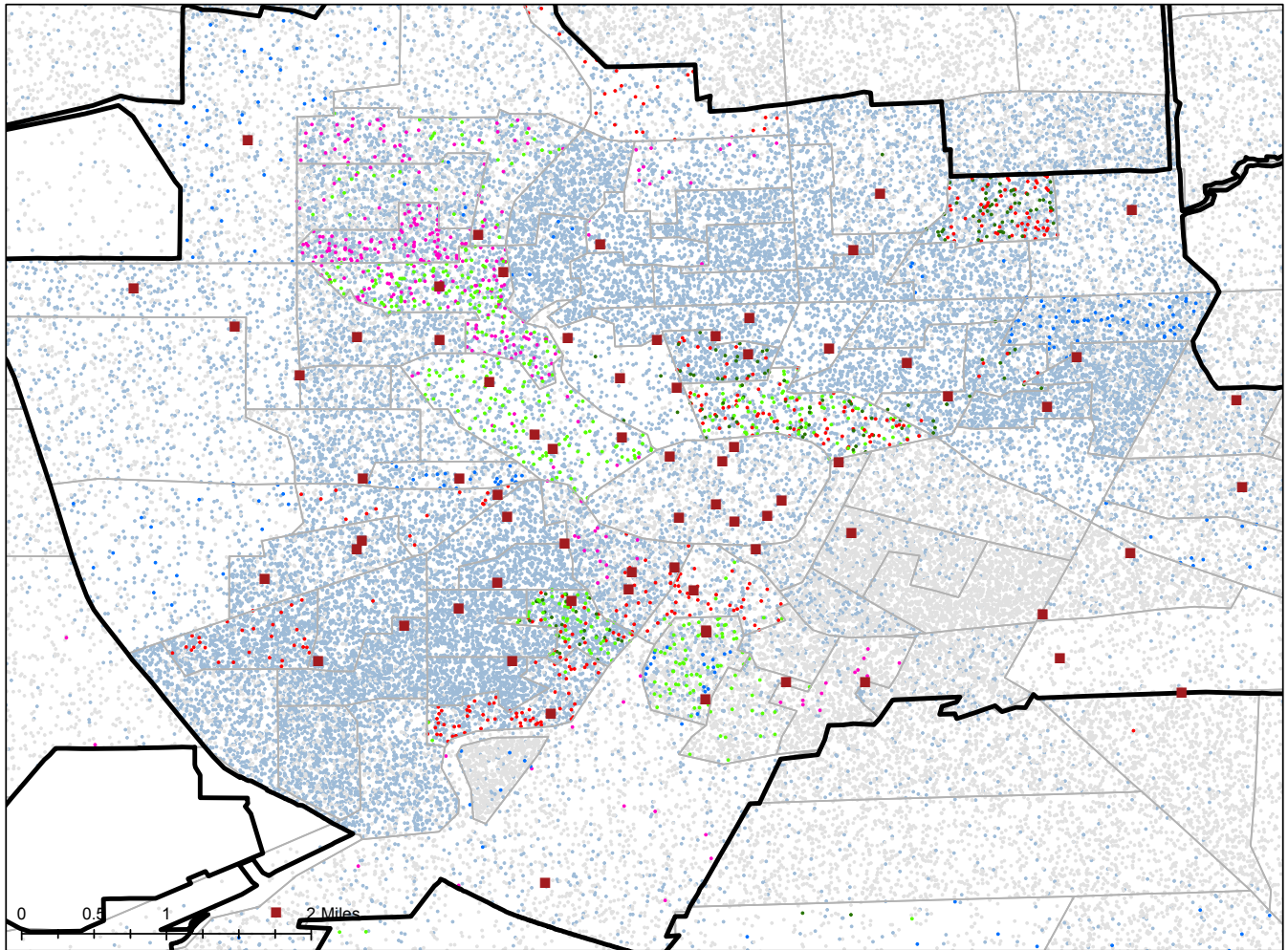




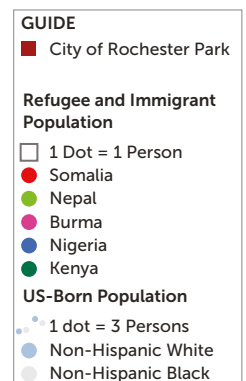
# APPENDIX B

## REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS AND CITY OF ROCHESTER PARKS

This dot density map identifies the five largest refugee populations in the city of Rochester and the location of the city parks. Some areas with relatively dense diverse populations are without a nearby city park.



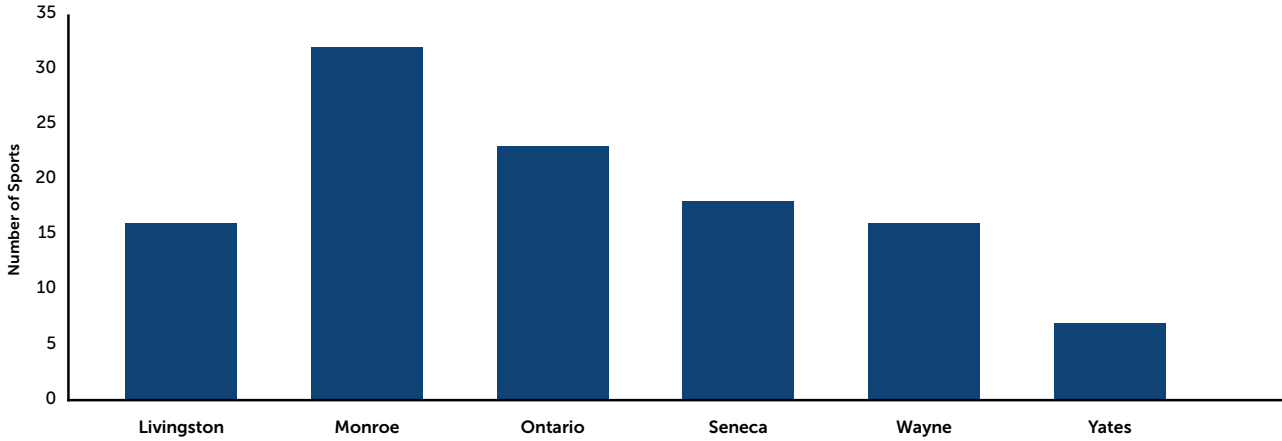
Source: US Census Bureau and City of Rochester



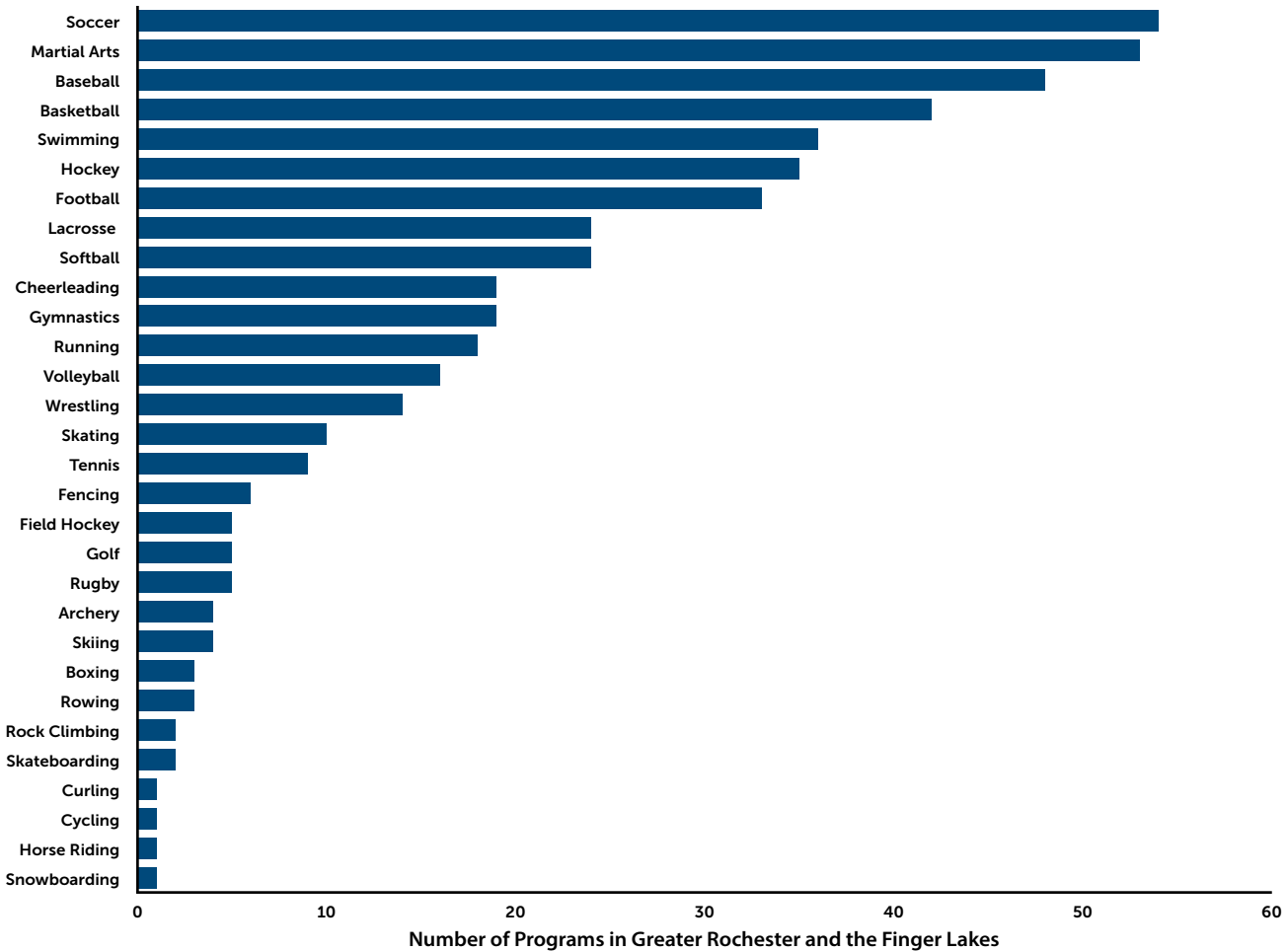
# APPENDIX C

The list of sports programs in Appendix C was created through an internet search by ActivityTree.com, supplemented by Aspen’s research team and the region’s task force members. The list does not represent the full universe of programs offered across the region, due in part to the fact that some grassroots programs do not have an online presence or are not registered with umbrella organization. These lists should be viewed as representing the minimum number of available offerings.

## SPORTS OFFERED BY COUNTY

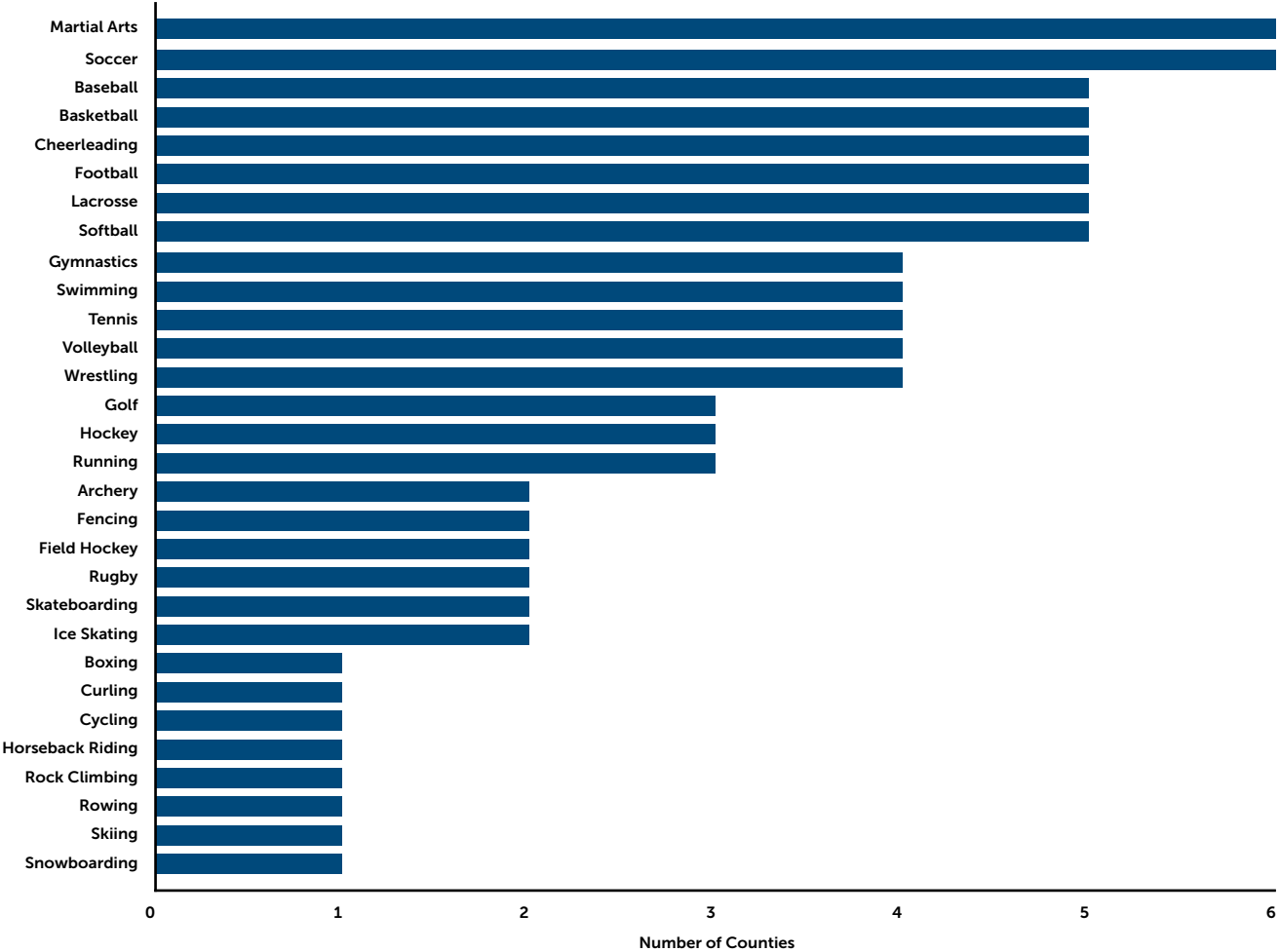


## PROGRAMS OFFERED BY SPORT



# APPENDIX C (continued)

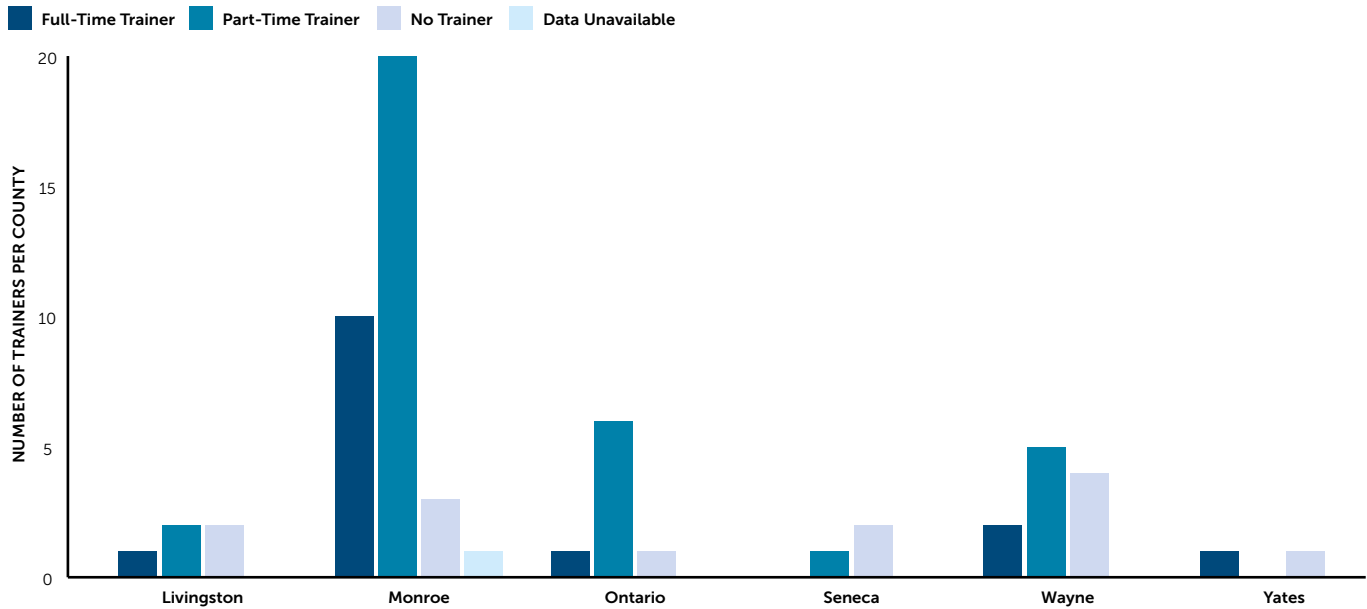
NUMBER OF COUNTIES IN WHICH SPORTS ARE OFFERED.



# APPENDIX D

## ATHLETIC TRAINERS BY COUNTY

Rural counties Seneca and Yates have the lowest access to trainers, while suburban and urban counties have greater access. Even among those with better access to trainers, students are more likely to have access to a part-time trainer than a full-time staff person. Students in Monroe County, where nearly one-third of schools have full-time training staff, are among the best off in the region. In total, 78 percent of schools within the region have athletic trainers and 23 percent of schools have a full-time trainer.



Source: Corey Stringer Institute

# APPENDIX E

## DAYS PER WEEK THAT STUDENTS IN GREATER ROCHESTER AND THE FINGER LAKES GET P.E. IN SCHOOL

	TOTAL	AGE 6-12	AGE 13-17
ZERO	3%	2%	4%
ONE	4%	4%	5%
TWO	31%	34%	25%
THREE	42%	43%	41%
FOUR	4%	4%	5%
FIVE	13%	10%	16%
UNSURE	3%	3%	3%

Source: Siena College Research Institute household survey of parents, for the Aspen Institute, 2017. See endnotes for methodology.

# APPENDIX F

## TOP 10 SPORTS PLAYED BY YOUTH IN GREATER ROCHESTER AND FINGER LAKES | DEMOGRAPHICS

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	WHITE	HISP	AFR AMER
BASKETBALL	20%	27%	11%	18%	24%	33%
SOCCER (OUTDOOR)	20%	23%	16%	22%	16%	9%
SWIMMING	17%	13%	20%	17%	15%	10%
RUNNING	13%	10%	16%	11%	14%	15%
BASEBALL	12%	21%	4%	13%	18%	8%
SOCCER (INDOOR)	12%	14%	9%	12%	24%	6%
GYMNASTICS	9%	3%	15%	10%	8%	6%
TRACK & FIELD	6%	5%	8%	6%	5%	10%
FOOTBALL (TACKLE)	6%	12%	<1%	6%	1%	14%
CYCLING	6%	7%	5%	6%	1%	4%

## TOP 10 SPORTS PLAYED BY YOUTH IN GREATER ROCHESTER AND FINGER LAKES | HOUSEHOLD INCOME

	TOTAL	<\$25,000	\$25,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$99,999	\$100,000+
BASKETBALL	20%	16%	25%	21%	16%	14%
SOCCER (OUTDOOR)	20%	12%	17%	23%	23%	26%
SWIMMING	17%	17%	17%	12%	26%	15%
RUNNING	13%	22%	12%	11%	11%	10%
BASEBALL	12%	10%	13%	11%	15%	15%
SOCCER (INDOOR)	12%	5%	11%	12%	18%	18%
GYMNASTICS	9%	9%	8%	8%	12%	9%
TRACK & FIELD	6%	5%	7%	4%	8%	6%
FOOTBALL (TACKLE)	6%	4%	8%	8%	6%	3%
CYCLING	6%	3%	9%	4%	9%	1%

## TOP 10 SPORTS PLAYED BY YOUTH IN GREATER ROCHESTER AND FINGER LAKES | COUNTIES & ROCHESTER

	TOTAL	LIVINGSTON	MONROE	ONTARIO	WAYNE	SENECA / YATES	ROCHESTER
BASKETBALL	20%	21%	19%	12%	20%	44%	23%
SOCCER (OUTDOOR)	20%	17%	19%	23%	22%	24%	13%
SWIMMING	17%	15%	16%	16%	17%	41%	18%
RUNNING	13%	6%	13%	12%	14%	12%	16%
BASEBALL	12%	23%	12%	17%	7%	0%	15%
SOCCER (INDOOR)	12%	6%	14%	6%	9%	21%	13%
GYMNASTICS	9%	6%	10%	10%	7%	3%	9%
TRACK & FIELD	6%	4%	6%	8%	10%	3%	6%
FOOTBALL (TACKLE)	6%	15%	5%	4%	9%	12%	7%
CYCLING	6%	4%	6%	0%	3%	35%	8%

Source: Siena College Research Institute household survey of parents, for the Aspen Institute, 2017. See endnotes for methodology.

# APPENDIX G

## HEALTH AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PROGRESS

The Global Obesity Prevention Center (GOPC) at Johns Hopkins University specializes in projecting outcomes of health-related interventions, with the aid of big data and supercomputers. The Aspen Institute asked the GOPC research team to calculate the benefits to Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes if stakeholders are able to get more youth active at least 60 minutes a day, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Their findings:

### 12%: GREATER ROCHESTER AND THE FINGER LAKES YOUTH CURRENTLY ACTIVE DAILY

IF...	Fewer Overweight and Obese Youths	Direct Medical Costs Averted	Productivity Losses Averted	Years of Life Saved
<b>25% OF YOUTH</b> GET AND STAY ACTIVE INTO ADULTHOOD	6,989	\$118 MILLION	\$125 MILLION	9,293
<b>50% OF YOUTH</b> GET AND STAY ACTIVE INTO ADULTHOOD	20,578	\$348 MILLION	\$369 MILLION	27,339
<b>75% OF YOUTH</b> GET AND STAY ACTIVE INTO ADULTHOOD	34,079	\$577 MILLION	\$611 MILLION	45,228
<b>100% OF YOUTH</b> GET AND STAY ACTIVE INTO ADULTHOOD	47,461	\$804 MILLION	\$851 MILLION	63,092

#### Fewer Overweight and Obese Youths:

Number of additional youths dropping below the 85<sup>th</sup> BMI percentile, which is the CDC's definition of overweight. Currently, 15.5 percent of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes youth fall into this category; another 18.5 percent are obese (at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> BMI percentile).

#### Direct Medical Costs Averted:

By reducing youths' BMI, they will be less likely to develop obesity-related health conditions later in life (e.g., stroke, cancer, heart disease, and diabetes). Avoiding such conditions will save medical costs such as hospitalizations, medications, and doctors' visits.

#### Productivity Losses Averted:

Avoiding obesity-related conditions will make people more productive (e.g., less sick days and longer lives), which will provide savings for businesses and society.

#### Years of Life Saved:

Avoiding obesity-related health conditions will also lengthen people's lives. Youth who move from above the 85<sup>th</sup> BMI percentile (overweight) to below that bar will on average lengthen their lives by approximately two years.

Source: Global Obesity Prevention Center, Johns Hopkins University, [www.globalobesity.org](http://www.globalobesity.org)

GOPC director: Bruce Y. Lee, MD, MBA, [brucelee@jhu.edu](mailto:brucelee@jhu.edu)

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## HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The Aspen Institute commissioned the Siena College Research Institute to conduct an online household survey across the six counties that are the focus of this report: Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, and Yates. Respondents represented 631 households (487 white, 64 African American, 42 Hispanic, 25 Asian, 13 other) and 1,059 youth (785 white, 109 African American, 92 Hispanic, 34 Asian, 2 Native American, 37 other). Respondents were drawn from online panels maintained and benchmarked by Lucid, a global audience platform. The total panel is maintained to be reflective of the population measured. Oversampling of ethnic groups took place to boost responses from typically under-responding groups. The survey was created with the guidance of Sports Marketing Surveys, which annually conducts a similar national survey of sports participation rates. Statistics on pages 2-3 reflect percentages of youth who played a sport a minimum of 12 times during the past year. Throughout the report, "parent" refers to an adult living in a home with children.

## FIGURE CITATIONS

Fig. 1: Data obtained from an online search by research team and ActivityTree.com, with guidance from the Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes Youth Sport Task Force.

Fig. 2: Data courtesy of the Korey Stringer Institute.

## PHOTOS

Photos were provided by (top to bottom):

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## CREDITS

This report was managed and edited by Tom Farrey and Risa Isard, executive director and senior program associate, respectively, of the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program. The principal investigator was Mark Hyman, professor at George Washington University. He was assisted by GW researchers Martin Fox, Edward Painter, and Veronica Buza. The Sports Facilities Advisory | Sports Facilities Management, led by Evan Eleff and Jared Carnes, conducted an analysis of facilities and physical assets for the report. Dame Wilburn conducted one youth focus group in consultation with the Aspen Institute Project Play's research team.

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- Marsha Foote, Ontario County Youth Bureau
- Evalyn Gleason, Golisano Foundation
- Kathy Hoyt, Section V, New York State Public High School Athletic Association
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- Linda Lovejoy, Wegmans
- Dwayne Mahoney, Boys & Girls Club of Rochester
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Contact The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program

Twitter: @AspenInstSports #ProjectPlay

[Facebook.com/AspenInstSports](https://www.facebook.com/AspenInstSports)

[sportsandsociety@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:sportsandsociety@aspeninstitute.org)

202.736.2916

