

STATE OF PLAY

Camden

ANALYSIS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS





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The Aspen Institute thanks our partner for its support of this report.

WELCOME

Situated along the Delaware River across from Philadelphia, the city of Camden has experienced moments of both vibrant growth and decline since it was settled in 1626. Through its existence, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, the city has remained optimistic about its future and potential growth.

Sports and wellness continue to be an anchor of hope, opportunity and community development in Camden. Many families in the community rely on sports to provide access to higher education and exposure to wellness and other productive habits. While there's a deep history of youth sports in the city, there is certainly room for improving the quality, quantity and diversity of athletic experiences available for children, regardless of race, gender, income or athletic ability.

The Aspen Institute's Project Play initiative aims to support Camden in identifying opportunities to build healthier kids and communities through sports and wellness initiatives. The work of Project Play is anchored in the body of research that has emerged over the past decade establishing the many benefits of physical activity. The research has established that sports, physical activity and outdoor recreation facilitate greater cognitive function, positive mental-health and educational outcomes.

Commissioned by the Sixers Youth Foundation, this report offers an assessment of the state of play for youth sports, physical activity and outdoor recreation in the city of Camden. This *State of Play Camden* report was produced by analyzing sports programs, facilities and experiences of young people in Camden through the eight strategies ("plays") highlighted in our seminal 2015 report, *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*. Guiding our findings is the State of Play Camden Advisory Group consisting of local leaders across several key sectors.

The report is intended to inform community strategies and help organizations develop new partnerships and programs that serve more children. We applaud the desire of Camden to continue to improve the lives of youth through sports and are excited to promote the opportunity for the city to become a national model by taking collective, sustained action guided by these findings.

Sincerely,



Tom Farrey
Executive Director
Sports & Society Program



Marjorie Harris
Chair
Sixers Youth Foundation

THE VISION

A Camden in which every child has the opportunity to be active through sports, play and outdoor recreation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program analyzed the landscape of youth sports in the city of Camden from November 2019 to October 2020. *State of Play Camden* offers a snapshot of how well adults are serving youth through sports, recreation and other physical activities.

Findings for this report were developed through multiple methods: input from project advisory group members; individual interviews with a broad collection of stakeholders and community members; focus-group discussions with youth; surveys conducted of youth; media accounts; and existing reports, policy analyses and publicly available data collected by the Aspen Institute with support from Ellen Staurowsky, former Drexel University sport management professor.



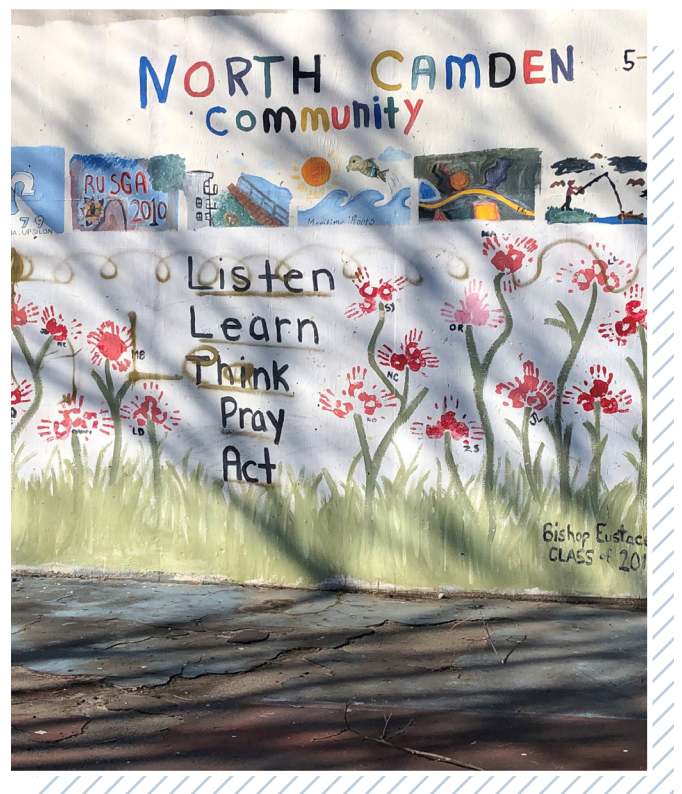
Some key findings in the report:

- **Local programs are challenged by a lack of resources, collaboration, and now, the pandemic.** Camden is not among the more than 10,000 cities around the country with a municipal recreation department that provides organized youth sports. For those programs, the city is more dependent than most on community organizations, which often work in their own silos and are totally dependent on one or two people coordinating events and raising money. Further, as with elsewhere in the country, some nonprofits may struggle to survive due to lost program revenues and the recent disruption in activity. Our youth survey showed that while most respondents (53%) indicated they would either be similarly or more active in sports after the pandemic, there was also a high rate of uncertainty (32%).
- **Middle school sports often leave Camden youth unprepared for high school sports.** Many middle schools lack fields, coordinated centralized schedules and proper skill development by coaches, so children’s experiences vary widely. These factors, along with schoolwork and family responsibilities at home, contribute to some youth quitting sports during their middle school years. Participation in team sports, in both organized and casual form, declines from 71% in elementary-school-age years to 65% in middle school to 59% in high school.
- **Girls in Camden have fewer opportunities to play sports than boys.** Our youth survey found that 59% of girls said they regularly play sports, compared to 72% of boys. Boys are three-and-a-half times more likely to play on a travel

team and twice as likely to play on a rec center team than girls. At Woodrow Wilson High School, females comprised 42% of the student body in 2017-18 but only 23% of the athletic participants. Camden High School showed a gap of 47% female students but 21% female athletes. One challenge in closing that gap is overcoming the perception among some that sports aren't for girls.

- **Basketball is the most played sport among youth, by far.** Our student survey found this is the case with boys, girls and Black and Latino/Latina youth. More than six out of 10 youth said they have played basketball, including 38% who play regularly. Soccer is also popular, as is, with Black males, tackle football. Baseball and softball have proven to draw participants through the North Camden Little League. But our survey also revealed strong interest in trying activities that sit outside the mainstream and are less often made available, including boxing, volleyball, karate, swimming, cheerleading/dance and fencing. Some community members told us sports providers should be mindful of kids having different sports interests when designing budgets and programs.
- **Camden has relatively few parks and recreation spaces.** Only 8% of city land is used for that purpose, barely half the national average of 15%, according to the Trust for Public Land. It's 13% in Philadelphia and 21% in New York City. In our youth survey, only 13% indicated that they go to parks more than once a week, and 24% said they do not visit parks at all. They said they wish parks were cleaner and had better equipment. Public and private investments have been made to renovate some parks and prevent vandalism.

- **Lack of transportation options is a major barrier that limits access to local programs.** Some parents said they don't register their children for sports programs since they know they don't have the ability to drive their child to games and practices, either due to work hours or not owning a vehicle. According to our youth survey, Latino/Latina youth are less likely to be transported to sports by a non-family member than Black youth; they also are less likely to walk or take the subway or school bus.
- **Building trust within the community for sustainable solutions is essential.** For example, many people in the Camden community perceive that the privately run Kroc Center, which has state-of-the-art pools, an indoor gym and a fitness center, is not available to them due to costs, behavioral rules and geography. New leadership at the Kroc Center is interested in finding ways to hold more youth sports programming.



Our recommendations for improving the local state of play — located in the Game Changer and Call for Leadership sections, starting on page 34 — are based on the unique characteristics of Camden and informed by feedback from the project’s community advisory group. They include:

- Create community partnerships to make the Kroc Center more accessible to city youth.
- Start a citywide middle school sports league.
- Use the power of the permit — the recognized authority of government agencies to manage public property — to promote coaching standards and equitable facility use.
- Recruit college students to become youth coaches.
- Annually track female sports participation and interests.
- Create and market online resources to promote access to sports facilities.

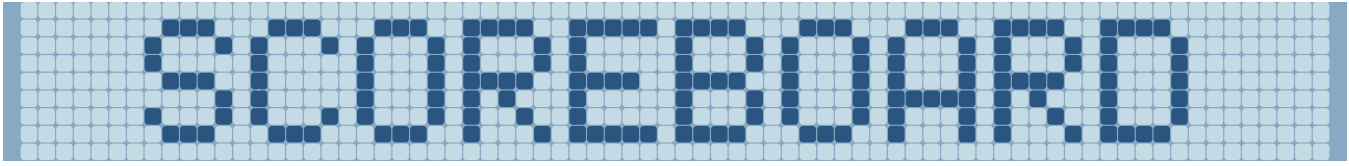
With a passionate sports culture and collective action, Camden can provide more equitable access to and higher quality of sport, physical activity and recreation opportunities for children. This can be accomplished through a joint commitment — by schools, local government agencies, nonprofits, and the business community — to the health and well-being of our next generation.

State of Play Camden is the Aspen Institute’s 10th overall community report. The Aspen Institute has produced county reports on Seattle/ King County, Washington and Mobile County, Alabama; a state report on Hawai’i; regional reports on Southeast Michigan, Western New York, Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, and Central Ohio; and local reports on Harlem and Baltimore. Stakeholders in those communities have taken actions based on the recommendations and are seeing results.



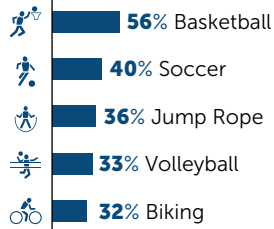


THE STATE OF PLAY IN CAMDEN

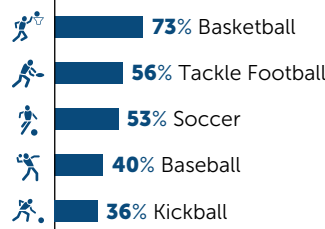


TOP 5 SPORTS/PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES YOUTH HAVE TRIED*

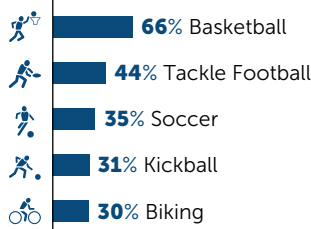
GIRLS



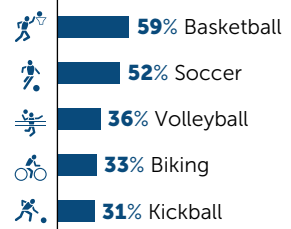
BOYS



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LATINO/LATINA



TOP SPORTS YOUTH WANT TO TRY*

OVERALL



21%
Basketball



17%
Boxing



16%
Karate

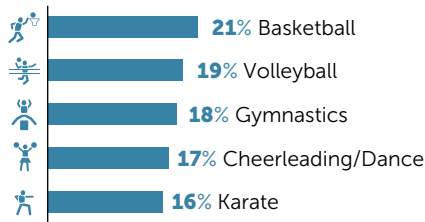


13%
Swimming

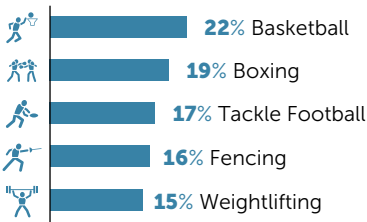


13%
Volleyball

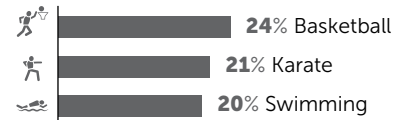
GIRLS



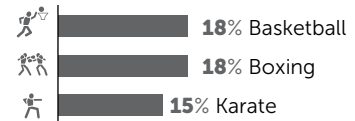
BOYS



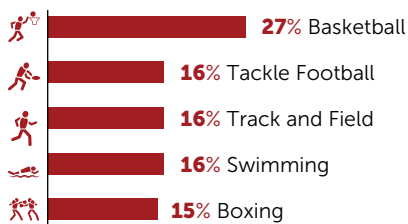
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



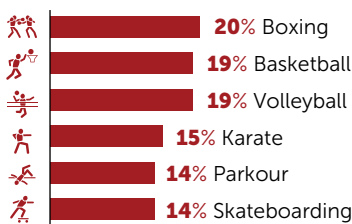
MIDDLE SCHOOL



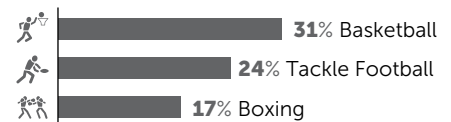
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LATINO/LATINA



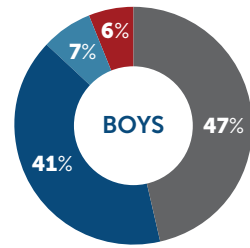
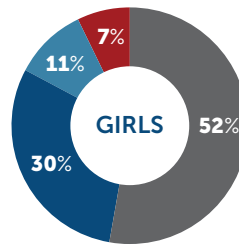
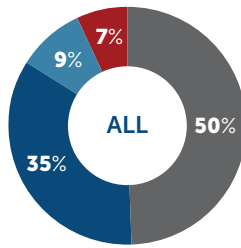
HIGH SCHOOL



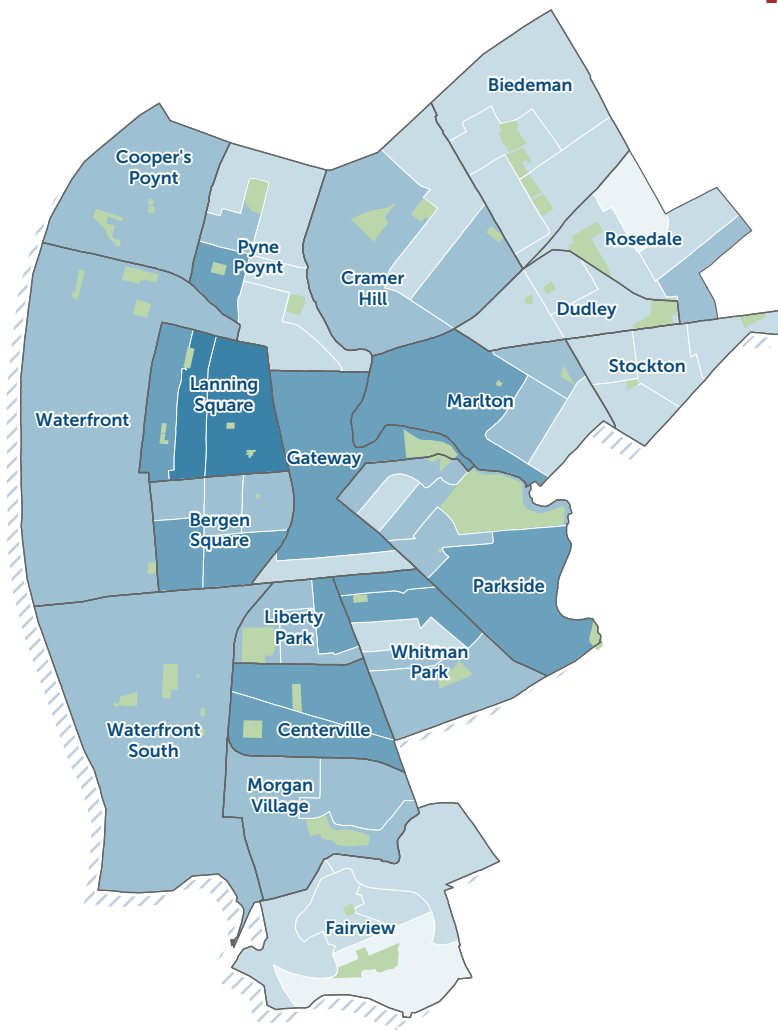
* Results from the Aspen Institute's survey of 615 youth. Percentages add to greater than 100 because youth could choose more than one answer.

DO YOUTH FEEL SAFE PLAYING OUTSIDE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD?*

Sometimes Rarely
 Always Never



MAP 1: 2020 CRIME INDEX BY NEIGHBORHOOD AND PARKS IN CAMDEN, NJ



Legend

- Camden Neighborhoods
- Camden Parks

Camden City Crime Index

- 92-100
- 101-243
- 244-321
- 322-399
- 400-513

Note: The Crime Index is an unweighted index of seven different crimes (murder, robbery, burglary, etc.) compiled at the block group level with data coming from the FBI Uniform Crime Report. It represents the variance with respect to the national values by the index value of 100.

Sources: City of Camden Recreational Facility Assessment 2017, ESRI Community Analyst, Hopework N Camden

1

Challenge: Youth sport is organized by adults

The Play: Ask Kids What They Want

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

To get and keep kids involved in sports, build the voice of children into the design of activities.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

Playing with friends is the No. 1 reason kids play sports.

It's worth remembering this as children return to sports during and after COVID-19. While competition is often emphasized by adults in Camden and has its place in the right context, kids told us in our survey that playing with friends and having fun were by far what they like most about sports. Winning ranked eighth. In interviews for this report, several youth said they enjoy feeling motivated by teammates. "They started encouraging me, and that made it fun for me because when I help them, they help me," said a seventh-grade girl. One of the most common reasons youth provided for not playing sports was a belief that they are not good enough. A 16-year-old male said he badly wants to play basketball but can't find a team because players get cut. "Please, let me on a team and I can help you out very much," he said.

Basketball is king, but some kids lack exposure to new sports.

Our survey of Camden youth found that 64% reported having played basketball at some point in their lives, reflecting how deeply embedded the sport is in the city's culture. The next-closest sports tried by youth are soccer (46%) and tackle football (35%). The No. 1 sport non-basketball-playing youth want to play is basketball — but they often lack options or get cut.

It's not due to lack of interest; it's a numbers game for a small-roster sport. Among youth who don't play sports often, the biggest reasons cited were lack of time due to schoolwork, family responsibilities, fear of injury and a belief they're not good enough to play. (See page 10 for full results). Boxing, karate, swimming and volleyball joined basketball as the top-five sports that youth said they most want to try. "I personally think kids are interested and want to do other sports, but the issue is getting the full support of the community behind it that playing a different sport can benefit kids," said Justin Spencer-Linzie of Greater Philadelphia YMCA, which serves Camden.

WHAT YOUTH LIKE MOST ABOUT PLAYING SPORTS*

Playing with friends	73%
Having fun	62%
Learning new skills	50%
Exercising to stay healthy	44%
Challenging myself	43%
Getting better at sports	42%
Making new friends	37%
Winning	35%

* Multiple answers allowed

Source: Aspen Institute Youth Survey

Six out of 10 kids say adults ask what they want to do when playing sports.

That means too many youth are rarely or never asked for their thoughts on creating a fun environment at gym class, practices or games, according to our youth survey. The Boys and Girls Club of Camden County allows youth to be actively involved in deciding what sports to play on “Freedom Friday.” Staff and kids talk about what activities they want to play — if basketball has been played too often lately, the staff encourage considering a different sport — and then it’s put up for a vote by kids. “The kids love it,” said Bernadette Shanahan, the club’s associate executive director. “They get told what to do all the time. Who likes that, especially when you’re a child?” The club also conducts annual surveys of youth — especially those who might not normally speak up — to get feedback on programming and learn if they feel respected by other kids and staff. Due to the COVID-19 shutdown, the Boys and Girls Club was unable to survey youth in 2020 and continues to work off 2019 data.

Girls play sports far less than boys.

In our youth survey, 59% of girls reported they regularly play team sports, compared to 72% of boys. Girls regularly play at lower rates in basketball (43% boys, 34% girls) and soccer (22% boys, 18% girls) — two sports with relatively high participation numbers for both genders. Also, girls listed fewer benefits they believe they receive from playing sports than boys. At Woodrow Wilson High School, females comprised 42% of the student body but only 23% of athletic participants in 2017-18, the most recent year of available Camden City School District data.¹ The gap was larger at Camden High School, where females made up 47% of the students but only 21% of the athletes. Even at Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy, where a majority of the students were female (63%), only 42% of female students played sports. Basketball,

soccer, volleyball, swimming, and track and field tend to be the most popular sports for girls, but playing options are limited outside of the school setting.

WHY SOME YOUTH DON'T PLAY SPORTS OFTEN*

Girls	
No time due to schoolwork	33%
I'm not good enough to play	22%
I'm not interested in sports	22%
No time due to family responsibilities	22%
I don't want to get hurt	21%
Not enough information	10%
My friends don't play sports	10%

Boys	
No time due to schoolwork	27%
I don't want to get hurt	17%
No time due to family responsibilities	14%
I'm not good enough to play	13%
I'm not interested in sports	13%
Don't have a way to get there	10%
Sports are too expensive	10%

* Multiple answers allowed

Source: Aspen Institute Youth Survey

With fewer sports opportunities, girls are less physically active.

Across New Jersey, only 37% of female high school students are physically active for 60 minutes daily at least five days per week, compared to 61% of males.² In Camden, girls don't receive the same early exposure to sports as boys, who are signed up at young ages to play football and basketball, said Janine Casella, principal of Cooper's Poynt Family School. "There aren't a lot of coaches who encourage girls to play," she said. "You have to convince girls to be part of the team. With physical activity, they get tired quickly because they're not outside playing and shooting hoops like the boys are." At the YMCA Soccer for Success program, only 39% of the participants in 2019 were female, most of whom were between ages 5 and 10.³ By ages 11 to 14, many females leave the program because schools offer extracurricular activities such as dance, art and music that attract their interest away from sports, said the YMCA's Jaimee Cliver. Middle schools often lack clear pathways for continued sports participation, including developing skills.



Destiny Hauser, 13

Destiny applies a curious mind about trying different sports. She once heard about lacrosse during a school presentation and thinks she could

play it because of her speed. Though she plays basketball and runs track at Cooper's Poynt School, Destiny's favorite sport is football, a sport that 15% of Camden females in our youth survey said they have played.

"I want to play football, but I'm a girl, so I guess I'll be in cheerleading or something," she says. "I would rather be a football player because I feel like even though cheerleading is for girls, I would bring power to the (football) team. I'm really fast."

Destiny looks around the Camden youth sports scene with so few organized girls' teams and wonders, "How can you bring all these boys' teams out here but not have any for girls?"

Destiny says most of her friends don't even try to play sports. The style of some coaches may not help.

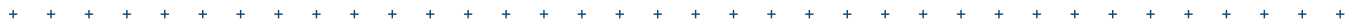
Destiny explained that a basketball coach at her previous school "didn't teach us things," she says. "He just sat there while we ran around. It was kind of like practice, but not fun." The best coaches she's had are laid back and "don't yell at us," she says. "They make me feel happy because then I won't have to worry about them yelling at me when I do something wrong."

Destiny says adults in Camden could improve youth sports by asking kids if they want to play on a team, writing down each name, and then picking up each child every day for practice with a uniform. "And it would be free because some parents can't afford stuff," she says. "I'm not going to make my football team or basketball team if we have to pay \$100 a month, because at the end of the day, parents still need to buy food, clothes, shoes, electric, a roof."

2

Challenge: Overstructured sports experiences

The Play: Reintroduce Free Play



From the *Sport for All, Play for Life* report:
Make sure there's room for not just organized play but experiences that children can own.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

COVID-19 has impacted kids playing sports on their own terms.

According to Aspen Institute national data, kids from high-income households are spending 41% more time on free play during COVID-19 than low-income youth, such as those in Camden. Prior to the pandemic, there was virtually no gap.⁴ "With all this (COVID-19) going on, I feel like I can't really play anything," said a Camden child. Several teenagers said they continue to exercise by running outside — a promising COVID-19 activity since it can be done with social distancing. One teenager who continues to run during the pandemic said he started running years ago to release anger built up from previously living in foster care. With fewer opportunities to play, many Camden youth are struggling mentally. "They're bored of being bored and afraid of missing out on things," said James Gaddy of Project Little Warriors, which teaches mindfulness and self-love to youth through yoga and fitness, and pivoted to virtual sessions during the pandemic. "My biggest fear is they already have to grow up too fast, and this will just expedite it even earlier. That's not fair. They have their whole life to be adults."

Almost half of Camden youth spend five hours or more on a screen daily for fun.

In our youth survey, 48% of respondents reported spending that much time on a cell phone, tablet, TV, computer or video games for fun outside of school, with 20% saying they use screens for 10 hours or more (see table on next page). Nationally, 48% of kids spend more than six hours per day online with mostly noneducational platforms; the average online time has doubled during the pandemic.⁵ A 13-year-old female recommended that every Camden playground have a charging port because her phone always dies: "I'll be checking every two seconds because you don't know what's going on in this world." Extensive use of screen time occurred in Camden — which typically has low broadband internet subscriptions — even before COVID-19. During the pandemic, some internet providers have offered free or reduced-cost services to Camden students.⁶



Kids staying home playing video games all day was one of the biggest issues we've worked on addressing for many years. COVID is forcing us back into that area, and that's the scary part of this. Kids get comfortable and don't want to go outside anymore."

AL DYER

Executive Director of Camden Health and Athletic Association

TIME SPENT ON SCREENS

Hours per day youth spend on a phone, tablet, TV, video games, computer, etc. for fun outside of school

Time	All Kids	Girls	Boys	Black	Latino/Latina	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
0 to 2 hours	21%	16%	26%	15%	25%	37%	19%	8%
2 to 5 hours	31%	31%	32%	27%	34%	30%	32%	29%
5 to 10 hours	28%	29%	27%	31%	26%	20%	28%	41%
10+ hours	20%	24%	15%	26%	15%	14%	22%	22%



Schools face challenges to teach kids how to play at recess.

About half of the surveyed youth said they have played sports at recess — the third-most popular location where kids play sports, slightly behind parks/playgrounds and physical education at school. But even before COVID-19, some staff at schools said they encountered difficulties to get kids to play at recess. Since many youth lack opportunities to play outside of school, several

school staff members said instructing students how to play falls on untrained teachers at recess. “It’s not always the most productive 20 minutes of the day,” an administrator said. “By that point of the day, we’re exhausted and just want to make sure the kids stay safe outside.” Janine Casella, Cooper’s Poynt Family School principal, said her school saw a significant decline in discipline problems at recess after its basketball courts and playground were renovated. “But students still lacked that type of social play that involves sharing, teamwork, imagination and resolving conflicts,” she said. The challenges may only increase when kids return to school under social distancing guidelines. The Camden City School District started the 2020-21 academic year with remote learning.

Youth said they would use parks more often if they were closer to home.

Various entities have invested about \$100 million into Camden parks in recent years, allowing children and families to enjoy the outdoors in new ways.⁷ Almost half of surveyed youth said they would use parks more frequently if they were closer to home and more than one-third said there’s not enough park space in their neighborhood.

Camden youth also said they wish parks were cleaner, hosted more events and activities, had better equipment and play spaces, and were safer. Almost eight out of 10 youth said they go to a park at least once a week — and far more frequently with parents (54%) or friends (38%) than by themselves (8%).

Almost every Camden child (97%) lives within a 10-minute walk of a park; the national average is 55%.⁸ But a 10-minute walk in Camden can still carry fears.

“Parents for decades have told kids not to go to parks because of crime,” said Justin Dennis, urban parks manager at the New Jersey Conservation Fund. “We hear this often: ‘Oh, we don’t go there.’” One parent said Camden has improved the quality of some parks but noted that he still won’t let his child go there much out of fear for his safety. Julia Raskin, formerly of the New Jersey Conservation Fund, said trails go unused because they are located deep within parks and without sightlines, emergency call boxes and lights. “Sightlines are really important,” she said.

Open gym for free pickup basketball is very popular with youth.

Typically, the Heart of Camden’s Michael J. Doyle Fieldhouse costs \$80-\$125 per hour to use. Prior to COVID-19, the gym was open Fridays and Sundays for kids to play basketball for free. Tawanda Jones, who operates the fieldhouse, only discovered this need existed by reintroducing herself to the community upon returning to Camden several years ago. She held two community meetings, the first of which had a low turnout, and knocked on doors to get feedback on how to use the gym.

“In our area, people may not bite at first,” Jones said. “You have to create an environment that’s welcoming to that particular neighborhood.” These discussions helped Jones learn that many residents were frustrated that they were no longer allowed to use the gym due to a policy change. About 40% of the gym usage is currently from non-Camden residents.⁹ “I didn’t see why we couldn’t do open gym again,” Jones said, adding that it’s vital in South Camden because other facilities are either too expensive or too far away. Before the pandemic, about 60-100 youth came to open gym, becoming so popular that Jones added police so there would be a security presence. The gym has been closed to youth programming during the pandemic and is being used to distribute food, masks and vaccines.¹⁰



3

Challenge: Sameness and specialization

The Play: Encourage Sport Sampling

From the Sport for All, Play for Life report:

Resist early sport specialization that limits overall development. Grow the menu of sport options, create better connections to vulnerable populations, and more athletes-for-life will emerge.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

There is unmet demand to play volleyball.

Girls and all Latino/Latina youth listed volleyball as the No. 3 sport that they most want to try. One in four youth reported playing volleyball at some point, but only 11% said they do so on a regular basis. Camden doesn't have many opportunities at early ages to learn volleyball skills. The Camden Health and Athletic Association wants to start a city summer volleyball league in 2021. The Camden County Boys and Girls Club began offering volleyball after female high school players at a nearby charter school expressed interest. Volleyball is the No. 1 sport that high school students told the Camden City School District they would participate in if given the opportunity.¹¹ Camden and Woodrow Wilson high schools both offer volleyball teams. Before the COVID-19 shutdown, Mastery Schools was prepared to start a high school boys volleyball club team and had some middle-school coed teams. "We're seeing some expansion of volleyball (in both Philadelphia and Camden)," said Sarah Kurlpel, director of athletics and extracurricular programming at Mastery Schools for both cities. "As soon as we're able to have some kind of courts (due to COVID-19), we'll try to bring it back, but it's difficult with a lot of equipment touching." Nationally, sand volleyball is growing in popularity, even in places that don't have beaches. Sand volleyball doesn't require using precious gym space and can be a mixed-gender sport.

Water-based physical activity offers promise, but costs and fear of water are barriers.

Thirteen percent of youth said they would like to try swimming – even more than track and field, a popular sport in Camden – yet only 8% said they regularly swim. The city has only two public pools, and they're both outdoor and only open a few months of the year. "If there was an organization like North Camden Little League that could access the Kroc Center pools and activate, swimming could take off in Camden," said Vedra Chandler, Connect the Lots community events manager. The Boys and Girls Club in Catto Community School also has a pool that could be utilized. Many residents said fear of water is a barrier, especially given that the national fatal drowning rate of Black children is three times higher than that of White kids.¹² In Camden, Latino/Latina youth are more likely to have tried swimming than Black youth. Upstream Alliance partners with schools for its Discover the Delaware youth engagement program, with activities on the Delaware River. The goal is to get every Camden child on the water at three different stages of their academic career. But a 27-mile urban stretch of the Delaware River that goes through Camden is the only part of the 330-mile-long river that is not designated by the Delaware River Basin Commission as safe for swimmers and kayakers.¹³ Environmental groups are pushing to clean the river to consistently make it usable for public recreation.

Half of Camden’s population is Latino/Latina, and youth often desire different sport offerings.

School board member Falio Leyba-Martinez said schools need to invest more money in sports that are popular among the Latino/Latina community (such as soccer, volleyball, baseball and boxing) and not just spend on basketball and football. “We just haven’t invested money in those (different) sports,” said Leyba-Martinez, who organizes a baseball league. Former mayor Frank Moran said the city has a lot of talented athletes unexposed to what he calls “Ivy League sports” — golf, field hockey, swimming and lacrosse. Language barriers are a challenge since sports programming is often not promoted in Spanish. Field permits can be difficult for Latino/Latina organizers. Jose Leana, a soccer coach, said he was surprised to learn he needed a permit, so the YMCA helped him obtain one. Exposing kids to new sports means diversifying how money gets spent.

Camden public schools invest the most athletic dollars on football and basketball.

In 2018-19, the city school district’s two most prominent high schools in sports combined to spend 48% of their coaching stipend dollars on football and basketball. Woodrow Wilson High School spent 51% of its stipends on those two sports, and Camden High School spent 44%. A less-pronounced trend appeared in how the school district provides coaching stipends for intramural sports at 14 schools.¹⁴ Basketball comprised 25% of those stipend dollars, followed by softball (14%) and track and field (8%). Volleyball, a sport that Camden youth told us they want to try, accounted for only 3%. The school district reported spending \$60,904 on 17 different intramural sports and extracurricular activities. Camden and Woodrow Wilson high schools totaled \$256,592 on its interscholastic coaching stipends. (See page 41 for sport-by-sport

coaching stipends.) Charter schools can frequently spend more diversely on various sports than school districts because many charters have their own foundations and don’t play tackle football, which is expensive, said Sarah Kurpel, Mastery Schools director of athletics and extracurricular programming. “Cost is a problem for us too, but we have other means to raise the money,” said Kurpel, whose schools offer flag football, cheerleading, cross-country, basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, and track and field.

Kids play soccer at young ages but lack teams to progress later.

Soccer is the No. 2 sport that Camden youth told us they have played, with 46% having participated. Campbell’s Healthy Communities brought the U.S. Soccer Foundation to Camden in 2011 and funded the YMCA’s Soccer for Success program. Mini-pitches were built by the U.S. Soccer Foundation, Target and Subaru, in partnership with the Philadelphia Union, and could be utilized more by accessible programming and awareness campaigns. If a child wants to play organized soccer games, he or she goes to the suburbs or Philadelphia. The Camden Youth Soccer Club, which struggles to find coaches and parent volunteers, only does drills and scrimmages. Parents and kids said they want to play games. Many schools that partner with Soccer for Success don’t have fields, so they practice basic skills in the cafeteria, gym or parking lot. Camden and Wilson high schools, along with some charter and renaissance schools, don’t offer soccer teams — and that impacts interest and programming at the younger levels since some Camden parents view sports as a potential ticket to college. Both schools previously played soccer, but discontinued the sport due to lack of field space and Camden High’s transportation challenges once it created specialty schools spread out across the city, Camden High Athletic Director Mark Phillips said.

Phillips said he wants to add soccer, tennis, bowling and golf teams when students return under one roof once a new building opens in fall 2021.



Jelayne Serrata, 17

Jelayne had never played organized team sports until trying out for the Camden Academy Charter High School volleyball team as a freshman. Lacking knowledge about the sport's rules, she got cut and was too discouraged to try again as a sophomore.



When I was in middle school, the only sports team we had was basketball. We didn't have a lot of opportunities to get to learn sports. I've always played volleyball on my own with my friends. I didn't know much. When I practiced with my friends, that's when I learned how to stand and how to hit the ball correctly."

JELAYNE SERRATA

Encouraged by a friend to try out again, Jelayne made her high school team as a junior. Now she hopes the word can spread that volleyball is an option for girls. In our survey of Camden youth, volleyball was the No. 2 sport that girls said they want to try.

"I would say there aren't a lot of opportunities for sports for girls," she says. "I feel like volleyball is one of the main sports that a lot of people don't talk about or give younger kids the opportunity to play. If kids knew more about it, they would be interested in it."

The coronavirus pandemic pushed volleyball tryouts for Jelayne's senior year season back to February 2021. In the early months of COVID-19, Jelayne and her sister practiced volleyball in the backyard or went to a park near their Cramer Hill home. Jelayne says they stopped practicing after her dad's death in June 2020.

"Unfortunately, he never attended any games because he was always working," Jelayne says. "We always practiced at his house in the backyard. He liked that I'm active and doing more extracurricular activities outside of school."

Jelayne returned to playing volleyball in early 2021. She remembers how her one and only season so far of volleyball helped relieve stress from schoolwork. She's a competitive person — her goal is to major in psychology at Rowan University — and she loves the excitement of winning.

Jelayne has this advice for coaches and administrators to improve youth sports in Camden: "Just have an open mind about everybody on the team. Not everybody knows what they're doing. From time to time, they'll learn something." And through more knowledge and encouragement, they just might keep playing.

4

Challenge: Rising costs and commitment

The Play: Revitalize In-Town Leagues

From the Sport for All, Play for Life report:

Provide community-based, low-cost leagues and programs that are accessible to all kids – not just youth with the resources and ambition to participate on travel teams.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

Organized local sports are challenged due to money and silos.

Many organizations work in their own silos and are totally dependent on one or two people coordinating events and raising money. If a key person leaves, a particular program for kids may be in jeopardy. The Camden Health and Athletic Association (CHAA), founded in 2016 by the Cooper Foundation and with support from the Norcross Foundation and AmeriHealth New Jersey, has made in-roads as a centralized nonprofit that helps with youth sports funding, programming, equipment and permits after years of a fragmented sports scene

with minimal financial support. As an example, CHAA Executive Director Al Dyer said each of the five football programs associated with CHAA receive \$8,700 annually to spend on insurance, league fees and equipment (other sports receive varying amounts of money). CHAA says the number of participants in its football, baseball, softball, T-ball and soccer programs increased by 73% over a three-year period. Other accomplishments include launching a free summer golf academy and partnering with The First Tee on a sport that was previously not a consideration by youth; staging football and basketball clinics with NFL and NBA players; and providing financial and logistical support for basketball, baseball, softball, football, soccer, wrestling, and track and field programs.



Building trust within the community for sustainable solutions is vital.

Corporate support for community sports programs has grown over the past 10 to 20 years, said former mayor Frank Moran. That support often comes through community benefits agreements (CBAs) negotiated with the city. Often, those negotiations are conducted without consulting leaders of organizations delivering community programs, said Stephen Danley, a Rutgers-Camden University public policy and administration professor. Rashaan Hornsby, president of the Centerville Simbas youth football program, said he wishes he had direct access to funders to make the case for supporting items like buying a bus and paying stipends to coaches. Hornsby said he appreciates the donations he receives for his organization, but corporate leaders working with the city control the larger investments and those often are not aligned with a sport provider's needs. We heard a version of this sentiment from other sports organizers, who say that having a seat at the table is needed to build sustainable solutions.

North Camden Little League is an example of building up a dormant sport.

Bryan Morton started a baseball league in 2011 to help revitalize what then was one of the most drug-ridden parts of Camden. They were the same streets where Morton used to sell drugs, resulting in a prison stint, and he wanted a safe activity for kids. Morton said the league typically has about 750 youth ages 5 to 19 and an \$800,000 annual budget, but it dipped to 350 youth and \$200,000 raised in 2020 due to the pandemic. The cost is \$25 per child, with about half on scholarship. An anonymous donor helps fund the league, which also receives support from the Phillies RBI program. "Bryan has figured out how to locate funding and help, which is big," said Camden City Council member Victor Carstarphen, who added that others have not yet figured out how to handle technical



aspects of fundraising. It's also a rare Camden league that uses data to target kids, recognizing that some neighborhoods are younger than others in a city in which 31% of the population is 18 or younger.¹⁵ North Camden Little League also started softball for girls, and a baseball league in East Camden was launched. Because most Camden sports programs don't use data, Morton said they compete against each other for kids and resources. "It doesn't allow for scaling in a way that can reach the largest population of kids," he said.

Many residents only learn of programming through word of mouth.

In our youth survey, 9% of respondents said they don't play sports often because they lack enough information about programs. Anecdotally, many residents said there is a greater need for more structured communication on many topics, not just sports. Angel Osorio, executive director of the District Council Collaborative Board, helped launch the Camden Youth Soccer Club over a decade ago.

She learned that no one knew about the club because it was promoted through handouts in school backpacks that were not reaching parents. As a result of Osorio's work with the District Council Collaborative Board, she often received calls asking where food pantries exist, so her graduate students at Rutgers University-Camden started a newsletter (and then a website) allowing citizens to submit information about their neighborhoods. "We started figuring out how to categorize this and get it out," Osorio said. "I can't even rely on the city for information. The information is either not there or confusing."

Youth sports programming increasingly relies less on the city.

At one time, the city's recreation department was the main programmer for organized leagues. That's no longer the case. "Historically, it became expensive for the city to do, and we relied more on local organizations and provided grants to them to

help with equipment and maintaining fields," former mayor Frank Moran said. The city offers after-school programming through federal funding, handles permits for city-owned parks and playgrounds, and is responsible for maintaining facilities. Camden County does not offer traditional sports programming either, instead focusing on quality recreational opportunities through maintenance investments and handling permits for county-owned parks. Organized sports are dependent on nonprofits. In 2019, the City of Camden renovated the one gym it owns for indoor basketball and added a computer lab in partnership with the Sixers Youth Foundation. The city's boxing gym also was renovated. Boxing is a top-six sport that boys and girls of all ages told us they want to try. Still, there are challenges. Camden's seven community centers "are not well utilized because we need staffing," said Carmen Rodriguez, the city's director of human services. "Once I have them open, what do (kids) do? You have to have the programming."





Ethan Brown, 9

Ethan loves soccer. He likes running and strategizing over who, when and where to pass to and shoot on goal. “It’s a lot of thinking, like when you shoot, you have to think where the goalie is going to be,” says Ethan, who plays for Camden Youth Soccer Club.

There’s one problem: Camden Youth Soccer Club only holds practices, not games. Ethan remembers playing a soccer “game” only at recess.



I wish there would be games. It would be more fun to compete against other people. A lot of kids were mad. They wanted there to be tournaments.”

ETHAN BROWN

Ethan, a fourth grader at Pennsauken Intermediate School after moving from Camden in 2019, says he’s only had good soccer coaches. His definition of a good coach: someone who’s nice and pushes him to do the best he can — a “friend coach,” as Ethan calls the person.

His three-week stint trying tackle football was different. He didn’t like that the coach yelled and made players do three more laps if he caught them walking.

“My coach was being really mean to me, but I just quit before I even played a game,” Ethan says. “It just wasn’t fun.” Ethan says the yelling made him feel “kind of angry.” Ethan figures the football coach yelled because he really wants to win. But Ethan says winning is only really important to him when he’s facing a rival; otherwise, he just likes competing.

Ethan would be interested in playing ice hockey, but there are no teams near him. He and his friends make up games. One friend introduced him to Quidditch, the fictional sport that Harry Potter plays. Ethan also enjoys keep-away and kickball, which can lead to arguments over the number of outs and who gets picked on which team.

The pandemic hasn’t been easy. Ethan’s soccer practices shut down. So did the indoor facility with the trampoline he loved visiting. He stays active by playing with friends at parks and houses in Pennsauken, where the backyards, Ethan says, are larger than the “really small” space when he lived in Camden.

5

Challenge: Not enough spaces to play

The Play: Think Small

From the Sport for All, Play for Life report:

Large sport centers are great — but people living within a mile of a park are four times more likely to use it than those who live farther away. Be creative in the use and development of play spaces and how kids can be transported there.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

Transportation is a major barrier for kids to access sports.

Camden is a generational city, and certain sections of city residents won't travel to other neighborhoods. Many single parents work multiple jobs, late shifts or weekends. Plus, the city has low vehicle-ownership rates. All of this makes it challenging for kids to get to sports events. Some parents say they don't register their children for sports since they know transportation would be difficult. Our youth survey showed that being driven by a family member is the most common transportation mode. Latino/Latina youth are less likely to access sports by walking, school bus, being driven by a non-family member, subway, biking and taxi/Uber/Lyft than Black youth. The most successful YMCA events occur by picking a centralized location that many people can access and rotating locations to avoid leaving out certain neighborhoods.¹⁶ Some coaches drive around neighborhoods to pick up youth and wish they could find a partner for van services. "If a kid doesn't have a ride to the place, we have to say, 'I'm sorry, we can't pick you up because my car is full already,'" said one coach. Some Camden Youth Soccer Club coaches are Rutgers University-Camden medical students who bike to practice. "Combining efforts with a biking or cycling group to get kids there would really be a good idea," said Angel Osorio of the Camden Youth Soccer



Club. "It might remedy transportation problems and a not-very-good bus system."

New Camden facilities will offer opportunities and challenges.

Despite the pandemic, a \$70 million park in Cramer Hill being built on a capped landfill remains scheduled to open in fall 2021. It will be a passive park for running, walking, kayaking, fishing and playground use. Funding to build it comes from the state but without money to operate it. Camden County Commissioner Jeff Nash said the park will be maintained by the county, at a cost of about \$250,000 to \$500,000 per year, as part of the county's \$1 million annual commitment to all city parks.

"If the park is marketed well, the possibilities are endless because of the location right on the river," said Sarah Bryant of Cooper's Ferry Partnership, a partner on park projects. "Camden residents are savvy enough about open spaces that if they don't feel like it's safe or maintained, they're probably not going to come back." Also coming in 2021: new athletic facilities at the site of the former Campbell's Field that will be operated by Camden County. Rutgers University-Camden is spending \$7.5 million for use by its baseball, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, and track and field teams. A community-benefits agreement is being created to establish public access, and permitting will be handled by Camden County. Rutgers-Camden has provided access to its facilities for various community sports providers through the years, including use of its gym and tennis courts. In March 2020, some local community members expressed displeasure that existing soccer and baseball fields at Rutgers-Camden have not been properly accessible to residents through the years.¹⁷ A Rutgers-Camden spokesman noted that Rutgers-Camden Community Park, current home to the school's soccer and softball teams, was opened to the North Camden Little League for use in summer 2020.

All-terrain vehicles and vandalism tear up some sports fields and parks.

Too often, dirt and sod have to be replaced as parks get used as racetracks. The law allows police to fine the riders, not give public chase. Former mayor Frank Moran, who called ATV use in the city an "ongoing epidemic," said Camden doesn't have the space to build an ATV park like southern regions of the state, where ATVs are welcomed. Also, vandalism occurs via graffiti, destroyed sprinkler systems, play equipment lit on fire, and damaged trash cans. Camden County Parks Director Maggie McCann Johns said it's important that the county's recent investments in city parks not go to waste due to lack of maintenance and vandalism. Camden County



and Cooper's Ferry Partnership are in the process of renovating 10 city parks over multiple years, at a cost of \$20 million. After the first completed project (Alberta Woods Park in East Camden) was subjected to vandalism, the county and Cooper's Ferry developed safeguards against misuse of the second park (Fourth and Washington Park in Lanning Square) by working closely with the neighborhood organization, Lanning Square West Residents Association. The organization monitors and helps to maintain the park, opening and closing it daily. The lesson learned: Camden parks need to establish low-cost maintenance plans before opening. "I wasn't happy when I first heard about (the lack of 24-hour access), but then I realized it was the one park we fixed that wasn't being vandalized," McCann Johns said. In a 2017 assessment of 27 active recreation parks, the Camden Health and Athletic Association determined that 11 required major improvements and 13 needed minor changes.

Schools are the most common setting for kids to play sports.

Our youth survey showed overwhelmingly that schools are where kids access sports the most, whether at physical education class (55%), during recess (50%), on a school team (47%), or in an after-school program (31%).

Schools are especially the most popular sports setting for girls. Fewer youth access sports on a rec center team (24% of boys, 12% of girls) or a travel team (17% of boys, 5% of girls). A survey by the Camden City School District found that only 22% of students play a sport outside of school.¹⁸ Some organizations find creative partnerships in school settings. Catholic Partnership Schools, which serves about 1,000 students, partners with the YMCA and Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation. The YMCA works with more than 20 schools through soccer and biking programming, mostly after school, and started offering weekend opportunities to different pockets of the city prior to COVID-19. “We find families love after-school programming and want more,” said Justin Spencer-Linzie, YMCA senior director for community programs in Camden.

Due to fears about crime, finding play spaces is a concern of youth.

Camden had 25 homicides in 2019, an increase from 22 the year before but a major improvement compared with the record of 67 in 2012.¹⁹ Violent crimes continue to decline in Camden, with 3,305 such crimes logged in 2019, compared to 14,685 in 1991. In our youth survey, 35% of respondents reported “always” feeling safe playing outside in their neighborhood, whereas 16% said “rarely” or “never.” Forty-one percent of boys said they “always” feel safe versus 30% of girls (see charts on page 7). Time of day also matters in some neighborhoods. One seventh-grade girl said she will occasionally go outside briefly if it’s before dark, “but when it gets dark, you have to go in because you feel like something might happen.” Children in North Camden and Cramer Hill expressed more safety concerns than those in East Camden and Fairview.

WHERE YOUTH PLAY SPORTS*

Location	Girls	Boys	Basketball Players	Non-Basketball Players
PE class	56%	54%	56%	54%
School team	55%	40%	56%	42%
Playground or park	53%	60%	61%	53%
Recess at school	45%	55%	56%	46%
After-school program	32%	30%	39%	26%
Rec center team	12%	24%	25%	13%
Travel team	5%	17%	12%	9%

* Multiple answers allowed

Source: Aspen Institute Youth Survey

6

Challenge: Too much, too soon

The Play: Design For Development

From the Sport for All, Play for Life report:

Age 6 is not 16. Offer programming that is age and developmentally appropriate, while tailored to the population served and needs of the individual child.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

COVID-19 could exacerbate long-term challenges for sports opportunities.

Camden City has been the hardest-hit community in Camden County during the pandemic. “They’re not going to be able to open these gyms back up for a while, and that’s going to be devastating for a community like Camden that loves basketball,” predicted Dr. Bob Atkins, a Rutgers University-Camden childhood studies professor and director of New Jersey Health Initiatives of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). “I don’t think it’s hit people in Camden how much longer this is going to be.” Atkins expects many youth sports nonprofits will close due to money. He encourages organizations to apply for statewide RWJF grants, though he noted they have limited capacity to do so. Some youth are worried about returning to sports. In our survey, Black youth indicated more comfort than Latino/Latina youth in returning to pickup/free play (58% vs. 45%), practice/drills (63% vs. 42%), and games/competition (69% vs. 54%). Given the city’s partnerships with corporate sponsors, former mayor Frank Moran said he is not concerned about future sports opportunities for kids. His major worry is what happens to high school seniors who have been recruited and may lose college opportunities.



Middle school sports leave youth unprepared for high school.

Basketball, flag football, track and field, volleyball, slow-pitch softball, soccer, dance, and cheer are among the activities offered at some middle schools. But many middle schools don’t have fields, coordinated centralized schedules, or proper skill development, so the experiences are all over the map. Some middle-school athletes don’t know the basics of their sport because they have never played organized games. Mastery Charter Schools Principal Jessie Gismondi said middle schoolers often get scouted by high schools, turning the scene into a chase for high school and college scholarships if kids can stay hooked on sports by the eighth grade. According to our survey, 21% of middle schoolers who don’t play sports often cited family responsibilities as a reason — more than elementary (15%) and high school (14%) students.

Camden youth who are gay say sports can be a valuable structure, if delivered sufficiently.

The benefits of LGBTQ youth playing sports are established. They are likelier to have more self-esteem, better grades and fewer symptoms of depression than their LGBTQ peers on average.²⁰ In our focus-group conversation with seven Camden youth who identify as gay, we found they derive some of the same benefits. “Sports made me not think about what people were saying about me,” one male high school student said. “It relaxed my mind.” Another high school student said playing sports motivated him to attend school every day as he chose not to tell anyone he’s gay. All of the youth described challenges in acceptance. A female high school student said some Camden adults don’t know how to react to a student who’s gay and being bullied. It’s unclear if issues of acceptance are greater in Camden than in other communities. But knowing these issues will offer opportunities to engage more youth through sports and physical activity.

Youth with disabilities have some options for sports, but often not in the city.

The Camden County Department of Disabilities and Special Needs provides programming such as boxing, yoga, fitness classes, Miracle League baseball, adaptive rowing, golf lessons, therapeutic horseback riding, ice skating, dance lessons and roller skating. Prior to COVID-19, about 1,000 youth and young adults with all types of disabilities participated in this programming annually. During the pandemic, the county has adjusted with some virtual classes, “but it’s really hard for the kids not seeing each other in person,” said Karen Weidner, director of programming for individuals with disabilities. “The population I work with are very, very friendly and like to hug and high five, so that’s hard.” Camden County has previously held swimming programs in the city at the Kroc

Center, but most in-person events occur elsewhere in the county. Camden City residents face transportation challenges and other constraints to access programming. Special Olympics New Jersey has a local program for Camden, Gloucester and Salem counties, though no 2020 events on its website were listed for Camden City. “Kids with disabilities are often invisible in Camden,” said Dr. Bob Atkins, a Rutgers University-Camden childhood studies professor whose son has developmental special needs. “I just don’t think the local infrastructure exists.”

Dance is a popular activity that tailors to the developmental needs of Camden youth.

About three in 10 girls told us they have tried dance. A leading nonprofit organization in this area is Camden Sophisticated Sisters (CSS), which has a drill team and various styles of dance. About 230 females and 60 males participate. “Drill team is really just a façade to bring these children in because it’s something they love to do,” said Tawanda Jones, the founder of CSS. “Once they’re here, I introduce them to education and the college life.” Youth must maintain a B average in school and accumulate 200 hours of community service to be part of the organization. The Camden City School District graduates 66% of its high school students. Jones said she has never had a dropout. Past participants return from college as mentors. “It’s a way of life, just like sports,” Jones said. “It’s very attractive to the young ladies, but also the young men with hip-hop.”



Jessica Rodriguez, 18

For Jessica, who is gay, finding her place in sports has been a journey, full of challenge and reward.

She started in baseball as the only girl in her league. "Girls' sports is not really emphasized in Camden as in other cities," she says. "If you go to Cherry Hill, you'll see different leagues. In Camden, they don't really put enough effort."

In middle school, she transitioned to softball, slow pitch at first. "I felt it was a little too slow and I was too good for the sport," she says. "Then I started playing against girls who had a fast pitch. I liked the competitiveness of it."

But in eighth grade, she stopped playing softball because she felt unsupported by family members. Instead, she poured herself into shooting baskets by herself, shooting daily at a court near her house in the Cramer Hill neighborhood. "I fell into a depression and basketball was literally my only outlet."

Later, Jessica wanted to play AAU basketball but couldn't afford the \$1,000 in fees per season or find transportation to play in tournaments a couple hours away.

So, she honed her game in Camden summer leagues, such as the Larry Gaines Stop the Violence tournament. She was the only girl competing against adult men. She began working with a personal trainer and her high school coach, who Jessica still calls her best friend, in hopes of earning a college basketball scholarship.

"I know a lot of people who just love playing the sport, but I felt the pressure in high school because I thought basketball was the only way I was going to go to school for free," she says. "I felt pressure to rely on basketball."

A college athletic scholarship never materialized. But along the way, she became the first girls basketball player at Camden Academy Charter High School to score more than 1,000 points, and another opportunity emerged for college.

Today, she's a freshman at nearby Rowan University, thanks to a four-year academic scholarship she received from the Boys & Girls Club of Camden County. Jessica regrets that she currently doesn't play basketball. She's too old to play on AAU teams, and she keeps contacting the Rowan coach to try to walk on when the team resumes playing after the pandemic. For now, she practices again by herself and waits.

Jessica takes pride in one benefit from her journey: She credits sports for helping her create the opportunity she now pursues as an economics major at Rowan.



My confidence went up. Because I was so good at basketball, I felt I could do other things. College is really hard, but it's something I can accomplish."

JESSICA RODRIGUEZ

7

Challenge: Well-meaning but untrained volunteers

The Play: Train All Coaches

From the Sport for All, Play for Life report:

Coaches can create athletes for life – or wreck their enthusiasm for sport altogether.

Get them trained in key competencies, including safety, sport skills and general coaching philosophy.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

It's difficult to find volunteer coaches.

This is not only a Camden problem; it's a national problem. Extra challenges exist in Camden because of the varying job hours that adults work and some responsibilities that coaches take on. Rashaan Hornsby, president of the Centerville Simbas youth football club, listed the tasks asked of coaches in Camden, including sometimes jeopardizing their lives by protecting kids during confrontations at parks, manually making the fields playable by removing dangerous materials like needles and

broken glass, and becoming resources available to parents and kids at all hours. "It's a lot," Hornsby said. Several organizers said finding coaches requires creative outreach to identify new people in the community who are emotionally invested in helping kids. Once the identification happens, they explain to candidates why they should volunteer their time and how doing so would not only help kids, but also provide personal or professional growth for the coach. "This coaching stuff is actually good for some of us adults," said one baseball coach. "Once I started coaching, I gained 15 friends."²¹



It's even harder to find female coaches in Camden.

Out of more than a dozen youth interviewed in focus groups for this report, all of them said they have never had a female coach in organized sports. Intramural sports seem to provide more diversity, since the coaches are often teachers. In 2018-19, 53% of the Camden City School District's intramural coaches were female.²² Nationally, only 24% of all youth sports coaches were female in 2019.²³ Often, females first have to be asked to coach, and then once they take the position, they must be valued and given the tools to provide a culture that makes them feel welcome so they don't quit. Female coaches nationally are overrepresented on sports viewed as most feminine, such as gymnastics, dance and cheer, and on all-girls teams.²⁴ They are highly underrepresented on sports viewed as more masculine, such as baseball, softball, basketball and martial arts. Girls provide more positive ratings for female coaches (82%) than male coaches (73%), citing the ability to more easily identify with a female as a mentor and role model.

Coaches in Camden could be more positive to create personal growth for athletes.

In our youth survey, 74% said coaches frequently or always tell them that all players are important to the team's success. Black youth (84%) were far more likely than Latino/Latina youth (67%) to say they feel this support. There's room for growth. Youth told us that a good coach is supportive and listens to ideas without yelling. Several youth said they dislike when coaches show favoritism to their children, relatives, or the most talented players. City Council member Victor Carstarphen, a former college basketball player who played and coached at Camden High School, said often coaches use bravado communication and curse at kids, because that's what they believe is necessary to keep youth out of trouble. "The reality is we've gotten away

from using sports as a tool for success in life with character and confidence," he said. "I go to some suburban areas and they're preaching confidence, character building and being able to communicate." Many Camden coaches try their best, but some take competition too far since some parents view sports as their child's ticket to a better life, said Mastery Charter Schools Athletic Director Denzel Smith. "Sports drive some of the kids' motors, but it can't be the end-all, be-all if that's all that's taught from middle school on down," he said. "There are more ways to contribute to the world than just being an athlete." Nationally, the likelihood of a high school basketball participant playing college basketball at any level is 3.5%; the rate is 1% for Division I basketball.²⁵ There are better odds for the value sports can provide youth, with physical, emotional, social and academic benefits while creating an active lifestyle throughout a child's life. (See page 44 for an infographic showing the benefits of active communities.)

Virtual training becomes a new tool during COVID-19.

With so many sports shut down, some coaches and providers in Camden have continued helping kids physically and mentally through virtual training. Project Little Warriors pivoted its mental health programming through yoga and fitness from in-person at schools to Facebook Live, Instagram and YouTube. The North Camden Little League sent training videos to baseball players. The Jr. 76ers produced a summer virtual basketball camp. Thinking outside the box with virtual training may become the norm for society and spawn innovative ways to train players, even when the pandemic ends. Nationally, roughly half of youth sports organizations added virtual training and another 15% had at least expressed interest.²⁶ But lower-income communities like Camden may fall behind, given their challenges with resources.

National data show that youth in households making \$50,000 or more increased their virtual training hours by 20% during the pandemic, compared to a 5% percent increase for those in households that make under \$50,000.²⁷

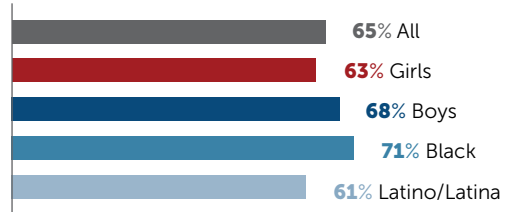
During the COVID-19 recovery, coaches are on the frontline of mental health and nutrition.

The pandemic could fundamentally change the purpose of youth sports and require coaches to become even more important, so youth don't slip through the cracks. A study by the University of Wisconsin found that 65% of adolescent athletes reported anxiety symptoms in May 2020, with 25% suffering moderate or severe anxiety.²⁸ Athletes in high-poverty communities reported greater anxiety. In Camden, the shutdown of schools and extracurricular activities cut off many children and teenagers from school staff members who helped them build self-esteem and cope with trauma. "I can't even imagine being at that age with COVID and Black Lives Matter happening, too," said James Gaddy, who counsels kids' emotional health through Project Little Warriors. "It's a lot of unsolicited stress for youth. That's what keeps me up at night. We have to get in front of kids more." Youth are also in need of food. The Food Bank of South Jersey served 49,291 meals to children in Camden City from March 1 to Aug. 31, 2020 — a 52% increase from the same period in 2019.²⁹

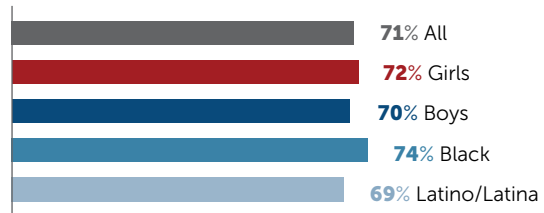
The Camden County Office of Mental Health & Addiction offers assistance to anyone facing fear, anxiety or depression by calling 856-374-6361.

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF COACHES

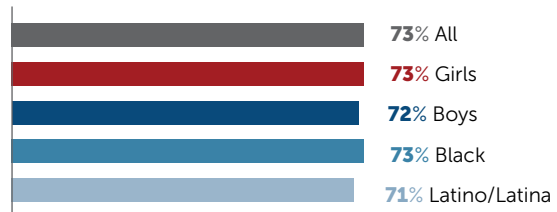
COACH MADE ME FEEL GOOD WHEN I IMPROVED A SKILL



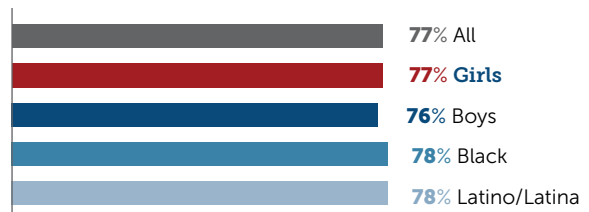
COACH ENCOURAGED ME TO LEARN NEW SKILLS



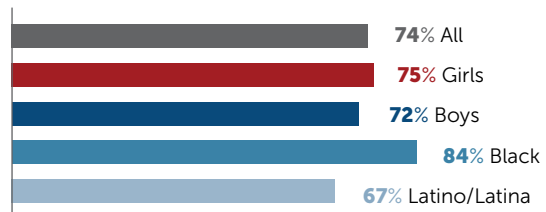
COACH TOLD US TO HELP EACH OTHER TO GET BETTER



COACH TOLD US TRYING OUR BEST WAS MOST IMPORTANT



COACH TOLD US WE ALL WERE IMPORTANT TO TEAM SUCCESS



8

Challenge: Safety concerns among parents

The Play: Emphasize Prevention

From the Sport for All, Play for Life report:

Children deserve environments that limit injuries and offer protections against emotional, physical and other forms of abuse. And today, many parents demand as much.

FIVE FINDINGS IN CAMDEN:

Low physical activity rates by adults limit their ability to be role models for healthy living.

In 2017, 44% of Camden residents ages 18 or older reported no leisure-time physical activity in the previous month, such as running, calisthenics, golf, gardening or walking.³⁰ The national average was 27%.

Camden adults have higher rates than the U.S. population for high blood pressure (39% vs. 32%), diagnoses of diabetes (17% vs. 10%), mental health challenges (20% vs. 12%), lack of health insurance (28% vs. 15%), current smokers (26% vs. 16%), and obesity (44% vs. 30%). Many public health experts say that the focus of youth sports should be on physical literacy in order to help children develop habits and interests to be physically active for life.

A lack of bicycle lanes and the risk of injury limits the ability of kids to enjoy one of the most popular activities of youth nationally.

After years of advocacy efforts, the city is now creating a master bike plan to promote biking for public health. "If you try to ride your bike on some



of the major streets like Market or Federal, it's a terrifying experience," said Sonia Szczesna of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. Former mayor Frank Moran said Market and Federal streets, which are owned by the county, are in the design stage for renovation that will factor in bikers. Cooper Street is under construction. The city promotes biking in the annual I Bike Camden event, a 12-mile ride along Camden's growing trails network. The YMCA's Watershed Education by Bike program teaches about a dozen youth to ride mountain bikes for the first time. "Some of them will say, 'Oh, that's my aunt's house,' or 'My house is two blocks away,'" said instructor Shelby Kim. "They're being active, and we're showing them their neighborhood and how it connects." Acquiring bikes can be expensive and difficult for youth.

In 2018, Camden piloted a dockless bike share program that was curtailed after three months when the Beijing-based operator ceased operations in all U.S. cities. Three out of 10 youth told us they have tried biking (the fifth-most popular activity). Some kids said parks have no bike racks to prevent theft. “If you have bike racks all over the place, people are going to start to culturally accept that bikes are something that people use all the time,” said Jaimee Cliver of the YMCA.

COVID-19 has heightened the need to sanitize parks, presenting new maintenance challenges.

Even before COVID-19, Camden faced complaints about not keeping the parks clean. There may be heightened attention on the cleanliness of parks as they reopen. The CDC says it may be possible that people can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes.³¹ However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Some Camden youth told us that the water fountains at parks are “nasty” and “unsanitary.” One high school student described park restrooms this way: “Someone probably spit in the sink and touched it with a disease. I will walk myself home if it’s two hours away. I’m not going to go the bathroom in the park.”

Tackle football is popular among Camden youth despite risks of long-term brain injuries.

In our youth survey, the No. 2 reason why some boys said they don’t play sports often was fear of injury (behind only schoolwork). Yet 23% percent of youth said they play tackle football regularly, compared to 7% who play flag football. Nationally, kids ages 6-12 play flag football (3.5%) more than tackle (2.9%), and youth ages 13-17 play tackle (7%) more than flag (2.9%). In Camden, 34% of elementary school kids said they have played

tackle football. Football participation at Woodrow Wilson High School declined in recent years from 50 players to about 35-40, though assistant coach Troy Still attributes that to Camden’s changing demographics more than fear of brain injuries. Camden’s population declined from 88,000 residents in 1990 to 74,000 today while experiencing major increases in the Latino/Latina population, few of whom play football. Still said many families with a child who plays football view the sport not as a risk, but an opportunity toward a better life through a college scholarship. “When you live in an impoverished neighborhood and you see an opportunity to get out and have a better life, it’s very hard to ignore that,” he said.

Youth say they feel less depressed when playing sports.

Many Camden adults and youth said playing sports dramatically helps the mental well-being of children by providing a sense of belonging, structure and distraction from traumatic problems at home. “It’s like you can forget your problems for a little bit,” said a middle-school boy who plays sports. During the pandemic, several youth told us they feel anxious and depressed. They miss being around classmates and teammates. Project Little Warriors, which intentionally helps youth deal with real-life situations through yoga and fitness, is an example of an organization in Camden that uses physical activity as a coping mechanism. Research from Washington University in St. Louis found that playing team sports can significantly reduce the likelihood of depression and anxiety later for people with childhood trauma.³² Data were analyzed from about 5,000 teens who reported one or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). They were first assessed in 1994-95 while in the seventh to 12th grades and then reassessed or tested for symptoms in 2008. The study found that sports protected kids with ACEs against depression better than nonathletic school clubs, such as drama and orchestra.

“There might be something about the combination of exercise and the social support or structure that comes from being on a team that can be useful at preventing or treating depression in young people,” said Lisa Gorham, the study’s lead author.



Jaiden Steele, 12

Jaiden started playing tackle football around age 4. He loves almost everything about the sport, especially the teamwork needed to succeed.

Yes, Jaiden acknowledges, he worries some about getting hurt as a running back and linebacker. But he says he tries not to think about injuries, “because I know that can limit my play.”

Still, it’s interesting which sport Jaiden dreams of playing professionally: basketball, not football. Jaiden has played for a couple years on a travel basketball team in Collingswood that goes to different New Jersey cities and Philadelphia.

Leaving Camden is typical for Jaiden in sports. He plays football for the PYAA Panthers in Pennsauken

because the fields in Camden aren’t too good. “They don’t really have lines and lights, so it’s kind of harder to play,” says Jaiden, who lives in the Parkside neighborhood and has a membership to the Kroc Center. When he often sees trash on fields in Camden, “I kind of feel bad because it’s disrespectful and kids don’t have a great space to play in.”

Jaiden also runs track and participates in cross country through a partnership between his school, Mastery Schools of Camden-Cramer Hill, and I Run This City, a running and mentorship program for Camden youth ages 12-18.

“

When I’m running in football and basketball, I can tell that track is helping me a lot because I can get that acceleration. Every sport helps you with another sport.”

JAIDEN STEELE

Sports serve as an escape from the streets. “It seems like there’s a lot (of gangs),” he says. “It kind of makes me feel scared and it worries me. I don’t want to get caught up in that.”

Though he loves LeBron James and dreams of playing in the NBA, Jaiden says he doesn’t feel pressure for basketball to be his ticket in life. “Both my parents went to college and they stress education, so I have something to fall back on,” he says.

Game Changer

Build community partnerships that leverage Camden’s assets, starting with the Kroc Center

To enhance youth access to high-quality sport opportunities, Camden must develop more partnerships to leverage its existing community assets. Many organizations from our advisory board, including Camden Health and Athletic Association (CHAA) and Sixers Youth Foundation, as well as the Kroc Center, are poised to act. With additional capacity, CHAA could take the lead, building these partnerships and a more centralized youth sports system in the city.

As a first step, we recommend creating sustained partnerships with the Kroc Center as a model for future collaboration among key partners.

When the Salvation Army’s \$90 million facility opened in 2014, local youth-sport organizers were filled with optimism about what it could do for the community. With its NCAA-size gymnasium,

competition pool and water park, baseball and soccer fields, outdoor basketball courts, playground, and state-of-the-art fitness center, the Kroc Center, then-Camden Mayor Dana Redd said, would be “the crown jewel of the city.”

More than six years later, that has not happened. Only 52% of Kroc Center annual-dues-paying members are city residents. Many Camden residents perceive it is not available to them due to costs, poor communication, behavioral rules, and its location in the city. Very few Camden schools use the facility.

“There were a lot of promises made when this building first came to fruition and that’s what the community outcry is about,” said Troy Still, dean of culture at Mastery Charter Schools.



“Let us be a part of it. If you build up a brand in a city where nobody can really touch it, what good is your brand coming here? As a community, we’re not benefiting from you being here.”

In order to demonstrate a long-term commitment to sustain community partnerships in support of youth sports, we are proposing many partners across Camden continue their collaboration to better take advantage of one of the city’s best assets. The Kroc Center and its new leadership present an opportunity for more local youth to play there in a city that lacks sufficient quality fields and gyms. Challenges will only intensify as municipalities, nonprofits, schools and the Kroc Center all face financial constraints due to the pandemic. Parents deserve safe and trusted play spaces for their children.



We want to be a trusted partner and colleague to be part of a bigger coalition with kids. It’s a city of youth, and we’re not fulfilling our mission of transforming the community unless we’re interacting with kids.”

CAPTAIN KEITH MAYNOR

*Kroc Center administrator,
former Salvation Army national youth secretary*

Build trust with the community

Effective community initiatives are usually built from the ground up. With support from CHAA, the Kroc Center could create a community sports advisory group — comprised of sports organizers, youth, parents, coaches and corporate funders — that

strategically builds partnerships around the goal of increasing youth participation at the facility. Using this report as a starting point, the group could identify opportunities to engage more residents in current programming as well as determine opportunities for expanded programming. Over time, this group could expand its scope to develop opportunities at venues elsewhere in the city.



The Kroc Center is largely privately funded, but also receives federal funds to feed residents and state and county money for summer camps and after-school programs. The state spent \$26 million to clean up the site prior to construction. “The community assumed the Kroc Center would be the epicenter of activities,” CHAA Executive Director Al Dyer said. “It’s turned out to be more of a South Jersey facility.”

The needs of local residents should be prioritized. They need the Kroc Center to better communicate what programs are offered and when, and the conditions under which the property can be used. “I had a couple bad experiences with people at the Kroc Center — there are lots of rules applied inconsistently,” said Sean Brown, a coach at Camden Soccer Club who has a Kroc Center membership.



Create more affordable options for residents and schools

Efforts could be made by the Kroc Center, donors and corporate sponsors to reduce costs. When the Kroc Center opened in 2014, the cheapest family membership was \$25 per month. Today, it's \$33 for Camden residents (32% increase) and \$44 for non-Camden residents. That's affordable compared to other gyms in the Philadelphia area, but still a lot for many Camden residents.

Prior to the pandemic, Kroc Center officials said they lacked money and staffing to offer free programs or lower membership costs. The Kroc Center has a \$7 million annual budget and doesn't make money off its sports programs, though it does profit from pool and gym rentals.

Brad Pierce, Kroc Center sports recreation and fitness manager, said the facility's sports leagues cost about \$60 per child versus \$25 per child in other city leagues. If the center could access qualified volunteer referees and coaches instead of paying staff for those roles, the fee could be reduced.

One strategy to reduce costs could be to partner with organizations like Up2Us and AmeriCorps that have the capacity to train more volunteer coaches from the local community, especially in sports like volleyball and swimming that kids tell us they want to try. Kroc Center Resource Development Manager Benjamin Ovadia said the facility's role in offering sports depends on what financial and programmatic resources others in the community can contribute.

The only Camden City schools that use the Kroc Center are three charters — Leap Academy, Camden's Promise, and Mastery. Renting the gym costs \$160 per hour, compared to rates as low as \$80 per hour at Heart of Camden for residents. Several Camden school administrators said facility rentals are simply too high at the Kroc Center, especially at its pool, which is often used by suburban schools and clubs paying \$200 to \$300 per hour.

Kroc Center officials said they have strict behavior guidelines that all players, fans, coaches and referees must follow, such as no eating, cursing and fighting. But those rules aren't always followed, and that frustrates the staff, sometimes resulting in ejecting users.

"Do I think the relationship (between Kroc Center and the community) is repairable? Yes," said Troy Still, a former member of the Camden City School District Advisory Board. "But that's going to take willingness on the part of the organization and the community."

Kroc Center officials said they have recently begun advertising programming in the neighborhood with door-to-door canvassing in Cramer Hill every other week. It is this type of trust-building that will be critical to the long-term success of future partnerships.

One option: Offer a lower daytime rate for Camden schools so PE teachers can provide swim lessons for students. This would need to be accompanied by support for transportation.

Bring residents to Kroc Center through more reliable transportation

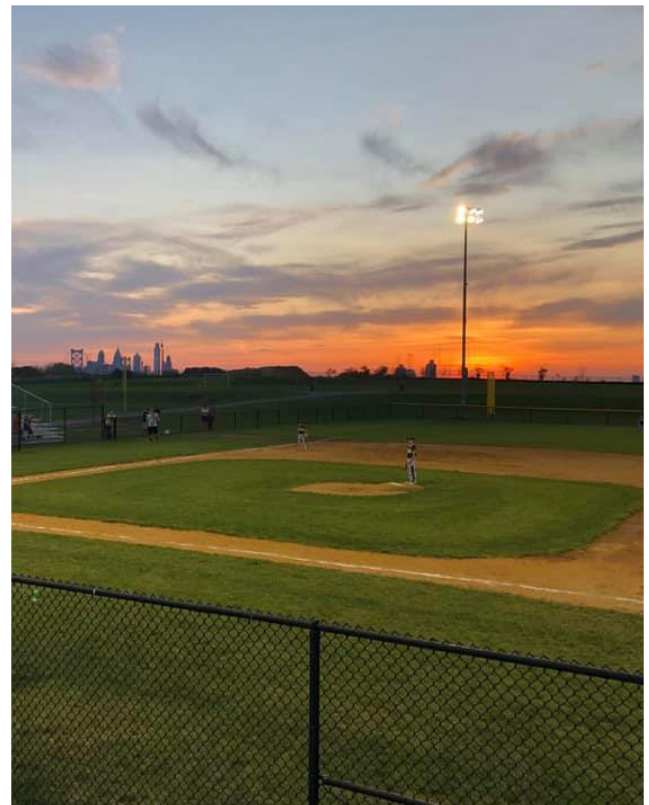
Many Camden residents say the Kroc Center is too far away and isolated in the northern corner of the city to access it. In our survey, 41% of Camden youth said they have used the Kroc Center for sports or physical activity at least once, with the highest volume coming from North Camden (46%) and Cramer Hill (45%), compared to East Camden (38%) and Fairview (29%). The Sixers Youth Foundation or other partners could provide funding for reliable van or bus service to pick up and drop off kids. Another option: Create a shared bike program, perhaps with the YMCA, that helps kids get exercise while riding to the Kroc Center.

Open gym free of charge is another opportunity. The center's outdoor basketball courts were free before the facility's current construction project, but not the gym. A single-day pass for use of the facility costs \$10. About 30 to 40 youth have come out for open volleyball at \$3 per person. The Kroc Center has considered \$5 Fridays for open gym but worries that free or reduced costs will disincentivize membership. If that's a concern, a funder in partnership with Camden's neighborhood associations could sponsor once-a-week, free open gym, with transportation.

Creating partnerships will be needed due to financial challenges stemming from the pandemic. As of late September 2020, the Kroc Center was starting to reopen, but only half of the 130-person staff was working due to finances. "I think people see the building and think we're flush with cash," Ovadia said. "That's not our reality."

Yet in August 2020, the Kroc Center broke ground on a \$2.5 million, 4,500-square-foot complex — the first expansion of the facility since it opened. The project will include a multipurpose room for fitness classes and recreational activities. "We're blessed with good donors who have stepped up," said Ovadia, who added that the 2021 fiscal year is unknown because of declining membership and uncertainty around hosting community and government forums.

On any given year, the Kroc Center engages about 10,000 youth. "There's no doubt we'd like to increase that," Ovadia said. Doing so requires intentionally listening to the Camden community and forming partnerships. There's still time for the "crown jewel" of the city to sparkle as promised — and in the process, Camden can develop a collaborative model on providing more quality opportunities for kids to play sports.



Call For Leadership

Create a citywide middle school sports league

Scheduling games between charter and public schools can be a nightmare due to communication and collaborative challenges. “If we can get that under one umbrella, there’s no reason we can’t be on the same page,” said Denzel Smith, athletic director at Mastery Charter Schools in Cramer Hill.

The potential is there to capture youth interest in a variety of sports during their middle school years, when kids too often quit playing. A middle school league should not turn into a pursuit of winning games or recruiting opportunities for high schools. It should be a developmental tool. Teach fundamental skills so kids are better prepared to play in high school — and make the middle school experience fun so they want to keep playing.

Currently, sports offerings in Camden middle schools include flag football, track and field, basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, dance, cheer, and slow-pitch softball. Softball is slow pitch for safety purposes, meaning kids aren’t ready for fast pitch in high school. Many middle schools don’t have fields, creating scheduling challenges. Still, half of middle school youth in our survey said they have played sports on a school team.

Camden High School Athletic Director Mark Phillips said a citywide middle school league should focus on skill development through proper training of coaches to build kids’ confidence. “We’re losing 50-0 in seventh and eighth grade, and kids don’t want to play by the time they get to high school,” he said.

Al Dyer, the school district’s senior director of athletic programming, wants to create a citywide middle school league in multiple sports. His goal is to increase salaries of some middle school coaches and provide training, such as with Positive Coaching Alliance. Several years ago, then Camden schools superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard helped create boys and girls middle school basketball leagues. “The coordination (of the leagues) was really challenging,” he said. “But I think there’s a huge, huge opportunity for middle school sports.”

Recruit college students to coach youth sports — and train them

Camden relies heavily on a small number of volunteers to organize and coach youth sports. That means if a coach moves, decides to quit or loses trust within the community by acting inappropriately, it’s hard to find new people to help. Many Camden parents are unable or unwilling to volunteer as coaches. College students could assist. Rutgers-Camden students play baseball, basketball, cross country, golf, track and field, soccer, lacrosse, softball, and tennis. Those athletes are ripe to become coaches right now. Rutgers-Camden, Camden County College and Rowan University could incentivize students to coach through community service obligations. Rowan professors Yannick Kluch and Debbie Sharnak, who are trying to create an experimental learning program about youth culture and gentrification in Camden, believe many of their students would be interested in coaching.

Students would need training to coach — something that’s sorely lacking for all coaches in Camden.

City Council member Victor Carstarphen, a former Camden High School basketball coach, said coaches need at least an annual retreat — similar to teachers — to be trained in communicating with all kids to create positive social and emotional development. “The (coaches) I know are hard-core guys with bravado communication,” Carstarphen said. “Our city is so small, we’re concentrating on one or two (elite) kids. Some kids don’t identify with, ‘Listen, you just have to go hard.’”

Only 65% of Camden youth in our survey said their coach makes them feel good when they improve a skill, compared to 79% of youth in Columbus, Ohio, who responded to the same question for our *State of Play Central Ohio* report. Camden doesn’t just need more coaches. It needs more quality coaches who serve as positive influences for all kids, on and off the field.

Use power of the permit for equitable facility use and coaching standards

A new Camden County sports facility that will be utilized by Rutgers University-Camden is scheduled to open in 2021, and it’s expected to be popular. Camden County will handle the permits. How the field gets used between the university and local youth sports providers remains an open question. As of September 2020, a community use access agreement with Rutgers was being negotiated by Camden County Commissioner Jeff Nash and Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden Board of Governors CEO Dana Redd.

“I think we all understand that Rutgers has first priority,” Redd said. Nash said Rutgers will have some authority in scheduling games but will not have exclusive rights to the fields. Creating a specific citywide calendar on when fields are available to the community will be necessary.

Camden County should also use this coveted facility to set standards on shared-use agreements and coach training in exchange for a permit. Fields should be made available to underserved populations who may not have long-existing relationships with the county. Coaches should have minimum training standards in order to have their league play on the fields.

Currently, Camden County doesn’t use the “power of the permit” concept to create standards for facility use. Redd, the former mayor of Camden, aspires for the Rutgers-Camden facility to resemble Philadelphia’s Netter Center of Community Partnerships, which works with K-8 public schools through sports programs to teach lessons beyond wins and losses. “I’d like to see us doing training to help empower volunteer coaches and parents, and really have a broad understanding of how this contributes to kids’ health and wellness,” Redd said.



Annually track female sports participation and interests

Our reporting showed that girls participate less in sports and have far fewer opportunities to play in Camden than boys. One problem is that the Camden City School District — where youth are most likely to play sports — doesn't even have updated information about sports participation rates by school. The most recent information provided to the Aspen Institute by the school district were reports from 2017-18.

That year, females comprised 42% of the student body at Woodrow Wilson High School but only 23% of the athletic participants; females represented 47% of the students at Camden High School yet only 21% of the athletic participants. If schools are not even regularly tracking participation, how can more quality opportunities be provided to females?

Nationally, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) recommends that Title IX coordinators — which school districts are required to designate and make visible — work closely with athletic directors to determine whether action is needed to address any underrepresentation. However, a 2018 survey by the federal government showed that many athletic directors believe their Title IX coordinator is unhelpful because they don't know what Title IX requires.

Camden schools should track annual participation data so it's possible to ask pertinent questions of coaches, school administrators and females. Why are so few females playing? What opportunities could be created to change that? What sports would they like to play? Who in the community could coach or organize these opportunities? Without data, even asking these questions on behalf of females becomes out of sight, out of mind.

Create and market online resources to access sports facilities

The Camden Health and Athletic Association website does a good job of listing sports programs and coaching resources. The Green + Healthy Camden initiative, led by The Trust for Public Land, offers a valuable tool to support parks and open space planning. But some Camden residents are unaware of how to find programming and facilities, and some programmers don't know how to connect their sports offerings to available spaces.

"Take the Y, for example," said Nyeema Watson, associate chancellor for civic engagement at Rutgers University-Camden. "They have the funding. They know how to do the programs. They just need access to physical spaces, so people aren't going to the school district all the time. There are a ton of partnership opportunities available for the city if we can connect silos."

Such a platform could be created by The Trust for Public Land and Hopeworks, which focuses on education, technology and entrepreneurship to help young people break the cycle of violence and poverty in Camden. In 2015, Hopeworks built a map with GPS technology to illustrate how critically low the availability of fresh food is in Camden. The map showed where large retailers and corner stores are available.

The same could be done of available gyms, fields, courts and green spaces in the city. The Trust for Public Land could externalize its data for community use to illustrate exactly where the spaces are located. Maps could help provide directions to facilities for Spanish-speaking residents. Our youth survey showed that 38% of Camden children speak both English and Spanish at home, and 5% use Spanish as their primary language at home.

APPENDIX A |
HIGH SCHOOL COACHING
STIPENDS

Coaching Position	Camden HS	Woodrow Wilson HS
Head Baseball Coach	\$5,790	\$11,580
1st Asst. Baseball	\$6,306	\$3,153
Freshman Asst. Baseball	\$4,452	Not applicable
Head Basketball	\$13,244	\$15,244
1st Asst. Basketball	\$7,911	\$9,394
Freshman Asst. Basketball	\$9,046	Not applicable
Asst. Basketball	Not applicable	\$9,046
Head Football	\$7,622	\$7,622
1st Asst. Football	\$4,697	\$4,697
Asst. Football	\$9,046	\$20,102
Freshman Asst. Football	\$4,523	Not applicable
Indoor Track	\$8,097	\$2,699
Head Tennis	Not applicable	\$2,230
Head Track	\$12,710	\$12,710
1st Asst. Track	\$7,342	\$3,671
Head Volleyball	\$11,580	\$11,580
1st Asst. Volleyball	\$6,306	\$6,306
Head Softball	Not applicable	\$5,790
1st Asst. Softball	Not applicable	\$3,153
Head Wrestling	\$5,790	Not applicable
1st Asst. Wrestling	\$3,153	Not applicable
Total	\$127,615	\$128,977

Source: Camden City School District, 2018-19

APPENDIX B |
CAMDEN CITY INTRAMURAL
COACHING STIPENDS

Sport	Amount per Individual	Total Spent
Head Basketball	\$1,122	\$12,342
Chess Club	\$1,052	\$4,734
Head Track	\$768	\$3,840
Head Soccer	\$717	\$2,868
Head Volleyball	\$717	\$1,434
Head Softball	\$688	\$5,504
Head Cross Country	\$624	\$1,872
Head Cheerleader	\$614	\$4,912
Asst. Basketball	\$588	\$2,940
Bowling	\$526	\$526
Dance Club	\$526	\$4,734
Drill Team	\$526	\$3,156
Floor Hockey	\$526	\$1,578
Head Flag Football	\$526	\$2,104
Head Tennis	\$526	\$526
Skiing	\$526	\$526
Weight Training	\$526	\$1,052
Gymnastics	\$512	\$512
Asst. Soccer	\$408	\$816
Asst. Volleyball	\$408	\$408
Asst. Softball	\$398	\$3,184
Asst. Track	\$334	\$1,336

Source: Camden City School District, 2018-19

APPENDIX C |

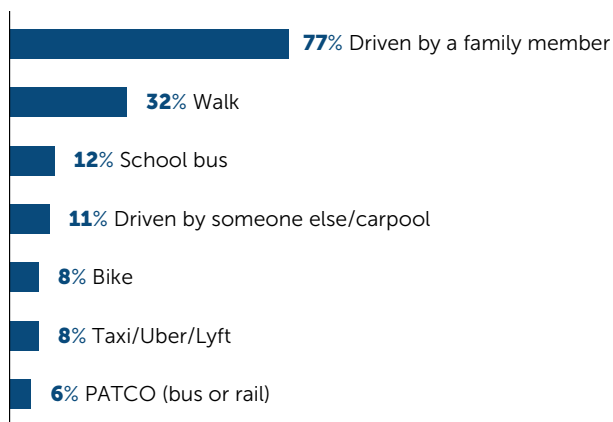
INTRAMURAL SPORTS COSTS BY SCHOOL

School	Total Amount
Catto Family School	\$9,353
Veterans Memorial Family School	\$8,914
H.B. Wilson Elementary School	\$7,831
Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy	\$7,044
Yorkship Elementary School	\$6,319
Wiggins College Preparatory Lab School	\$6,090
Cooper's Poynt Family School	\$2,770
Sharp Elementary School	\$2,700
Camden Big Picture Learning Academy	\$2,252
Davis Elementary School	\$2,236
Dudley Family School	\$1,839
Camden High School	\$1,648
R.T. Cream Family School	\$1,140
Forest Hill Elementary School	\$768
Total	\$60,904

Source: Camden City School District, 2018-19

APPENDIX D |

TRANSPORTATION YOUTH USE TO PLAY SPORTS*

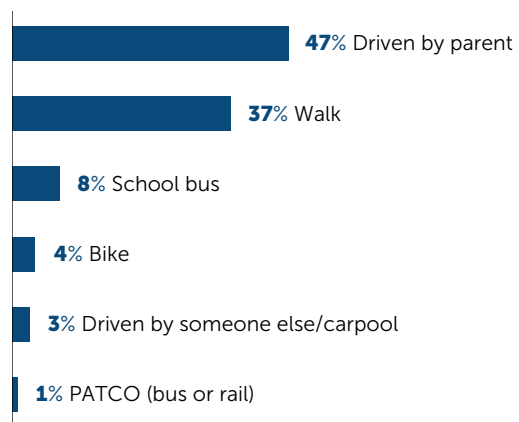


* Multiple answers allowed

Source: Aspen Institute Youth Survey

APPENDIX E |

TRANSPORTATION YOUTH USE TO VISIT PARKS*

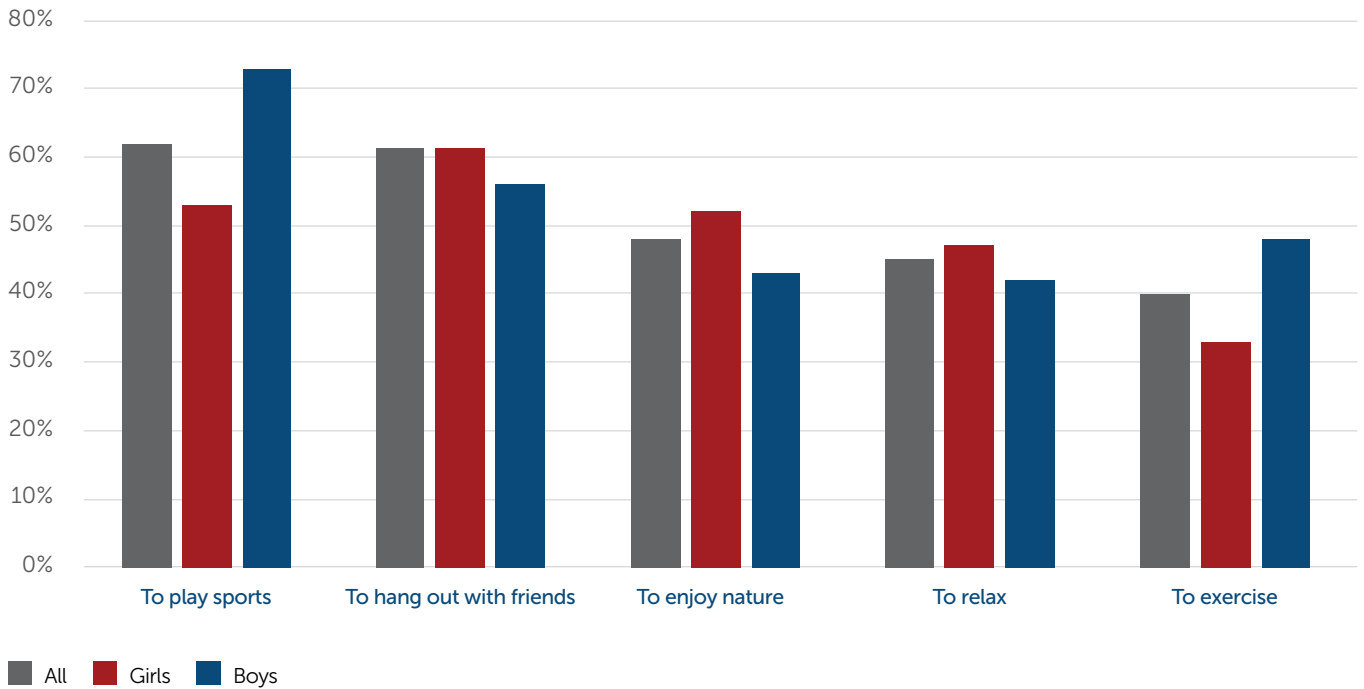


* Multiple answers allowed

Source: Aspen Institute Youth Survey

APPENDIX F |

WHY YOUTH VISIT PARKS*

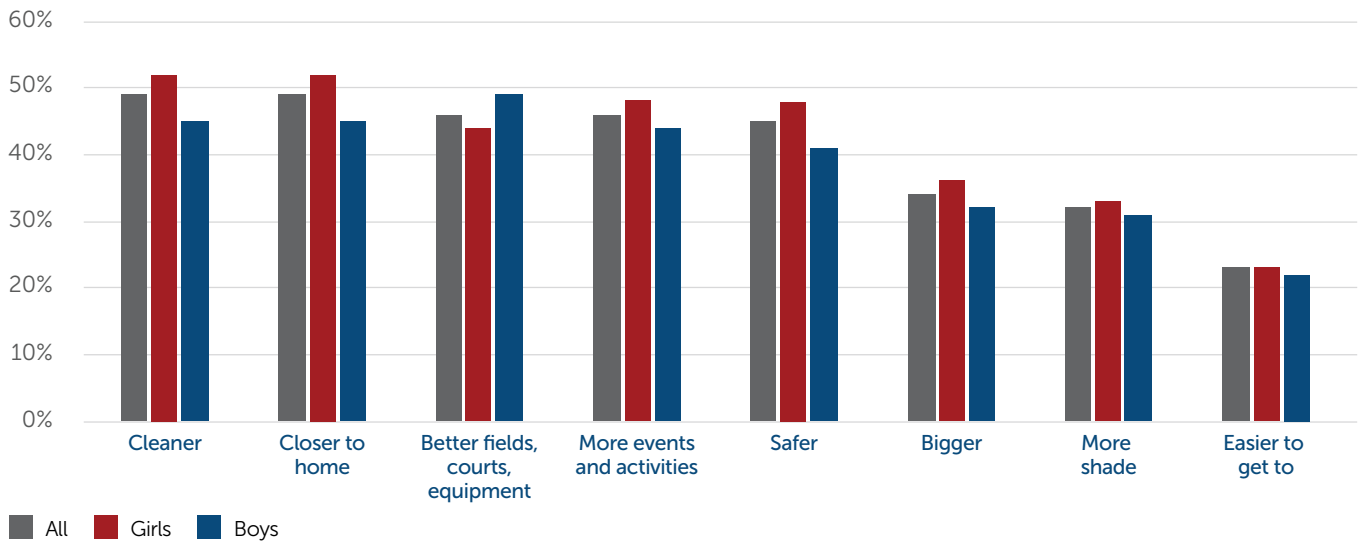


* Multiple answers allowed

Source: Aspen Institute Youth Survey

APPENDIX G |

WHAT WOULD HELP YOUTH USE PARKS MORE OFTEN?*

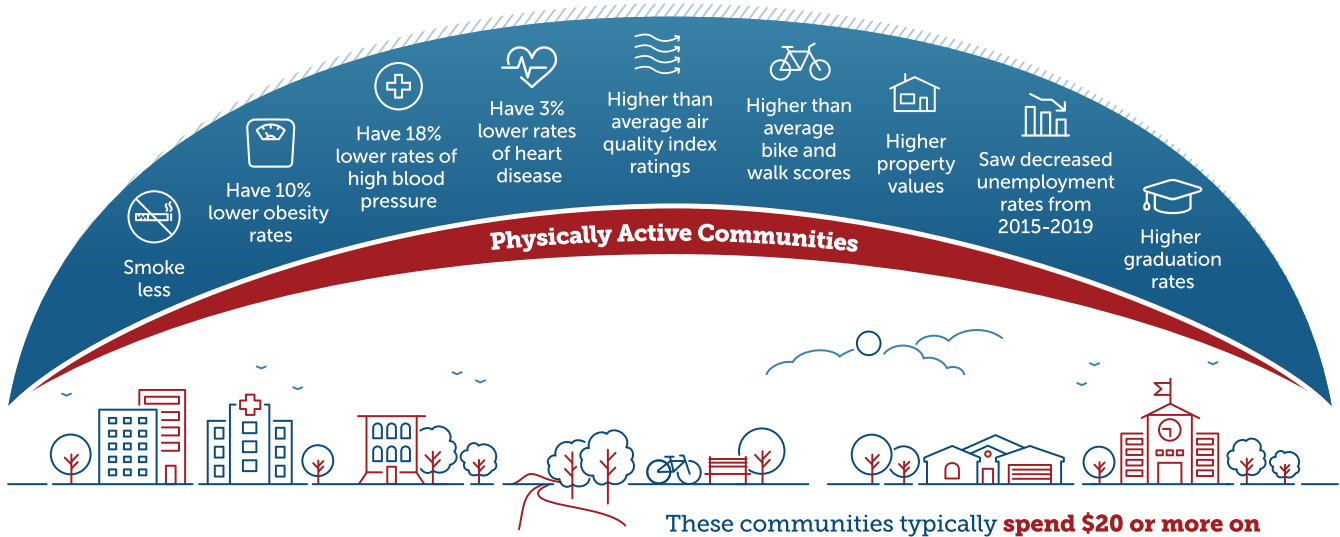


* Multiple answers allowed

Source: Aspen Institute Youth Survey

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES DO BETTER

What research shows on the benefits to residents

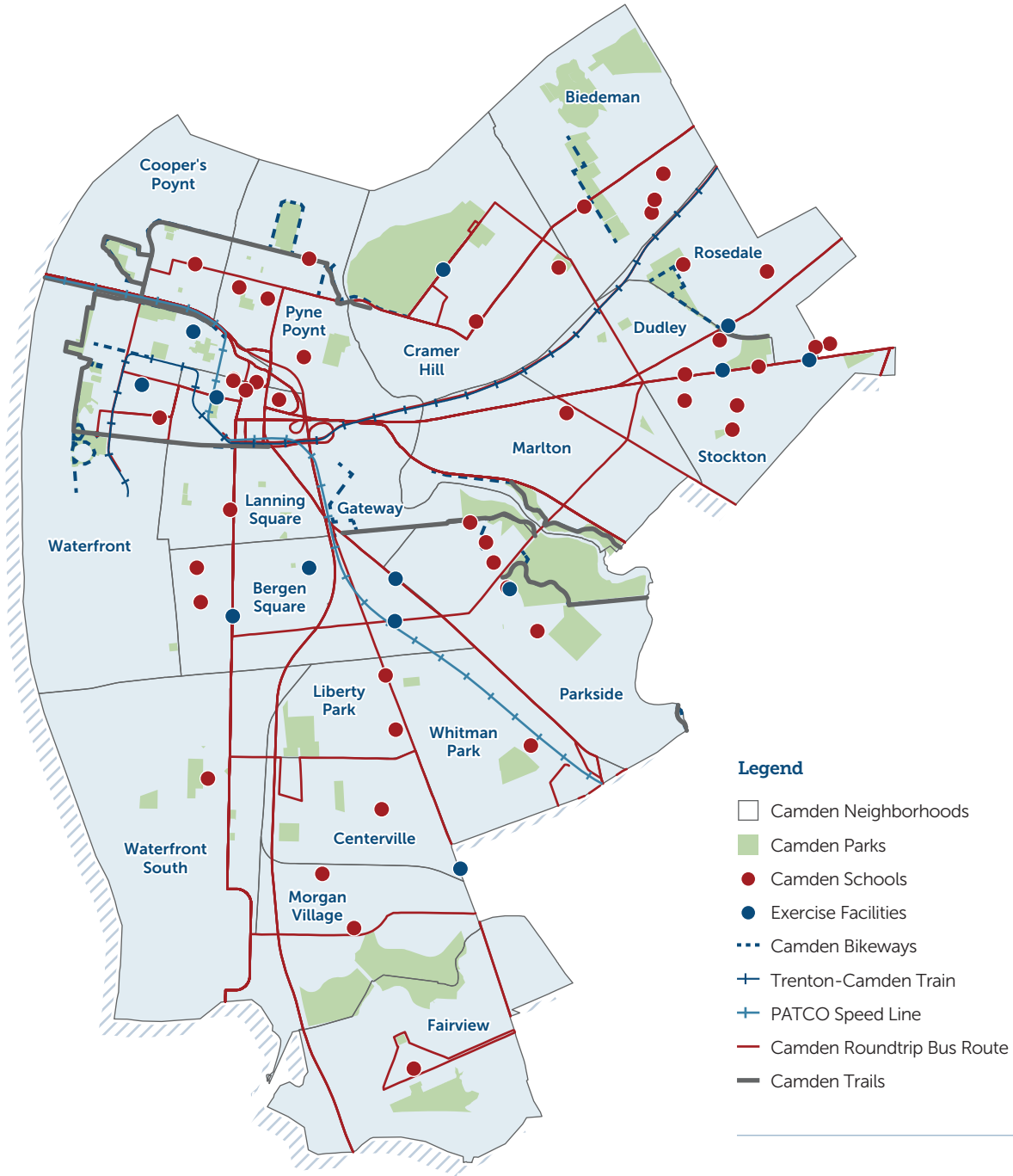


Learn more at as.pn/sportsfacts



APPENDIX I |

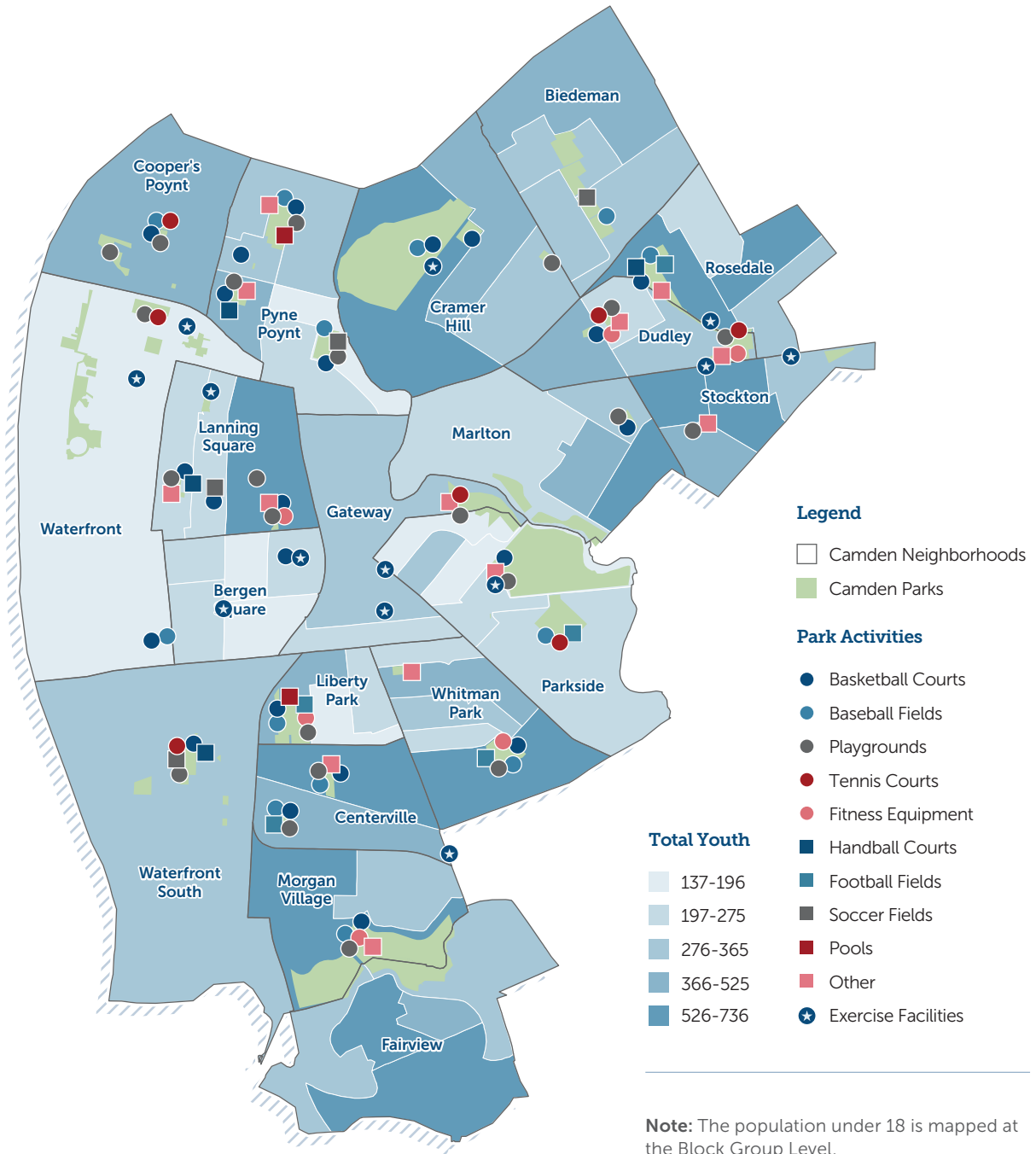
**MAP 2: TRANSIT ROUTES, EXERCISE FACILITIES,
AND PARKS IN CAMDEN, NJ**



Sources: Camden County Open Data Portal, DVRPC, NJGIN Open Data, Hopeworks N Camden

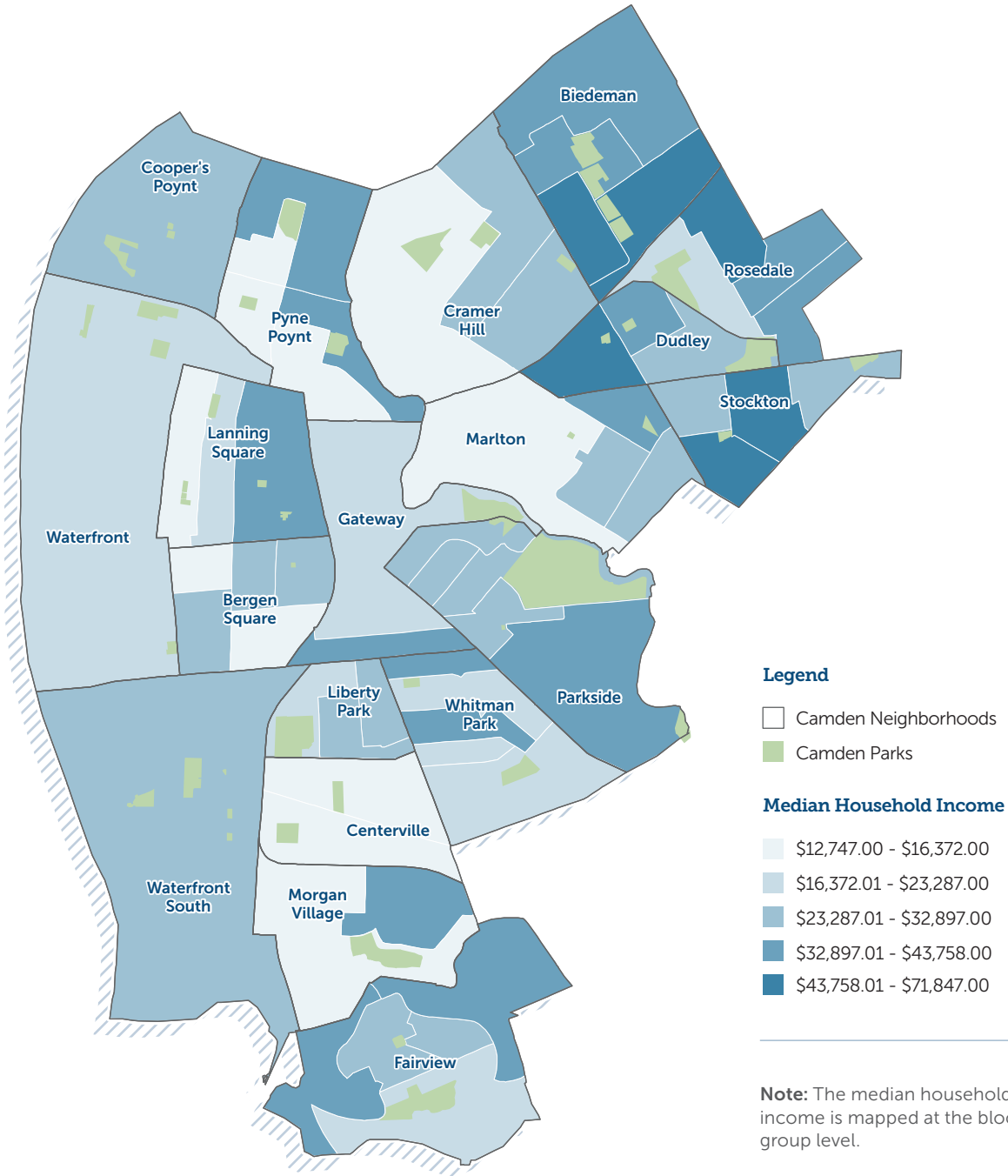
APPENDIX J |

MAP 3: 2020 POPULATION UNDER AGE 18 WITH EXERCISE FEATURE BY PARK IN CAMDEN, NJ



APPENDIX K |

MAP 4: 2020 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY NEIGHBORHOOD AND PARKS IN CAMDEN, NJ



ENDNOTES

1. Data from 2017-18 provided by Camden City School District.
2. New Jersey Department of Education Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2013.
3. Data provided by the Greater Philadelphia YMCA.
4. *Aspen Institute/Utah State University COVID-19 Parenting Survey*, September 2020.
5. "Survey Shows Parents Alarmed as Kids' Screen Time Skyrockets During COVID-19 Crisis," Parents Together Foundation, April 2020.
6. "Return to School FAQ," Camden City School District.
7. Interview with former Camden mayor Frank Moran.
8. Data from The Trust for Public Land.
9. Interview with Heart of Camden Executive Director Carlos Morales.
10. Interview with Heart of Camden Executive Director Carlos Morales.
11. High school student survey data from Camden City School District, 2018-19.
12. *Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Fatal Unintentional Drowning Among Persons Aged ≤ 29 years — United States, 1999-2010*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014.
13. "On the Delaware, a Promising New Era in Cleanup of an Urban River," *Yale Environment 360*, Aug. 20, 2020.
14. Data from 2018-19 provided by Camden City School District.
15. United States Census Bureau data.
16. Interview with Justin Spencer-Linzie of Greater Philadelphia YMCA.
17. "How Much Access Will Camden Residents Have to the Facility Replacing Campbell's Field?" *Tap into Camden*, March 3, 2020.
18. Data from 2018-19 provided by Camden City School District.
19. "Violent Crime Has Dropped in Camden, But Homicides Are Up Slightly," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 3, 2020.
20. *National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2020*, The Trevor Project.
21. *Pyne Point, America ReFramed*, 2016.
22. Data from 2018-19 provided by Camden City School District.
23. Sports & Fitness Industry Association data
24. *Keeping Girls in the Game: Factors That Influence Sport Participation*, Women's Sports Foundation, March 2020.
25. "Estimated Probability of Competing in College Athletics," NCAA.
26. LeagueApps data from SportTechie story: <https://www.sporttechie.com/youth-sports-pandemic-covid-19-access-to-coaching-technology-connectivity>
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28. *The Impact of School Closures and Sport Cancellations on the Health of Wisconsin Adolescent Athletes*, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, June 2020.
29. Data provided by the Food Bank of South Jersey.
30. *500 Cities Project: Local Data for Better Health*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017.
31. "COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.
32. Lisa S. Gorham, Terry Jernigan, Jim Hudziak, Deanna M. Barch, *Involvement in Sports, Hippocampal Volume, and Depressive Symptoms in Children*, Science Direct, May 2019.

PHOTOS

Avi Steinhardt, Camden Health and Athletic Association, and Kroc Center.

CREDITS

Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program staff gathered data, wrote the report and managed the process. A literature review was produced by Drexel University professor Ellen Staurowsky. The report was designed by The Hatcher Group and proofread by Catherine Lutz. Maps were created by Hopeworks.

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The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, and an international network of partners.

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ABOUT PROJECT PLAY

An initiative of the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program, Project Play develops, applies and shares knowledge that helps stakeholders build healthy communities through sports.

[ProjectPlay.us](https://www.projectplay.us)

ABOUT SIXERS YOUTH FOUNDATION

The Sixers Youth Foundation envisions communities where all children can create, pursue and realize their dreams and live productive lives.

[SixersYouthFoundation.org](https://www.sixersyouthfoundation.org)

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REPORT METHODOLOGY

Throughout the report, "sports" refers to all forms of health-enhancing physical activity which, through organized or casual play, aims to express or improve physical fitness and mental well-being. The term "youth" refers to 6- to 18-year-olds. The term "parent" is used to refer to the caregivers with whom youth reside. The term "coach" is used broadly to include those who instruct youth in both sports and other physical-activity programming.

The youth survey data reported in the scoreboard section and throughout the report comes from students in grades three through 12. From March-December 2020, 615 youth from more than a dozen schools in Camden completed an online survey about their experiences and perceptions of sports, physical activity and outdoor recreation. The survey was conducted on an online platform, and results were analyzed by Resonant Education. The survey is a statistically representative sample of Camden youth. Due to challenges from the coronavirus pandemic, more survey responses were collected from public schools than charter and private schools, but all school types are included.

