Fields of Dreams: Innovate and They Will Come?

September 24, 2014 | Chicago, IL

@AspenInstSports #ProjectPlay
Thank you

Support for this conversation is provided by Nike through Designed to Move, a framework co-authored with the American College of Sports Medicine to address the global epidemic of physical inactivity. The University of Florida’s Sport Policy & Research Collaborative provided research support, and the Illinois Youth Sport Summit supplied meeting space.

The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program thanks each of these event partners.
Welcome to Chicago, one of America’s great cities. Just fly over the top and you can see why. More than 580 parks, green patches amid the urban density, the legacy of the Playground Movement from a century ago, sustained through a dedicated share of property taxes. Communities come together at parks, to recreate, celebrate (Go Cubs!) and find themselves. They’re essential for kids, who need spaces to play sports and stay active.

In Cook County, 98 percent of residents live “reasonably close” to a location for physical activity, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (see page 2). Still, barriers to use remain. On Chicago playgrounds, black-and-yellow signs state, “WARNING: You Have Entered a SAFE PARK ZONE: Criminal Penalties Are Severely Increased for Gang Recruitment Activities and Possession, Use or Sale of Drugs and Weapons.” The sign didn’t stop a gunman last year from opening fire on a basketball court, shooting 13 people, including a 3-year-old boy.

Safety is a concern in some neighborhoods. Elsewhere in Illinois and around the U.S., the main obstacle in providing children with access to play spaces might be a lack of joint-use agreements with schools to leverage existing facilities, or the cost of maintaining gyms and fields amid budget cuts, or just transportation – getting kids there. But all communities share a need to innovate and collaborate across sectors.

We have organized this Project Play event to pump a few big ideas into the bloodstream. We recognize that improving the built environment is a complex problem, as is connecting kids to the great outdoors, and only so much can get done in one afternoon of dialogue. But it’s an essential conversation as Project Play reimagines youth sports in America to serve all children in all communities.

So, thank you for engaging. The strategies that surface today will help inform the Aspen Institute’s Project Play report, a playbook that stakeholders – from parents to policymakers, sport leaders to mayors – can use to create universal access to an early positive sports experience. The report, more than a year in the making, will identify eight key strategies and be released in advance of the Project Play Summit, Feb. 25 at the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

We hope that you can join us again then, as meaningful talk turns into powerful action.

Sincerely,

Tom Farrey
Executive Director
Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program
@tomfarrey
In 2014, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Rankings created the first national measure of the many places where individuals have the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity outside their home. Locations are defined as parks (local, state, national) and recreational facilities (gyms, community centers, YMCAs, dance studios, pools, certain businesses). People living within a half mile of a park are considered to have adequate access to opportunities for physical activity, as are those within either one mile (urban area) or three miles (rural area) of a recreational facility.

The chart on this page reflects the wide disparity in Illinois, ranging from counties where one percent of the population has adequate access to sports and exercise opportunities (Cumberland County, in the rural, south central part of the state) to counties where 99 percent do (DuPage County, just outside Chicago).
September 25, Navy Pier, Chicago, IL

Noon
Lunch + networking

1:30 pm
Welcome and introduction to the topics
Tom Farrey
Executive Director, Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program

1:45 pm
4 trends in play spaces
JO Spengler
Sports Policy and Research Collaborative, University of Florida

2:00-4:00 pm
Working groups
Goal: Identify the 5 most promising strategies or ideas that will grow access to quality play spaces for children in each of 4 areas

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural
- Special opportunity: Olympics
  How can the hosting of an Olympic Games best leave a legacy of community facilities? What are the lessons of London, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, other cities?

4:00 pm
Report backs

4:45 pm
Next steps with Project Play
Tom Farrey
Alexander Chan
Clinton Health Matters Initiative

5:00 pm
Meeting concludes
Please share your thoughts and perspectives on the topic through the following means:

**Social Media**
#ProjectPlay
@AspenInstSports

**Websites**
Aspen Institute Project Play microsite: www.AspenProjectPlay.org
Designed to Move: www.DesignedtoMove.org

**Email**
sportsandsociety@aspeninst.org

**Survey**
Post-event, we will send a brief survey to capture your feedback and additional ideas.

The Sports & Society Program will later publish a report, featuring a summary of the day, highlights from the roundtable, and supporting materials. The report will be available on the Project Play microsite. To receive a copy, please sign up for our distribution list at www.AspenProjectPlay.org.
Four Built Environment Settings
Insights and opportunities for leaders to consider in
growing access to youth sport, physical activity

1. Parks and Open Spaces

Building new parks, renovating old ones, and improving all parks with features that
promote sport and exercise are proven strategies for improving health and reducing the
costs associated with physical inactivity.

Observations of children in the 2nd through 8th grades over two years in an inner-city New Orleans
schoolyard* show that children are more likely to be very active in play areas with installed play struc-
tures than those with an open field.

A 2011 study conducted at a Florida elementary school found that the school’s first-graders were
far more active during recess after a project that painted stenciled shapes, grids, and games onto the
ground. Prior to the improvements, barely half of first-graders were active during recess.

1 Special thanks to Prof. J.O. Spengler, chair of the Sport Policy and Research Collaborative at the University of Florida, for his
contributions to this section. All charts based on materials by ActiveLivingResearch.org.

Study results published by NACCHO, Peaceful Playgrounds: Using Evidence-Based Strategies
and Quality Improvement to Address Childhood Obesity in Florida:

*Mean of children present on any given observation: 39.6
**Equipped concrete refers to a concrete surface with basketball hoops, hopscotch, and other play features
2. Urban Design and Land Use

City planners should pay special attention to the sport and recreational needs of low-income areas and communities of color, given the limited access to safe, well-maintained play spaces.

A 2007 study of Maryland, New York, and North Carolina found that most neighborhoods identified as predominantly African-American or Hispanic did not have any recreational facilities. The opposite is the case in most predominantly white areas.

People living within one mile of a park are four times as likely to visit the park once/week or more as compared to those living farther away. Additionally, those living within one mile had an average of 38 percent more exercise sessions.


3. Transportation

Enhancements to transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks and bicycle lanes, multi-use trails, and traffic calming measures, can result in increased sport and recreational opportunities, and improvements in children’s health.

Parents reported children walked or biked to school more after a Safe Routes to Schools project was completed.

A national study of nearly 3,000 women found that American-Indian and African-American women are more likely to report not having neighborhood sidewalks compared with white women. As the primary caretakers of children, we can assume that this lack of infrastructure also disproportionally affects American-Indian and African-American children.

4. Schools

Sharing school and community play spaces through legal contracts (shared-use agreements), or simply opening school facilities to the public, can increase opportunities for sport and recreation, as well as increase the number of children who are active.

“…when a previously locked schoolyard was opened and supervised, the number of children who were physically active outdoors was 84% higher than in a [comparable] community that had closed schoolyards.”

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Kirk Anderson  
Director, Coaching Education 
United States Tennis Association  
kanderson@usta.com

Vaughn Bryant  
Chief Program Officer  
Chicago Park District  
vaughn.bryant@chicagoparkdistrict.com

Carrie Carroll  
Deputy Director, RWJF Culture of Health Prize 
Researcher, University of Wisconsin Population 
Health Institute  
carrie.carroll@match.wisc.edu

Laurence Chalip  
Professor  
University of Illinois  
lchalip@illinois.edu

Alex Chan  
Associate Director, National Strategy  
Clinton Foundation  
achan@clintonfoundation.org

Jay Coakley  
Professor  
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs  
jcoakley@uccs.edu

Suzanne Davies  
Global Portfolio Director  
Nike Access to Sport  
suzanne.davies@nike.com

Peter Davis  
President  
Sport Performance Management  
peter.davis.spm@gmail.com

Ann Dillemuth  
Research Associate  
American Planning Association  
ad@planning.org

Tom Farrey  
Executive Director  
Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program  
tom.farrey@aspeninstitute.org

Asa Firestone  
BeyondGear / BeyondTalks  
Co-Founder  
asa@gobeyondgear.com

Ed Foster-Simeon  
President  
United States Soccer Foundation  
efostersimeon@ussoccerfoundation.org

Natasha Frost  
Staff Attorney  
Public Health Law Center  
natasha.frost@wmitchell.edu

Gary Hall, Jr.  
Principal, Hallway Consulting  
Olympic Hall of Fame  
garyhalljr@me.com

Risa Isard  
Program Coordinator  
Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program  
risa.isard@aspeninstitute.org

Michael Kanters  
Professor  
North Carolina State University  
mkanters@ncsu.edu

John Kessel  
Director of Beach Volleyball, Education, and 
Grassroots Programs  
USA Volleyball  
john.kessel@usav.org

Sage Learn  
Government Affairs Manager  
National Recreation and Park Association  
slearn@nrpa.org
Rachel MacCleery
Senior Vice President
Urban Land Institute
rachel.maccleery@uli.org

Ken Martel
Technical Director of American Development Model
USA Hockey
kenm@usahockey.org

Alicia McConnell
Director, Training & Community Partners
United States Olympic Committee
alicia.mcconnell@usoc.org

Scott Myers
Executive Director
World Sport Chicago
smyers@worldsportchicago.org

Tim O’Connell
Assistant Director of Recreation
Chicago Park District
timothy.oconnell@chicagoparkdistrict.com

Dev Pathik
CEO
Facility Sports Advisory
dpathik@sportsadvisory.com

Nathan Plowman
Director of Partnerships
Nike Access to Sport
nathan.plowman@nike.com

Sharon Roerty
Senior Program Officer
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
sroerty@rwjf.org

Jarrod Scheunemann
Community Services and Education Coordinator
Office of Recreation and Park Resources
scheune1@illinois.edu

Bae Schilling
Director of Program & Business Development
The Association for International Sport for All
schilling@tafisa.net

Colin Schmidt
Executive Director
America SCORES Bay Area
cschmidt@americascores.org

James Siegal
Executive Vice President
KaBOOM!
jsiegal@kaboom.org

Deborah Slaner Larkin
CEO
Women’s Sports Foundation
dlarkin@womenssportsfoundation.org

Joe Smith
Program Manager
City of Palos Heights Parks & Recreation
jsmith@palosheights.org

Travis Smith
Director of Research
National Recreation and Park Association
tsmith@nrpa.org

Marjorie Snyder
Research Director
Women’s Sports Foundation
marjsnyder2@aol.com

J.O. Spengler
Associate Professor
Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management
University of Florida
spengler@hhp.ufl.edu

Alan Turnbull
Community Building & Communications
National Park Service
alan_turnbull@nps.gov
Jessica Wahl
Policy Manager for Recreation
Outdoor Industry Association
jwahl@outdoorindustry.org

Dan Waldinger
Director
Mahomet Parks & Recreation
dwaldinger@mahomet-il.gov

Taldi Walter
Community Affairs Program Manager
Recreation Equipment, Inc.
twalter@rei.com

Jim Whitehead
CEO
American College of Sports Medicine
jwhitehead@acsm.org

Mary Wittenberg
President and CEO
New York Road Runners
mwittenberg@nyrr.org
The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute has campuses in Aspen, Colorado, and on the Wye River on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. It also maintains offices in New York City and has an international network of partners.

www.aspeninstitute.org

About Sports & Society

The mission of the Sports & Society Program is to convene leaders, facilitate dialogue and inspire solutions that help sports serve the public interest, with a focus on the development of healthy children and communities. The program provides a venue for thought leadership where knowledge can be deepened and breakthrough strategies explored on a range of issues.

www.SportsandSociety.org

About Project Play

The Aspen Institute’s Project Play is a thought leadership exercise that will lay the foundation for the nation to get and keep more children involved in sports, with a focus on addressing the epidemic of physical inactivity. The initiative convenes sport, policy and other leaders in a series of roundtable and other events, and in January 2015 will publish a framework for action that can help stakeholders create “Sport for All, Play for Life” communities.

www.AspenProjectPlay.org

About Designed to Move

Designed to Move is a global call-to-action supported by a growing community of public, private and civil sector organizations dedicated to ending the epidemic of physical inactivity. More than 75 sport and academic organizations have endorsed the plan, co-authored by Nike, the American College of Sports Medicine and the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education. The collective vision is of future generations running, jumping and kicking to reach their greatest potential.

www.designedtomove.org

Contacts

Program Executive Director: Tom Farrey
Tom.Farrey@aspeninstitute.org
860.798.0752

Program Coordinator: Risa Isard
Risa.Isard@aspeninstitute.org
202.736.2916