

PARK CITY --- OUR CITY

Assessment of and recommendations for the youth sport community

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Park City, Our City was commissioned by Matt Terwillegar of the Utah Olympic Park, Julian Coffman of the Park City Sport and Wellness Coalition, and Tate Shaw of Park City Recreation. These individuals, in collaboration with Dr. Travis Dorsch and Dr. Matthew Vierimaa from Utah State University's College of Education and Human Services sought to begin work toward optimizing the design and delivery of organized youth sport programming in the Park City community.

A necessary first step in pursuing this aim was to assess Park City's current youth sport landscape. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to identify stakeholders' perceptions of community level factors that have shaped the design and delivery of organized youth sport programming in Park City since Salt Lake City's hosting of the 2002 Olympic Games. In addition to looking back at the legacy of the 2002 Games, this project also served as an initial opportunity to look forward toward 2030 as key community stakeholders chart a course for the next decade of youth sport delivery.

Nine focus groups were conducted with 11 youth, 10 parents, 13 coaches, and 9 administrators from a variety of recreational, competitive, and elite sport organizations. These focus groups took place in May, July, and November 2018. In each focus group, participants responded to questions regarding their personal philosophies and experiences in youth sport, as well as about characteristics of the Park City community that influence the ways sport programming is implemented and consumed at a local level.

Focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and cross-checked for accuracy by members of the Utah State research team. Transcripts were then analyzed using thematic analysis, resulting in a final framework of 7 overarching categories and 35 underlying themes.

Findings shed further light on the ways the 2002 Olympics have been used as a catalyst to increase levels of participation in sport and physical activity in Park City. Findings also highlight a shared belief among stakeholders regarding the importance of making sport accessible to all, developing physical literacy and life skills, and embracing multi-sport participation. However, the community's high-performance culture, growing population, and limited facilities often lead sport organizations to adopt a pay-to-play mentality and encourages early sport specialization. This apparent conflict between idealized perspectives about youth sport and the reality of implementing and sustaining sport programming underscores the importance of considering how youth development through sport actually occurs within the Park City community.

This project report is designed to inform decision-making at the community, organizational, team, and family levels in Park City, Utah, and we thank all the community stakeholders who took part as partners and participants!

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

11
Athletes



Five MALES



Six FEMALES

- All 11 athletes identified as White
- Ages ranged from 10 to 24 with a mean age of 14.55 years
- 10 of 11 came from families with two parents
- Nine athletes attended public or private school and two were homeschooled
- Number of siblings in the home ranged from 0 to 3 with a mean of 1.72
- Represented 11 sports: Adaptive Ski Racing, Alpine Skiing, Baseball, Basketball, Figure Skating, Football, Freestyle Skiing, Soccer, Speedskating, Snowboarding, Volleyball

10
Parents



Five MALES



Five FEMALES

- Seven parents identified as White, two as mixed race, and one did not report
- Ages ranged from 29 to 62 with a mean age of 44.60 years
- Seven parents were employed for wages, two were self-employed, and one was a homemaker
- Five made less than \$100k and five made more than \$100k
- 3 of 10 had sport administration experience; 4 of 10 had coaching experience; 7 of 10 had athletic experience
- Number of children in the home ranged from 0 to 4 with a mean of 2.20
- Represented 8 sports: Alpine Skiing, Baseball, Figure Skating, Lacrosse, Nordic Skiing, Snowboarding, Soccer, Swimming

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

13
Coaches



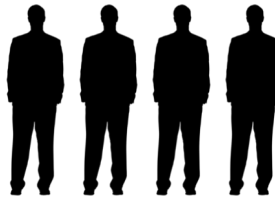
Seven MALES



Six FEMALES

- 12 coaches identified as White and one as Asian
- Ages ranged from 33 to 69 with a mean age of 48.85 years
- Eight were employed for wages, four were self-employed, and one was out of work and looking for work
- Four made less than \$100k and nine made more than \$100k
- 6 of 13 had sport administration experience; 8 of 13 had experience as a sport parent; 13 of 13 had athletic experience
- Represented 14 sports: Alpine Skiing, Baseball, Basketball, Cheerleading, Cross Country, Figure Skating, Freestyle Skiing, Ice Hockey, Karate, Mountain Biking, Ski Jumping, Soccer, Snowboarding, Track & Field

9
Administrators



Four MALES



Five FEMALES

- All nine administrators identified as White
- Ages ranged from 26 to 55 with a mean age of 43.89 years
- Eight were employed for wages and one was self-employed
- Five made less than \$100k and four made more than \$100k
- 2 of 9 had sport coaching experience; 4 of 9 had experience as a sport parent; 8 of 9 had athletic experience
- Represented 6 sports and 3 institutions: Alpine Skiing, Freestyle Skiing, Karate, Luge, Rowing, Soccer, National Ability Center, Park City High School, Utah Olympic Park

THE PARK CITY COMMUNITY: A BLESSING AND A CURSE

As study participants described youth sport in the Park City community, it became quickly apparent that for as many positive characteristics that were discussed, a similar number of negatives also came to light.

On one hand, participants highlighted Park City's reputation as a world-class winter sport destination with a history of developing elite athletes. As such, the community has steadily grown as families relocate to allow developing athletes the best chance of athletic success. A key ingredient in this process has been the strong support of the entire community. The Park City community as a whole was described as strongly valuing the importance of sport and recreation.

While this strong social support nurtures the development of Park City's aspiring athletes, it can also exert additional pressure to reach elite levels of performance. This high performance, competitive culture can lead to inflated expectations, as well as feelings of disappointment among athletes who fail to reach elite status.

Many of the positives of the Park City youth sport experience can be traced back to the community's "small town feel." When paired with its world-class sport infrastructure, the small, supportive community helps to elevate its young athletes to reach their potential in sport and life. At the same time, participants described how the community seemed to be reaching capacity, and detailed how its facilities are struggling to accommodate the growing population. Participants struggled with this notion, as they embraced the benefits of a small community, while longing for the opportunities associated with a larger city center.

A PLACE THAT PEOPLE WANT TO BE

IT'S SO SUPPORTIVE UP HERE!

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

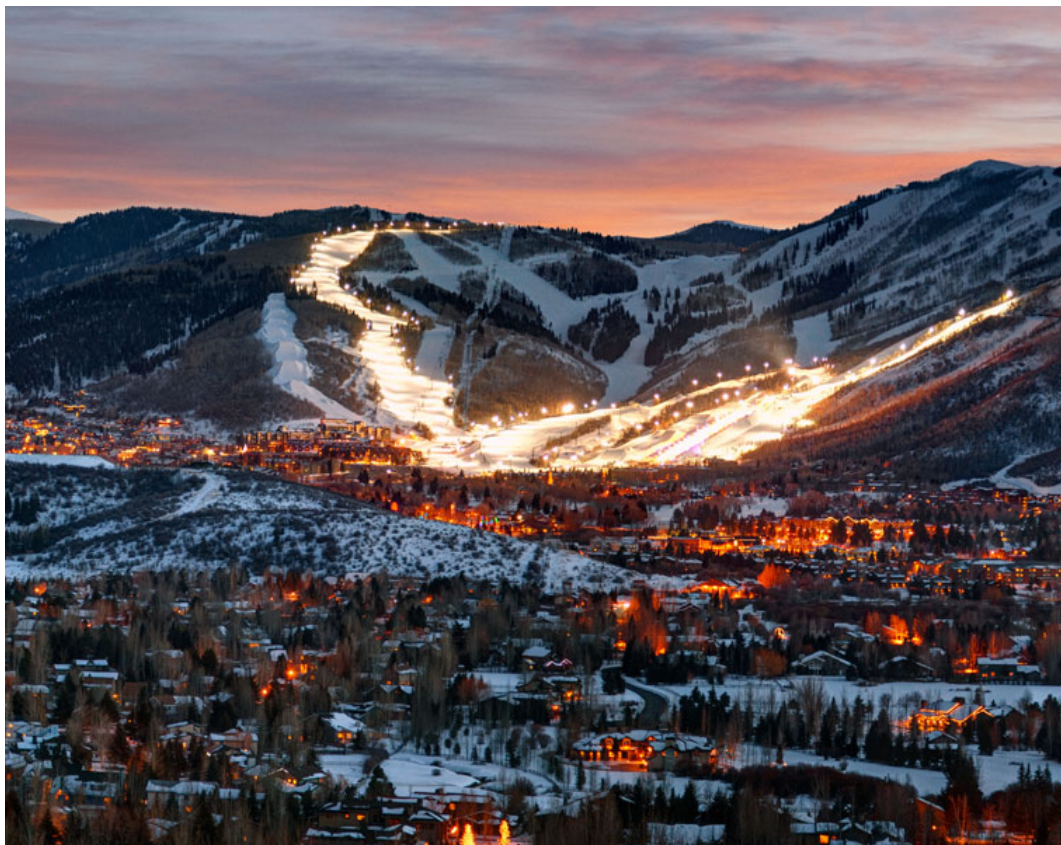
UNSPOKEN EXPECTATIONS

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES



THE PARK CITY COMMUNITY: A BLESSING AND A CURSE

A PLACE THAT PEOPLE WANT TO BE



Park City was described as a **community with a lot to offer** in terms of youth sport. In fact, many participants shared knowledge of families who had moved to Park City specifically to enhance their child or children's prospects in sport. In most cases, these families had **children pursuing elite status in winter sports**, but other adults suggested that people also come to Park City to partake in the community's **overall sporty or outdoorsy vibe**.

"We're a place that people want to be, and if they're moving here, usually they've got some pretty high expectations. And we need to try to balance that with kids coming up through the community."

Male Elite Sport
Administrator

"There's a lot of positive vibes in the air in Park City. A lot of people end up moving here because they like the community, and how nice people are, and the landscapes, and all the opportunities their kids have to play sports, or all the outdoor activities and indoor activities that are here."

Female Competitive Sport Athlete

THE PARK CITY COMMUNITY: A BLESSING AND A CURSE

IT'S SO SUPPORTIVE UP HERE!

The Park City community was described as a **friendly and encouraging place to be** an aspiring athlete. This feeling included both the general population of residents, as well as the administrators, coaches, and families that are actively engaged in youth sport in the community. Of specific note were feelings among athletes of **compassion and understanding**, as well as the **kind and accommodating engagement, of coaches and administrators** in the community.



“The actual organization for my sport isn’t as strong as it could be. But, the *people* who are in the organization – my coaches – I give so much credit to for getting me to where I am today. We have some of the best coaches … ‘cause they’ve they all had the experience and they all know what to do to like get us prepared for like World Cups and … for the next four years.”

Male Elite Sport Athlete

“The community is always backing you up since we’re not as big.”

Male Recreational
Sport Athlete

THE PARK CITY COMMUNITY: A BLESSING AND A CURSE

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD



Despite the community's many strengths, living in Park City was also described as a **catch-22**. On one hand, the community has **the infrastructure, support, and cachet of a larger metropolitan area**. On the other hand, it is a **small town with limited space and resources to accommodate its growing needs**.

Participants struggled with this dialectic, and hoped for more services and opportunities without the population growth that might support and/or necessitate these things.

"We wanna have a population of 100,000 so that we can cover everything, but we also like the fact that our town's 10,000 people. We want every amenity we can possibly have. We want everything. We want to be able to do everything while maintaining that small-town feel."

Male
Elite Sport
Administrator

"Having world class facilities to pursue all these sports, it's really amazing. But that is countered with the very high pressure environment and the need to be the very best ... Athletes do get burnt out, athletes do get specialized too early."

Male Recreational Sport Coach

THE PARK CITY COMMUNITY: A BLESSING AND A CURSE

UNSPOKEN EXPECTATIONS

At its core, Park City was described as a **competitive community** that prides itself on excellence and **high achievement**. This ethos trickles down into youth sport as well, as many **children feel pressure to achieve elite status** early in the sporting years. Administrators and coaches struggled with this as a general philosophy in sport, but noted feeling tugged by the **inertia to see kids specialize early and achieve at a high level**.



“People who train here are always going to go to the Olympics, and I feel like if not then people are disappointed about it.”

Female
Competitive
Sport Athlete

“(Park City) has a legacy for being a sports town, a more advanced athletic town, and I think people are held to a higher standard.”

Male
Competitive
Sport Athlete

“There is an overall level of intensity in this community in terms of athletics and sports. You know, we are generating Olympic medalists out of this community that rival *countries* ... And that just elevates expectations.”

Female
Competitive Sport
Administrator

THE PARK CITY COMMUNITY: A BLESSING AND A CURSE

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES



Participants described living in Park City as a **consistent race to be the very best, and to show others that you had the resources to do so.**

According to participants, this often manifests as an **arms race** in youth sport as many families strive to manufacture the next Olympic champion. Indeed, many **families described feeling the need to engage their children in early specialization** to make sure they don't get left behind.

"We only have two kids and we can't even afford to put our daughter into any more programs, let alone the commitment of time ... It's such a heavy burden financially for families. It's really, really challenging."

Male Recreational
Sport Parent

"When (parents) get to that fear of falling behind, part of it is 'are we keeping up with the Joneses?' or 'if my kid's going to have a chance, we are going to have to do what these people are doing.' It takes a very strong personality to be able to break that as the head of an organization and say 'no, this is what we are going to be about in this community.'"

Male
Competitive Sport
Administrator

A NEED TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

A key aim of the study's focus groups was to investigate how accessible youth sport programming is in the Park City community, and to explore potential areas through which key stakeholders can enhance accessibility of sport and recreation opportunities for the entire community.

As previously noted, participants highlighted the reality that Park City is blessed with the infrastructure to allow its residents to explore a wide range of winter and summer sports. The community's sport culture encourages youth to sample from the wide variety of sports at their fingertips.

In some cases, access to these opportunities is constrained by the growing size of the community and limited facilities, which force sport organizations to prioritize access to certain (typically more elite) groups.

From another perspective, even though youth in Park City technically have the opportunity to engage in a wide array of sporting activities, this access often comes with a significant financial cost. Although many Park City families are relatively affluent and can afford to support their children's athletic development, many others lack the necessary time or money to allow their children to pursue their passions. In light of this, participants identified several community initiatives that encourage youth from a broader range of socioeconomic backgrounds to try out different sports in the community.

However, a notable gap remains in the support that these youth require to advance beyond early sampling to the higher levels of training and competition.

ABILITY TO DO IT ALL IN ONE LOCATION

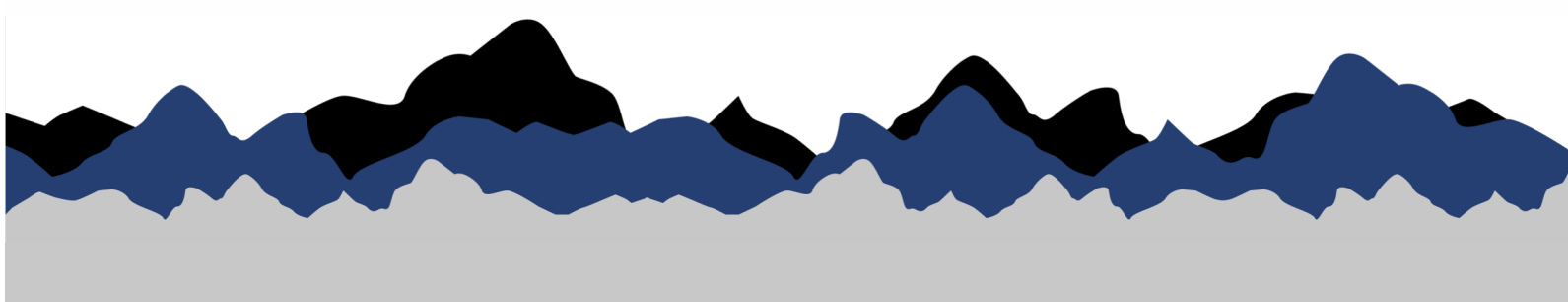
NOT EVERYONE HAS THE TIME AND MONEY

THERE'S NO MIDDLE ROAD

WE CAN'T GO THERE ANYMORE

ITS ALL GRINGOS IN PARK CITY

ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY



A NEED TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

ABILITY TO DO IT ALL IN ONE LOCATION

Park City was described as an **epicenter of sport opportunity**. From the obvious infrastructure that makes Park City a winter sports mecca, to the bountiful hiking and mountain biking trails, to its many options for traditional team and individual sports, **Park City has it all**. This range of options provides a range of **opportunities for youth to explore various sports and activities**, and ultimately settle on a passion. However, it also **spreads the community thin** to a certain extent, resulting in a relative dearth of space for a number of sports.



“In Park City, you grow up doing it, and you find that love for it. In Park City it just begins so early. I’ve done a lot of other sports. I played soccer, and I ski jumped for a little bit, and I finally got into a program that allowed me to skate and I just fell in love with the sport. I believe in this community we have that ability to like find like what we want to do. We have tons of options. And I believe just finding what you love is really just like exploring your options when you’re younger.”

Male Elite
Sport Athlete

A NEED TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

NOT EVERYONE HAS THE TIME AND MONEY



Despite the opportunity to sample an amazingly large range of sports in Park City, study participants were quick to note that not everyone in the community can afford to do so. Indeed, the pervasive **caricature of Park City families is that they all have the means to spend time and money without limit** pursuing their children's elite sport interests. In fact, that is not the case, as many **families are trying to fit youth sports into an already tight household budget.**

“Accessibility is location, time, and money. The location is good here. But, not everyone has the time and money.”

Female
Elite Sport
Parent

“One interesting component I am finding is that families will pay a fee for their sons, but not for their daughters.”

Female
Competitive
Sport Coach

“Contrary to popular belief, everybody up here is not infinitely wealthy, there are a lot of working-class people up here.”

Female
Elite Sport
Coach

A NEED TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

THERE'S NO MIDDLE ROAD

Study participants described Park City's recreational sport opportunities as top-notch.

Rightfully so, they also highlighted the **world-class opportunities** for elite sport athletes. The **disconnect**, according to participants, lies in the **"bridge" from recreation to elite participation**. While programs exist to help athletes make this jump, stakeholders in the community suggested that there **really isn't a low-key opportunity for kids to participate as they age up**.



"We generate a lot of subsidies at the introduction level to sport, but the bridge between intro and recreational is missing. I think the venues, the resorts, the manufacturers at the recreational are like, 'we want to get paid now.'"

Male Recreational
Sport Coach

"I feel like the opportunities are there but we could always do more to enhance accessibility to those opportunities."

Male
Competitive
Sport Coach

"I think access is unbelievable for the *little* kids . It is just unbelievable. I mean, nothing costs anything. You can try every sport you want, it is so cool. But, it gets more expensive ... And that is where it is hard to do for a lot of families."

Male Elite Sport Parent

A NEED TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

WE CAN'T GO THERE ANYMORE

Ironically, with all the resources Park City has to offer, study participants shared a number of stories about **a lack of access for athletes** in the community. In many cases, this tied directly to a **lack of available space**, and the decisions clubs and organizations make to **prioritize access for certain teams or athletes**.



"It seems crazy but we don't have enough skiing for our teams when we have the largest ski area in the Lower 48."

Male
Elite Sport
Administrator

"We have a really nice gym, but my group can't train there."

Female Elite
Sport Athlete

"Park City has crazy resources, but it's super frustrating 'cause a couple years ago they split from US Paralympics, so we can't go there anymore ... they were like 'we have no control over them, we can't tell them to let you in.' So, it's frustrating."

Female Elite
Sport Athlete

A NEED TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

IT'S ALL GRINGOS IN PARK CITY



Study participants were keenly aware that **winter sports in Park City lack diversity**. Although **many community initiatives are in place** to introduce young people of disparate racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds to sports like skiing and snowboarding, there appears to be **a lack of follow-through as athletes' ability increases**. This appeared largely due to the **financial and time constraints** experienced by many families in the Park City community as well as potential **language barriers**.

"In ski racing, it's not very diverse."

Female
Elite
Sport
Athlete

"It's all Gringos in skiing and snowboarding."

Male
Recreational
Sport Parent

"It's like the *whitest* sports."

Female
Recreational Sport
Administrator

A NEED TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY



It became evident that study participants were **driven by a goal of social equity** in the Park City youth sport community. However, it also became evident that there is a long way to go to achieve this aim. Although **a number of programs and initiatives are in place** to advance opportunities for underserved families and youth, city leaders, sport administrators, and coaches seem to **struggle translating this into continued sport participation** among these populations.

“The perception is that winter sports are off limits to the Latino community. We’re gonna have to address that ... we need to find ways to go in and ask questions.”

Male Elite Sport
Administrator

“There are different incentive programs and subsidized programs that organizations are offering for people to have access. But, not a lot of people seem to know about it.”

Male Recreational
Sport Coach

“If 20 percent of our population is Latino, then 20 percent of our population should be reflected in all of our sports at the elite levels.”

Male
Recreational
Sport Parent

OUR MISSION: TO DEVELOP BETTER PEOPLE AND ATHLETES

Through discussion of the objectives and reasons in which youth participate in sport, all of the community stakeholders were in agreement that youth sport should develop better people in addition to its core mission of developing better athletes. Further, participants discussed the benefits of multi-sport or seasonal participation, citing the potential for skill transfer and greater opportunities for the development of interpersonal and life skills.

Central to this belief, participants advocated for a greater focus on the development of fundamental movement skills and physical literacy as the building blocks for well rounded elite athletes. Despite this belief, coaches and administrators suggested that youth athletes in the community commonly lack these necessary fundamentals. One reason for this weakness seems to be the growing emphasis on early specialization and year-round training.

Even though participants were well aware of the benefits of multi-sport participation and physical literacy, they acknowledged the bottom line that must be considered if youth sport programming is to be sustained. On one hand, programs are commonly tasked with doing more for youth with less financial support, which nudges them toward the early specialization model, which helps to ensure their viability. Similarly, parents exert pressure on coaches and administrators, expecting a return on their financial investment as their children advance in sport.

KIDS NEED FUNDAMENTALS

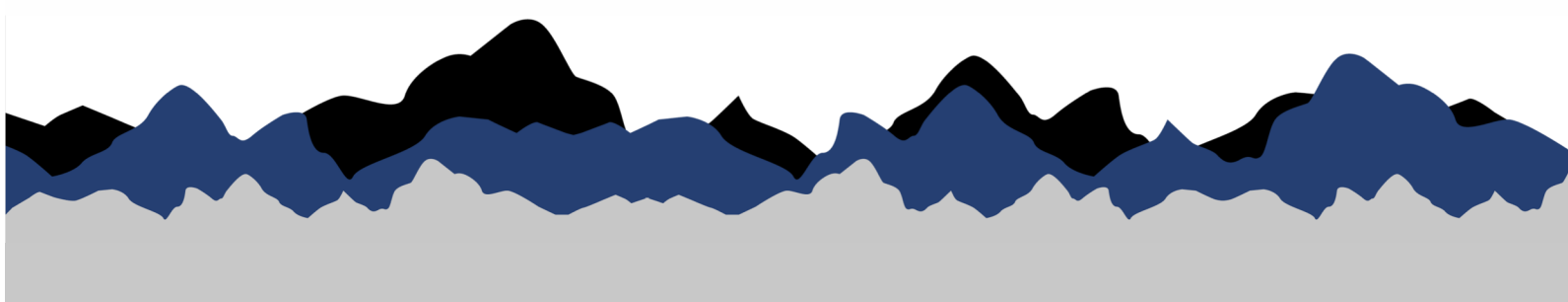
EARLY SPECIALIZATION IS AN EPIDEMIC

SKILLS TRANSFER ACROSS SPORTS

IT'S ABOUT THE ATHLETE FIRST

SPORT'S MADE ME A BETTER PERSON

WE ALL HAVE BOTTOM LINES



OUR MISSION: TO DEVELOP BETTER PEOPLE AND ATHLETES

KIDS NEED FUNDAMENTALS

In the **push to specialize early** and achieve elite status at younger ages, study participants suggested that **kids are missing opportunities to learn fundamental skills** that provide the foundation for future athletic successes. Administrators and coaches acknowledged the importance of these skills, but also suggested that **outcome-related pressures and time constraints** keep them from implementing more fundamental skill learning into their training schedules.



“Basic skills are not something that every kid is built with. Bounding, hopping, skipping, lateral jumping, sliding, pivoting, using your hips -- those are all skills that need to be taught. Right? It’s elementary physical education. We have some of the nicest parks I’ve ever seen in the world, and they are empty if it’s not structured, if it’s not time for soccer practice.”

Male
Competitive
Sport Coach

“Kids need fundamentals. I mean (USSA) constantly talks about fundamentals and they look at our skiers they’re like, ‘jeez, there’s no fundamentals.’ Fundamentals are very important at those younger ages – they’ve gotta learn those fundamental motor skills younger, and we need to continue to do fundamentals all the way through.”

Male Elite
Sport Administrator

**OUR MISSION:
TO DEVELOP BETTER PEOPLE
AND ATHLETES**

EARLY SPECIALIZATION IS AN EPIDEMIC



Tied to a number of concerns in the community, administrators, coaches, and parents all described the **negative outcomes related to early sport specialization** in Park City. They also acknowledged the many **pressures on athletes and families to pursue this developmental pathway**. In some ways, key stakeholders have thrown their hands up and **accepted this as “the way it is”**; however, many also continue to offer resistance via their own coaching or parenting strategies.

“Kids are starting to specialize younger and younger and younger. There’s a push to be good at something super young so you have that chance to be an Olympian or go to college. It’s just becoming more and more competitive, so they’re just not *playing*.”

Female Elite
Sport Parent

“The kids are so specialized and have tunnel vision on one single goal and they’re missing this broader view of what needs to happen.”

Female
Competitive Sport
Administrator

“The best hockey players at nine are not the best hockey players at 18. You don’t have to specialize at 9 – in fact, studies show that we’re losing people because of it.”

Male
Elite Sport
Administrator

**OUR MISSION:
TO DEVELOP BETTER PEOPLE
AND ATHLETES**

**SKILLS
TRANSFER
ACROSS SPORTS**

In light of the pushback against early specialization, a number of participants suggested that **Park City is uniquely designed for youth to sample a range of sports.**

This ideal is bolstered by knowledge that a number of fundamental **skills can be gained in one sport and applied to another.**

Administrators and coaches, specifically, suggested that they wanted athletes to play and compete in different sport settings.



“I know skiing has helped my skating. I ski for fun on Sundays during the winter and I know that can help because I can learn how to use my edges on the skis which means I can learn to do steeper edges on the blades. You know, skills transfer across sports.”

Female
Competitive
Sport Athlete

“You’re not necessarily teaching them how to hit a forehand or how to hit a backhand. You are teaching them how to have the confidence to move your body in a way you know that develops you for the long term. For a healthy lifestyle. I think it’s easy to forget, especially as a coach or parent or administrator, you know.”

Male Recreational Sport
Administrator

**OUR MISSION:
TO DEVELOP BETTER PEOPLE
AND ATHLETES**

**IT'S ABOUT THE
ATHLETE FIRST**



At the recreational and competitive levels, study participants describe a **purposeful aim to develop better athletes, rather than single-sport superstars.** Park City was described as a community where **this mission is oftentimes thwarted by coaches' and or families' goals** to manufacture elite performers at early ages.

"I think the *Utah Olympic Park* has tried to take a leadership role in terms of long-term athlete development, and I think they are bringing that awareness in. We have shifted our mindset in how we do things in Park City."

Male
Competitive Sport
Administrator

"No matter what level we're at, the philosophy always should be "athlete first, soccer player second," or "athlete first, basketball player second." We are missing the boat when we are putting younger kids into those particular sports and not letting them experience that full gamut of movement skills."

Male Competitive Sport Coach

**OUR MISSION:
TO DEVELOP BETTER PEOPLE
AND ATHLETES**

SPORT'S MADE ME A BETTER PERSON

Athletes in Park City, especially those at the Olympic development level, described the role of sport in their lives as a **contributing member of society**. Specifically, they highlighted the **many lessons they learned in sport that carry over to their lives** as students, employees, friends, role models, and adults. In this light, sport in Park City was viewed by most as **a platform to become a better person, not just a better athlete**.



“Sport builds people skills, you know, like how you take criticism. It teaches you how to work through the highs and the lows.”

Female
Elite Sport
Athlete

“Being an athlete kind of makes me practice what I preach and makes me a better person.”

Female
Competitive
Sport Athlete

“After you’re done with your sport ... the self-discipline carries over. You can discipline yourself with your eating, working out later in life. Also, just learning to how to break through that one last step of pushing yourself and not giving up. It’s such a hard thing to learn, and sports just force you and push you to get there.”

Male Elite Sport Athlete

**OUR MISSION:
TO DEVELOP BETTER PEOPLE
AND ATHLETES**

**WE ALL HAVE
BOTTOM LINES**



A conflict was identified between the idealized vision for youth sport in Park City and the **real-world constraints of running a viable operation** in this space. Specifically, study participants spoke about the dialectic of **wanting to do more for more kids while also attending to the financial limitations** that affect all community programs.

“We’re all stretched for money. How many kids are in the program? How much money do you bring in? How much are we spending on our coaching? As an administrator, I have different pressures on me, you know, and so you’re trying to balance budgets and you’re trying to figure out all this stuff out and keep your program viable too.”

Male Competitive Sport Coach

“We all know it’s a necessity. But, at the end of the day, we all have bottom lines to maintain. And how much physical literacy gets translated into actual practice is debatable. “We want you to try all these different sports,” but that’s a competing goal to elite performance.”

Male Recreational Sport Coach

BARRIERS:

WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

Even though study participants identified a wide range of factors which facilitate youth development through sport, they also cited several barriers that limit the development of well-rounded athletes.

As noted in the context of accessibility, the wide array of sports available to the quickly growing community has led to challenges in ensuring that all participants have access to the facilities and space that they need to nurture their development. And while many individuals and families relocate to Park City because of the sport opportunities, participants highlighted how others have chosen to move away from Park City to larger communities for the heightened sporting opportunities.

For many in Park City, the biggest barrier is the immense financial burden to support developing athletes as they reach higher levels of competition. The high cost of living, in addition to soaring sport-related fees and expenditures, have forced many families to make difficult decisions regarding limits to their children's sport participation.

The community's competitive, high performance culture also influences the nature of its youth sport programming. Due to the high expectations of parents, Park City's coaches and administrators feel compelled to provide greater opportunities for training and specialization, even though it may not be in the interest of the athletes' long-term development. Ultimately, participants expressed a desire to lessen the outcome-oriented focus of Park City's youth sport culture.

WE JUST DON'T HAVE THE SPACE
THE FINANCIAL BURDEN IS HUGE
ALL-OR-NONE MENTALITY
PARENTS HAVE A LOT OF EGOS
THE "VAIL EFFECT"
THE "SALT LAKE CITY EFFECT"



BARRIERS: WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

WE JUST DON'T HAVE THE SPACE

Perhaps the primary barrier described by key sport stakeholders in Park City was the **lack of adequate space** to reasonably deliver sport to the community. Specifically, administrators at the competitive level **felt “squeezed” as they attempted to balance opportunity for all** with the performances of their own teams. Coaches, parents, and athletes also felt the pinch, with many wondering how the community would ever be able to offer youth the time and space to be competitive at a local, regional, or national level.



“Rowing doesn’t just happen in 4 months. They have to be going to dry land through the whole winter to be ready for the next season, and that’s not available. The first year I had winter dry land, I was on a porch of a parent’s house with three ergometers, having kids freeze in between sessions. We’re always feeling like orphans.”

Male Competitive
Sport Administrator

“We have 37 teams and 10 hours of turf time a week. We have major facility issues in this town. Space is probably an equal obstacle to anything else we have in this town.”

Female Competitive
Sport Administrator

“We have such limited space in Park City. It’s difficult for us to be able to compete with other communities that have more facilities available to them. We just can’t practice two days a week and go against a team that can practice five.”

Female Competitive
Sport Administrator

BARRIERS: WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

THE FINANCIAL BURDEN IS HUGE



The Park City youth sport community was described as rather **expensive**.

Specifically, while many families are able to afford sport sampling when their children are young, those **same families described being priced out as their children aged up** into more competitive levels of participation. This creates a **burden on most families in the community**, and in some cases forces families to have their children choose just one or two sports to participate in, among their other academic or after-school activities.

“It’s this celebrated thing to say ‘hey, play as many sports as you can.’ But, when you look at it … there’s still fees. And transportation, getting time off, whatever else it may encompass. It’s not easy.”

Male
Recreational Sport
Administrator

“The financial burden is huge. We see kids who would be awesome moving from rec into comp, and the finances are too much. I think finance is a key element of what is stopping some people from continuing on.”

Male Recreational
Sport Parent

“We see kids that go to the Olympics that are sometimes mediocre because their parents could write the checks. It’s a huge financial commitment for a parent to put their kids through sport here, and sometimes the cost can be enormous and prohibitive.”

Female Elite Sport
Administrator

BARRIERS: WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

ALL-OR-NONE MENTALITY

Study participants described Park City's mission to deliver youth sport as being driven by an **outcome-oriented approach**. This, in turn, leads to an **early tracking of athletes** into sports for which they show promise. A number of coaches and administrators shared a certain level of angst about this, suggesting that the athletes, and therefore the broader community, might be better off if adults were able to **create an environment imbued by less pressure and more support** for exploration.



"The all-or-none mentality gets old. (Kids) don't wanna sign up for three months' worth of swimming 'cause they're not sure. 'Bring 'em *one* day. We'll play a game and we'll have a good time. We'll teach 'em a couple things. If they like it, they'll sign up on their way out.' Having a trial period would be good for a lot of kids before making that huge financial commitment."

Female Recreational
Sport Administrator

"Everybody wants to be the best, but what should we be delivering to our youth? Should we be delivering a balance of athleticism and take the pressure off? You can still have amazing fundamentals and amazing success, um, without having that all-in approach. Um, because a lot of times when you don't have the all-in approach you get the all-in approach."

Male Competitive Sport Coach

BARRIERS: WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

PARENTS HAVE A LOT OF EGOS



Study participants described Park City's sport **parents as a source of pressure** on the youth who participate. In some cases, this was linked to the fact that Park city is a fairly **affluent town** and the notion that many affluent parents are also **type-A individuals who are themselves driven by success**. The influence of parents was described as **influencing not just their children, but also coaches and administrators** who design and deliver youth sport in the community.

“Park City has kind of its own culture around sport and competition. There are conflicting goals at different levels for sure, so it is a challenge. When the more affluent parents, the more type-A parents, are paying the bills, or funding a certain trip, or funding a certain initiative, there is conflict there.”

Male Recreational
Sport Coach

“There’s people that are making new teams ‘cause the parents weren’t happy. But the kids don’t really care, they’re just having fun and making friends.”

Male Recreational
Sport Athlete

“Park City’s an affluent community, so (parents) want their kids to excel early ... As the kids progress higher, there’s the expectation that they need to be the best *now*. Parents need their kid to be the best. It’s all about the win.”

Male Recreational
Sport Parent

BARRIERS: WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

THE “VAIL EFFECT”

The Park City youth sport community -- specifically the winter sports that train on the mountain -- was described as having been greatly impacted by the **transition to Vail Resorts' ownership**. Most notably, participants highlighted the **changing aim of the mountain**, from being one that was athlete-centric to one that **focuses almost exclusively on tourist dollars and brand recognition**.



“The ski community is starting to feel the pinch from Vail (Resorts). You know, the alpine program isn’t what it was because they don’t have access. When the Cummings owned it, it was much more athlete-friendly. Vail’s model is a different business model. It’s not about the kids in the community, it is about shareholders. So that is a big issue right now.”

Male Elite Sport Coach

“We are sending my son to Mammoth this year because they get things up quicker for the kids. Here, the mountain is aligned with Vail (Resort)’s shareholders.”

Male Elite Sport Parent

BARRIERS: WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

THE “SALT LAKE CITY EFFECT”



Key stakeholders in the Park City youth sport community also described the **lure of Salt Lake City as impacting the local youth sport culture.**

Largely, this was noted by sport administrators, who described the exodus by some Park City families who see **greater opportunity or freedoms in Salt Lake City.** The effect of this has been **less community**

cohesiveness, something that has impacted Park City primarily at the recreational and competitive levels.

“We’ve lost the community concept. There are no town teams anymore, or youth league that are town-centered.”

Male
Competitive Sport
Administrator

“I have I’ve seen kids who will … travel down to Salt Lake for a different team cause they’re supposed to have a better, more expert coach.”

Female
Recreational Sport
Administrator

“The top-level kids are lured by clubs in Salt Lake, and they don’t have that synergy of having grown up in the same system by the time they get to high school.

And we see the difference in our results.”

Female Competitive
Sport Administrator

LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT OUR ATHLETES

In pursuit of optimizing the development of local youth athletes, study participants identified how key social agents can best support developing athletes.

While some of challenges associated with parents' involvement in youth sport have already been identified, strategies to enhance parent involvement were also discussed. Parents are encouraged to manage their expectations regarding their children's performance in sport, in spite of their financial investment. Instead, they should ensure that their own goals are developmentally appropriate and in alignment with that of their children. Coaches were generally viewed as supportive and adequately educated. Across most sports, study participants believed that coaches possessed the necessary technical and tactical knowledge, and encouraged the development of well-rounded athletes. Study participants also noted that peers appear to play a crucial role in youth's motives for enrolling in a sport, and maintaining their involvement over time.

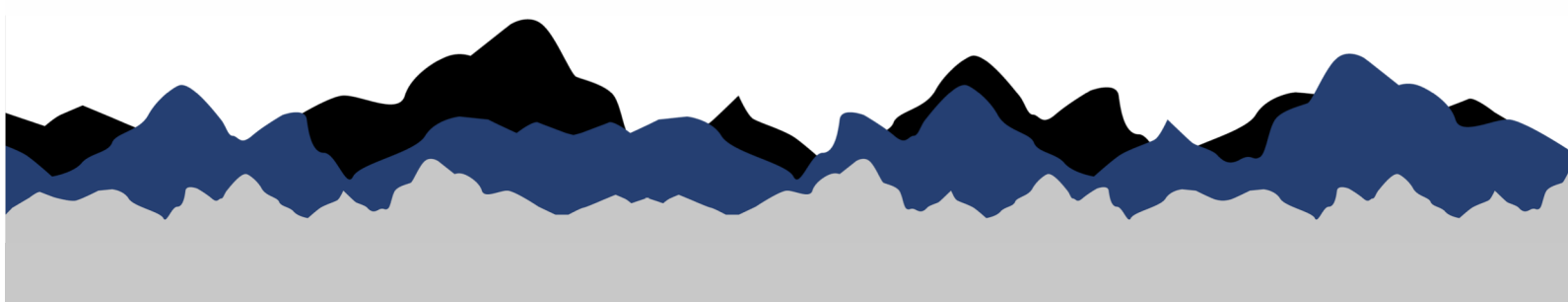
One unique aspect of the Park City community is the number of local Olympians. It was agreed that the community should be more intentional in how it optimizes Olympians as role models, potential coaches and mentors for future generations of athletes.

MANAGING PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS

COACHES NEED TO BE POSITIVE

WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE TEAMMATES

DRAW ON THE EXPERIENCES OF ELITE ATHLETES



LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT OUR ATHLETES

MANAGING PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS

Study participants described **parents as a key resource** in the Park City community. In line with a strengths-based approach, a number of strategies were offered that might foster stronger parent-child relationships in sport. The take-home message for administrators and coaches was that **parent expectations should be managed** and their **goals brought into alignment with the athletes** who are participating, and the teams and organizations that facilitate participation.



“My mom’s always at the rink when I’m training … I feel like it’s kind of hard sometimes. But, she’s really supportive of me, and she pays for all of it. She knows what I’m capable of, and she holds me accountable.”

Female
Competitive
Sport Athlete

“Parents set these high expectations. They want their kid to learn the game, but … they just gotta be patient and let the kid work through stuff.”

Female
Recreational
Sport
Administrator

“It’s a struggle to balance the focus on year-round play with the logistics of the community’s facilities. For example; in the summer baseball has plenty of space and time but when there is snow on the ground parents are frustrated that baseball doesn’t have anywhere to play. It’s the same for soccer, lacrosse, and other sports.”

Male Recreational
Sport Administrator

LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT OUR ATHLETES

COACHES NEED TO BE POSITIVE



Study participants were collectively **pleased with the level of coaching** youth receive in Park City. However, despite coaches' technical knowledge, many athletes suggested that the **methods adopted by coaches were not always conducive to growth** and development.

“Coaches need to be positive, helping you like build you up and helping you like gain more confidence, or even tell you like what you need to work on, and help you with that. Positive things could come out of advice or just even just words of positivity.”

Male Competitive
Sport Athlete

“Our coach really doesn't care what our record is, if we win or lose, he just wants us to get the lessons out of the sport and we can take it on further in life and prepare for what might come at us later in life.”

Male Recreational
Sport Athlete

LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT OUR ATHLETES

WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE TEAMMATES

One of the most **meaningful relationships** described by study participants was that of **athletes and their peers**. In fact, athletes suggested that their **teammates often serve a buffering role** when they are having a bad day or struggling in competition. Administrators and coaches also sought to **facilitate relationship building** among youth in sport, acknowledging that it is a primary mechanism of athletes wanting to return to play in subsequent seasons.



"I have one kid that just wants to show up because it's finally somewhere where she feels like she has friends. I want her on the team as much as I want somebody that that wants to go to the Olympics. I want the kids to find a home and have a sport a life."

Male
Competitive Sport
Administrator

"When sport goes bad, you'll always have teammates that encourage you."

Male
Recreational
Sport
Athlete

"I've been friends with my teammates ever since we were little ... I know we have our disagreements sometimes, but I'm always happy that they're there and that we can work together and work things out and talk to each other about our sport."

Female
Competitive
Sport Athlete

**LEVERAGING
RELATIONSHIPS
TO SUPPORT OUR ATHLETES**

**DRAW ON THE
EXPERIENCES
OF ELITE ATHLETES**



Study participants were nearly unanimous in the belief that Park City could **be more purposeful in the way the community utilizes its elite athletes to serve as ambassadors for youth sport.** While acknowledging the many requests these athletes receive for their time and expertise, participants also recognized the role they had the **potential to play in bringing along the next generation of Park City athletes.**

“We should leverage the experiences of Olympians, ‘cause most Olympians have come out of Park City. They can become coaches and help kids become better and get better at whatever sport they do.”

Male
Competitive
Sport Athlete

“It’s about the accessibility to the athletes. I think we could utilize them more than we even are as resources, mentors, and role models to our athletes. we need to use them as motivation, ‘how hard did they have to work? What did they do? How did they get to their dreams?’”

Female Competitive
Sport Administrator

THE COMPLICATED LEGACY OF 2002

The key event that put Park City on the map as a world-class sport community was the 2002 Olympic Games. Study participants noted that the legacy of 2002 is sewn into the fabric of the community through the growth in infrastructure and the collective identity that resulted from hosting the Games.

In contrast to most other Olympic cities, it was acknowledged that the Utah Olympic Park has effectively maintained and upgraded the facilities in the years since 2002. One reason for this has been trying to strike the appropriate balance between tourism and sport. Study participants understood that tourist dollars were necessary to ensure the sustainability of the community's winter sport facilities, but at the same time longed for greater access for local and visiting athletes.

A noted side effect of the Olympic legacy has been the apparent hierarchy among local sports, where winter activities are clearly valued above others.

**THE SPIRIT OF WHO PARK CITY IS
OUR INFRASTRUCTURE IS SPOT-ON
BALANCING TOURISM & SPORT
WINTER SPORTS ARE HIGHER ON THE TOTEM POLE**



THE COMPLICATED LEGACY OF 2002

THE SPIRIT OF WHO PARK CITY IS

Study participants described **Park City's ethos** as one that is largely driven by its role as a **host community for the 2002 Olympic Games**. This, in addition to the community's **sport infrastructure**, was communicated as the primary **legacy** left by the 2002 Games. In line with this belief, study participants recounted a number of ways Park City has capitalized on its role as an Olympic host, and offered others that it could focus on in the future.



“It’s the spirit of who Park City is at this point. It’s kind of woven in the fabric of this town because it did happen here, and so many of us came here to try and capture that again.”

Female
Elite Sport
Athlete

“It’s completely built into the community. You look up to those guys, you know, you want to be them. There’s so many different people and things that like all contributed to the Olympics, and that’s *why* people are in Park City.”

Male Elite Sport Athlete

THE COMPLICATED LEGACY OF 2002

OUR INFRASTRUCTURE IS SPOT-ON



The most tangible aspect of Park City's Olympic legacy is **the infrastructure that was created in the lead-up to 2002**. One of the things that separates Park City from other Olympic host cities is the way this **infrastructure has been maintained and enhanced** in the almost two decades since hosting the Games. A key player in this effort has been the Olympic Legacy Foundation through its support of the Utah Olympic Park.

“The Olympics probably put us on the map. In terms of winter sports, I feel that our infrastructure is spot on, world-class.”

Male Elite Sport Parent

“Certainly, our legacy is in our facilities. Um, in the facilities not just being built but continuing to be utilized. I think that is a huge piece of a legacy, you know. I think, um, the foundation is the epitome of what should happen in Olympic towns. I think a lot of kids from winter sports come here because of the Olympics were here and now we are producing kids that are going to that level.”

Male Elite Sport Administrator

THE COMPLICATED LEGACY OF 2002

BALANCING TOURISM & SPORT

Study participants described Park City's legacy as an Olympic host community as **having two masters: tourism and sport**. Indeed, it is sport (more specifically the 2002 Olympics) that brings tourists to Park City; however, it is also the **tourist dollars** that support the **maintenance and upgrades** of Park City's sport infrastructure.

Key stakeholders in town recognize this dialectic, but also **struggle with how best to support the needs of both tourists and the athletes** who are training with an eye toward future Olympic cycles.



“UOP’s main goal is to expand on the Olympics and make it better for future athletes. The ability to do the 20 sports that Olympians do, and do them right here, is amazing.”

Male Recreational
Sport Athlete

“The Utah Olympic Park and its Legacy are dedicated to providing training opportunities not only for Olympic-bound athletes but local youngsters. Keeping these activities affordable and maintaining the facilities is a true balancing act. Tourism and the dollars generated at the UOP are an integral part of keeping these facilities open and updated. Many times staff have to look at how to maximize the use of the facilities for visitors and athletes but always keep the athlete experience first and foremost. The staff work hand in hand with coaches to ensure all levels of athletes have the training opportunities needed.”

Male Elite Sport Administrator

THE COMPLICATED LEGACY OF 2002

WINTER SPORTS ARE HIGHER ON THE TOTEM POLE



Study participants were somewhat self-effacing in the **hierarchy of sports** that exists in the Park City community. In many respects it is the genetic code of Park City to focus on, and value, **winter sports above all else**. At the same time, however, coaches and administrators see the **potential for making Park City a year-round destination** for recreational, competitive, and Olympic development athletes in a wide range of sports.

“Skiing and all the winter sports are higher on the totem pole than basketball or even football, other big sports around the country.”

Male Competitive
Sport Coach

“We really haven’t gone after some of the summer athletes to get them up here. We need to try to use the aura of the Olympics to try to continue with that growth of being a well-rounded sports community. You’ve gotta try to build the *whole* place. We have to use the ski industry as, you know, the base.”

Male Elite Sport Coach

A PEEK TOWARD 2030

In exploring Park City's 2002 Olympic legacy, study participants also considered how hosting the 2030 Olympics might impact youth sport in the community moving forward. It was believed that Salt Lake City being awarded the 2030 Games would have little-to-no influence on current athletes, given their short-term focus on the next one or two training cycles. However, it was agreed that hosting these Olympics would nurture the Olympic dream among the next generation of youth athletes.

In addition, participants agreed that the opportunity to host the 2030 Olympics would serve as a great opportunity to enhance and update the city's sport infrastructure, perhaps drawing test events such as Work Cup skiing and snowboarding competitions.

A final theme which is central to optimizing the benefits of the 2030 Olympics and youth sport in general is the need to get all of the community stakeholders at the same table to discuss the community's collective mission. Given the relatively small size of the community, study participants believe that it is realistic and necessary to plan regular meetings through which administrators can unite in pursuit of the well-rounded development of all youth athletes in the Park City community.

**EVERYBODY HAS THE OLYMPIC DREAM
IT'S A CHANCE TO REBUILD AND REVAMP
WE MUST GET ALL THE GROUPS AT THE TABLE**



A PEEK TOWARD 2030

EVERYBODY HAS THE OLYMPIC DREAM

When asked to think toward a potential hosting role if the 2030 Games are awarded to Salt Lake City, study participants suggested that it would have a large impact on youth sport in the community. Interestingly, administrators and coaches suggested that Olympic development **athletes are locked into four-year cycles and aren't yet thinking about 2030.** They acknowledged, however, **the immeasurable impact hosting again would have on the younger athletes** who would likely be inspired by an event of that magnitude.



"It would inspire some, but others maybe not. The kids who have these dreams don't need the Games to be local. I think it would inspire the younger kids, not necessarily the ones coming up right now. But also, kids who didn't have that dream before might say 'oh, if I train one more day, if I work a little bit harder, if I give it more effort, maybe I can be one of those kids too.'"

Female Competitive
Sport Administrator

"It inspires kids. The Olympics is huge, absolutely huge."

Male
Competitive
Sport Coach

"If us hosting were to be announced, you'd probably see a huge bump toward the winter sports. You know, everybody has the Olympic dream pretty much at some point."

Male Elite Sport
Administrator

A PEEK TOWARD 2030

WE MUST GET ALL THE GROUPS AT THE TABLE

One of the most important issues discussed by study participants was the feasibility of **bringing key stakeholders together on an annual basis**. It was suggested **that more communication is needed** as administrators and coaches in the Park City youth sport community **strive to project a common voice**. Ultimately, this has the potential to **unite stakeholders** across recreational, competitive, and elite sport programs.



“I think the important thing to do is try and maintain communication and keep the meetings happening. Keep people coming together. We are a small enough community that we should be able to continue on an annual basis of getting all of the people together. We really need to get everyone in the same room and have a conversation. I also acknowledge that that would be extremely difficult.”

Male Competitive Sport Coach

“We want to create a better sport community for our kids and collaborate, but the reality of coming together is often difficult.”

Female
Competitive
Sport Parent

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the stated aims of this project was to inform decision-making at the community, organizational, team, and family levels in Park City, Utah. In light of this aim, we offer the following six recommendations to Park City's youth sport leaders. We view them not as comprehensive or definitive, but as a starting point for community discourse.

1. Unite all stakeholders in regular meetings/partnership to encourage cooperation and open communication

- *Ensure sport administrators, coaches, parents, and athletes all have a seat at the table*
- *Focus on the shared interests of these community members, rather than the differences that may drive the "us versus them" mentality*

2. Write a mission statement for the Park City youth sport community

- *This could be a precursor to, or an outcome of the inaugural meeting of community stakeholders*
- *The mission statement may reflect many of the points raised throughout this report, and should also represent the interests of administrators, coaches, parents, and athletes across recreational, competitive, and elite levels*
- *Stakeholders should agree to use the mission to guide the design and implementation of sport in the Park City community; however, freedom should also be given to individuals and programs to communicate specific expectations and guidelines*

3. Build a community strategy for leveraging existing and potential relationships

- *Maintain an open dialogue and share resources with sister communities, facilities, organizations, etc.*
- *Establish reciprocal relationships with National Governing Organizations (NGOs) beyond the United States Olympic Committee*
- *Utilize former elite athletes living in the community in an effort to increase visibility in community, mentor developing athletes, model ways in which sport has made them better people*
- *Adopt positive and forward-thinking relationships with corporate and sport leaders at Vail Resorts and in Salt Lake City*

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Identify opportunities to develop sport partnerships, whereby cross training would be strategically used to enhance the athletic experience and build more well-rounded athletes

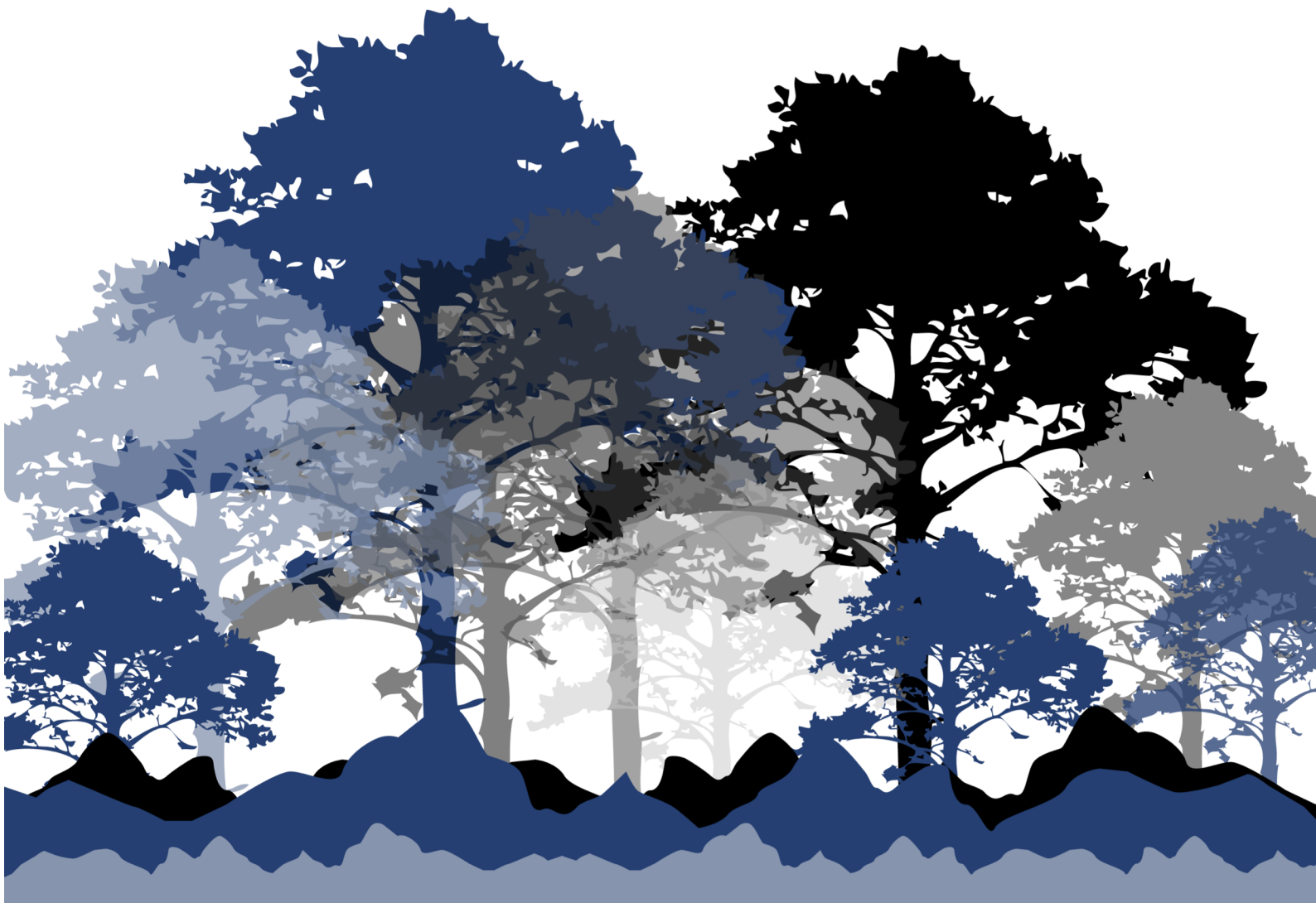
- Continue to develop ways to partner “tourism” and “sport” strategically, not just at the Utah Olympic Park, but throughout the community
- Design, implement, and assess parent education programs at the early stages of youth sport
- Emphasize awareness among, and outreach to, underserved populations
- Utilize Spanish speaking liaisons in various community sport contexts
- Develop a marketing campaign highlighting Latino winter sport athletes

5. Ensure that sport is developmentally appropriate, particularly for pre-adolescents

- Emphasize sampling and discourage early specialization for the bottom 98%
- Among all athletes (even elite specializers), emphasize physical literacy and the rationale behind training the “whole athlete”
- Continue to design spaces, programs, and trainings that align with this aim

6. Find a way to address space and scheduling issues

- Develop an e-platform for youth sport in Park City that would afford cooperative scheduling, crossover training, ride-sharing, community events, parent and coach trainings
- Seek individual, family, and corporate donors to fund the construction of new recreational and competitive sport spaces, as well as training facilities for the fullest range of athlete types



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PARK CITY --- OUR CITY

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