



6

YOUTH SPORTS AND RECREATION

“Participation in competitive youth sports ‘spill over’ to occupationally advantageous traits that persist across a person’s life.”

~Kevin Kniffin, PhD

“ What is it like to be a youth in Tuscaloosa?”

This is the primary question that drove the work of the Youth Sports and Recreation (YSR) subcommittee. In answering this question, the YSR began to look at the current sports offerings of the Tuscaloosa area. Quickly, the subcommittee realized that the scope of the subcommittee had to be widened to capture the thousands of Tuscaloosa children and youth that have no interest in sports or other physical activity. To that end, the YSR focused its efforts on the whole youth: mental, physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee was composed of local and regional leaders in the non-profit, education, healthcare, and sports industries. The common thread among the members was their years of experience in youth-focused activities and their commitment to the success of each and every child. Armed with that passion, the YSR set out to ensure that no child's zip code or socioeconomic status, would determine their ability to participate in engaging and enriching recreational programming.

This subcommittee targeted its recommendations on reducing traditional barriers to access, strengthening the community's youth infrastructure, increasing participation from children and youth, and identifying and empowering youth-centered individuals and organizations.

It is the hope of the Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee that these weeks of active dialogue and the resulting recommendations are just the beginning of a new, exciting chapter for Tuscaloosa's youth.

Establish a City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement & Opportunity

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Intermediate |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation, Education |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama, Industrial Development Authority, YMCA of Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa City Schools, United Way of West Alabama |

It is becoming a common practice for a municipality to have a department or division that solely focuses on youth. Cities like Los Angeles, CA; Boston, MA; Louisville, KY; Seattle, Washington; Avondale, AZ; Durham, NC; Euless, TX have already incorporated a youth services division or department into their operations with relative success. Of Alabama's top five municipalities (Birmingham, Mobile, Huntsville, Montgomery, and Tuscaloosa) only the City of Birmingham has created an organizational unit dedicated to youth. With roughly 18% of its population under the age of 18 and as the home of three higher education institutions--The University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College--Tuscaloosa must allocate the resources to meet the needs of this growing population.

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee (YSR) recommends the creation of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity within the City of Tuscaloosa.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The YSR recommends that the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity (DYAO) contain certain operational and programmatic elements.

Organizational/Operational Components

Administration Unit: This unit will govern the operation of the city-sponsored youth programming as well as the overall management of department and external stakeholder engagement. includes the operation of the program and the internal and external management of the department.

Advocacy: DYAO will act as a youth advocate within legislative conversations and assertively reorient the narrative of youth engagement towards youth-centeredness versus problem-oriented. Additionally, DYAO will push for youth representation and centeredness in conversations about policy development, orient systems to be more responsive to youth and cultivate youth voices to advocate for themselves.

Community Engagement and Education: DYAO will provide training and technical assistance opportunities to individuals and organizations, increase community awareness of the work of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity, solicit community input on direction, goals, objectives, and programming, facilitate a youth-oriented city and community infrastructure/culture, and help build community and organizational capacity to facilitate positive environments and interactions for youth. This area will also include the creation of the communication plans, campaigns, and promoting the work of DYAO and its partner organizations.

Research and Community Assessment: DYAO will research financial and programmatic opportunities, as well as compile data from programs, organizations, and community members, and support youth-centered research endeavors. Also, DYAO will continually assess the greater Tuscaloosa community to determine departmental direction, goals, objectives, and programming.

Program and Project Design and Development: DYAO will ideate, design, and facilitate the process, policy, and practice development for city-sponsored programs as well as co-create and collaboratively implement partnership programs and projects.

Strategic Planning and Partnership Development: Identify and work with partner organizations to define local and individual strategies and outcomes for youth in Tuscaloosa, provide supervision and support for the policy, program, and project implementation and adoption, and provide ways for like-minded organizations to collaborate undeterred.

Six Programmatic Points

The YSR recommends establishing a six-point program focus for the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity. The six programmatic points will be Civic Responsibility and Engagement, Education, Economic and Workforce Development, Holistic Wellbeing, Juvenile Justice, and Youth Sports and Recreation.

Civic Responsibility and Engagement

Civic responsibility is often defined as the active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good. According to Youth.gov, "Civic engagement involves "working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. Civic engagement includes both paid and unpaid forms of political activism, environmentalism, and community and national service. Volunteering, national service, and service-learning are all forms of civic engagement."

Studies have shown a positive correlation between youth community engagement and increases in future income and employment, higher reported levels of self-confidence, gains in empathy, decreases in reports of depression.

There are four constructs of civic engagement that should be utilized to develop Tuscaloosa's civic engagement programs.

FOUR CONSTRUCTS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic Engagement

Working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community.

Civic Action
Civic Commitment or Duty
Civic Skills
Social Cohesion

- **Civic Action**, or participation in activities such as volunteering or service-learning to help better the community (Bobek, Zaff, Li, & Lerner, 2009)
- **Civic Commitment or Duty**, or the willingness to make positive contributions to society
- **Civic Skills**, or the ability to be involved in civil society, politics, and democracy
- **Social Cohesion**, or a sense of reciprocity, trust, and bonding to others

"Four constructs of civic engagement", Youth.gov

Examples of current and potential civic programs include the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama's Forerunners, creation of a City of Tuscaloosa Youth Council, development of in-school and/or after-school civic education and engagement programs for elementary, middle, and high school students, and establish mentorships- "Adopt an Official/ Councilor" programs for children and youth to engage with local and regional leadership.

Education

The educational point of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity will focus on academic enrichment for school-aged children and youth. It will incorporate educational partnerships between the City of Tuscaloosa and its educational partners. Note that a partner organization could work with DYAO on a variety of foci. For example, Tuscaloosa City Schools can be an educational, economic, youth sports, and holistic well-being partner.

Examples of current educational programs include Mayor's Cup for Pre-K, Career and College Ready Dual-Enrollment Scholarships, Pre-K Initiative, Summer Learning Academy, and the Saban Center. Potential partnerships can include summer scholarships for youth, similar to the program implemented by Davenport, Iowa, or a Kids Pass, where children and youth purchase a summer pass to attend various educational programs throughout a season for one low price.

Economic and Workforce Development

Youth economic and workforce development has been a national focus for several years. Locally, the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa City Schools, and various employers have worked together to ensure that the city's youth are prepared to enter into the workforce and compete locally, regionally, and nationally. The City currently offers the Hope Summer Jobs Program as its singular youth employment initiative.

The YSR believes that the City can expand its efforts in youth employment to also include elementary, middle school, and college-aged students. For example, the City can sponsor a Municipal Scholars Program for college-aged students to intern and co-op with the City of Tuscaloosa. For our younger and younger students, the City can spear a standardized developmentally appropriate education that focuses on the world of work. In addition, YSR recommends fostering entrepreneurship through programs like Lemonade Day/ Community Coffee Day as well as sponsoring a Teen/ Youth Incubator at the EDGE.

Holistic Wellbeing

YSR recommends incorporating a point concentrated on improving mental, emotional, physical, and social health outcomes in Tuscaloosa youth. It is estimated that one in six children aged 6 and up have at least one treatable mental health disorder. As well, it is recognized that negative well-being influences behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, disruptive behavior in classrooms, and poor academic achievement.

To combat this, YSR recommends having on-staff social workers that partner with community partners to address the needs of child and youth participants. Also, the Holistic Wellbeing point will actively support the needs of LGBTQIA and non-English speaking youth.

Juvenile Justice

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee understands that delinquency and criminal acts are an unfortunate reality for some of our youth. According to Youth.gov, juvenile justice processes operate under the principle that youthful offenders (juveniles) are inherently different from adults. To that end, justice systems and organizations that interact with youth should be focused on rehabilitation, self-determination, reintegration, and social and educational supports.

The YSR recommends creating a juvenile re-entry program. In addition, YSR supports the creation and implementation of conflict resolution courses for all school-aged children and their parents and/or guardians. Also, YSR is a proponent of Violence Trauma Therapy, where children and youth exposed to violent crimes (such as eyewitnesses, or as immediate family members of victims or perpetrators of violent crimes) can receive free or low-cost therapy sessions.

Youth Sports and Recreation

The YSR recommends that the sixth point of programming for the DAYO focuses on the coordination and support of youth sports and recreation within Tuscaloosa city. This point encompasses team sports, as well as performing arts and other recreational activities. Under this component, DYAO will manage the coordination of the youth sports calendar, youth partnerships, Youth Bus route, and provide Gateway support.

Organizational Chart

The YSR recommends organizing the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity similarly to the organizational chart provided below.



Create Partnership Pathways with higher education institutions and civic organizations to provide mentorship for youth activities

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Short-Term |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | Tuscaloosa City Schools, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College, various non-profit and civic organizations such as National Panhellenic Council, Jack and Jill, 100 Black Men, etc. |

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends creating documented, objective, and standardized processes for the City of Tuscaloosa investment into youth-centered institutions and organizations. Developing partnership pathways provide structure and uniformity to the collaboration process, which allows organizations to make a deep dive into key areas but also creates clear expectations and collaborative measures of success. It is the belief of the YSR that such processes will increase collaboration between the City of Tuscaloosa, community organizations, and the Tuscaloosa community at large. An anticipated added benefit of creating partnership pathways is an increase in partnerships from new organizations, which could lead to greater innovation.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Define the six points of partnership

The YSR recommends that the points of partnership mirror the Six Programmatic Points of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity. These are the areas of focus for any youth-centered collaboration between the City of Tuscaloosa and community organizations or institutions.

These points are:

1. Civic Responsibility & Engagement
2. Education
3. Economic & Workforce Development
4. Holistic Wellbeing
5. Juvenile Justice
6. Youth Sports & Recreation

2. Define the type of partnership pathways

The YSR recommends creating partnership pathways to provide a framework for the City of Tuscaloosa's interaction with and organization and the role the city will play in the implementation of the program or project.

The types of pathways are as follows:

Sponsor- The City of Tuscaloosa will be a financial contributor to the implementation of specific programs and/or activities.

Developer- The City of Tuscaloosa will co-design a program/ project.

Contributor- The City of Tuscaloosa will provide in-kind contributions to the program or a project such as a facility space, research, data, or volunteer hours.

Lead Agency- The City of Tuscaloosa will finance, manage, and oversee the implementation of a non-profit collaborative project.

Support- City of Tuscaloosa will write a letter of support for viable programs, projects, and grant applications.

3. Create a process for proposal approvals and collaboration that is codified and demystified

The YSR recommends establishing a defined proposal process that includes an evaluation rubric and clearly defines its financial and programmatic priorities.

4. Consolidate Youth-oriented partnerships into one department/contact

The YSR recommends that all youth-centered partnerships be housed within the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity. This will prevent confusion about where organizations should go for programmatic or financial assistance. Currently, youth programs and initiatives are subsidiary considerations and components of other departments with separate missions, goals, and objectives. This will also reduce the administrative burden on City Staff when working on projects that are outside the scope of their traditional job functions and duties.

5. Establish diverse funding mechanisms and transparent processes for funding

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends the identification of dedicated City of Tuscaloosa funding for youth-centered organizations. In addition, the funding application should be flexible to reduce the administrative burden for organizations. For example, expanding funding cycles from 1 year to 3 years, having a rolling application/funding cycle, or the creation of a comprehensive application for General Funds, Grant Funds, and DYAO funding.

Create Communications Plan for Tuscaloosa Youth Activities

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Short-Term |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation, Education |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | KIDS Life Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports, Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Authority Doctor's offices, Tuscaloosa County Health Department, Department of Human Resources, Tuscaloosa Public Library, Weaver Bolden Library, Maude Whately Health Services, Gateway Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa City Schools, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College, Tuscaloosa Transit Authority, Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, volunteer organizations, and youth-centered non-profits, and religious organizations. |

A recurring theme during the Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee meeting was the lack of knowledge by the target demographic about the variety of current programs and events offered by various organizations and clubs through the city of Tuscaloosa. Members discovered that oftentimes events are planned based on the initial response to a "feeler" or through constituents asking for certain events or programs. However, during the event/program the turn-out is consistently less than the organization anticipated. Additionally, organizations regularly highlighted the need for dedicated marketing funds as budget cuts have required organizations to reduce their extraneous expenses to preserve program operations.

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends that a communications plan for Tuscaloosa's youth activities is developed and that it is maintained as an independently funded, neutral, and informational dashboard for all youth-centered activity.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Youth Activities Campaign

The YSR recommends the development of a youth activities campaign to initiate the comprehensive youth services communications plan/ community engagement.

One of the greatest deterrents to participation is the lack of awareness of current youth activity offerings. In addition, citizens are deterred from participation because they do not know the benefits of participating and/or having a membership to an organization besides what the membership does for their individual families. For instance, many organizations offer scholarships, which are funded by memberships. Urging Tuscaloosa to participate in local organizations via membership, donation, and youth participation is a way to improve public health, build community/relationships, and help a friend/neighbor.

This campaign will require comprehensive media engagement via radio, television, billboards, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snap Chat, YouTube), advertisements in magazines, and interactive events.

Additionally, seeking out mutually beneficial partnerships for collaboration, information posting, and promotion will be crucial to the effectiveness of the campaign.

2. The Tuscaloosa Youth Website

YSR recommends the creation of a dedicated website for all youth-centered activities within Tuscaloosa. The subcommittee recommends, at minimum, the following elements.

1. Full Website

- a. Lead Agency:** City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity
- b. Contributing Agencies:** All area youth-centered organizations, including for-profit businesses that are sponsoring youth-oriented enrichment activities, not entertainment.
- c. Implementation timeline:** The website turnaround should be less than 180 days.

2. The website will include its own URL, web name, and will have the following features

- a. Mobile-Friendly**
- b. Accessible to all users**
- c. Well-formatted content**
- d. Browser consistency**
- e. Effective navigation**
- f. Visuals and descriptions**

3. An ArcGIS map that allows citizens to categorically view available youth activities.

- a.** Suggested filters and sorts by age, gender, organization, type of activity, cost, and location.
- b.** Map symbols will link directly to the organization's website and will show the physical address of the organization

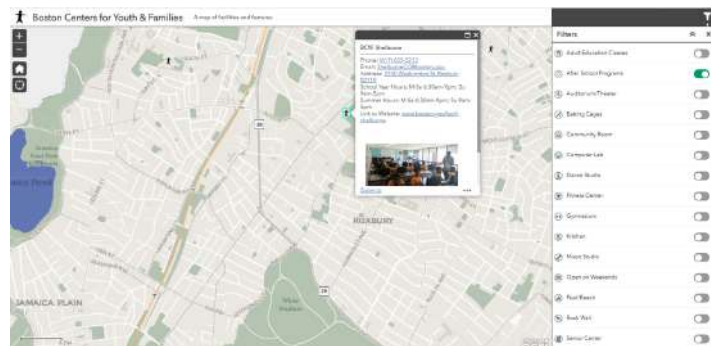
4. The website will include a monthly calendar of events, a directory of contributing agencies, links to contributing agency websites, links to registration pages for activities and/or organizations.

5. The website will also link to the Youth Bus Route page

6. Website will be updated weekly, information from contributing agencies to send that information over to the appropriate staff person at the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity
7. In addition to youth service activities, the website will also provide information about the upcoming events, city-sponsored programs that are youth-oriented.

3. Marketing Stipends for Youth Organizations

Additionally, the YSR subcommittee recommends direct payments to individual organizations for marketing. This marketing budget would be used solely for marketing organizations and will allow them to tailor their messaging to reach underserved community youth. Underserved youth are young persons that are underrepresented in their current registrants or traditionally have been underrepresented. Marketing should only be approved if the organization is marketing directly to underserved and/or underrepresented populations, or minority, LGBTQIA, non-English speaking youth. Subsequent funding will be conditional based on the organization demonstrating a quantifiable increase in participation in the target demographic over the previous year.



PARENT PORTAL
All the information you need in one place!
Welcome to the PARENT PORTAL! Here you will find policies, waivers, and other necessary forms for the department. Please reach out to us if you need help or have an idea for programs!

Create City of Tuscaloosa Youth Council

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Short-Term |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation, Education, Community Connection & Outreach |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa City Schools |

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends the creation of the Tuscaloosa Youth Council to empower our city's youth to make substantial changes in the current and future trajectory of Tuscaloosa. Throughout the YSR meetings, youth participation and engagement have been paramount in discussions. The subcommittee agrees that it is important to listen to our youth and have them voice their wants, needs, and concerns. The YSR would like to expand on the role of youth from informing decisions to actively crafting policy and developing programs to push Tuscaloosa's youngest citizens forward.

The YSR recommends that the Tuscaloosa Youth Council is a youth-led decision-making body that centers youth, informs city government, and helps re-orient its programming, activities, and funding priorities towards the real needs of youth.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Diversity of Youth Members

The YSR recommends the intentional inclusion of a generous cross-section of youth. It is imperative that the Tuscaloosa Youth Council engages the best and brightest students/youth but also includes youth of various levels of academic achievement, youth from historically marginalized communities, such as non-English speakers, varying physical abilities, identities, familial status. Also, it is paramount that the youth members include students from public, private and home-school school and those participating in the GED.

One of the greatest deterrents to participation is the lack of awareness of current youth activity offerings. In addition, citizens are deterred from participation because they do not know the benefits of participating and/or having a membership to an organization besides what the membership does for their individual families. For instance, many organizations offer scholarships, which are funded by memberships. Urging Tuscaloosa to participate in local organizations via membership, donation, and youth participation is a way to improve public health, build community/relationships, and help a friend/neighbor.

2. Levels of Implementation

The YSR recommends creating varying levels of implementation for civic engagement among all Tuscaloosa city school-aged children and youth. Levels will be based on elementary, middle, and high school categories and feature developmentally appropriate activities and opportunities. This will also include a KIDS in Council program, Mock Council, and Field Trips to City Hall.

- a. **Little Leaders-** Elementary level, school-based quarterly concentrations on citizenship and civic responsibility. This level should consider school-wide service projects to foster collaboration among the students
- b. **Junior Council-** Middle School level, a school-based implementation that focuses on citizenship through service. Each school will develop a service and/or community-based project to solve a pressing issue.
- c. **Tuscaloosa Youth Council-** High school level, the extracurricular implementation that centers on citizenship, policy development, civic engagement, and collaboration. Each council will create a policy agenda for implementation and/or create a city-wide youth-oriented service project.

3. Member Eligibility, Selection, and Benefit

The YSR recommends establishing criteria for member eligibility and standards for selection. At a minimum, membership will be open to all area students residing within Tuscaloosa city limits and enrolled in a high school curriculum. This will include public, private, homeschooled and those enrolled in a general equivalency course. Additional criteria could include a GPA requirement, requiring a reference letter from a teacher, counselor, or school administrator.

The selection of members should be as objective as possible, including the possibility of a blind application process with no identifying information for potential members.

The YSR also recommends providing an educational stipend or scholarship for active participation.

4. Council Structure and Organization

The YSR recommends the Tuscaloosa Youth Council mimic the organization and structure of the City of Tuscaloosa City Council. This will include relevant council committees, having youth councilors serve by the district. Additionally, the Tuscaloosa Youth Council should have at least one advisor, possibly from the Youth Commission.

5. City Council/ Youth Council Collaboration

The YSR recommends active collaboration with associated governing bodies to include the Tuscaloosa City Council and the Tuscaloosa Board of Education. YSR suggests the creation of an annual or quarterly collaborative town hall, which would feature members from each organization.

Also, the YSR recommends a district project collaboration between each Youth Councilor and their City Councilor. This would be an excellent way to promote solidarity between the councilors and provide hands-on mentorship for the youth councilor.



Establish Youth Engagement Bus Route

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Intermediate |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | Tuscaloosa Transit Authority and youth service non-profits |

Transportation is a critical obstacle to increasing youth participation in available sports and recreation activities. Each member of the Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee cited transportation as a crucial element in determining the types and frequency of activities offered.

In Tuscaloosa, access to public transportation is limited to Monday through Friday from 5 am-6 pm. For youth in lower-income households, there may not be access to a reliable vehicle or there may be one vehicle for a number of family members or shared among separate households. In addition, Tuscaloosa has inconsistent sidewalks within several lower-income communities, which makes walking difficult, if not dangerous for those youth participants. Having access to a safe- city-wide youth-only bus route would be a game-changer for youth, their families and the organizations that serve them.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Bus Route

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends a closed bus route that runs from elementary, middle, high schools to major youth activities then home. The suggested age for participation is 8-15 years old.

2. Safety

The YSR recommends a monitored bus with physical monitors. Youth bus monitors will be verified via background checks and will undergo training and certifications in CPR and First Aid, de-escalation, and conflict resolution training. Bus monitors will be on the bus to ensure that youth are on the right bus and bus riders are respectful to each other at all times.

During the bus route only approved persons will have access. The only approved persons are bus drivers, monitors, and youth representatives from the member organization. Tuscaloosa Police Department, Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue, and EMT for emergency situations only.

3. Administration

The YSR recommends the automation of the youth bus route. This will include a web application, website, and mobile app. These applications will be used to track bus routes for the route administrators, non-profits and parents/guardians.

Reconstruct the Benjamin Barnes YMCA

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Implementation Priority: | Long Term |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation, Education |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | YMCA of Tuscaloosa County, YMCA Men's Club, Stillman College, Shelton State CA Fredd Campus, University of Alabama, Alabama Power, Mercedes Benz |

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends the reconstruction of a new Benjamin Barnes YMCA facility.

History of the Benjamin Barnes YMCA

The need for a Negro branch of the YMCA was expressed by the community in 1953. A membership drive was inaugurated with a "Kick-off" dinner in the auditorium of Industrial High School on January 2, 1953. A goal of 500 members was established by the organizing committee. In October 1953, a petition was presented to Mr. J. Oviatt Bowers, President of the YMCA requesting a Negro Branch of the YMCA of Tuscaloosa.

The Benjamin Barnes Branch to serve the Negroes of the County was organized in January 1954, with Mr. Robert L. Glynn as Chairman. Mr. Robert J. Smith was employed as Executive Secretary and began work July 1, 1954. The first floor of the Masonic building was leased and an open house was held in November 1954.

In July 1955, the Christ Lutheran Church property was purchased for a new Branch building for \$16,500 including 2 buildings and a fence. The property known as the Alston Home is located between 18th and 19th streets facing 30th Avenue. Rather than demolish the Alston Home the group decided, based on the excellent condition of the structure, to use it as a temporary recreation building for Negro youth in the area and also house the Negro branch of the library and a Junior Welfare Clinic. In June 1956, the Barnes Branch moved into the Alston Home. In 1960 the funds necessary to construct a new facility for the Barnes Branch were available. In January 1961, the branch moved into its new building that was completely paid for at that time. The Warner Foundation gave \$42,000 towards the cost of this \$105,000 building.

The new building included a general-purpose room, club, craft, and game rooms as well as a gymnasium, office, and kitchen. In 1961 classes were offered in Home Making Made Easier, typing and shorthand, square dancing, slimnastics, and bridge for adults. Youth classes included various forms of dance, tumbling, bridge, and tennis. There were clubs for students of all ages. (History and pictures Courtesy of the Tuscaloosa Virtual Museum)



Benjamin Barnes Branch YMCA, 1961. Photo courtesy of YMCA of Tuscaloosa

Over the decades, due to the prevalence of fitness-only gyms, and decline in homeownership in the surrounding areas, membership at the Benjamin Barnes YMCA has declined and consequently maintenance of the building has suffered. Throughout the years, BBYMCA has utilized grants and other funding sources to address its arising needs. In the last nine months alone, the BBYMCA has invested close to \$200,000 into the building to ensure safety and positive experiences for members and participants. However, this is not sustainable or cost-effective.

Benjamin Barnes YMCA by the Numbers

Program Data: Program name, program description, number of children/youth served, participation numbers for each program for last three years.

Afterschool: Y afterschool programs provide a safe, nurturing environment while also offering creative and engaging ways for kids to stay active and connected after school hours. We know safety is top-of-mind for parents now more than ever. You can rest assured knowing your child's well-being is the Y's first priority.

2018-2019 88

2019-2020 91 Virtual Camp 74

2020-2021 88

Summer Camp: At YMCA Summer Day Camps, kids build friendships and learn new skills through adventure and exploration, all while discovering the Y's values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

2019 142

2020 106

2021 115

YMCA youth sports programs encourage and promote healthy kids, families and communities by placing a priority on family involvement, healthy competition and sportsmanship. The emphasis is on participation over winning. Learning to play as a team and individual development produces fair play and mutual respect for others.

Basketball:

2019 N/A

2020 N/A

2021 82 (Winter)

2021 195 (Summer)

Baseball:

2019 N/A

2020 N/A

2021 144 (including those registered through PARA)

Membership Units: Numbers, any demographic information about BBYMCA members. Past 3 years.

2019 189 – as of 12/31/2019

2020 196 – as of 12/31/2020

2021 120 – as of 6/15/2021

• Increased rates for the first time in 30+ years on 4/1/2021

Membership Usage: Usage of the Facility by members for amenities

2019 - 124

2020 - 92

2021 - 1508 as of 6/15/2021

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Location

The YSR subcommittee recommends that the location of the Benjamin Barnes Branch of the YMCA (BBYMCA) remain within West Tuscaloosa. With over six decades of investment into the children and families in West Tuscaloosa, the BBYMCA is a lasting symbol of community in an area that has withstood years of disinvestment and blight.

2. Potential Properties

The YSR subcommittee requested an inventory from the City of Tuscaloosa's Urban Development Department and the Office of City Attorney of available land and/or facilities that match the anticipated organizational needs.

For the BBYMCA, a potential site should meet the majority of the following requirements:

1. **Visibility**
2. **Public Area that is accessible for pedestrians, vehicles, and public transportation**
3. **Access to connecting amenities**
4. **Supports 30-40 square foot facility**

At the time of the publication of the recommendation, the following potential properties were identified (in preferential order):

1. Pecan Grove-Recommendation from Barnes Branch Advisory Committee

Location evaluation

Strengths: Across from Stillman, access to families (residential area), access to amenities (Riverwalk expansion), size of the lot, still located within West Tuscaloosa

Considerations: Raw land, increased construction cost, more secluded, effects of construction on residents

2. Dragons Way

Location evaluation

Strengths: Similar location to current BBYMCA, access to elementary and middle school students, nostalgia due to proximity to current BBYMCA, could connect new and old locations

Considerations: Narrow street, construction effects on Central Elementary and Westlawn Middle

3. Stillman Heights Valley-Recommendation from YMCA CEO

Location evaluation

Strengths: Busy street, adjacent to Stillman Heights and Stillman College, size of the lot

Considerations: Geographical features of the property (hill), diminished visibility, narrow street

4. McDonald Hughes- Recommendation from Councilor Howard

Location evaluation

Strengths: Across from Maude Whatley, Tuscaloosa Career and Technical Academy, Shelton State Community College- C.A. Fredd Campus, large lot for construction, proximity to the park

Considerations: Confusion about building ownership, the public perception that BBYMCA is no longer in existence, conflating the legacy of Benjamin Barnes and McDonald Hughes

5. Reconstruction on existing location- Recommendation from Councilor Howard

Location evaluation

Strengths: known location

Considerations: Demolition at the spot of construction, relocation of services during construction, smaller parking lot-must park in the church parking lot at times, narrow street

3. Scope of Work

The YSR subcommittee recommends the construction of a new Benjamin Barnes YMCA that meets the minimum specifications as mutually agreed upon and approved by the YMCA of Tuscaloosa Board of Directors and the City of Tuscaloosa.

4. Transportation

The YSR subcommittee recommends the purchase of buses to replace the currently outdated models and secure or build storage for the buses to decrease incidents of vandalism.

5. Operations and Maintenance

The YSR subcommittee recommends the development of long-term operations plan to outline the operational and programmatic practices of the Benjamin Barnes Branch YMCA and the long-term maintenance of the facility. The City of Tuscaloosa and the YMCA of Tuscaloosa must sanction the operations and maintenance plan via a memorandum of understanding or written agreement.

Key considerations for agreement:

1. Organizational responsibility for maintenance of the facility. This will include an outline of the responsibilities of each organization and the terms (Number of years, percentage of financial support, etc.)



New Benjamin J Barnes Family YMCA Recommendations

Scope of Work from YMCA of Tuscaloosa

A new facility to best serve the needs of youth, families, and seniors in the West Tuscaloosa area would need:

I. To be situated on 3-4 acres to provide a

- 35,000-40,000 sq foot facility
- Parking for 15-20% of total membership (industry standard)

II. High traffic area on or near public transportation routes

III. Near single family housing and multi-unit housing

- I.E. Population Dense

IV. FACILITY

- i. Classrooms for After School and Summer Camp Programming
- ii. Double Gymnasium for sports, special events, youth and adult activity
 - Includes small concession area
 - Outdoor window as well preferred
- iii. Wellness Center
- iv. Dedicated Group Exercise Studio
- v. Aquatic Center
 - 6-Lane 25 yd
 - Handicap Accessible
- vi. Multi-purpose center
 - Summer Camp
 - Community Gathering
 - Meeting Space
- vii. Childwatch
 - For Children while parents exercise
- viii. Adult Locker Rooms
- ix. Youth and Family Locker Rooms
- x. Family Bathroom
- xi. Office and Administrative Space

II. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- After School Programming
- Summer Day Camp
 - Plus Specialty Camps
 - Youth Sports
 - Healthy Cooking
 - STEM
 - Summer Learning Gap
 - Food Program
- Youth, Adult, Senior Health and Wellness
- Youth Sports
- Youth and Adult Swim Lessons
- Water Exercise
- Aquatic Safety Programming
- Health Equities/Community Health and Chronic Disease Mgt
- Life Skills Training– how to get a job; interview skills; fill out a form; check book; etc.
- YMCA Youth in Government (YIG)
- YMCA Achievers Mentoring Program



Photos Courtesy of YMCA Tuscaloosa

Invest in Boys and Girls Club

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Intermediate |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama |

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends financial and operational support investments into the Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama.

History and Background Information for Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama

Celebrating 60 years of service in 2021, Boys & Girls Clubs of West Alabama is dedicated to helping children and teens, especially those who need us most, reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens. We have positively influenced tens of thousands of young lives.

Opening in 1961, the organization began as the Tuscaloosa Boys Club, providing a safe place for underprivileged young boys to go instead of hanging out on the streets. Over the years, we have grown in number and in service, welcoming all youth ages 6-18. Our mission has shifted from just keeping kids safe to a more ambitious and impactful goal: guiding and equipping children and teens on their path toward lifelong success. Through innovative programs and with the support of skilled and caring staff, our members are succeeding in school, living healthy, and giving back.

As of the school year 2021, BGCWA operates two standalone units in Tuscaloosa and Greensboro and three school sites—Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary and Southview Elementary in Tuscaloosa, as well as Hale County Middle School. Our Clubs are located in underserved communities where we provide a safe, positive and engaging environment managed by trained Youth Development Professionals. Our YDPs implement life-enhancing programs and character development experiences which focus around our four priority outcome areas: Academic Success, Healthy Lifestyles, Character & Leadership Development, and Teen Programming.

It is proven that children who are engaged in meaningful, supervised activities while not in school have better school attendance, earn better grades, and are more likely to attend college. BGCWA is more than just a safe haven for at-risk children and teens. Clubs daily help members embrace possibility and demonstrate how good life can be when young people are nurtured, inspired, and encouraged to reach their full potential. Through BGCWA, children are given the tools and opportunities needed to experience their own great future.

2020 PROGRAM DATA



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF WEST ALABAMA

OUR MISSION: To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

972

Members enrolled in 2020



“I started coming to the Club when I was 6. I like to make friends here now, and I know that all of the staff are happy to see me. I think all kids should come here!”
Zionna, Age 7



2 standalone Club units



3 school-based Club sites



496 youth impacted by outreach programs



25 dedicated Youth Development Professionals on staff

100%

of BGCWA members report they expect to graduate from high school.

85%

of Club members report they are currently making at least one meal.

7,200 learning kits

provided to community youth to support at-home learning.

12,334 free meals

served onsite and via pickup to ensure access to nutritious food.



612 Connection Calls to check on families and members during the COVID-19 crisis.

OUR DOORS OPEN WHEN KIDS NEED US MOST.

DEMOGRAPHICS



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF WEST ALABAMA

ETHNICITY

92%

African American

6%

Caucasian

2%

All other races or not reported

50%

MALE

50%

FEMALE

AGES

45% 6-9

33% 10-12

11% 13-15

9% 16+

2% Under 6

“The Boys & Girls Club is an amazing place to be because I feel very welcome and they are basically like my family.”
Kashan, Age 13



OUR DOORS OPEN FOR ALL KIDS AGES 6-18.

Infographics Courtesy of Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Facility Improvements

- a. The YSR recommends a combination of retrofitting and renovations at the Jaycee Park location of the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama.

Retrofitting and renovations include:

ADA compliant Retrofitting

Façade Improvements

Interior Painting and Furnishings

Update Art room, bathrooms, laundry area, intercom system, and security area

Furniture needs to be age-appropriate and provide a welcoming environment

The club needs to have an open concept to improve safety and accessibility

Interior lighting needs to be retrofitted for LED bulbs

The gym needs a scoreboard and bleachers in order to have a sports program

- b. The YSR subcommittee recommends the construction of a new Teen Center at the Jaycee Park Location that meets the minimum specifications as mutually agreed upon and approved by the Boys and Girls Club Board of Directors and the City of Tuscaloosa.

2. Technology, Academic, and Enrichment Investments

The YSR subcommittee recommends the installation of updated computer equipment and academic/ enrichment resources

- a. **Technology**

New computers, video system, and upgraded wi-fi needed in order to keep up with current technology need

- b. **Education**

Learning Center needs to include a Career Training Center focusing on culinary arts, hospitality, technology, cosmetology, and health care training.

- c. **Enrichment**

Sports programs including volleyball, E-sports, theatre, photography, gym, recording studio, and dance studio

3. Transportation

The YSR subcommittee recommends the purchase of buses to replace the currently outdated models and secure or build storage for the buses to decrease incidents of vandalism.

4. Operational Support

The YSR subcommittee recommends funding for operational support to increase qualified staff to accommodate increases in youth enrollment with Boys and Girls Club.

5. Operations and Maintenance

The YSR subcommittee recommends the development of long term operations plan to outline the operational and programmatic practices of the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama and the long-term maintenance of the facility. The City of Tuscaloosa and the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama must sanction the operations and maintenance plan via memorandum of understanding or written agreement.



Current Facilities

Photos courtesy of Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama



Examples of New Facilities

Photos courtesy of Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

Current Transportation



Updated Transportation



Photos courtesy of
Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

Create Youth Commission

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Short-Term |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation, Education |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | City of Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa City Schools, youth centered organizations |

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends the establishment of the Youth Commission, which would be the continuation of the Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee and other individuals and non-profits across Tuscaloosa.

1. Composition of Youth Commission

Member organizations represent at least one of the Six Points of Youth Development:

- a. **Civic Responsibility and Engagement**
- b. **Education**
- c. **Economic and Workforce Development**
- d. **Holistic Well-being**
- e. **Juvenile Justice**
- f. **Youth Sports and Recreation**

Council must include youth representative [possibly Tuscaloosa Youth Council president]

2. Mission and Scope of the Commission

The YSR recommends that the scope of the Youth Commission be limited to school-aged children residing within Tuscaloosa city limits.

Establish Gateway as center of STEM, E-sports, and digital investments for youth

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Intermediate |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation, Education |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | Gateway, City of Tuscaloosa, STEM consultants |

The Youth Sports & Recreation and the Education Subcommittees advocate for substantial financial investment in the Tuscaloosa's Gateway. The Gateway, with its digital format and programming is a unique offering in West Alabama. As technology advances, the Gateway is poised to effectively contribute to closing the digital divide and ensuring that Tuscaloosa's children and youth are well equipped to participate as 21st century global citizens.



Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Reconfiguration of space

The YSR recommends renovations to Gateway to allow a more educational and collaborative experience for users. This may include the creation of a dedicated e-sports/gaming space.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

2. Expand programming to reflect current and future digital trends

The YSR recommends creating educational, entertaining and accessible programs

a. Tech Corps to teach youth coding, gaming, etc.

3. Breakdown barriers to technology

The YSR recommends free to low-cost equipment rental programs and an upcycling of older computers/equipment to schools and non-profits

4. Invest in up-to-date technology

The YSR recommends creating a technology/equipment fund to ensure Gateway users have access to the latest equipment and technology

5. Construction of mobile/satellite Gateway facility in west Tuscaloosa

The YSR recommends creating a mobile and/or satellite Gateway in west Tuscaloosa to provide equitable access to digital activities

Position Tuscaloosa Police Department as a Key Partner in youth outreach, engagement, and investment

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Implementation Time-frame: | Intermediate |
| Project UNITY Subcommittee(s): | Youth Sports & Recreation, Education, Community Connection & Outreach |
| Lead Organization: | City of Tuscaloosa |
| Potential Partnerships: | Tuscaloosa Police Department, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa City Schools |

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee believes that children and youth need exposure to law enforcement in non-threatening, safe, and neutral environments. As both youth and police officers have preconceived notions of the other demographic, it is imperative that our community creates several opportunities to challenge those perceptions and build relationships. The YSR recommends the Police Athletic League be the center of youth engagement, outreach and investment for the Tuscaloosa Police Department.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Evaluation of the current scope and mission of the Police Athletic League

The YSR recommends an opportunity evaluation of the Tuscaloosa Police Department and the Police Athletic League. The goal of the evaluation is to determine opportunities for collaboration between the TPD, PAL, and community organizations.

YSR recommends evaluating the following aspects of the organization

- a. **Leadership**
- b. **Programs and Projects**
- c. **Levels of Participation**
- d. **Strengths**
- e. **Considerations**
- f. **Opportunities for engagement and support**

2. Develop youth-centered programs and project in partnership with Tuscaloosa Police Department and Police Athletic League

The YSR subcommittee recommends the creation of a mentoring program to promote positive interactions between youth and Tuscaloosa Police Department

- a. **Implement Bigs in Blue in conjunction with Big Brothers and Big Sisters of West Alabama**