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Capturing the community sport landscape through Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis

Community sport provides opportunities for improved physical and mental health, increased social capital, higher levels of community engagement, growth of the sport, enhanced social skills, and the development of coaches and officials. The wealth of a community may be measured by the range, availability, and accessibility of sport and physical activity programs and services for individuals and families. This presentation focuses on part of a larger project aimed at capturing the community sport landscape in London, Ontario. Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping is used to analyze the location and density of sport and physical activity organizations and facilities to better understand that landscape. The findings provide insight to current offerings and gaps, and can inform City planning and community sport development. Web-based data of 300+ sport and physical activity organizations in London were collected in 2020 and compiled into a comprehensive dataset containing about 40 characteristics (e.g., sector, mission statement, programs and services, postal code). Public sport and physical activity offerings provided by the City itself were excluded from this research. As part of the project, data were organized and uploaded to the ArcGIS Online platform for geospatial mapping, based on postal code. The City of London Planning Districts were overlaid on the map, providing an understanding of city and district boundaries. The organizations appear as colour coded (by sport) dots on the map and can be clustered to demonstrate density of offerings. Further, each dot can be selected to display a pop-up that provided the characteristics of each organization. Through this snapshot of London's sport offerings, the mapping is illustrating the landscape of the overall London community as well as by the City's individual planning districts. This GIS analysis provides community sport stakeholders with a thorough spatial and descriptive understanding of the community sport offerings, highlighting gaps and growth potential. Further analysis will include the addition of filters to the map to gain a deeper understanding of the landscape according to specific characteristics (e.g., nonprofit or commercial sector, open or member-only programs, shared or exclusive facility usage), for an even fuller understanding of the wealth of this community.
