

Richfield Youth Sports (RYS)

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“Inspiring Youth”

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“COIDA advances Otsego Now initiated Joint Richfield Comprehensive Plan with land transfer for a Richfield Youth Sports Park”

Students, families and volunteers of Richfield Youth Sports
have optimism for this headline.

What is the RYS request?

Richfield Youth Sports (RYS) requests ownership of the COIDA parcel 24.00-1-18.31 consisting of 47.44 acres in the Town of Richfield to establish permanent athletic fields for community youth sports programs that serve families of over 250 children annually. Long-range plans include a recreation center/gymnasium to complement and enhance the Richfield Springs Central School and Richfield Springs Community Center programming which involves music, arts, and fitness.

Establishing permanent athletic fields on this COIDA parcel will illuminate collaboration amongst COIDA, Village of Richfield Springs, Town of Richfield and RYS after Otsego Now has initiated a community-wide comprehensive planning process in partnership with the Village of Richfield Springs and the Town of Richfield. This Youth Sports Park is noted in the municipality/community vision (see chart on page 7 for details).

Upgrading our infrastructure with permanent athletic fields is a priority short-term objective. However, our overlying purposes are to contribute to the quality of life in northern Otsego County/southern Herkimer Counties, inspire and guide youth on a path to being responsible citizens and promote our sponsoring businesses for economic revitalization. In summary, RYS works to enhance the fun and joy of growing up in the Richfield Springs area.

Endorsements of RYS result in community and youth development accomplishments. Owning and developing this property into a Youth Sports Park will underscore Richfield’s commitment to youth and that - It’s a good place to raise your children.

Why this parcel?

Location. Location. Location. By location, it is a safe, three-quarter mile walk for students from the Richfield Springs School on village sidewalks (two blocks) to the snowmobile/rail trail which crosses the COIDA parcel and is planned per Comprehensive Plan to become a Hiking/Biking Path. By motor vehicle, the parcel is easily accessible from Route 28 with ample visibility for safe ingress and egress. Eleven acres of COIDA’s 47.44 acres accommodates our



Map 1 - Satellite view of proposed development by RYS of COIDA parcel 24.00-1-18.31 in the Town of Richfield. The COIDA parcel is a safe, 3/4-mile walk from the school. This depicts a baseball diamond (left), a softball diamond (right) and soccer fields.

cont'd? Why this parcel?

baseball/softball/t-ball diamond and soccer field needs. See page 5 for map of current field locations.

Safe playing areas are essential to the integrity of RYS sport offerings today. While we are grateful for the generosity of the individuals and entities that have provided Diamond and Mercury fields throughout our years, we are unable to diligently maintain these outdoor facilities without ownership.

This site would anchor Richfield Youth Sports in Richfield Springs. Recreation is one key component to quality of life and community positivity. Squeals, hollers and chatter from children playing are welcome sounds that inherently bring optimism and sense of “all is well here.”

RYS has been conducting its programming by skipping across town and county lines to continue the program offerings. The natural progression now is to make the location of field facilities consistent. Welcoming visitors to one spot instead of two for soccer and baseball seasons will raise our level of hospitality and grow our sense of community.

Who is Richfield Youth Sports?

STUDENTS. FAMILIES. VOLUNTEERS. SPONSORS.

Community youth sports have existed over 20 years in Richfield Springs. In the early years, separate volunteer groups coordinated little league, softball and football. Today, RYS coordinates youth sports programming with professional and streamlined fundraising, volunteering and recruiting.

Using baseball as an example, its leadership has evolved from PeeWee Baseball to Pony League (1999) to Richfield Springs Youth Baseball (2003) to Richfield Springs Athletic League (2010), and now Richfield Youth Sports. Local businesses have sponsored youth baseball through the evolution.

After football left the RYS offering list, soccer filled the fall sport spot by collaborating with the Cooperstown Soccer Club in 2015. As you can see, the RYS story has many examples of ongoing relationship building and adjusting to changing circumstances while still executing their mission of *inspiring youth*.

Competing teams include those from the Tri-Valley league (Laurens, Morris, Edmeston, Milford, Clark Sports Center, Cherry Valley-Springfield, Sharon Springs) and Cooperstown Soccer Club league which includes teams from Otsego and Herkimer counties.

Students ■ Richfield Youth Sports—an all-volunteer 501(c)(3)—organizes play of baseball, softball, t-ball, basketball and soccer to children 4 years old to sixth grade students. This includes providing facilities, coaches, uniforms, equipment, referees/umpires proper insurance, field maintenance, schedules and more.

Families ■ Team rosters co-mingle students beyond the 13439 zip code. Youth sports programming is not limited to students from Richfield Springs Central School, Owen D. Young School and homeschool students.

Volunteers ■ Fundraising, publicity, field maintenance, referees/umpires, concession stands, coach recruitment, player registration and practice scheduling are a few of the tasks performed by RYS volunteers.

Sponsors ■ Our longstanding sponsors are community-minded individuals and businesses who recognize that the quality of life provided by RYS programming is vital to our regional growth and culture.

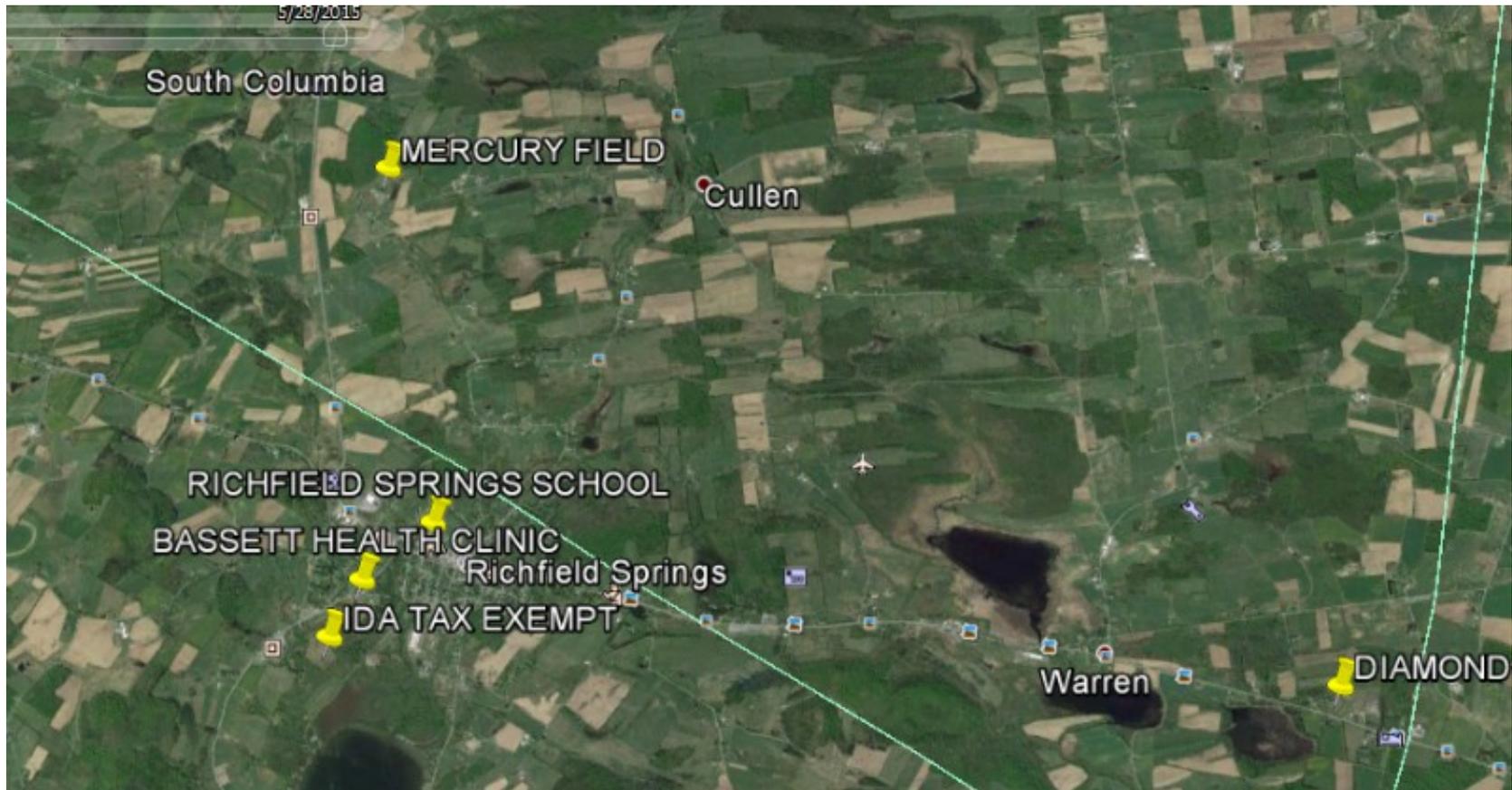
Is RYS ready to operate a Youth Sports Park?

Yes. As always, leadership, commitment, funding, organizational framework, participants, coaches and volunteers are in place today. RYS is missing a *coherent location* to play its sports programming and welcome visiting players and their families.

Amazing community support has allowed RYS to positively impact hundreds of children. After all, RYS is centered on and motivated by the students, families, and community. The next generation should grow up in the love of sports, which brings them back, with their own families to this area, and brings so many visitors here and to this part of the Cooperstown Hall of Fame area. RYS helps inspire this return home.

Current Facility Collection for RYS Programming

- *Baseball/Softball/T-Ball facility for 2017:* Free of charge from the owners' generosity for RYS practice, games and concession sales. This is Diamond Fields that is 5 miles east of Richfield Springs on Route 20 in the Town of Warren, Herkimer County. No use agreement in place for 2018.
- *Soccer 2016/upcoming 2017:* Leased for \$1 from property owner, Al Houser, that has a 120 yards x 60 yards playing field. This is located 5 miles northwest of Richfield Springs on Cullen Road, off of Route 28/ Town of Columbia/Herkimer County. Volunteers provided over \$50,000 of in-kind equipment, fuel, operator and excavating to create the 120 yards x 60 yards which RYS currently maintains with mowing and fertilizing grass, provides a portable restroom. No electricity or water. RYS will lose access to this facility when the lease terminates in five years.
- *Basketball 2016-2017:* Richfield Springs Central School (RSCS) is wonderfully kind in allowing free gym time to RYS after gym-time scheduling for their six school-sponsored basketball teams'-modified, JV, Varsity-all for boys and girls. We expect this gym-time arrangement can continue with RSCS. Another gymnasium is always a welcome community addition so that is why a long-term goal is to have a gymnasium on the COIDA parcel. RYS athletes, with a good sports park, will not need to leave the area to find a great sports program.



Map 2 - Satellite view of current RYS Facilities Collection to soccer (north) and baseball/softball/t-ball diamonds (east). Driving miles from the Richfield Springs Central School to the Mercury Field (soccer) is 2.5 miles and it is 5 miles from the school parking lot to the baseball/softball/t-ball fields at Diamond Field. The COIDA parcel is a safe walk from the school.

Who are the Community Stakeholders for a Richfield Youth Sports Park?

Detailing numerous collaborators whom have made the last 20 years of youth sports programming in Richfield Springs possible is testament to the far-reaching, broad-based community support RYS has for this Richfield Youth Sports Park.

- Richfield Springs Central School (years of superintendents, principals, athletic directors, janitors) welcome RYS to publicize registration at school events, fundraise at school events and use their gyms for basketball practice and games.
- Our Village of Richfield Springs was home to an early baseball/softball/t-ball field next to the Fire House and later cooperated to develop a village parcel for a ball park complete with announcer stand and restroom facilities. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation disallowed use of this small parcel, due to wetland declaration.
- Town of Richfield & Village of Richfield Springs Joint Comprehensive Plan Draft reports focus groups in Oct. 2015 noted the need for athletic fields as did data collection in the Open House and other public outreach determined there is “strong desire for athletic fields and youth outdoor programs.”
- Mercury Field, which belongs to Al Houser –When first leased, this parcel served football season and has since transitioned to our soccer practice and game fields.
- Financial support from businesses and individuals remains strong in the form of sponsorship and contributions.
- 20 years of results to prove that the Richfield Springs Community can do a lot with a meager budget for youth sports activities.

How does a Richfield Youth Sports Park advance the County of Otsego County IDA economic development mission?

As you know, a healthy economy requires more than jobs. Education, tourism, recreation and business are all essential components that contribute to the quality of life and prosperity of a region.

The RYS proposal presents the COIDA an innovative approach to facilitate community development and validate IDA’s earnestness in having deep roots in a northern Otsego County community. COIDA would be a strong force in RYS’s vision of building a prosperous tomorrow for youth and families.

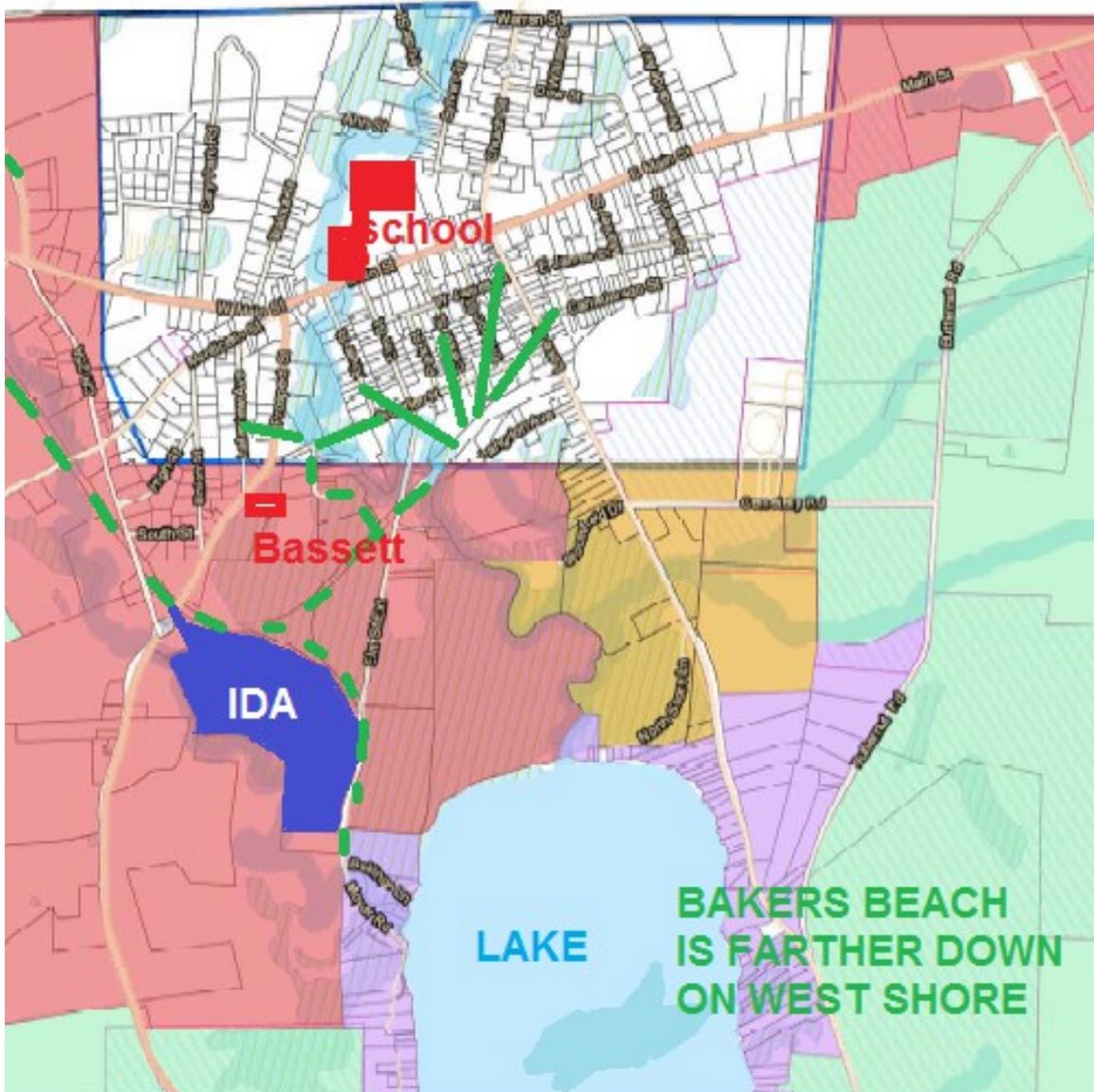
This land ownership change would be a two-county Private-Public Partnership centered on enriching lives through recreation and social arenas thereby increasing the vitality of northern Otsego and southern Herkimer counties. There are about 30 businesses that are members of the RYS sponsor roster. Being a RYS sponsor is a business decision for marketing, promotion, publicity and community goodwill.

When relocating, a family diligently evaluates schools. Richfield Springs Central School has a lengthy list of attributes the community is pleased to have, including laptop computers for students in grades 5 – 12, tv media and production and hydroponics curriculum, no charge summer music lessons and driver’s education. Current student enrollment is 458, which is a decline. However, RYS participation is seeing increases in its youth memberships. While surrounding communities have youth sports programs that can utilize school open space and fields, Richfield Springs School has limited availability to lend space to youth sports.

COIDA would be supporting a project that enhances northern Otsego County and southern Herkimer County which lies in the Mohawk Valley Economic Development Council region.

Possible Outcomes for First Year of Richfield Youth Sports Park

Number of firms assisted (with cash, loans, technical assistance, problem-solving) by the Agency Problem-Solving	3	Problem-solving with Richfield Youth Sports Village of Richfield Springs, Town of Richfield Springs Furthering the Joint Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Richfield & Village of Richfield Springs
Number of jobs created with help from Agency assistance	Volunteer Hours	Community Service, which builds resumes for scholarships and job applications, is required for graduation from Richfield Springs Central School and other area schools.
Number of jobs retained with help from Agency assistance	10	Indirect revenue to business from visitors hosted by RYS at the Richfield Sports Park which encourages Main Street traffic in the Village of Richfield Springs compared to existing, outlying fields. Parks and recreation programs generate revenue directly from fees and charges, but more importantly, provide significant indirect revenues to local and regional economies from sports tournaments and special events. Economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, recreational equipment sales, and many other private sector businesses is of true and sustained value to local and regional economies.
Capital investment made in the County (both total and private funds leveraged with public assistance)	\$50,000	Vacant land that has been idle will be developed with in-kind contributions. This number is based on in-kind services and materials rendered to establish the Mercury Field, consisting almost entirely of services.
Number and dimension of efforts to support local efforts that support continued job growth and economic gains for the County	1	COIDA Land to RYS supports local efforts outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan Draft page 4-8 Parks & Recreation: “The Town and Village recognize the importance and value of a vital parks and recreation network as a component of our social, environmental and economic well-being... includes identification of a centrally-located youth multi-sports facility, a concept that has broad community support as evidence by comments received throughout the development of this Comprehensive Plan.”
Number and dimension of efforts to support regional efforts that support continued job growth and economic gains in the region	1	Quality parks and recreation are cited as one of the top three reasons that business cite in relocation decisions in a number of studies.



Map 3 – Otsego Now initiated a Joint Comprehensive Plan of The Town of Richfield and Village of Richfield Springs. This map from the Draft Joint Comprehensive Plan shows the COIDA parcel proximity to the school/village and US Route 20 and NYS Route 28.

Endorsements

Richfield Youth Sports serves to inspire young children and their busy families to connect with Richfield Springs through the RYS community and its business sponsors. Remember parents are also parent-guardians and parenting grandparents who appreciate coaches and RYS volunteers as additional role models for influencing to their children regarding respect, courtesy, responsibility, manners and cooperation with their words and actions.

- “Thank you for getting <name withheld> to play basketball. His self-esteem is so much better and he is eating healthier,” says his grandma who he lives with. His coach paid the RYS \$30 basketball fee and provided transportation to his practices and games.
- On average, two players each sport season are sponsored by a RYS coach to the full extent of paying the fee and providing transportation for each team commitment.
- “I have been enlightened to the value in youth sports that goes beyond early skill building to ensure practice time on school sponsored teams,” Tammy, a 40-year old RYS volunteer says. “Sports was a second tier of opportunity for my childhood but I see that RYS is their only extracurricular opportunity.”
- "Another child, clearly headed the wrong way in life with academic and social trouble during early grade school years, was welcomed into the RYS program for all seasons until he graduated RYS after 6th grade. This teenager plays highschool sports, and achieved a 90+ average."
- The RYS opportunity is more than athletic. It helps children take an active interest in themselves and in our community, which is at the very least learning about the business that is their team sponsor. Our children's' untapped potential is encouraged and grows. RYS parents know their child will learn to make the needed effort for a successful life. These young parents/volunteers are creating inter-municipal cooperation, networking, organizing events, fund raising, seasonal celebrations, and wide-spread inspiration. Basketball families from the greater region are greatly impressed with our school facilities and community.
- Beyond their competition arena, RYS leadership attend player's concerts, assemblies, recitals, 4-H contests and out-of-school events like the business showcase in Cooperstown (TR\$P Entrepreneurial Trade Show). Academics and non-athletic interests are fostered.
- RYS coaches encourage their players to be spectators of their Richfield Springs School sporting events and invite players to attend with them for a “viewing practice.”
- Inexpensive fees and all-inclusive registrations and play time are paramount to RYS. RYS charges only \$40 for a season of play participation with multi-child pricing as well, while other youth programs charge up to \$100 per child.
- In conclusion RYS's purpose is to have an aesthetic, safe, friendly place to teach and inspire teamwork, goal setting, community service and citizenship.
- RYS collects used cleats and is an option for high school students for community service. Youth players start setting goals to be referees, score keepers or coaching assistants like the high school volunteer role models.

Project Timeline - Realistic Goals from Vested Volunteers

Goal #1 is to continue this vital work for the children of the greater Richfield area, without regard to status, wealth, or any discrimination factors, or even athletic ability, because it's so much more for life values.

This timeline illustrates the time, machinery and labor involved in bringing the parcel to its state of readiness. Our timeline is based on volunteer experience in bringing the Mercury Field into use for sports.

July 2017 Ownership and submit necessary planning board applications and documentation. Fall 2017 Install drainage tile for playing fields. Spring 2018 Seed and mulch. Spring 2019 Debut Season for RYS Baseball/Softball/T-Ball at Richfield Youth Sports Park. Fall 2019 Debut Soccer Season at Richfield Youth Sports Park.

10-year Project: Field House/Gymnasium/Recreation Center, for more basketball gym time, lacrosse, equipment storage/concession, and community gatherings.

15-year project: Native American History Educational Memorial denoting Indian names like Canadarago means “On the Lake – Squaw in the Sun.” Visitors would learn of what was here before Richfield, including the Indian sport of Lacrosse.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Len Pickens, president
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