



# Community Benefits

Capital Region Aquatic Center will provide water therapy, swim lessons, and programming geared to all ages, and levels of ability, with specialized programming for Veterans, adults and children with special needs, as well as underserved populations. This expansive target population will benefit from the project in the following ways:

**Accessibility:** The planned location is on existing CDTA bus routes offering the opportunity for a diverse, underserved population to have access to the facility. The facility will have scholarship funding for children and adults who might not be able to afford Learn-to-Swim programs, aquatic team memberships, aquatic exercise programs and more.

**Drowning Prevention:** According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 360,000 people died from drowning in 2015, making drowning a worldwide major public health problem. The facility's vision is to provide Learn-to-Swim lessons for every Second Grader in Schenectady City Public Schools through partnerships with local foundations and USA Swimming Make-A-Splash Foundation. The facility will also be partnering with US Masters Swimming for adult Learn-to-Swim programs, as approximately one-third of adults in the United States cannot safely swim the length of a pool.

**Lifelong Activity:** Swimming is an easy-on-the-joints way to stay active and maintain a healthy lifestyle at any age. In 2017, Swim England commissioned new research into the health benefits of swimming. The report shows that swimmers live longer, regular swimming helps older people stay mentally and physically fit, and participation in swimming lessons can help children to develop physical, cognitive and social skills quicker.

**Employment and Job Skills Training:** The facility will provide teens and adults with training for lifelong employable skills. Programs will be offered for CPR, First Aid, lifeguard certifications, Water Safety Instructor training, aquatic coach training and required continuing education for certified aquatic employees. Again, the facility being on CDTA bus routes makes it accessible for those not having their own transportation. Greensboro Aquatic Center, which the facility is modeled after, currently has 100 part-time employees and 11 full-time employees. These part-time employees work as lifeguards, instructors, pool techs and front desk employees.

**Gateway to Aquatic Sports:** Swimming and other competitive and recreational aquatic sports build confidence, self-discipline, and health awareness. Studies show that higher physical activity level in swimming leads to improved grades and greater internal motivation. Exercise causes a release of endorphins - which improves mood. When confident and in a good mood, a student is more likely to excel in academics. Training in the water requires the ability to work by oneself and as a teammate. These skills are essential for academics and the workforce. Excerpts from a St. Louis Today newspaper article illustrate the effect of sports on at risk youth: *Sports play a life-changing role for at-risk youth in low-income urban neighborhoods. There is a need for more sports-*



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*based youth programs to reduce crime and increase high school graduation rates in cities. It is no secret that today's economically and socially at-risk urban teenagers — especially boys — are just as likely to get involved in criminal behaviors and go to jail as they are to graduate from high school and become productive adults. Juvenile crime rates are consistently reduced in neighborhoods where sports-based youth development programs are improving the leadership, teamwork and self-governance skills of at-risk teens. For example, Fort Myers, Fla., police reported that juvenile arrests dropped by nearly one-third since the city began the STARTS (Success Through Academics and Recreational Support) Program. Norfolk, Va., forged a partnership between police, human service agencies and local citizens that included starting new youth athletic leagues, which led to a 29 percent drop in crime in the targeted neighborhoods and a citywide reduction in violent crime. Giving at-risk kids a chance to play sports keeps them healthier, in school and out of gangs and trouble.*

**Healing Environment/Rehabilitation:** Aquatic therapy provides gentle and effective rehabilitation for people recovering from many types of injuries. Water-based exercise improves the quality of life for people with chronic pain and disabilities. Aquatic therapy can be an effective way to manage sensory issues in autistic children. Swimming has a positive impact on a range of physical and mental health conditions including obesity, cancer, cerebral palsy, and pulmonary disease. The facility is currently researching partnership opportunities with healthcare organizations to run programs in the facility. Special Olympics New York and The Autism Society of the Greater Capital Region have already indicated their plans to partner with the facility once it is open. The facility plans to incorporate aquatic programs similar to WETs for Vets at John Jay College in New York City. These programs engage veterans in exercises designed to help their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. There are currently 2,946 veterans in the City of Schenectady.

**Economic Impact:** The economic impact analysis from the feasibility study funded by Schenectady Metroplex projects \$9.4 million annually. This analysis does not include championship level meets and the larger, longer meets (several extend to 6+ days). These larger events typically generate \$3-\$4 million in economic impact per event. These events will result in many new job opportunities in the hospitality industry. This helps continue Schenectady's path to revitalization.