

NFL Foundation Grassroots Program Application Cover Sheet

Sto-Rox School District

Business office address: 298 Ewing Road, McKees Rocks PA 15136

Business office phone: 412-771-3213 Ext. 5248

Fax: 412-771-3848

Superintendent: Frank Dalmas

Business Manager: Jacky Hardiman

Primary contacts: Brian Rhindress, Grant Writer, 610-585-5866, brhindress@srsd.k12.pa.us

Ryan Kacsur, Athletic Director, 412-771-3213, ext. 1105, rkacsur@srsd.k12.pa.us

The Sto-Rox School District (“SRSD”) is requesting a \$250,000 grant from the NFL Foundation Grassroots Program to install a new synthetic turf “Community Activities Field” at the Sto-Rox Jr./Sr. High School. The field will replace a natural grass field that was last re-sodded in 1976. SRSD is a densely populated suburban district located seven miles from the Pittsburgh Steelers Headquarters at Heinz Field. SRSD serves 1,500 students from the Stowe Township and McKees Rocks Borough in Allegheny Country, Pennsylvania (collectively, “Sto-Rox”). SRSD’s mission is “to prepare today’s learner for tomorrow’s world in a cooperative manner as partners with students, parents and the communities we serve.” In SRSD, 100% of Sto-Rox students are economically disadvantaged and receive free and reduced-price lunch. Installation of the Community Activities Field will complete Phase II of a comprehensive facilities regeneration Plan that has brought a new scoreboard, parking lot, and increased youth sports programming to the SRSD community. The Community Activities Field project will unite the Sto-Rox community by providing a safe, accessible, quality field for use by over 400 local youth sports players and over 6,500 total annual patrons. The Community Activities Field will be used for SRSD sports and extracurricular activities, youth sports and community events. The project has wide community buy-in and fits into the larger landscape of community redevelopment efforts in Sto-Rox, spearheaded by the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation, Stowe Township, McKees Rocks Borough, Focus on Renewal and the SRSD. Matching funding is provided by local Sto-Rox alumni, individuals, businesses, Stowe Township and SRSD. The Pittsburgh Steelers support this project through a formal Letter of Support.

NFL Foundation Grassroots Program Application
Sto-Rox School District

Description of the Organization

Mission: The Sto-Rox School District ("SRSD") is the applicant and intended recipient of this grant to refurbish the Sto-Rox Jr./Sr. High School ("SRHS") football field. SRSD is a densely populated, suburban Title I school district, formed in 1967, that serves 1,500 students from Stowe Township and McKees Rocks Borough in Allegheny County, PA (collectively, "Sto-Rox"). Our mission is "to prepare today's learner for tomorrow's world in a cooperative manner as partners with students, parents and the communities we serve."

History: SRSD is one of the poorest districts in PA. Governor Corbett's \$1 billion-dollar statewide budget cuts of 2008 forced SRSD to make difficult decisions to reduce curricular and extracurricular offerings including cuts to sports teams and arts programs. Despite these cuts, SRSD is now in its second year of a successful and energetic five-year regeneration plan to bring back extracurricular activities and implement a "Community School" strategy. Some preliminary successes include the creation of new teacher leadership positions, community partnerships, security systems and renegotiation of business contracts. With respect to Athletics, this Plan includes a 3-phase program and grounds refurbishment. Phase I of the Plan is now complete and included: the return of the JV Football Team, Varsity Volleyball, Varsity Baseball and Softball, and Varsity Wrestling programs as well as the purchase of a new football scoreboard and paving of the football field parking lot.

Phase II of the Plan includes the construction of a new synthetic turf field—a "Community Activities Field" at the SRHS to support expanded sports teams and community access. To complete Phase II of the Plan, a voluntary association of alumni and community members, answerable to the SRSD, formed the Sto-Rox Field Committee ("SRFC") for the purpose of fundraising and community outreach. The SRFC is led by a group of former Sto-Rox alumni, including former NFL Quarterback, Chuck Fusina, all of whom want to give back to the Sto-Rox community that helped build the foundations for their academic, athletic and professional successes. The SRFC also includes an SRSD Board Director, Stowe Township Commissioner, the Commissioner of Little Vikings Youth Football, a former SRSD principal and several local business owners. In collaboration with SRSD administration, the SRFC initiated the "It Starts with the Field" campaign to raise the capital funds necessary to complete Phase II of the Plan. All funds solicited by the SRFC are deposited into an SRSD account. See Organizational Attachments for contact lists.

Capacity to Develop Proposed Project: Collectively, the core SRSD and SRFC project team has over 75 years of experience in project management, school administration and business. To-date, the core project team has raised over \$300,000 in matching funds, consulted with field construction and engineering experts, taken administrative steps to prepare for site construction, garnered wide community buy-in, and promoted increased participation in SRSD sports and extracurricular activities, youth sports and community events. Our representative group ensures that all stakeholders have been included in the process and that our project is ready to commence construction upon fundraising completion.

Description of the Neighborhood:

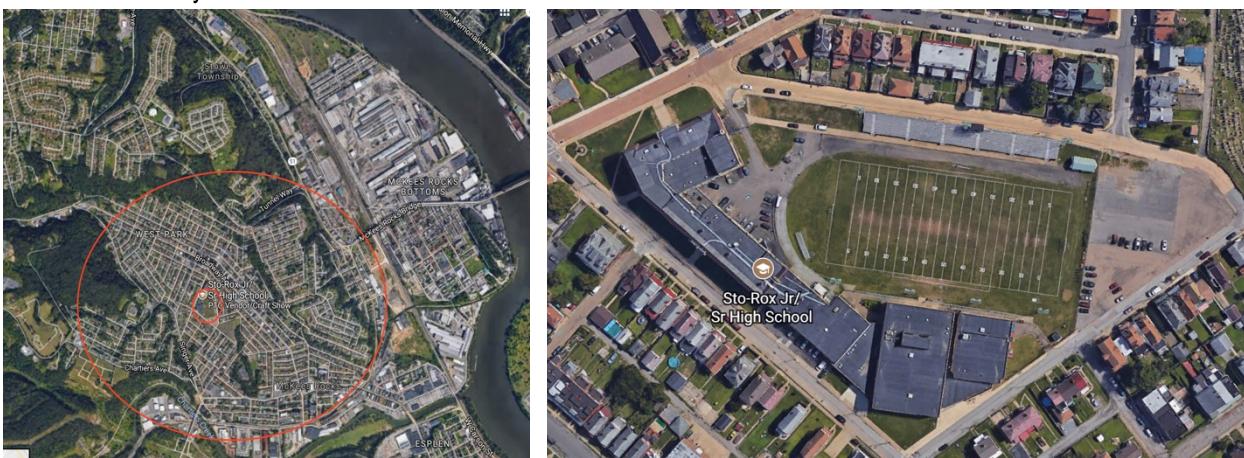
Boundaries of Catchment: SRSD encompasses a three-square mile grouping of neighborhoods, including Stowe Township and McKees Rocks Borough, just seven miles from Downtown Pittsburgh and Heinz Field. Prior to the 1970s, Sto-Rox was a booming industrial town. With the GI Bill and increased financial security, many Sto-Rox baby boomer families sent their children to college for the first time, and these children then seized opportunities all over the country. However, as with much of Southwest Pennsylvania and the greater Rust Belt region, the 1970's and 1980's brought deindustrialization. Sto-Rox was severely affected during this downturn as it suffered the loss of key local industries that manufactured locomotives, construction materials and metallic parts. As a result, Sto-Rox exited the 1980's without jobs and with four sections of county-subsidized public housing and an uneducated workforce. Accordingly, the community forged down a path of decline and hardship. While some of the Pittsburgh region has bounced back through regional investments, Sto-Rox and other densely populated suburbs located just outside the city limits are still reeling from the economic decline of the last 40 years.

Neighborhood and District Demographics: In 2014, Allegheny County Department of Human Services conducted a Suburban and Rural Poverty Analysis¹. The study ranked 105 suburbs by indicators of poverty, single-mother households,

unemployed males, housing vacancy and transportation scarcity. Sto-Rox ranked in the highest tier county-wide, designating it a "Distressed Community." As of 2015, 26% of Sto-Rox residents were living in poverty with a median household income of \$31,574, compared with a statewide median of \$55,702². Moreover, 15% did not have access to health insurance compared with 8% statewide, and the unemployment rate was 7.9% compared with 5.2% statewide. SRSD serves about 1,500 students, 100% of whom are economically disadvantaged and receive free and reduced-price lunch. Over 56% of SRSD students have engaged with the human service system (including child welfare, public benefits, behavioral health and homeless services) at some point in their lives. Demographically, 53% of students are black, 31% are white and 16% belong to another race group. In 2010, the community at-large was approximately 70% white and 30% black, showing a 10% increase in black residents since 2000. Additionally, there is a growing number of young families in the community and presently 23% of all residents are youth under the age of 18. Thus, Sto-Rox is a mixed community, of older white and increasingly young black residents. Lastly, our school district struggles financially in an uphill battle with local charter schools, to whom we pay over \$4.5 million dollars yearly (18% of our operating budget) to educate district-residing students, the fourth highest percentage in the State of Pennsylvania³.

Condition of Housing Stock and Main Commercial Areas: The statistics set forth are unsurprising for a densely populated district with four separate sections of county-subsidized public housing, over 1000 vacant properties and a majority of renter-occupied properties. Commercially, SRSD's two main business districts exist on the streets of Broadway and Chartiers Avenue. Both streets have seen the exodus of many businesses over the last few decades. However, revitalization efforts are currently being spearheaded by local municipalities and development groups (see "Impact" section below for more details).

Existence and Conditions of Local Parks and Open Spaces including Community Facilities: As SRSD is composed of two small overlapping municipalities, there are no centrally-located parks that can host safe, multi-purpose, regular sport league games and large community gatherings. Third Street Park, Ranger's Field and the Sto-Ken-Rox Boys and Girls Club are each located on the boundaries of the community and are not regularly maintained and/or large enough for regulation football and soccer. Other public spaces include small playgrounds in each of the sections of public housing. These serve the local housing units but are not accessible or large enough to be useful to the whole community. In comparison, the SRHS football field is located in the direct center of the community.



Left: Sto-Rox School District (entire frame), West Park, Sto-Rox's most densely populated area (outer oval), Current SRHS football field (inner oval). Right: Close-up of current High School Field and location of the proposed Community Activities Field.

Description of the Project:

Location, Site Control & Current Condition: We are applying for a field surface grant to replace the SRHS natural grass football field with a synthetic turf field. The current SRHS football field is in the heart of West Park, the most densely populated Sto-Rox area. The SRHS and football field are fully located in Stowe Township, tangent to the McKees Rocks border. SRSD inherited the land from the Stowe School District during their merger in 1967 and has owned it since⁴. The field was last sodded, rolled and leveled in 1976 and lack of long-term fertilization, weeding and a sprinkler system has

¹ Suburban Poverty: Assessing Community Need Outside the Central City (Rep.). (2014, August). Retrieved <https://www.allegenycountyanalytics.us/index.php/2015/12/01/community-need-index-reports-datasets/>

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

³ Analysis by Pennsylvania School Business Officials Association, referenced [here](#).

resulted in the field condition gradually deteriorating over the past four decades. The crown of our field has become more pronounced, resulting in puddling around the sidelines, benches and track. Past and future safety concerns include ankle and knee injuries, which are exacerbated by field conditions. As a result, each season the SRSD Athletic Director must cancel or move several non-conference games to away locations and regularly limit access to the field due to its current condition.

Plans for Site Use and Progress on Plan - Site Control, Zoning, Environmental Review, Physical Improvements:

The Field Surface Grant falls in Phase II of a three-phase programming and facilities resurgence Plan. Phase I (Complete) lasted from 2014-2017 and included the replacement of the scoreboard, pavement of the parking lot and regeneration of the SRSD Athletics program. Phase II (in-progress) will last from 2017-2018 and includes the field surface replacement, the addition of new sports team and outdoor extracurricular activities (marching band, soccer, intramurals, gym, etc.) and expanded community access. Phase III (future) will take place from 2018-2020 includes future fundraising efforts for sports teams and facilities (bleachers, press box, lighting). With the completion of Phase II of the plan, our proposed 389' x 190' Community Activities Field will allow multipurpose use by SRSD sports and outdoor extracurricular activities, youth football and sports programs, and community events. Given space constraints of school property, our field will just exceed the minimum size necessary for football and soccer. See Project Attachments for field design renderings.

Our core project team includes five full-time SRSD staff with a combined experience of over 75 years in school administration and athletics. Three liaisons from the SRFC will complete the capital campaign and continue building community support. Our Project Manager, J.T. Sauer & Associates ("JTSA"), a Sports Field Architecture and Engineering Consultant, has constructed over 50 parks and fields and has over 60 years of combined professional experience.

To-date, we have had initial consultations with JTSA and synthetic turf contractors. JTSA collected preliminary bids and worked with a synthetic turf company, AstroTurf, to scope a field that meets our needs. AstroTurf is an AEPA-approved vendor and has installed over 40 fields in Pennsylvania, including a successful comparable field at Steel Valley, a neighboring high school. Importantly, the project does not need to undergo any time-consuming regulatory reviews, including but not limited to: 1) the PA Department of Education Planning Commission process, because the SRSD has site control and the project is refurbishing an existing field, and 2) an environmental review because the project is not being built in an environmentally sensitive area. Accordingly, the project is ready to commence construction once it has been fully funded. The SRSD Business Manager, SRSD Athletic Director, JTSA and AstroTurf have agreed on a preliminary project schedule and have booked the field for construction from April to July 2018 to avoid conflict with district and community scheduling.

Moving forward, JTSA will oversee the project with support from the core project team described previously. JTSA will conduct and complete a Soil Review, Site Master Plans, Field Design with a Stormwater Management Report and Construction Documents. Permits will be submitted 1) to Stowe Township for a local zoning and subdivision land development permit and 2) to Allegheny County Conservation District for a DEP NPDES permit. Simultaneously, JTSA will facilitate the solicitations for certified, in-kind material and construction contributions, including following up with local landscapers, concrete producers and developers that have already been contacted by the SRFC. JTSA will meet regularly with the core project team for a project kick-off, concept design review, construction document package review on a bi-weekly basis throughout all phases of construction for performance and quality assurance purposes (subgrade, compaction review, installation of collector drains, sub base, turf installation and completion). AstroTurf construction will begin on or before April 1st, 2018 and finish by July 15th, 2018, in time for the beginning of the SRHS Football season, Little Vikings football season, the National Night Out Police Block Party and Community and Youth Football Parade and Pep Rally. See Project Attachments for project plans and scope of work done by JTSA and AstroTurf.

Timeline for Completion of the Project: A simplified overall Phase II project timeline is as follows:

1. June 2016 – December 2017: initial planning, capital campaign and consultations
2. December 2017 – April 2018: permitting, preparations and design
3. April 2018 – July 2018: field construction, review and rollout
(see Project Attachments for full plan and timeline)

Project Budget and Match Funding: Based on estimates from JTSA and AstroTurf, the projected expenses for field renovation are approximately \$535,000. This includes JTSA's permitting, design and project management costs and AstroTurf's installation costs. Both JTSA and AstroTurf have offered in-kind services totaling \$62,295. In just 9 months, the SRFC has raised \$302,930 in direct matching dollars and pledges. The capital campaign was conducted in three phases: 1) targeted alumni solicitations, 2) social media⁵ and 3) alumni and business outreach. In total, the 188 donors include 162 individuals, 22 businesses, Stowe Township, and various fundraisers through the Sto-Rox Elementary Schools, Little Vikings and Teacher's Union. Checks-received total \$144,280 with \$158,650 still in outstanding pledges. SRSD is pledging a minimum of \$18,000 from the Athletic Boosters Endowment.

Additional endowment funds may be used for future athletic programming and on an as-needed basis for unexpected construction and long-term maintenance costs. Additionally, while base minimum project costs have been met with a \$20,000 buffer, the SRFC plans to continue fundraising to secure at minimum a \$65,000 buffer (10%) for unexpected construction costs. Thus, our total budgeted revenue and expenses balance at approximately \$600,000. Additionally, the SRFC will work with JTSA to lower costs by finalizing in-kind material and construction donations from local businesses. The SRFC have donated 100% of their time and efforts so that 100% of donations go directly to the field. See Project Attachments for the full project budget and breakdown of funding sources.

Community Support for Project, and Agreements with Partner Organizations: Our project has wide community support, as evidenced by 11 support letters from the Little Vikings Football League, Sto-Ken-Rox Little League, Stowe Township, Stowe Police Department, McKees Rocks Borough, McKees Rocks Police Department, Western Area YMCA, Boys and Girls Club of Sto-Ken-Rox, Focus on Renewal and Father Ryan Arts Center, McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation and the Pittsburgh Steelers. We have in place agreements with Little Vikings Football to use the field for \$400 per year, the Pittsburgh Colts Semi-Pro team at \$800 per game, and a generalized Joint-Use Agreement for new partners. We are piloting an indoor afterschool program with the YMCA this year and are conducting surveys to assess interest in programming, including field access for next year. See Project Attachments for letters of support and joint-use agreements.

Impact of the Project and Future Sustainability

Planned or Anticipated Programming in Field Space: Currently, our field supports over 300 local youth and over 2,000 visiting youth per year in annual sports programming including SRHS Varsity, JV and Jr. High Football, Varsity Baseball & Softball practice, Cheerleading, Marching Band, Dance Team, and a highly active USA Football Heads Up-Certified Little Vikings Football program. The Little Vikings Football program currently runs two flag football teams, four tackle football teams and four cheer teams serving 150 youth and growing, from ages 5-7, 8-9, 10-11 and 12-14. The Little Vikings play up to 30 games per year on the field. Being in the center of Sto-Rox, our field hosts many additional community events including SRHS Graduation, the National Night Out Police Block Party, the Community and Youth Football Parade and Pep Rally, the SRHS Mock Crash and the Semi-Pro Pittsburgh Colts football team. In aggregate, over 4,000 people currently use our field per year.

However, as stated above, we must make difficult decisions about which organizations may access the field and the frequency of use. With the benefits of an artificial turf field, we could start a number of new SRSD sports programs, including SRHS Boys and Girls Soccer, Lacrosse, Field Hockey and intramural sports (all of which are being piloted indoors at the Upper Elementary School after school program for grades 4-6). The Little Vikings Football team has been steadily growing and projects up to a 50 player increase with a turf field. Community access will expand to the Boys and Girls Club of Sto-Ken-Rox, Western Area YMCA, WPIAL playoff games, additional semi-pro events, and increased community access for pep rallies, police and township/borough events, and the West Park Fair (which was cancelled over 10 years ago due to the damage inflicted on the field). In total, we will increase field use by over 2,000 people per year, for an aggregate usage by over 400 local youth sports players, 6,500 total annual patrons. See Project Attachments for projected field participation.

⁵ Example campaign media:

- <https://www.sto-roxfield.org/>
- https://www.facebook.com/SRHSActivitiesField/about/?ref=page_internal
- <http://www.mckeesrocks.com/starts-field-funding-campaign-aims-bring-synthetic-turf-field-sto-rox-activities/>

Maintenance & Safety: SRSD's current annual maintenance budget is \$9,000 for field paint, fertilizer, sod, gas and man-hours for our grounds and field custodian. AstroTurf fields come with an eight-year "Rhino Maintenance" plan, an eight-year warranty and a brush drag to self-maintain the field. "Rhino Maintenance" includes annual inspection, deep grooming, de-compacting, magnetic metal collecting, professional cleaning, disinfectant and review to keep the field safe and improve G-MAX performance. The warranty guarantees defects in material and workmanship. In addition, SRSD will continue to employ a field custodian for game day setup, cleanup and basic field maintenance with the brush drag. As for programming, SRSD will continue to fund our athletics programs at current levels through the general fund. The SRSD Athletic Boosters Endowment will be maintained over the next decade to be used for necessary program expenses (e.g. uniforms, equipment, etc.), as well as for ad-hoc or long-term maintenance costs. Little Vikings Football and other organizations are responsible for their own funding, as per the aforementioned joint-use agreements. See Project Attachments for maintenance plans.

Our current field is unsafe for players and has resulted in minor injuries and has raised concerns among administrators and parents that it will one day cause a serious, long-term injury. While injuries are always possible when participating in athletics, a flat, well-maintained turf field will be significantly safer and mitigate injury risk. As of this year, all football-related organizations (SRHS and Little Vikings) using the field must be USA Football & Heads Up-Certified. Such certification will be a condition of using the field and will be included in future joint-use agreements and school policy.

According to our current facilities use policy, any organizations using our field must be minimally insured up to \$1 million dollars with SRSD named as the additional insured. All fields and grounds must be returned as found and no intoxicants, tobacco, narcotics or weapons are allowed on site. Organizations using the field must provide security or police if necessary. The Athletic Director is in charge of the grounds and unless otherwise agreed upon, the grounds must be locked until he/she arrives. Together, these plans ensure the safety of all users and the maintenance of the field.

Community Plans for Neighborhood: Despite the hardships, Sto-Rox has endured. Our community is now rebuilding itself, and this field has the opportunity to be one of the cornerstones of Sto-Rox's revitalization plan, showing both community members and outsiders that real progress is being made. In addition to SRSD's successful regeneration plan, the district has also committed to the nationally-recognized "Community School" model by hiring a Site Coordinator from the nonprofit Communities in Schools of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. In the "Community School" model, a public school is considered as the central resource in a community to bring families, educators and community partners together. The SRSD Site Coordinator actively works to connect SRSD with community assets through sharing events, communicating opportunities, offering afterschool programs and advancing projects such as the Community Activities Field.

With this in mind, The McKees Rocks Borough, Stowe Township and the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation are all currently working on multi-million-dollar redevelopment projects, including the main Chartiers Avenue Business District, the Broadway Commercial District, the Roxian and Parkway Theaters, and the McKees Rocks Plaza. In addition, community and business groups are hard at work to bring industry and jobs back to the community, including developing a sixty-million dollar CSX Intermodal Facility. Focus on Renewal, our anchor human services nonprofit, just opened a "Community Resource Center" to fight addiction, mental health issues and promote re-employment resources. For several years, all of these stakeholders and other youth organizations have partnered to collaborate on projects such as this one, through the "Sto-Rox Youth Partnership" annual planning sessions. As opportunities start to come back to the SRSD, the Community Activities Field will act as a unifying public meeting place to connect all of these resources in our community.

The SRSD and SRFC firmly believe that the Community Activities Field can provide safe, life-changing opportunities for the youth in our community. Like all parents and educators, we want our children to flourish, both on and off the field, and we see this field as a rare opportunity to provide immediate benefits to our children and our community. Above all else, the soft impact of kids seeing that adults care about them is the foundation we need to create, maintain and sustain a healthy community. It is for this reason we say— "It Starts with the Field."

Please indicate how you learned about the NFL Foundation Grassroots Program.

Chuck Fusina was made aware of the grant through his professional NFL alumni network.

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