



Parks and Recreation Commission

Wednesday, August 14, 2024

6:00 PM

Elk River City Hall

Regular Meeting & Work Session Agenda

- Regular meeting in Council Chambers
 - Work Session meeting in Upper Town Conference Room immediately following regular meeting
-

1. CALL SPECIAL WORK SESSION TO ORDER
 - 1.1 Special Meeting Work Session Notice
2. SPECIAL WORK SESSION DISCUSSION ITEMS
 - 2.1 Athletic Facilities Master Plan
3. MOTION TO ADJOURN SPECIAL WORK SESSION



**Special Meeting Work Session Notice
Parks and Recreation Commission**

**Wednesday, August 14, 2024
6:00 p.m.**

**Elk River City Hall
13065 Orono Parkway
Elk River, MN 55330**

The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

Discuss the Facilities Master Plan

Dave Anderson

8-9-24

Date

I HEREBY CERTIFY, that this notice has been posted and that I have served this notice upon the members of the Parks and Recreation Commission by e-mail at least one day prior to the above-called special meeting. In accordance with State Statute, this notice will be posted at least three days prior to the meeting date.

Tina Allard, City Clerk

8/9/24

Date





Request for Action

To
Parks and Recreation Commission

Item Number
2.1

Meeting Date
August 14, 2024

Prepared By
Joe Stremcha, Business Services Director/Assistant
City Administrator

Item Description
Athletic Facilities Master Plan

Reviewed by
Jeff Shelby
Joe Stremcha

Action Requested
Discuss the Athletic Facilities Master Plan.

Background/Discussion

HKGi will present detailed concepts for site development of athletic fields. Based on projected growth outlined in a 2022-23 study. The commission continues to discuss these concepts and refine the capital improvement plan. The construction timeline below preserves the number of fields available for play prior to adding new additional fields. The proposed plan creates the following benefits:

- Centralized bathrooms
- Centralized concessions
- Centralized equipment storage based on sport/activity.
- Organized parking
- Field locations are based on activity creating ownership cleanliness among user groups.
- Fans at “ground level” are at a higher elevation than the playing surface for improved lines of sight.

Financial Impact

Cost estimates for capital improvements within the Athletic Facilities Master Plan are included.

Mission/Policy/Goal

Responsible for every dollar as good stewards and providing an opportunity to live, work, and play.

Attachments

1. 12.1 03-13-2024 HKGi Athletic Fields Master Planning Presentation
2. FINAL Elk River Field Study March 8 2023
3. 2024 Athletic Centers Concepts Labeled SCALE BARS IN BOTTOM RIGHT CORNER
4. Alternative Oak Knoll Site Based on Commission Feedback on April 10, 2024
5. Athletic Fields Master Plan - 10-year CIP

The Elk River Vision

A welcoming community with revolutionary and spirited resourcefulness, exceptional service, and community engagement that encourages and inspires prosperity



ATHLETIC FIELDS MASTER PLANNING

Elk River Parks & Recreation
March 2024



Agenda

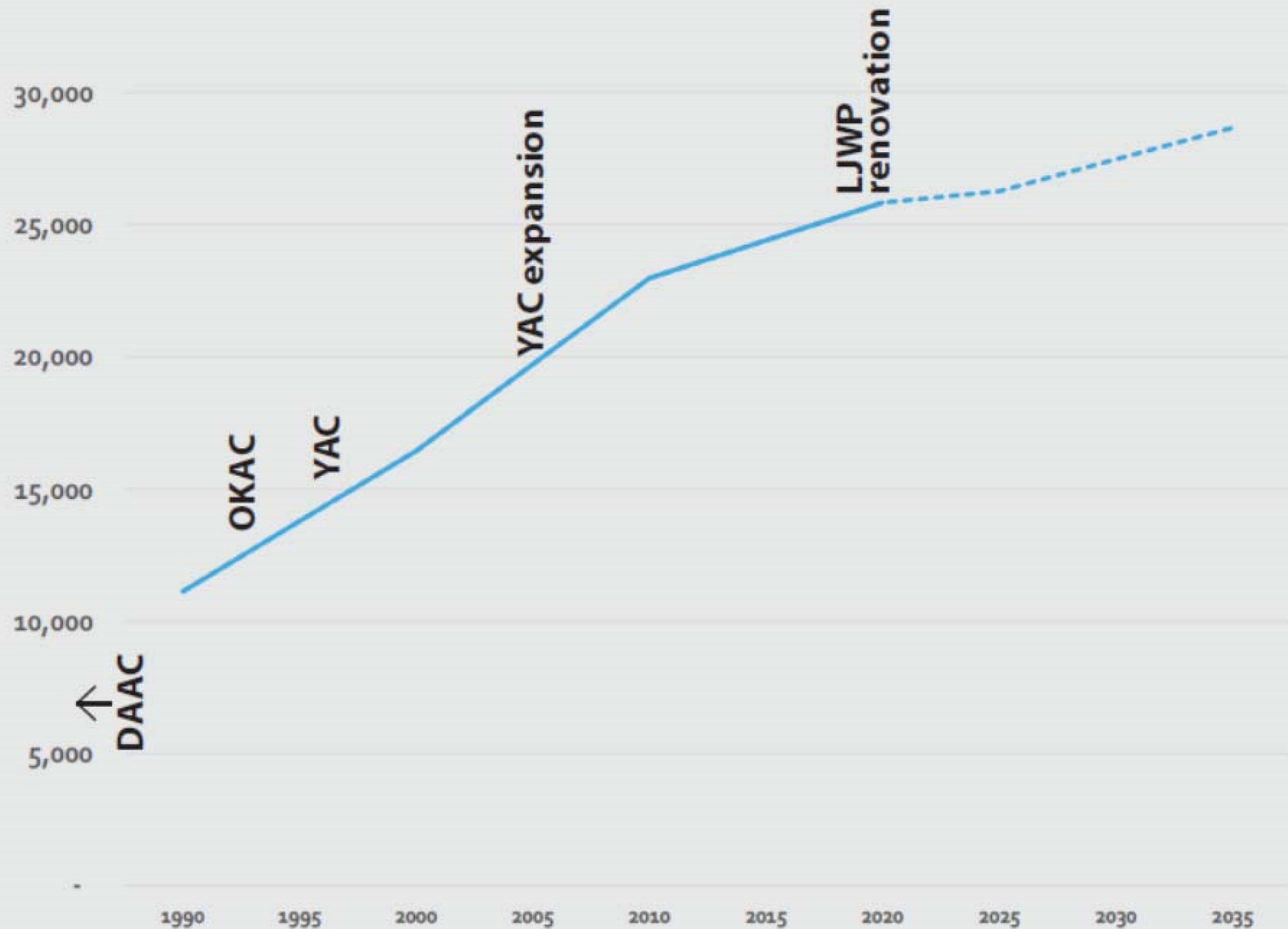
- Recap Findings From Utilization Study
- Concept Review
- Costs
- Phasing
- Discussion



Project Purpose

- Provide a **long term** vision to guide development of athletic fields in Elk River
 - » Meet the needs of a growing community
 - » Guide investments where they will last
 - » Help the City plan for future costs
 - » Continue to position Elk River as a place with great recreation opportunities for families and youth

Population Growth and Field Development in Elk River



Utilization Study Findings

- Expansion for growing population and to add capacity/resiliency
- Preference for improved user (player and spectator) experience
- Desire for tournament capabilities
- Safety/Functionality concerns at DAAC (short term)



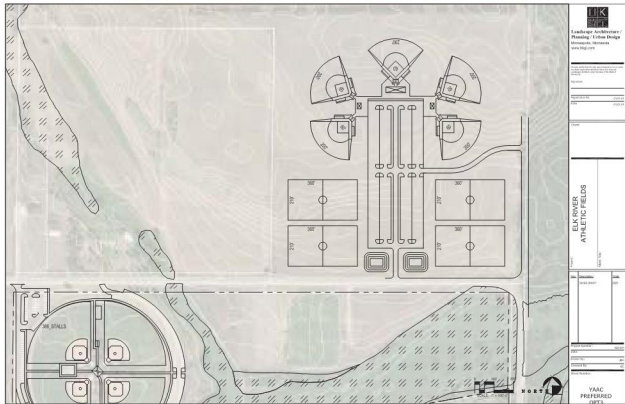
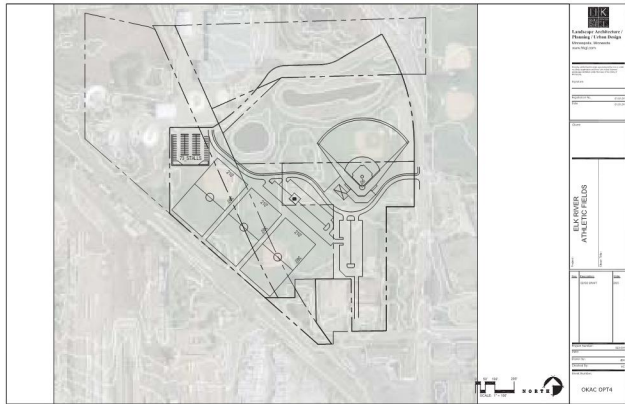
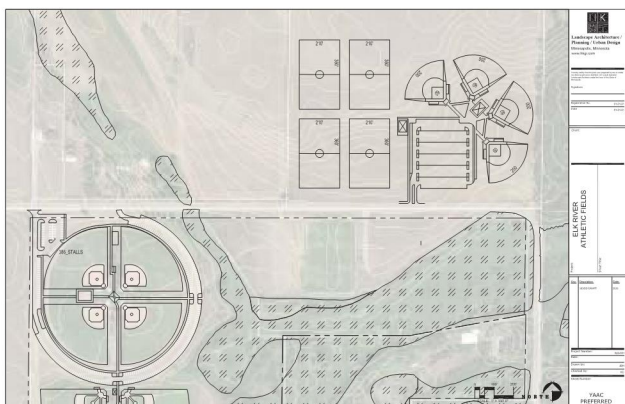
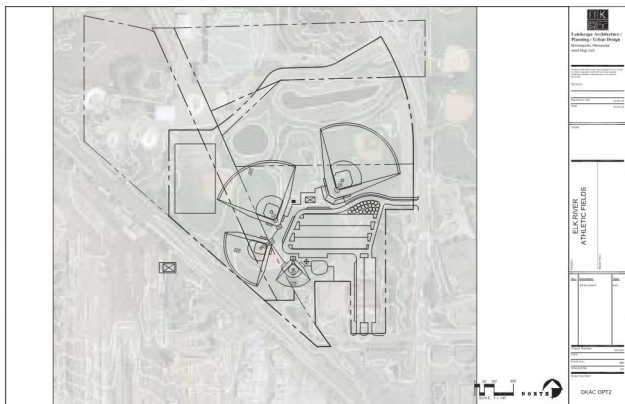
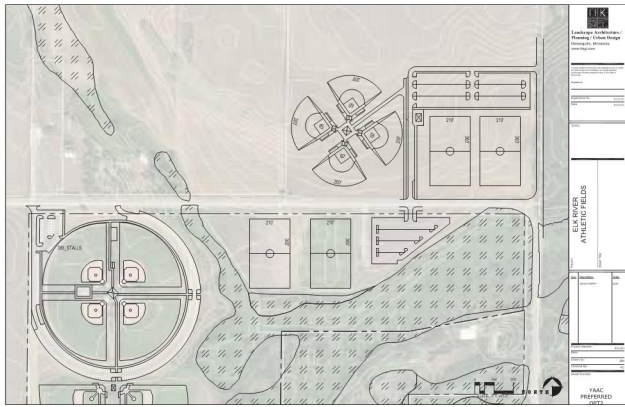
Utilization Study Findings

In the next 10-15 years:

- 3-4 60' ballfields with 200-225' fences
- 1-2 75' ballfields
- 1-2 90' ballfields
- 4 rectangle fields



Master Plans



Master Plan Initiatives

- Create a distinct “Home of” for each sport
- Add capacity to the system
- Help PTRC facilitate tournaments



Dave Anderson Athletic Complex

- Shifts from outmoded facility to rec focused extension of Orono Park/ City Hall/YMCA district







Dave Anderson Athletic Complex

- Removes 2 softball fields and replaces them with open field space that can accommodate up to a full sized rectangle field or multiple youth sized fields
- Improves safety considerations by reducing the number of softball fields and having play occur behind spectators
- Installation of drain tile in the outfields to reduce flooding/ponding that is occurring today

Dave Anderson Athletic Complex

- Addition of a centralized plaza and shelter to support recreational field use
- Creation of new parking to support field programming, as well as Orono Park
- Retains flexibility for potential long term change with adjacent land uses
- Needs short term safety issues addressed (netting)

Dave Anderson Athletic Complex

All costs are planning level to help the City budget based on contractor pricing. Additional design will further refine the costs. Costs may change based on inflation, labor & material costs, permitting, timing, and other factors.

Project Cost: \$1,985,000

Parking and Roads: \$760,000

Plaza and Trails: \$645,000

Other: \$235,000

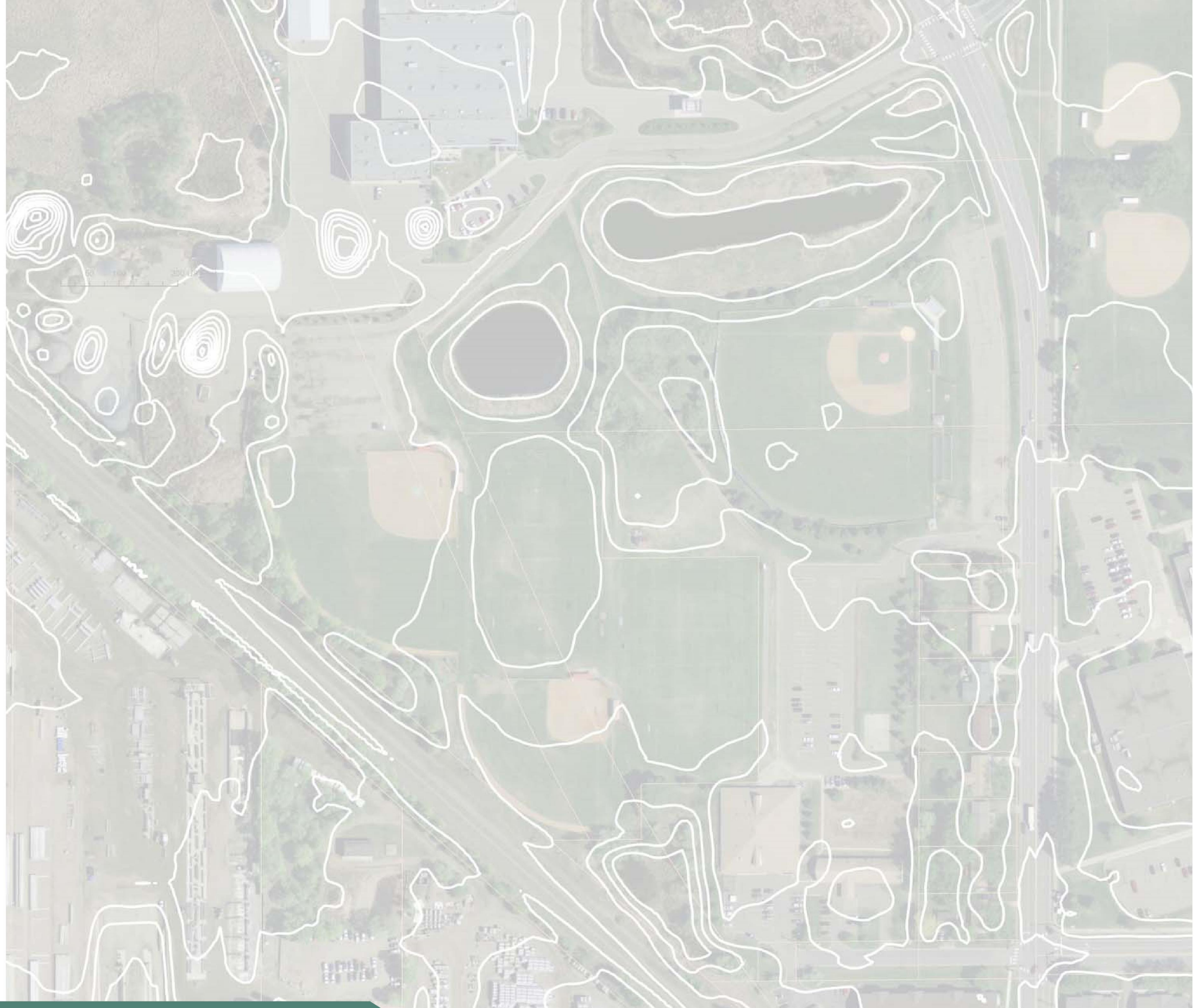
Soft Costs: \$165,000

10% Contingency: \$180,000

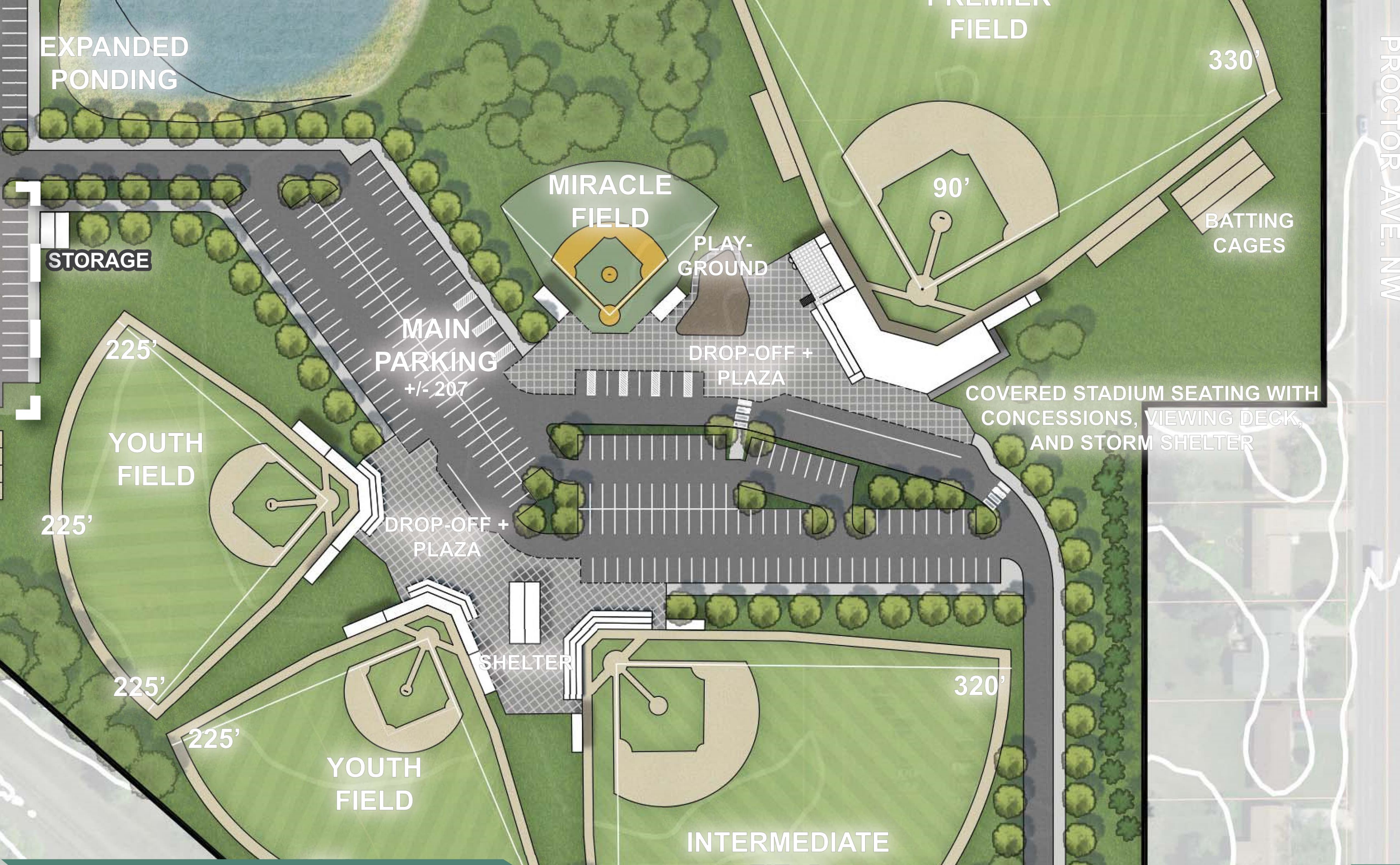
Oak Knoll Athletic Complex

- Creates a destination baseball complex for players of all ages and abilities anchored by a revamped, realigned, and improved premier ballfield









Oak Knoll Athletic Complex

- Anticipates the removal/relocation of Ivan Sand and the Education Technology Center
- Reconfigures access to Proctor Road and School Street, and creates a connection between the two entries
- New parking to support expanded ballfield program
- Plazas/shelters/gathering spaces to support ballfield programs

Oak Knoll Athletic Complex

- New, re-oriented full size (90' basepath) ballfield with grandstand seating
- Adds miracle field and inclusive playground
- Creation of two dedicated youth (60' basepath) baseball fields with grass infields
- Creation of a dedicated intermediate (70-80' basepaths) baseball field with grass infield

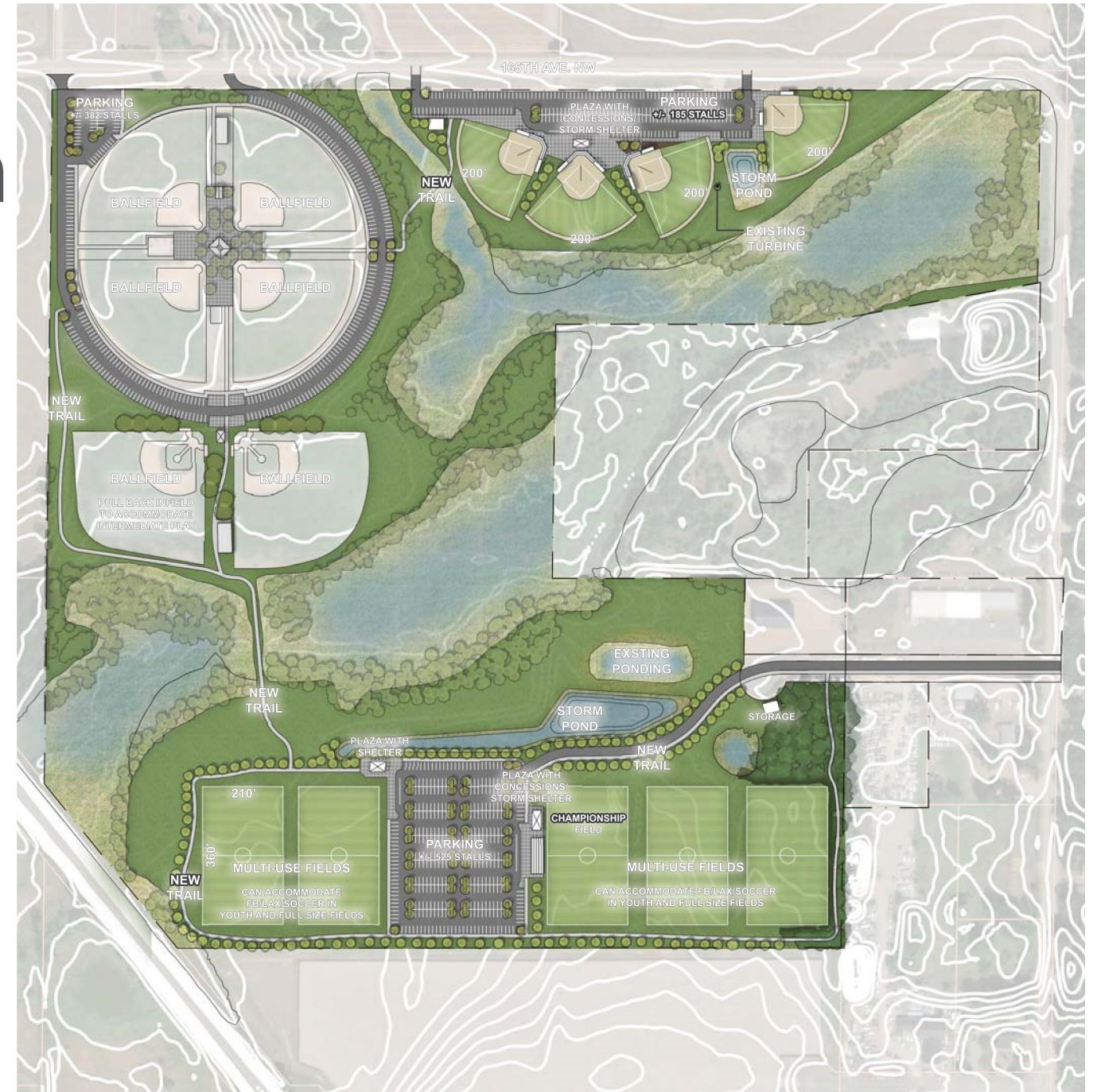
Oak Knoll Athletic Complex

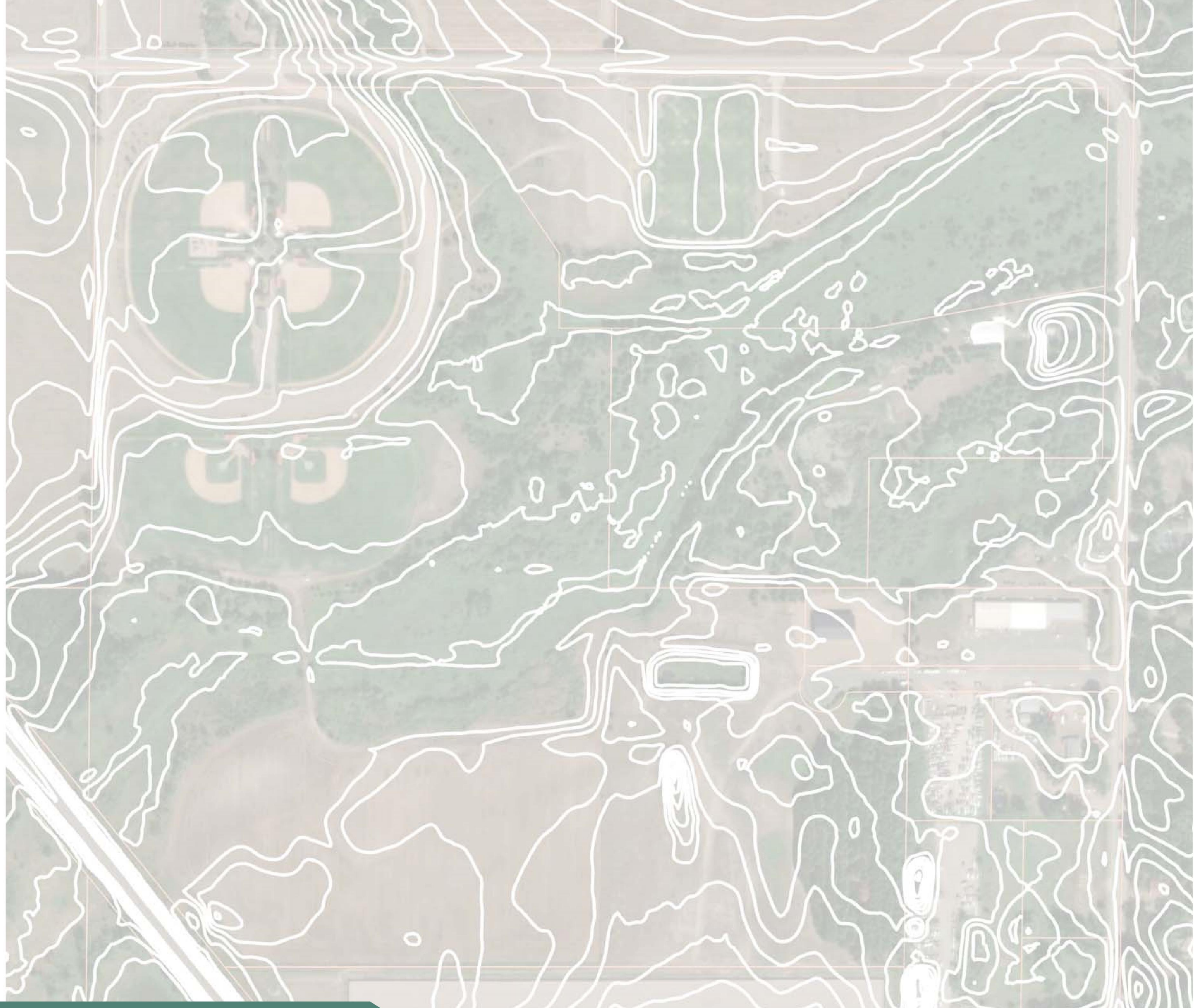
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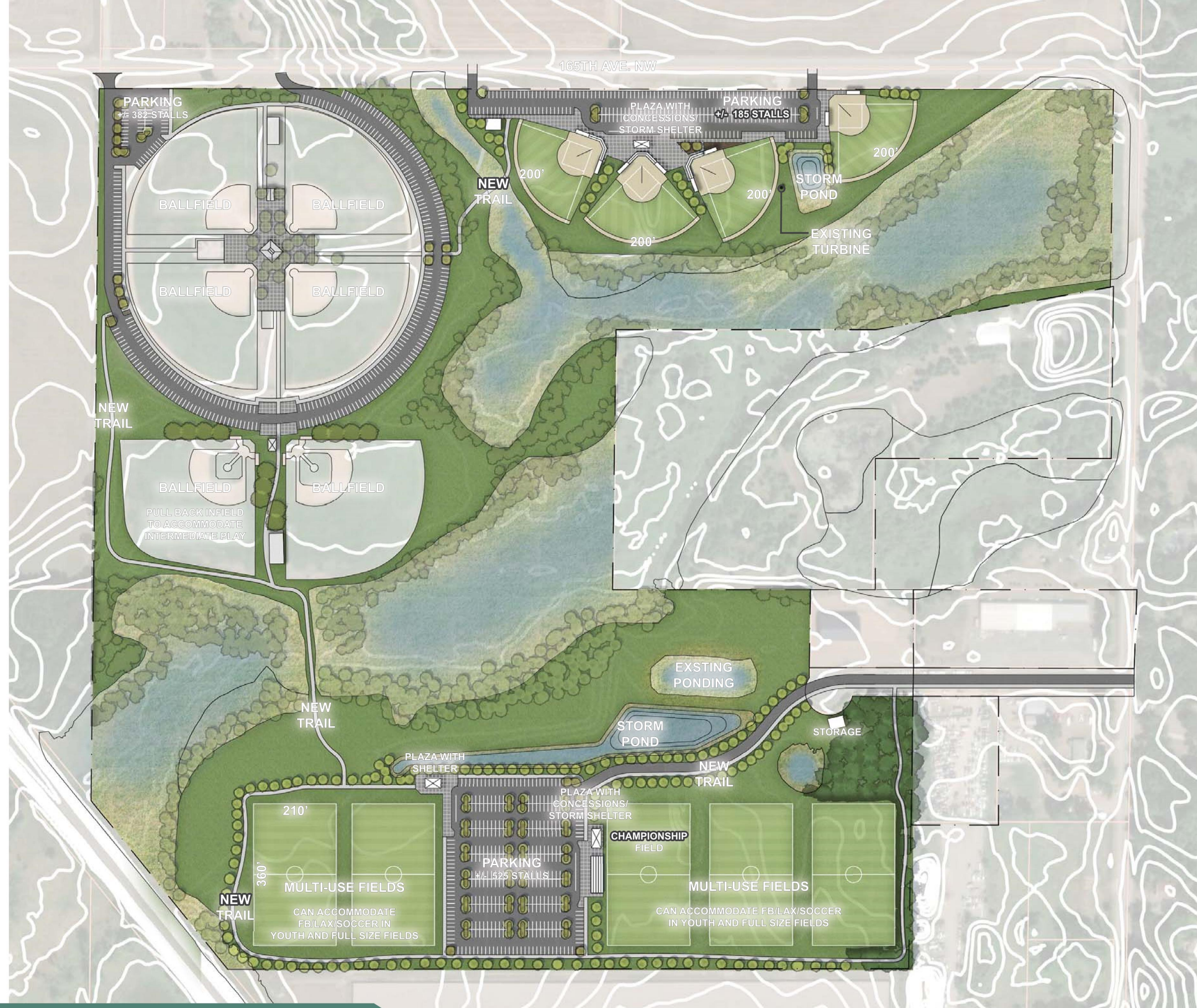
Project Cost:	\$17,645,000	
Premier Field:	\$3,125,000	<i>includes turf option</i>
Miracle Field and playground:	\$1,070,000	
Other fields:	\$1,410,000	
Parking and roads:	\$3,800,000	
Trails and plazas:	\$1,210,000	
Other costs:	\$2,175,000	
Soft Costs:	\$1,915,000	
20% Contingency:	\$2,940,000	

Plants and Things Recreation Complex

- Expansion and reconfiguration create dedicated homes for each youth sport user while also providing the flexibility to host larger tournaments









165TH AVE. NW

PLAZA WITH
CONCESSIONS/
STORM SHELTER

PARKING
+/- 185 STALLS

NEW
TRAIL

200'

200'

200'

200'

STORM
POND

EXISTING
TURBINE



Plants and Things Recreation Complex

- Relocates softball from DAAC and creates a 4 field dedicated complex with youth sized fields
- Softball tournaments could incorporate the existing pinwheel for an 8 field schedule
- Creates a new rectangle field destination that can accommodate football, lacrosse, and soccer with up to 5 full sized fields or many youth sized layouts

Plants and Things Recreation Complex

- Creates showcase opportunities for Plants and Things at plaza areas in each of the three areas
- Parking to accommodate extensive field use
- Each sport area would have concessions/restroom/storm shelter

Plants and Things Recreation Complex

- Existing ballfields would have parking paved
- The smaller 90' field would have infield grass pulled back to accommodate intermediate play
- New trails incorporated into the park

Plants and Things Recreation Complex

All costs are planning level to help the City budget based on contractor pricing. Additional design will further refine the costs. Costs may change based on inflation, labor & material costs, permitting, timing, and other factors.

Northwest Area Project Cost:	\$3,800,000
Parking and Roads:	\$1,650,000
Trails and Plazas:	\$1,030,000
Other Costs:	\$325,000
Soft Costs:	\$300,000
15% Contingency:	\$495,000

Plants and Things Recreation Complex

All costs are planning level to help the City budget based on contractor pricing. Additional design will further refine the costs. Costs may change based on inflation, labor & material costs, permitting, timing, and other factors.

Softball Area Project Cost:	\$8,785,000
Fields:	\$1,750,000
Parking and Roads:	\$1,660,000
Trails and Plazas:	\$1,265,000
Other Costs:	\$1,440,000
Soft Costs:	\$915,000
25% Contingency:	\$1,755,000

Plants and Things Recreation Complex

All costs are planning level to help the City budget based on contractor pricing. Additional design will further refine the costs. Costs may change based on inflation, labor & material costs, permitting, timing, and other factors.

Rectangle Fields Project Cost: \$15,550,000

Fields:	\$1,940,000
Parking and Roads:	\$3,945,000
Trails and Plazas:	\$2,075,000
Other Costs:	\$2,860,000
Soft Costs:	\$1,620,000
25% Contingency:	\$3,110,000

Plants and Things Recreation Complex

All costs are planning level to help the City budget based on contractor pricing. Additional design will further refine the costs. Costs may change based on inflation, labor & material costs, permitting, timing, and other factors.

Project Cost:	\$28,135,000
Northwest Section (wheel):	\$3,800,000
Softball:	\$8,785,000
South Section (rectangles):	\$15,550,000



Phasing

Minor investment in safety netting at DAAC

1 - Rectangle fields at YAC

(Allows for removal of existing YAC and OKAC fields)

2 - Softball Fields at YAC

(Allows for removal of DAAC fields and add grass at OKAC)

3 - Baseball Complex at OKAC

(Keep DAAC fields for baseball capacity while under construction? ISD timing?)

4 - Removal of Softball Fields at DAAC

(Could happen earlier with coordination: use of ISD/LJW fields, adult softball)

Potential Variables:

- Other projects (parks & development)
- Budget
- Coordination with ISD
- Fairgrounds

Utilization Study Findings

- Expansion for growing population and to add capacity/resiliency
- Preference for improved user (player and spectator) experience
- Desire for tournament capabilities
- Safety/Functionality concerns at DAAC (short term)

Tournament Capacity in One Location

Sport	Existing	Proposed	Notes
Youth Baseball (60')	4	8	DAAC or PTRC today, PTRC Proposed
Intermediate Baseball (75')	4	5	DAAC or PTRC today, PTRC Proposed
Full Sized Baseball (90')	2	2	PTAC for both, ISD adds capacity if OKAC
Fast Pitch Softball	4	8	DAAC or PTRC today, PTRC Proposed
Slow Pitch Softball	4	4	DAAC or PTRC today, PTRC Proposed
Rectangle Fields (FB/Lacrosse/Soccer)	2	5	OKAC today, PTRC Proposed

Utilization Study Findings

In the next 10-15 years:

- 3-4 60' ballfields with 200-225' fences
 - +1 60' baseball field
 - +2 60' softball fields
- 1-2 75' ballfields
 - +1 capacity, 1 more enhanced
- 1-2 90' ballfields
 - +0, but enhanced facilities
- 4 rectangle fields
 - +3, plus increased flexibility



ELK RIVER ATHLETIC FIELDS STUDY

Elk River Parks & Recreation
March 2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITY COUNCIL

- Mayor John J. Dietz
- Cory Grupa - Ward 1
- Matt Westgaard - Ward 2
- Mike Beyer - Ward 3
- Jennifer Wagner - Ward 4

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

- Dave Anderson
- Ryan Holmgren
- Greg Loidolt
- Mike Niziolek
- Mark Rathbun
- Andy Soltvedt
- David Williams

STAFF

Michael Hecker
Parks and Recreation Director

Tim Sevcik
Street and Park Superintendent

Warren Ellingworth
Recreation Coordinator

City of Elk River
13065 Orono Pkwy NW, Elk River
MN 55330

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Elk River is a growing community at the northwestern edge of the Twin Cities metro. The city is “Powered by Nature” and the importance of parks and recreation is enormous in this community. Many of Elk River’s families have been a part of the youth athletics associations and sports are part of what helps define Elk River’s character.

The city has worked hard to provide its youth and adult athletes with safe and fun athletic facilities. This is most recently evidenced in the development of the Furniture and Things Community Even Center multi-purpose facility, Lion John Weicht Park, and improvements at the schools. This study is to help understand the current and future needs of the community, protecting existing assets, and also serving as guide for new investments. This was completed through review of city qualitative and quantitative data, user group input, and consultant analysis of trends, demographic projections, and recreation standards.

Elk River continues to grow, in both overall and youth population. This is putting additional demand on the athletic facilities.

The study identified qualitative and quantity/capacity related needs and opportunities, both currently and anticipated. Needs identified included:



Supporting and strengthening the relationship between the schools and the city for the provision of athletic facilities in the community



Longer term expansion of capacity through construction of additional fields



Continuing to pursue tournaments that provide unique hosting experiences for the athletes and bring people to Elk River

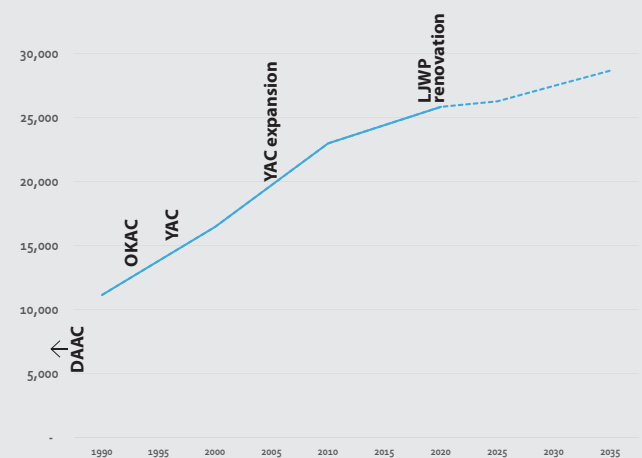


Safety and user experience improvements such as netting, restrooms, and other support facilities as well as improved maintenance (both city and school) of fields

This study recommends:

- Continue to maintain additional fields that can flex in order to accommodate weather and tournament induced peaks in demand.
- Improve facilities at DAAC to modernize the facility and improve user experience
- Continue to limit access after weather events or long winters.
- Add two 60’ and two 75’ baseball fields with grass infields. This could happen entirely at YAC or may include upgrades to the ballfields at Oak Knoll to dedicated baseball fields with grass infields.
- Addition of 1-2 90’ baseball fields in the community
- Continue to evaluate usage, and if baseball shifts to OKAC, increase availability for softball at YAC.
- Consider the development of an additional 3-4 small fields with 200-225’ fences in the long run (by 2035) to accommodate growing and future demand.
- Consider the development of 4 rectangle fields over the long term (by 2035) to accommodate growing and future demand.
- Explore bringing amenities to the field at YAC similar to what has been constructed at the ballfields. If the expansion occurs, it may be better to focus investments on support facilities in that area.
- Continue to work with youth associations to bring more tournaments to Elk River, particularly with weekend availability.
- Consider opportunities to double up scheduling, particularly when school users do not go later than 6 p.m.

Population Growth and Field Development in Elk River



Sources: US Census, Elk River Comprehensive Plan, ESRI



INTRODUCTION/STUDY PURPOSE

The City of Elk River is recognized for its progressive park system, providing a wide range of passive and active recreation experiences for residents and visitors alike. Within the city's parks, Elk River boasts a number of exceptional athletic facilities that have long supported the community and hosted many of the community's youth as they participated in sports. These are the facilities that have served as the backdrop for many residents' life lessons and lifelong memories.

Elk River has a commitment to ensuring that the people who live and visit the city have access to safe, quality fields. As a city "Powered by Nature" and focused on being a great place to live, athletic facilities are one of the important elements of the community. The city also knows that the whole community benefits when the youth have the positive influences associated with playing sports: exercise, teamwork, dedication, confidence, friends, and fun.

THIS STUDY

The City of Elk River is in the process of updating and addressing many of the athletics and park needs in the community. The past few years have seen significant investment in the Furniture and Things Community Event Center multipurpose facility, and the John Barth Softball Fields at Lion John Weicht Park. ISD 728 School District has recently upgraded many of their facilities as well at Elk River High School and the middle schools. At the same time, many of the field sports are at facilities that were built 20-30 years ago or longer, when population was much smaller and needs were different.

This study considers the current context of field sports in Elk River and the future trends affecting athletics and population to provide an approach to maintaining and expanding facilities through 2035.

This study's process drew from three main sources:

- The City of Elk River's first-hand experiences, policies, and field use data
- Surveys with user groups
- Consultant review of data, demographic projections, level of service standards, facility evaluations, and current trends in athletic facilities

YOUTH SPORTS

The city's youth programs are strong, with Elk River Youth Athletics (ERYA) leading the offerings in the community. Various Elk River youth athletic organizations provide a range of competition levels across different age ranges. The sports offered include:

- Baseball
- Softball
- Football (flag and tackle)
- Lacrosse

Elk River families that participate in soccer are typically doing so through a regional club such as Boreal FC that serves players across the northern suburbs.

Following an initial decline after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, participation numbers have rebounded well and are anticipated to continue to strengthen.

SCHOOL SPORTS

Outdoor athletics through the schools occur at the high school level. Elk River High School underwent extensive renovations in 2021 to improve the conditions at the play and practice fields.

Elk River High School has a number of dedicated field spaces with priority in the afternoons after school lets out. While some youth athletic programming occurs on these fields, they understandably have second priority after school needs, such as games and practices. Games especially are more likely to run later into the evening and bump youth sports.

ADULT

Adult softball does continue to utilize the Dave Anderson Athletic Complex. As participation numbers have declined significantly, the future of adult slow pitch softball in the community is in question. The number of teams and the number of nights has fallen off.

There are American Legion and VFW summer baseball teams in town. These teams typically utilize Hale's Field, which is a school district facility.

TOURNAMENTS/TRAINING

From time to time, the facilities are also utilized by outside groups and schools, whether that is for tournaments, camps, training, or other events. These are typically scheduled around the youth athletic organizations programming that have priority. Tournaments are an important economic development opportunity for communities and one of the ways associations fundraise to keep participant prices down.

OVERALL FINDINGS/ FACILITIES

EXISTING FACILITIES

YOUTH ATHLETIC COMPLEX (YAC)

Elk River's Youth Athletic Complex (YAC) is a set of fields dedicated for the community's young athletes. The pinwheel was built in ('91-'03) with the additions of the two south ballfields in 2004 and the lighted rectangle fields in 2006. Lights were added to the diamonds before the 2020 seasons.

YAC has expansion potential to the south of the existing facilities.

NO.	PRIMARY SPORT	SECONDARY SPORTS	LIT?	PRIORITY
1	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball	Yes	City
2	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball	Yes	City
3	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball	Yes	City
4	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball	Yes	City
5	90' Baseball		Yes	City
6	90' Baseball		Yes	City
7	Football/Lacrosse	Soccer	Yes	City

DAVE ANDERSON ATHLETIC COMPLEX (DAAC)

Dave Anderson Athletic Complex (DAAC) was built before 1985, replacing a baseball field that was there in the late 1950s. It has been updated over time. DAAC served as the hub of adult softball during its peak in the 1980s and 90s, and has continued to host adult softball games, while also providing a venue for youth baseball and softball. With infields that can flex between 60 and 90 foot basepaths, DAAC can host games for 12/13 year old baseball on 70'/75' basepaths, although it does have skinned infields. The 285' fences are adequate for a number of different uses, although adult men's slow pitch softball prefers a longer fence in the 300'-315' range. The dimensions and layout of the fields do create concerns related to foul balls and associated safety concerns.

With unfenced outfield foul territories, DAAC can be striped for football and lacrosse, although lacrosse is more challenging as the seasons overlap with the primary baseball & softball uses.

Parking at the site can be reliant on adjacent County Fairground parking. This is limited during the times in the summer when the fair is active. Furthermore, the long term location of the fair remains a question and it is unclear if DAAC can anticipate that support parking in the future.

A small baseball/softball field was removed in 2021 from the adjacent Orono Park as part of the redevelopment at that facility.

NO.	PRIMARY SPORT	SECONDARY SPORTS	LIT?	PRIORITY
1	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball, Flag Football	Yes	City
2	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball, Flag Football	Yes	City
3	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball, Flag Football	Yes	City
4	Softball/60' Baseball	75' Baseball, Flag Football	Yes	City



OAK KNOLL ATHLETIC COMPLEX (OKAC)

Oak Knoll Athletic Complex was developed in ('91-'03). It is now home to one intermediate sized ballfield, one smaller ballfield, and two rectangle fields. A full sized ballfield that used to be at the complex was removed in 2006 with the development of the public works site. ISD 728 owns and operates the adjacent Hales Field, which is not part of OKAC.

NO.	PRIMARY SPORT	SECONDARY SPORTS	LIT?	PRIORITY
1	75' Baseball		No	City
2	Softball/60' Baseball		No	City
3	Football/Lacrosse	Soccer	Yes	City
4	Football/Lacrosse	Soccer	Yes	City
Hale's Field is a School District Facility:				
	Baseball		No	School

LION JOHN WEICHT PARK

Lion John Weicht Park is the home of two recently constructed, high quality softball fields. These replaced a single softball field in 2020. These fields, now known as the John Barth Softball Fields are the home of Elk River High School's softball team.

NO.	PRIMARY SPORT	SECONDARY SPORTS	LIT?	PRIORITY
1	Softball		Yes	School
2	Softball		Yes	School

KLIEVER LAKE PARK

Kliever Lake Park currently hosts football and lacrosse practices. The park size is adequate for one rectangle field, but the parking situation is problematic. Youth soccer has been relocated due to parking concerns. This facility works for the time being, but is likely not a sustainable solution in the long term without additional parking facilities.



CITY PARKS

In addition to the city's main athletic facilities, some of the neighborhood parks have been built with facilities such as open playfields or other informal field spaces. These are typically not programmed for association uses except for recreation level play, younger athletes, or when needed as backup.

FURNITURE AND THINGS COMMUNITY EVENT CENTER (MULTI PURPOSE FACILITY)

While this study is primarily examining outdoor field space, it is worth noting that the city also built a field house in 2020 with 30,000 square feet of artificial turf and additional training elements such as batting cages.

This facility can be utilized during the winter or in case of inclement weather for practices.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

ISD 728 underwent major field renovations at Elk River High School (ERHS) and the middle schools. The renovation included the addition of synthetic turf and the reconstruction of other fields. The renovation resulted in the overall addition of one baseball field (from one to two) and the loss of two softball fields. ERHS's primary varsity baseball field, Hales Field, is across Proctor Avenue from the main campus and adjacent to OKAC.

The fields at ERHS are used by school teams and youth athletic associations.

Lincoln and Parker Elementary Schools have 4 softball fields together and Meadowvale has another two with the ability to stripe additional rectangle fields. Twin Lakes has another diamond and rectangle field. Similar to neighborhood parks, the elementary schools are not heavily programmed.

While the facilities are maintained by the schools, (rather than the city) many participants and families do not understand or care if the facility they are at is a school district facility or a city facility.

It is worth noting that the recent renovations at the high school temporarily created a very large shortage of field space in the community. This was around the same time that Lion John Weicht Park was undergoing renovations as well. As fields come back on line, that shortage is being reduced.

FUTURE EXPANSION

As the city continues to grow, parkland will need to be developed to meet the community's needs.

THE STATE OF YOUTH ATHLETICS

Nationally, youth athletics is changing dramatically. From spending to specialization, safety to expectations, the standards that facilities and associations are being held to keep rising.

SPENDING

Youth sports has become big business. Between equipment and fees, many families can expect to spend at least \$500 per athlete, per season. At higher levels of competition, such as traveling and club, that price tag can easily reach into the thousands of dollars. Scholarships, equipment swaps, and other programs may help blunt that cost for some families, but in general youth sports represent a real financial commitment. Spending on youth sports has risen approximately 55% from 2010 to 2017 and represented about \$19 billion in spending annually in the US before the pandemic. By population, this means that Minnesotans spend more than \$325 million per year on youth sports. This trend does not show signs of slowing down and spending is expected to continue to grow.

One of the reasons that traveling and club sports become more expensive so quickly is participation in tournaments. Tournament registration fees, gas, food, and lodging all get added to team fees and equipment spending.

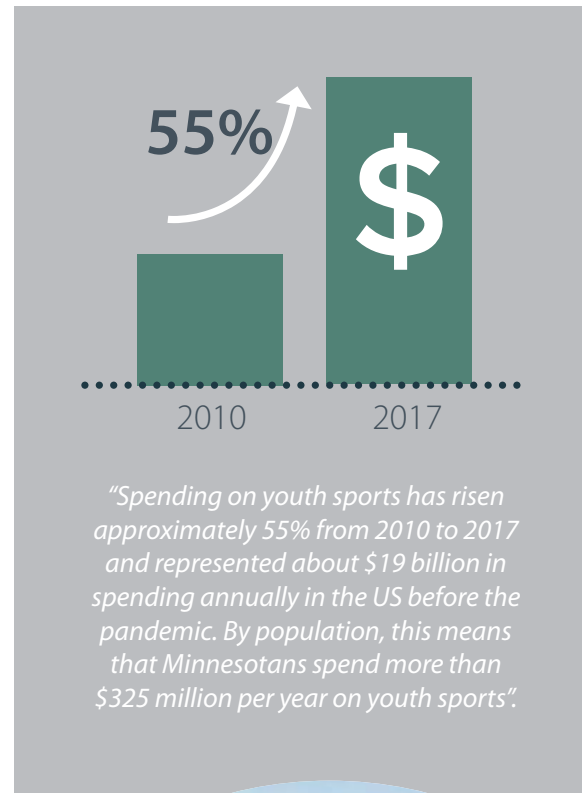
Many cities have recognized the value of youth athletics and see it as an economic development opportunity. Elite facilities draw families to a community to live and work. They also bring in outside spending through games and tournaments. The Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission (MASC) is a statewide group that has economic development as their primary purpose. MASC operates facilities across the state, including the National Sports Center in Blaine, plus 10 other facilities that bring tourism dollars to the state. A 2018 study found visitors to MASC facilities spent \$76.6 Million that year alone.

Elk River has developed a great facility for hosting baseball/softball tournaments in the Youth Athletic Complex. One issue from an economic development perspective is the location of the complex, relative to the commercial nodes in Elk River (visitors coming from the metro are more likely to stop in Ramsey or Otsego), and a lack of lodging options locally to help keep dollars in the community. The other facilities in Elk River are better positioned to capture food, drink, and gas spending. Due to the lack of fields in one location, there is not currently a great spot to host larger tournaments for lacrosse, football, or soccer.

SPECIALIZATION

More and more athletes are opting to specialize in specific sports. This may be due to really loving a particular sport, feeling pressure from coaches or parents to participate in off-season training or second seasons, or the perception that specialization will allow them to get better at sport specific skills. While research is showing benefits to cross training, trends still show specialization occurring more and more.

The implications of this for facilities are longer/more seasons for specific sports and demand for specialized training facilities and coaches. The City of Elk River has seen pressure for early and late season use on fields. Additionally, some of the diamonds are striped to accommodate other sports that use fields in the fall. This demand makes it more challenging for maintenance, resting fields, and protecting them when they are vulnerable during freeze/thaw cycles or after weather events. The recent addition of turf at the Furniture and Things Community Event Center has started to relieve some of the pressure, particularly after weather events.





TIME COMMITMENTS

Talk with many parents and one will realize the amount of time that is dedicated to supporting their children in youth athletics. Driving to and from practices, watching games, and volunteering is taking up more and more of a parent's time. When you introduce weekend tournaments, that commitment is even more prominent. As families spend more time at fields, ballparks, and other sports facilities, the demand for support facilities also grows. This may include things such as wi-fi, concessions/food, and playgrounds/splash pads for siblings.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

Between the financial and time commitments that many families make for youth athletics, it is not surprising that expectations about facilities and competition have risen. Families and athletic associations are requesting more of the park organizations that support them. This includes the quality of fields, the times that are available for practice, the support facilities, and the overall user experience.

SAFETY

Safety has always been an important consideration for youth athletics, but recent developments have shone a light on it even more. As we learn more about concussions and their long lasting impacts, there is a growing push to change and improve games to reduce the risk of head injuries. While football is the most cited sport, changes have also come to other sports as well. Heading in soccer and hitting at the younger levels in hockey and lacrosse have both been subject to recent rule changes and shifts in how sports are played and practiced. This has also led to increased requirements for the training of coaches and in some cases, the introduction of baseline testing for athletes.

As specialization increases, so does the potential for specific use injuries. The University of Wisconsin has led the research on specialization and the relationship to injuries. One of their key findings is that youth athletes that only participate in a single sport for a larger portion of the year are more likely to suffer repetitive use/overuse injuries and a higher prevalence of lower body injuries in general. This has the potential to change training practices for athletes, particularly in sports that have multiple seasons.

Since 2020, the impact of COVID-19 has been felt in athletics. The need for social distancing has changed the way dugouts and sidelines are designed and operate. Moving forward, new facilities may expand these areas to accommodate the requirement for more room. Indoor facilities will need to pay more attention to air circulation and filtration. Players are also being tested and it is not uncommon for athletes to have to miss competitions and training if they are exposed or infected. The impacts of this time off and the potential cardiac impacts necessitate an informed approach to bringing players back into game shape.

Facilities are also improving with regard to safety. While some older folks may brag about playing on the sandlot with rocks and packed dirt, playing surfaces are much improved and players and parents are demanding safer fields. Fields are more closely managed to ensure a more consistent and safer surface. This can include the use of sand based fields, new ag-lime technologies, irrigation, improved drainage, warning tracks, and artificial turf.



DIVERGENCE OF COMPETITION LEVELS

While many youth sports are becoming more competitive and this is driving many of the expectations about associations, facilities, and investment, it is important that communities retain a variety of offerings for youth. Rec leagues provide a lower cost/lower time investment option that still comes with the many benefits of youth sports participation, and may be especially important for kids from lower income households or those without family connections to athletics. For families making less than \$50,000 per year, cost is the most common reason given for why their kids do not play organized sports according to the Aspen Institute. For the traveling and club teams, rec/in-house teams are important for getting players into a sport and supporting player development.

The terminology varies from sport to sport but there are three main levels of competition:

- In-House/Recreational
- Traveling
- Club

The parents of most children playing today played in local team sports often competing against players from their own city or region, depending on the sport. The expansion of traveling and club teams has been a significant shift in the youth sports landscape in the last generation. Elk River's approach has been to prioritize community-based programs, and recognize that there will be some additional demand for facilities from outside organizations or associations.

“ For families making less than \$50,000 per year, cost is the most common reason given for why their kids do not play organized sports. Rec/in-house teams are important for getting players into a sport and supporting player development ”

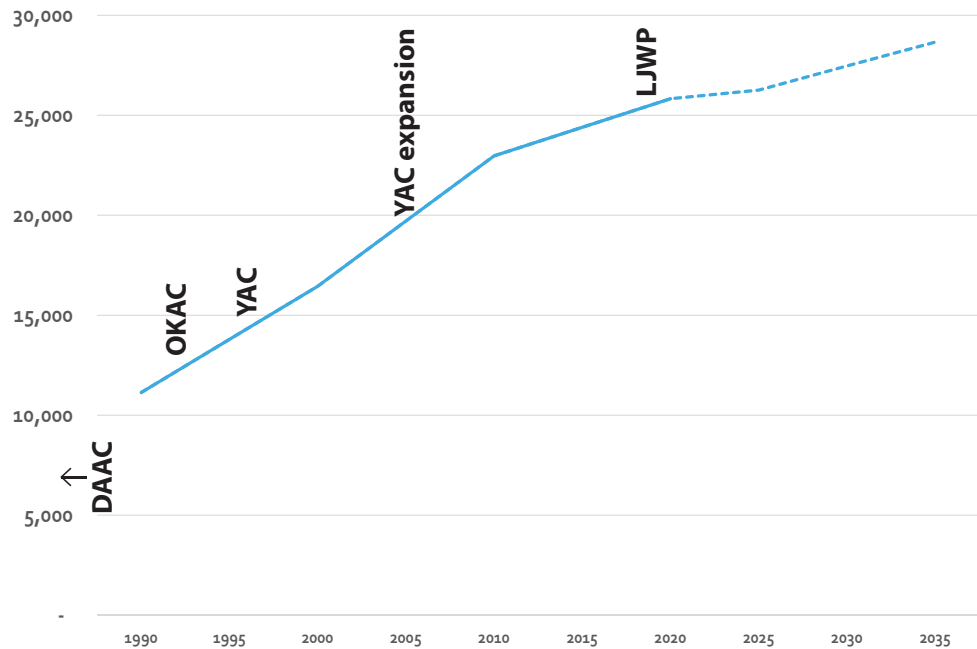




DEMOGRAPHICS

Elk River has grown significantly since the 1970s and continues to grow steadily. The city still has significant buildable land and is projected to continue to add population for the foreseeable future.

When DAAC was built, Elk River was fewer than 9,000 people. The initial development of OKAC and YAC occurred in the 1990s as the city grew from 11,143 to 16,447 and was about half the size it currently is. In 2005 when YAC was expanded, the city was still under 20,000 people. Since then the city has added more than 6,000 residents and is anticipated to add at least 2,300 more by 2035.



Sources: US Census, Elk River Comprehensive Plan, ESRI

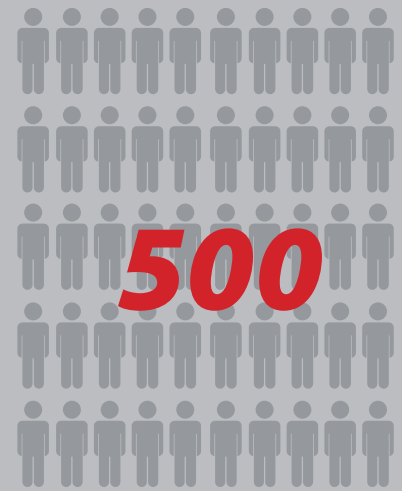
	YEAR	POPULATION (APPROX.)	POPULATION CHANGE TO 2022 (APPROX.)	POPULATION CHANGE TO 2035 (APPROX.)
Building of Dave Anderson Athletic Complex (DAAC)	<1985	9,000	17,400	19,700
Building of Youth Athletic Complex (YAC)	1997	15,000	11,400	13,700
Building of Oak Knoll Athletic Complex (OKAC)	Early 1990s	13,000	13,400	15,700
Expansion of Youth Athletic Complex	2005	19,700	6,700	9,000
Renovations to Lion John Weicht Park	2020	25,800	600	2,900

With regard to youth demographics, Elk River continues to add younger residents. Since 2010, the youth population has grown by approximately 400. This is expected to continue to over 500 by 2027. Growth has largely come in the 8-18 year olds rather than at the younger levels. This trend is expected to shift somewhat to younger age levels leading the way, while the older age groups stay stable or grow slightly. This slowdown in the teenage demographics is a national trend, and not unique to Elk River.

This expanding age group in the 2022 to 2027 time frame will be reaching athletic participation ages in the following 5-10 years, and athletic facility demands are likely to grow even more then.

AGE	POP. 2010	POP. 2022	TREND FROM 2010 TO 2022	COHORT FROM 2010 TO 2022	POP. 2027	TREND FROM 2022 TO 2027	COHORT FROM 2022 TO 2027
<1	357	355	-2		378	23	
1	342	346	4		366	20	
2	390	388	-2		407	19	
3	353	381	28		393	12	
4	417	410	-7		423	13	
5	385	384	-1		393	9	38
6	379	396	17		396	0	50
7	402	387	-15		389	2	1
8	367	390	23		384	-6	3
9	372	388	16		386	-2	-24
10	355	396	41		401	5	17
11	347	403	56		398	-5	2
12	355	390	35	33	397	7	10
13	345	386	41	44	393	7	3
14	338	376	38	-14	383	7	-5
15	351	391	40	38	383	-8	-13
16	345	367	22	-50	365	-2	-38
17	335	370	35	-15	372	2	-18
18	308	329	21	-50	337	8	-49
TOTALS	8853	9255			9371		

Sources: US Census, ESRI



"Since 2010, the youth population has grown by approximately 400 people. This is expected to continue to over 500 by 2027. This expanding age group in the 2022 to 2027 time frame will be reaching athletic participation ages in the following 5-10 years, and athletic facility demands are likely to grow even more then."



FIELD RATIOS

In order to evaluate field needs to ensure an adequate supply moving forward, field to population ratios are considered. This study is considering growth through 2035. The last major expansion of field space was in 2005 with the addition of full sized baseball and rectangle fields. This table examines how the city stacks up now compared with after its most recent expansion and following projected growth through 2035. The goal of the city should be to proactively meet current and future demand, rather than remaining in “catch up” mode.

Generally, the study is evaluating competition level fields at the main facilities. Both city and city + school numbers are considered. The prevalence of school use on specific fields also impacts desired ratios as there is some overlap, but use may be limited for non-school athletics.

The surplus/ratio deficit is a good starting point, but because of flexibility and other options, this only informs the recommendation strategies, instead of being a hard and fast rule.

This table is measuring the number of “competition level” fields in the community. There is some objectivity to this classification, but generally it includes fields that have the necessary infrastructure to be used in a game setting with appropriate dimensions for the sport at a level beyond practice or basic recreation. For example, a field that is only big enough to accommodate T-Ball or U-8 soccer would not be included. This may include elements like outfield fences, dugouts, areas for spectators, and adequate parking nearby. Baseball field dimensions vary, but outfield lengths were evaluated against the typical basepath dimensions for age.

Rectangle fields tend to be more flexible, but needed to have a long dimension of at least 330 feet, preferably 360-400’ by at least 210’ plus some spill over space (for benches, out of bounds balls, etc.). Rectangle fields are sometimes split into multiple youth fields with smaller dimensions, but in this instance are not counted as multiple fields.



	FIELD TYPE	FIELDS	CURRENT RATIO 1 FIELD/___ POP. (26,400)	2005 RATIO 1 FIELD/___ POP. (19,700)	DESIRED RATIO 1 FIELD/___ POP.	2035 RATIO 1 FIELD/___ POP. (28,659) NO BUILD SCENARIO	SURPLUS/ DEFICIT IN 2035 NO BUILD SCENARIO	
CITY ONLY	90' Baseball Diamonds	2	13,200	9,850	10,000	14,330	1 Short	YAC (2)
	75' Baseball Diamonds	1 ^A	26,400	19,700	15,000 ^B	28,659	1 Short	OKAC (1)
	60' Softball/ Youth Baseball	11 ^C	2,400	1,791	2,000	2,605	3-4 Short	DAAC (4), YAC (4), OKAC (1), LJW (2)
	Full Sized Rectangle Fields	3	8,800	6,567	4,000 ^D	9,553	4-5 Short	OKAC (2), YAC (1)
CITY + SCHOOLS	90' Baseball Diamonds	4	6,600	4,925	5,000	7,165	2 Short	YAC (2), Hales, Salk
	75' Baseball Diamonds	1 ^A	26,400	19,700	10,000 ^B	28,659	2 Short	OKAC (1)
	60' Softball/ Youth Baseball	14 ^C	1,886	1,407	1,500	2,047	5-6 Short	DAAC (4), YAC (4), OKAC (1), LJW (2), VMS (3)
	Full Sized Rectangle Fields	9 ^E	2,933	2,189	2,000	3,184	5-6 Short	OKAC (2), YAC (1), ERHS (1), VMS (2), SMS(2), TLES (1)

A - DAAC (4) and YAC (4) can both accommodate 75' basepaths, but are primarily used for 60'. None have grass infields.

B - Dedicated 75' fields - the ability of DAAC and YAC 60' fields to flex allows for flexibility. School renovations reduced capacity.

C - No 60' city field has a grass infield. A newly re-worked 60' field at Vandenberg has a grass infield.

D - This ratio varies from the 2005 ratio due to the rise of lacrosse, soccer, and flag football since that time.

E - 5 Rectangle fields are currently programmed for competition. An additional 4 fields are typically practice fields, but could accommodate soccer/ lacrosse games at full size. They do not have goalposts for football.

Sources: Elk River, HKGi, NRPA



PEER COMMUNITIES

Working from a review of fields in neighboring communities, this study compares the number of fields on a per capita basis. Because communities have different approaches regarding what is provided by the city vs. the school district, the study looks at both measures. Although school district lines do not always mirror city limits, the cities are the ones that are measured for population purposes.

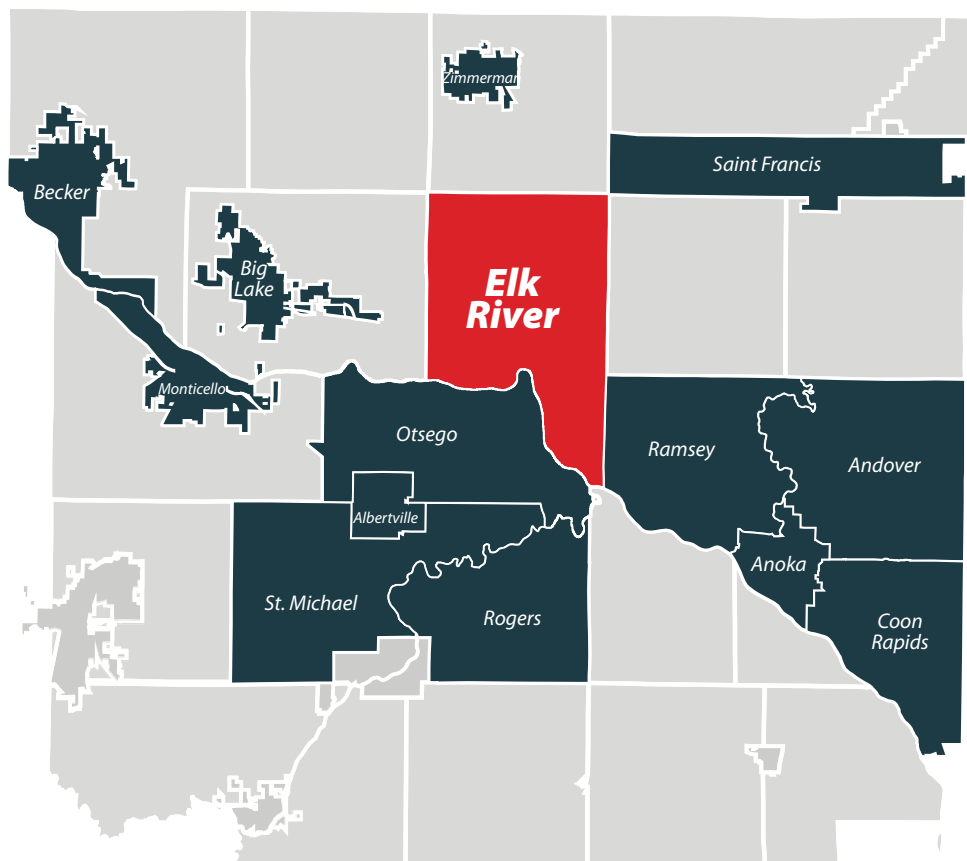
FINDINGS

Elk River as a city is slightly ahead of the curve when it comes to full sized baseball fields. This is also the most volatile metric, as 5 of the 12 cities do not provide full sized fields. The city is about average when including school fields.

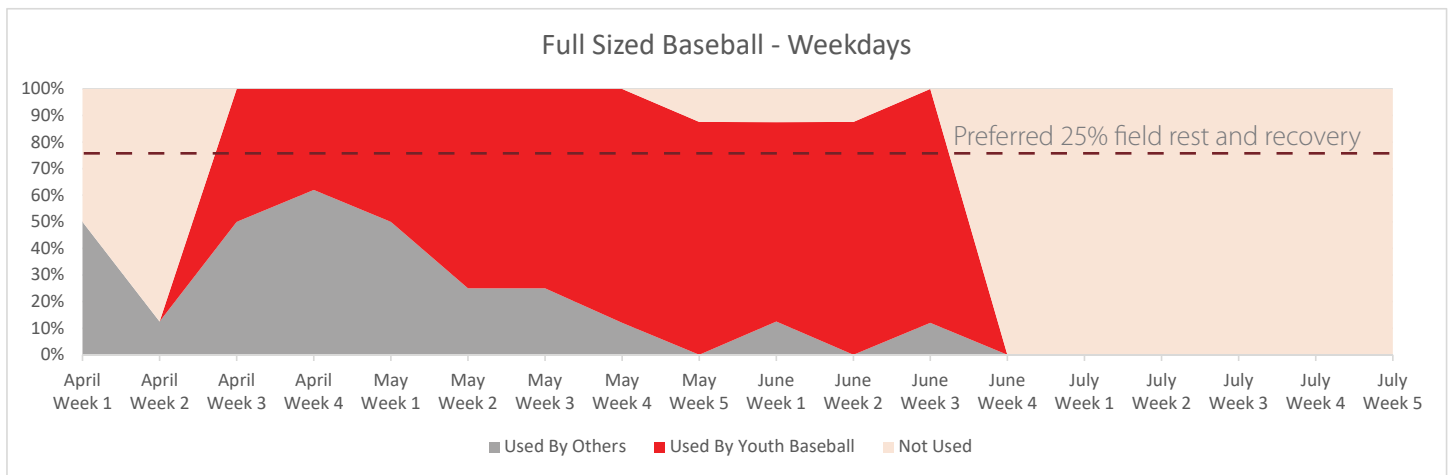
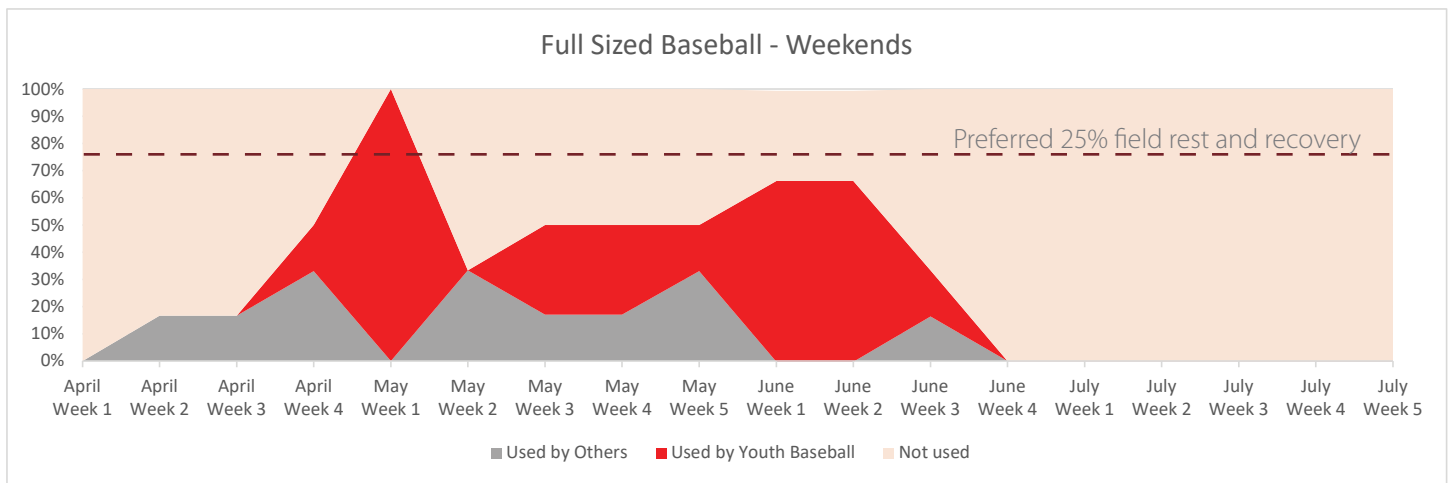
Elk River is in the middle of the pack compared with neighboring communities in the provision of softball & youth baseball fields, as well as rectangle fields. The community falls behind when considering city and school fields combined.

Similar to field ratio analysis, peer comparisons are not perfect (for example: some cities have stronger programs in specific sports and need the extra fields), but they do help paint a picture of how the community stacks up relative to their neighbors.

These ratios are also a snapshot in time. As neighboring communities grow, they are continuing to add facilities.



How to Read The Box & Whisker Diagrams												
The chart used illustrates the data separated into quartiles, with "0" at the location of "fewer fields" The farthest right bar illustrates the minimum value of the communities considered. The right side of the box illustrates the 25th percentile - 25% have fewer, 75% have more The long bar illustrates the 50th percentile - half have fewer, half have more The left side of the box illustrates the 75th percentile - 75% have fewer, 25% have more The farthest left bar illustrates the maximum value of the communities considered. The red circle illustrates where Elk River sits on the continuum												
		ELK RIVER	ROGERS-OTSEGO	ANDOVER	ST. MICHAEL-ALBERTVILLE	COON RAPIDS	ANOKA-RAMSEY	MONTICELLO	ZIMMERMAN	ST. FRANCIS	BIG LAKE	BECKER
Population (2021)		26,359	35,068	33,428	26,754	64,519	47,793	14,106	6,538	8,264	11,178	5,065
CITY (OR CITIES) ONLY	Full Size Baseball (Primarily 90' basepaths, typically grass infields, permanent mound at 60'6" outfield fences or temporary system) *Andover and Ramsey have primary 75' grass infield facilities included	2	0	2*	2	2	9*	0	1	0	0	1
	Population Per Field	13,180		16,714	13,377	32,260	5,310		6,538			5,065
	Elk River: 1 / 13,180 (#4 of 11)											
	Softball and Youth Baseball Works for 60' basepaths - skinned infields (SB/BB) or grass infields (BB), may have adult softball fences (275-315') or fastpitch softball fences (200')	12	9	20	5	17	10	7	3	2	1	3
	Population Per Field	2,197	3,896	1,671	5,351	3,795	4,779	2,015	2,179	4,132	11,178	1,688
	Elk River: 1 / 2,197 (#5 of 11)											
	Rectangle Fields (Football/Lacrosse/Soccer)	3	7	12	2	2	10	1	0	1	0	2
	Population Per Field	8,786	5,010	2,786	13,377	32,260	4,779	14,106		8,264		2,533
	Elk River: 1 / 8,786 (#6 of 11)											
CITY AND SCHOOL DISTRICT	Full Size Baseball (Primarily 90' basepaths, typically grass infields, permanent mound at 60'6" outfield fences or temporary system) *Andover and Ramsey have primary 75' grass infield facilities included	4	4	5*	4	3	11*	2	3	4	2	3
	Population Per Field	6,590	8,767	6,686	6,689	21,506	4,345	7,053	2,179	2,066	5,589	1,688
	Elk River: 1 / 6,590 (#6 of 11)											
	Softball and Youth Baseball Works for 60' basepaths - skinned infields (SB/BB) or grass infields (BB), may have adult softball fences (275-315') or fastpitch softball fences (200')	15	13	20	13	19	11	11	6	6	8	8
	Population Per Field	1,757	2,698	1,671	2,058	3,396	4,345	1,282	1,090	1,377	1,397	633
	Elk River: 1 / 1,757 (#7 of 11)											
	Rectangle Fields (Football/Lacrosse/Soccer)	9	22	22	20	8	17	7	3	8	9	5
	Population Per Field	2,929	1,594	1,519	1,338	8,065	2,811	2,015	2,179	1,033	1,242	1,013
	Elk River: 1 / 2,929 (#10 of 11)											



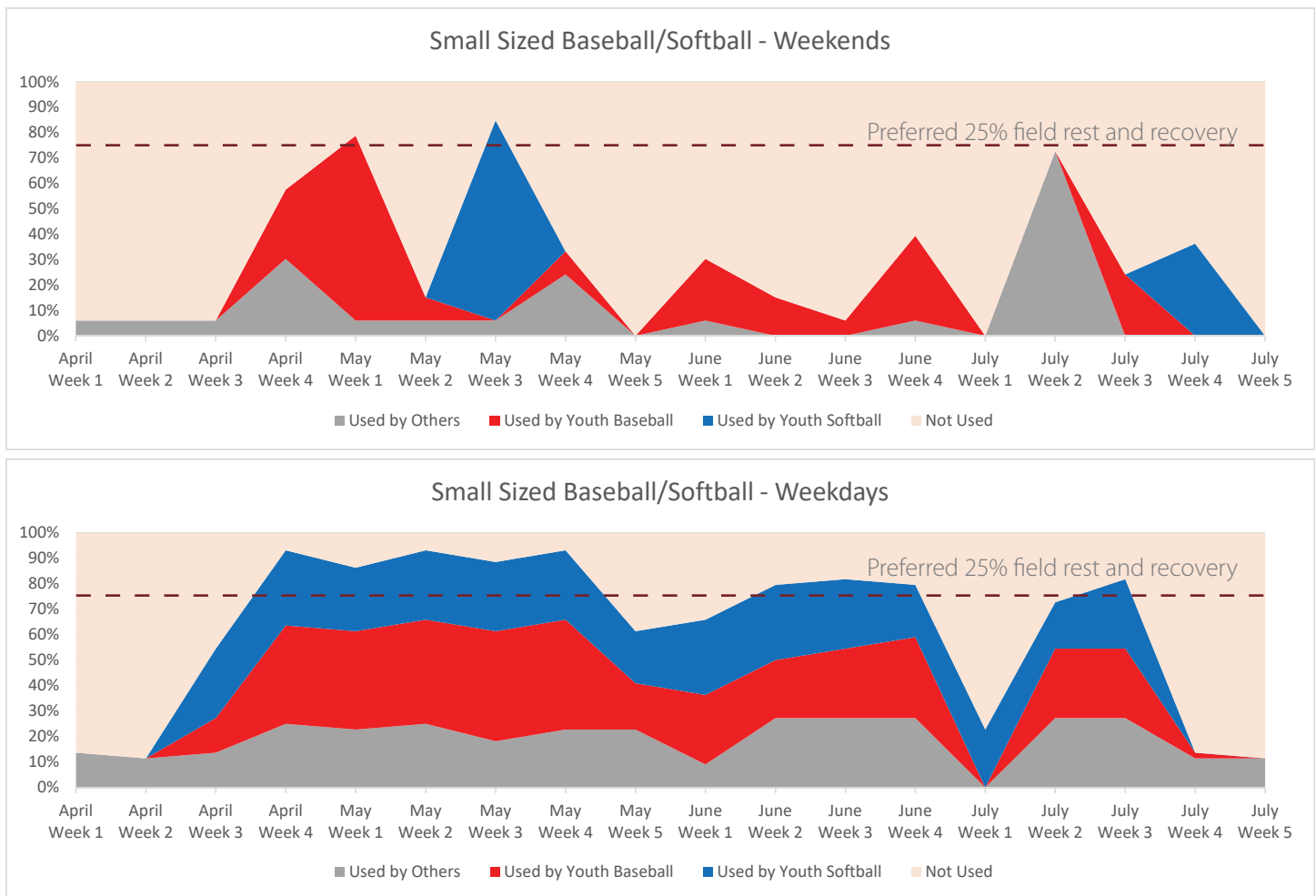
FULL SIZED AND 75' BASEBALL FIELDS

The current baseball fields are well utilized, with little to no weekday capacity until July. In part this is due to heavy school use of city facilities. One issue with this level of programming is that when late winters and rainouts occur and cause delays, it becomes very tough to make up postponed games.

The two lighted 90' fields at YAC are better than many surrounding communities, especially when compared to other "non-varsity" fields.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop 2 dedicated 75' baseball fields with grass infield and appropriate outfield dimensions. This could be an upgrade to the large ballfield at Oak Knoll (with the addition of lights) or be located as part of a future YAC expansion.
- Develop an additional 1-2 full sized (90' basepath) fields in the community.
- Continue to maintain YAC 5 & 6 as high quality 90' basepath fields.
- If additional demand exists beyond current use for weekday fields, particularly in May and June, consider doubling use by having an early session and later session. This is more feasible as school users typically do not go very late unless there are games.
- Continue to maintain additional fields that can flex in order to accommodate weather and tournament based peaks in demand.
- Within the community, there is confusion about the status of Hales Field. It is school district property and operated by the district. Its location adjacent to Oak Knoll Athletic Complex leads some to think that the field is part of the city's park system. It is also clear that the field is in need of updating and addressing deferred maintenance. This has been the case for some time.



SMALL SIZED BASEBALL/SOFTBALL FIELDS

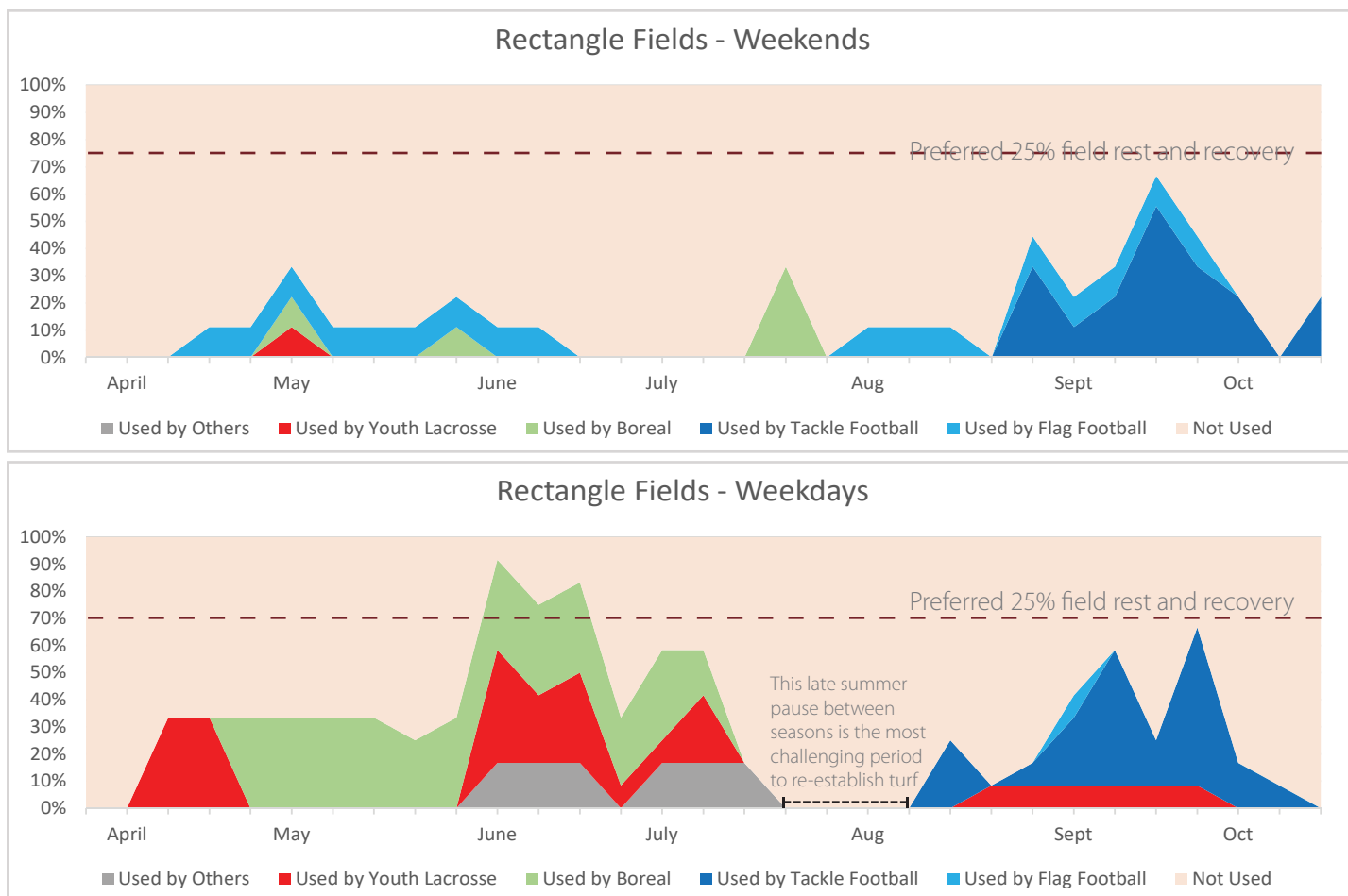
Softball and youth baseball are both strong programs in Elk River, and are using much of the available field space in the community. This extends from late April through July. While a small amount of capacity is shown for the weekdays, having a small amount of buffer is helpful for rescheduling games.

There have been some questions from the community about whether the fields that are reserved are really being utilized, or if the pricing structure simply incentivizes associations to reserve as much field space as they can, even if they are not going to use it. While it probably does occur, this does not appear to be the main driver limiting supply.

It is worth noting that the city does not have many fields with smaller fence dimensions. Only one at OKAC and the two softball fields (which are prioritized to the schools) are at the smaller dimensions. Temporary fencing is available at most fields and used in some instances. This is a good intermediate step, but dedicated small fields are preferable from a user experience perspective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- When the Lion John Weicht fields are being used for practice by the schools, schedule a second set of practices for youth softball.
- Develop at least 2 dedicated 60' baseball fields with grass infields. This could be an upgrade to the small ballfield at Oak Knoll (with the addition of lights) or be located as part of a future YAC expansion. These fields should have 200'-225' fences.
- Continue to maintain YAC 1-4 as high quality small baseball/softball fields. If OKAC changes to a dedicated baseball facility, increase availability for softball at YAC.
- Consider the development of an additional 3-4 small fields with 200-225' fences in the long run (by 2035) to accommodate growing and future demand.
- Improve facilities at DAAC to modernize the facility and improve user experience
 - Permanent restrooms and upgrades to shelters/buildings
 - Netting at spectator areas



RECTANGLE FIELDS

The rectangle fields (football, lacrosse, soccer) are slightly underutilized in Elk River during the spring and summer. While the graphs above show limited use, that is somewhat helpful for resting fields. It is also worth noting that unlike diamonds, which see heavy pressure for only one season, the rectangle fields are used consistently from first thaw to late fall. The additional use is detrimental to the conditions of the fields, particularly at OKAC as lacrosse and football are harder on larger areas of the fields (soccer causes localized “hot spots” but does not impact the entire field like lacrosse and football). Growth in field demand is expected. Lacrosse participation is recovering strongly. Boreal Soccer is a regional club and as such, uses fields around the north metro. The club was started in 2020 and based on trends, it is likely to expand significantly over the upcoming years. To some extent it has probably limited its requests for fields as the city navigated the recent construction process. As they grow, soccer will likely bring additional demand beyond the limited current use.

The data shown is also for spring/summer and one of the larger users is a fall user in youth football, both with tackle and flag football. While tackle football participation has dropped below the levels from 2015-2018, the numbers appear to have stabilized somewhat. At the same time, flag football has expanded rapidly. Lacrosse and football are both heavy users of the school fields as well, particularly for practices.

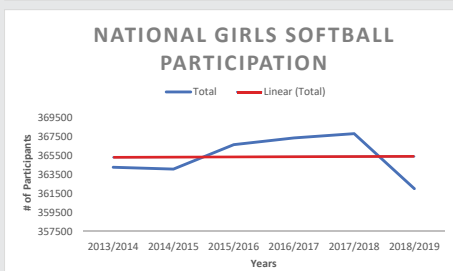
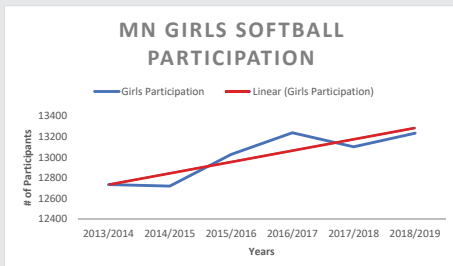
One of the primary issues with the city’s current field situation is that there are very few rectangle fields if something happens to one of them. If there is an issue, the city’s capacity becomes much smaller. The few fields are also dispersed, so it is not feasible to host tournaments for football, lacrosse, or soccer. This is a challenge for these programs who would like to bring competitions to Elk River and use these events for fundraising. Nationally, demand for rectangle fields continues to grow rapidly and Elk River also is in the back half of the pack when compared with peer communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

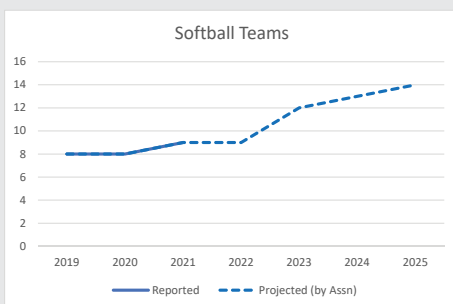
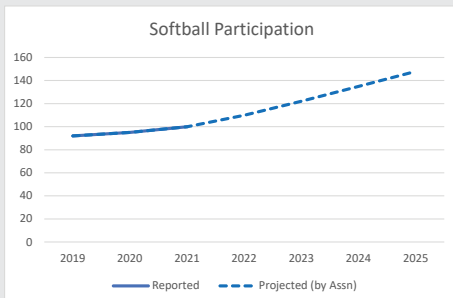
- Consider the development of 4 fields over the long term (by 2035) to accommodate growing and future demand.
- Continue to limit access after weather events or long winters. With only 3 fields in the city’s system, having one go off line due to being torn up would cause significant issues.
- Explore bringing amenities to the field at YAC similar to what has been constructed at the ballfields. If the expansion occurs, it may be better to focus investments on support facilities in that area.
- While Kliever is a reasonable overflow location for occasional needs, the parking and support facilities suggest the city should not rely on it for regular programming.

SOFTBALL

STATE AND NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATION RATES



ELK RIVER YOUTH ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION RATES



FINDINGS

Youth Softball is a steady to growing sport in Elk River. The association anticipates strong growth. For the purposes of this study, the expectations are tempered somewhat to a moderated growth, based on the association getting its footing after separating from ROSA and continued demographic growth.

Adult softball has declined in popularity from a high in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This slide has continued as players age and there are more demands on players' time. It is unlikely that the trend will reverse. The long term viability of continuing adult softball is in question.

In Elk River, there is the perception among softball players and families that the program does not get access to some of the same fields as baseball. The creation of two ballfields at Lion John Weicht park has created a destination with outstanding facilities. The school district does retain priority scheduling on these fields for the high school teams.

DAAC is a solid facility, but at this point is showing its age. There are not permanent restrooms at DAAC and the lighting and shelters are nearing the point of needing to be replaced. Softball would like to see improvements similar to those at YAC.

It is also worth noting that the two fields that are sized for fastpitch have school district priority. Other smaller fields would be welcome for the association.



BASEBALL

OVERALL

Baseball participation in Elk River has been declining slightly. The association is optimistic about their opportunities to begin growing again. For the purposes of this study, maintaining of existing numbers is assumed. There are also other teams such as the VFW and Legion teams in Elk River.

The desire for fall ball is also growing and this would require additional field time during historically unprogrammed seasons. Additional use would challenge the quality of the fields by putting them to use when they are typically resting.

SMALL FIELDS

The City of Elk River does have a number of flex fields that can accommodate younger baseball players on 60' fields, the city does not have fields designed for younger players. There are no grass infield ballfields, and most of the skinned infield fields are at 285-315 foot outfields. The perception among baseball users is that there are not enough fields, but this may be in part due to recent construction projects and maintenance issues taking fields offline in the past few years.

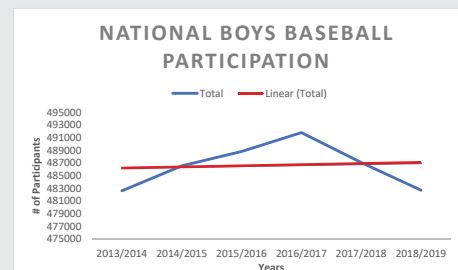
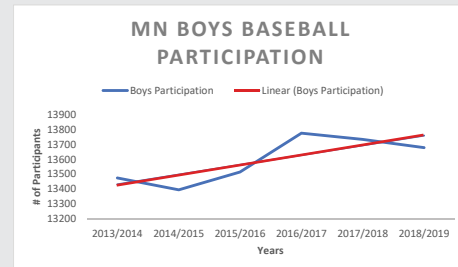
MIDDLE FIELDS

Providing dedicated baseball fields with grass infields for the 12-13 year old teams is a challenge for Elk River, but also many other communities. This is a challenging age because the 52' mound/75' basepaths are only used for this specific age group. While a number of the skinned fields can accommodate this, the baseball use always feels secondary, especially when the fence dimensions are longer than desired.

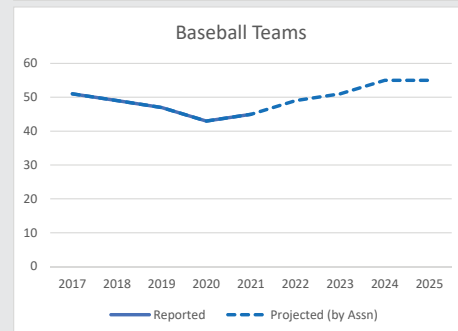
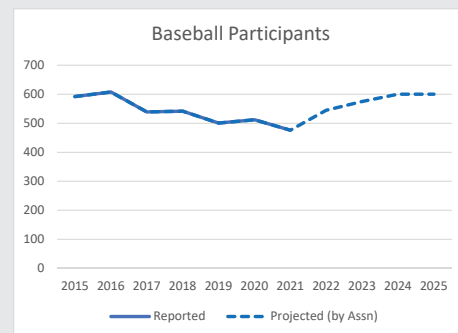
FULL SIZED FIELDS

The city is home to more full sized baseball fields than many neighboring communities, but the main critique tends to be with Hales Field. Hales Field is the home field of the high school, VFW, and Legion teams and is in need of upgrades. Hale's is not owned or operated by the city, but the proximity to OKAC leads some to believe it is a city field. Newer lights and dugouts at the 90' fields at YAC have been a welcome addition.

STATE AND NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATION RATES



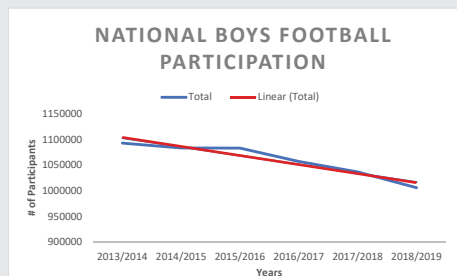
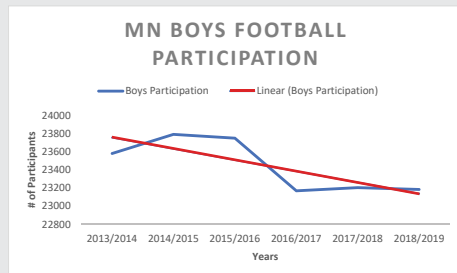
ELK RIVER YOUTH ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION RATES



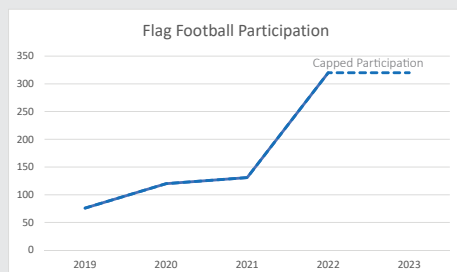
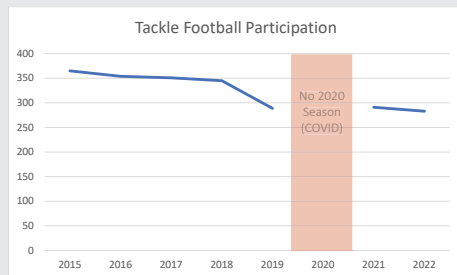


FOOTBALL

STATE AND NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATION RATES



ELK RIVER YOUTH ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION RATES



FINDINGS

Tackle football has seen a reduction in the number of kids playing the game, in large part due to information that emerged in the mid to late 2010s about head injuries. What is unclear at this point is whether the trend will continue to move downward, or if participation rates have now been set at a lower, new normal. For the time being, it appears that numbers have stabilized in Elk River. Efforts have been made to make the game safer in the rules and officiating, with the introduction of improving helmet technology, and the invention of new forms of the game such as tacklebar. There has also been rapid growth in the number of kids playing flag football.

That being said, tackle football remains the most popular high school sport far outpacing soccer, baseball, basketball, and lacrosse for boys sports. At the youth level there are still 3 participants for every 2 lacrosse players.

While participation rates for tackle football are down nationally, increases in flag football will somewhat offset the drop in tackle. Elk River has historically been strong in football and the ability of high school program to remain strong will to some degree depend on the popularity of the sport at a youth level.

As discussed above, flag football has been expanding, much more than outpacing the rate at which tackle football has lost participants. The association has been active since 2019 and that rapid growth has occurred, even in spite of the pandemic. In 2022, the association had already reached 320 players which is the maximum number of players the association can have. This is based on a 32 team cap with 10 players per team.

Unlike many other sports, football has not shifted as much into the “year round” model. Some offseason training and camps occur, but football remains a primarily fall sport.



FINDINGS

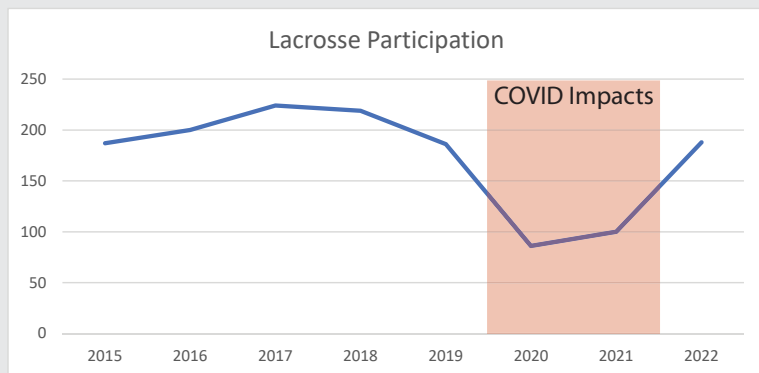
Lacrosse is no longer an upstart “new” sport, but is now an established activity. With Elk River’s reputation as a hockey town, it is not surprising that lacrosse has been popular here for some time, as the game and players often overlap.

Although hit hard by COVID, participation numbers appear to be returning to pre-pandemic levels. The sport has not been a fast growing sport, but has had relatively stable participation numbers for the few years before 2020.

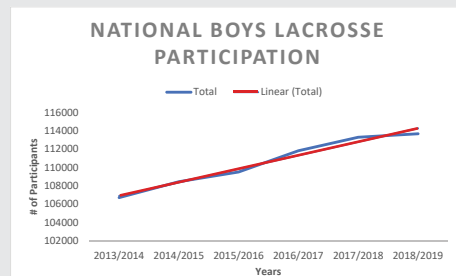
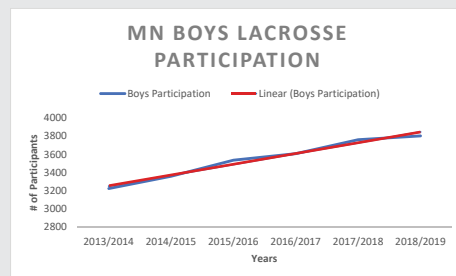
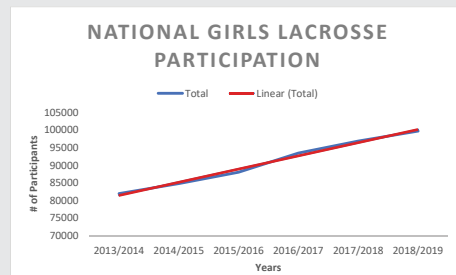
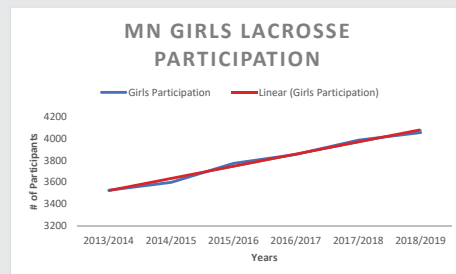
In Minnesota, lacrosse can be a challenging sport to provide fields for because of the spring season. When fields are in their freeze/thaw cycles they are the most susceptible to damage. Lacrosse is a fast paced game with lots of running and cutting that can tear up wet or thawing fields. When field conditions are deteriorated early in the season, it is very difficult to re-establish turf and get them back to a playable standard at any point that year.

Lacrosse uses the rectangle fields at YAC and Oak Knoll, the fields at the High School/Middle School complex, and the indoor turf space in the fieldhouse.

ELK RIVER YOUTH ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION RATES



STATE AND NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATION RATES





IMPLEMENTATION

PRIORITIZATION

When developing prioritization, actions can be evaluated by how they improve the city's system of athletic fields:

Does the action have positive safety implications?

The highest priority for the city should be actions that improve safety outcomes. This includes things like netting, field maintenance, and provision of AEDs at fields.

Does the action improve capacity and address current or projected needs?

Actions such as the addition of lights and building new fields add capacity to the system. The more recent addition of lights at YAC have improved the capacity at those fields. An expansion at YAC would have similar impacts.

Does the action strengthen the city's operations and capacity for funding?

Actions that create improvements for maintenance and operations should be prioritized. The city has opted to consolidate fields

in designated athletic facilities, rather than dispersed around the community. The focus remains on providing fields in larger, consolidated locations where maintenance can be streamlined and more efficient. Other actions may strengthen the city's abilities to recruit and host tournaments (and increase field rentals) or better position the city to pursue other funding such as grants.

Does the action improve equitable distribution of resources between sports?

The city has done a great job of improving facilities for many of the youth athletic associations. If there are sports that have not seen upgrades in some time, the priority should go to these sports over those that have seen recent improvements and investments.

Does the action improve user experiences?

Elk River's facilities provide varied user experiences. Upgrades at the YAC ballfields have been well received, while a lack of toilets on the rectangle field side or at DAAC remain a point of contention. Elements such as appropriately sized fields, batting cages, shaded viewing areas, concessions, storage, and parking go a long way to improving user experience.

TIMING

The study provides recommendations for the City of Elk River based on the identified needs and desires of the city and athletic associations. Some of these recommendations are easier to implement, others will take some time to identify funding, design, and bring to fruition. Lastly, some of the recommendations focus on strategy and programming and represent ongoing efforts that are already underway.

	QUESTIONS ADDRESSED	SPORTS	TIMING
FACILITIES			
Install Netting at DAAC Wheel and consider backstop upgrades	Safety	Softball/ Baseball	0-3 Years
Install covered dugouts at DAAC	Safety, Equitable Distribution, User Experience	Softball/ Baseball	0-3 Years
Develop Support Facilities at DAAC (Shelters, restrooms, concessions, signage, parking/parking agreement)	Equitable Distribution, User Experience	Softball/ Baseball	4-6 Years
Update Lighting and Irrigation at DAAC	Capacity, Operations & Funding	Softball/ Baseball	4-6 Years
Install netting at playground at YAC	Safety, User Experience	Softball/ Baseball	0-3 Years
Install Bleacher Protector system at YAC	Safety, User Experience	Softball/ Baseball	0-3 Years
Improve Facilities at YAC's rectangle field (Restrooms, paved parking, concessions, storage) <i>*May be deferred to longer term expansion at YAC</i>	Equitable Distribution, User Experience	Football/ Lacrosse/ Soccer	4-6 years
Continue to make improvements at YAC regarding support facilities (Pave parking, spectator seating at 5&6)	User Experience	Softball/ Baseball	4-6 years
Develop 2 75' grass infield baseball fields, potentially at YAC or:	Capacity, User Experience	Baseball	7-13 Years
Convert OKAC 1 to a dedicated 75' field with grass infield	Capacity, User Experience	Baseball	0-3 Years
Develop 2 60' grass infield baseball fields, potentially at YAC or:	Capacity, User Experience	Baseball	7-13 Years
Convert OKAC 2 to a dedicated 60' field with grass infield	Capacity, User Experience	Baseball	0-3 Years
Improve support facilities at OKAC (Storage, restrooms, concessions, signage)	User Experience, Equitable Distribution	All	4-6 Years
Construction of 3-4 60' basepath / 200-225' fence ballfields and support facilities	Capacity, Equitable Distribution	Softball/ Baseball	7-13 Years
Construction of 1-2 90' baseball fields	Capacity, Equitable Distribution	Baseball	7-13 Years
Construction of 4 rectangle fields and support facilities	Capacity, Equitable Distribution	Football/ Lacrosse/ Soccer	7-13 Years
OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE			
Continue to protect fields after weather event or long winters	Safety, Capacity, Operations & Funding	All	Ongoing
Maintain flex fields that can accommodate multiple sizes and user groups	Capacity	Softball/ Baseball	Ongoing
Plan for replacement/upgrades to irrigation system at OKAC	Safety, Operations & Funding	All	Ongoing
STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMING			
Explore opportunities to have two time slots for programming fields, especially in combination with school users	Capacity	All	Ongoing
Continue to actively pursue tournaments	Operations & Funding, User Experience	All	Ongoing
Continue to evaluate the long term viability of Adult Softball	Operations & Funding	Softball	Ongoing
Explore additional partnerships with the school district to fund improvements	Capacity, Operations & Funding	All	Ongoing
Continue coordination with the school district to better share scheduling/ programming needs and find additional capacity	Capacity, Operations & Funding	All	Ongoing
Continue to develop partnerships with outside events, clubs, camps, and trainers to bring in additional funding	Capacity, Operations & Funding	All	Ongoing



ELK RIVER ATHLETIC FIELDS STUDY



OAK KNOLL ATHLETIC COMPLEX



- » Anticipates the removal/relocation of Ivan Sand and the Education Technology Center
- » Reconfigures access to Proctor Road and School Street, and creates a connection between the two entries
- » New, re-oriented full size (90' basepath) ballfield with grandstand seating
- » Adds miracle field and inclusive playground
- » Plaza to support the premier field, inclusive play area, and miracle field
- » Creation of two dedicated youth (60' basepath) baseball fields with grass infields
- » Creation of a dedicated intermediate (70-80' basepaths) baseball field with grass infield
- » Centralized, elevated plaza with shelter to support the youth and intermediate field
- » New parking to support expanded ballfield program

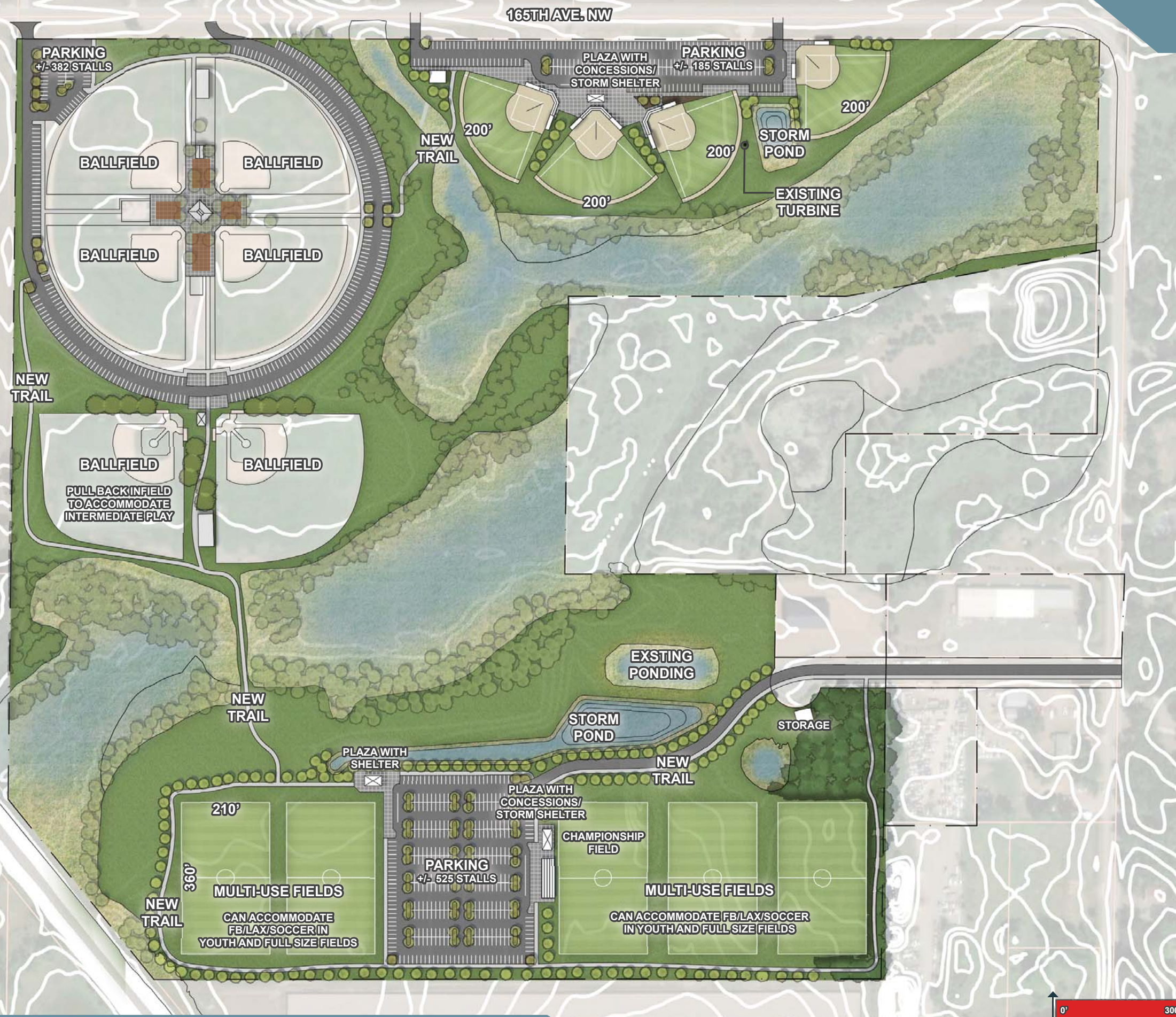
DAVE ANDERSON ATHLETIC COMPLEX

- » Removes 2 softball fields and replaces them with open field space that can accommodate up to a full sized rectangle field or multiple youth sized fields
- » Improves safety considerations by reducing the number of softball fields and having play occur behind spectators
- » Installation of drain tile in the outfields to reduce flooding/ponding that is occurring today
- » Addition of a centralized plaza and shelter to support recreational field use
- » Creation of new parking to support field programming, as well as Orono Park
- » Retains flexibility for potential long term change with adjacent land uses



PLANTS AND THINGS RECREATION COMPLEX

- » Creates showcase opportunities for Plants and Things at plaza areas in each of the three areas
- » Relocates softball from DAAC and creates a 4 field dedicated complex with youth sized fields
- » Softball tournaments could incorporate the existing pinwheel for an 8 field schedule
- » Parking to accommodate extensive field use
- » Creates a new rectangle field destination that can accommodate football, lacrosse, and soccer with up to 5 full sized fields or many youth sized layouts
- » Each sport area would have concessions/ restroom/storm shelter
- » Existing ballfields would have parking paved
- » The smaller 90' field would have infield grass pulled back to accommodate intermediate play
- » New trails incorporated into the park



PLANTS AND THINGS RECREATION COMPLEX





Client:

**ELK RIVER
 ATHLETIC FIELDS**

Project:

Sheet Title:

Key:	Description:	Date:

Project Number: 023-001

Date:

Drawn by: JBH

Checked By: KC

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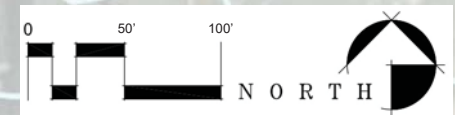


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ATHLETIC FIELDS

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ATHLETIC FIELDS

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Athletic Fields Master Plan

HKGi presented detailed concepts for site development of athletic fields on March 13, 2024, based on projected growth outlined in a 2022-23 study. The commission continues to discuss these concepts and refine the capital improvement plan. The construction timeline below preserves the number of fields available for play prior to adding new additional fields. The proposed plan creates the following benefits:

- Centralized bathrooms
- Centralized concessions
- Centralized equipment storage based on sport/activity.
- Organized parking
- Field locations are based on activity creating ownership cleanliness among user groups.
- Fans at “ground level” are at a higher elevation than the playing surface for improved lines of sight.

Project Impact Summary

Site	Fields removed	Fields added
PT Complex	1 rectangular field	5 rectangular fields 4 softball fields
Dave Anderson Athletic Complex	2 softball fields	1 rectangular field
Oak Knoll Complex/ Hales field	3 baseball fields 2 rectangular fields	4 baseball fields 1 miracle field
Net Change		+2 Softball fields +6 rectangular fields +1 baseball field + 1 miracle field

Project Phasing Potential

Approx. Year	Site	Fields Removed	Fields Added
2026	PT Complex (Southeast)	none	3 rectangular fields
2028	Oak Knoll Complex/Hales Field (South/East)	2 rectangular fields 1 ballfield	2 baseball fields
2030	Oak Knoll Complex/Hales Field (North/West)	2 baseball fields	2 baseball fields 1 miracle field
2032	PT Complex (Southwest & Northeast)	1 rectangular field	4 softball fields 2 rectangular fields
2034	Dave Anderson Athletic Complex	2 softball fields	1 rectangular field
+/- 9-years	TOTAL SCOPE	2 softball fields 3 rectangular fields 3 baseball fields	4 baseball fields 4 softball fields 1 miracle field 6 rectangular fields

