



Grand Forks Area Youth Baseball/Softball Campaign for a new Multi-diamond Complex

Campaign Overview

Participation in girls' fastpitch softball is up over 300% to 125 players in the last four years, while boys' baseball has consistently maintained around 325 players during that same time period. These participants share the same fields with area high school and university baseball and softball teams and recreation leagues. The smaller fields at Apollo Park are very difficult to maintain in the pitching area, as high school softball, summer softball, and Cal Ripken baseball all pitch from different distances.

Baseball is played on a baseball diamond; softball should be played on a softball diamond, not a modified baseball field. By designing a complex with fields designated specifically for each sport, players, coaches and parents will feel a sense of pride knowing that a complex was made for them.

Therefore, the members of the "Building Fields of Dreams" Baseball/Softball Complex Campaign Steering Committee would like to invite families of boys and girls who play the game, fans that enjoy watching the sport, and advocates of community youth sports to join as one cohesive team to build a new multi-diamond complex.

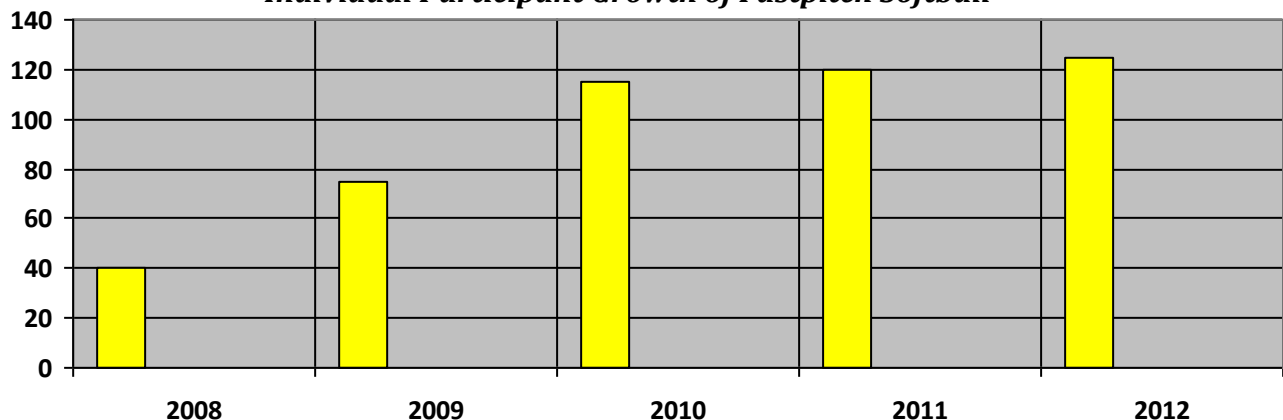
History of Baseball and Softball in Grand Forks

From all accounts youth baseball in North Dakota dates back to the early 1930's with American Legion teams, however it wasn't until 1958 that a Babe Ruth League began in Grand Forks, just seven years after the League itself was officially founded.

According to the late William E. Julison, after the "July 18, 1971 inauguration of Apollo Park, a girl's 'Pony Tail' loop and the fast-growing slowpitch element were given full ownership of Riverside Park. The growing popularity of both softball speeds was assured when Grand Forks, with its new, determined Association and fine facilities, hosted its first men's fastpitch regional in 1974 and the women's slowpitch regional in 1977 and 1978.

In 2000, the Grand Forks Park District began an 18 and under girl's fastpitch recreation league. It wasn't until 2008 that a core group of interested parents came together to form a girl's fastpitch Board to promote league and tournament play for the sport in Grand Forks.

Individual Participant Growth of Fastpitch Softball



During this same timeframe, baseball has been consistently around 325 players, ages 9 – 15 with 24 league teams and 6 state tournament teams. Additionally, there are 100 kids age 7 & 8 who have participated in limited activities and 30 more kids playing on two American Legion baseball teams. These figures given do not include high school JV and varsity baseball and softball, nor do they include the university baseball and softball teams that also use the facilities in the spring.

The Plan

The Board members of Forks Area Youth Baseball/Softball Association with the Grand Forks Parks and Recreation Foundation Board of Directors would like to invite families of youth who participate, fans who enjoy watching the sport, and advocates of community youth sports to join as one cohesive team to build a baseball/softball complex where all community members can enjoy the game and sport. At the conclusion of the capital campaign, this building project will have afforded our youth a designated location where youth of age appropriate skill levels can freely practice, play in games and tournaments without their coaches and parents having to endure scheduling conflicts coupled with emotional hassle.

Your financial generosity through gifts and pledges made over the next three to five years, will allow the Forks Area Youth Baseball/Softball Association with the Grand Forks Parks and Recreation Foundation to design, layout and build a multi-diamond youth baseball/softball facility and make improvements to Apollo and Ben Franklin parks. Actual site construction will begin once funds and pledges are documented and received to apply for an approved low-interest municipal bond over a 5- year period.

Not only will this greatly benefit and financially impact Greater Grand Forks, but it will also demonstrate our investment in youth softball and baseball as an integral part of our community and region. It is time we take a proactive approach to meet the growing demand for field space to alleviate overcrowding conditions and serious scheduling conflicts that currently exist and pave the way for growth opportunities in baseball and fastpitch softball. The proposed complex will feature fields with:

- Backstops
- Fencing (baselines & outfield)
- Dugouts (2 per diamond)
- Irrigation
- Infield sod/fill
- Scoreboard
- Lights
- Fields will have a shared parking area with space for over 100 vehicles, and feature restrooms and a concession stand.

Why Do We Need a New Softball/Baseball Complex?

To alleviate scheduling conflicts for players, coaches and parents

- Baseball participation has been consistently around 325 players, ages 9 – 15 over the last four years. There are 24 league teams and six state tournament teams in these numbers. Additionally, there are 100 kids age 7 & 8 that participate in limited activities. There are also 30 kids playing on two American Legion baseball teams, as well as 60 young men playing high school JV and varsity baseball in the spring. Needless to say, scheduling conflicts make practices and games challenging.

To have designated softball fields for easier accessibility and safety

- The main reason is more accessibility to the field of play in which players will compete on. Often, players are relegated to practice on wide open fields or in over-crowded practice fields. Having more fields means more access for more experience in learning to play the game.
- Having a designated field for fastpitch softball will give teams, players and the sport recognition and an identity. Baseball is played on a baseball diamond, softball should be played on a softball diamond, not a modified baseball field. Thus, having a set of designated fastpitch diamonds will give players, coaches and parents a sense of pride, knowing that this complex is made for them.
- Currently, softball leagues share fields with 20 Cal Ripken baseball teams making it difficult to modify the fields when there is a mixed playing schedule. With the continued growth in softball over the last four years (participants are up over 300%), designating fields specifically for softball or baseball, would eliminate needing to modify the fields between games and practices.

To ease the wear and tear on existing Apollo Park fields

- Since July 1971, Apollo Park has accommodated multiple games and practices each day in every week of the summer, endured excited fans that come to watch little kids up to high school and college players, and made maintenance, practice and game scheduling a virtual nightmare for staff crews, players, parents and coaches. The environmental impact is great.
- In order to improvise during congested days, softball teams play on baseball fields and the shuffling of pitching mounds impacts everyone from a compatibility standpoint – pitching mounds leave large holes which cause disruption, delays and scheduling issues.

To increase the number of fields

- In the summer of 2011, nearly forty 9-15 year old baseball and softball teams shared three regulation size baseball fields and three smaller fields at Apollo Park. These same fields were also used by local high school and university softball, the Park District recreation softball programs, and American Legion and high school baseball teams.

To host tournaments

- The ability to host tournaments during the season allows the Association and League to be self-sufficient and meet the operational needs for the season.
- Tournaments also bring in people who stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants and spend money on entertainment which helps the vitality of Grand Forks.

To increase the number of practice days

- Practices are limited to one hour, due to the frequency of games (day & night) at Apollo Park during the summer months. The ability to cover all the problems areas during an hour practice is vitally impossible. Quality is not an obtainable goal with a one hour practice.
- Most teams are only allowed one practice per week due to field demands. Statistics show that players, who can refine their mistakes during practice, can perform at a greater level on game day. Practice is an essential part of mastering batting and fielding techniques and increasing skill level for game day.

Benefits of Baseball and Fastpitch Softball in Grand Forks

- Helps build good citizens. They learn respect for our parks and programs.
- Statistics show higher grades for students, a lower high school dropout rate and less discipline referrals for those involved in sports. Also, test scores in English and Math were higher for athletes than non-athletes.
- Kids can be kids, have fun playing an organized sport while building their character, learning self-discipline, a strong work ethic, leadership and teamwork skills.
- Kids need quality time with friends and family in constructive activities with allowances to make mistakes in order to grow and mature.
- The skills in baseball and softball are not easy to learn. Players who can hit, throw, field and run bases often feel pride with each new skill they add. The harder someone is willing to work, the more one can learn and accomplish what they were not able to do before.

Now It Is Up To Us

Your help is needed. The all-inclusive projected cost for this facility and improvements is estimated at \$2,100,000. A careful review of the need was studied by various entities, which assured us of strong local and regional interest in and financial support for the above plan.

Therefore, the Grand Forks Parks and Recreation Foundation is launching a capital campaign, ***"BUILDING FIELDS OF DREAMS: ONE GIFT AT ONE TIME."*** Our intent is to raise a base goal of \$850,000 with a challenge goal of \$2,100,000 in immediate, pledged, and deferred gifts of cash, highly appreciated stock, securities, real estate, IRAs, annuities, trusts, grain, clay, livestock, and other assets. Volunteer leaders will be recruited and trained to gain support and solicit contributions.

We are asking for the help of friends, the baseball/softball family, key community supporters, and all others who have an interest in seeing a less chaotic facility for area leagues to practice and play their games, while offering an economic boost to the region as a tournament host in the future. Now is the time to create an opportunity with an investment in girls' fast-pitch softball and boys' baseball.