



Ball Field ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Ball Field Assessment and Development Strategy Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION #1 - PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

It is our recommendation that the Fairbanks North Star Borough facilitate collaboration and growth of Borough sports leagues. It is important to recognize that the Borough's value to the athletic field User Groups goes far beyond the provision of space and maintenance:

- FNSB and User Groups must recognize that each is a valuable partner in the delivery of sports in the Borough, and that it takes both to succeed
- There must be an environment where FNSB and User Groups work hand-in-hand to ensure that all efforts; from organization to production of games are well managed
- Develop and sustain a program that is representative of a positive working relationship between the Borough and athletic field User Groups
- Determine if current User Group Agreements are adequate management tools for the Borough and User Groups to evaluate their annual relationship as it relates to the organization and production of the sports program
 - The Agreement must include specifics about what the Borough will provide and what the User Group will provide
 - The Agreement must quantify the investment by the Borough each year and the investment by each User Group
 - The Agreement must specify how effective communication will be accomplished between the two parties
 - The Agreement must specify who the main contacts will be for each party and the organizations' alternate contacts, and must be updated annually
 - The Agreement must also require reporting of basic demographics for the various league organizations for documentation and planning purposes
- FNSB should institute an infield maintenance training program for league volunteers to instruct them on proper techniques, standards, and the use of tools and equipment
- FNSB should organize an annual recognition event (lunch or dinner) to commend the efforts of community volunteers





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RECOMMENDATION #2 - FIELD CAPACITY

Field Capacity has been evaluated to determine the number of new teams that can be accommodated by the year 2030 when the population is projected to increase from its current level of 91,000 to 110,000. Given that level of population growth, the calculation in Table 8 shows the possibility of an additional **28 to 31** teams, if participation levels remain the same as they are today. To determine field capacity, FNSB and User Groups must work together to:

- Determine the realistic timeframes, such as evenings and weekends, that fields are available for use. For example, it is likely that games are not appropriate on Sunday mornings.
- From the available timeframes within the baseball and softball season, it should be easy for the Borough and User Groups to account for the times that are scheduled and determine the unscheduled times that are available for additional scheduling. This should be done as needed, as participation percentages increase, or as the population increases over time.

There are no realistic athletic field standards that serve as a benchmark for the Borough to evaluate the number of athletic fields required to serve the community. Each community is different, thus one size does not fit all situations. The process of determining how many fields are needed requires the community to calculate the number of teams; the hours and days to be played in season; perhaps the need to “rest” fields so that they are not overused (if quality turf is important); time allocated to tournaments (usually on Friday through Sunday), the need for practice facilities or use of game fields for practices; and the life cycle of the local program relative to whether it is growing, stable, or declining in participation. The Borough and the User Groups should continue to:

- Evaluate and monitor current national, regional, and local trends to understand if programs such as baseball and softball are in a state of growth, stability, or decline
- Evaluate current field capacity to determine if fields are being fully utilized
- Determine the current level of participation as a percentage of the total population
- Apply the level of participation to projected population growth to determine future demand

RECOMMENDATION #3 - UPGRADES TO EXISTING FACILITIES

Upgrades are needed to many of the existing facilities, as determined by the inventory and assessment included in this study. Specific upgrades are identified in each facility report (See Facility Inventory in Appendix A), but generally include:

- Infield improvements
- Site grading
- Dimensional compliance for the appropriate league requirements
- Fencing improvements
- New dugouts
- ADA compliance
- Other safety issues, such as GFI electrical outlets





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RECOMMENDATION #4 - NEW FIELDS

Based on our field capacity study, as outlined in Recommendation #2, it is possible that new fields will be needed in the next two decades. Based on population growth projections from 91,000 in 2008 to 110,000 by 2030, and provided the level of participation remains stable, the calculations in Table 9 show that there may be 28 to 31 new teams. The consultant is of the opinion, at this time, that there is excess capacity with existing fields, thus many of the 28 to 31 projected new teams can be accommodated. Due diligence, as it relates to future field capacity studies, will determine the number of teams that cannot be absorbed, and the need for new facilities. As new field development is considered, it will be important for the Borough to focus on consolidating fields of similar use and creating clustered facilities.

RECOMMENDATION #5 - SPORTS ALLIANCE

Given the number of different User Groups and the apparent need to improve communication between Borough and the User Groups, the recommendation is to work closely with a local Sports Alliance. The Alliance would include representatives of all User Groups who are using fields owned by the Borough. It would provide a forum where constructive and “partnership development” discussions could be held. This option would help address the issues that are common to all groups, regardless of the age, gender, or type of sport they are involved in (e.g. level of maintenance, capital improvement needs, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION #6 - INDOOR FACILITY

It is clear that there is some support and justification for developing an indoor multi-use facility that can be used for baseball and softball, and other sports leagues (e.g. extreme weather conditions, short seasons, improved performance with increased practice). A feasibility study to determine project costs, potential uses and users, and revenues and expenses would determine if such a facility can be supported in the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

