

WINTRUST CROSSROADS SPORTS COMPLEX

CASE STUDY



WINTRUST CROSSROADS SPORTS COMPLEX AT A GLANCE:



Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex is opened in the Village of New Lenox in June 2025. It is designed to be a differentiator for the community, 45 minutes southwest of Chicago. The 100-acre, state-of-the-art facility is already attracting premier local, regional, and national travel tournaments that have booked future events there.

New Lenox views the complex as a catalyst for new business development, serving out-of-town visitors and its own 30,000 residents. 14 acres of the project are dedicated to hospitality-related businesses, including a 160-room dual-branded hotel, restaurants, and retail. Optimism over Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex has also spurred the development of an entertainment district across the street from the facility. Government and business leaders in New Lenox view their location as ideal for attracting youth sports tournaments to the greater Chicagoland area. Expected revenue generated at the outdoor complex will fund a planned indoor sports complex to be built at a future date.

THE FACILITY INCLUDES:

- 9 full-sized turf baseball fields
- 22 youth baseball and softball fields
- 11 multipurpose turf rectangular fields
- 2 batting cages
- Beer garden/concession area
- 2 auxiliary concession buildings
- 14 acres dedicated to hotels, restaurants, and retail





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Over the years, the Village of New Lenox has established a reputation as a family-friendly destination within the Chicago suburbs.

It's also a community that possesses several natural advantages to attract outside visitors. Most notably, it is accessible via Interstate 355 and I-80. The convenient location has driven development activity over the years, including the relocation of the acclaimed medical facility, Silver Cross Hospital, from nearby Joliet, IL, to New Lenox in 2012. Seeking to capitalize on the increased traffic the new medical campus would create, commercial realtor Zaremba Group sought to build a large shopping mall on the adjacent land. But an economic downturn, paired with the trend against indoor malls, prevented the project from moving forward.

Taking advantage of what he considered a golden opportunity, New Lenox Mayor Tim Baldermann led the effort to purchase the 100-acre property for \$8.2 million using funds the Village already possessed. "Industrial users wanted to put warehousing there, but we didn't want that on this prime piece of property right next to the hospital," Baldermann said.

Instead, New Lenox civic leaders gravitated toward sports tourism, which generated \$52.2 billion in direct spending in 2023 with a total economic impact of \$128 billion, according to Sports ETA, a trade association for the sports events and tourism industry.



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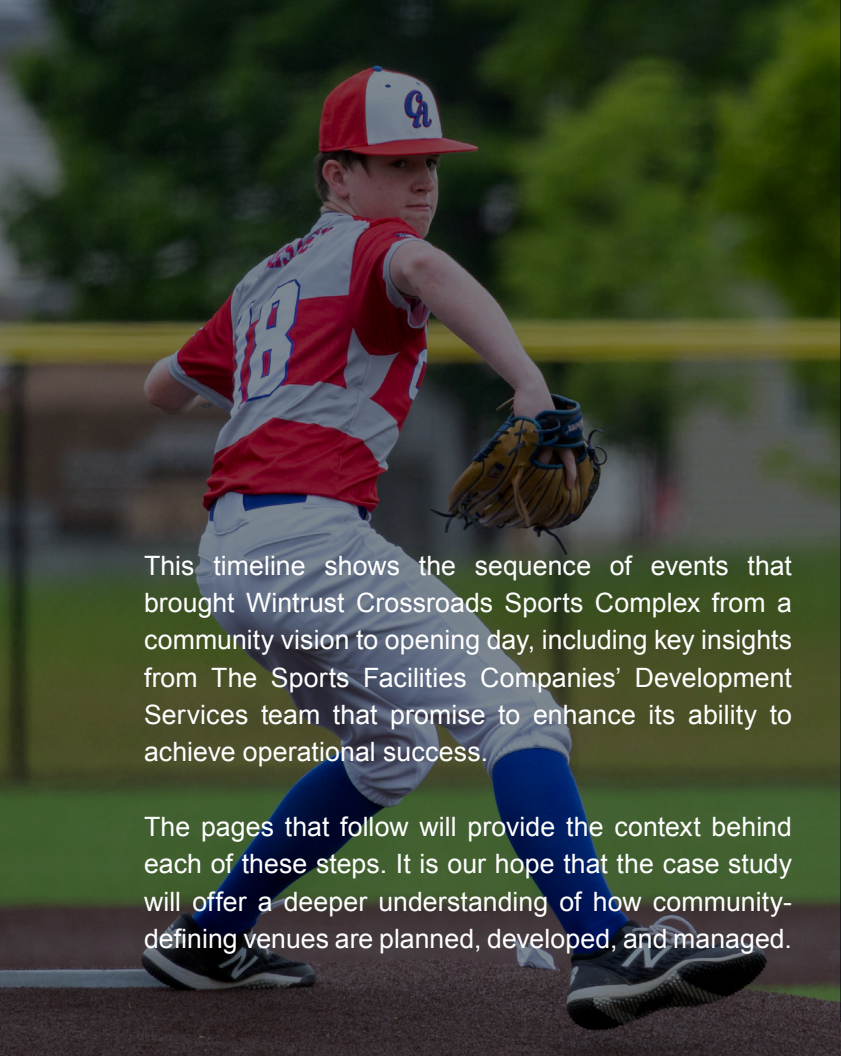
Private investors initially presented the idea of building a sports tourism complex on the land, but the local government opted to purchase it to take advantage of the revenue generated from visiting tournaments and taxes collected on hotels, restaurants, and retail properties.

Direct access to two highways and close proximity to Chicago and the Windy City's two major airports—Chicago O'Hare International Airport and Chicago Midway International Airport—contributed favorably when assessing the feasibility of the project. Additionally, the youth sports market is underserved in the Chicago area, which, over the years, has invested in top-tier professional sports facilities instead.

“There isn't a youth sports complex of this magnitude within 100 miles of New Lenox,” says Mayor Baldermann.

The complex cost \$70 million to build through the use of bonds. Revenue generated from it will go toward the completion of a 140,000 sq. ft. fieldhouse for basketball, volleyball, and other indoor sports.

Projections indicate that the complex will have a \$12 million economic impact in its first year and \$20 million by the third year. Once all phases are complete, it is expected to draw in over 600,000 visitors annually from a multi-state region, with an expected annual economic impact of more than \$30 million.



PROJECT TIMELINE

This timeline shows the sequence of events that brought Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex from a community vision to opening day, including key insights from The Sports Facilities Companies' Development Services team that promise to enhance its ability to achieve operational success.

The pages that follow will provide the context behind each of these steps. It is our hope that the case study will offer a deeper understanding of how community-defining venues are planned, developed, and managed.

- Spring 2023: The Village of New Lenox buys a 100-acre site next to the Silver Cross Hospital site for \$8.2 million from Zaremba Group.
- July 2023: New Lenox engages The Sports Facilities Companies (SFC) to guide the venue's development process and to become its operational partner
- Fall 2023: SFC's Development Services team guides several solutions during the development phase that enhance the venue's operational and revenue generation capacity
- October 2024: Hired Scott Brost as General Manager
- April 2024: Groundbreaking on new venue.
- July 2025: Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex opened its doors
- Grand Opening July 1, 2025

CHALLENGE

HOW TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A GROWING COMMUNITY

Civic leaders in New Lenox are highly motivated to attract a greater number of visitors to the Village to drive economic growth. The city is already considered a family-friendly destination because:

- It is home to a giant, 36-foot lighted Santa Claus featuring 18,500 LED lights.
- KidsWork Children's Museum opened in 2024, further enhancing its reputation.
- A summer concert series attracts popular legacy musicians like Rick Springfield.
- "Fridays After Five" brings food trucks and live music to the Village Commons.
- Free movie nights in the Village Commons every Wednesday throughout the summer.
- "Scarecrow Stroll" featuring local organizations creating their own spooktacular display.

The opportunity to purchase 100 acres of land centered on sports tourism seemed like a natural fit.

New Lenox's ambitious nature was clear even during the initial blueprints for Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex. "We want enough fields to make sure that we're getting all the tournaments that we want to get," says Baldermann. "We didn't want to go halfway. What's the point?"

Revenue generated from the tournaments and the on-site hospitality amenities is earmarked to pay back the bonds used to develop the \$70 million complex. An additional \$40 million will be required to fund an indoor sports facility.



SOLUTION

After purchasing the 100-acre lot, the Village of New Lenox enlisted the aid of a variety of experts to turn the vision into a reality. This group included:

- JLG Architects
- General Northern Builders
- The Sports Facilities Companies
- Spaceco Civil Engineering and Surveying
- Bolton & Menk Landscape Architects
- Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd.

These firms have experience constructing stadiums, arenas, and sports complexes throughout the country. Specifically, SFC has supported the design and development of dozens of youth sports facilities. JGL is a staple behind many projects in North Dakota, including the Fargo Parks Sports Center. General Northern Builders is a legendary real estate firm in the Chicago area, dating back to 1927.

SFC leadership led New Lenox officials on a tour of Hoover Met Complex, a premier youth sports complex in Alabama, operated by SFC. The firm also showcased different complexes, allowing Village leaders to identify what elements they wanted to incorporate into their facility.

Analysis of the original blueprints identified avenues to maximize the space to add more fields and bring in more teams. Most tournaments will be played from mid-March to Halloween due to the climate in the area. When completed, the indoor complex will allow for year-round competition on-site.

“WE WANT TO MARKET OUR TOWN TO THAT EXTENT THAT WHEN PEOPLE THINK ABOUT NORTHERN ILLINOIS, THEY’LL THINK ABOUT CHICAGO; THEY’LL THINK ABOUT ROSEMONT; AND THEY’LL THINK ABOUT NEW LENOX. WE’RE OFF TO A GREAT START.”

— MAYOR TIM BALDERMANN
NEW LENOX, IL

Tim Baldermann has been Mayor of New Lenox for 18 years. He has overseen the relocation of Silver Cross Hospital to the Village and is the driving force behind the Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex. The medical campus is currently responsible for 2.2 million annual visitors to New Lenox. He estimates that number to increase to approximately 3 million once the sports facility is completed. Long term, Baldermann estimates the facility can spur a population growth from 30,000 residents up to between 80,000-90,000.



Using its reputation for operational excellence in the sports tourism industry, SFC is able to connect tournament organizers with the facility, helping to ensure a full schedule of top-notch events are held at Crossroads.

Meanwhile, the Village and its residents face little economic risk. New Lenox only spent money it already had on-hand to pay for the sports facility—which is why the fieldhouse will be built later.

The complex's location in the northwest corner of New Lenox removes much of the noise and traffic from locals, who generally live in the Village's south side. Residents were welcoming of the plans, the mayor adds. "They'll never be impacted by this, which is why it is the perfect location," says Baldermann of the town's population.



THROUGH SFC'S EXPERIENCE SUCCESSFULLY OPERATING OVER 90 SPORTS, RECREATION, AND EVENT COMPLEXES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, IT WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY SEVERAL KEY ENHANCEMENTS DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS.

DESIGN CHALLENGES AND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS:

While New Lenox initiated pre-construction studies, SFC conducted its own feasibility and economic impact studies once it came aboard as a partner. Through SFC's experience successfully operating over 90 sports, recreation, and event complexes across the country, it was able to identify several key enhancements during the planning process.

The most significant of these enhancements was the adjustment of plans for a road running through the Wintrust Crossroad Sports Complex. SFC advised Village officials to adjust the planned road layout and simplify its plans to one clear entry point into the complex, with the goal of improving the guest experience.

"One point of entry is a more efficient layout," says Jake Whittaker, senior vice president of development services for SFC, who served as the firm's primary liaison for the development of the venue. "When you're designing a sports complex like this, you have to consider the staffing costs, traffic flow, and guest safety first. While it may have felt like taking a step backwards in the design process to remove the road, ultimately it was worth it."

The move was approved by the Village, and through the advisement of SFC's development team, the venue's operational capacity was enhanced in the following ways:

ROAD ADJUSTMENT:

- Created a separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, improving the event experience and making guests safer
- Allowed for one main entry, supporting a greater experience for sporting and non-sporting events
- Easier access to the beer garden and event retail opportunities
- Increased operational efficiency for food & beverage and field maintenance teams
- Created better roadway access to outparcels and additional development

The move also allowed for a more flexible field layout, which had the following benefits:

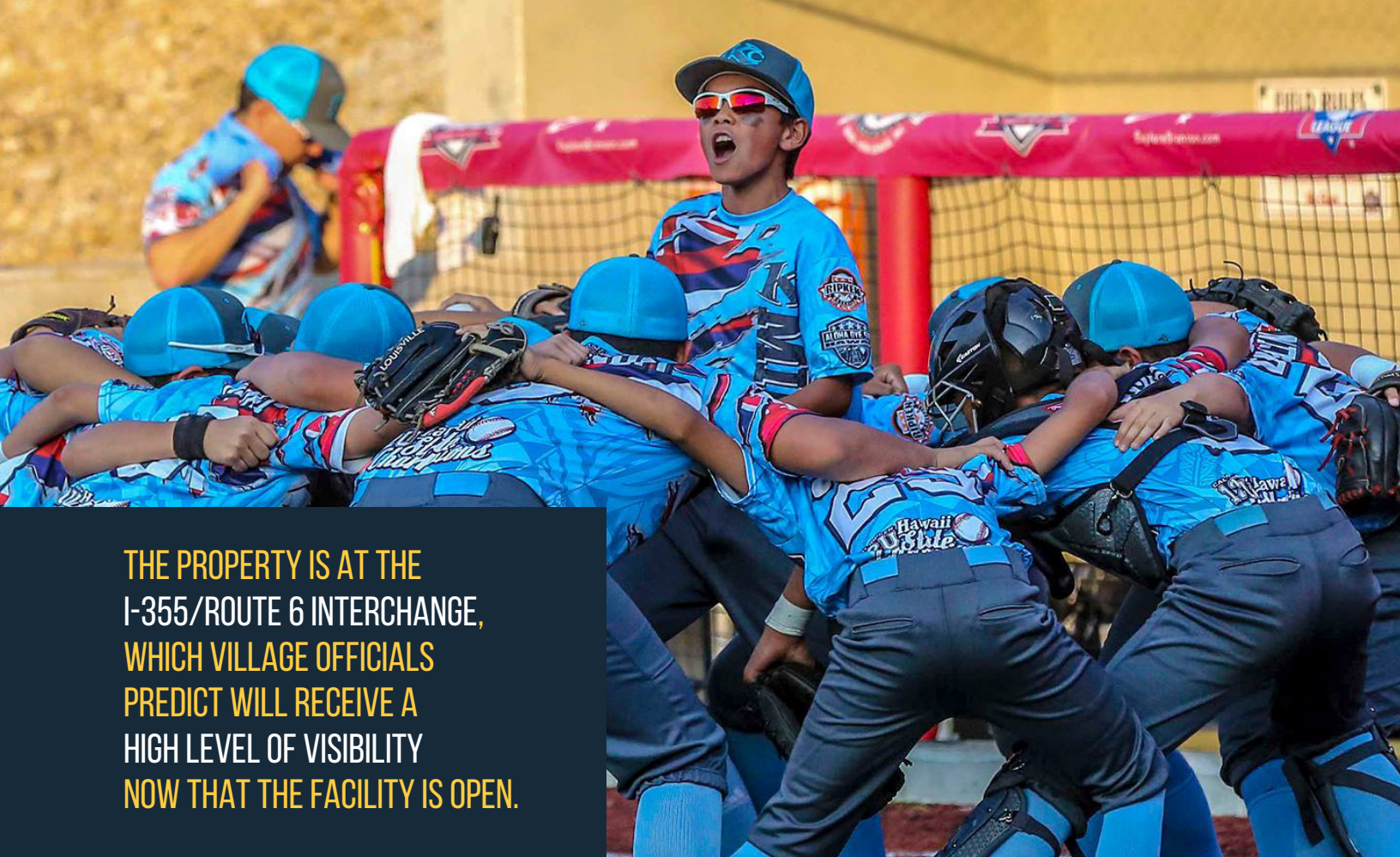
- Created flexibility that increased the maximum number of full-size soccer fields from 5 to 11
- Allowed for the number of high school-level baseball fields to increase from 8 to 9, while allowing up to 22 softball/youth baseball fields
- Allowed for efficiency in lighting layouts, which decreases costs for the venue

"It made the facility more marketable," notes Whittaker, who compliments city leadership for agreeing to alter the original schematics. "We refined their vision."

"[WE] MADE THE FACILITY MORE MARKETABLE,"

**— JAKE WHITTAKER
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES AT SFC**





THE PROPERTY IS AT THE I-355/ROUTE 6 INTERCHANGE, WHICH VILLAGE OFFICIALS PREDICT WILL RECEIVE A HIGH LEVEL OF VISIBILITY NOW THAT THE FACILITY IS OPEN.

RESULTS

MAKING AN IMPACT DURING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex opened in June 2025 and is already a hit. A 160-room dual-brand hotel is under construction, and the same hospitality company has the right of first refusal for a second hotel. New restaurants and retail are also in the works.

Businesses throughout the community recognize the economic potential of the venue and are eager to become partners. Most notably, the Village of New Lenox reached a deal with Wintrust Financial Corporation to make them the title sponsor for the venue. Other companies partnering with Wintrust Crossroads Sports Complex include Pepsi, Beggar's Pizza, Gas N Wash, Joey's Red Hots, Phillips Chevrolet, Kozol Bros., Illinois Bone & Joint, Silver Cross Hospital, and Kona Ice.

Additionally, the Village of New Lenox has acquired 100 acres of property across the street from the new venue and is currently selling outlots for further development of retail outlets, restaurants, entertainment, and housing. The property is at the I-355/Route 6 interchange, which village officials predict will receive a high level of visibility once the facility opens.

Beyond the economic impact, residents will also gain access to premier fields for practices and games held during weekdays when tournaments are not in town.

The Village has additionally invested in advertising on WGN during sports games to raise its profile. Soon, the word will be out among all sports tournament organizers.

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