

Officials unveil plans for sports complex south of Bowie



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The Liberty Sports Park, which will be located near the southwest corner of Route 301 and Route 214 just outside of Bowie, will cost local governments nearly \$14 million to build.

But the park, the plans for which were officially unveiled last week, is projected to be an economic boon for Prince George’s County. The sports complex will feature at least 10 lighted fields, four of which will be turf, and could generate as much as \$30 million in economic impact annually.

“This is going to pay for itself and then some,” said state Sen. Doug Peters (D-District 23), who helped secure the \$5 million funding piece from the state. “This is going to be the model for the future.”

The athletic complex will sit just southwest of the planned **South Lake residential/retail development**, formerly known as Karington. South Lake will feature 700,000 square feet of retail commercial space and a couple of hotels just a short walk from the athletic fields.



Peters and other elected officials envision the sports park as a potential site for weekend youth sports tournaments in soccer, football, rugby, field hockey and lacrosse. The proximity of food options, shopping and hotel rooms would make the Liberty Sports Park an especially attractive venue for the organizers of such events.

“From the 10 fields here, you’ll be able to walk to over 700,000 square feet of retail,” Peters said. “There will be three hotels where parents can stay and literally walk to the fields.”

As a lacrosse parent, Peters knows all too well the frustrations of having a child on travel teams and playing in out-of-town tournaments with games scattered all over the map.

“I have been all over for tournaments,” he said. “The kids play at one school and lose, they have to drive to another school – and there’s no food and no hotels.”

“The retail, restaurants, and hotels at South Lake will be amenities that will help set the Liberty Sports Park apart from other such facilities and will greatly enhance its status as a regional attraction not just for young athletes, but their families as well,” said Kevin Kennedy, the vice president of the development division for NAI Michael, the development and marketing consultant for the South Lake mixed-use project. “As we became aware of the sports park plans and location, we adjusted the South Lake site plans to make the retail and hospitality amenities more accessible to the park, and we believe the projects will complement each other very well.”

Officials expect the fields will be used 20 weekends a year for tournaments, drawing a total of 40,000 participants and 100,000 spectators to the park. During the week, the fields will be available for use by the county’s public school athletic teams, Peters said.



And, according to Peters, the facility will have some room to grow, too. The Washington Redskins have announced that they’ll sponsor one of the 10 fields that are part of the initial design.

“The numbers are big when you talk about money, but it’s really about the kids,” said Redskins President Bruce Allen. “We’re proud to be associated with this.”

Officials plan to go out and solicit sponsorships from other local organizations as well.

“This is about vision and partnership and working together on that particular vision,” said County Council member Todd Turner (District 4), whose district includes Bowie. “We’re not done yet, we still have some work to do. This is just the beginning.”

Peters expects that the process clearing trees for the field complex could begin sometime in the fall