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June 2009

Ten Dollars

Parks & recreation

Play ball!

A new minor league park becomes the centerpiece of a city's recreational complex

BY NIKI SWANK

The City of Avon has grown from one of the best farming communities in the state into a progressive place offering access to big-city amenities without losing its small town charm. As part of this change, the city brought in a new minor league team, the Lake Erie Crushers of the Frontier League, now playing baseball at the newly constructed All Pro Freight Stadium located at I-90 at SR 611. Chris Wynn, whose firm Osports (Osborn Sports Architecture) was selected as the design architect and architect of record, explains that the \$13 million, 32,000-sf baseball stadium will seat 3,500 fans, with another 1,500 on grass beyond the outfield fence. The facility has 11 private suites, 2,600 box seats, picnic and patio areas, on 8.5 acres.

But this park is only part of Phase One of an Avon master plan. Another is the \$13.5 million, 65,000-sf French Creek YMCA currently under construction on 122 acres adjacent to the stadium and planned for opening by December 2009. Designed by Doty and Miller, it will include two pools and two exercise areas. Both projects are funded through a 1/4% income tax.

Root for the home team

Avon mayor Jim Smith explains that city and county needed a recreation center, but it could afford a bigger one by partnering with the YMCA. The city will provide 60% of the construction costs, with maintenance and operations handled by the Y and the maintenance of the ballpark handled by the Frontier League team.

In addition, 27-acres of the site is seeing \$4 million worth of infrastructure, with new roads, and lighted parking for 1500 cars. According to Wynn, future projects



The new Avon ballpark welcomes guest from gates facing Lorain County.

All Photos Courtesy of Hanson Photography



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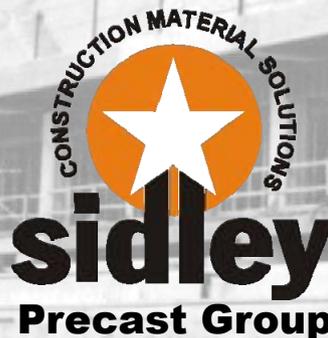
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include the western edge of the site (which will be the community playing fields and parking), while the ballpark, Y and a proposed ice rink, complete the civic buildings. The eastern part of the site would be commercially developed with a hotel, restaurants, office buildings, etc. The overall site was bought by the City of Avon. "Besides being an economic tool for development, the ballpark becomes a proud symbol of Avon's evolution," Wynn says.

The area at I-90/SR. 611 had no developmental direction, with a truck stop as a basic amenity, according to Mayor Smith. "I needed a drive to push the property value up," he says, adding he acquired the land with two phone calls in less than three quarters of an hour.

So much is going on now that the city is working with RWL Architects as the executive architect serving as the client's representative to handle the specifications and construction administration services on all three projects.

Ronald Landig of RWL Architects says the planning stage began with Osports during the fall of 2007 and included programming, design and construction documents to 100% completion. The project was advertised for bid in May 2008 and was awarded in June 2008 to Infinity Construction of Warrensville Heights.

Infinity had previously completed other City of Avon facilities for the community, including the Avon fire station, police station and post office.

Take me out with the crowd

Wynn explains that Osports was selected to design the main ballpark building, clubhouse and storage buildings, using the city's design guidelines for traditional architecture. They also had to keep in mind the intimacy of minor league ballparks, the need to hold 7,000+ patrons for concerts, and the importance of a family-oriented facility with affordable pricing. Landig explains that their architects came up with the design after much research and visits to existing stadium in Ohio and other states.

The ballpark is clearly visible from the highway, with a mesh net to protect traffic. But the entryway faces Lorain County, to welcome citizens. "The ballpark is an evolution of the Frontier League's facility program and is the new benchmark for the league," Wynn says. The league's

"Besides being an economic tool for development, the ballpark becomes a proud symbol of Avon's evolution, under Mayor Jim Smith's direction."

- Chris Wynn, Osborn Sports Architecture

RWL Architects, Inc. and Infinity Construction were proud to have served as Architect and General Contractor on the Avon Baseball Stadium project. CONGRATULATIONS to the City of Avon and The Lake Erie Crushers on their new home!



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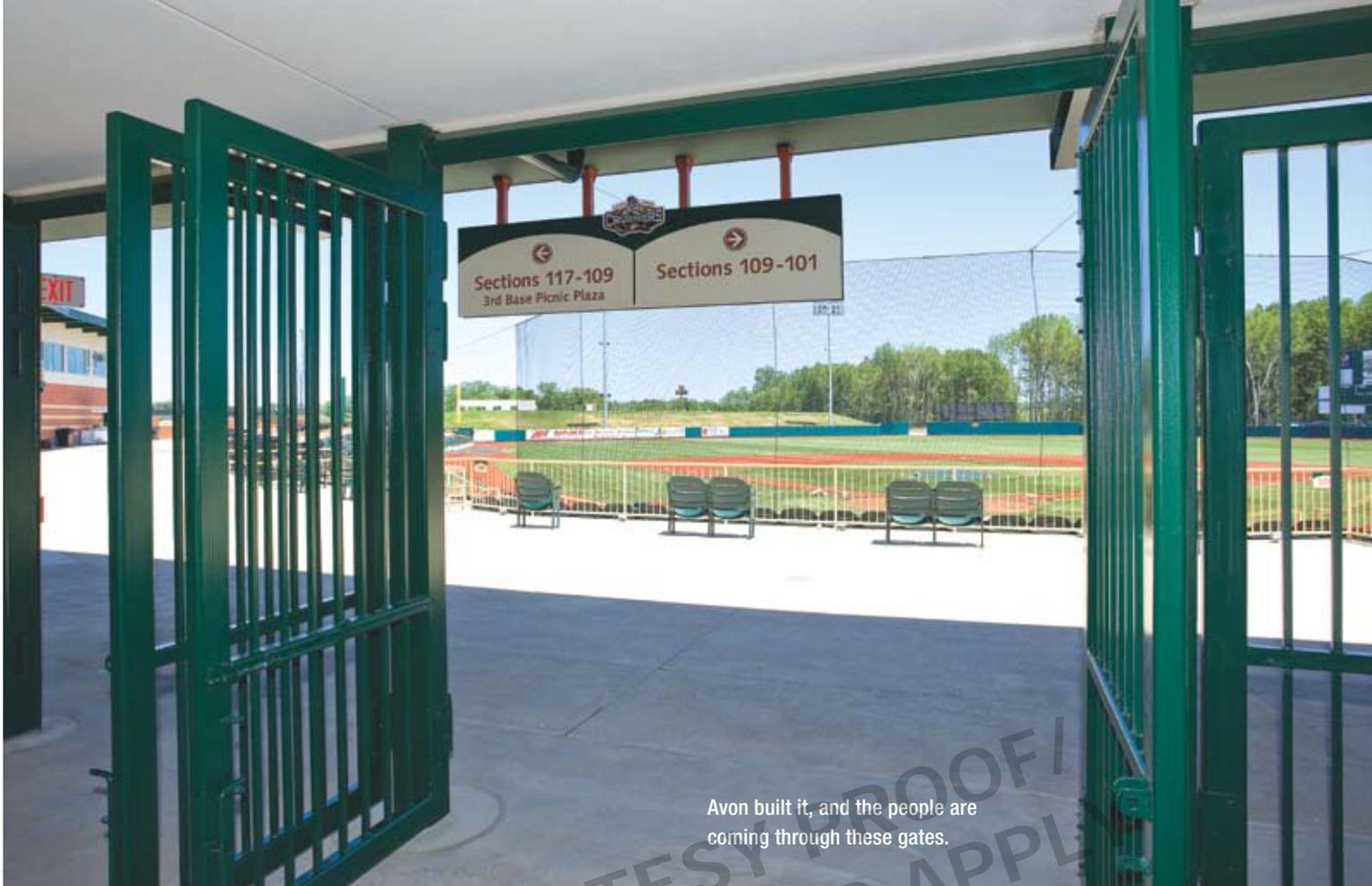
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signature program elements are shown in the combination seating bowl and wide concourse behind it. "The enclosed suites are a departure from most Frontier League ballparks, and will have premium sightlines to the field. Another upgrade was the inclusion of the team clubhouse next to the field, which also created a large party patio on its roof area," Wynn says.

"Osports is known for knowing how to provide just what's needed," says the mayor.

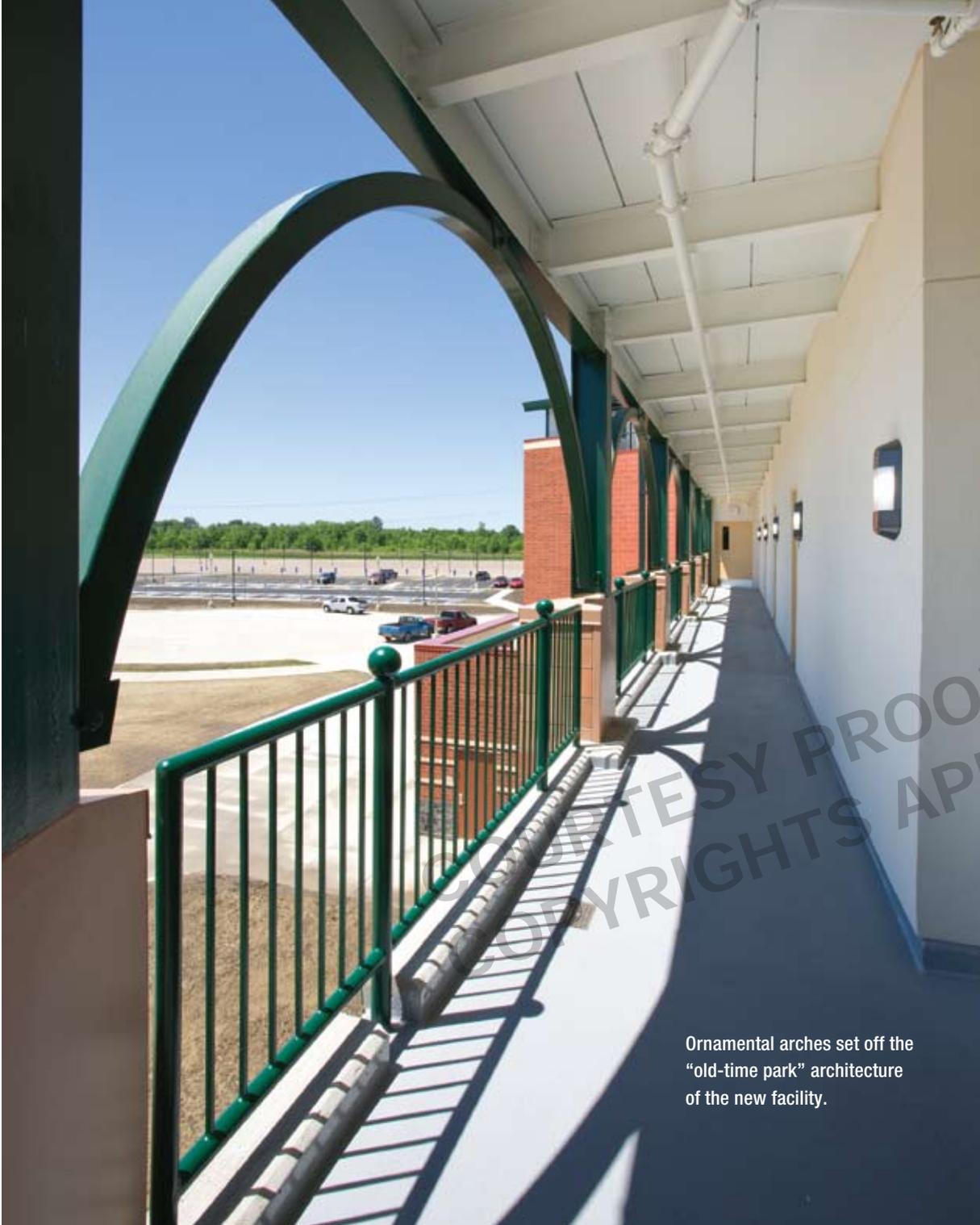
If you build it

Fabrizi Trucking and Paving began the French Creek Bridge replacement in 2007 to accommodate future construction traffic. According to Aaron Appell, Bramhall Engineering, Terrace Construction began construction on the sewers, drinking waterlines, roadways, electrical conduits, parking lots and lawn restoration at the end of June 2008

and finished a year later. "Intense site preparation by Terrace involved dewatering the site so that the improvements could proceed. Their extensive experience in dewatering was extremely valuable in building this difficult project from day one," he says.

Terrace Construction turned the site over to Infinity Construction so construction of the stadium could begin in July. Appell says completing a 14-18 month project in 12 months was a challenge. There was "constant communication with public and private utilities, architects, other consulting engineers, city officials," he says.

"Site conditions were a challenge," agrees Mark Vega, project manager for Infinity. "Coordination between contractors was critical to maintain access for materials and workers. The other issue was completing an entire stadium from ground up through an Ohio winter."



Ornamental arches set off the “old-time park” architecture of the new facility.

stalled. With the early arrival of heavy snow, Infinity installed a temporary enclosure over the entire front and rear of the stadium, allowing work through the record cold in January and February. “We had to delay our masonry work to construct winter protection. After a delay of almost three weeks, Infinity resumed masonry work and continued with other areas of construction until the middle of April, when the enclosure was removed so exterior work could be completed,” says Mark Busta, project superintendent overseeing field coordination.

It was the middle of March when major underground field preparation began. The drainage system is comprised of contoured subgrade with #57 and #10 stone over a complicated underground drain piping system that can handle a 3-inch rainfall in only an hour and a half. The installation of the drainage system lasted approximately 5 weeks and was immediately followed by the installation of the artificial turf. Avon’s field is one of the first baseball fields to use the artificial turf in this area. “We went to see the facility in Florence, KY, and decided to have a turf surface at the ballpark,” says Mayor Smith, due to the varied uses for the stadium.

The seat installation began in the middle of April with completion during the second week of May. The exterior facade was completed, with the balance of the project being completed by middle of May, a few weeks ahead of the original schedule.

Another key element was getting submittals and engineering completed upfront in an expedited format. This task was handled and coordinated by Vince Notarberardino, project engineer. “It was a great job by all subcontractors involved. They and Bill Belloma of RWL Architects, who was on-site daily reviewing submittals with me, enabled us to make quick release of materials needed in the early parts of construction,” he notes.

MEP items are underground, he says, because of the separate clubhouse. The front wall

of the seating bowl was poured 1 ft above the baseball field grade and the rear wall 7 ft above exterior grade. This area was then filled with over 12,000 cu yd of clay to form the seating bowl and concourse. The clay was a cost-effective way of bringing the concourse area up to subgrade as it was available from a nearby site. At the time of steel erection, the early winter weather began to become a factor in constructing the masonry and interior portion of the project.

In early November, the roof was in-

Fastball

Jim Fantozzi, VP of operations, is proud of Infinity’s accomplishment in completing a full minor league stadium in 10 months. He notes that the dedication of Infinity’s staff, the architects involved, the subcontractors and the overall cooperation of the City of Avon personnel made a difficult project goal much more attainable. “Our completion date was set for June 1 with



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All-Pro Freight Stadium

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Owner: City of Avon</p> <p>Architect: OSports</p> <p>GC: Infinity Construction</p> <p>Site CM: RWL</p> <p>Cost: \$13 million</p> <p>Size: 32,000-sf baseball stadium to seat 3,500 fans</p> <p>Timeline: 10 months to construct</p> <p>Vendors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Action Door of Lorain County ■ American Seating Company ■ ASI Modulex ■ B-Par Inc. ■ Bramhall Engineers & Surveyors ■ Burghardt Manufacturing ■ Chagrin Valley Steel Erectors ■ Cleveland Architectural Hardware ■ Comm Steel ■ Coon Caulking and Restoration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Custom Fabricators Inc. ■ D. H Kaiser Co. ■ Daktronics ■ Duray J.F. Duncan Industries ■ Educational Equipment ■ Fabrizi Trucking & Paving ■ Garbo Third Compnay ■ Great Northern Fence ■ Independence Excavating ■ KONE Inc. ■ Lake Erie Electric ■ Legacy Commercial Flooring ■ List Industries ■ Lorain Glass ■ Mac Mechanical ■ Mack Industries ■ Metropolitan Builders ■ Ohio Awning & Manufacturing ■ Patriot Construction Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prime Interiors ■ RAM Construction Services ■ REM Graphics and Signs ■ Schmid Mechanical ■ Sidley Precast Group ■ Spectra Contract Flooring ■ Sports Construction Group ■ Sportsfield Specialites ■ Track & Field Installers ■ U.S. Flag and Flagpole Supply ■ VJA Systems ■ Willham Roofing Co. |
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Opening Day on June 2. Infinity completed the work approximately two weeks early to allow the team to move in prior to opening night. Watching the first pitch thrown was exciting and signifies we are truly 100% complete," notes Mark Vega.

The mayor explains that the city saved approximately \$150,000 by reducing the use of change orders, keeping original colors for cabinets and turf, etc. The site of the ballpark moved about 500 feet originally when the land was found to contain fly ash and mitigation would have set the project back a year. This was a result of excellent contractors in all disciplines and great communications to keep the project on schedule even though it was termed as a fast-track project.

The architects and engineers expedited delivery of shop drawings, pay applications and concise logging of meeting minutes, RFI's, change orders and coordination meetings with City of Avon officials," adds Fantozzi.

"The construction of the ballpark was fast and furious! Infinity Construction did a tremendous job working in challenging winter conditions and they were able to complete the facility by the June 2 opening game. There were no real significant events or setbacks along the way," Wynn says. "I believe this ballpark will be a great asset to the city and will be an economic development tool to complete the 133 acres available at the site. The ballpark sets a high standard for design and construction."

"The community enhancement is beyond belief along with the creation of a civic recreation site for all Avon families and others to enjoy at reasonable prices including pro-baseball venues, concerts, etc. Everyone is proud of the unique design which follows Avon's existing buildings theme aesthetically," concludes Landig. **BXM**

Niki Swank is a reporter with the Builders Exchange, with her finger on the pulse of state commercial construction.

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