

TO: City Council Members  
FROM: Adam Smith, City Manager  
DATE: February 23, 2023  
RE: Department of Natural Resources Spark Grant – Round Two – Project Home Run

**Background:** Michigan Spark Grants are a \$65 million program, funded by the American Rescue Plan, that represents a milestone moment for outdoor recreation, helping local communities that want to create, renovate or redevelop public outdoor opportunities for residents and visitors – especially those whose economic opportunities and health were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In February 2023, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) allocated just over \$14M in Round One leaving approximately \$50M available to allocate within Rounds Two and Three.

Administered by the DNR, Michigan Spark Grants will support projects that provide safe, accessible public recreation facilities and spaces to improve people’s health, introduce new recreation experiences, build on existing park infrastructure, and make it easier for people to enjoy the outdoors. This grant is possible because of the Building Michigan Together Plan, signed in March 2022, which included a historic infusion of federal funding in our state and local parks.

**Eligibility and Important Dates:** Based on eligibility requirements, the City can apply for up to two (2), \$1 million grants to support and enhance neighborhood features that promote improved health and safety outcomes in the Grand Ledge community that has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. *The DNR is prioritizing projects that are “shovel ready” with existing plans in order to help ensure the federally mandated timelines are met.*

#### **Summary of the Spark Grant Requirements:**

- Round Two grant applications are due TBD by the DNR.
- Ability to obligate all funds by December 31, 2024, and complete the project by October 31, 2026.
- Ability for this project to address COVID-19 impacts to aid with new outdoor recreational opportunities for people of all abilities.
- Eligible financial match is encouraged.
- Ability for the project to provide a long-term impact on the community.
- Long-term financial viability from the City to maintain the project.
- Ability to show how the project supports the vision and goals within plans incorporating public input such as the City’s Master Plan, DDA Priorities, and Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

**Project Components for the Project Home Run Application:** To capitalize on the up to \$1 million of potential grant funding available per applicant and meet the requirements of providing permanent outdoor infrastructure that will leverage federal, state, local, and private resources toward sustainable, public, outdoor recreation.

Project Home Run will utilize the successful Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant of \$134,700 for Field 1 (380' 13U/14U and up ball field) and add two additional fields with amenities for a tournament-grade, three-field complex on the 10.10-acre City-owned parcel adjacent to Fitzgerald Park. The following Project Home Run elements may include, but are not limited to:

- **\*Field 2** a 200' youth ball field for 9U-12U baseball and 9U-adult softball
- **\*Field 3** a 250' youth ball field for 9U-13U baseball and 9U-adult softball
- **\*ADA Permanent Bathrooms and Concession Facility**
- **\*Site Development**
- **\*Paved Trail** to enter Fitzgerald Park
- **\*Paved Parking Lot**

**\*Notes project components with existing plans.**

**Project Cost Estimates:** Per the DNR Spark Grant requirements, the total project cost may exceed \$1 million if the applicant is able to provide documentation of secured matching funding sources. City staff is estimating the total project costs to be approximately \$1,150,000.

In accordance with the City Council Tier 1 priority of Public Places & Park Enhancements, City staff are in support of a grant application submission for the Round Two DNR Spark Grant.

**Round Two Submission:** The City will submit the Project Home Run application when the Round Two window is open.

- **Spark Due Date:** The DNR has not announced an official due date for Round Two. It is anticipated to be in April 2023.
- **Spark Available Funding:** Approximately \$50M is available via the Spark grants. The DNR will allocate this in Round Two and Round Three in 2023.
- **Spark Funding Regulations:** All of the Spark grant funds, regardless of the award date, must have funds fully obligated by December 31, 2024, and fully completed by October 31, 2026.
- **Application Amount:** The Project Home Run application has total project costs estimated at \$1,150,000. City staff will utilize the MNRTF grant amount allocated to Field 1 of \$134,700 as match deemed allowable in the Spark Grant program. City staff recommends that City Council allocate an additional \$150,000 in match from the General Fund to allow a grant request of \$1,000,000.
- **Project Priority:** Spark grant applicants are allowed to submit more than one grant application as long as they are prioritized. The City plans to resubmit the Jaycee Park project as the #1 priority and the Project Home Run as the #2 priority.

# FUTURE SITE OF GRAND LEDGE BALL FIELDS

9U-12U | 9U-13U | 13U-14U and up  
BASEBALL

9U-ADULT SOFTBALL

PLAY BALL!

LEARN MORE!

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