

# FROM FACILITY USER TO COMMUNITY ASSET STEWARD

Nonprofit Facility Control, Community Youth Sports,  
and a Sustainable Oklahoma Model

Central proposition

**A community youth-sports organization cannot fully protect its mission over generations if its continued existence depends entirely upon someone else controlling the facility. Ownership provides the strongest protection, but durable, transparent, mission-protected operational control can provide a viable alternative.**

**Discussion basis:** September 22, 2026 audio transcript, cross-referenced with Baseball Heaven project materials including *Who Controls the Field Controls the Future*, the Brian Crawford Memorial event history, and the 2011 Oklahoma State University Shawnee sports-complex economic-impact study.

## Purpose

This executive summary converts the afternoon discussion into a research framework suitable for development as a major Baseball Heaven landing page or formal case study. It distinguishes documented project findings from personal recollection, interpretation, and hypotheses requiring additional verification.

# Executive Overview

The September 22 discussion represents a transition in the Baseball Heaven research. Earlier work primarily documented what happened, how Oklahoma youth-sports operations function, how facility control is structured, and how economic activity moves through tournaments and user groups. This discussion asks the next question: **what institutional model should replace the weaknesses identified by the research?**

The emerging answer is a community-asset stewardship model in which responsibility, revenue, youth access, facility control, and long-term mission are deliberately aligned. The concept does not require every youth nonprofit to purchase land. The comparative research already shows that fee-simple nonprofit ownership is the strongest form of control, while a long-term, transparent public-private stewardship agreement can also protect community continuity.

## 1. From Documentation to Institutional Design

The discussion moves the research through four stages: **documentation -> diagnosis -> comparative analysis -> institutional design**. Hidden Valley and related projects examine the business architecture of youth sports. Facility-control research asks who controls scheduling, operations, revenue, improvements, and access. The new discussion begins designing a structure intended to preserve a community mission across generations.

This makes the proposed case study prospective rather than merely historical. Its purpose would be to use accumulated evidence and lived operating experience to define a transparent alternative for Oklahoma community youth sports.

## 2. Success Does Not Equal Security

A central lesson from the Brian Crawford Memorial and BCM Sports experience is that successful programming does not automatically create durable facility rights. A nonprofit may build participation, relationships, events, volunteer capacity, goodwill, and operational knowledge while remaining dependent upon a property owner or leaseholder for future access.

The existing *Who Controls the Field Controls the Future* research describes this as **sweat equity without property equity**: community organizations can add substantial value to a facility without acquiring a legal interest that guarantees continued use. The September 22 discussion turns that observation into a strategic question: how can a nonprofit protect the mission after it has proven the ability to create value?

## 3. The Memorial Experience Changes the Question

The Brian Crawford Memorial history adds a dimension that ordinary facility studies do not have. The investment is not only operational. It includes memorial identity, charitable fundraising, volunteer effort, community trust, organizational goodwill, and a long-term mission created in Brian's name.

The research therefore distinguishes contribution from control. Naming rights, donations, programming success, and community investment can be deeply meaningful without becoming ownership or durable operating authority. The proposed next phase is not simply to build another facility bearing Brian's name; it is to examine how to build a governance structure capable of protecting the mission that the memorial created.

## 4. The Community-Program Problem

The transcript contrasts community-based participation with an increasingly team-, tournament-, and travel-oriented environment. The concern is not that competitive baseball should disappear. The discussion expressly recognizes that

families may choose travel, showcase, and tournament pathways.

The access problem is the child who does not already have a team. A community model provides an entry point: **register individually -> enter a draft or balanced-team process -> receive coaching -> play locally -> develop -> advance if desired**. The proposed model therefore treats recreational access and competitive advancement as complementary pathways rather than mutually exclusive systems.

The transcript also recalls a major participation decline at Shawnee Lions Club ballfields after a change from a predominantly draft-oriented structure toward a mixed structure involving competitive bring-your-own teams. Those historical participation figures should be independently documented before publication as established fact; for now they are best presented as personal recollection supporting a research question.

## 5. A Different Definition of a Sports Complex

The discussion implicitly challenges the idea that tournament economic impact should be the primary purpose of a youth-sports complex. A community-first hierarchy emerges: **local participation, player development, tournament activity in support of the mission, and economic impact as a broader community benefit**.

This distinction is consistent with the 2011 Oklahoma State University Shawnee report. That report was an economic-impact analysis, not a feasibility or benefit-cost study. It estimated visitor spending and secondary economic effects under stated assumptions; it did not establish that regional economic impact is the same measurement as facility profitability, operator revenue, or community-program success.

The Baseball Heaven framework should therefore continue separating four concepts: **regional economic impact, facility revenue, operator revenue, and community benefit**.

## 6. Hidden Valley Supplies the Governance and Financial Layer

The Hidden Valley research provides the structural context for the proposed model. In the Oklahoma environment under study, ownership of the land, operational control, calendar authority, tournament activity, gate receipts, concessions, entry fees, officiating costs, and capital responsibility can be distributed among different parties.

The proposed response is alignment. Tournament revenue can support the fields. Concessions and sponsorships can support operations. Donations can become capital improvements. Registration can support local programming. Capital reserves can protect the physical asset. The governing institution responsible for the mission should also have clearly defined responsibility and authority over the resources necessary to sustain that mission.

## 7. Ownership Is Strongest - But It Is Not the Only Model

The September 22 discussion repeatedly gravitates toward nonprofit ownership of land and facilities. The comparative project folder adds an important refinement: **durable control can be created through more than one legal structure**.

The existing research identifies four useful models: nonprofit ownership; a protected public lease to a community league; independent nonprofit stewardship on publicly owned land; and a more discretionary/intermediary public-facility model. Northshore Athletic Fields is especially important because King County retains ownership while a nonprofit operates under a long-term agreement covering development, operation, maintenance, and use.

The refined thesis is therefore stronger than 'a nonprofit must own the complex': **a community nonprofit needs durable, transparent, representative, and mission-protected control of the complex**. Fee-simple ownership is one pathway; multi-decade stewardship can be another.

## 8. Proposed Community Asset Stewardship Model

The research now supports development of a formal **Community Asset Stewardship Model**. Its core features would include mission-protected nonprofit governance; durable facility control through ownership or a long-term agreement; open community registration; a draft/parity structure for recreational play; a pathway for advanced players to pursue competitive baseball; tournament activity used to support rather than replace the community mission; transparent financial reporting; capital-reserve planning; representative governance; written rules for scheduling, concessions, rentals, improvements, contracts, renewal, and termination; and institutional continuity designed to survive changes in founders, boards, elected officials, and facility administrators.

## 9. Claims That Require Careful Treatment

Several portions of the audio concern Tulsa National Little League, Little League regional/international administration, team eligibility disputes, and possible motives behind organizational decisions. The transcript itself sometimes identifies these statements as speculation or personal interpretation. A professional public case study should separate: **(1) documented facts, (2) attributed interpretation, and (3) unanswered research questions.**

The same discipline should apply to the suggestion that voters reject municipal bond or sales-tax proposals because they distrust user-group governance. That is a plausible hypothesis raised in the discussion, but the source materials reviewed for this summary do not establish that causal explanation. It could become a future survey or public-opinion research question.

## 10. Position Within the Baseball Heaven Research Architecture

This project should complement rather than replace *Who Controls the Field Controls the Future*. The earlier study asks which governance structures create durable community control. The proposed case study asks how those findings could be applied in Oklahoma.

| Existing research                          | Contribution to the new case study                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Who Controls the Field Controls the Future | Comparative facility-governance framework and ownership/stewardship alternatives.               |
| Brian Crawford Memorial Tournament History | Programming history, demand, relationships, and operational experience.                         |
| Before the Gates Opened                    | Operating-system design before a facility opens.                                                |
| Shawnee Regional Sports Park               | Economic promise, operating outcomes, and economic-impact versus facility-revenue distinctions. |
| Hidden Valley                              | Financial flows, intermediaries, tournament economics, and accountability questions.            |
| Little League / field-control research     | Community access, charter sustainability, and local-program governance.                         |
| Northshore comparative research            | Long-term nonprofit stewardship on publicly owned land.                                         |

## 11. Recommended Landing Page / Case Study

**Working title:** From Facility User to Community Asset Steward

**Subtitle:** Nonprofit Facility Control, Community Youth Sports and a Sustainable Oklahoma Model

**Primary research question:** What if the future of community youth sports depended not on finding another facility to rent, but on creating an institution capable of protecting the fields, programs, finances, and mission for generations?

Recommended narrative sequence: **The Question -> The Memorial Experience -> Sweat Equity Without Property Equity -> The Community Participation Problem -> What Hidden Valley Revealed -> Economic Impact Is Not Facility Sustainability -> Four Governance Models -> The Northshore Alternative -> Community Asset Stewardship -> Shawnee Opportunity -> Research Questions -> Evidence and Documents -> Next Phase.**

## 12. Strategic Significance

The strongest value of the September 22 recording is that it begins moving Baseball Heaven from retrospective accountability research toward prospective institutional design. The project has spent years asking what happened, how the business system works, who controls public facilities, and how community organizations become vulnerable. This discussion begins asking what should be built instead.

The resulting concept is not merely a proposal for another baseball complex. It is a proposal to examine whether a transparent, accountable nonprofit institution can align youth access, facility stewardship, revenue reinvestment, capital planning, and long-term community control.

The memorial story gives that policy question a human origin: remembering Brian led to programming; programming led to facility experience; facility experience led to research; research now points toward stewardship.

***“Not simply: Who gets this weekend?  
But: Who will protect this place for the next generation?”***

Research status: Conceptual executive summary. Historical recollections, contested allegations, election-related causal interpretations, and site-specific legal conclusions should be independently documented before being presented as established findings in a public-facing case study.