



Chicago Baseball Museum Studies 'Perfect Match' on Whiting Lakefront

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The Chicago Baseball Museum will conduct a feasibility study to help determine whether a proposed lakefront site in Whiting, Ind., could be suitable for a bricks-and-mortar home, it announced on Tuesday.

Whiting officials have expressed interest in the museum to be a centerpiece of a 30-acre, \$45-million Lakefront Project, which is expected to be completed in two years. The massive redevelopment will include a boardwalk, fishing pier, bike and nature trails, hotel, high-end restaurants, upscale condos and other attractions.

The city is located in the Chicago Metropolitan Area on the southern shore of Lake Michigan, less than one mile east of the Illinois-Indiana border.

"From the start, our goal has been to build a permanent home in the shadows of Chicago's two major league ballparks," said Dr. David Fletcher, CEO and founder. "After consideration of several potential sites, we have found that to be impractical at this time especially in light of the economic troubles the state of Illinois currently faces.

"Meanwhile, Whiting officials have become aware of our vast potential and is in the unique position to help us achieve it," Fletcher went on to say. "Their ambitious plans and can-do spirit should not be ignored. This may be a unique opportunity to build a state-of-the-art baseball museum in a community that really wants one."

"The CBM is a perfect match for our strategy to transform the City of Whiting into a weekend destination location," Whiting mayor Joe Stahura said. "We are excited to partner with it to analyze the feasibility of establishing a high quality sports museum in our city."

The proposal calls for the museum to become co-tenants with the Mascot Hall of Fame and the Whiting-Robertsdale Historical Museum in a new structure to be built near Lakefront Park. The site is 14 miles from U.S. Cellular Field, 18.5 miles from the central Chicago Loop and 24 miles from Wrigley Field.

The project will be funded by city dollars and a grant from the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority.

"Perhaps more than any, baseball fans are a passionate lot and known to travel hours if not days to reach their desired destinations," museum executive director Paul Ladewski said. "The ques-

tion is, are these people more concerned about the state designation or the overall quality of the experience itself?

“Or to tweak a line from Field of Dreams, if we build it on the Illiana border, will they come? That's a question we hope to answer in the weeks ahead.”

Whiting is the base headquarters for BP, which operates the sixth-largest oil refinery in the country there. The company is in the midst of a \$4.2-billion modernization project, the single largest investment in state history.

Whiting also features Oil City Stadium, which is home to the Midwest Collegiate League and several local amateur teams. The ballpark is a short distance from the proposed site and can provide an outdoor venue for museum events. In addition, the city hosts the annual Pirogi Festival, which last weekend drew more than 200,000 people from across the country.

The Chicago Baseball Museum (www.chicagobaseballmuseum.org) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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