

Vernon Hills Athletic Complex (VHAC)

History

Located 1 mile south of Route 60 or a quarter mile north of Route 45 on Fairway Drive in Vernon Hills

The U.S. Navy Libertyville Training Site, now known as the Vernon Hills Athletic Complex (VHAC), consisting of 184 acres, was acquired by the Navy from the Curtiss Candy Company in 1945. The Navy used it as an auxiliary airfield to train pilots during World War II. The Army used the property as a NIKE missile base from 1954 through the early 1960's when it was decommissioned and the missiles removed. In 1971, the Federal Aviation Administration was given 3.67 acres near the center of the site to construct a navigational aid tower for O'Hare Airport.

In 1972, the property was transferred back to the Navy. The Navy used the property for training and a small arms firing range. A 20-acre parcel in the northeast corner of the property was transferred to the Lake County Public Works Department for construction of a wastewater treatment plant. The Navy never developed the remaining 164 acres. In 1982, all aboveground structures associated with the Nike missile operations were demolished. The site has been vacant and unused since the early 1990s and was declared surplus by the Federal Government. Only the FAA Doppler Visual Omni Range (VORTAC) facility remained onsite.

Three school districts, Libertyville H.S. District 128, Stevenson H.S. District 125, and Lincolnshire/Prairie View District 103, have portions of the site for use as athletic fields. The Village of Vernon Hills has approximately 45 acres, of which 7.5 are used for a road right-of-way to connect Fairway Drive with Route 45. The remainder of the Village's parcel has been used to develop active and passive recreational facilities.

The staffs of the various districts and the Village of Vernon Hills jointly worked on engineering and planning for the site and reviewed funding options for the first phase of the recreational improvement. In addition to the extension of Fairway Drive to Prairie Road and Route 45 the Village owned recreation facilities include soccer fields, lighted ballfields, football fields, restrooms, concession/storage building, a large shelter, and bike paths.

Maintenance

Maintenance of the athletic fields and grounds is by Village contract with a local landscape maintenance company. Restroom cleaning and trash removal is the responsibility of the Vernon Hills Park District.

Operations

Scheduling of activities at the VHAC is provided by the Vernon Hills Park District through an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Village of Vernon Hills. Scheduling priorities are Park District programs and activities first, Park District affiliates such as the Vernon Hills Youth Athletic Association (Cougars and Stingers) are second, and third are other groups who request to use or rent the fields.