

Growth of soccer in Miami Dade County and the need for more field space

With the rising interest in professional soccer in the United States, coupled with a high population of foreign born residents, the need for more soccer fields to meet the demand for youth and adult play continues to grow in Miami Dade County. In the last few years, the emergent of new youth academies loosely tied to foreign professional clubs, smaller instructional academies, and lower division domestic professional/development programs are challenging and competing with the traditional youth clubs for talent and limited field space. The County's Kendall Soccer Park's five artificial fields and the six natural grass fields at the Amelia Sports Complex have helped to meet the demand for fields, but more is needed as the sport continues to grow.

Beckham's MLS team in the now youth baseball dominated City of Miami will see an unprecedented growth in soccer in the city and south Florida. The City's plans includes converting fields and building mini fields complexes, but more outside the city will be needed. Miami Dade County Parks has taken the lead in identifying and building new fields with more fields planned at Amelia (4 fields), and new projects at Ives Estates Park (3 fields), West Dade Soccer Park (8 fields) and a large tournament style soccer facility in west Dade at the yet to be developed 160 acre West End Park (16 – 22 fields), but these projects will take three to five years to complete.

Seven factors the county and city park planners must consider:

1. Expansion of soccer into the inner-city.
2. Continued growth in adult recreational play
3. Foreign based/influenced youth academies replacing traditional parent based youth programs
4. Continued growth in popularity of MLS and lower professional/development leagues (NASL, IPSSL, PDL)
5. Growth of alternative field sports (Rugby & Lacrosse)
6. Miami-Dade County is the gateway to soccer rich Central and South America.
7. Economic impact from tournaments, international games, soccer related tourism.

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