

# Ripken Sr. Foundation to begin Memorial Stadium project

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Ryan Sharrow](#) Staff



Nicholas Griner | Staff  
Baseball Hall of Famer Cal Ripken Jr.  
displays the new Memorial Stadium field.  
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The Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation will break ground Wednesday morning on a \$1.5 million youth baseball field — backed by some of the region’s largest companies — on the site of the former Memorial Stadium.

Cal Ripken Jr. and brother Bill are expected to be joined by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake at the ground breaking on East 33rd Street. Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson and businessman Francis X. Kelly Jr., co-chairs of the foundation’s “Swing for the Future” campaign, will also be in attendance. They will be joined by Baltimore Colt Art Donovan.

The Swing for the Future program, [first reported by the Baltimore Business Journal](#) in February 2009, aims to build baseball fields for at-risk youth that will serve as a catalyst for redevelopment in low-income neighborhoods. The two-acre Memorial Stadium project will be the flagship of five Baltimore fields.

Fundraising for the Memorial Stadium project began in early 2009 and raising the \$1.5 million wasn’t easy, said Steve Salem, executive director of the Ripken Sr. Foundation.

“A lot of folks say ‘Are you sure you want to do this?’” Salem said in an interview Tuesday. “Our stance has been, and still is, during times like this projects like this are more important than ever.”

Top donors for the Memorial Stadium project include:

- \$400,000 from the State of Maryland through its Open Space program, which awards grants for projects centered around green-space developments;
- Up to \$200,000 from the board of the Ripken Sr. Foundation;
- \$150,000 from the City of Baltimore’s Community Development Block Grant funds;

- \$150,000 from [Legg Mason Inc.](#);
- \$100,000 from the WBAL Kids Care Campaign;
- \$100,000 from [CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield](#);
- \$100,000 from [M&T Bank Corp.](#); and,
- \$100,000 from the [Henry and Ruth Blaustein Rosenberg Foundation](#);
- \$100,000 from an anonymous donor.

Salem said a \$500,000 naming-rights sponsor is still available. Additional funds raised will go toward programming and routine maintenance.

Once complete, the 2-acre Memorial Stadium park will be gifted to the Y of Central Maryland. Henry H. Lewis Contractors will build the park, which Salem hopes will be complete by late November.

The project is flanked by a 55,000-square-foot YMCA and 340-unit senior housing development.

Meanwhile, Salem said the [Living Classrooms Foundation](#) has secured \$3 million in stimulus funds for a future Patterson Park field. Living Classrooms would partner with the foundation on that project. Before construction begins, Salem is looking to raise another \$1 million in programming funds.

Ripken Jr. [told the Baltimore Business Journal last year](#) the local projects could spur the organization to take the campaign to 29 other cities across the U.S. with big-league baseball teams in an attempt to provide a similar spark to needy neighborhoods in those towns.

The Park Heights neighborhood is also being eyed for a field.

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