

# MAYOR'S CORNER



A BLOG BY MAYOR JAMES D. STEWART, JR.

APRIL 7, 2026

## Built Different: Ruffner Park's Second Season Is Just Getting Started

Two years in the making. One community that keeps showing up — 1,500 strong and growing.

This past weekend, **Kim and I sat on a swing set** at Ruffner Park Sports Complex and watched our community enjoy something we fought hard to build. I looked out at the packed fields, heard the laughter rolling off the playground, and felt something I can only describe as deep gratitude — not just for the moment, but for every person who believed in this city when believing wasn't easy. In that moment, every skeptic, every obstacle, and every late night was worth it.

### Irondale is Built Different.

April 2024 → March 1, 2025 → April 4, 2026  
Construction Begins      Grand Opening      Year 2 Opening Day



**Still Growing**

*"We didn't just build fields. We built the future of Irondale."*

We broke ground on this dream in **April 2024**. By **March 1, 2025**, we opened the doors to a brand-new world-class facility — replacing antiquated, divot-filled gravel lots because our families deserve the best. And now, in our **second season**, the momentum is only building. Over **1,500 neighbors** packed the park on Opening Day, with overflow lots full and cars lining Ruffner Road by 10:00 a.m. Year 1 was a promise kept. Year 2 is proof that the promise is here to stay.

<b>1,500+</b> Neighbors showed up	<b>12</b> Teams on the Field	<b>Year 2</b> And Still Growing
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*"Opening Day is always special, but what makes this program truly meaningful isn't just the fields or the facilities—it's the people. It's the coaches who volunteer their time, the parents who show up day in and day out, and the families who pour into these kids. That's what builds a program. That's what builds a community."*

**- Will Harrington, Irondale Parks & Recreation Director**

### OPENING DAY HIGHLIGHTS

**Prayer & Praise:** John London blessed the fields, and Miss Irondale, Sarah Claire Hults, delivered a passionate National Anthem that set the tone for the whole day.

**New Leadership:** Park Director Will Harrington welcomed 12 teams of young athletes ready to make their mark in Year 2.

**The Atmosphere:** Hot dogs, mozzarella sticks, laughter on the playground, and excitement in every corner of the park.

**Overflow Parking:** By 10:00 a.m., every lot was full, and cars lined Ruffner Road — Irondale showed up bigger than ever.

A few weeks ago, these same families were hunting Easter eggs at this very park. Now they're back for Opening Day. **That's not a coincidence — that's a community putting down roots.** We are watching young families choose Irondale, and in just two years, this park has become their home base. Every season they return, Irondale grows stronger.

The skeptics called this project "crazy." But two years later, seeing 1,500 neighbors pour through the gates on a Saturday morning makes the vision crystal clear. This didn't happen overnight — it took planning, partnership, and an unshakeable belief that Irondale deserved better. To every council member, contractor, parks staff member, and resident who carried this with us from the very beginning: **thank you.** You built this, too.

### COMING UP NEXT

Ruffner Park is just one chapter in the Beloved Community story. Stay tuned for a follow-up post mid-season with photos, stories from the stands, and a look at what Year 2 is producing for Irondale families — and what Impact 2026 has in store next. Do It Every Day. ❤️

Were you at Opening Day? Share this post and tag a family who was there. Let's keep the momentum going all season long.

**#BelieveInIrondale**



Build Community. Build the Future.