

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee
Report From: Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
Meeting Date: March 16, 2022
Report Code: CS-22-033
Subject: Preliminary Feasibility Study for an Artificial Turf Field

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-22-033 respecting a Preliminary Feasibility Study for an Artificial Turf Field, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to:

1. Work with the partners and stakeholders to undertake the following six (6) steps:
 - a. Structure a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Owen Sound, the Owen Sound Minor Soccer Association, and other parties with a material interest in the successful development of an artificial turf field development project. The purpose of an MOU is to establish shared project development principles, roles, and procedures for advancing the project;
 - b. Visit comparable sites to acquire additional development and operational insight and learn from the experiences of other facility operators;
 - c. Further investigate a limited number of existing site conditions indicated in the Preferred Site Program & Amenities section of this report;
 - d. Revalidate potential field user groups' outdoor and indoor field time requirements. Ask potential user groups to provide a formal letter of commitment specifying its' time requirements and to provide a board resolution declaring a commitment to utilizing the requested time if it were to be provided;

- e. Seek infrastructure funding and capital grants from government and non-government sources to assist with upfront capital;
 - f. Remain open to alternative site development locations that could not be reasonably anticipated at the time of this study. Apply the site location considerations and business case projections used in this analysis when updating the business case to consider alternative sites, should they present; and
2. Examine potential grant and funding opportunities consistent with the feasibility study and bring opportunities forward for consideration by Committee and Council.

Highlights:

- The Recreation, Parks and Facilities Master Plan identified a desire for a turf field and encouraged the City to work with partners to undertake a turf field feasibility study;
- The draft study was completed in partnership with Owen Sound Minor Soccer Association and included consultation with several potential user groups and also included input from other groups, including the Owen Sound Agricultural Society;
- The draft identifies anticipated capital and operating costs and scenarios associated with such a facility in Owen Sound and also provides an analysis of potential sites;
- The study identifies a series of next steps that would be undertaken to advance further the planning for and development of this facility in cooperation with other partners going forward.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Collaborative City - KR1 - Leverage partnerships to improve or maintain delivery of targeted services without increasing tax levy

Background:

In January of 2018, Council approved a new Recreation, Parks, and Facilities Master Plan for the City.

In the stakeholder engagement and public consultation completed as part of the Recreation, Parks, and Facilities Master Plan, it was clear that there was a

strong public desire for a multi-use turf field that could be developed with a seasonal bubble.

Indoor turf facilities are becoming increasingly common throughout Ontario. The closest full-size turf fields are located in Barrie and Guelph (approximately 120 km east and south, respectively).

As encouraged by the Master Plan, the City, in partnership with Owen Sound Minor Soccer Association (Minor Soccer), developed a working group to prepare the background and deliverables in an RFP document. The RFP was issued in August of 2021, and the project was awarded to RC Strategies at a total cost of \$20,000 (each partner contributes \$10,000).

The final draft report is attached. The consultant will present the Preliminary Feasibility Study at the Committee meeting on March 16, 2022.

Analysis:

Based on input gathered through consultation with potential project partners, feedback from potential sports field users, and demographic and best practices analysis, the following general conclusions are noted:

- There is evidence of sufficient demand for both an outdoor and seasonal indoor artificial turf field to serve a catchment population within 30 minutes from Owen Sound.
- Victoria Park is an ideal location for an outdoor and seasonal indoor artificial turf field so long as it can be situated over the existing natural turf football field.
- The financial sustainability of the project is significantly enhanced if the City and Minor Soccer partners with a school board that can utilize weekday daytime hours and assists with capital development and operating costs.
- Assuming a partnership with a school board is possible, all outdoor and indoor field operating budget scenarios are net positive.
- The rounded, estimated capital cost of indicated capital items required for full-size soccer and a full-size soccer/football field is \$1,195,000 and \$1,520,000, respectively.
- The incremental, estimated cost of providing a 1/3 field air supported seasonal dome over either of the outdoor fields is

\$1,067,000. The 1/3 field seasonal dome is sized for anticipated utilization.

The study cautions that preliminary outdoor field operating costs budget scenarios should be interpreted cautiously as they are high level and based on certain assumptions (hours of operation, Monday – Sunday, 8 am – 11 pm, prime time spring and summer hourly rates, \$40 and \$30 respectively) and a fixed fee for daytime school use is assumed at 50% of outdoor field operating costs). The operation of an outdoor turf field without and with a seasonal dome with between 50 and 70 per cent utilization results in a net positive operating budget. In addition, the indoor revenue assuming various utilization scenarios of between 65 and 85 per cent result in positive net operating budgets (assuming there is a partnership with a school board for daytime use).

The last section of the draft feasibility study is the conclusions and next steps. The key next step is to formalize a process through which the City and partners can agree on a general framework to advance a future capital project further. The following six next steps are outlined in the full study:

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2. Visit comparable sites to acquire additional development and operational insight and learn from the experiences of other facility operators.
3. Further investigate a limited number of existing site conditions indicated in this report's Preferred Site Program & Amenities section.
4. Revalidate potential field user groups' outdoor and indoor field time requirements. Ask potential user groups to provide a formal letter of commitment specifying its' time requirements and to provide a board resolution declaring a commitment to utilizing the requested time if it were to be provided.
5. Seek infrastructure funding and capital grants from government and non-government sources to assist with upfront capital.
6. Remain open to alternative site development locations that could not be reasonably anticipated at the time of this study. Apply the site location considerations and business case projections used in this analysis when updating the business case to consider alternative sites, should they present.

Financial Implications:

The rounded, estimated capital cost of indicated capital items required for full-size soccer and a full-size soccer/football field is \$1,195,000 and \$1,520,000, respectively.

The incremental, estimated cost of providing a 1/3 field air-supported seasonal dome over either of the outdoor fields is \$1,067,000.

The annual net operating costs of the turf field and indoor dome component are anticipated, based on the assumptions of the draft Feasibility Study, to be a net positive.

At this time, the City's 10-year capital budget forecast includes \$250,000 for constructing a turf field in 2031. Depending on the success of the next steps, including realizing MOUs with key partners and the availability of potential funding such as grants, the timeline relating to the City's capital commitment may need to be brought forward.

Communication Strategy:

The idea for a turf field feasibility study came from the Recreation, Parks, and Facility master plan based on public consultation and feedback at the time of the preparation of the Master Plan in 2019.

There has been significant communication as part of the research and consultation with stakeholders, users, and potential partners that will continue as the next steps are undertaken.

Consultation:

An important part of the RFP was engaging and consulting with stakeholders. The key themes of that consultation and findings from the survey are outlined in detail in the attached draft feasibility study.

Owen Sound Minor Soccer was provided the draft in advance. Other partners were provided the draft feasibility study as soon as the plan was made public, including school boards, minor sports groups, and the Agricultural Society.

Attachments:

1. Draft Preliminary Feasibility Study for an Artificial Turf Field-rcs+

Prepared and Recommended by:

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Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services at pcoulter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 x. 1252.