

City of Richmond
Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee
June 28, 2005

Agenda Item Request

Delegation from an alliance of 13 Richmond Soccer Associations

An alliance of 13 Richmond soccer associations proposes a new partnership with the City built on the City's 'Guiding Principles' which will provide soccer fields that better meets the needs of its players and will better serve the community of Richmond at large. The proposal has been formally endorsed by the Richmond Sports Council.

The proposal will be presented by:
Roger Barnes, Richmond Youth Soccer
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A Proposal for a New Soccer Fields Strategy and Facilities for Richmond

A. Executive Summary

An alliance of 13 Richmond soccer associations and clubs proposes a new partnership with the City built on the City's 'Guiding Principles' which will provide soccer fields that better meets the needs of its players and better serve the community of Richmond at large. The proposal has been formally endorsed by the Richmond Sports Council.

This proposal involves building a **Richmond Training Centre** comprised of four new artificial turf fields, reducing play on current grass fields to sustainable levels, and releasing nearly 50 current soccer fields (40 acres) for other community uses.

This proposal, with a target date for Fall 2006, will:

1. Provide long-needed training and improved playing surfaces for 3,700 soccer players.
2. Reduce the number of soccer fields required by nearly 50, freeing up approximately 40 acres of park space for other community uses.
3. Reduce the chronic over-usage and damage to grass fields.
4. Improve the quality of diamonds for summer sports groups.
5. Improve the availability and quality of playing fields for other community sports.
6. Reduce the city's costs to restore over-used fields.

As a tangible measure of the importance of improved training and playing surfaces to soccer players, Richmond's soccer associations will contribute \$250,000 to the capital cost of the Training Centre, will pay ongoing maintenance contributions each year of \$140,000, (i.e., about \$110,000 above current rental fees), and will seek further sponsorship and external financial contributions to the project. For a Fall/Winter season, field rental fees would approximate to \$30 for each youth player and \$45 for each adult.

The resources required for this facility are land and finances. The location needs are eight to ten acres, ideally located West of Number 4 Road. The projected project cost is estimated at \$6 million dollars for four artificial turf fields and a support building. Given the benefits that accrue to the city as a whole from this approach, we ask that the project be considered for capital plans and for any additional discretionary City funds as available. If the facility cannot be fully built for Fall 2006, we ask for completion of a full project plan, completion of a significant first phase in 2006, and designation of funding and build-out by 2008.

B. Situation Analysis:

The Problem: Chronic Over-Usage of Fall/Winter Playing Surfaces

In the fall/winter season, there are 3,700 organized soccer players in Richmond, representing about 80 percent of all fall/winter outdoor sports players. Two-thirds are youth and nearly 40 percent are female. Soccer participation is growing consistently, by 20 percent in the last ten years, especially in girls' and women's leagues. This growth is expected to continue, especially through continuing increases in female participation. There are also 1,300 organized summer league players, most winter players continuing their sport year-round.

Soccer players typically play one game each week. Elite players practice twice or more each week, recreational players practice once. Richmond has a rich tradition of developing top-flight national-level players and broad recreational participation. The sport is volunteer-run; the annual contribution of over 50,000 hours of time by coaches and organizers keep costs affordable for all.

Soccer players have two needs regarding fields. First, that adequate lit fields be available for practices. Second, that good quality, safe fields be available for all scheduled games.

The City has one artificial turf (AT) field, 17 'sand fields' and over 80 clay soccer fields. Eight of these are 'upgraded clay' fields, with irrigation and some drainage, but in general the clay fields are poorly drained and do not provide suitable and safe playing surfaces in the winter. Soccer is played on clay fields until Thanksgiving, after which youth play mostly switches to sand fields. Many adult soccer games take place on wet clay fields throughout the winter. The City provides fields without charge except for the AT.

Seven full-size sand fields and three mini fields are lit for evening practices. While first-class surfaces in the fall, these rapidly deteriorate through over-use. The recommended usage of a sand field is 260 hours per fall/winter season (12 hours per week). Currently, the lit sand fields are consistently used over 600 hours, or 32 hours per week, based on community demand and club growth. As a result, these fields are in poor condition for the second half of the season, are closed and/or in poor condition for summer sports, with annual maintenance and restoration costs running approximately \$15,000 per field. The unlit sand fields largely remain good quality all season as they are only used on weekends.

To reduce usage on lit fields to a sustainable 12 hours per week, meeting practice needs would require at least ten more lit grass fields. The alternative approach is to build on the proven success of the Artificial Turf fields at Minoru and (this year) Richmond High. Artificial Turf surfaces alone provide excellent training and game surfaces with near unlimited, high density use.

C. The Solution: 'Richmond Training Centre'

The City of Richmond is currently developing a Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan, based on six 'Guiding Principles' adopted by Council. These include: the ability to meet community needs, enhanced customer service, community involvement, effective partnerships, financial sustainability and a policy framework for decision making.

The Richmond soccer community proposes a new relationship with the city solidly based on these guiding principles, and offers a true, accountable partnership, with benefits for the community at large as well as its members.

The Richmond soccer community proposes that it be allocated significantly fewer fields than the current allotment, but that these fields be much better suited to its needs. This proposal will meet projected needs up to 2010, by which time we hope a new recreation and tournament facility, possibly located at the DFO site, would add to facilities and help meet future growth.

A 'Training Centre' of four new Artificial Turf (AT) fields is required for use by soccer and other outdoor sports users, to be available for Fall 2006. This would allow:

1. The great majority of practices to be held on AT surfaces.
2. All teams to play all games on either AT surfaces or on sand grass fields not used for practice, with only limited use of better clay fields. From September onward, field usage would be sustainable, ensuring that fields remain in good quality all season.
3. The current practice of using many clay fields for only four weeks (until Thanksgiving) could end. No longer required, many of these could be 'released' from soccer inventory.
4. Improved playing surfaces for summer groups. Included in the fields released are those now left in very poor condition for baseball/softball. For example, soccer could withdraw from Palmer 1 and 2, London 2 and 3, King George 2 and 3. Usage of London 1 and Minoru 3 (Latrace) could reduce from 600 hours to 260 hours per winter, preventing the deterioration of those fields.
5. Dramatically reduced play on Minoru Oval, where practice use conflicts with track users and results in a very poor playing surface. We propose strict quotas on the Oval, e.g., maximum of four games per week, so it can return to being a "showcase" facility with an excellent grass surface used only for a few high-profile games and special events with broad spectator and media interest.
6. Adult soccer to move out of small community fields into the larger Training Centre facility, reducing community friction. Lighting requirements in community fields would also decrease.

7. Soccer to give up approximately 50 of the 100 grass fields currently prepared for it, i.e., 40 acres of parkland. See the attached list, included as an example only. Some would be kept as soccer fields for informal use. Half of these are School Board fields but about 20 are City-owned fields. These could be decommissioned as sports fields and adapted to suit other leisure activities, including passive uses for which there is increasing community demand. These fields are located throughout Richmond, resulting in city-wide benefits. (See map)
8. While primarily a home for soccer, the new facility could also be used by other community sports user groups.
9. Soccer groups recognize the improvement of playing surfaces as a major improvement in the resources made available for them. While this plan also benefits other parks users, we will contribute to the capital cost and pay usage fees for access to these fields.
 - Soccer associations will guarantee to make an initial capital contribution of \$250,000 in cash by fall 2006, with contributions from each (fall/winter) partner association at \$80 for each youth player and \$40 for each adult player. We will endeavor to increase this from other funding sources, e.g., lottery grants.
 - We will enter into usage agreements with the City to make contributions to maintenance costs of \$140,000, i.e., about \$110,000 per annum above current AT rental fees, i.e., nearly half of current maintenance costs. Hourly rental rates of AT and grass fields will be set so that the full fall/winter season charge averages approx. \$30 per youth player and \$45 per adult player, reflecting current city youth/adult fee ratios. Summer league charges would be approx \$10 for youth players and \$15 for adults.
 - Allocations should maximize usage of the AT and minimize grass usage. We propose penalty fees for associations booking an AT field and then not using it.
10. We will coordinate the usage of fields by our groups so fields remain at sustainable levels to protect field quality.
11. Such a site will allow Richmond to attract significant tournament activity. BC Soccer would welcome Richmond hosting Provincial Cup competitions each year.
12. The facility could also be utilized for other recreational activities and groups, e.g., by community centres, schools, provincial sports bodies, etc.
13. Soccer has had consistently active membership in the Sports Council, and will continue to work in that setting to advance sports in Richmond. We will form a 'Richmond Soccer Alliance' to coordinate our needs and viewpoints. We will continue to guarantee access to all regardless of means, continue to provide opportunities for both recreational and elite players, and continue to be a bridge across our community.

D. Location and Facility

A four-field training site will require about eight acres of playing surface, ten acres in total. While playing surfaces are the top priority, a changing room/washroom/ support facility would be desirable. As a high-density facility, substantial parking is required. To meet needs, the four AT fields must be incremental; any conversion of existing lit sand fields would require matching replacement unlit sand fields.

At this stage of the proposal, the soccer community is focused on the concept of the new facility, not any specific location. Ideally the facility should be located west of Number 4 Road and have grass fields adjacent to allow usage for tourism-generating tournaments. The Centre would ideally be at one site, or at most two sites, to allow cost efficiencies and optimal training capabilities. A number of locations may be suitable, including the DFO lands, South Arm and Hugh Boyd. We expect that selection of the optimum location will depend on park space and building costs and achieving consistency with the needs of other sports groups and with other community parks users and stakeholders.

E. Costs

The cost estimates below are based on consultation with the Parks Department, and given that we are not focusing on one particular location within this report, are conservative, to include significant contingencies in the order of 20% to allow for site specific conditions.

Each new AT field with lights would cost approx \$1.5 million (\$6.0 million total). Economies of scale from building four fields at one time could reduce this cost to approx. \$5 million. Building four fields plus a support building would cost approx. \$6 million.

The Parks Department projects that it may be able to recommend significant capital spending on this project in 2006. Additional funds would include soccer groups' capital contributions, other City funding options and possible partnering and cofunding.

We hope the City will recognize the new availability of 40 acres of parks for broader community uses as having sufficient benefit to the community at large to consider this project in City capital spending plans and to justify additional discretionary funding for this project as may be available.

In addition to its own contributions to the capital cost, with an approval in principle in place, the soccer community will actively explore other partnerships, e.g., with other soccer bodies, and seek other external funding sources, including casino fund applications and other granting organizations.

F. Endorsement

This proposal is brought forward by an alliance of the following 13 soccer associations and clubs representing 3,570 fall/winter players and 1,330 spring/summer soccer players:

	<u>Approx. Players *</u>
<u>Fall-Winter</u>	
Richmond Youth Soccer (Boy's)	1,550
including the four boy's soccer clubs:	
West, South Arm, North and Central Richmond	
Richmond Girls Soccer	1,000
Richmond Senior Soccer League (Men's)	600
Richmond Women's Soccer	240
Vancouver Metro Men's (Richmond teams)	180
Total Fall/Winter	3,570 *

- * The only Richmond affiliated soccer group not included is Master's soccer, (approx 170 players) for which we have been unable to reach a Richmond liaison.
- * The proposal also has the support of the BC Chinese Soccer Federation.

<u>Spring/Summer</u>	
Richmond Youth Soccer (Co-ed)	500
Richmond Women's Soccer	200
Richmond 6 a-side Men's League	160
Richmond Regional Soccer League (Men's)	220
Richmond Recreational League (Men's)	200
BC Christian Soccer League (Men's: Richmond teams)	50
Total Spring/Summer	1,330

- * Fall winter soccer registration in Richmond has grown from 3,040 in 1995, to 3,377 in 1999 and to 3,740 in 2005, an increase of 23% in ten years.

The proposal has been endorsed by the Richmond Sports Council.

G. Next Steps

The delegation respectfully requests that the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee:

- * endorse this proposal in principle
- * refer it to staff for review and recommendations regarding implementation, and
- * require these recommendations be returned to Committee/Council for final approval by September 2005.

Appendix:

Richmond Soccer Fields: Possible Release List: Example Only

	Full-Sized	Mini-Soccer	Total
City Owned	Kidd 1 King George 3 Kingswood 1 London 3 Palmer 1 Palmer 2 Westwind 1	Blundell Mini 1 Grauer Mini 2 Kidd Mini Kilgour Mini 1 Lee Mini 2 Quilchena Mini 2 Steves Mini 1 Currie Mini 1 Dolphin Garden City Mini 1 Garden City Mini 2 Garratt Mini 1 Tait Mini 1 Talmey Mini 1	
School Board Owned	Kilgour 1 King George 2 London 2 Woodward 1 Dixon 1 Gilmore 1 Lee 1 Mitchell1 Rideau 1 Thompson Talmey 1	Grauer Mini 1 Quilchena Mini 1 Bridge Mini 1 Cook Mini 1 De Beck 1 De Beck 2 Dixon Mini 1 Ferris Mini 1 Homma Mini 1 Maple Lane Mini 1 McKinney Mini 3 Sea Island Mini 1 Sidaway Mini 1	21
Other Owned	MOT 1 (Federal) Miller Rd (YVR)		2
Total	23	21	47

Richmond Soccer Fields: Possible Release List

