



# Corporate Report

NO: R052

COUNCIL DATE: March 4, 2004

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## REGULAR

TO: Mayor & Council                      DATE: March 2, 2004  
FROM: Interim General Manager,      FILE: 6140 –  
Parks, Recreation and                      20/T  
Culture  
SUBJECT: Whalley Indoor Synthetic Turf Complex at  
Tom Binnie Park

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## RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receive this report as information.
2. Approve a loan of nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) from the City's Land Reserve to facilitate construction of an improved indoor synthetic turf complex in Whalley, with repayment over a four year period from facility revenues.

## INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide an update to Council on planning issues related to the development of an indoor synthetic turf complex in Whalley and to seek approval to borrow funds in order to deliver an improved facility that will better meet community needs and provide an enhanced opportunity for future expansion and increased revenues.

## BACKGROUND

In July 2003, City Council approved a group of capital improvements, community development initiatives and incentives for development in Whalley that will enhance this area of the City by improving its image, stimulating private sector development, and by building a greater sense of pride within the community for those who live, work and visit there. One of the key initiatives is the development of an indoor synthetic turf field at Tom Binnie Park. Approved at \$1.4 million, the facility was envisaged to be a tensioned fabric and steel structure covering a synthetic turf field with rubber infill as illustrated in the photograph in Appendix A.

Staff have held a number of meetings with representatives from Surrey's outdoor sports community to seek input on the requirements for the facility. In addition, staff have been exploring partnership

opportunities with other sport organizations with the goals of:

- securing additional partner funding to expand the scope of the project;
- increasing utilization of the facility throughout the day and evening by broadening the user base.

While the provincial sport governing body for soccer has indicated its interest in relocating its headquarters to Surrey, it

is premature to state conclusively that this organization will partner with Surrey to expand the project. Therefore, in order to meet the required timeline for opening the facility, the City will need to continue with its plans for construction of the facility in the manner described in this report.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Facility Size & Configuration**

Through discussions with manufacturers of tensioned fabric & steel buildings, staff have determined that the allocated budget of \$1.4 million would build a 200' x 100' facility similar to the new SoccerCity indoor turf complex in Kamloops, BC. This would provide a single, less than regulation size, indoor field with limited ability to reconfigure into smaller training pads and limited opportunity to expand in size at a later date. This design did not give consideration to parking requirements.

While staff initially thought that the 200' x 100' design would meet community needs, discussions with Surrey based sport association representatives, the BC Soccer Association and the Outdoor Sport Advisory Committee indicate that a facility of this size will not meet the current and latent demand for indoor practice facilities in Surrey, given that Surrey has more registered soccer players than any other city in the province. This is primarily due to the proposed facility's limited ability to reconfigure into multiple practice pad configurations and its limited ability to be expanded at a later date.

As an alternative, staff are proposing a slightly larger four "training pad" configuration as outlined in the attached Appendix B. In this design, a single sheet of synthetic turf measuring approximately 240' x 160' can be reconfigured based on the needs of the different user group as:

- Four practice pads (120' x 80') for youth sport practice.
- Two regulation size mini-fields (160' x 120') for mini field game play or practice for older age groups.
- One  $\frac{3}{4}$  field (240' x 160') for game play or for adult or elite level training sessions.

The proposed four pad configuration also allows greater flexibility to reconfigure the available space for sports and activities other than soccer including flag football, field hockey, lacrosse, slo-pitch and possibly even conventions or indoor concerts. A larger more easily configurable indoor turf area also provides enhanced opportunities for soccer programming for pre-school children, single parents and economically disadvantaged children. Further, the new design takes into account the requirement for development of ancilliary parking on the site, which will be a requirement of development.

Staff, supported by sport user groups, estimate that a four pad training facility would be booked to capacity in the fall-winter-spring months as soon as the facility is open. This configuration represents the best value for money in terms of return on investment and is estimated to generate \$250,000 a year in net revenue to the City. With this configuration, future expansion of the indoor turf facility to six or eight training pads would be possible at a later date, if a partner was found to provide the necessary capital funding. Such an expansion is easily achievable as the end walls of the facility do not require a concrete footing and are simply tensioned fabric. By comparison, configurations typical of Sportstown, Burnaby 8 rinks and SoccerCity cannot be expanded at a later date and would require a separate additional building in order to achieve more programming space at those locations.

In addition to a four pad soccer training facility, staff are also proposing the addition of two indoor cricket courts to service the growing needs of cricket in Surrey. Additional information on the sport of Indoor Cricket can be found in Appendix C of this report.

### **Impact on the BC Lions**

This proposal will not impact the operation of the current building rented by the BC Lions at Tom Binnie Park. However, during the construction period (the facility is anticipated to be opened in September 2004) approximately half of the existing grass practice field will be lost to the Lions. During this time, however, the City will have upgraded the remaining grass field so that it is suitable for Lions practice. Upon completion of the indoor turf facility, the Lions will have daytime access to the indoor synthetic field as part of their rental agreement, and will still retain a natural grass field suitable for football practice.

## FUNDING REQUIREMENT

Through discussions with manufacturers of tensioned fabric buildings, staff estimate that a four pad synthetic turf training facility (240' x 160') with two indoor cricket courts and an associated 94 stall parking lot, as illustrated in Appendix C, would cost approximately \$2.30 million. Staff recommend that Council borrow \$900,000 (nine hundred thousand dollars) from the City Land Reserve in order to increase the existing approved project funding to this revised projected amount. Based on estimated operating revenues and expenditures, it is projected that a loan of this amount would be amortized within four years.

## CONCLUSION

Community sport associations in Surrey are eagerly awaiting the construction of an indoor synthetic turf facility in Whalley and it is expected that this facility will generate considerable activity in this area of the city centre, especially in the evening hours during the week and on weekend days. Staff believe that additional funding will allow for the construction of a larger facility that will better meet the current needs of Surrey residents and provide opportunities for future expansion as the City grows. An enlarged facility, as illustrated in the attached Appendix C, would constitute the highest quality indoor synthetic turf facility in British Columbia by providing access to a variety of different field configurations on the largest indoor synthetic turf area in B.C.

Staff recommend that Council approve the loan of nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) to the project from the City Land Reserve based on a four year pay back period utilizing facility revenues.

Interim General Manager,  
Parks, Recreation and Culture

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## **Appendix 'C'** **Background on the Sport of Indoor Cricket**

The sport of Indoor Cricket originated approximately twenty years ago and is a rapidly growing sport in other cricketing nations of the world such as Australia, New Zealand, UK, India, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Pakistan. Cricket has mass appeal to all age groups and is truly an international sport that is played by people of many different cultures, many of which are represented in Surrey. It is an adaptation of the sport of cricket whereby the field is reduced down to a synthetic turf court measuring 92' x 35' and teams are reduced in size from 11 to 8 players. The entire game is completed within approximately two hours instead of taking a full day.

The City is currently in the process of constructing it's first regulation size cricket field at Sullivan Heights Park in South Newton. This is in response to the current demand for cricket game play facilities in Surrey, however, it will not address the unique practice requirements of this sport. Instead of constructing conventional outdoor cricket practice nets, staff are proposing that practice sessions could be conducted on purpose built indoor cricket courts that would provide opportunities for batting, bowling and fielding practice. It is expected that the indoor cricket courts would be well utilized in the summer months for practice sessions and that in the winter months they would provide the opportunity for the establishment of Indoor Cricket recreational leagues. In addition to indoor cricket, the two proposed indoor courts would also function well for baseball and softball practice areas. If constructed, this would be the only Indoor Cricket facility in the Lower Mainland of B.C. and Canada.