



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	OLD BUSINESS
MEETING DATE	AUGUST 26, 2026

ITEM:	Soccer Field Project: Defining Project Goals and Desired Outcomes		
Presenting Item: John W. Stutzman, Parks and Recreation Director			
DEPARTMENT: Park and Recreation		BY/DATE: John W. Stutzman/ August 21, 2026	
CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i>			
☒ Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity		☒ Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	
☒ High Quality Public Spaces		☐ Resilient and Prosperous Economy	
☒ Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone		☒ Inclusive and Connected Community	

BACKGROUND

At its July 22 meeting, the Parks and Recreation Commission began discussing the goals and desired outcomes for the Soccer Field Project. The discussion focused on the role a future soccer facility should play within the City's parks and recreation system, the community needs it should address, its intended users, the types of activities it should support, and the improvements and amenities necessary to accomplish those goals. The discussion provided a good start to the conversation and reinforced the importance of involving the community as the project continues to develop. The Commission requested additional time for members to consider the subject and asked that the conversation be revisited at the August meeting.

As discussed in July, the City Council identified \$720,000 in Parks Fund resources for the Sullivan Lake Park Playground Project and the Soccer Field Project as part of the 2026 budget process. The Sullivan Lake Park Playground Project is anticipated to use approximately \$300,000 of those resources, in addition to funding from a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources grant. This leaves approximately \$420,000 in currently identified Parks Fund resources available for the Soccer Field Project. Conceptual estimates previously presented to the Commission ranged from approximately \$702,000 for the most limited natural-turf option to approximately \$1.24 million to \$1.67 million for a synthetic-turf, multi-use facility. These preliminary estimates demonstrate that potential project costs vary significantly based on the facility's intended use, field type, supporting amenities, and overall scope. They also exceed the funding currently identified for the project. As the Commission considers the examples presented this month, these financial parameters should remain part of the discussion, recognizing that the project scope, additional funding sources, and timing have not yet been determined.

Community engagement will be an important part of developing the Soccer Field Project. However, approaching the community with a completely blank slate may generate a wide range of ideas that are difficult to compare, evaluate, or translate into a practical project. Providing an initial concept or potential direction would give community members something more specific to evaluate while still allowing their feedback to meaningfully influence the project. Staff is therefore seeking the Commission's assistance in developing the foundation for an initial facility concept. Staff would use this direction to develop preliminary

renderings that could be presented to the community for review and feedback. The concept and renderings would serve as a starting point for public discussion and would not represent a predetermined or final facility design.

VISUALIZING A FUTURE SOCCER FACILITY

To provide a more tangible framework for this discussion, staff has collected photos and aerial images of nine soccer and rectangular-field facilities. The examples represent different facility layouts, surface types, amenities, intended uses, and levels of development. The Commission is not being asked to select one of these facilities or recommend a preferred design. Instead, the examples are intended to help commissioners identify the features and characteristics they believe could best serve Columbia Heights, along with potential limitations, operational challenges, and missing elements.

For each facility, the Commission is being asked to consider:

- What features or characteristics do you like?
- What do you dislike, or what appears to be missing?
- Who do you believe the facility is intended to serve?
- What community needs or potential project goals could the facility help address?
- What challenges could the facility present related to scheduling, maintenance, or operations?

The examples and resulting discussion are intended to focus the Commission's conversation on facility characteristics and community outcomes rather than specific design details. Staff will use the Commission's feedback to identify common themes, preferences, and concerns that can help shape the next stage of project development.

NEXT STEPS

Following the Commission's discussion tonight, staff will summarize the common themes, preferences, and concerns identified through the exercise. Over the next several months, staff will work to select a consultant who can use the Commission's feedback to begin developing an initial facility concept or project framework. Staff will continue to update the Commission and will present the initial concept for its review before beginning broader community engagement.

Defining Project Goals and Desired Outcomes

As the project moves from initial planning into further development, staff is seeking input from the Parks and Recreation Commission regarding the goals and desired outcomes for the future soccer facility. Before advancing further into project design, staff believes it is important to establish a shared understanding of the intended purpose of the facility. The desired community outcomes will directly influence decisions regarding facility type, design, amenities, programming, operations, maintenance, and long-term sustainability.

This discussion will focus on identifying the primary community needs the future facility is intended to address, the intended users of the facility, the desired balance between dedicated soccer use and broader community recreation opportunities, and the level of investment and amenities that best support those goals. Staff is not seeking a recommendation regarding a preferred facility concept at this time, but rather guidance regarding the community outcomes and priorities that should help inform future project development. While each concept, with a cost estimate above, would expand soccer opportunities, the Commission's discussion will help identify which community outcomes should be prioritized as the project continues to move forward.

Requested Action/ Discussion Topics / Key Questions

Provide staff with feedback and guidance regarding the facility characteristics and amenities, intended users, community needs, potential project goals, and operational considerations that should inform the development of an initial Soccer Field Project concept.
--

ATTACHMENT(S)

- July 22, 2026, Soccer Field Project Memo
- Soccer Field Comparison Photos