

Ottawa Catholic School Board – Turf Field Project – Q&As

What is the location of the turf field and when will it be available?

The multi-sport turf field will be located at 140 Main Street on the existing field at Immaculata High School with the anticipated access date of September 2018.

Why is the school and Board initiating this project now?

A community soccer group, Footy Sevens, approached the school and Board about a partnership to provide the students with access to a new turf field. Footy Sevens currently runs recreational soccer programs at the University of Ottawa. Last year Footy Sevens completed a very similar successful partnership with the Peel District School Board and their field began operation this past September.

Do other school Boards have turf fields?

Yes, the experiences across the province have been very positive. A few of the Catholic Boards that have turf fields include: Thunder Bay Catholic, Windsor-Essex Catholic, Toronto Catholic, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic, York Catholic, Niagara Catholic, Halton Catholic (all high schools), Waterloo Catholic, Bruce Grey Catholic, Nipissing Catholic and others. There are thousands and thousands of turf fields in North America providing enhanced sporting and learning environments to their students and community partners.

What has been the reaction at the school to the enhancements to the field?

Feedback from teachers, coaches, parents and students has been very positive and there is an excitement at the school anticipating a new high quality sports field.

What are the terms of the agreement with the school's partner?

Footy Sevens is covering all costs associated with the installation of the turf field, the lights, the soccer nets, fencing, and the ongoing utility and maintenance costs. In exchange for the partner covering all of these costs, the Board is providing a license to the field for each evening after school use and on weekends and during the summer when school is not in session. The students taking physical education classes and those involved in outdoor field sports will benefit from this enhanced learning environment. The agreement also includes arrangements for community use of the field.

Why were neighbours not consulted on the design of the field and fencing and lights?

The use of the sports field is not changing, it is being enhanced to allow greater access and reliability that is not dependent on the elements. Given that the school's existing sports field is still being used as a sports field, public consultation was not initiated. Had the field been changed to another use such as an arena or if a dome had been planned then public consultation would have been part of the school and Board process. Following inquiries, meetings and telephone conversations have been held with the local community association representative, the city councillor, and interested neighbours. Written responses including this document have been created to clarify questions about the enhancements to the field.

Will there be a dome on the field during the winter months.

The enhancement is for a turf field for use during a typical season of April – October and no use during the winter months. The enhancements do not include a dome.

Will the lights impact the immediate neighbours closest to the field?

During the discussions with our community partner we required that the installation of lights must be state of the art LED lights that direct light onto the playing surface and not onto other nearby areas. These are community field LED lights, not large stadium lights. The light levels will be approximately one-fifth of the levels currently used at the University of Ottawa turf stadium. The design has 0 foot candle spill at the property line. (A foot candle is a unit of light received on a plane; measured using a light meter). The use of the lights will meet all city bylaws.

Will the field result in any run-off of water or result in any significant impact to the environment.

An approved drainage plan was submitted to the city of Ottawa by the community partner. There is no plan to take down any trees other than any necessary trimming for the installation of a perimeter fence.

Will the enhanced field result in more traffic and noise disruption after school hours?

We anticipate that since the field will have a fence around it, it will result in less traffic on side roads as there is plenty of parking space on the school property. In the past some users parked on the side streets to gain access to the sports field. The license is for typical sporting events as have taken place in the past on the school field. Loud events such as concerts are not permitted usage of the turf field.

Why is a fence necessary, won't that prevent free access when the field is not being used?

This is a significant investment by the community partner and in order to protect the investment, a fence is necessary. This is the same as has been done at other turf fields throughout the city. Pedestrian access outside of the fenced field will still provide a shorter route from side streets to Echo drive.

Do turf fields result in less injuries than a natural grass field?

Turf fields have evolved over time and the new fields are used around the world including at the professional level. New generation turf fields have the look and feel of natural turf with the advantage of increased use and safety, and consistency in high quality playing conditions. Recent studies such as the Toronto Public health department's review of turf fields have concluded that there are no increases in injuries on turf fields as compared to natural field surfaces.

Are there environmental impacts when a turf field is installed?

In many areas of the world turf fields are being encouraged as a means of water conservation since unlike traditional fields, they do not need to be watered. There is no run-off of fertilizer or other supplements that sometimes occurs with traditional fields. Turf fields reduce the emissions associated with traditional riding mowers and eliminates grass clippings.

Shouldn't the Board wait for more studies on the potential health risks associated with turf fields?

The components of the new generation of turf meet the standard for children's toy toxicity and the field performance criteria meets FIFA performance testing criteria. More than 100 studies have reviewed the health effects of turf rubber components related to toxicities from inhalation, ingestion, and cancer links. The studies have been conducted over the last 20 years by independent organizations and have concluded no negative health effects associated with rubber in synthetic turf.

A summary report from Brussels (2016) noted that unfounded claims have been made related to the harmful effect on sports players who come into contact with rubber infill. Research by industry, government and public interest groups concluded no empirical research that links infill rubber to cancer. The USA Environmental protection agency listed 41 independent projects showing no harmful effects of infill. The Synthetic turf association listed another 10 similar reports. An industry meta-analysis concluded that research and testing has confirmed that turf surfaces are safe and do not pose health risks.

Michael Peterson, a board-certified toxicologist at Gradient, an environmental and risk sciences consulting firm, evaluated all available North American data on chemical composition of recycled rubber and air sampling data on or near turf fields. The research team included scientists and experts in public health, environmental management and those certified in toxicology. The research was published in the journal of Environmental research and was subject to peer review. They found no elevated public health risk from playing on turf as compared to natural soil. In 2017 their study was added to nearly 100 studies that did not find evidence to support health concerns.

The city of Montreal contracted a study on the analysis of infill for synthetic turf fields. Using the EN 71-3 standard (safety of toys) all samples collected passed with a conclusion of no significant risk to players' health due to the presence of these granulates. The scrutiny of this standard is the same that is applied to baby pacifiers and baby bottles.

Toronto Public Health studied the increasing prevalence of turf fields throughout the city of Toronto. Their 2015 report concluded that third generation artificial turf posed no significant risks to human health provided it is properly

installed and maintained. They also concluded that playing on artificial fields did not result in an overall increase in injuries compared to natural field surfaces.

What will the turf field look like?

We anticipate that the field will look similar to the other school based turf fields in the city of Ottawa. Two examples include the field at Hillcrest and Franco Cite high schools and the University of Ottawa sports field at King Edward and Templeton. The Board is not purchasing the field, Footy Sevens is using their procurement processes to select the field supplier and installer. At this stage we have the following sketch of the field design.



In addition to community bookings of the field, will there be any free access to the field for those living close to the school?

Yes. The school will have access to the field when Footy Sevens does not need the field for its own programming/maintenance/permits. If the school does not have use for the field during these hours, additional community use, free of charge, may be coordinated.

Will there be an opportunity to see more details as Footy Sevens finalizes design with their contractors?

Yes, the school staff will share more details once they become available. Parents and interested neighbours will be invited to see the final designs once they become available.