

**TO:** MAYOR & COUNCILLORS  
**FROM:** DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
**SUBJECT:** **DESIGNATED FIELD HOCKEY TURF UPDATE**  
**PURPOSE:** To provide an update on the need for a water-based field in Burnaby and seek direction to review the need for a water-based field in Burnaby as part of the analysis required for the upcoming Sport Field Strategy.

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** direction be given to staff to proceed with Option 1, as outlined in the report titled "Designed Field Hockey Turf Update" dated January 14, 2025, to explore the replacement of Field #2 at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West with a hybrid soccer/field hockey turf field.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff were directed by Council to explore the need for a water-based turf field, primarily for the use of Field Hockey. Preliminary findings, based on a review of industry best practices, emerging trends in the sport, the current field allocation needs and demands across the City, indicate insufficient evidence of demand to justify the development of a specialty water-based field hockey turf in Burnaby at this time. Staff are recommending the replacement of Field #2 at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West with a hybrid soccer/field hockey turf field, as outlined in Option 1 below.

### 1.0 POLICY SECTION

This Plan aligns with the following City plans and policies: Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016) and the Benefits Based Approach (2024).

### 2.0 BACKGROUND

On April 16, 2024, the Women's Field Hockey delegation presented to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee (PRCC) their proposal, *Advocating for a Field Hockey Preferred Surface in Burnaby*. The delegation requested the development of a dedicated water-based field for field hockey use within the City of Burnaby.

Following the presentation, the PRCC approved a motion, subsequently endorsed by Council, recommending that staff meet with the delegation's representatives to explore the need for a water-based field and report back.

Since then, staff have met and engaged with the delegation’s representatives to gain a deeper understanding of their request and sport needs. Staff have also requested additional information from the field hockey clubs to support a comprehensive analysis of both the use and the potential community benefits of a specialized field. As of the date of this report, the requested information has not yet been provided.

This update report outlines staff’s preliminary findings based on a review of industry best practices, emerging trends in the sport, and the current field allocation needs and demands across the City.

**3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

To make informed and strategic decisions regarding future sports field development and to ensure that these decisions align with community needs, it is essential to gather data from user groups. Complete analysis requires detailed membership statistics for each club, including the total number of players, the percentage of players who are Burnaby residents, and the age, gender, and skill level breakdown. Insights into how registration has evolved over the past several years are needed, particularly in terms of participation changes among younger players, retention rates, and the age at which players transition to other clubs or levels of play. Additionally, information on anticipated future trends in registration and strategies to foster long-term participation growth is crucial. Furthermore, examples of non-water-based field hockey fields that prioritize water conservation should be identified to guide potential alternative solutions for turf fields.

Currently, Burnaby has nine artificial turf fields, including four located on School District 41 sites. Historically, the City has not followed a formal long-term asset management plan for turf field replacement, with decisions being made annually based on fields that are nearing the end of their lifespan. Given the limited funding available through the City’s Capital Asset Works Financing Fund, staff are focussing on replacing existing turf fields and maintaining the current level of service.

In addition to immediate field replacement plans, 2025 will also see the development of a Parks, Recreation, and Culture (PRC) Master Plan. The Master Plan will provide a strategic framework for future investments and service levels across all PRC amenities. As part of this, staff anticipate the need for a comprehensive Sports Field Strategy to better understand current and future community needs, participant demand, and long-term investments in new fields. This strategy may include further exploration of water-based turf fields, ensuring that decisions are based on a broader, long-term vision for the City’s parks and recreation infrastructure.

**3.1 Field Hockey in Burnaby**

Burnaby is home to two field hockey clubs, which collectively request field use from the City. These clubs have an estimate of 200 members across Adult, Junior, and Female teams. Currently, all field hockey in Burnaby is played on Field #2 at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West (**Attachment 1**) and Cariboo Community Field (**Attachment 2**), both of which are artificial turf fields. However, only Field #2

features a turf product with a shorter pile, which is a more multi-use hybrid turf better suited to accommodate field hockey needs.

Field hockey is generally considered a regional sport, as attracting enough participants often requires involvement from multiple cities within the region. While a breakdown of Burnaby club memberships by residence is not yet available, it has been requested from each of the Burnaby-based clubs.

The field hockey season in Burnaby runs from September to March for adults, with some regional clubs offering a spring season from April to June. For juniors, the season is from April to June, although one club offers activities from September to March.

Burnaby hosts two annual field hockey tournaments, typically held in May and June. During the past Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer seasons, field hockey clubs were allocated 15 and 19.5 hours of field time per week, respectively. Due to increased demand for artificial turf fields across all sports and in accordance with the interim allocation policy, staff have established standard game and practice time allocations for field hockey based on the number of teams. As a result, these allocations have been reduced compared to previous years.

Preliminary findings, based on a review of industry best practices, emerging trends in the sport, the current field allocation needs and demands across the City, seem to indicate insufficient evidence of demand to justify the development of a specialty water-based field hockey turf in Burnaby at this time. However, staff can re-evaluate this analysis should additional or contrary evidence be presented by the user groups.

**3.2 Field Hockey Turf Options**

In the interim, staff are presenting two potential options for Council's consideration:

**Option 1. Hybrid Turf Field Replacement at Field #2 (Recommended)**

Staff have explored hybrid turf fields as a potential alternative to water-based turf. While several hybrid turf products are available, most are soccer-focused and not typically preferred by field hockey users. In 2015, the City installed a hybrid turf at Field #2 at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West, featuring a slightly shorter pile height than is typically used for soccer. Although this turf accommodates both soccer and field hockey, it is not ideal for higher-level play in either sport. This type of turf also typically requires a higher level of maintenance.

Newer generations of hybrid turf products claim to be more robust and user-friendly, with some now approved by both soccer and field hockey governing bodies and not requiring expensive, resource-heavy water use. This field would still primarily serve soccer but would also feature field hockey lines, making it suitable for community and school-level competitions as a secondary use. The upgraded hybrid turf would offer an improvement for field hockey compared to the current product at Field #2, while maintaining the current level of field provision for field hockey in the most cost-

effective way. This option would also balance the needs of other community sports, ensuring that the facility serves a range of user groups effectively.

Should Council approve this option, staff would issue an RFP seeking proposals for hybrid turf products from qualified proponents. A subsequent report will outline replacement plans for both Field #1 and Field #2 at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West, both of which are in urgent need of replacement. That subsequent report would also address hybrid turf options for Field #2, including project replacement timelines. The evaluation process will need to begin shortly to review and discuss product options with user groups, with the aim of presenting the preferred choice to Council for installation by September 2025 in time for this year’s sport season.

Given current sport demands, staff would recommend that the turf at Field #1 remain focused solely on soccer. This approach aligns with the highest level of demand for field time, ensuring that the facility meets the primary needs of the soccer community while still providing appropriate accommodations for other sports on alternative fields.

**Option 2: Water-based Turf Field Proposal**

Beginners in field hockey typically start on multi-use fields, but as they progress in the sport, they prefer to play on specialized field hockey fields. At the elite level, these specialized fields are water-based turf, providing a smoother surface that increases the speed of play and reduces ball bounce. However, water-based fields have limitations compared to traditional turf fields. They cannot be used by sports that require players to wear cleats, such as soccer, and are generally suited only for field hockey, field lacrosse, and ultimate frisbee. Additionally, field hockey cannot share a field with other sports during practice for safety reasons, meaning only one field hockey team can practice at a time. Other sports can accommodate multiple teams on a single field for practices.

Given that field hockey is a regional sport, the specialized nature of a water-based turf field means that the availability of regional amenities must be considered. Water-based fields are required by the International Hockey Federation only for the highest-caliber competitions, such as official international and national games. In Metro Vancouver, there are currently five specialized field hockey fields: two at Tamanawis Park in Surrey, one at Ambleside Park in West Vancouver, one at Eric Hamber Secondary School in Vancouver, and one at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

In 2022, staff investigated the possibility of creating a new water-based turf field at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West Field #6 to serve as a primary field for field hockey, complete with water cannons and changeroom facilities. However, the estimated \$10 million cost, along with limited use potential, environmental impacts, and the availability of other regional amenities, led staff to halt further planning for a water-based field.

Given the lack of demonstrated user demand, an incomplete understanding of local user trends, and the absence of clarity on operating impacts, staff do not

recommend proceeding with either a water-based turf field at Field #2 - potentially displacing other users - or creating a new specialized Field #6 at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West. The development of the PRC Master Plan, along with the Sport Field Strategy, will be critical to providing a clear framework for future decision-making.

**4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Following their delegation to the PRCC on April 16, 2024, PRC staff met with representatives from the Burnaby Lake Field Hockey Club and Field Hockey BC on June 27, 2024. Unfortunately, the Burnaby Bears Field Hockey Club was unable to attend. PRC staff subsequently reached out to the clubs and Field Hockey BC by email, requesting additional details about their clubs and the field surfacing options discussed in the meeting to assist with the assessment of the request for a dedicated field hockey field in Burnaby. As part of the planning for field replacements at the Burnaby Lake Sports Complex, staff will engage with all relevant user groups to gather input and feedback. This will help inform the replacement plans for Field #1 and #2 at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West, and staff will provide an update to the clubs on Council’s direction.

**5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As noted above, the City’s current Financial Plan does not include funding for the addition of new artificial turf fields. However, as part of the 2025-2029 Financial Plan, staff plan to propose funding to replace Fields #1 and #2 at the Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West, both of which have reached the end of their life and require replacement to remain available for community use. Additionally, staff will propose ongoing funding to replace one existing field each year thereafter.

New artificial turf fields are not eligible for Developer Cost Contributions (DCC), and as such, must be funded through other sources. Given the limited funding available through the Capital Asset Works Financing Fund (CAWFF), staff recommend focusing on maintaining the existing inventory of artificial turf fields, with no new fields proposed in this financial plan.

The development of the PRC Master Plan and the eventual Sports Field Strategy will support long-term planning for both new and existing fields, as well as potential funding options. As part of the 2025-2029 Financial Plan, staff will explore the potential for a hybrid turf field at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West, which will be considered during future Council discussions. The planning process will involve input from current user groups and those who may benefit from new surface options, as any changes could affect future field allocations. Staff aim to expedite this process to ensure the replacement fields are in place before the start of the 2025 sports season in early September.

Respectfully submitted,

Carmen Gonzalez, Deputy General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Burnaby Lake Sports Complex West Context Map

Attachment 2 – Cariboo Community Field Context Map

**REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Rebecca Thandi, Director PRC Strategic Initiatives and reviewed by Andre Isakov, Director PRC Planning; John Musil, Manager PRC Planning; Sarah Kosari, Senior Manager PRC PMO; David Rose, Recreation Services Manager; and Lucas Bjerke, Recreation Complex Supervisor.