city of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Council Memo

Department Source: Parks and Recreation
To: City Council
From: City Manager & Staff
Council Meeting Date: September 21, 2026
Re: Rainbow Softball Center Improvements
Impacted Ward: Ward 2

Executive Summary

The Parks & Recreation Department is requesting approval of an ordinance authorizing a capital improvement project at Rainbow Softball Center located in Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area (Cosmo Park). The proposed improvements include upgrading sports field lighting to LED lighting fixtures, infield renovations, and replacing the existing asphalt backstop seating areas at each of the six fields. The total project budget is $750,000 and is funded by the Park Sales Tax. Portions of the project will be bid through the City's Purchasing Department and will be completed using a combination of contract and force account labor. Contract labor will be used for the replacement of the backstop seating areas and infield renovations. Park staff will complete all other proposed improvements associated with the project. The improvements at Rainbow Softball Center are scheduled to begin in Fall 2026, with an anticipated completion date of late spring 2027.

Discussion

Rainbow Softball Center, located in Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area (Cosmo Park), is a six field softball complex that has served the Columbia community since 1983. The last renovations to the complex were completed in 2012 and included dugout expansion on each field. In 2019, an additional project was approved by the City Council to upgrade the existing parking lot lighting to LED fixtures.

The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting approval of an ordinance authorizing a capital improvement project at Rainbow Softball Center. The proposed improvements include upgrading sports field lighting fixtures from metal halide to LED, infield renovations, and replacement of the existing asphalt backstop seating areas on each of the six fields.

After reviewing the proposed Rainbow Softball Center improvements in the *2013 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan,* staff focused internal discussions on renovations to the concession/restroom facility. Parks and Recreation staff hosted a public input meeting on October 5, 2023. Many of the comments received requested improvements to the field conditions, specifically lighting and infield playability, over any improvements to the concession/restroom facility.

Staff revised plans based on public input to focus on sports field lighting improvements, replacement of the seating areas, and infield improvements. Staff held an additional public

input meeting on June 2, 2026 at the complex. The public had an additional opportunity to provide comments about the project via an online survey at BeHeard.Como.gov from May 29, 2026 to July 15, 2026. All feedback from the public input meetings and online surveys are included with this Council memo and may also be found online at https://beheard.como.gov/rainbow-softball-center-lighting-improvements.

Parks and Recreation staff introduced the proposed Rainbow Softball Center improvements to the Parks and Recreation Commission on July 16, 2026. After discussion of the project, the commissioners voted to endorse the proposed improvements and recommend that Council approve the plans as presented. After considering all citizen comments and P&R Commission recommendation, staff believes the proposed improvements to the complex represent a consensus of park users and staff.

The proposed improvements at Rainbow Softball Center include the following:

1. Park construction staff will replace the metal halide light fixtures at each field with upgraded LED light fixtures utilizing the existing poles. The goal for the lighting improvements will be to reach level III lighting for the softball fields. This lighting level is appropriate for competitive leagues, club events, and high school varsity competition. New lighting will provide light levels at 50 footcandles for each infield and 30 footcandles for each outfield. For an example of current lighting levels at the complex, the measured light level on red field is 10 footcandles on the infield and 8 footcandles in the outfield.

   In addition to improving the light levels on each field for the players and umpires, conversion from metal halide light fixtures to LED fixtures will also reduce energy consumption by 50 to 75% for each field. There will be a reduction in expenses at the complex and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions with the lighting conversion. Long-term maintenance expenses will also be reduced as LED lights typically last for 50,000 to 75,000 hours compared to metal halide bulbs, which last 1,000 to 10,000 hours before the need for replacement. The LED lighting fixtures also have immediate on/off capabilities resulting in less operating time and promotes dark sky initiatives through reduced light spill, glare and sky glow.

2. Staff is proposing to use contract labor to replace the existing asphalt backstop seating areas at each field. The asphalt backstop seating areas have warped and heaved over time, creating uneven walking surfaces, cracks, and unsightly conditions. Staff anticipates that the lighting conversion project will have an impact on the asphalt backstop seating areas where new conduits will need to be installed. Staff will work with a local asphalt contractor to complete a mill and overlay of the asphalt backstop areas on each field. Park staff will also replace any worn out bleachers at each field during this project.

3. Staff is proposing to use contract labor to complete laser leveling of each soil infield to improve playability and watershed after rain events. In this process, engineered soil will be added to each field to meet the correct percentages of sand, silt and clay for each infield. Park staff will complete the infield renovations after laser grading with the application of a clay infield product to assist with infield moisture and reducing rainouts.

The total project budget is $750,000 and is funded by the Park Sales Tax. Staff will start the procurement process for the LED lighting fixtures and asphalt mill and overlay after City Council approval so that the project can meet the anticipated completion date of late spring 2027. This timeframe will allow for minimal disruptions to the spring and summer adult softball and kickball leagues at the complex.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total cost of the capital improvement project is $750,000 and is funded by the Park Sales Tax.
Long-Term Impact: Staff anticipates a reduction in electric utility expenses with the conversion of the lighting fixtures from metal halide fixtures to LED lighting fixtures. Staff is collecting current data related to lighting usage at the complex and will ask lighting vendors to provide estimates for reduction in electric usage with the conversion to LED lighting fixtures as part of the bidding process.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:
Primary Impact: Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Safe Community, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable
Comprehensive Plan Impacts:
Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Economic Development, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
3/18/2019	B61-19: Appropriating funds for the major maintenance and replacement of existing lighting and underground electrical wiring in the Rainbow Softball Center parking lot at Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area. B61-19
10/17/2011	B276-11: Authorizing construction of improvements at Rainbow Softball Center. B276-11

Suggested Council Action

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Approve the ordinance authorizing the Parks and Recreation Department to proceed with the capital improvement project at Rainbow Softball Center.