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Calgary Herald

*Wednesday, December 10, 2008*

The city will investigate the merits of installing artificial turf on soccer fields in an effort to increase the lifespan of the pitches.

City council heard Tuesday that artificial turf costs about twice as much as a natural field but can handle more playing days and is less expensive to maintain because it doesn't need to be watered.

Ald. Andre Chabot, who co-sponsored the motion with Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, said there are about 20 days a year when existing fields can't be used because of wear or rain.

"It would be a very worthwhile investment," he said of replacing the grass.

Calgary has lost out on tournaments because of the condition of its overused fields, Ald. Joe Connelly noted.

"We need to be in the hunt for these things," Colley-Urquhart added, mentioning an under-16 tournament that went to Edmonton a few years ago.

She said the city's soccer community is already exploring funding options for the new turf, such as talking to other levels of government and fundraising.

City staff are to report back in February, after looking at the capital costs and potential operating savings, as well as possible ways to fund replacing natural fields with artificial turf.

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