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Brighton High could get home football field under Simmons College's plan to renovate worn site

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 10, 2012 05:45 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Brighton High School would regain a home field for its successful football program for the first time in more than two decades under a \$5 million proposal by Simmons College to renovate a run-down, state-owned sports field in Brighton.

Through a public-private partnership, the college hopes to transform Daily Field in Brighton into a multi-use athletic field that would be shared by the college's sports programs, the surrounding community, the Allston-Brighton Little League team, and city schools, namely Brighton High.

The green space flanked by the Charles River to the north and Nonantum Road to the south currently features space for softball and soccer.

Simmons would pay to renovate the property to create a complex with two new synthetic fields, a running track, tennis courts, river path, lighting for the entire parcel and other amenities for athletes and spectators, officials said.

The multi-purpose outdoor athletic complex would allow for uses including football, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, rugby, softball, and tennis.

The field was once home to Brighton High School football. But due to deteriorating conditions, the team abandoned the space more than 20 years ago. Since then, the Bengals have called other sites home, most recently White Stadium at Franklin Park.

Over the past six seasons, the school has made it to the Division 4 Super Bowl four times, including winning the title to cap a perfect 12-0 season in 2007.

“The Daly Field project will give Simmons College much needed fields for its top-ranked athletics programs as well as provide Brighton High School and the Allston-Brighton and surrounding communities with a state-of-the-art athletic facility,” the college said in a [statement on its website](#). “Over the past year, we spent a great deal of time talking with community leaders, legislators, and Department of Conservation and Recreation and other state officials about this



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exciting partnership and its many community benefits.”

Simmons’ campus is based in the Fenway neighborhood. The school features a private women’s only undergraduate program and a co-ed graduate program. Some of its athletic programs use an indoor sports facility on-site; others play and practice at shared locations near the college campus.

“We believe in supporting community programs and see this as an ideal partnership,” the college’s statement added. “In advancing athletics and revitalizing Daly Field, this project will improve the community’s access to recreational space and will create a focal point for increased community involvement.”

[State legislation](#) has been filed that, if approved, would allow the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, which owns the property, to lease the field to a nonprofit organization, the Allston-Brighton Friends of Daly Field. The lease would be for 20 years with an option for a 10-year extension.

That friends group formed last summer, according to state records. The group is governed by a 15-member board of directors composed of residents and city, state, and Simmons representatives, according to state Senator William N. Brownsberger of Belmont, who sponsored the bill that would allow the state to lease the field.

“I think we have a package now that benefits all the communities and institutions involved,” Brownsberger said in a statement.

In a phone interview last week, the legislator said that no public funded would be involved in the field’s renovation. Under the proposal, Simmons has agreed to contribute \$500,000 to support the nearby Watertown Riverfront Park Restoration Project.

Brownsberger estimated that if the bill passes, it would take at least about two years before construction would be complete.

He said that State Representatives Michael J. Moran and Kevin G. Honan, both of Brighton, worked with Simmons officials to develop the bill’s text.

In a statement through the state senator’s office, State Representative Jonathan Hecht, of Watertown, also backed the proposal.

“The parklands along the Charles are so important to our residents and the region,” Hecht said. “This bill aims to give people more ways to access and enjoy them while preserving the special character of the riverfront.”

Simmons has published a feasibility study to explore several options for how Daly Field could be renovated. To read that report. [click here](#).

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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