

Part of the bond issue includes a synthetic turf softball field and synthetic turf football/soccer field.

This recommendation came from our 45+ individuals on our strategic planning committee, which included parents, staff, students, and community members.

Here's what we know. There are about 16,000 synthetic turf fields in the U.S. There are pros and cons about turf fields. **For high schools, turf fields allow for more playability, help prevent injuries, save water, are free of pesticides, and reduce maintenance cost.**

The reason turf fields help prevent injuries is high school sports departments don't have the annual maintenance budget that collegiate and pro sports departments do. That means it's often difficult for high school athletic departments to have the resources to properly maintain a field to the utmost degree after usage or even after adverse weather hits. This can result in the fields having uneven playing surfaces with divots throughout and excessive mud that gets turned up when the grass is ripped out. These are all significant injury hazards for players. Artificial turf fields don't have those same concerns. They can withstand the heavy usage in good and bad weather and don't result in the same sloppy conditions after it rains, for example. About half of the NFL teams have turf fields. The pro teams with sod often re-sod their field during each season. High schools do not have that luxury.

Also, as teams advance in the MHSAA playoffs, the final games are played on turf fields. This gives an advantage to teams that play on turf fields during the season, especially soccer. Soccer is a completely different game on turf versus grass. For softball, it is much safer for infielders to play on turf versus a dirt or grass infield because there are no bad hops. You don't have to worry about stepping in rough spots in the outfield, either, when playing on turf. And finally, other sports, such as baseball, can use the turf football/soccer field for practices in the early spring when our other fields are thawing out or are too soft to practice on because of the climate.

Here's the science behind synthetic turf fields:

Synthetic turf is a more consistent and safer surface. A GMAX test, for fields, measures impact attenuation – the ability of the playing surface to absorb the “shock”, or kinetic energy – from a collision, such as a player falling to the surface of a synthetic turf sports field. The lower the GMAX rating, the more energy is absorbed by the surface of a synthetic turf field. Alternatively, the higher the GMAX rating, the less energy is absorbed by the surface, meaning more energy is returned to the player. A new synthetic turf installation strives to meet a professionally maintained natural grass field, as in a perfect MLB outfield or a FIFA soccer field.

The Synthetic Turf Council, an organization that represents manufacturers of artificial turf, insists that **the materials used in synthetic grass products are safe**, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) says that there is **no elevated health risk from playing on artificial turf**. **There is no scientific evidence that concludes turf fields are linked to cancer**, which has been a claim made by a few community members.