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## Collier County advances plan to buy land, build sports park for visiting teams

Greg Stanley, [greg.stanley@naplesnews.com](mailto:greg.stanley@naplesnews.com); 239-263-4738 Published 2:18 p.m. ET Dec. 12, 2017 | Updated 5:26 p.m. ET Dec. 12, 2017



(Photo: Dorothy Edwards/Naples Daily News)

Collier County commissioners on Tuesday unanimously pushed forward their most ambitious project to become a destination for traveling youth sports teams and amateur athletes.

Commissioners plan to buy 61 acres for \$12 million to build a sports complex to feature dozens of fields and a small outdoor stadium, along with an indoor field house.

The total number of fields, sizes of the stadium and field house, and the ultimate design of the complex still have to be decided.

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Construction on the first fields could begin by late fall 2018, said Deputy County Manager Nick Casalanguida.

The county is expected to close on the land purchase in February. By that time, the county should have selected a firm to design the sports park and hired a construction group to oversee building it, Casalanguida said.

The 61 acres are between the county's landfill and Collier Boulevard, immediately north of the Alligator Alley stretch of Interstate 75.

Manhattan Construction, owned by U.S. Rep. Francis Rooney, of Naples, was ranked No. 1 by the county to become the construction manager of the project. The county will start negotiating a contract with Manhattan to become the builder of the complex and to work with designers to show the estimated costs of each option and where and how many fields could fit on the site.

There is space for eight outdoor fields, a stadium and a field house on the 61 acres, said KP Pezeshkan, vice president at Manhattan.

The total project could cost up to \$60 million.

A county-funded study from **Hunden Strategic Partners** projects that 265,000 people a year would travel to Collier County to use the sports fields, which would host regional and national youth and amateur tournaments.

Those travelers would spend an estimated \$468 million in Collier over 20 years, including \$132.5 million at local hotels, according to the study.

To pay for the complex, commissioners will raise the bed tax from 4 to 5 percent. The tax increase, charged on overnight stays at hotels and short-term rentals, will raise an estimated \$5.25 million a year.

The fields also would be used by local teams and leagues that have run out of space at other county parks, supporters said.

Detailed concept plans, on track to be finalized by fall 2018, could greatly affect the final cost.

Tentative plans include a 3,000-seat covered stadium with at least eight outdoor artificial turf fields for football, lacrosse and soccer, as well as eight baseball/softball diamonds.

The rectangular outdoor fields likely would be developed first.

A field for championship games would have bleachers and might be added in a second phase.

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