

# Asheville City Council approves \$4.4M Memorial Stadium project, to include new track



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ASHEVILLE - After a years-long wait, a new track is coming to East End.

"I'm glad that they're listening to us," said Renee White. For once, she said, it seemed the community was getting what it asked for.

President of the East End/Valley Street Neighborhood Association, White has been advocating for a track at Memorial Stadium for years. Community calls heightened in recent months as the neighborhood [demanded answers from the city](#) after plans moved forward without the stadium track residents said they were promised.

At its March 22 meeting, Asheville City Council unanimously approved a resolution authorizing a \$4.4 million project that would include a six-lane competitive track at Memorial Stadium, a longtime request from the East End/Valley Street neighborhood.

## Previous coverage:

- [Memorial Stadium fumble: 'We need to do better,' Asheville city manager says](#)
- [The future of Asheville's Memorial Stadium: Can tourism and community needs coexist?](#)

Built in 1925, the city-owned stadium sits behind McCormick Field, where the Asheville Tourists minor league baseball team plays, and has spent much of the last three decades in disrepair.



### 'At home again': Vision plan for Asheville's South Slope to pursue inclusivity, cohesion

For generations, it served the area's Black community, and was home to local recreation teams and high school leagues.

The resolution was brought to council by Councilmember Antanette Mosley, a native of East End, who has been [vocal in her support for a track](#).

"I feel tired, but justified, and happy for the community," Mosley said following the project's approval.

"What I want to see next is for this not to happen again, that's the main thing. Not just the East End neighborhood, but I want (all) neighborhoods to be heard."

Council's vote authorizes "phase two" of Memorial Stadium development, including a competitive-sized track, expansion of a walking trail, the replacement of existing restrooms and playground improvements in Mountainside Park.

This phase follows a \$1.2 million investment of bond funds in the field — replacing its artificial turf, improving drainage and creating new stormwater infrastructure.

The initial project wrapped in January.



### Will proposed Asheville zoning amendments improve housing or slash city open space?

Some of these improvements will have to be walked back to accommodate the track, and the \$1 million bond funds remaining will not be enough to foot the bill of new improvements, said D. Tyrell McGirt, parks and recreation director.

Existing stormwater pipes must be modified and it will reduce the turf field by 5 yards, still meeting FIFA soccer regulations, but limiting the soccer team's ability to host national and international professional matches.

According to White, the turf replacement and other changes were made without giving the neighborhood notice, and instead catered to the desires of the newly-formed semipro Asheville City Soccer Club, which made the field home in 2017.

“Every time the city comes in to fix something up, they kick us out,” said Paul Howell, who spoke at council public comment. “And by kicking us out, they slowly remove any trace of our being there.”

**Reparations:** [Buncombe makes final reparations picks; 25 individuals will lead the historic process](#)

Howell said he grew up playing sandlot football at Memorial Stadium in the 1970s. He asked that City Council let the field remain a place where neighborhood teams can play.

"Our kids don't have anywhere to go," he said.

Residents of the neighborhood said the initial movement forward, which left no room for a track and catered to outside stakeholder needs, represented a sharp reversal from promises made to the community,



"We wouldn't be here today if the right thing had been done years ago," White said. She said the Black residents have been pushed out, forced to endure things that no community should.

Among the frustrations is the treatment of the area on soccer game days and during festivals, like Brewgrass, she said, when fans and partiers descend on the neighborhood, people clogging streets with parked cars, littering and "peeing in people's yards."

"Do the right thing," she told council.

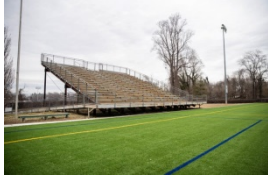
## What's next?

Proposed by McGirt at the March 22 meeting was a \$4.4 million project that seemed to meet many of the community asks.

He said it would not displace any user groups, though some programming may have to be adjusted.

It will require the existing restroom to be demolished, as well as the western bleachers, which will be replaced with a concrete plaza to allow for temporary seating expansion.

**More:** [Asheville proposes bike lanes for College, Patton; would reduce road to 1 lane](#)



The track will reduce current seating capacity, soccer field size and flag football capacity.

No timeline was provided, and though \$1 million in bond funds remain, there is a funding gap of \$3.4 million.

McGirt said staff will begin working to identify possible funding sources, including potentially utilizing a portion of the \$17.9 million in American Rescue Plan Act money currently being considered by the city.

**ARPA:** [Who applied for Asheville ARPA funding? \\$50 million requested, but \\$17.9 million available](#)

Now that it is approved, staff can begin developing a design and construction schedule.

"This has been a really, really interesting process in terms of the evolution of it, but I really think that we have ended in a good place," City Manager Debra Campbell said during the March 22 meeting.

While there are issues with programming and parking that still must be worked through, she hopes the city will move forward with a minimal impact on the quality of life of neighborhood residents.

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