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At commission, score 1 for SOCA

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By [JEREMY BORDEN](#)

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The Albemarle Board of Supervisors should approve a much-anticipated soccer facility for the Soccer Organization of Charlottesville-Albemarle, the county Planning Commission unanimously recommended Tuesday.

The site would feature six soccer fields as well as a 38,000-square-foot indoor practice facility that would include an office and locker rooms, all within the yet-to-be constructed Belvedere development off East Rio Road. One of the fields would be a lighted synthetic field.

The Board of Supervisors is expected to make a final decision on part of SOCA's facilities May 14. County officials have already approved the indoor complex.

Belvedere developers are planning more than 700 energy efficient homes with SOCA serving as a community amenity, a developer said.

The board rejected SOCA's effort last April to expand and improve its facility off Polo Grounds Road, much to the chagrin of the soccer players, coaches and sport enthusiasts who showed up to support it. Nearby residents, however, also turned out in droves to protest, and supervisors said that the skinny road and surrounding neighborhood were ill equipped for such a facility.

So SOCA and Belvedere teamed up, with help from Supervisors David L. Slutzky and Kenneth C. Boyd, who agreed that a new facility at Belvedere would be a boon for soccer and sports enthusiasts. The new facility would also be located in a growth area, where the county seeks to focus development.

"Generally development to me doesn't sit well," said Patrick Grant, who lives nearby. "But in this instance, I'm a big supporter. There's a desperate need for playing fields in this community."

Chris Schooley, with Stonehaus development, said he expects the indoor soccer facility to be built within two years or so; the synthetic, all-weather field in four years; and the rest of the soccer fields in six years. The development itself is also expected to be completed in about six years, Schooley said. It is expected to offer homes from the upper \$200,000 range to the mid-\$600,000s.