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PHILADELPHIA SOCCER 2026 LAUNCHES AN INTERACTIVE “PITCH” AT THE INDEPENDENCE VISITORS CENTER TO ENGAGE PHILADELPHIANS IN THE CITY’S CONTINUED EFFORTS TO HOST FIFA WORLD CUP 2026™

U.S. Soccer legend and 3-time Olympic Gold Medalist, Heather Mitts, named as newest Honorary Co-Chair for Philadelphia Soccer 2026

PHILADELPHIA (June 29, 2021) – Today, Philadelphia Soccer 2026, the City’s official FIFA World Cup 2026™ bid committee, opened a new interactive “Pitch” at the Independence Visitors Center (IVC). The “Pitch” will serve as a home for bid activities through the fall and engage those visiting the IVC in Philadelphia’s efforts to host World Cup matches in 2026. Playing off the common term used to describe the soccer playing field, this “Pitch” aims to celebrate Philadelphia’s rich history of soccer and encourages the public to “show their love for the game” through a crowdsourced traveling exhibit of soccer achievements and memories. Fans of all ages are invited to visit the “Pitch” (which is free to all visitors) over the next four months and partake in its soccer challenges and interactives while also registering support for Philadelphia’s bid to host matches.

“The ‘Pitch’ at the Independence Visitors Center offers a fantastic opportunity for local soccer fans to be part of helping us to win this bid,” said Philadelphia Soccer 2026 Chairman David L. Cohen. “Throughout our virtual meetings with FIFA and U.S. Soccer, we have highlighted our superior soccer infrastructure, the walkable and friendly nature of Philadelphia, our terrific public transportation options, and our strong hospitality assets. We believe that Philadelphia is perfectly suited to host matches and that we meet all the criteria that FIFA and U.S. Soccer want in a host city. But the one element we want to elevate is the passion of this community for soccer. With the ability to register support for the bid onsite at the ‘Pitch’ and to contribute your own soccer memories to our Fan Collective, we see this as one of the best ways that our community can show FIFA and U.S. Soccer how much we want to host the World Cup in 2026. I encourage everyone to join our team over these next few months and help us win this bid.”

Cohen and Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney helped to officially open the “Pitch” during an afternoon ceremony at the IVC, which saw each contribute the first pieces of memorabilia to Philadelphia Soccer 2026’s “Love of the Game” Fan Collective. This exhibit encourages people to share their soccer memories

– as both players and fans – to help tell a love story of this sport across the region. From soccer patches to photographs to newspaper clips to kits, Philadelphia Soccer 2026 welcomes the public to contribute their own memories to this exhibit and show FIFA and U.S. Soccer how passionate the local soccer community is. To kick-start the exhibit, Mayor Kenney added memorabilia representing the Unity Cup, highlighting this first-of-its kind tournament in the U.S., and reflecting how important soccer is within the city’s immigrant communities. Cohen added the official Philadelphia Soccer 2026 scarf as a favorite collector’s item among soccer fans worldwide and with a nod to the future when Philadelphia will hopefully be named an official Host City for FIFA World Cup 2026™.

Mayor Kenney also offered his support for the “Pitch” and Philadelphia’s bid, saying, “Our history with soccer – and our passion for the sport – are undeniable. From the late 19th century on, our city neighborhoods have been animated by soccer clubs with the heart of soccer’s history in Kensington where immigrants working in mills and factories often played between shifts. Now we see soccer played in West Philadelphia, at FDR Park, along the river wards and truly in every neighborhood of this City. Soccer has exploded in popularity in the U.S. since we hosted the men’s World Cup in 1994 and the women’s World Cup in 1999 and Philadelphia wants to drive the next wave of growth in hosting FIFA World Cup 2026™. The ‘Pitch’ at IVC is a terrific way to share our enthusiasm for hosting World Cup matches with residents and tourists alike – and with FIFA and U.S. Soccer officials when they arrive in Philadelphia for their site visit.”

As part of today’s festivities to open the “Pitch,” Philadelphia Soccer 2026 also named U.S. Soccer legend and 3-time Olympic Gold Medalist, Heather Mitts, as its newest Honorary Co-Chair for the bid. Mitts joins Governor Tom Wolf, Mayor Kenney, Julie and Zach Ertz, Carli Lloyd, Alejandro Bedoya, and Zack Steffen in representing Philadelphia and its soccer pedigree to FIFA and U.S. Soccer.

“I am excited to join the team working to bring the World Cup to Philadelphia in 2026,” said Mitts. “Soccer continues to be a central part of my life and the opportunity to have my hometown host the world’s biggest sporting event is awe-inspiring. I look forward to working with David, our Honorary Co-Chairs, and our Soccer Council to ensure that FIFA and U.S. Soccer know how passionate and ready Philadelphia is to host World Cup matches.”

In addition to Mitts being announced as an Honorary Co-Chair, she also presented 12 Youth Ambassadors for the bid with a unique medal recognizing their love of the game and support for this effort. These youth soccer players, all between the ages of 10 and 13, represent the sport’s future in the tri-state area. Selected from the 5-County Philadelphia region, South Jersey and Delaware, the following players joined Cohen and Mayor Kenney in being the first to share a piece of their own personal soccer history on the “Love of the Game” Fan Collective:

1. Anthony Acevedo, Kensington Soccer Club
2. Asayah Carter, Philadelphia ODP (Olympics Development Program)
3. Israel Carter, Philadelphia ODP (Olympics Development Program)
4. Yancarlo Corredor, Kensington Soccer Club
5. Zathdielys Dávila, Kensington Soccer Club

6. Christopher Deely Jr., United German Hungarian Club
7. Hannah DeFino, Marple Newtown Soccer Club
8. Madeline Ferrie, Whitpain Recreation Association, ODP (Olympics Development Program)
9. Shymira Hightower, Kensington Soccer Club
10. Chloe Jurich, Octorara Soccer Club
11. Mason Khol, Concord Soccer Association
12. Franko Morales, Cohansey Premier

The Philadelphia Soccer 2026 “Pitch” was launched as part of Wawa Welcome America and will remain open at the IVC through October 31. For additional information regarding Philadelphia’s bid for FIFA World Cup 2026™, please visit: www.philadelphia2026.com.

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About Philadelphia Soccer 2026

Philadelphia Soccer 2026 is Philadelphia’s civic committee overseeing the region’s bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2026™. Established in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it is governed by a five-person Board of Directors, which includes representatives from the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau (the sponsoring entity of the bid) and the City of Philadelphia.