

Dear Community Services & Parks Commissioners,

The Glendale Environmental Coalition sent you a detailed letter of concern opposing installations of artificial turf in February 2021. Our position remains the same. We ask you to push for real grass fields that will provide cool, natural surfaces for our residents and sports leagues, and we support staff getting the resources they need to be successful.

The following are some of our concerns with the staff report and reasons for continuing to oppose installation of artificial turf and call for natural grass instead:

1. Longer, hotter heat waves due to the changing climate are not adequately factored into days of playability and revenue projections. As our letter noted, Glendale had 77 days over 90°F and only 15 days of rain during 2020. **Heat is a bigger impact in our climate than rain.** Heat island impacts should be a top concern. Artificial turf fields as proposed with a moistened infill are estimated to be 35-55 degrees hotter than real grass. Fields over 120°F present a very real safety issue, with turf burns possible after only 2 seconds. Even the Synthetic Turf Council, whose literature was quoted in the staff report, recommends that “practices and events on synthetic turf fields be scheduled for cooler hours of the morning or evening during high-temperature summer months...”

Investing in field surfaces that will likely be rendered unusable for a portion of the peak program hours they are projected to fill (and on which revenue projections depend), is ill advised. We need to build for the reality we live in, which is a climate of months of high heat, especially during soccer season. Tree planting cannot mitigate this. The year-round, low-maintenance perceptions of artificial turf are “debatable” according to the National Recreation and Park Association, in this recent article: [Synthetic Sports Fields and the Heat Island Effect](#). It recommends careful monitoring of artificial turf surface temperatures during hot weather to evaluate whether fields can or cannot be used, to avoid turf burns and other health impacts to players.

2. Our urban environment is full of pavement and surfaces that contribute to the **urban heat island effect**. Cities tend to be hotter than their plant-covered surrounding areas. Large synthetic turf installations add to this very real problem, even showing up as hot spots on thermal images generated from NASA satellite maps. It is worth noting that two of the proposed artificial turf surface installations are for GUSD school campuses, which are almost entirely non-living surfaces except for the current fields.
3. The report’s survey of other cities shows that less than 7% are artificial turf. **Glendale is striving to be more sustainable and climate resilient**, including an existing pilot that uses electric landscaping equipment at small parks, planning to power the city with 100% clean energy, transitioning to a 100% carbon-free fleet, banning single use plastics at city facilities and studying ways to mitigate the urban heat island effect. **Installing plastic grass takes us backward, not forward.**

4. Greenhouse gas emissions from landscaping equipment were mentioned in the report as an adverse impact of grass fields maintenance through 2041. However, our parks department is currently piloting electric landscaping equipment for eight of our smaller parks, with the intention of expanding the program. Electric landscaping equipment is in our near-term future and both the CA Air Resource Board and our CA Assembly are looking at phasing out new gas equipment by 2024. **Going electric will mitigate the GHG issue.**
5. Regarding **reclaimed water usage**, four of five field locations are serviced by recycled water and the Parks department is looking into connecting the fifth location to nearby piping. Potable drinking water is not jeopardized, and the unused supply of reclaimed water is being put to use rather than sent to the ocean. There are ecological benefits to watering grass with reclaimed water while also resupplying our groundwater. There are growing indications that we are now in a mega drought and should be pursuing opportunities to recharge our groundwater aquifers.
6. **Bioswales and catch basins** are mentioned on Page 19 in relation to artificial turf design planning. We suggest that they be incorporated in coordination with new real grass installations to prevent any fertilizer runoff issues (to address an issue raised in the staff report) and to provide stormwater capture.
7. It appears from the survey that some neighboring cities do not have their own soccer fields (e.g. Burbank). **Is Glendale disproportionately absorbing a regional need?** The staff report does not take into consideration a variable cost structure or increase in usage fees through 2041.
8. Meeting demand: Whether or not the fields are real or artificial, the city is installing three NEW fields. We contend that while the natural turf fields can be used slightly fewer days per year, **the city is GROWING its usable hours by installing new fields.**
9. Shaw's rep states that the field should be groomed with a towed apparatus after each 48 hours of play (approximately every 4-5 days). If this grooming is not done, the condition of the infill and overall feel of the field will be affected, and it will shorten the lifespan of the installment. The maintenance schedule on page 16 shows biweekly grooming. Is staff concerned this would shorten the life span of the product? If they plan to increase grooming to once per 5 days, what would the cost impact be?
10. Glendale's survey shows nine serious knee injuries on artificial turf, and none on grass.
11. Spending very large amounts of money on new artificial turf fields (a ten year investment minimum and twenty as projected in the staff report), when grass fields are so much less expensive to install, **does not make financial sense** at this point of budget stress. Put in real grass fields now and revisit this issue at a later time when the financial picture

improves and there may be other, more sustainable field options available.

12. The report contains some inaccurate information about the EPIC system. For example, (1) fields are not required to rest for 3 months, (2) sand does not compact and therefore complete renovations are not required, (3) the field can be played on the same day as a rain event and (4) fertilizer leakage is not an issue as there is a liner. Several of these points affect the budget considerations for this option. However, we did not advocate for installation of EPIC systems; we only cited it as a design possibility. Our position remains that Glendale sports fields and parks should provide the environmental, health, and climate benefits of natural grass.

While we appreciate staff's work in compiling this report, more questions and concerns have arisen from it than have provided answers. Given the information before us and what we have indicated above, we hope you reject the artificial turf proposal.

Thank you for taking these points into consideration.

Best regards,
Glendale Environmental Coalition
Steering Committee