



Item No: 1
Meeting Date: January 27,
2015

To: Planning Commission

Date: January 20, 2015

**Authorized
By:** Ron Munekawa
Chief of Planning

By: Guido F. Persicone, AICP, Associate Planner
(650) 522-7214/ Fax: 650 522-7201
gpersicone@cityofsanmateo.org

Subject: PA 14-105 Los Prados Park Turf Conversion Mitigated Negative Declaration (Conversion of 4.5 Acres of Natural Grass to Synthetic Turf). 1837 Bahia Street (APN: 040-163-260)

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission recommends approval of the project to the City Council by making the following motion:

- A. Adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration to assess environmental impacts, based upon the Findings for Approval in Exhibit A; and
- B. Approve the Site Development Planning Application for removal of 10 inches of organic material or approximately 6,700 cubic yards of material based upon the Findings for Approval in Exhibit A and subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit B.

BACKGROUND

The City has determined that its park system has a shortage of athletic fields, particularly for accommodating youth sports programs. The San Mateo General Plan 2030 recognized this need and includes a policy statement encouraging the City to take sufficient action to address this trend:

C/OS 14.3 Active Use Facilities: Provide sufficient active use facilities to support current needs and future trends including at least three new multi-use athletic turf areas; an evaluation of existing turf fields for possible conversion to synthetic turf.

A solution for decreasing the shortage of athletic fields is to convert fields to synthetic turf. Synthetic turf can provide superior safety and playability with a more uniform resilient surface that eliminates ruts, uneven surface and other trip hazards and impediments to quality play. Additionally, synthetic turf fields are not affected by rain or wet conditions, thus increasing usage by eliminating cancellation days and closed fields. The Synthetic Turf Council states there are over 8,000 turf athletic fields and there are numerous ones installed in the San Francisco Bay Area (Attachment 1)

In 2012, the City initiated a project to identify fields that would be most appropriate to convert to synthetic turf and to establish priority for those fields for turf conversion. The current Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget provides sufficient funding to convert one field. Community input was an important element of the planning process, thus a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was established to represent field users, neighborhood interests, and the general community. The CAC established criteria for assessing each of ten fields for appropriateness of converting to synthetic turf, reviewed the results of an assessment prepared by the City's landscape architect consultant (Callander Associates), reviewed research on environmental, health and safety considerations, and considered public comments received on the proposal. An extensive community outreach effort was conducted. Notification was sent to all homeowner and neighborhood associations, youth sports organizations and residents living within 500 feet of the five fields narrowed for consideration, notifying them of opportunities to comment. Those opportunities included a community workshop, a posting on San Mateo Town Hall, a survey, and direct communication with staff.

Through City staff planning efforts, consultant recommendations and the CAC input, Los Prados Park was proposed as the first park for synthetic turf conversion. In July 2013 the City Park and Recreation Commission voted to support the recommendation for Los Prados Park. At a Study Session in August of 2013 the City Council reviewed and informally endorsed the recommendation, directing staff to proceed with the Los Prados Project.

Site Description

Los Prados Park is a 12.6 acre public park operated by the City located at the end of a cul-de-sac at 1837 Bahia Street. The main area of the park is oriented north-south and consists of approximately 5.5 acres of natural turf field area with baseball diamonds at each end that can accommodate a variety of uses at the same time. The Athletic Field is approximately 4.5 acres and will be converted with the one acre (Old Section) remaining as natural turf (Attachment 2).

CODE AND POLICY COMPLIANCE

General Plan and Zoning: The General Plan Land Use Diagram designation is Parks/Open Space. The zoning classification is Open Space. The proposed land use is consistent with these designations. As documented in the findings for approval, the project complies with the applicable General Plan polices that apply to this project. The proposed project complies with the Open Space zoning standards related to use of the park, and no changes are proposed to the parking. Compliance with the General Plan is documented in Exhibit A.

Site Development Planning Application: The City's Municipal Code requires a Site Development Planning Application approval from the Planning Commission because the volume of grading, approximately 6,700 cubic yards, is in excess of the 5,000 cubic yard threshold identified in Section 23.40.040 of the Municipal Code. The selected contractor will remove 10 inches of organic material, the sand drain layer and the irrigation lines from the existing turf area. Approximately five trees will be removed (one eucalyptus, one pine tree, two redwood trees and one deodar cedar tree), and nine trees would be planted (four new trident and five redwoods). The construction will take approximately 3-4 months and last from March to July 2015. This construction schedule is necessary in order to reopen the playfield for use prior to August 1 which is the peak use for soccer season.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project requires the preparation of an environmental impact assessment under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City prepared the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, which identify and discuss potential environmental impacts of the project and proposed mitigation measures to be incorporated in the project to eliminate any potentially significant impacts. The public review and comment period on the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was from December 17, 2014 to January 6, 2015.

Mitigation measures affecting air quality, hazardous materials, and noise have been incorporated into the project and would reduce potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level. The City received six comment letters submitted by January 6, 2015 on the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, which covered the following environmental topics:

- The potential cumulative health exposures from rubber crumb
- Increased surface heat from playing on the modified field
- Construction noise and duration, including impacts on traffic on local streets
- The increased heat effects on users of the field

These comments are included as Attachment 3 and responses to these comments are included as Attachment 4. The Planning Commission should consider these comments in making the findings for adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration. However, staff finds that the comments submitted to date do not raise any new issues concerning significant potential impacts that have not been addressed in the current document and, if necessary, mitigated to a less than significant level. Therefore, revisions to the environmental document and recirculation, are not anticipated to be required at this time.

ISSUES

Planning Commission Review of Infill Material

During the public review period the City received several public comments related to the type of infill material that would be used for the synthetic turf. Currently, the City is considering using crumb rubber, but other materials including ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) and thermoplastic elastomers (TPE) are being reviewed. Pursuant to Section 2.24.020 of the San Mateo Municipal Code the Planning Commission is a land use advisory body to the City Council. Since the replacement of crumb rubber is unrelated to the scope of the Site Development Planning Application compliance, the focus of the Planning Commission discussion should be on the land use related issue, which is the Site Development Planning Application including grading of the project site and ensuring that the City's Mitigated Negative Declaration adequately addressed any significant environmental impacts and reduce any impacts to a less than significant level.

The Findings of Approval (Exhibit A) are for the grading of the site and the Planning Commission needs to make these findings related to the Site Development Application. If the Planning Commission, chooses to comment on the potential infill material that will be used for the field, it may do so as part of a separate motion.

Infill Options

A number of infill options are available for synthetic turf installations (Attachment 5). Both Callander Associates, the Landscape Architect for the Synthetic Turf Plan, and Beals Alliance, the Landscape Architect for the Los Prados Synthetic Turf Project recommended Cryogenic Crumb Rubber as the preferred infill material. Callander Associates stated the following in the Synthetic Turf Plan:

“Since the introduction of long pile artificial turf, sand and SBR crumb (recycled crumb rubber) have been used in the installation of turf fields. Both environmental and practical, these components have safety, performance and cost advantages which have made them the preferred infill materials of artificial turf fields.”

The Los Prados Synthetic Turf Project plans and specifications were completed in late November and specified a Sand and Cryogenic Crumb Rubber infill (specifying no truck tires). These plans and specifications were released for bid to pre-qualified contractors on 12/8/14. An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared by PMC with a finding that the specified synthetic material would result in a Less Than Significant Impact, and was released for public comment for the period 12/17/14 through 1/6/15. The City received several public comments regarding the use of crumb rubber.

Subsequent to this, on 12/17/14, State Senator Jerry Hill announced that he had introduced legislation with the following key provisions:

- Directing specific State agencies to conduct additional studies related to health considerations in the use of recycled crumb rubber from waste tires, and to compare health considerations between those products and alternatives that do not use recycled waste tires.
- Implementing a moratorium on installing or contracting for new public fields and playgrounds using recycled crumb rubber from waste tires until 1/1/18, except that any installation commenced or contracted prior to 1/1/16 is exempt from this provision.

The Los Prados Park project shall be completed before August 1, 2015. This project, therefore, would be exempt from the moratorium if the legislation is passed. Options have been provided, however, for the City Council to select alternative infill material that does not include recycled waste tires if it wishes. A bid addendum was issued to provide alternatives for two substitute infill materials: ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) and thermoplastic elastomers (TPE). Please see Attachment 5 for a description of each. In its simplest description, EPDM is manufactured virgin rubber, and TPE is a manufactured mix of plastic and rubber.

In response to public comments received and the proposed Hill legislation, PMC was asked to assess whether there would be any greater or additional health or environmental impacts with either of these options. Their assessment was that there would be none. PMC cited a comprehensive 2008 literature review of over 100 studies conducted for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that evaluated the off gassing of crumb rubber (SBR), EPDM and TPE. According to this review emissions of chemicals of potential concern were determined to be non-detectable or similar to background levels. Therefore, the replacement of crumb rubber with EPDM or TPDE will not have a significant impact upon the environment (Attachment 4)

One additional option, organic infill, is sometimes cited by those expressing concerns about using recycled tire infill. That option was considered by Parks and Recreation, however, in consultation with Beals Alliance, it was decided not to add this as a bid

alternate to this project for of the following reasons: Organic infill requires additional maintenance and water resources. It is a light material, and to maintain its performance requires regular irrigation- the Limonta Sport USA Maintenance Procedures for their organic infill product recommends weekly irrigation for climate zones similar to San Mateo. In addition, the infill material must be topped off- the Limonta manual recommends 3-5% per year, or approximately 40% over the life of the field (8 years). An organic option would require a more extensive irrigation system, which would require redesign and additional cost. Organic infill is among the most expensive options- Beals Alliance cost estimate indicated that Organic Infill would be approximately 80%-140% greater EPDM or TPE (\$180k-\$285k).

PUBLIC NOTICE AND OUTREACH

On November 6, 2014 the City organized a community meeting to discuss the proposed project. Three persons were in attendance. The following topics were discussed at the meeting:

- Concern about the short term noise impacts from the project
- Increased surface heat from the playing on the modified field.
- How the proposed project would affect the current dog park or the existing baseball field.

On December 17, 2014 the City posted a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration on the City website and with the County Clerk and received six public comments prior to the end of the public comment period. At the conclusion of the public comment period an additional three public comments were received which can be found in Attachment 3 with the response to comments identified in Attachment 4.

In accordance with Government Code 65090 notice of this hearing was published in the Examiner 10 days before the hearing. In accordance with the Government Code section 65091 and the City's Municipal Code noticing requirements, this hearing was noticed to the following parties ten days in advance:

- Property owners, residential tenants, and business tenants within 500 feet of the project site; and
- The City's "900 List" which contains 100 Homeowner Association, Neighborhood Associations, local utilities, media, and other organizations interested in citywide planning projects
- The interested parties list which includes interested individuals who contacted the City and requested to be added to the project notification list.

NEXT STEPS

On February 17, 2015 the City Council is tentatively scheduled to discuss the award of the contract for the conversion of the field. At the same meeting, the Council will take action on the Site Development Planning Application and the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

EXHIBITS

- A. Findings for Approval
- B. Conditions of Approval

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. City Council Administrative Report, dated August 13, 2013
- 2. Reduced Project Plans
- 3. Public Comments on the Mitigated Negative Declaration
- 4. Response to Public Comments
- 5. Infill Material Primer (Callendar and Associates)
- 6. Location Map
- 7. Traffic Impact Counts

Provided separately:

Mitigated Negative Declaration/Initial Study (provided to the Planning Commission December 17, 2015-also available online at

<http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/DocumentCenter/View/43876>

CC (Email Notification)

Interested Parties (if email address was provided)