



March 19, 2019

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Malcolm Bromley  
General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Playing Field Upgrades Project – Board Update**

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Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the [Playing Field Upgrades project](#), specifically in relation to the sites being considered for synthetic turf and lighting upgrades, as well as the plan to develop an enhanced engagement process that incorporates resident and user concerns before proceeding with any further consideration of Beaconsfield and Clinton parks as potential new sites.

In the 2015-18 capital budget, funding was approved for three to four new synthetic turf fields and associated lighting. This was done in concert with recommendations from the Vancouver Field Sport Federation and a noted increase in demand for bookable field time. Soccer, field hockey, ultimate, football, rugby and many other sports field users are demonstrating need for more access to synthetic turf as utilization of the existing 12 synthetic turf fields currently ranges from 91% to 100% during peak times.

Synthetic turf allows for 105 hours of use each week (approximately 48 hours at prime time – evenings and weekends), compared to grass fields that operationally can only sustain a maximum of 12-14 hours a week and require seasonal downtime to ensure recovery and adequate field quality.

On October 2, 2017, the Park Board approved the [Synthetic Turf Playing Field – New Site Options](#) report recommendation to “endorse Beaconsfield Park, Clinton Park, and Sir Winston Churchill Secondary school for consideration as the potential site for a new synthetic turf playing field”. The project is to be funded by Citywide Development Cost Levy (DCL) Funds, subject to further technical review and a public process.

As part of the technical review and public process, Park Board staff held the following engagement events in late 2018 to consult with the public and gather feedback on possible new synthetic turf playing fields at the three potential sites identified and to also seek feedback on adding lights to the existing synthetic turf fields at Kitsilano Secondary School and the mini field at Hillcrest Park:

- Nov 08: Kitsilano Community Centre
- Nov 19: Hillcrest Community Centre
- Nov 20: Trout Lake Community Centre
- Nov 25: Italian Cultural Centre
- Nov 29: Churchill Secondary School



Additionally, over 2300 responses were received via an online survey conducted to gather feedback from users and residents on the potential playing field upgrades. All five (5) sites received between 55%-70% support, with the lowest support identified for a new synthetic turf field at Clinton Park and highest support for adding lighting to the existing synthetic turf fields at Hillcrest Park and Kitsilano Secondary, as well as upgrading a field at Churchill Secondary School to synthetic turf.

Common concerns raised in the engagement included potential negative impacts to the neighbourhood such as parking and pressure on other park facilities such as playgrounds and washrooms, as well as the environmental sustainability and health concerns with synthetic turf surfaces.

In the coming weeks, staff will be bringing forward a report with the full engagement summary of the process outlined above and will be recommending the approval of the highly supported projects: adding lighting at existing synthetic turf fields at Hillcrest Park and Kitsilano Secondary and converting the Churchill Secondary School field to synthetic turf (in collaboration with Vancouver School Board). Recommendations will also include pausing the current process regarding Beaconsfield Park and Clinton Park in order to develop an enhanced process that will better incorporate resident and user concerns.

Public feedback received through the 2018 consultation process has highlighted the need for an additional level of engagement as part of the planning process for changes to parks, such as converting playing fields to synthetic turf. This process will include broader public engagement with user groups and residents, including a proposed city-wide advisory group with a mandate to provide input on field upgrade locations, as well as an enhanced review of potential impacts and mitigation options for existing and new amenities, infrastructure, environmental aspects, and parking, along with resultant park plans and designs.

Demand for synthetic turf products continues to grow worldwide in response to a growing and active population seeking out more high capacity, durable, low maintenance surfaces with limited watering requirements and durability in wet seasons. Correspondingly, new research has been undertaken to understand any safety or health implications of these new and evolving products. Park Board staff work closely with Vancouver Coastal Health on projects that may have potential human health impacts. New research into synthetic turf products has been shared with Vancouver Coastal Health, and staff are seeking an updated letter from the Chief Medical Health Officer (see Appendix A of 2017 [report](#) for previous memo) to share with the Board ahead of future decisions on surfacing material details.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Malcolm Bromley".

Malcolm Bromley  
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

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Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team  
PB Communications