

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

**SUBJECT: THE USE OF SYNTHETIC TURF SYSTEMS FOR PUBLIC PARKS AND
JOINT USE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

POLICY NO.:

EFFECTIVE DATE:

BACKGROUND:

There is an increasing demand for athletic fields within the City of San Diego (City). The use of synthetic turf systems on athletic fields has grown in popularity for all levels of play, including, but not limited to, public recreational leagues, high school and college athletics, non-profit organizations and professional sports teams.

The use of synthetic turf within the city park system appears to be a viable alternative to natural turf in some circumstances as a means to increase field capacity, improve the consistency of playing conditions and reduce maintenance costs. At the same time the City is implementing strategies to reduce potable water consumption for landscape and synthetic turf provides a proven method to conserve limited water resources.

Synthetic turf is the common term for crumb rubber infill type systems in which crumb rubber granules are added to a flexible synthetic grass carpet to hold the carpet in place, stand the synthetic blades in place and provide a cushioned playing surface. Silica sand may also be mixed with the crumb rubber. The synthetic grass and infill are underlain with a crushed stone base and drainage pipes to facilitate rapid drainage of the playing surface. Several manufacturers provide this type of infill synthetic turf product for use on athletic fields.

For the purposes of this policy, it shall be assumed that the life expectancy of the synthetic turf system will be no longer than 10 years. For the purpose of budgeting future replacement costs, it is also assumed that the underlying crushed stone base and drainage system that were initially installed with the synthetic turf system installation will only need minor repairs at the end of the synthetic turf's lifecycle.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria for the use of synthetic turf systems within the City's park system including school joint use sites.

POLICY:

- I. Synthetic turf systems may be considered for use in public park facilities if they are installed for permitted, active sports-related recreational activities or to replace small, high use natural turf areas that are difficult to maintain as determined by the Park and Recreation Director.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

The following criteria shall be met before site is considered for synthetic turf. Some or all of these criteria may be waived or additional criteria may be imposed by the Park and Recreation Director at any time due to the varying recreation facilities found in the City's park system, the evolution of synthetic turf products and new research findings becoming available.

- A. The synthetic turf system for athletic fields shall be a crumb rubber, crumb rubber and silica sand, synthetic or organic infill type with a subterranean drainage system sufficient to allow the playing surface to drain quickly.
- B. The manufacturer shall have local or regional representation capable of performing repairs and providing maintenance advice in a timely manner.
- C. All components of the synthetic turf system shall meet or exceed relevant federal, state and local health requirements. Manufacturers shall be required to fully disclose all ingredients used in the manufacture of the synthetic turf system and provide complete information on all potentially toxic constituents.
- D. The project specifications for a synthetic turf system shall include provisions to secure the necessary equipment and training to properly maintain the synthetic turf system according to the manufacturer's recommendations and warrantee requirements.
- E. A synthetic turf facility for sports related activities shall be by permit only, unless otherwise supervised by City staff, and shall be designed to be secured when not in use.
- F. Signs shall be posted with user health and safety guidelines at all synthetic turf fields. These signs shall include, but not be limited to, advising users how to recognize heat-related illnesses and the proper steps to take to moderate and treat such illnesses, emphasize good hygiene such as washing hands after playing and practicing and standard first aid for skin wounds to prevent infections.
- G. Signs shall be posted to indicate what activities are allowed and not allowed on the synthetic turf. These signs shall address, but not be limited to, items such as food, drinks, pets and certain types of chairs, umbrellas, athletic shoes and athletic equipment which may damage the turf and invalidate the manufacturer's warranty or shorten the product's life expectancy.
- H. Sun shade and drinking fountains shall be provided near the synthetic turf field. Where shade and/or drinking fountains cannot be provided due to design or site constraints, efforts shall be taken to encourage users to provide acceptable portable shade systems and drinking water.
- I. Each synthetic turf installation shall include a water system including quick coupling valves shall be included to assist in the proper maintenance of the system. Potable water shall not be used to cool the synthetic turf playing surface.
- J. The recyclability of the synthetic turf and infill components shall be considered when selecting the synthetic turf type to assure that the materials can be recycled at the end of the useful life.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

- K. Synthetic turf fields will not be installed in flood prone areas due to potential damage to the turf and possible dissemination of synthetic turf materials, such as the infill material, into storm drains or natural drainage courses.
 - L. When possible, prior to installation of the synthetic turf system, the City shall identify a funding source for the replacement of the synthetic turf at the end of its life expectancy. The funding source shall include the costs for recycling and/or legal disposal of removed synthetic turf components.
 - M. Synthetic turf may be considered for smaller areas other than athletic fields where the extensive use causes soil compaction and makes natural turf difficult to maintain, such as adjacent to playgrounds or other high use passive areas. In these smaller areas, synthetic turf systems that do not use an infill and are not designed for athletic use may be considered.
- II. Synthetic turf may be considered for use in joint use facilities where the proposed turf area is 1.5 acres in size or smaller and shall meet all the criteria stated in this policy unless approved otherwise by the Park and Recreation Director and the participating joint use partner. Joint use facilities may not be subject to permitted use only criteria. They may be open to the public per the conditions stated in the joint use agreement for that particular site.
- Joint use sites are those sites where the City has entered into a long-term agreement with another governmental or not-for-profit agency, commonly a local school district, in which the City and the agency share the development costs, use and maintenance of the facility. Joint use agreements are specific to each site and are negotiated based on each entity's needs.
- III. Synthetic turf may be considered for use on city parkland when requested by organizations holding a Special Use Permit or long-term lease agreement with the City. Upon approval by the City, the organization requesting the use of synthetic turf shall agree to adhere to this Policy and provide all necessary funding to install and maintain the synthetic turf to the City's satisfaction.
- IV. The Park and Recreation Department will endeavor to select synthetic turf which meets the highest standards for user health and safety, playability and materials performance and will periodically:
- A. Review and evaluate literature and new research that becomes available regarding the installation, maintenance, injuries, health issues and environmental concerns related to the use of synthetic turf and make changes in its best practices when warranted.
 - B. Seek feedback from user groups to assist in the evaluation of synthetic turf products, performance and maintenance practices.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

- C. Conduct or participate in synthetic turf field temperature testing to monitor playing surface temperatures and establish criteria for field closures due to excessive playing surface heat.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-