

Beach Chalet Athletic Fields Renovation Frequently Asked Questions

So Every San Francisco Child Has a Place to Play Ball

Why Fix-Up the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields?

Beach Chalet is one of three primary ground sports fields in San Francisco. Each week in the fall and spring, 1,550 kids and 600 adults play ball on the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields.

Unfortunately, these fields are in abysmal condition and are closed to the public except by paid reservation. The fields are completely closed for rest and regrowth for several months each year and only three of the four fields are used at one time in order to try to preserve their condition. Meanwhile, the overall facility is rundown and lacks basic facilities for park visitors, including spectator seating, bike parking and doors for bathroom stalls.

The Beach Chalet Athletic Fields are proposed for renovation to dramatically increase public access for San Francisco's youth. Synthetic turf and lights would triple the amount of playtime on the fields to more than 14,000 hours annually. At the same time, the new synthetic turf fields will save about 6,000,000 gallons of water each year and encourage a safe, family-friendly environment for athletics and park visitors.

What's the plan?

City Fields and SF Recreation and Parks are proposing to install synthetic turf, field lights and on-field spectator seating – bleachers on either end of the field and low profile bench seating between the two center fields. A new viewing plaza will connect to the restored restrooms with new paths leading from JFK Drive in the Park to the athletic fields.

A children's play area will occupy the little ones while spectators watch the games from adjacent barbecues and picnic areas. With neighbors in mind, field light heights were reduced by 20 feet so the light standards will not be visible from surrounding neighborhoods and "open play" hours will be posted to ensure community access to the new fields.

A new pick-up & drop-off area near the restroom will increase safety for kids and athletes and 81 bike parking spots will be installed. Twenty new spaces will be added to the existing car parking lot to keep additional cars off park roads and a pathway will encircle the fields to provide disability access and to make it easier for everyone to enjoy the fields. The current eight foot fence will be lowered to four feet around most of the fields and rise to 16 feet behind the goals to keep balls in bounds.



*Proposed Renovation of the
Beach Chalet Athletic Fields in Golden Gate Park*



What's the process to get the project approved? When will construction start?

San Francisco park restorations are subjected to a rigorous, multi-hearing approval process involving several city departments before a project is approved and construction can start. Over the last three years, the Beach Chalet Athletic Field Renovation has been put through intense public scrutiny and discussion.

Public input is welcomed at all of these hearings. If broad community support is demonstrated, we hope and expect the project will move forward.

- ✓ May/June 2012: Certification. First, the Planning Commission held a hearing on May 24, 2012 to certify Beach Chalet's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which describes potential impacts of a proposed project and mitigations to reduce those impacts. The commission determined that the project conforms to the City's land use plans. After hours of testimony from hundreds of kids, coaches and parents, the Planning Commission voted 4-1 to certify the environmental report.
- ✓ May/June 2012: Approval. After the EIR was certified, the Recreation and Parks Commission voted unanimously in support of the project plans during the same May 24 hearing.
- June/July 2012: Appeal. At the EIR approval hearing, project opponents vowed to appeal the report to the Board of Supervisors. Should this occur, a majority of district supervisors will have to vote to uphold or deny the environmental report's certification.
- August – December 2012: Design and Bid. Once the project is approved, the architect will complete the design and the project will be put out to potential contractors to bid.
- February – December 2013: Construction. Demolition, grading, construction and field installation will take roughly 10 months.
- December 2013: Fields Reopen! Community celebration of the new ballfields.

Wasn't this project already approved? Why the delay?

We began our plans for Beach Chalet in 2009 and were approved by the SF Recreation and Parks Commission after several public hearings. However, to address inquiries by San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, we chose to conduct an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a thorough study of the potential physical and environmental impacts of the project.

Two years and \$1 million later, the draft EIR was released in October 2011 and received a thorough vetting by both city agencies and community members. The draft EIR was overwhelmingly positive for the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields Renovation project (see details below).

The final EIR was published and certified in May 2012.



What did the Draft Environmental Impact Report determine? Is synthetic turf safe for people, animals and the planet?

Yes, synthetic turf is safe. From the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission to the California Environmental Protection Agency to San Francisco's own Department of the Environment, study after study has found synthetic turf to be safe for people, pets, wildlife and our environment.

The Environmental Impact Report thoroughly studied the Beach Chalet project's impact on the following areas:

- Aesthetics
- Cultural Resources
- Transportation and Circulation
- Recreation and Public Space
- Biological Resources
- Hydrology & Water Quality
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Air Quality

The draft Beach Chalet Environmental Impact Report found that all but one of the study areas will have "no impact," a "less than significant impact" or could be mitigated to a "less than significant impact."

The report found that renovation of the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields will create a single "unavoidable significant impact" to the site's value as a historic resource. The report determined that replacing grass with synthetic turf, installing field lighting, adding on-field spectator seating and creating concrete pedestrian paths around the fields would alter the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields' existing features which convey historical significance.

However, Golden Gate Park's designation as a historic place on the federal, state and local levels would remain unchanged as the park has many features which will continue to convey historic character and significance.

The report summarizes the impact thus: *"Considering there are 137 contributing resources to the [Golden Gate Park National Historic District], the potential loss of one contributor ... would not constitute a significant impact to the District as a historic resource. The [Golden Gate Park National Historic District] would remain eligible for listing in the National Register after completion of the project."* (IV.C-27)

For more information you can read the EIR here:
http://sfmea.sfplanning.org/2010.0016E_DEIR.pdf

What other City Fields/Rec/Park synthetic turf field renovations are in the works?

Mission Playground's asphalt soccer field (19th St & Valencia) was recently replaced with a new synthetic turf field which opened in May 2012.



Minnie & Lovie Ward Recreation Center's athletic field (Montana & Capitol) is currently under environmental review. Despite a misguided appeal filed by neighborhood group across town, the project is expected to be approved this spring and construction should begin this winter.

Both the Mission Playground and Minnie & Lovie Ward projects have received broad and diverse support from community leaders, elected officials and neighborhood residents.

Why focus on athletic fields?

In San Francisco, youth sports are entirely constrained by a lack of access to athletic fields. A 2004 study found San Francisco would need to add 35 soccer fields and 30 baseball/softball fields just to meet demand. For many years, local school teams, youth leagues, and after-school programs have accepted as many kids as they can place on fields. Once a league's allotment of fields is full, registration is closed and kids are turned away.

Since 2006, Recreation and Parks and the nonprofit City Fields Foundation have worked to address this challenge by renovating select City athletic fields with synthetic turf and field lights. The goal is to increase playable hours on existing sports fields so every San Francisco child has a place to enjoy sports after school.

To date, our partnership has renovated twelve multi-use sports fields in six different parks, including Garfield Square, Silver Terrace Playground, Franklin Square, Crocker Amazon Playground, South Sunset Playground and Kimbell Playground. Combined with our other efforts, the synthetic turf and field light additions have created more than 66,000 hours of new annual playtime in our parks, allowing for 1,800 more kids to play each year on 148 new teams!

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