

Date: February 5, 2010 (REVISED)



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation & Planning and Environment Committee
SUBJECT: Synthetic Turf Playfields at Jericho and Memorial South Parks

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board approve the installation of a synthetic turf playfield at Jericho Park on the existing grass playfield adjacent to Discovery Street (the ‘West Field’), as described in this report.*
- B. THAT the Board approve the installation of a synthetic turf playfield at Memorial South Park on the existing grass playfield/diamond adjacent to Prince Albert Street (the ‘Southwest Field’), and an upgrade of the existing running track in the central oval, as described in this report.*
- C. THAT the Board direct staff to update and revise the 2002 Playing Field Renewal Plan to guide playfield capital investments, playfield maintenance programs and playfield allocations to user groups for the next ten years.*

POLICY

The Vancouver Charter (section 489.1) states that “the Board shall have power to provide for: (b) accommodation for sports and games, and spectators thereof, and setting aside and reserving portions of the parks for specified kinds of sports and games”.

Major changes to parks or portions thereof require Board approval.

BACKGROUND

Inventory of synthetic turf playfields

The first synthetic turf playfield in Vancouver was built at Eric Hamber Secondary School in 1986. This was followed by the provision of two synthetic turf playfields at Andy Livingstone Park in 1995.

In 2002, the Board approved the Playing Field Renewal Plan, which included the following recommendation to increase playing field capacity between 2002 and 2011:

“that an additional six artificial turf fields be constructed to meet the increasing demand for outdoor field sports”.

Between 2004 and 2007, the Board approved the construction of four synthetic turf playfields: one at Kerrisdale Park-Point Grey Secondary School (project completed in 2006), one at Vancouver Technical School (project completed in 2008), and two at the ‘Trillium’ park site in the False Creek Flats industrial area (the fields are under construction). Once the ‘Trillium’ project is completed, there will be seven synthetic turf playfields in parks or on school grounds.

Site selection for the next two synthetic turf playfields

In September 29, 2008, the Board approved the 2009-2011 Capital Plan, which included \$5.5 million in funding for the construction of two additional synthetic turf playfields.

On January 19, 2009, the Board approved “that the Board direct staff to work with the Vancouver Field Sports Federation and report back by April 6, 2009 with a shortlist of sites to be considered for the construction of two or more artificial fields to be funded from the 2009-2011 Capital Plan and other sources”.

On April 6, 2009, the Board approved “THAT the Board endorse Memorial South Park, Rupert Park and Beaconsfield Park as potential sites for artificial turf playing field installation funded by Citywide Park Development Cost Levy (DCL) Funds, for further technical review and a public process”, although the Board expressed concern that there were no sites west of Main Street on the shortlist.

On September 10, 2009, the Board’s Planning Committee endorsed the addition of Jericho Park to the shortlist, as well as Prince-of-Wales Secondary School and Queen Elizabeth Elementary School (often referred to as the “Camosun” site), subject to these school sites being supported by the Vancouver School Board.

Between September 23 and October 1, 2009, Park Board staff hosted four open houses to gather public input on the four park sites under consideration (Beaconsfield, Jericho, Memorial South and Rupert Parks).

On October 6, 2009, the School Board’s Planning and Facilities Committee supported the inclusion of Prince-of-Wales Secondary School as a candidate site for installation of a synthetic turf playfield. On November 9, 2009, Park Board and School Board staff hosted an open house to gather public input on this site.

In December 2009, Park Board secured \$1.0 million in additional funding from an external source (details are expected to be announced in March 2010). The funding would be allocated to additional sport and exercise amenity related to one of the two synthetic turf playfield installations. One of the requirements associated with the additional funding is that all three projects (two synthetic turf playfields and the additional sport and exercise amenity) must be completed by March 31, 2011.

DISCUSSION

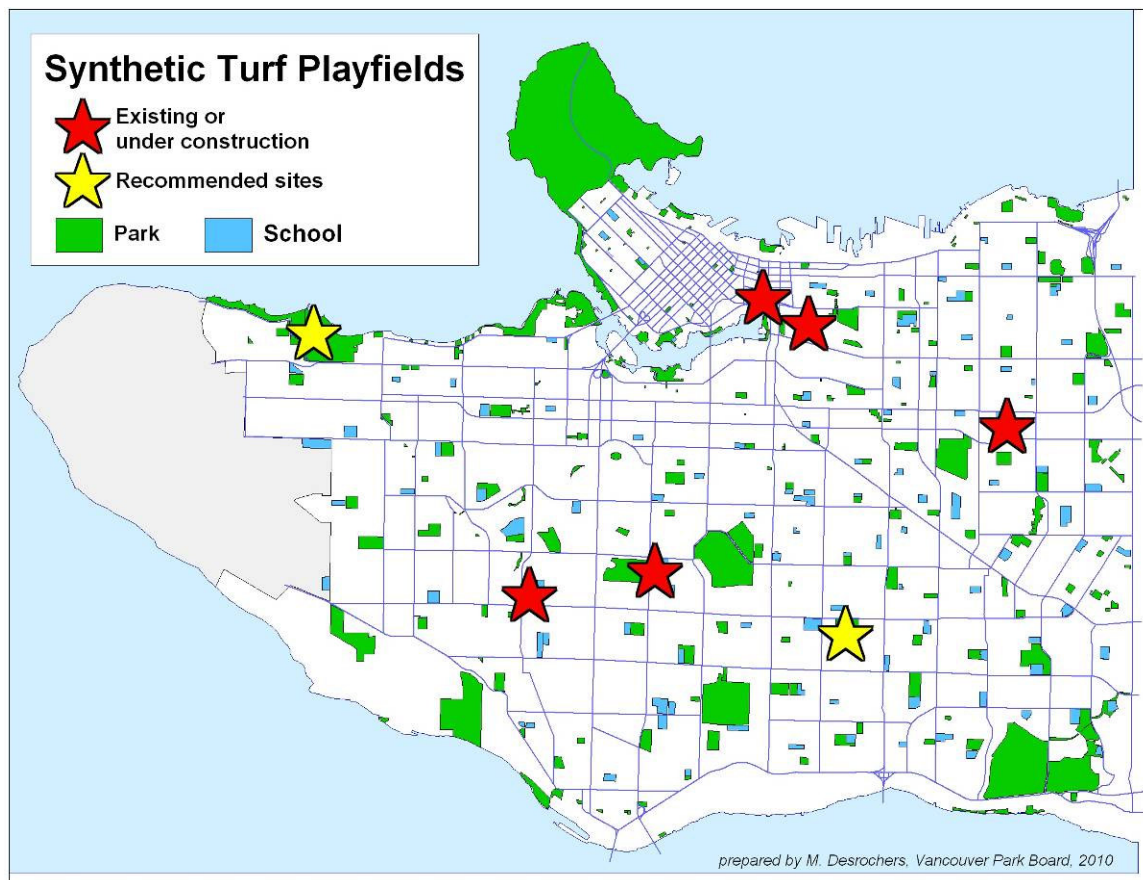
Recommended sites

Given the current geographic distribution of synthetic turf playfields, Park Board staff believes it would be optimal to have an additional synthetic turf playfield on the East Side, as well as an additional one on the West Side.

	East Side	West Side
Candidate sites:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beaconsfield Park• Memorial South Park• Rupert Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jericho Park• Prince-of-Wales Secondary School

On the East Side, Memorial South Park is the recommended site because it is the only site that has a running track which can be included as an upgrade with the additional \$1.0 million in funding.

On the West Side, Jericho Park is the recommended site because it is the only site that can be completed by March 31, 2011. Prince-of-Wales Secondary School cannot be completed by that deadline because the site requires School Board approval and, subsequently, a legal agreement between Park Board and School Board – steps are a likely to add several months to the project timetable.



Jericho Park

Two sites were considered at Jericho Park: the West Field and the East Field.



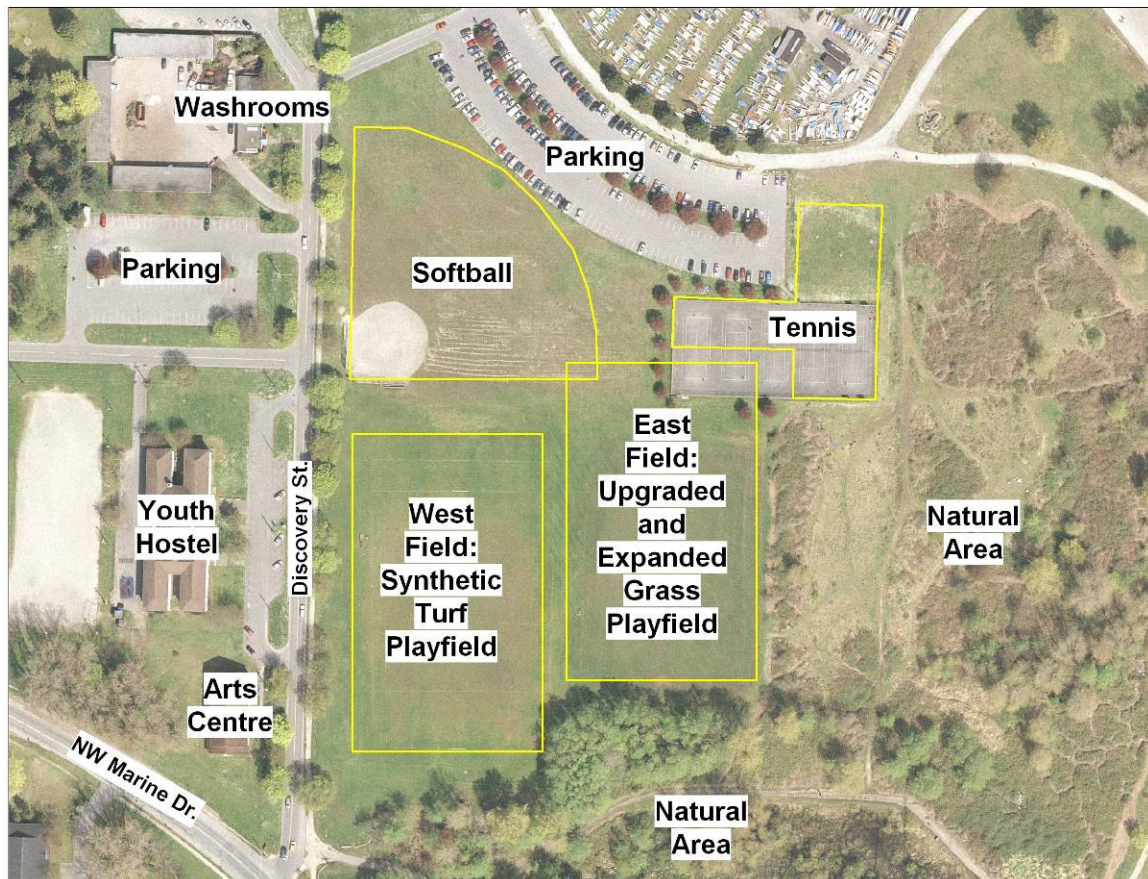
The East Field is not recommended for synthetic turf playfield installation because it is located immediately north and west of two natural areas (a remnant woodland and a scrubland), and it is not desirable to place a lit synthetic turf playfield in such close proximity to these natural areas.

The West Field is recommended for synthetic turf playfield installation because:

- the lit synthetic turf playfield would be located further away from the natural areas;
- the synthetic turf playfield would be located reasonably close to nearby washrooms and three parking lots; and
- the synthetic turf playfield would be located far enough away from nearby residents such that overspill parking, lighting and noise are minimized (the closest residential home is 130 m away).

Installing a synthetic turf playfield on the West Field will require the following changes to Jericho Park:

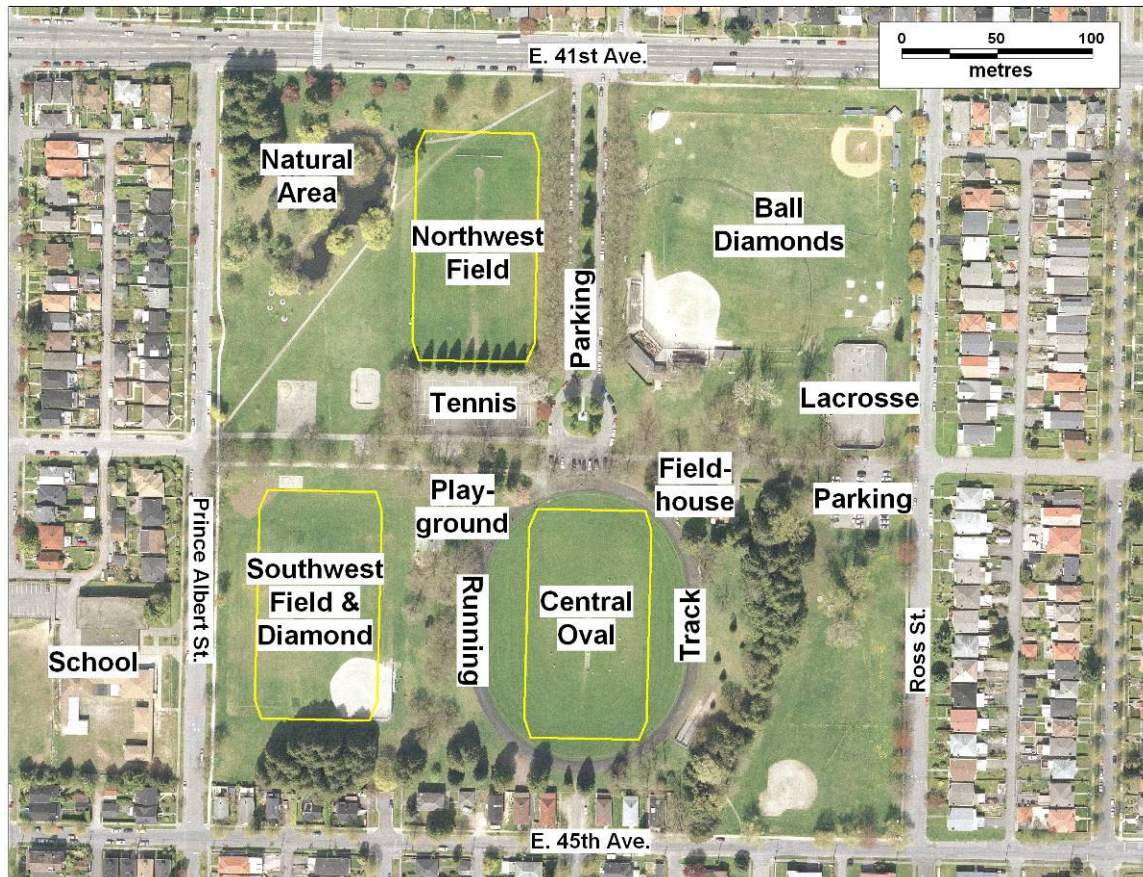
- the East Field will need to be upgraded and expanded to the north in order to accommodate the needs of the existing users of the West Field (mainly rugby and ultimate), who will be displaced with the installation of the synthetic turf playfield on the West Field; and
- three of the five tennis courts located north of the East Field will be reconfigured or rebuilt east of the parking lot in order to accommodate the northerly expansion of the East Field.



There will be a small overlap between the outfield of the softball diamond and the northern edge of the expanded East Field. During the fall-winter season, rugby will use the expanded East Field (softball is not played at that time of the year). During the spring-summer season, softball will have access to the full 300 foot diamond because the principal user group on the East Field will be ultimate, who require a shorter field than rugby.

Memorial South Park

Three sites were considered at Memorial South Park: the Central Oval, the Northwest Field and the Southwest Field/Diamond. The first two sites were presented at the public open houses in the fall of 2009. The third site was included for review in January 2010.



The Northwest Field is not recommended for synthetic turf playfield installation because it is located immediately east of the natural area with a pond/wetland, and it is not desirable to place a lit synthetic turf playfield in such close proximity to this natural area.

In late January 2010, Park Board staff recommended the Central Oval for synthetic turf playfield installation because:

- it is very close to the fieldhouse and reasonably close to the two parking lots;
- the lighting would light the synthetic turf playfield and upgraded running track; and
- overspill lighting would be minimized for nearby residents because the Central Oval is nearly completely surrounded by large mature trees.

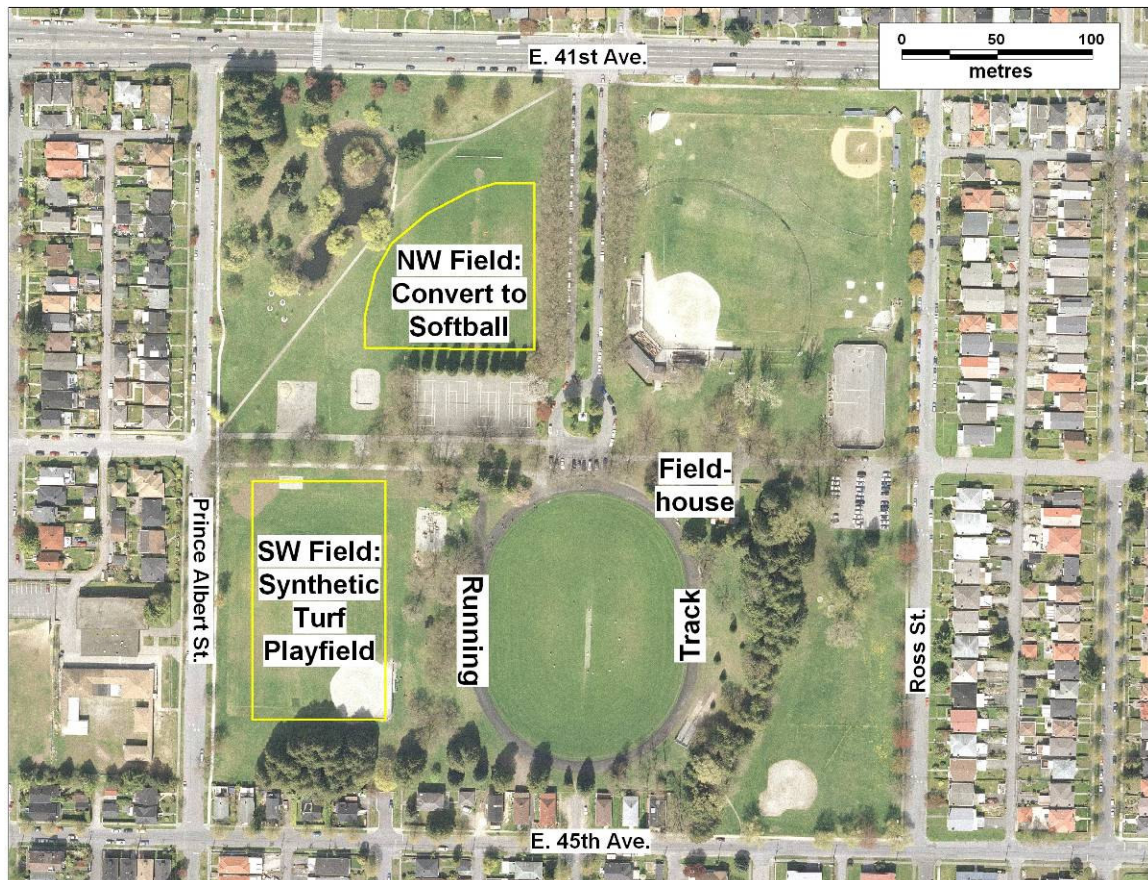
This proposal would require the relocation of: a) cricket and ultimate from the Central Oval to the Southwest Field; b) the softball diamond from the Southwest Diamond to the Northwest Field; and c) the children's playground within the park.

On February 4, 2010, after hearing from field users and nearby residents, the Park Board's Planning and Environment Committee recommended the Southwest Field/Diamond for synthetic turf playfield installation because:

- the proposal reduces the number of users and uses to be relocated within the park (cricket and ultimate do not have to be relocated from the Central Oval to the Southwest Field/Diamond, and the children's playground does not have to be relocated), and therefore reduces costs associated with relocating users;
- the proposal will not change the naturalistic, serene character of the Central Oval; and
- the proposal does not impact a large number of residential properties because of the school located on the west side of Prince Albert Street and the grove of large evergreen trees located south of the proposed site.

Installing a synthetic turf playfield on the Southwest Field will require the Northwest Field to be converted to a softball diamond in order to replace the Southwest Diamond.

As part of this proposal, the running track in the central oval would be upgraded. The new running track would generally follow the current alignment and have a rubberized surface. Lighting may be installed around the running track. A decision will be made after reviewing the type and cost of lighting most appropriate for this site.



Surface Type

There are two main surface types for synthetic turf playfields: the “in-fill” surface, which is preferred by soccer players, and the “carpet” surface, which is preferred by field hockey players. Discussions with the Vancouver Field Sports Federation about the preferred surface type for the next two synthetic turf playfields have begun but not yet concluded. A decision regarding surface type will be required in March or April at the latest. If an agreement cannot be reached by then, staff will bring the issue forward to the Board for resolution.

Project Phasing

Both recommended sites at Jericho and Memorial South Parks involve the relocation of sport groups from an existing field or diamond to a new location. Staff will develop a phasing plan for both sites in consultation with the Vancouver Field Sports Federation. Each phasing plan will take into consideration realistic construction timetables, scheduling impacts for specific sport groups, and opportunities to temporarily relocate sport groups to other sites.

Public Consultation

About 300 people attended the five public open houses that were held in the fall of 2009. A total of 276 questionnaires were filled in at the open houses. Another 650 questionnaires were filled in on the Park Board’s consultation website. It is worth noting that playfield users accounted for about 80-90% of all participants.

The few comments received from non-field-user residents around Jericho Park expressed concern about the proximity of the synthetic turf playfield to the natural area. In the case of Memorial South Park, the comments from non-field-user residents expressed concern about overspill lighting, noise and parking.

The Vancouver Field Sports Federation has been involved in the site selection process since early 2009. The Federation made a presentation at the Park Board’s Planning and Environment Committee meeting on February 4, 2010.

If the Board approves the Southwest Field as the site for synthetic turf installation at Memorial South Park, staff will notify the residents living near Memorial South Park of the Board’s decision, since this site was not identified during the public consultation process in the fall of 2009.

NEXT STEPS

Staff anticipates the project schedule to be as follows:

- Select consultant: March 2010
- Development Permit application: April 2010

- Award of construction contract: late Spring 2010
- Start of construction: Summer 2010
- Completion: First quarter 2011

PLAYING FIELD RENEWAL PLAN UPDATE

The Playing Field Renewal Plan was approved by the Board in 2002. One of its central features – providing six new synthetic turf playfields – can be achieved by 2011. Staff recommends that the plan be updated and revised to take into account recent population forecasts, as well as changes in demand for various sports. The new plan would guide playfield capital investments, playfield maintenance programs and playfield allocations to user groups for the next ten years.

SUMMARY

Increasing the supply of synthetic turf playfields has been a stated goal of the Park Board since 2002. Two fields have been completed, and two fields are under construction. After a nine-month long selection process, the Park Board's Planning and Environment Committee considered a number of siting options and heard from many stakeholders on February 4, 2010. Pursuant to this meeting, the following sites are being recommended for two additional fields: at Jericho Park ('West Field') and Memorial South Park ('Southwest Field'). The project at Memorial South Park will include an upgrade to the running track.

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