



Date: October 21, 2004

TO: Board Members – Parks and Recreation

FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: Synthetic Turf Playing Field – Site Selection

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A. THAT the Board endorse the development of a lit synthetic turf playing field at Kerrisdale Park/Point Grey Secondary School, subject to concurrence by the Vancouver School Board (VSB), with the source of funding being from City Wide Development Cost Levy allocated for this purpose in the 2003 – 2005 Capital Plan.*
- B. THAT the commitment of funds from the Dunbar, Point Grey and Kerrisdale Soccer Clubs towards this project as required up to \$400,000 be accepted.*
- C. THAT land exchange at Kerrisdale Park/Point Grey Secondary School be negotiated with the VSB so that the entire field can be developed on park property, with final boundaries and arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.*
- D. THAT Park Board staff continue to work with VSB staff to facilitate synthetic turf field development on VSB properties at Vancouver Technical and Churchill Secondary Schools.*

POLICY

In July 2002, Park Board approved the Playing Field Renewal Plan, the outcome of a study conducted jointly with the Vancouver School Board and the Vancouver Field Sport Federation. The Renewal Plan recommends “that an additional six artificial turf fields be constructed to meet the increasing demand for outdoor field sports.”

On April 5, 2004 the Board approved a short-list of five sites for locally-based public consultation and in-depth technical evaluation. The short-listed sites were: Churchill Secondary School, Point Grey Secondary School, Prince of Wales Secondary School, Vancouver Technical Secondary School and Killarney Park.

The change to park holdings contemplated in this report will require resolutions of both City Council and the Park Board passed by affirmative vote of not less than 2/3 of all the members thereof (Vancouver Charter, Part XXIII 488 (1)).

BACKGROUND

The Park Board is working in partnership with the Vancouver School Board (VSB) to develop two synthetic turf fields in order to increase the inventory of public playing fields in Vancouver. The understanding between the two Boards is that a shared-use agreement on the same general template as that in place for the artificial turf field at Eric Hamber School be in effect for these new fields. \$2.9 million was allocated for synthetic turf fields development in the 2003 - 2005 Park Board Capital Plan.

A public consultation process to determine two appropriate field sites was launched in the fall of 2003. The first step in this consultation was a city-wide forum, which had three objectives: (1) to communicate the need to increase the City's supply of sports fields (specifically with new synthetic turf fields), (2) to further develop criteria for determining the location of such fields, and (3) to establish a shortlist of appropriate sites. This city wide forum took place on November 22, 2003 at Charles Tupper Secondary School.

58 potential sites for field development were identified at the city-wide forum, which also generated a set of "must-have" and "desirable" criteria for assessing the suitability of these sites (See Appendix A). In April 2004, both the Park Board and the School Board approved a shortlist of the following candidate sites: Churchill Secondary School, Point Grey Secondary School, Prince of Wales Secondary School, Vancouver Technical Secondary School and Killarney Park. With the exception of Killarney, all of these sites, in whole or in part, are on VSB property.

Staff proceeded with a series of open houses held at locations close to each of the five sites. The Open Houses featured displays on the Playing Field Renewal Plan, the advantages of synthetic turf with regard to meeting rising demand for playing fields, the selection criteria established at the city-wide forum, the proposed layouts in local context and identification of known site specific issues and mitigation needs.

In tandem with the open houses, a more detailed technical assessment of each of the five sites was conducted by staff, with consultant support. This work focused on such critical considerations as soil stability, existing site services and needs, access to wash/change rooms, parking, electrical supply, sewer and water connections and legal considerations.

DISCUSSION

Staff have completed a public process and technical evaluations in connection with all five of the shortlisted sites. The responses recorded at each Open House, or subsequently submitted via e-mail, fax or regular post, are summarized in Appendix B. The technical evaluations have focused on factors affecting costs of development at each site, as well as funding and land tenure issues. This analysis has helped to clarify the relative suitability of the five sites in relation to the original assessment criteria.

Public Input

The majority of input has been positive with regard to the concept of synthetic turf and the presentation of information on this subject. Some concerns were expressed about anticipated impacts of the development, and in many cases these were alleviated by the information provided through the displays and discussions at the Open Houses.

There is a clear divergence of opinion in relation to the Prince of Wales site. On the one hand, the number of comments in favour was higher here than for any other proposed location. On the other hand, a much higher level of opposition was recorded, mainly from residents immediately adjacent to the site. The key concerns expressed by these neighbours focused on the following:

- The proximity of the field to residences (particularly along Yew Street), and three seniors' retirement and nursing homes;
- The number and intensity of use of the existing fields on the combined school grounds and park; and
- Limited parking availability on adjacent streets, and no off-street parking next to the field.

Cost of Development

Comparative order of magnitude costs for development and mitigation measures have been estimated for each site. Included in this analysis were considerations of the following:

- proximity and capacity of power, water, sanitary services at each site
- results of geo-technical survey on the proposed sites
- lighting placement and type to minimize off-field impacts
- requirements (if any) for off street parking
- need for additional protective fencing
- availability of wash/change room facilities and options for developing these if needed

Given optimal site conditions, and assuming an unfenced site, basic field construction would cost in the order of \$1.4 million. The order of magnitude estimates for field construction at the short-listed sites break down as follows:

- Vancouver Technical and Churchill: \$1.4-1.5 million. Both sites have existing fencing that can be retained to save costs, but both require a limited amount of excavation and retaining wall installation.
- Prince of Wales: \$1.7 million. The additional cost is mainly due to the need to provide electrical service and to construct off-street parking and washrooms (school washrooms cannot be made accessible from the field).
- Kerrisdale/Point Grey: \$1.8 million. Some peat removal is required to ensure a level playing field. Electrical service and washrooms can be supplied from the Kerrisdale Arena.
- Killarney: \$2.7 million. The high cost is due to extreme peat conditions at this location.

Funding and Land Tenure Issues

The funding for the synthetic turf fields has been allocated from City-wide Development Cost Levy which, under the terms of the Vancouver Charter, can only be spent on park land acquisition and development. City Legal Services has confirmed that land for park purposes must be acquired either through purchase or long term lease, requiring legal subdivision of VSB properties at four of the five short-listed sites to effect such a transfer.

At two of the VSB sites, Kerrisdale/Point Grey and Prince of Wales, subdivision could be achieved through redrawing the existing boundaries between park and school grounds, resulting in no net loss of land for either Board. This approach presents the easiest development scenario. At Kerrisdale/Point Grey, in particular, the land exchange would be logical, since the proposed site is a field that straddles the boundary between VSB property and park land (see Appendix C).

At the remaining two VSB sites, Vancouver Technical and Churchill, the subdivision process is complicated by a number of factors:

- Subdivision at either site would require the VSB to cede land to the Park Board, without reciprocal land exchange, in return for part-time use of the field.
- Vancouver Technical is about to undergo seismic upgrading, which entails some uncertainty about future site configuration, egress points, etc.
- Subdivision at Churchill would create a Floor Space Ratio (FSR) non-conformity for the school (i.e., the square footage of the buildings would be in excess of what is permitted for the size of the remaining property).

A second restriction with respect to funding applies only to Churchill. The school is within the legal boundaries of the Oakridge-Langara Development Cost Levy area, and is therefore excluded from City-Wide DCL funding allocation. However, it may be possible at some point to allocate area-specific DCLs to this project should land tenure requirements be met.

An alternate way to resolve the matter of DCL funding restrictions is to allocate regular capital as opposed to DCL funds in the 2006 – 2008 Capital Plan. With Council approval, Capital Plan money could be spent on VSB property without change of land tenure.

Finally, a recent development in terms of potential funding is relevant to the funding situation. The Dunbar, Point Grey and Kerrisdale soccer clubs have agreed to contribute up to \$400,000 to make it possible for one of the synthetic turf fields to be built within their collective catchment area. This commitment has been made in recognition of the following points:

1. This contribution should make it possible to finance the development of two fields as originally planned, even where cost of development would exceed half the \$2.9 million allocated to the project.
2. The three clubs together serve approximately half of all children playing soccer in Vancouver, and placing one field where requested is consistent with the criterion of “proximity to high user demand.”

Summary of Individual Site Assessments

Three of the five short-listed sites, Kerrisdale/Point Grey; Vancouver Technical and Churchill appear to be viable and appropriate for the construction of synthetic turf fields, although such a development is not immediately achievable in all cases given the funding and land tenure issues discussed above. Killarney and Prince of Wales are not recommended as sites for synthetic turf installation. The reasoning behind these recommendations is summarized below:

Kerrisdale/Point Grey: An excellent location in terms of access, parking, servicing, and proximity to field user demand. Strong local support has been expressed from Point Grey School and from local field sport clubs. There is sufficient separation from residences to contain light, noise and traffic impacts. As noted in this report, there is a peat issue at this site which will likely raise construction costs above budget allocation. This consideration is offset by the funding offered by the three local Soccer Clubs to construct a field in this location. Care will have to be taken in design and construction to not further deteriorate the running track which encloses the field area.

Vancouver Technical: A strategic location to serve growing sports participation generated by such youth outreach programs as MoreSports, as well as current demand from field sport leagues on the East side of Vancouver. The site is also excellent in terms of access, servicing and low residential impact. Letters of support have been received from the school community and from local organizations. Upcoming renovation plans for the school should factor in consideration of providing change washrooms accessible from the field. Vancouver Technical would appear to be a high priority for future development when site and funding conditions allow.

Churchill: There is strong support for the proposed development from the school community. Bounded on all sides by school buildings, parking lots and a playfield, the proposed site works well in terms of limited impact on nearby residences. Minor renovations can create access to wash/changerooms in the Secondary School. This site should receive strong consideration for future synthetic turf installation.

Prince of Wales: There is strong local support for the field development, including a letter of support from the School's Parent Advisory Council. However, there is also strong opposition from immediate neighbours. Technical assessment has confirmed that it would be very challenging in this context to achieve project objectives for low neighbourhood impact, particularly in regard to light spillage and parking. Known mitigation costs are high, and some uncertainty remains as to the full investment required to achieve a successful installation. It is not recommended at this point to install synthetic turf at this location.

Killarney: Geotechnical survey and subsequent cost analysis has confirmed the extreme peat conditions at this site would require extensive site preparation to address. In addition, the existing all-weather field receives heavy use as a lit practice field and a fallback game site when local grass fields are closed due to wet weather. These functions would be displaced and acceptable alternatives for the lost all-weather surface are not immediately achievable. It is not recommended at this point to install synthetic turf at this location. However, since there is a

rising demand for playing fields in the Killarney area, future consideration should be given as to how to increase the field inventory in the southeast quadrant of the City.

Conclusion

Kerrisdale/Point Grey is proposed for immediate development, for the reasons outlined above, and Staff will continue to work with VSB to determine the feasibility, timeline and other conditions for developments at the Vancouver Technical and Churchill sites.

SUMMARY

This report recommends proceeding with synthetic turf field installation within the running oval at Kerrisdale Park/Point Grey Secondary School. Land exchange with the VSB is recommended in order to secure the entire field site as park, in keeping with the requirements of the City Wide Development Cost Levy By-law. It is further recommended that the Board accept the offer from the Dunbar, Point Grey and Kerrisdale Soccer Clubs to contribute \$400,000 towards making the project possible at this location. Staff will continue to work with the VSB to plan for the next installation of synthetic turf, either at Vancouver Technical or Churchill School.

Prepared by:

Planning and Operations
Board of Parks & Recreation
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SITE ASSESSMENT: 'MUST-HAVE' CRITERIA

1. Be public open space, either owned by municipal authority or leased over a long term, with no covenants on title or other legal restrictions prohibiting the intended use.
2. Be big enough for one full sized field (minimum 100 x 65 m) with additional room for run-off, spectators, washroom/change facility, parking, etc.
3. Be reasonably level and on stable ground, so that a field can be built within budget, with a minimum of excavation, in-fill or other site preparation required.
4. Not be used for other valued activities or contain facilities which cannot reasonably be relocated elsewhere.
5. Not convert potential undeveloped passive green space to a synthetic field in communities underserved by passive greenspace.
6. Be accepted by the local neighbourhood (see Appendix B: tabulation of inputs).

SITE ASSESSMENT: "DESIRABLE" CRITERIA

1. Minimal residential impact from traffic, noise, and light generated by field operation.
2. Minimal environmental impact from tree removal, loss of passive green space, habitat disruption.
3. Good site access: Connection to cycle routes, access streets and/or public transit.
4. Amenities on site: washroom/change facilities, parking, or other necessary components already in place, or achievable with minimal cost.
5. Proximity to high user demand.
6. 'Lift' in sports field playing capacity (e.g., through replacing a little-used and poor quality field).
7. Proximity to a Secondary School to serve both public and curriculum needs.
8. Service Distribution: (i.e., dispersed across the City rather than in any one area).

Feedback on Siting Shortlist:

Compilation of Feedback Forms returned at open houses, as well as via e-mail, fax and regular post received subsequently. **Note:** these figures do not represent a randomized and controlled scientific sampling:

Site	Yes	No	Total
Churchill	33 (97.0%)	1 (3.0%)	34
Killarney	22 (95.6%)	1 (4.4%)	23
Point Grey	146 (95.4%)	7 (4.6%)	153
Prince of Wales	129 (74.6%)	44(25.4%)	173
Van Tech	15 (93.7%)	1 (6.3%)	16
Total	345 (86.5)	54 (13.5)	399

Other communications were received from individuals and organizations in support of or opposition to one or more of the shortlisted sites, as indicated below:

- A petition “against the installation of the proposed synthetic turf planning field for the prince of Wales site due to the residential impact from traffic, noise and light generated by field operation”: 235 signatures.
- 4 letters received from neighbours of Prince of Wales School opposing the field installation at that site.
- Letter of support for Prince of Wales site for synthetic turf from the Prince of Wales Secondary School Parent Advisory Council.
- Two letters received in support of synthetic turf installation at Point Grey Secondary School.
- 4 letters in support of synthetic turf installation at Vancouver Technical Secondary school.
- One letter in support of installation at either Kerrisdale/Point Grey, and in opposition to installation at Churchill.

