



Baker Park: Site Improvements meeting notes

The following is a summary of interpretation of items discussed and action items. If there are any corrections or additions to the summary, please inform Project Manager, Alice Messer at Alice.Messer@ci.stpaul.mn.us to issue updated notes.

**West Side Community Organization
Land-Use Committee Meeting
November 20, 2024**

Baker Park Field and Site Improvements

- Adjust survey – allow participants to chose more than one season.
- In-out parking – seems tight.
- Opposition to artificial turf
 - Want natural surface for little kids to play on.
- Park annex building – almost never open to the public.
 - Partner group, west side booster has storage underneath.
 - Unknown if building has historic value (it does).
 - Proposal to include patio with shade.
 - Clarification – building will stay.
- Parking removes softball field – is parking required? (Concept 1)
 - Parking not required, softball can be feature of multi-use field.
 - Parking accommodates accessibility.
- (Concept 2) – how do the proposed trees impact the sledding hill?
 - 61 feet available, seems sufficient – folks are skeptical.
 - Keep definition of sledding hill approximately as-is.
- Power lines on Bellows – prohibit shade trees; looking for other opportunities on-site to include large trees.
- Fence/netting? – probably.
 - This will likely prohibit sledding.
- **WINTER USE OF HILL IS VERY IMPORTANT**
- Goal will be needed for soccer; fence may not be needed on south side of field.
- Nobody uses this field for soccer.
 - Used currently for baseball, softball, football, ultimate frisbee.
- Artificial turf
 - Kids need safe and healthy places to play – plastic grass heated in the sun and toxins that are released from this.
 - Kids with allergies, asthma.
 - Ecological consequences of artificial turf.
 - Family doesn't play sports – values unprogrammed/multi-use open space for other activities.
- Coach on West Side – natural grass fields were not good.
 - El Rio is much better with artificial turf now.
 - Turf will be beneficial to kids.
 - Fewer injuries on artificial turf.
 - Most high school fields are artificial turf – sets kids up to be ready for that.
- Has design team talked to staff specifically at the school?



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- They regularly use the site for a variety of activities.
 - Will it be a pervious surface? – Yes, sand base under artificial turf, improved water quality.
 - Budget – this was identified as a need in upcoming 2025 budget (12/11). Funding is anticipated to be approved in this budget.
 - Initial funding has allowed work to date (preliminary design, Geotech, survey).
 - Kids use park for school and non-school.
 - Opposed to fake turf, interested in natural grass (sustainable).
 - Understands drainage issues.
 - Environmental impact of putting in artificial turf – PFAS.
 - Why is Parks not maintaining regular turf to be playable?
 - Sledding – super important – opposes any fencing that would prohibit this.
 - Accessibility with all activities.
 - Kids don't play soccer.
 - Urban heat island effects of artificial heat – will impact neighbors.
 - Natural grass – pride of the West Side.
 - Natural grass – would still be using chemicals to keep grass alive.
 - What are the benefits of artificial turf?
 - El Rio fields are beyond capacity – so much demand – artificial turf can support increased demand.
 - Artificial turf is more flexible to changing trends.
 - Rain event – can't play on real grass, artificial extends the season.
 - Conway, JOTP, examples of natural fill materials.
 - Lots of new products and materials that can be considered – could be more environmentally friendly.
 - Rock substrates can help treat stormwater.
 - Maintenance staff are stretched.
 - **Can the City provide a pros and cons list?**
 - What medium can meet this demand?
 - **Environmental research?**
 - Facilities haven't changed, they are getting worse.
 - Same with the climate.
 - Want kids to have the same access to great facilities that other communities get to have.
 - **12/4 – next meeting – CAN PARKS HAVE MORE INFORMATION BY THIS DATE?**
 - Boosters – provide programs for lots of kids.
 - Support for new, improved fields.
 - Current field is not safe.
 - Injuries, can't play in the rain.
 - Does not support parking.
 - MORE field space.
 - Yes to bathrooms.
 - Desire for drinking fountain.
 - Concerns about heat from fields impacting neighbors.
 - Currently used to run dogs.



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- Pros and cons of this.