



MEMORANDUM

Date: July 9, 2009

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Glenn Kost, Parks Planning & Development Manager, 425-452-5258
Scott Vander Hyden, Capital Projects Coordinator, 425-452-4169

Subject: Newport Hills Sportsfield Improvements:
Update and response to Park Board requests for additional information

Action: None

SUMMARY

We will update the Park Board on the June 17 Newport Hills community meeting, summarize neighborhood concerns and measures we are taking to address those concerns, and respond to the Park Board's questions and requests for additional information at the June meeting. Staff will proceed as outlined in this report and in the 2008 Parks & Natural Areas Levy.

JUNE 17 COMMUNITY MEETING

On June 17, Parks staff hosted a second community meeting at the Newport Hills Swim and Tennis Club to discuss plans for the synthetic soccer field conversion at Newport Hills Park. Over 3,000 invitations were mailed to area residents and the meeting was advertised on the City's website. 18 people attended. Parks' staff presented the same plan reviewed at the June 9 Park Board meeting (**Attachment 1**), clarifying that the synthetic soccer surface, drainage and parking improvements, and lighting upgrades were funded elements, while the baseball field relocation and other amenities would be considered as funding allowed. Concerns expressed at this meeting were similar to those heard during previous outreach efforts.

ADDRESSING NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS

As noted in the previous report to the Board (**Attachment 2**), staff has been working with the community to address many of the expressed concerns. Generally, the neighbors are concerned that the extension of evening soccer use from 4 months/year to a year-round activity would restrict the neighborhood's use of the park, and would exacerbate existing concerns about light, glare, noise, parking, and inappropriate behavior by the adult users. The neighbors are concerned that their park will inappropriately become a sports complex.

To address these concerns, we will be replacing the existing light fixtures to reduce ambient light and glare, and to reduce the noise produced by faulty ballasts. We will retain as much natural grass as possible, and will not install a full perimeter fence around the soccer field to maintain a more park-like feel, and to encourage neighborhood use during non-programmed activities. We will also notify our field users, especially the adults, to address the concerns about inappropriate language and behavior.

To help ease parking problems, increase pedestrian safety, and reduce conflicts with the immediate neighbors, we will increase off-street parking capacity along the east side of the park by approximately

15-20 vehicles, and are working with our Transportation staff to implement traffic calming measures along 120th Avenue SE. We are also considering the relocation of the baseball infield, though this will be dependant on funding.

Several neighbors have suggested implementing an earlier curfew to minimize adult use and to mitigate the shift to year-round use. Newport Hills currently maintains a 10pm curfew, one hour earlier than the 11pm curfew maintained at all other Bellevue sportsfields. Staff does not support further reductions in field use.

PARK BOARD QUESTIONS/REQUESTS

At the June meeting, the Park Board requested additional information about specific aspects of the project, listed individually below:

1. Can we demonstrate how the new lighting technology might reduce the impact of lighting on the neighborhood?

The attached photos (**Attachment 3**) demonstrate how new lighting technology effectively directs light onto the playing surface while minimizing spill light and glare onto adjacent areas.

2. Do we have examples of suspending field use due to inappropriate language or behavior?

No. We have had no history of warning, reprimanding, or suspending field use from any adult sport team, nor have we had any letters or phone calls regarding the behavior of adult teams or leagues in the recent past, including at Newport Hills. We have received complaints about inappropriate behavior of youth league parents, mainly toward field staff, for which we have issued written warnings. Our intent is to resolve these disputes before they result in revoking field use.

3. Can the soccer field be relocated to the NE corner of the park to create a larger buffer for the adjacent homeowners?

We have prepared an alternative field layout (**Attachment 4**) to demonstrate the impact of relocating the existing soccer field to the northeast corner of the park. The relocated soccer field would conflict with the little league field use, so the little league field has been shifted to the south end of the park. Pros and cons are identified, but generally, this option would incur significantly more cost to relocate or reconstruct park elements such as the restroom and field lighting while netting little added benefit to the neighbors or to the project itself. In most cases, problems are simply shifted from one area to another.

4. Can planting buffers be created to alleviate noise and increase privacy for the neighbors?

We are currently working with the immediate neighbors to explore options to minimize the impacts of the lights and noise, including fencing and landscaping. We will augment the existing landscape buffer as part of this project.

POTENTIAL LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD RELOCATION

The potential relocation of the little league infield to the east side of the park has been presented as a possibility if funds are available. This solution responds to the stated issues of parking, pedestrian safety, and disruption to the adjacent neighbors. Many people attending little league games park along the north side of SE 60th Street because of its close proximity to the field, even though space remains in the east lot. Pedestrians are then forced to cross SE 60th Street, creating potential safety issues. Relocating the infield to the east side of the park will encourage users to park along the east edge of the park, as it will be the most convenient location. It will reduce pedestrian movement

across SE 60th and relocate the most active part of the field away from the adjacent neighbors.

While this relocation solves several expressed concerns, concentrating more activities in one area and having more fence bisect the park may compromise the park-like feel of this site. While the idea seemed well-received at the meetings, maintaining a neighborhood park feel is also an expressed interest of the neighborhood, and may be viewed by some as a trade-off.

Attachments:

- Preliminary Site Plan
- Memo to Park Board – 6-9-09
- Lighting Photos
- Alternative Field Layout



BASE BID

- Enhance park entrance at corner
- Maintenance access to field
- Relocate existing tress west and add berm
- Remove "No Parking" Signs on shoulder 40' south of intersection
- Replace existing post and rail fence with more durable wood bull rail
- Existing parking, restroom building, and play area to remain
- Existing field light to be replaced with shielded fixture
- Soccer field surface to be converted to vertically draining synthetic turf
- Existing concrete bleachers shall be re-moved
- Storm drainage infrastructure will be added west of the field
- Existing trees west of the field will be augmented with additional landscape plantings
- Ball control fencing and netting will be added at field ends behind goal areas

ADDITIVE ALTERNATE BID

- Construct new backstop and wing fencing with ball control netting
- Softball infield location shall be shifted to the southeast corner closer to parking and restrooms
- Infield surface to be converted to vertically draining synthetic turf
- Renovate natural turf outfield area with new grading, drainage, irrigation and root zone
- Maintenance access to field

NEWPORT HILLS PARK
 PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN
 JULY 2008





MEMORANDUM

PHONE: 452-5258; 452-4169

DATE: June 9, 2009

TO: Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Glenn Kost, Parks Planning & Development Manager
Scott Vander Hyden, Capital Projects Coordinator

SUBJECT: Newport Hills Sportsfield Improvements – Response to Petition

ACTION REQUESTED: None

SUMMARY

We will review the Newport Hills Sportsfield Improvement project, focusing on the levy process, project scope, and methods being explored to address neighborhood concerns. Unless otherwise directed, staff will proceed as outlined in this report and in the 2008 Parks & Natural Areas Levy.

PROJECT & LEVY BACKGROUND

The property was purchased by King County in 1973 primarily for the purpose of baseball and soccer use at the urging of the Newport Hills Park Society. Most of the park development was completed by the Society in the late 1970's, and remains essentially the same today. Bellevue acquired the property from King County in 1996, and has completed several modest upgrades since that time. Facilities include a lighted soccer field, unlighted little league baseball field, playground equipment, restroom, picnic shelter, and off-street parking for 32 cars (see attached aerial photo).

The installation of synthetic turf at Newport Hills Park has been a high priority park project for many years, and identified in the adopted 2003 Parks & Open Space System Plan. The project would satisfy an identified need for more high quality soccer game fields, is located in an area especially lacking in quality fields, makes use of an existing lighted field to maximize program capacity, and is located in a park with existing infrastructure such as parking and restroom facilities.

In June 2007, the City Council asked the Parks & Community Services Board to conduct a public outreach process to gauge voter interest a potential Parks voter initiative, and to assist Council in making final decisions on timing, content, and funding mechanisms for the initiative. The outreach was conducted throughout the Fall 2007, and the findings are summarized in the attached January 8, 2008 report to Council. Council eventually placed the "Parks & Natural Areas" levy on the November 2008 ballot. The Newport Hills project was identified in the levy, with the fact sheet stating:

"Building on the expanded capacity of the Robinswood Sports Fields, additional synthetic fields will be installed to improve safety and play at Wilburton Hill and Newport Hills Parks."

After the decision was made to place the measure on the ballot, additional outreach was conducted to inform the public about the levy, including the distribution of fact sheets and attendance at community meetings. Shelley Marelli, Deputy Director, attended an October 21 meeting of the Newport Hills Community Club. Approximately 15-20 residents attended. The following comments/questions were raised at that meeting:

- A question about the projected timing of construction should the levy pass;
- A request that the City host a public meeting to inform the neighborhood of the project details and obtain public input prior to construction; and
- A request that part of the park remain in natural grass to accommodate the neighborhood's annual picnic.

The levy was approved with 67% of Bellevue residents voting yes. The precincts immediately surrounding Newport Hills Park indicate a similar approval percentage.

CURRENT FIELD USE & PROJECT SCOPE

The existing facility is a lighted, natural grass field used approximately 4½ months each year for organized soccer games and other youth sports activities such as sports camps. Much of this use is by neighborhood youth, as follows (2008 figures):

- Newport Youth Soccer games – 62%
- Other youth sports, including sports camps – 25%
- Adult soccer games – 13%

By early November, conditions have deteriorated such that the field is no longer safe for play and is closed to organized use. A synthetic sports surface will allow for year-round use, with the distribution of use expected to remain predominantly neighborhood use. Because of the proximity of the nearby residents to the field and past requests, no use is allowed after 10pm rather than the 11pm curfew used for all other lighted athletic fields.

The project scope includes converting the existing grass soccer field to synthetic turf and upgrading to a state-of-the-art lighting system. The new lighting system will improve the lighting quality for the teams and reduce spill light and glare for the neighbors. As budget allows, other improvements will be considered, including a pedestrian walkway connection along the east edge of the park, new ballfield fencing and backstop, restroom upgrades, baseball infield conversion to synthetic turf, and infield relocation to the east side of the park to help with traffic and pedestrian flow.

PUBLIC PROCESS TO-DATE

A community meeting was held on April 29 at Newport Hills Swim and Tennis Club. Meeting invitations were mailed to over 2,000 nearby residents and advertised on the City's website.

Approximately 12 park neighbors and 3 local sports representatives attended. This meeting served as a general introduction of the project, and to field questions and concerns. The following concerns were raised by the park neighbors at the meeting and in three follow up written comment sheets:

- Increasing organized sports use to year-round would limit open space availability to the neighborhood.
- Noise levels and light glare experienced during games will now be year-round.
- Late evening, inappropriate behavior, and language by adult users experienced by adjacent neighbors will now be year-round, and the City should limit field times to minimize adult use.
- Parking in the neighborhood and surrounding streets is currently a problem and will now be year-round.
- The park will lose its neighborhood park feel and become a "sports complex" which is not an appropriate use for this park.

On May 7, Parks' staff met with four adjacent neighbors to discuss ways to address the privacy issues discussed at the community meeting for those living adjacent to the park. Fencing and landscape buffering options were discussed. One attendee volunteered to discuss these options with all adjacent neighbors in an attempt to gain a consensus on a desired solution - this process is ongoing.

On May 12, the attached petition signed by 28 nearby residents was presented to the Park Board highlighting the concerns raised at the initial community meeting, and urging the City to partner with the Bellevue School District to improve an area school sportsfield instead of Newport Hills Park.

ADDRESSING NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS

We are exploring the following project elements to help address the concerns raised by the neighbors, and to be a good neighbor:

- We have committed to replace the existing light fixtures with state-of-the-art field lighting to minimize noise, glare, and ambient light.
- We are working with our consultants, the Transportation Department, and Bellevue School District to improve parking conditions around the park and to increase parking capacity at the park.
- We will notify adult user groups that inappropriate behavior and language will not be tolerated, and that failure to comply may result in revoking field use.
- The design will not include a full perimeter fence in order to maintain an open park feeling, and to encourage neighborhood use when the field is not scheduled, similar to the Robinswood fields.
- The design will retain a significant area of natural turf to allow for general park use and to facilitate the neighborhood picnic.
- We continue to work directly with the adjacent neighbors to explore measures to reduce the impact of the field on their properties.

We have also had very preliminary discussions with Bellevue School District representatives, who remain reluctant to complete significant field upgrades at individual schools because it results in district-wide inequities. A potential site is the BSD-owned former Eastside Catholic HS/Ringdall MS site, located across SE 60th Street from Newport Hills Park. Starting in 2010, this site will be used for 6-8 years as a swing school for the middle school renovation program. No formal discussions have been held with the school district.

PROJECT TIMELINE & NEXT STEPS

The project is currently in design and cost estimating phase. We expect to submit for environmental review and apply for permits in June. Depending on permit review and weather conditions, construction could begin this Fall and be complete next Spring. We feel the Newport Hills Park synthetic field conversion remains an appropriate project, and that most concerns can be reasonably addressed. Unless directed otherwise, we will proceed with the project as described. A second community meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 17, where we will present the park design. We remain committed to working with the neighbors to help reduce the impacts this project may have.

ATTACHMENTS

Aerial Photo

Petition

Public Outreach Findings – January 8, 2009

Attachment 3 - Lighting Photos



Attachment 4 - Alternative Field Layout

Scope of Work

- Relocate Soccer Field & Lighting
- Relocate/Reconstruct Restroom
- Reconfigure Playground & Pathways
- Relocate Baseball Field
- Remove or Relocate Picnic Area



Pros

- Increase distance from soccer field to adjacent homes by 30-40'

Cons

- Added cost to relocate/reconstruct park elements (approx \$0.75m)
- Shifts field and lighting impacts from one area to another area
- May eliminate picnic shelter