

WORKSHOP 2 RESULTS

The City of Lake Forest Parks & Recreation Board virtually hosted a second community workshop on February 17, 2022 from 7 to 8:30 pm. The purpose was to address questions from the first workshop held in December 2021 and provide the community an opportunity to evaluate four different design approaches for Deerpath Community Park. Approximately 120 community members were in attendance, the majority of whom engaged through live commenting. To ensure that other community members, who were not in attendance, had the opportunity to engage, an online comment form was available through February 24. Eighty-eight Lake Forest residents shared their thoughts through the online form.

The second workshop was divided into two segments. The first segment focused on answering questions that were brought up during the first workshop, and the second segment featured four potential design options for Deerpath Community Park. Participants had opportunities throughout the presentation to share their thoughts and feedback. The City of Lake Forest greatly values the community's continued interest in this planning process.

Below is a summary of key topics and subsequent themes mentioned during the second workshop and submitted on the online comment forms.



The community engagement process for Deerpath Athletic Field Improvements is prepared and conducted by The Lakota Group, a landscape architecture and community engagement firm based in Chicago.

THEME DISCUSSIONS

PLAYER SAFETY

- Community members unanimously agreed that high quality improvements and high standard maintenance practices, for either natural grass or synthetic turf are of utmost importance to player safety.
- Some community members expressed concern of PFAS harmful effect on youth players, increased injuries, and heat-generation issues as reasons to keep natural grass fields.
- Other community members found turf fields to be safe for players from personal experience and proven effective across the nation.
- Some community members stated concern for game cancellations on player happiness and suggested that improvements to the athletic fields would support players' mental health.



“AS A FORMER ATHLETE WHO PLAYED ON TURF AND WITH KIDS WHO PLAY ON TURF, I DO NOT HAVE MAJOR CONCERNS WITH PLAYER SAFETY. THERE IS A MINOR INCREASE IN RISK FOR INJURIES BUT PLAYING ON GRASS IN POOR CONDITIONS - OR NOT PLAYING AT ALL WITH CANCELLATIONS - ALSO INCREASES PROBLEMS FOR ATHLETES.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

MAXIMIZE PLAYABILITY

- Participants wish to see the fields improved to ensure playability not only for youth sports but also for residents to enjoy the fields.
 - Multiple community members voiced their support for investment in synthetic turf fields as the most promising improvement for ensuring playability.
 - Other community members expressed that high quality improvements to the natural grass fields would minimize cancellations and ensure playability.



“I VIEW THIS AS AN IMPORTANT PUBLIC GOOD, MY KIDS DO NOT PLAY ORGANIZED SPORTS, BUT WE USE THESE FIELDS FOR FUN, AND WE WOULD LOVE TO USE THEM MORE. THERE HAVE BEEN COUNTLESS TIMES THAT I WANT TO GO OUT WITH MY KIDS, AND WE COULD NOT FIND A FIELD IN THE COMMUNITY IN GOOD CONDITION, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS ONE OR MORE DAYS AFTER A RAIN.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

MAXIMIZE FIELD USAGE & CONDITIONS

- Regardless of field surface options, participants agreed that grading and drainage issues at Deerpath Community Park need to be addressed to maximize field usage and condition, avoid game cancellations, and provide the best conditions for players and user groups.
- Many community members expressed interest in synthetic turf field improvements to increase the quality of the fields and create a reliable and durable surface.
- Other community members felt the investment in natural grass athletic fields and continued maintenance would be the best investment by the community to ensure field usage and condition.



“ I WOULD LIKE TO SEE OUR COMMUNITY MAXIMIZING THE USABILITY OF OUR FIELDS AND UNFORTUNATELY, WE DO NOT LIVE IN A CLIMATE THAT ALLOWS US TO DO SO WITH NATURAL GRASS AND POOR DRAINAGE ISSUES.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

PLAYER/USER GROUP EXPECTATIONS

- Some community members voiced the need to consider the value playfield improvements will have for families that do not play organized sports but use the athletic fields as a gathering space.
- Participants wished to have more input from Lake Forest youth on their preference for natural grass versus synthetic turf fields, as they will be using the athletic fields.

“ A LARGE PRICE IS POTENTIALLY BEING SPENT ON A VERY VISUAL PROJECT AND MANY LOCAL SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS ARE GOING TO WANT TO ENSURE THAT THEY TOO HAVE A FAIR OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE AND PLAY ON THE NEW FIELDS.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER



OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES



- In regard to operational efficiencies, community members encourage the City to bring sustainable maintenance practices into improvements regardless of chosen surface. Community members encourage Lake Forest to look to comparable communities for the best practices of sustainable maintenance for both natural grass and synthetic turf fields.
- Multiple community members mentioned the importance of ensuring that the athletic fields are well maintained to avoid long-term repairs and reinstallations whether that be through policies or fencing.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Some community members raised concerns about synthetic turf not being recyclable.
- They were also concerned about harmful microplastics and potential chemical maintenance treatments leaching into the surrounding environment.
- Other community members raised concerns regarding standard practices for maintaining natural grass. Some suggested organic natural grass management as an alternative worth investigating.
- Community members encourage Lake Forest to investigate the most environmentally friendly synthetic turf that will benefit the community and have the least harmful impact on the environment.

“

I TRUST LAKE FOREST WILL PROPERLY BUDGET FOR MAINTAINING THE FIELDS TO MINIMIZE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER



PARKING AVAILABILITY & TRAFFIC

- Parking availability and traffic were low concerns for community members, but participants were interested in a traffic study for any proposed improvements moving forward.

ENHANCED/IMPROVED SITE AMENITIES

- Numerous community members expressed interest in preserving the walking path with any improvements made to the athletic fields.
- Some community members believe fencing and controlling access will benefit the improved fields long-term to avoid repairs and replacement.
- Community members wanted more information about the policies that the City will have to put into place to protect the improvements including fencing, rules about field usage, and fireworks on-site, to maintain the improvements long-term.
- Fourth of July events were a high priority for Lake Forest members and interest in continuing this tradition was expressed.



FINANCIAL COSTS

- Community members are interested in learning more about the estimated costs presented for the various improvements to Deerpath Community Park.
- On more than one occasion participants showed concern for synthetic turf's high investment cost and its short lifespan of only ten years.
- Other community members felt this level of investment for the community would be good for the City and home property values.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

- On more than one occasion community members noted that improvements to the athletic fields will make Lake Forest a competitive option for new families looking to move to the suburbs.
- Numerous participants expressed that any improvements should prioritize Lake Forest residents' use and local teams as well as the lifespan of the fields over revenue generation from non-Lake Forest sports leagues.

DESIGN OPTIONS

DESIGN OPTION 1 - BUSINESS AS USUAL

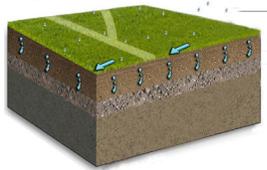
NATURAL GRASS MAINTAINED AS A PARK

OPTION BENEFITS:

- Low cost option

OPTION CHALLENGES:

- Requires on-going yearly effort
- Low playability and usability
- Natural grass maintenance practices



From the workshop presentation.

- Community members unanimously expressed that option 1 is not the right approach and that Lake Forest can do better than leaving the fields as they are. It was noted that this option fails to address usability, field condition, playability, game cancellations, and player safety to name a few issues.

“LAKE FOREST NEEDS MODERN FACILITIES TO KEEP OUR CITY AND CHILDREN ON EQUAL FOOTING AS OUR NEIGHBORING TOWNS. THIS OPTION DOES NOTHING TO MOVE US FORWARD.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

“THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE CURRENT SPORTS FIELDS ARE NOT SUFFICIENT AS THEY HAVE BEEN POORLY DESIGNED AND NOT BEEN APPROPRIATELY CARED FOR.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

DESIGN OPTION 2 - NATURAL GRASS IMPROVEMENTS

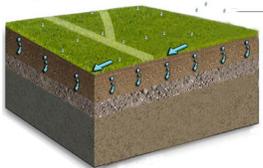
REGRADE, REPOSITION FIELD, IMPROVE DRAINAGE, AND NATURAL LAWN

OPTION BENEFITS:

- Implement best management sustainable standards
- Regrade, reposition and improve drainage conditions

OPTION CHALLENGES:

- Subject to weather-related cancellations
- High cost with less revenue stream potential
- Requires a higher level of maintenance
- Natural grass maintenance practices



From the workshop presentation.

- Community members expressed interest in this design option for several reasons including financial cost, player safety, and environmental impact.
- Other community members believe this option still does not address maximizing usability and playability to reduce game cancellations, and still has a high financial cost to the community.
- Lake Forest investing in environmentally sustainable maintenance practices came up by multiple respondents for any improvements to the fields.
- Multiple community members brought up the recent drainage improvements to Townline Park athletic fields and note they are still experiencing unfavorable field conditions, game cancellations, and poor usability.

“ I LOVE THIS SOLUTION! GOOD DRAINAGE TECHNOLOGIES WILL PROVIDE LESS CANCELLATIONS, PLUS IT IS THE MOST SUSTAINABLE, THE SAFEST FOR THE ATHLETES, THE SAFEST FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT AND WITH GOOD MAINTENANCE WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PLAY ON THIS FIELD A LOT, EVEN WHEN THERE IS SOME RAIN.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

“ OUR COMMUNITY WANTS RELIABILITY AND DURABILITY IN THEIR FIELDS. GRASS FIELDS CANNOT SUPPORT THE DEMANDS WE HAVE IN THAT AREA, PLUS THE AMOUNT OF PLAY WE GET.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

DESIGN OPTION 3 - SYNTHETIC TURF IMPROVEMENTS

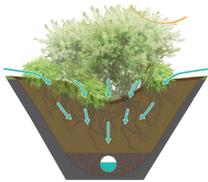
NEW ROBUST ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD SPORTS COMPLEX

OPTION BENEFITS:

- Minimize weather-related cancellations
- Implement best management sustainable standards
- Low maintenance and operations
- High revenue stream potential
- High playability and usability

OPTION CHALLENGES:

- High initial investment costs
- Removal costs at 10-12 years
- More heat generated



From the workshop presentation.

- Community members who favored this option were in support of maximizing field use and condition, relative level of low maintenance, revenue generation, competitive advantage to surrounding communities, and maximizing playability.
- Community members who were against this option brought up the financial costs, environmental impact, heat generation, player safety, and having to replace the product in 10 years.
- Lake Forest community members expressed an interest in gaining children's opinion on turf fields; some expressed having children that do not enjoy playing on turf fields.

“IDEAL SOLUTION TO PROVIDE OUR CHILDREN WITH MODERN FACILITIES WHILE PROVIDING REVENUE GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES. THIS IS SOMETHING OUR TOWN CAN BE PROUD OF AND WILL ALLOW US TO BECOME A PREMIER DESTINATION FOR SPORTS ACTIVITIES AND TOURNAMENTS. THIS OPTION ALSO POSITIONS WELL TO BETTER MANAGE BAD WEATHER EVENTS, WHICH FEEL MORE COMMON TODAY.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

“SYNTHETIC FIELDS ARE NOT THE BEST OPTION REGARDLESS OF THEIR INCREASED PLAYABILITY BECAUSE OF THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES THAT MAY RESULT FROM IMPACTS TO OUR ENVIRONMENT AS WELL AS TO USER SAFETY. ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, THERE STILL REMAINS A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS REGARDING THEIR LONG-TERM IMPACT ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

DESIGN OPTION 4 - HYBRID NATURAL/SYNTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS

HYBRID TURF/LAWN COMPLEX WITH IMPROVED DESIGN

OPTION BENEFITS:

- Provides a balanced approach to meet playability, programming, and environmental needs or concerns.
- Allows for future expansion of turf facilities with further achievable benchmark metrics
- Implement best management sustainable standards

OPTION CHALLENGES:

- Not maximizing playability and usability
- Not maximizing revenue streams
- Fertilizer and infill concerns



From the workshop presentation.

- Some Lake Forest community members felt that this approach would not fix all the problems of the current field and would like to see maximum improvements to the facilities - maximum drainage improvements or full synthetic turf fields.
- Some participants expressed interest in exploring this hybrid option and looking at 2/3 natural fields and 1/3 synthetic turf and having the natural fields closer to the Recreation Center.

“IT IS NOT CLEAR WHY WE WOULD GO WITH THIS OPTION. IF WE ARE ADDING SYNTHETIC TURF, IT SEEMS BEST TO MAKE THE FACILITY ALL SYNTHETIC TURF AND TEAMS CAN USE THE OTHER GRASS FIELDS THROUGHOUT LAKE FOREST IF THEY WANT THAT TYPE OF SURFACE.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DEERPETH ATHLETIC FIELD IMPROVEMENTS, VISIT THE WEBSITE BELOW.

CityofLakeForest.com/AthleticFieldImprovements