





Initial Submittal, Energy and Environmental Committee: June 27, 2024

Resubmittal, LA City Council: August 16, 2024

Councilmember Bob Blumenfield
Councilmember Katy Yaroslavsky
Councilmember Kevin de León
Councilmember Tim McCosker
Councilmember Nithya Raman

Dear Councilmember Blumenfield and Committee Members,

We are writing in support of CF 24-0602 to:

- transition away from future installations of synthetic grass / artificial turf citywide, and
- identify incentives and rebate programs to remove and replace synthetic turf / artificial grass, and
- encourage the transition to California friendly landscaping.

With the growing awareness of the climate crisis, cities and agencies are often implementing artificial grass as a means to reduce water consumption. While initially it seems like a great way to save water, this solution is actually mired in unintended consequences, including:

- killing microorganisms, wildlife habitats and biodiversity below every artificial turf installation
- emitting toxic leachate in runoff to nearby fields and storm drains
- creating heat islands and contributing to warming temperatures
- impacting the health of users and others
- increasing the cost of maintenance

A study conducted at Brigham Young University found that “The surface temperature of the synthetic turf was 37° F higher than asphalt and 86.5° F hotter than natural turf.”¹ Artificial turf is a silent but significant contributor to our climate crisis. Research indicates we need more real turf and studies have shown reduced global warming in countries where agriculture has intensified.²

Synthetic turf, which off-gasses methane and ethylene and contains PFAS, has known public health dangers, especially to our youth who have prolonged exposure to these fields. Artificial turf is being assessed for its health impacts from known carcinogens & neurotoxins: lead, mercury, cadmium, PAHs, VOCs, SVOC, phthalates, benzene, toluene, and carbon nanotubes. A study published by the National Library of Medicine identified 306 chemical constituents of crumb rubber infill from 20 publications. Utilizing a computational program to predict carcinogenicity and genotoxicity, 197 of the identified 306 chemicals met their carcinogenicity criteria. Of these, 52 chemicals were also classified as known, presumed or suspected carcinogens by the US EPA and ECHA.^{3 4}

While many cities and agencies prefer artificial turf for its perceived low maintenance, in reality, the cost to implement and maintain these fields is almost equivalent to installing and maintaining natural turf fields. Also the impacts of heavy rains and winds are more disastrous for artificial turf fields, and unquestionably, our futures are filled with atmospheric rain and wind storms.⁵ In addition, with lower snowpacks forecasted, capturing groundwater will be imperative for future water supplies and artificial turf interferes with groundwater capture.⁶

Artificial turf sports fields actually need to be watered to keep temperatures down during summer months. A summary from a letter submitted to Glendale Community Services and Parks shows the reality of maintaining an artificial turf field.⁷

“A well-maintained Shawgrass field requires the following.

(1) The field must be swept with a machine, once per week.

¹ [Synthetic Sports Fields and the Heat Island Effect](#)

² [Global Green Up Slows Warming](#)

³ [The toxicity to the people and the environment](#)

⁴ [Evaluation of potential carcinogenicity of organic chemicals in synthetic turf](#)

⁵ [Artificial Fields after a flood](#)

⁶ [Synthetic Turf costs more money](#)

⁷ [Realities of Artificial Turf](#)

(2) The field must be groomed with a towed apparatus after each 48 hours of play (approximately every 4-5 days). If this grooming is not done, the condition of the infill and overall feel of the field will be affected, and it will shorten the lifespan of the installment.

(3) Artificial turf fields may require patching of damaged areas and drainage repairs.

(4) Sanitation of the artificial grass is a particular concern. While contaminants like blood and saliva rinse off real grass, synthetic grass doesn't share this trait. Messes that could potentially be a health hazard need to be cleaned and the surface sanitized.

(5) Though not required, it is recommended that the field be watered regularly to maintain the safest level of play, as the field will hold more moisture. If the field is not watered regularly, the turf will harden.

(6) In the warmer months, to mitigate surface temperatures, Shaw recommends watering the field for 5-10 minutes each morning when the dew point has not been reached to satisfactorily moisten the field. If the field is watered in this way, it can cool approximately 20-30°F, which may in fact not be enough to cool the field to below 120°F or the cooling may not last the entire day.

(7) Lastly, artificial turf surfaces need to be replaced after 8 years, on average.”

Studies show that the non-intuitive process of planting these areas with grasses actually contributes to a healthier environment, including reducing climate emissions. Artificial turf fields reduces our ability to capture stormwater, sink carbon and host vast amounts of biodiversity at each site. It also reduces the microclimates that are able to hold and release moisture to help preserve biodiversity and reduce warming. It is for these reasons and more that we urge you to pass CF 24-0602 in order to protect human and environmental health.

Sincerely,

Regional LA Groups:

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LA Forward

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Silver Lake Couch Collective

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Kate Grodd, Los Angeles

Katherine Palardy, Los Angeles

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350 Southland Legislative Committee

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