

APPENDIX F – SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD PROGRAM

Synthetic Turf Athletic Fields

Most of Arlington's fields exceed the number of games allowed for retaining acceptable field conditions. The current scarcity in the number of fields inevitably leads to overuse, which results in turf degradation and fields that are potentially unsafe and unplayable. From past analysis of scheduled play on rectangular natural grass fields, the overuse of our fields has been estimated to be, minimally, one and one half times what is recommended. This represents just one factor in the equation for field demand. It does not account for unscheduled community use or unmet demand for structured play.

The initial investment for the installation of synthetic grass is expensive. However, over a ten year period, the cost of ownership of a synthetic grass field is approximately 1.4 times greater than that of a natural grass field. Over the same ten year period, a synthetic grass field can support as much as five times the amount of play of a natural grass field without degradation of the field turf. In fall 2000, two synthetic soccer goal mouth areas were installed at the Thomas Jefferson upper field as a pilot program, and in spring 2002, a full synthetic field was installed at Gunston Park.

In 2003, a citizen/staff Synthetic Grass Working Group submitted their recommendations regarding conversion of athletic fields from natural grass to

synthetic grass. They concluded that several existing fields, particularly those located at the middle and high schools, were viable locations for synthetic grass and recommended their conversion as soon as possible. It's important to work with surrounding communities to add amenities to help mitigate the impacts of the additional play, especially dark sky lighting. Where appropriate, scheduling of these conversions should be driven by the timing of the construction projects, and funding should be included as part of the project.

As a result of this working group's report, fields at Virginia Highlands Park and Wakefield High School were completed in 2004 and the stadium field at Washington-Lee High School and the community field at the renovated Barcroft Park were completed in 2005. The synthetic field at Greenbrier Park (adjacent to Yorktown High School) and four fields at the North Tract will be implemented as part of the construction projects. Other potential fields for future conversion include Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, Kenmore, Swanson and H-B Woodlawn.

Candidates For Synthetic Grass Athletic Field Conversion

Recommendations:

- ▶ Convert a minimum of one natural grass field per year to synthetic grass based on the analysis and recommendations of the 2003 Synthetic Grass Working Group.
- ▶ All synthetic grass conversions should have existing lighting or a plan for installing "dark sky" lighting as a part of the synthetic grass installation.
- ▶ Continue to explore new technologies and practices for managing and maintaining natural grass athletic fields.

