Meeting Date: 3 / 18 / 08

ACTION	TYPE OF ITEM
☐ Approved Recommendation	☐ Info/Consent
☐ Ord. No(s). _____	☐ Report
☐ Res. No(s). _____	☐ Public Hearing (Info/consent)
☐ Other _____	X Other Study Session

Prepared By: Lori Rice, Parks Manager _____ Agenda Item No. R-1

Reviewed By: City Manger _____ City Attorney _____ Finance _____ Other Michael Henderson, GS Manager

DATE: March 11, 2008

TO: City Council

FROM: Michael Henderson, General Services Superintendent
City Manager's Department

SUBJECT: **Use of Synthetic Playing Surfaces in City Parks**

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council consider a report on the use of synthetic playing surfaces in the City park system and provide direction to the General Services Manager.

DISCUSSION

Synthetic playing fields were first introduced in the 1960s as an alterative to natural turf fields for professional teams. Demand has grown to the point where over 800 multi-use synthetic turf fields are installed annually in North America. Twenty NFL teams play and/or practice on synthetic playing fields, and it is approved for World Cup soccer matches. More recently it has been used in colleges and high schools as a conscious choice to help cut water use and lower maintenance costs. This saves millions of gallons of water each year throughout the United States, and reduces the amounts of fertilizes, pesticides and herbicides used. Synthetic playing fields have improved in the more than 40 years since Astroturf was first installed in the Astrodome in Houston, Texas. The new generation is more stable and resilient, as well as less abrasive than Astroturf. Modern synthetic playing fields are made of recycled materials, such as tires, and engineered to more closely resemble the look and feel of natural grass. Advances in the manufacture and installation of today's synthetic playing fields have led to a safer playing surface in terms of athletes sustaining orthopedic injuries.

Synthetic playing fields offer increased playability. They are made with materials that absorb the weight when a person falls. It also meets the U.S.A, American Society for Testing and Materials standard for impact attenuation. When natural fields become bare and uneven from over-use they become hard, lose their natural bounce back, and become a safety concern. Use of synthetic playing fields can enhance player safety and reduce the amount of injuries. For all of these reasons synthetic playing fields are a good alternative for heavy use locations.

The use of synthetic playing fields has raised health concerns by various individuals. These concerns are based primarily on opinions and have not been substantiated by scientific studies. Dr. Andrew S. McNitt of Pennsylvania State University stated the following: "While there is some indication that the source of these bacteria may be more closely associated with locker room activity than with the infill system, conclusive evidence is not currently available." He also stated: "While microbes exist in the infill media the number was low compared to natural turf grass field soils. It should be noted that microbes tend to be present on most surfaces humans come in contact with and the simple presence of microbes should not be cause for concern. Most manufacturers' of synthetic turf fields do however; provide a recommendation for disinfecting their product if there is a known infection risk."

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact at this time.

Attachment #1 – Study by Associate Professor, Andrew McNitt, Pennsylvania State University
Attachment #2 – List of some Synthetic Turf fields in Southern California
Attachment #3 – Synthetic turf vs. Natural Grass

LR/lr

Use of Synthetic playing fields in city Parks agenda has been provided to the City Council. Copies are available for review at the Circulation Desk in the Library after 6:00 p.m. on the Thursday prior to the Council meeting and at the City Clerk's Office after 8:00 a.m. on Friday.