



451 Hayes Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
415.621.3260
www.sfparksalliance.org

May 24, 2012

Mark Buell, President
Recreation and Park Commission
McLaren Lodge, Golden Gate Park
501 Stanyan Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1898

Rodney Fong, President
City Planning Commission
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Commissioners,

The San Francisco Parks Alliance (SFPA) lends its strong support to the proposed Beach Chalet Athletic Field Renovation Project, and encourages the Commissions to approve its Environmental Impact Report.

SFPA believes the Beach Chalet Project will be a significant public good, increasing the fields' playability and safety, while more than tripling the number of hours currently available there for recreation. At a time when healthy recreation for both kids and families is becoming increasingly important, yet simultaneously San Francisco kids are regularly turned away from recreation for lack of playfields, the Beach Chalet Project represents an uncommon opportunity to ameliorate the City's documented shortfall of available playfield recreation hours, especially for youth.

SFPA finds the continued use of Beach Chalet as an athletic playfield consistent with its historical use over the last 80 years, and consistent with the Golden Gate Park Master Plan's designation of the Beach Chalet as a "Major Recreation Area."

SFPA considers the Beach Chalet Soccer Project both unique and complex because of its location in Golden Gate Park, and its proximity to Ocean Beach. Although constituting only seven of Golden Gate Park's 1,017 acres - less than 1% - replacing grass with synthetic turf and installing lighting at Beach Chalet is something that should be, and has been, considered carefully through an extensive Environmental Impact Report.

We note that the City has adopted synthetic turf standards that require turf vendors to provide detailed end-of-life recycling plans for synthetic turf. We also note the EIR's finding that "with implementation of storm water collection and testing requirements, the field would not contribute to degradation of groundwater quality and to Ocean Beach from groundwater outflow." Both of these observations were key contributors to SFPA's support.

In addition, the EIR asserts that the "proposed lighting is unlikely to spill over the site's boundaries substantially enough to adversely affect the surrounding neighborhoods. Also, the spillover would not affect the amount of light of the night sky." SFPA recognizes the value of dark nighttime skies for this area of the City, and we believe every effort has been made to mitigate lighting impacts. Because weather conditions may provide additional variables, SFPA encourages the City to monitor the lighting systems at Beach Chalet Soccer Fields once they are installed, consistent with recommendations made by the National Park Service, and report findings back to the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Commission.

The issue about how the City will pay for replacement of the synthetic turf fields, which have a limited life span, must be addressed. SFPA is aware of other recreation agencies that have addressed this question with creative funding mechanisms to pay for turf replacement. We encourage the Recreation and Parks Department to examine these funding models, and if applicable to San Francisco, adapt them.

San Francisco has just been designated as having the best park system of any major city in America, by the Trust for Public Land. While we can all take pride in that designation, we also must acknowledge that, even with the improvements the Beach Chalet Soccer Fields renovation would bring, we are a long way from fulfilling the City's needs for recreational facilities, be they soccer, other sports, or any of the many other ways we engage in healthful activity. Once this project is approved and construction begins, we must look to the future.



451 Hayes Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
415.621.3260
www.sfparksalliance.org

We believe now is the time to rigorously assess our City's recreational facility needs, the facilities we have in place, and develop a plan to guide future decision-making about how to more completely meet residents' needs - especially children's needs. We may be number one in the Nation, but we know we can - and must - be even better. SFPA offers its active support in developing this citywide recreation plan.

Finally, one of the reasons the Parks Alliance was created is to provide a vehicle for discourse, research, idea-sharing and finding of common ground, based on our shared love and passion for our park system. We have just launched our Park Policy Council, a representative group of park advocates, community leaders, and park users from every district in the City, as a key resource toward this end. We are committed to serving San Francisco as we continually look to fulfill our Mission to "protect, sustain, and enrich our parks, recreation and green open spaces."

The new Beach Chalet Athletic Fields Renovation Project will provide thousands of youth, adults, and families with healthy recreational opportunities. We strongly support the renovation, and urge the Commissions to approve its Environmental Impact Report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt O'Grady".

Matthew O'Grady
Executive Director

Cc: San Francisco Board of Supervisors
Mayor Ed Lee
Phil Ginsburg, Recreation and Parks Department General Manager
John Rahaim, Director of Planning