



Golden Gate Park Preservation Alliance ©

"Destroy a public building and it can be rebuilt in a year; destroy a city woodland park and all the people living at the time will have passed away before its restoration can be effected."

William Hammond Hall, Surveyor
First Superintendent of Golden Gate Park

To: Commission on the Environment
From: Katherine Howard, Member, Steering Committee,
Golden Gate Park Preservation Alliance
Date: March 4, 2010
Subject: Request for resolution supporting an EIR for the Golden Gate Park / Beach
Chalet Soccer Fields project

We are requesting support for a resolution requesting an Environmental Impact Report for the Golden Gate Park / Beach Chalet Soccer Fields project. Listed below are some of the many reasons why a project of this scope should be evaluated with a full EIR.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED GOLDEN GATE PARK SOCCER COMPLEX AT THE BEACH CHALET RECREATION FIELDS AT OCEAN BEACH

- Negative impact on park vegetation:
 - Loss of a meadow with grass and other vegetation;
 - Loss of topsoil that has been carefully built up over 140 years to stabilize the sand dunes;
 - Outright loss of some of the surrounding screening trees that provide shelter for the current fields and a windbreak for Golden Gate Park;
 - Impact of the construction on the root systems of the remaining trees, possible leading to their decline and loss.

- Negative impact on wildlife:
 - Impact on habitat for birds, mammals, butterflies and other insects. The areas around the soccer fields are being planted with native plants; one purpose is to provide both food and shelter for wildlife. This habitat will be degraded by this large development;
 - Impact of intense night lighting on an area of Golden Gate Park that has been naturally dark since it was established. Night lighting will negatively impact wildlife nesting and roosting;
 - Fog can increase the amount of light reflected from this type of lighting. Since this part of San Francisco is known for its fog, the potential is great for light pollution from the field lights. Birds, mammals, and the insects they feed on, can be negatively affected by extensive night lighting;
 - Loss of wildlife corridor – both from the eastern to the western end of the Park and from north to south, along the coast;

- There is a need for increased habitat for wildlife, not for less habitat;
- Picnic and barbeque facilities will bring increased trash and potentially negative impacts of predators from access to human food.
- Increase in paving:
 - Artificial Turf is a type of paving; the cross-section is similar to that used for asphalt and concrete;
 - Increase in paving in Golden Gate Park for the fields, the parking and the path to Ocean Beach, contrary to stated Department goals of removing paving from the Park.
- Promotes the use of cars:
 - Increases parking, which goes against the transit-first goals for San Francisco;
 - Relatively remote location from many residents that will require that they drive to this location, increasing vehicular traffic both within Golden Gate Park and through the neighborhoods;
 - The addition of a championship field will attract players and spectators from a variety of locations, both in and outside of San Francisco. The distance of the fields from the mass transit hubs will encourage players and spectators to drive to this location.
- Use of artificial turf:
 - Installation of artificial turf with its human health implications and environmental non-sustainability;
 - What will be the composition of the artificial turf?
 - How will the artificial turf be handled at the end of its life, in 8 to 10 years?
 - How can we be sure that any company that installs the artificial turf will be financially viable in 8 to 10 years to recycle it?
 - What will be the impact on the environment if the artificial turf starts to break down and there is no money to replace it? Will the artificial turf be left in place to degrade or blow around?
 - More information is made available weekly on many of these issues. An EIR can review and evaluate the most current information, giving the opportunity to both sides to submit this information.
- Degradation of dark sky in western part of San Francisco
 - What will be the effect of the intense lighting on the Dark Sky areas around this project, for night viewing of the stars?
 - Land's End is one of the premium night sky viewing areas in the Bay Area. What will be the impact of this project on that site?
 - Do we want to accept any impact on dark sky in this area? Shouldn't we be working for better visibility of the stars in this area, instead of supporting less visibility?
- Impact on enjoyment of GGP and Ocean Beach
 - Impact on those people who come to Ocean Beach to view the sunset and encroaching darkness ;
 - Impact on feelings of wildness for those people who like to walk on a dark beach at dusk or to enjoy the contrast of a fire ring to the surrounding darkness.

- Degradation of the historic features of the western end of Golden Gate Park
 - Proximity to the restored windmills, Beach Chalet, and wheelwright's house;
 - 60 foot sports lights are not consistent with the historic context of this area;
 - View from Ocean Beach of the windmills will be ruined by the light poles;
 - Western end of Golden Gate Park was planned to be trees and meadows – not an urban sports complex ;
 - Current fields are hidden by the trees; new light poles will destroy this view of the Park from the Great Highway and from Ocean Beach;
 - GGP Master Plan supports keeping the western end of GGP a “pastoral and sylvan landscape” (1998);
 - Secretary of the Interior National Register of Historic Places (2004) supports keeping the western end of GGP as a “natural woodland park.”

Positive aspects of leaving GGP as parkland:

- There are benefits from natural parkland that are of great value to both youth and adults;
- Poorer segments of our community should not have to travel outside of the city to enjoy a woodland;
- Part of the benefit of Golden Gate Park is the amount of land that is not ‘developed’ for planned recreation activities;
- Many young people in our cities are considered nature-deprived. Our youth deserve the opportunity to enjoy the natural landscape without the intrusion of built elements and artificial lighting;
- These are values that can be enjoyed by all ages, young and old, no matter their physical condition;
- The existing soccer fields can still be used as playing fields – they just need maintenance;
- Retains the night-sky viewing; we should be going in the direction of eliminating and controlling lights, not adding lights – especially in parkland;
- Improve habitat possibilities for wildlife – if enough native plants are not there now, then let's plant more to enhance this wildlife corridor.

An EIR can explore alternatives and find new solutions to existing problems:

- An EIR can explore the alternatives of leaving the fields as grass, which has not been explored as part of this complex;
- An EIR can evaluate the possibility of removing the existing fencing, which went up without any public process, and returning the fields to native plants with greater habitat value;
- An EIR can evaluate the various field remediation techniques that contribute to a safe, pleasant playing surface while not detracting from the environment;
- An EIR will give more outreach and public comment, which has been lacking from this process to date;
- An EIR can give San Franciscans the opportunity to comment on this drastic change to a major park.

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