

Technical Memorandum:

Dover High School Sports Complex: A Review and Recommendations on the Reconstruction of the Dover High School Athletics Complex

Recreation Department: Kevin Hebert, Director

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This memorandum outlines the Recreation Department's recommendations for the proposed renovation and reconstruction of the Dover High School Sports Complex, specifically advocating for the installation of a synthetic turf field, track and baseball field reconfiguration.

With over 25 years of experience as an athletic director and recreation professional, I have thoroughly researched the options for athletic fields, including attending numerous JBC meetings and investigating both natural grass and synthetic turf alternatives. My assessment is also informed by discussions with former Division 1 athletic director colleagues and various local youth sports organizations.

Overview:

The increasing demand for high-quality, year-round athletic fields makes synthetic turf a strategic and cost-effective solution for both youth and adult recreational programming. While the department acknowledges the concerns and prioritizes the least toxic methods in the City, the significant recreational benefits of synthetic turf outweigh these concerns. I would recommend the expanded scope of rehabilitation for the facility to include large community events, beyond athletic events, to include recognition ceremonies, concerts, and festivals that would need the amenities of a complete athletic complex (lights, seating, sound, restrooms and ADA parking).

Key Benefits from a Recreation Standpoint:

1. Extended Playability and Increased Field Access:

- o Unlike natural grass fields, synthetic turf is not susceptible to weather-related closures due to rain or overuse, allowing significantly more hours of play per week and a longer athletic season. The addition of a synthetic turf field will allow the City to take pressure off our remaining natural grass fields. Dover's youth teams, such as local soccer clubs, and lacrosse programs, could in turn use the synthetic turf for practices and games throughout the year, especially in early spring and late fall.

2. Support for Growing Youth Programs:

- o Dover's youth sports leagues have experienced substantial growth in participation, resulting in frequent scheduling conflicts due to limited field



availability. A synthetic turf field will enable the City to accommodate more teams, including:

- Youth soccer (U6–U18)
- Youth flag and tackle football
- Youth lacrosse and field hockey
- Local school athletic teams

3. Expanded Adult Recreation Opportunities:

- o Adult leagues face frequent scheduling limitations, particularly in the evenings when natural fields are closed for rest or maintenance. A synthetic turf field would be able to support expanded programs such as:
 - Adult soccer (co-ed and men's leagues)
 - Ultimate frisbee and recreational flag football
 - Fitness boot camps and community events

4. Reduced Maintenance and Operating Costs:

- o Although the initial investment for a synthetic turf field is projected to be higher than a natural grass surface, synthetic turf requires less ongoing maintenance (e.g., no mowing, watering, or re-seeding), thereby freeing up departmental resources.
- o Evidence shows that synthetic fields remain in excellent condition regardless of use volume, eliminating the need for frequent rest periods and costly repairs.

5. Increased Program Revenue Potential:

- o A consistent, reliable playing surface has the ability to attract regional tournaments and external rentals, which can offset some of the upfront investment through increased revenue.
- o Local teams will benefit from reduced cancellations, which will promote stronger league participation and retention.

6. Restoring Track Surface:

- o Restoration of the track surface is essential not only for school events, but to include recreational/fitness use by our residents.

7. Reconfiguring Baseball Field:

- o By addressing the baseball field, it would allow for more use with the additional turf and lights by adding a multiuse field. That field would be used for not just school sports, but for further extending playable field space for Recreational programs and teams, especially in the colder seasons and evening hours with added lights.

Conclusion:

Installing a synthetic turf field, track and multiuse field at the Dover High School Athletic complex aligns with the Recreation Department goals to promote inclusive, year-round recreational opportunities for participants of all ages and abilities. This investment will ensure reliable access to safe and durable facilities for both youth and adult recreational teams, thereby supporting the continued growth of community sports and recreational engagement.



Recommendation:

I therefore recommend the School Board and City Council accept the recommendations of the Joint Building Committee and approve the funding of a synthetic turf field, track restoration and baseball field reconfiguration to enhance the recreational infrastructure for current and future generations.

