


[EXTERNAL]Simpson Stadium Park Renovation

DRCA Land Use Chair <landuse@delraycitizen.net>

Fri 6/2/2023 10:35 AM

To: Bethany Znidersic <Bethany.Znidersic@alexandriava.gov>; Karl Moritz <Karl.Moritz@alexandriava.gov>; PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>; DRCA Land Use Committee <DRCA-land-use@delraycitizen.net>; ExecBoard <execboard@delraycitizen.net>

 1 attachments (139 KB)

6.2.23 Simpson Park Renovation Letter to RPCA.pdf;

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Good Morning Beth,

We'd like to thank you and Mitch for attending the May 30, 2023 Del Ray Citizens Association Land Use Committee (LUC) meeting and providing the community the opportunity to review and discuss the proposed renovations.

Attached please find the letter from the LUC regarding the goals of the proposed renovation of Simpson Stadium Park. We have offered a number of recommendations that the Committee feels merit further study / consideration before the final plan is implemented. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Kristine Hesse
DRCA LUC Co-chair

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June 2, 2023

Bethany Znidersic
Division Chief
Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Division of Park Planning and Capital Development
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Beth,

The Del Ray Citizens Association Land Use Committee (LUC) wishes to thank you for giving the Del Ray community the opportunity to review and discuss the proposed renovations of Simpson Stadium Park during our May 30, 2023 meeting.

After the presentation and the questions and answers, the LUC voted on the goals as follows:

Goal #1: Plant trees along the northern alleyway. **SUPPORT**

Goal #2: Provide hardscape trails in the east half of the park. **SUPPORT** with the following recommendations:

- Increase gates / connectivity to the soccer fields on the north and east sides of the park.
- Add bike racks at the soccer fields. Bikes are being chained to the fences.
- Limit the amount of additional impervious surfaces by keeping the trails sized for pedestrians and bicycles.

Goal #3: Provide new ADA access from Monroe Ave. **SUPPORT** but note the following concerns should be addressed before implementing:

- The ADA access to the park where shown on the plans is at the highest point on Monroe Ave (travel is uphill from both sides of the sidewalk to get to the ramp).
- Safety of locating a primary pedestrian access point into the park away from crosswalks. Does this encourage people who park on the opposite side of Monroe to cross the street at a location other than a crosswalk?





Goal #4: Install new bleachers, equipment storage and concessions: **SUPPORT** with the following recommendation:

- Consider opportunities for the concession stands to be open during non game days and times.

Goal #5: Create a picnic area near the concessions (with shade structure): **SUPPORT** with the following recommendations:

- Limit the amount of additional impervious surfaces.

Goal #6: Expand the parking lot and improve circulation: **SUPPORT** provided the following recommendations are implemented:

- New entrance off Monroe Ave should be narrower for one-way ingress. The drive aisle in the parking lot should be one way with egress at the existing driveway.
- Create a safe pull over and drop-off zone within the proposed parking lot area. This will allow a driver to let children with their equipment out of the car and then find a parking space in another area.
- Provide bulb-outs on both sides of Monroe Ave at new entrance / crosswalks. The current on-street parking does not provide a safe crossing because the cars conceal people waiting at the crosswalk. More study should be investigated to make sure this meets safe street criteria.
- Encourage park goers to utilize other city-owned parking lots nearby that are underused during games, like the George Washington MS lot. The City should pursue agreements with sports leagues to provide shuttle buses to remote parking lots and require leagues to publicize available parking to participants at the beginning of each season.

Goal #7: Improve the turf at Big Simpson with option for synthetic turf. **OPPOSE USE OF SYNTHETIC TURF.**

- Synthetic turf can produce a heat island effect which is detrimental to our climate. It also creates dangerous temperatures for athletes on the fields.
- There are unknown long-term effects of PFAS chemicals on the environment.





Goal #8: Improve natural turf drainage at Little Simpson: **SUPPORT**

While not a specific goal outlined in the plan, the DRCA LUC would also like to request that efforts be made to keep the size of the dog park as large as possible. We have concerns that the proposed evergreens inside of the dog park, and adjacent to the screen wall for the basketball court, will not survive.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposed modifications to the plan. We appreciate the time and effort spent to improve Simpson Park.

Sincerely,

Kristine Hesse, DRCA LUC Co-chair

Lisa Lettieri, DRCA LUC Co-chair

cc: Mitch Dillon, Project Implementation, RPCA

Karl Moritz, P & Z Director

Members of the Planning Commission



City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 5, 2023

TO: CHAIRMAN MACEK AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

SUBJECT: DSUP2023-10003 / SIMPSON STADIUM PARK RENOVATION
(DOCKET ITEM #7)

This memorandum is in response to questions raised about the removal of existing large trees during the Simpson Stadium Park Renovation project. In particular, during the briefings, Commissioner Brown asked about the removal of two trees as identified on the Tree Inventory Plan (Sheet C-105): Tree #819 and Tree #801. Staff would like to provide additional information regarding these two trees.

Tree #819: This tree is a large willow oak that is located northeast of the Big Simpson outfield, as called out on Exhibit 1 (attached). The submitted tree preservation plans show this tree to be removed. However, as plans for the project have evolved, adjustments were made and Tree #819 will not be removed and will be preserved as part of the park renovations. The Tree Inventory Plan will be updated during Final Site Plan review to capture this, if the project is approved.

Tree #801: This tree is also a large willow oak that is located between the parking lot area and bleachers for Big Simpson field and is proposed to be removed during renovation of the park. Exhibit 2 (attached) was created to show the existing conditions around this tree as well as the multiple demolition and new park elements that impacted the City's ability to preserve the tree without significantly damaging it.

STAFF:

Karl Moritz, Director, P&Z
Dirk H. Geratz, Principal, P&Z
Abigail Harwell, Planner III, P&Z
Beth Znidersic, Division Chief, RPCA
Mitch Dillon, Project Manager, DPI

EXHIBITS:

Exhibit 1 - Updated Tree Removal Exhibit
Exhibit 2 – Additional information for removal of Tree 801

Exhibit 1 – Updated Tree Removal Exhibit

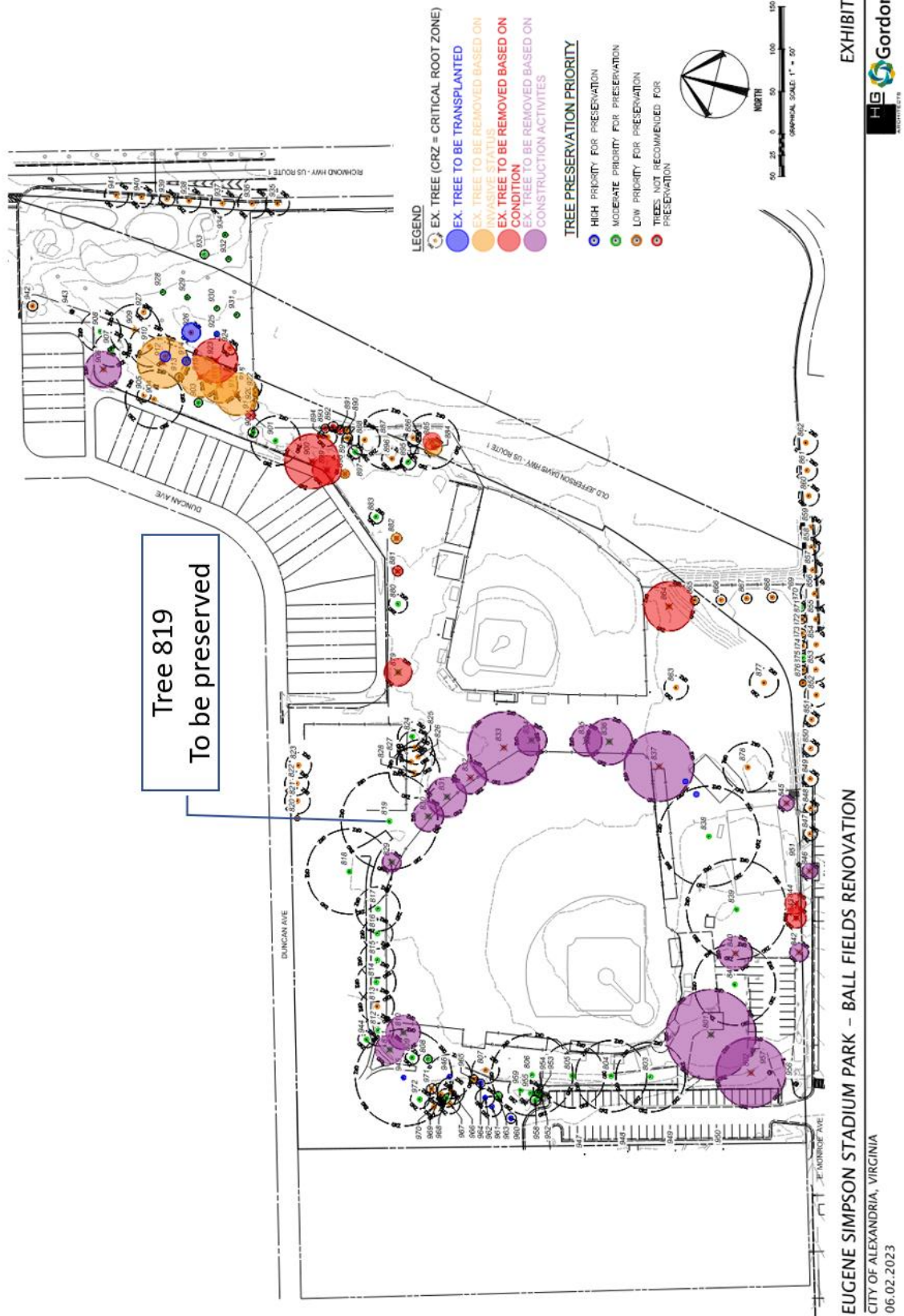
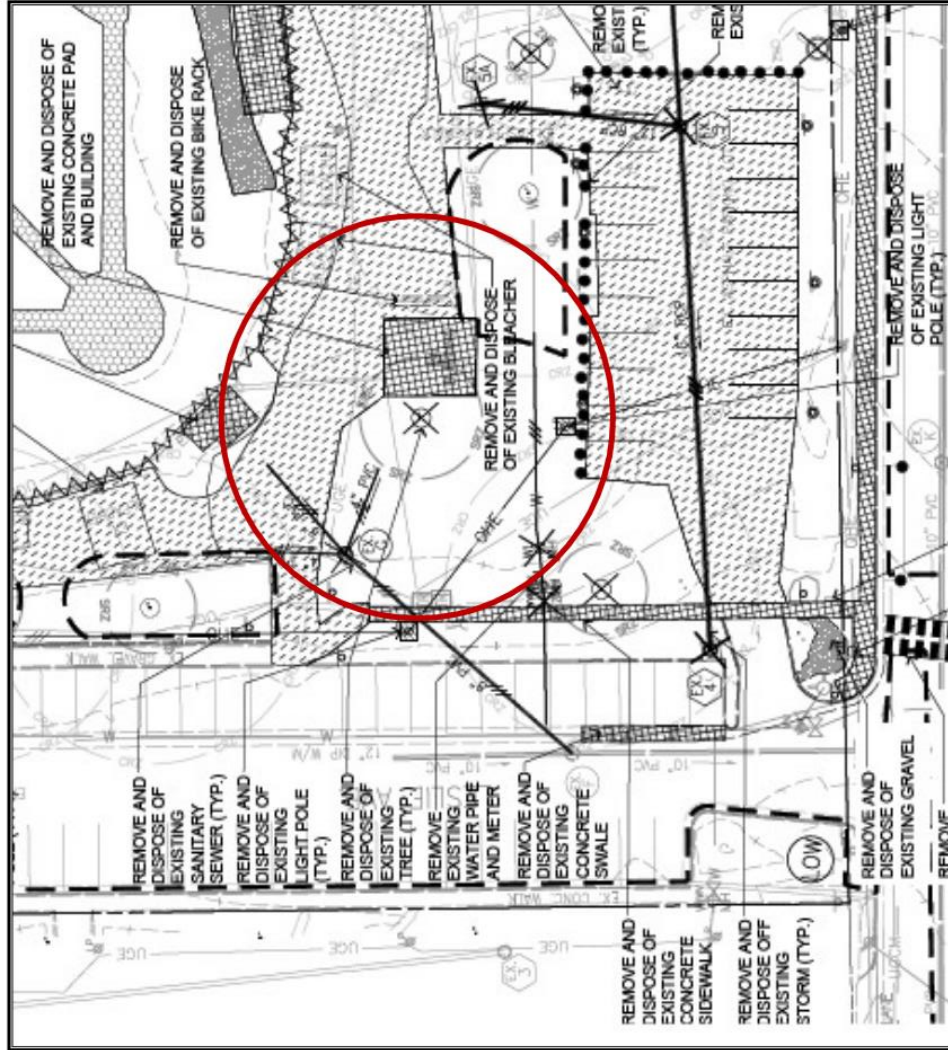


Exhibit 2 – Additional information for removal of Tree 801



Tree Impacts

- Tree 801 is a 35" (DBH) Willow Oak in good condition that is proposed for removal
- The tree is impacted by:
 1. Demolition of existing blue bunker building (Structural Root Zone)
 2. Removal of existing sidewalk
 3. Removal of sanitary sewer
 4. Revisions to the existing parking lot
 5. Installation of synthetic turf, bleachers, press box

[EXTERNAL]Eugene Simpson Park Project

Sherry Reilly <sherryreillyva@gmail.com>

Mon 6/5/2023 11:14 PM

To:PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;Bethany Znidersic <Bethany.Znidersic@alexandriava.gov>

 1 attachments (27 KB)

Simpson Letter from Baseball Community.pdf;

Dear Ms. Znidersic and Parks and Recreation Planning Commission Members,
Thank you for your attention on the needs of the baseball community in regards to upgrades to diamond fields in the city.

Please find a letter attached regarding the Alexandria baseball community's thoughts and concerns as you consider moving forward on this very important project at tomorrow's public hearing. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Best regards,
Sherry Reilly
President, Alexandria Little League

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June 5, 2023

Dear Bethany Znidersic, Division Chief, Dept of RPCA and Planning Commission Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Alexandria Baseball Community, including Alexandria Little League, Alexandria City High School, Bishop Ireton High School, the Alexandria Reds travel organization, and Alexandria American Legion Baseball Post 24.

We strongly support all of the proposed improvements to Eugene Simpson Park, including improved dugouts at both fields, a new dedicated concession stand at Big Simpson, new press boxes and bleachers at both fields, a permanent storage building, a larger parking area, and the hardscape improvements with walkways, trees, picnic areas, and passive areas.

But mostly we strongly support the field improvements for both fields. Improved natural turf and drainage at Little Simpson will greatly enhance the usability of that field.

We very specifically want to call out the need for synthetic turf at Big Simpson Field.

The lack of big fields in the city means the Alexandria baseball community uses the two current 60x90 fields almost nonstop. Having only 2 big fields in the city shared with all of the baseball organizations listed above as well as the collegiate team, the Alexandria Aces, means that we use the fields constantly during the spring, summer, and fall baseball seasons.

This much overuse can cause the grass on the field to become bare which has a negative effect on drainage, making the big fields be offline even longer at times. Grass needs recovery time. It also means that when there is significant rain, fields will be closed for numerous organizations, often for several days. Synthetic turf fields are much more durable than natural turf fields, allowing broader access for players and teams.

Baseball is the only sport in the city that consistently gets cancelled due to weather. All of the other sports – including soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey, basketball, football, et.al., either have multiple synthetic turf options or indoor options.

Please move forward with this project including synthetic turf at Big Simpson so baseball also has an option to allow play throughout entire seasons, rain or shine.

Sincerely,

Sherry Reilly, Alexandria Little League President

Tom Blackwood, Alexandria Little League Board Member

Mike Olerta, Alexandria City High School Varsity Coach

Zach Hecker, Alexandria City High School JV Coach

James Parker, Alexandria City High School Athletic Director

Kevin O'Keefe, Bishop Ireton Varsity Coach

Ben Matthews, Alexandria Reds Owner

Allan Lee, Alexandria American Legion Post 24 Head Coach

Alexandria Planning Commission Comments on Planned Simpson Field Renovations

My name is Brian Collins, I am a resident of Alexandria in the Del Ray neighborhood near Simpson Field.

I reviewed the plans and focused specifically on the recommendation to install plastic (artificial) grass turf to replace the turf grass field.

I am deeply concerned that the review of the Big Simpson Turf field proposal is inadequately reviewed and recommended by the planning commission for these reasons.

1. The planning commission neglects to address the high field temperatures of plastic grass fields - this year already the temperatures at plastic grass fields at Jefferson-Houston have exceeded 120 degrees. The temperatures of plastic fields in Alexandria will continue to get hotter corresponding with summer temptations.
2. Commonly accepted and endorsed recommendations for allowing activity for plastic fields is to not allow if the temperature exceeds 105 degrees. At 120 degrees the plastic grass can burn children/adult users that come in contact with the field.

3. The reference to organic rubber gives the impression the crumb rubber is safe however EPDM is made of chemicals that are still under review for safety and evidence indicates that EPDM rubber is hotter than the traditional tire crumb rubber. EPDM is twice the cost of crumb rubber and the use of biodegradable materials like coconut husk are even more expensive.
4. The planning commission recommendations do not provide any evidence that there is an existing drainage problem at Big Simpson field. A visual observation shows a nice slope of the grass playing field to drain. Informal conversation with those experience in coaching games on the field did not identify any drainage issues. The fundamental premise is the field needs to be replaced due to drainage however the analysis/justification in the planning commission recommendation is silent on this topic.
5. Although the planning commission may not consider cost in their recommendations (it seems they should as a resource to the citizens and city decision makers) the information available is that plastic fields have a 10 year life span, cost in excess of \$1M - while sod grass dirt based fields are \$40K to replace for similar size. The economics do not justify this expense.
6. The city planners indicate the plastic grass will enable more use of the field however there is no reason the field must remain locked to the public

when it is sod grass - there is the capability for sod grass to be affordably repaired/replaced and there are many uses of open space grass fields on sod that are non-damaging. If we look at the total usage of the current sod grass field the costs to replace with plastic grass per usage hour is astronomical.

7. There is a common misperception that plastic grass fields are low maintenance - this assumption is flawed because we know that hot plastic is a petri dish for body fluids such as vomit, blood, expectorant and other requiring regular shampooing. Further, regular maintenance is required to maintain the G-force of the surface to prevent it from becoming too hard creating danger for athletes. Fields require regular grooming to smooth out the crumb rubber. Chemicals are applied to plastic grass like fire retardants to protect against vandals, more chemicals to mix with rubber to expose our youth to potential health risks.
8. Plastic grass is not a preferred surface for baseball - I am unaware of any professional baseball field that is made of artificial plastic grass.
9. The planning commission ignores the impact of the heat on the environment contributing to climate change and the impermeability of the plastic turf system will drain water into the Potomac and contribute to global sea rise. Eco City Alexandria objectives to cool the planet and minimize water runoff is not consistent with this project. We want water to soak into the soil, to grow plants to cool the

water and the air.

Thanks, Brian

[EXTERNAL]June 6th 2023 - Simpson Field Docket 7

Brian Collins <brian.c1@me.com>

Wed 6/7/2023 9:27 AM

To:PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

You don't often get email from brian.c1@me.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Supplemental Comments: Development Special Use Permit #2023-10003
426 East Monroe Avenue - Simpson Stadium Park renovation

I submitted comments for last night's session and wanted to add this comment to my input.

Plastic turf for a football size field requires about 40,000 lbs (20 tons) of plastic and 400,000 pounds of crumb rubber infill from recycled tires or other crumb rubber - all that must go to the landfill since it is very difficult or impossible to recycle. This runs counter to Eco-City Alexandria objectives.

Plastic fields create micro plastics from wear and tear where plastic blades break down from wear and this accounts for the 10 year lifespan estimate.

See this link for reference/analysis: <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/12/artificial-turf-fields-are-piling-no-recycling-fix/603874/>

Please let me know if you have any questions/comments.

Thanks, Brian

Brian Collins
500 E. Glendale Ave.
Alexandria, VA, 22301
703-795-8169

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