



PARKS, ARTS, RECREATION & CULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

February 17, 2026 - 6:30 PM
Los Altos Community Center - Sequoia Room
97 Hillview Ave, Los Altos, CA 94022

PARTICIPATION: Members of the public may participate by being present at the Los Altos Community Center, Sequoia Room, 97 Hillview Ave, Los Altos, CA 94022. Public comment is accepted in person at the physical meeting location, or via email to PARCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov.

RULES FOR CONDUCT: Pursuant to Los Altos Municipal Code, Section 2.05.010 "Interruptions and rules for conduct": Understanding that the purpose of the city council meetings is to conduct the people's business for the benefit of all the people, in the event that any meeting of the city council is willfully interrupted by a person or group of persons so as to render the orderly conduct of the meeting impossible, the mayor, mayor pro tem, or any other member of the city council acting as the chair may order the removal of the person or persons responsible for the disruption and bar them from further attendance at the council meeting, or otherwise proceed pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.0 or any applicable penal statute or city ordinance.

REMOTE MEETING OBSERVATION: Members of the public may view the meeting via the link below, but will not be permitted to provide public comment via Zoom or telephone. Public comment will be taken in-person, and members of the public may provide written public comment by following the instructions below.

<https://losaltosca-gov.zoom.us/j/97570650808?pwd=zyDBsbm4bcu9FeA9PBF8yL6kRexu4B.1>

Telephone: 1-669-444-9171 / Webinar ID: 975 7065 0808 / Passcode: 173256

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS: Prior to the meeting, comments on matters listed on the agenda may be emailed to PARCpubliccomment@losaltosca.gov.

Please note: Personal information, such as e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, home addresses, and other contact information are not required to be included with your comments. If this information is included in your written comments, they will become part of the public record. Redactions and/or edits will not be made to public comments, and the comments will be posted as they are submitted. Please do not include any information in your communication that you do not want to be made public.

The Chair will open public comment and will announce the length of time provided for comments during each item.

ESTABLISH QUORUM

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Members of the audience may bring to the Commission's attention any item that is not on the agenda. Please complete a "Request to Speak" form and submit it to the Staff Liaison. Speakers are generally given two or three minutes, at the discretion of the Chair. Please be advised that, by law, the Commission is unable to discuss or take action on issues presented during the Public Comment Period. According to State Law (also known as "the Brown Act") items must first be noticed on the agenda before any discussion or action.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

1. **Minutes:** Approve minutes from the January 20, 2026 regular meeting
2. **Playground Replacement (Shoup & Grant Parks):** Receive staff report and give feedback
3. **Work Plan Projects:** Discuss process for managing

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

4. **Staff**
 - **Downtown Park Study Session — February 24, 2026, 5pm**
 - **Council/Commission Joint Meeting — February 24, 2026, 6pm**

COMMISSION/SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Park Tour for Commissioners

ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO THE PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and California Law, it is the policy of the City of Los Altos to offer its programs, services and meetings in a manner that is readily accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and require information or materials in an appropriate alternative format; or if you require any other accommodation, please contact department staff. Advance notification within this guideline will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility. The City ADA Coordinator can be reached at (650) 947-2607 or by email: ada@losaltosca.gov.



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
PARKS, ARTS, RECREATION & CULTURAL
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
January 20, 2026
6:30 PM
Los Altos Community Center - Sequoia Room
97 Hillview Ave, Los Altos, CA 94022**

ESTABLISH QUORUM

PRESENT: Vice Chair Nguyen, Commissioners Stout, MacDonald, and Sangani
ABSENT: None
VIRTUAL: Chair Morris, Commissioner Dolich

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Morris called the meeting to order at 6:35pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

1. **Minutes:** Approve the minutes from the November 17, 2025 Special Meeting

Public Comment: None

Action: Based on a motion by Commissioner Dolich, seconded by Commissioner Stout, the Commission approved the minutes from the November 17, 2025 Special Meeting as written.

Approve: Morris, Nguyen, Stout, MacDonald, Sangani, Dolich

Oppose: None

Abstain: None

Motion passed, unanimously: 6-0-0

2. **2026 Work Plan:** Review and approve Commission Work Plan for 2026

Public Comment: Maria Bautista

Action: Vice Chair Nguyen moved that the Commission accept the 2026 Work Plan as amended during the meeting (attached).

Approve: Morris, Nguyen, Stout, MacDonald, Sangani, Dolich

Oppose: None

Abstain: None

Motion passed, unanimously: 6-0-0

3. Joint Meeting Preparation: Prepare for Joint Meeting with City Council

Public Comment: None

Action: None

Commission Dolich left the meeting at 8:10pm

4. Call for Art: Review Submissions for Los Altos Community Center Call for Art

Public Comment: None

Action: Commissioner MacDonald moved to accept and display pieces 1 – 15 in the Los Altos Community Center Gallery. Vice Chair Nguyen second the motion.

Approve: Morris, Nguyen, Stout, MacDonald, Sangani

Oppose: None

Abstain: None

Motion passed, unanimously: 5-0-0

Action: Commissioner MacDonald moved to accept and display piece 16 in the Los Altos Community Center Galley at Staff's discretion with clarification from the artist, including a potential name change (as needed).

Approve: Morris, Nguyen, Stout, MacDonald, Sangani

Oppose: None

Abstain: None

Motion passed, unanimously: 5-0-0

wat

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- **Summarization of first Family Fun Night**
- **Background checks for volunteers**

REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS ADJOURNMENT

- **Caltrain shuttle for events**
- **Tour of Parks for Commissioners**

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Morris adjourned the meeting at 8:30pm

Parks, Arts, Recreation, & Cultural Commission

2026 Work Plan

Goal	Objective	Projects	Anticipated Completion	Priority Source	Assignment	Done?
PROMOTION & EXPANSION OF PARKS	Identify projects that can expand the use and appreciation of Los Altos Parks and the potential for added park space	Evaluate parks and collaborate with staff regarding park upgrades, enhancements, and expansion while keeping an eye on environmental concerns			Dolich, MacDonald	
		Work with appropriate commissions when considering promotion and expansion of parks			Nguyen, Dolich	
PROMOTION & EXPANSION OF PUBLIC ART	Leverage resources to complete regular support programs and expand public art programs	Continue exploring collaboration with Arts Los Altos for programming and displays			Morris, Stout	
		Select the theme and hang selected art in the Community Center Gallery			Morris	
		Explore a joint guide and update the public art listing and brochure annually			Nguyen, MacDonald	
		Select call for art and artists for Art Without Walls program			Nguyen, Morris	
		Evaluate and recommend public art for maintenance and/or replacement needs			Nguyen, Morris	
PROMOTION & EXPANSION OF RECREATION PROGRAMS	Identify opportunities to be involved in existing Parks & Recreation programming	Table at Summer Concert(s)			Stout, Sangani	
		Host a project room at Family Fun Day			Stout, Sangani	
		Select the movie for and host Halloween Movie Night			Stout, Sangani	
		Assist P&R staff with Spring Egg Hunt			Stout, Sangani, MacDonald	
PROMOTION & EXPANSION OF CULTURAL PROGRAMMING	Look for and be involved in programs that expand the cultural opportunities for the community	Continue current partnerships with MALA, Justice Vanguard, Chinese Association			Nguyen	
		Explore additional cultural events			Nguyen, Sangani	
		Explore a multi-cultural event, with a focus			Sangani, MacDonald	
		Winter Cultural Concert Series			MacDonald, Sangani	

ONGOING COMMUNITY OUTREACH	Gather public feedback within and outside of regular commission meetings	Table at Farmers’ Market for public input on upcoming projects			Stout, Nguyen	
		Explore a partnership for a self-guided art tour			Morris, Nguyen	



TO: Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture Commission

FROM: Manny A. Hernandez, Staff Liaison

SUBJECT: Review and Provide Input on Grant and Shoup Playground Replacements

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the proposed design of the Grant and Shoup playground replacements at Shoup and Grant Parks and provide input

BACKGROUND

Grant Park currently has a playground area for two age levels of play (2-5 years & 5-12 years). The current equipment was installed in 2008 and is within the City's recommended replacement schedule of 15-20 years. Shoup Park has two age levels of play in separate areas of the park. The current equipment was installed in 2003 and is now beyond the City's recommended replacement schedule.

Staff solicited proposals through a request for proposals (RFP). Seven proposals were received and reviewed by staff and a non-staff member of the public (Parks & Recreation Commissioner) with knowledge and interest in the replacement project. Through this process Playcore Wisconsin Inc. (DBA GameTime) was selected as the best proposal. GameTime's proposal included playground equipment layouts and components that evaluators felt satisfied current usage while incorporating modern play elements. The proposed playground designs at Grant Park and Shoup Park increase overall play value by expanding opportunities for music and sound play, dramatic play, climbing, and interactive activity panels, while maintaining a comparable number of core play elements such as slides and swings. Both designs also enhance accessibility and inclusivity through the addition of poured-in-place safety surfacing and a broader range of ADA-accessible and adaptive/universal play elements.

Staff is presenting this proposal from GameTime to the Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture Commission to receive additional input before finalizing the design and equipment.

Attachments:

A. Slides

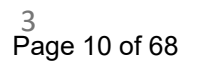
Grant & Shoup Park Playground Replacements

Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture Commission |
February 17, 2026



Grant Park





Grant Park (2-5 Years)



Grant Park (2-5 Years)



Grant Park (2-5 Years)



Grant Park (5-12 Years)



Grant Park (5-12 Years)



Grant Park (5-12 Years)



Grant Park (5-12 Years)



Grant Park



Shoup Park



Shoup Park (2-5 Years)



Shoup Park (2-5 Years)



Shoup Park (2-5 Years)

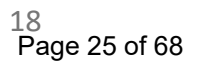
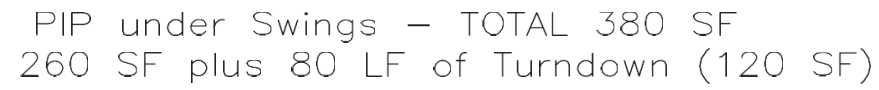


Shoup Park (2-5 Years)



Shoup Park (2-5 Years)





Shoup Park (5-12 Years)



Shoup Park (5-12 Years)



Shoup Park (5-12 Years)



Shoup Park (5-12 Years)



Shoup Park (5-12 Years)





Casey Richardson

From: Andrea Wald <waldmba@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 8, 2026 7:39 AM
To: Casey Richardson
Subject: Materials pertinent to Feb 17th meeting of PARC Commission members

Dear PARC commissioners,

At your February 17th meeting you will be discussing the plans for renovation at both Grant and Shoup parks. I am fearful that plans could be presented that can contain materials that the Los Altos community does not want as was evident when the city was looking into the new dog park at Hillview.

To better help you understand what the best option is I am sending you information that pertains to the best ground covering for playgrounds: EWF (Engineered Wood Fiber) – not to be confused with tan bark, which is rough and made from the bark of trees. EWF is made from the inside of trees, is softer, and is processed such that it is an excellent ground covering for our playgrounds – ALL NATURAL, unlike PIP (poured-in-place rubber) which is made from fossil fuels.

There are plenty of parks that use EWF. If EWF is ADA compliant, that should suffice. Why risk environmental and health harms with unnatural (fossil-fuel) materials like PIP. As for performance over time, the PIP surfaces do wear down and end up in landfill, where they sit for hundreds of years releasing the toxic chemicals they were made with.

<https://sfstandard.com/2025/05/02/san-francisco-playground-sunset-park-playground-cost-price/>



Below are several photos from parks nearby that show many local cities prefer natural EWF surfacing.

Oak Meadow Park, Los Gatos – 11/9/25



Visona park playground:



Wildwood Park, Saratoga:



Creekside Park, Cupertino:



Playground at Blackberry Farms in Cupertino – newly laid EWF. In a recent communication with the head of parks in Cupertino I learned that “in October of 2025 the city had a contractor install Certified EWF within all City owned playgrounds”.



To better understand why I, along with many others, are against PIP playground surfacing, please see info below:

2023, National Center for Health Research (Dr. Diana Zuckerman), **Are PIP rubber playgrounds safe for Kingston?**

<https://www.center4research.org/pip-playgrounds-danger-kingston-ny/>

2024, National Center for Health Research (Dr. Diana Zuckerman), **Testimony on: HB1147 - Environment – Playground Surfacing Materials – Prohibitions** to Montgomery County, Maryland Environment and Transportation Committee

https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2024/ent/1zNZLKC1F2RIHeb8PKNT5aRiqxgewbQfy.pdf

Lastly, in the playground design I would recommend a lot of shade structures and less plastic materials. Even though EWF does not get hot like artificial turf and PIP, we are experiencing periods of not only hotter weather, but prolonged heat waves. Kids especially should be protected from direct sunlight as much as possible. Plus, just the playground equipment itself can get hot and uncomfortable to be playing on.

If the playground is expected to be accessible to all users then you should be aware that plastic slides are not good for anyone with a cochlear implant. What is recommended are metal slides. See material below.

<https://www.miracle-recreation.com/blog/hearing-impaired-playgrounds/>

Static electricity, particularly from plastic playground slides, poses a significant risk to cochlear implants (CIs), potentially causing electrostatic discharge (ESD) that can temporarily or permanently "fry" or shut down the external sound processor. To prevent damage, it is recommended to remove CI processors before using plastic slides, bouncy houses, or trampolines. www.gametime.com +3

Thank you for taking the time to review the materials I've shared. I hope it will help you make the best choices for the renovations at the parks and for what Los Altans want and can enjoy for years to come.

Thank you.

Andrea

Casey Richardson

From: Manuel Hernandez
Sent: Thursday, February 12, 2026 4:21 PM
To: Casey Richardson
Subject: FW: Response to Resident on the Recommendation for PIP Over EWF

Manny A. Hernandez
Parks & Recreation Director
City of Los Altos
650.947.2889

From: Gabriel Engeland <gengeland@losaltosca.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 5, 2026 9:25 AM
Cc: Manuel Hernandez <mhernandez@losaltosca.gov>
Subject: Response to Resident on the Recommendation for PIP Over EWF

Mayor and Council,

One or more of you may have received a message regarding why staff would recommend PIP over EWF. I have copied my response to the resident below.

Manny,

In addition to all of the public comments Council received on this topic at the meeting, please forward the Q/A and this response to the PARC Commission. I think it is best if they see both the criticisms and our reason for recommending PIP.

Here is the response:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address directly why staff recommends PIP over Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF). In order to keep my response brief and to the point of why we recommend PIP over EWF, I will only add to the previous response that the broader findings of the Federal Research Action Plan (FRAP), which included extensive chemical characterization, biomonitoring, and exposure modeling, did not identify evidence of elevated chemical exposure across the evaluated exposure pathways when compared to typical background environmental exposures reported in the literature. While these federal studies do not rule out all potential risk, they did not identify findings that suggest an unusual or elevated health concern associated with contact with recycled rubber materials under normal use conditions. These findings support the conclusion that any potential exposure from the rubber appears limited and not distinguishable from common, everyday sources based on the evaluated exposure pathways.

In Los Altos we have direct, firsthand experience with engineered wood fiber, and that experience aligns with widely documented operational and accessibility concerns associated with loose-fill materials. Unlike unitary surfaces, EWF introduces additional pathways for injury and maintenance-related risk, including material displacement, dust generation, and the potential for unintended inhalation or ingestion. Additionally, there is degradation when exposed to moisture. When EWF remains damp, it can support the growth of mold or fungi, and

loose-fill systems can obscure animal waste or sharp objects. These risks are operational rather than theoretical and occur more frequently with loose-fill systems than with unitary surfaces.

Additionally, as noted in the response, PIP is designed to be ADA compliant upon installation and is intended to remain firm, stable, and accessible throughout its service life. While claims that EWF is ADA compliant are technically correct at the time of installation, maintaining that compliance requires frequent, ongoing maintenance that is difficult to sustain in practice given the frequency that EWF is kicked out, compacted, removed, or otherwise displaced. The U.S. Access Board has noted that loose-fill materials such as EWF are more susceptible to displacement and compaction, making it difficult to consistently maintain the firm and stable surface required for accessibility. Additionally, and as residents can observe, EWF is at the very best challenging for individuals using wheelchairs, walkers, and other mobility aids.

In real-world conditions, and based on both safety testing and local experience, EWF is prone to losing required depth in high-traffic areas such as beneath swings and at slide exits. When this occurs, fall protection is compromised. By contrast, PIP and other unitary surfaces are engineered to provide consistent, durable fall attenuation and do not lose protective performance through material displacement.

As the initial response stated, guarding against the actual and well-documented risk of falls, which can result in broken bones or traumatic brain injuries, is a higher priority than guarding against speculative or unproven chemical risks. Falls and trips remain the most common cause of playground injuries, and our responsibility is to mitigate the risks that occur most frequently and regularly.

Los Altos, like many cities, has experienced liability claims associated with trips and falls on EWF surfaces resulting in serious injuries. In fact, the most recent serious playground injury claim involved a child who fell from a swing and broke their arm. It was a traumatic event for the child as well as the mother who witnessed her young child fall and break their arm. At the time of the incident, EWF had been displaced, leaving insufficient fall attenuation. This type of failure is a known and well-documented limitation of loose-fill systems and underscores why staff recommends PIP for long-term safety, accessibility, and risk reduction.

I am happy to discuss this further if you have additional questions on the staff report, response to Council, or why we are recommending PIP for installation in the playgrounds.

Thanks,

Gabe

Latest Los Altos news at your fingertips: [Subscribe for Los Altos Updates.](#)



Gabriel Engeland
City Manager, City of Los Altos
ICMA Credentialed Manager
(650) 947-2740 | www.losaltosca.gov
1 N. San Antonio Road | Los Altos, CA 94022

Melissa Thurman

From: Andrea Wald <waldmba@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 24, 2026 7:21 AM
To: Jonathan Weinberg; Larry Lang; Pete Dailey; Sally Meadows; Neysa Fligor; Lynette Lee
Eng; Public Comment
Subject: [External Sender]Public Comments for Jan 27th City Council mtg - Agenda item 4

Dear Mayor and City Council members,

I am writing regarding the plan to redo both Grant and Shoup playgrounds using PIP (poured-in-place) rubber surfacing. The continued expansion of petroleum-based surfaces impacts the health of people and the wildlife that lives among us and goes against policies that address environmental and sustainability goals that Los Altos and many other cities have in place. I am very much against this plan.

What's most upsetting is the lack of transparency for this action. There has not been any public notification regarding the plans nor ability for any input to be provided by community members. It is only now that city council is being asked to approve the budget that the details are available to community members. This is not acceptable.

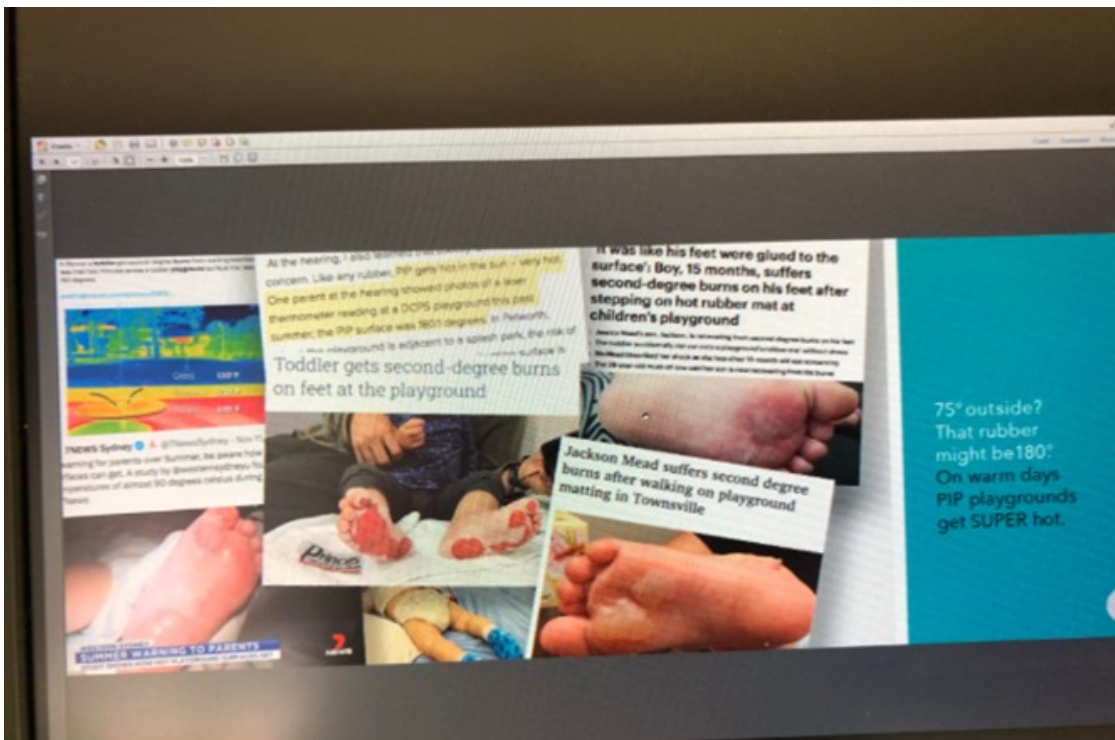
Currently both parks have EWF as their ground cover. This is the best option for a healthy, safe environment for all. Council is already aware of all the harms of artificial turf and has directed the Environmental Commission to look more into this as to how this material impacts Los Altos, the environment and its citizens. PIP is also a petrochemical product and has many of the same harms as artificial turf. Information on this has been shared with council members in the past but I will be adding a few more reference articles below.

A comparative exposure [study](#) published in *Environmental Geochemistry and Health* showed that children playing on poured-rubber surfaced playgrounds had approximately ten times higher estimated cancer risk from polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in dust and soil compared to children on traditional soil playgrounds. This suggests that synthetic surface materials may increase harmful exposures through skin contact, inhalation, and hand-to-mouth behaviors.

A recent *Journal of Hazardous Materials* [study](#) found that crumb rubber materials used in playgrounds and sports surfaces can release micro- and nanoplastics and a broad range of plastic additives (e.g., flame retardants, lubricants, antioxidants) into the air and through runoff events. These breakdown products can be extremely harmful to both humans and wildlife.

In addition to all the environmental and health harms being linked to these plastic surfaces, there is also the issue of extreme heat. With more frequent and longer hot weather that we are experiencing and which is predicted to only get worse over time, these surfaces should be avoided.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/toddler-receives-second-degree-burns-feet-hot-playground-castle-rock-dangerous/>



Recent fires involving synthetic playground and turf surfaces in school yards and parks in SF and the very devastating fires in the Palisades area of LA left behind melted plastic, burned synthetic rubber, toxic debris, contaminated runoff, and hazardous smoke. These fires are becoming more frequent and more intense, creating risks for nearby residents, first responders, and wildlife and forcing taxpayers and donors to repeatedly fund replacements of the same flammable materials - not to mention the impact on city budgets.

Artificial turf and PIP playground surfaces contain flammable plastics and synthetic rubber treated with chemical flame retardants such as polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD), and organophosphate flame retardants. These chemicals are associated with endocrine disruption, neurodevelopmental harm, and potential carcinogenic effects. All artificial turf also contains PFAS chemicals, which are linked to cancer, hormone disruption, thyroid disease, reduced fertility, impaired immune response, and developmental impacts in children. PFAS bioaccumulate in living organisms and can enter the body through inhalation, ingestion, and skin contact.

Importantly, plastic is not necessary to provide engaging, inclusive play. [Nature-based playground design](#) offers stimulating, developmentally rich experiences for children, including [children with disabilities](#). The Toxic Use Reduction Institute at UMASS Lowell highlights [best practices](#) for

nature-based play. Materials such as engineered wood fiber—distinct from loose mulch or wood chips—are ADA-compliant, widely used, and much better for the environment and our health.

Please do everything within your power to reduce environmental and human health harms. Do NOT approve any park/playground upgrades that are using unnatural products when more natural, healthier ones exist. We often forget that we humans who are creating these toxic messes are a fundamental part of the environment. Sometimes the convenient option needs to be deprioritized.

Sincerely,

Andrea Wald
Co-Founder, Community for Natural Play Surfaces

Melissa Thurman

From: Laura Fay <fay.laura@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 25, 2026 7:19 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Public Comment, Agenda item #4, Playground Renovations and Grant and Shoup Park – Jan 27, 2026
Attachments: PIP Rubber on Playground Surfaces.pdf

Dear Los Altos City Council,

Please defer the approval of the budget for Shoup and Grant Park playground designs that include artificial surfaces, in favor of maintaining the natural play surfaces. The design proposed by the selected vendor calls for replacing the natural elements of the playground with pour-in-place (PIP) rubber. Please see the attached document that outlines the well documented issues with this surface type.

Please defer the approval of the budgets for playground upgrades until the public has an opportunity to review and comment on the designs. Public review ahead of a city RFP process is important for any element that is expected to be enjoyed by Altans for years to come. Neither the public or the PARC commission has been provided with any information about the new upgrades ahead of this city council meeting, where the staff is seeking approval for the design and hundreds of thousands of dollars in budget allocation.

Thank you,
Laura Fay
Los Altos resident

Pour-In-Place Rubber - Playground Surfacing Information

Summary

"Poured-in-place" (PIP) is a type of playground surfacing material, often made with shredded waste tire rubber, that is mixed and poured on-site to create a seamless, cushioned surface. It allows for designs and color combinations. However, high heat, off-gassing of chemicals and leaching of chemicals and heavy metals from the waste tire and other rubber pose a hazard to users.

What is Poured-in-Place (PIP) Playground Surfacing?

Installation: PIP surfacing involves mixing rubber granules (often made from waste tires) with a binder on-site and pouring it onto the playground area.

Layers: It typically consists of a shock-absorbing base layer and a thin colored top layer.

Aesthetics: PIP allows for various colors and patterns.

Durability: It's alleged to be durable and low maintenance but especially when weekly maintenance is skipped (ie. vacuuming the surface) the surface quickly starts to fall apart.

Concerns:

Chemicals and Heavy Metals: Waste tire crumb used in PIP is essentially a synthetic rubber plastic polymer which contains many other known toxic chemicals such as Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, benzothiazoles, ketones, 6PPD quinones and more and variably contains heavy metals such as, lead and cadmium. PFAS and other chemicals have been detected as well.

Environmental Concerns: The breakdown of the rubber material leads to the release of rubber plastic particles and their chemicals and heavy metals into the environment.

Temperature: (see link below with photos from Kemp Mill playground in Maryland)
PIP surfaces can become very hot in direct sunlight.

Curing: The surface requires a curing period after installation to ensure it's safe for use.

Safety Considerations:

Fall Height: It's important to choose surfacing that meets appropriate fall height requirements, especially for taller play equipment. The unitary PIP surfacing has been shown to get less protective over time and admit heats up so that should be taken into account

Material Testing: Lead testing is not required but some municipalities have tested PIP or shredded tire surfaces and found high levels of lead, leading to playground closures. In Washington DC, Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties.

Best Practices: It's recommended to avoid mouth contact with the surfacing, wash hands after use, and limit exposure on hot days.

References and Resources:

Heat readings at Kemp Mill urban Park Playground on Arcola Ave

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/N8iEA9nM9hpXdin29>

Playground Surfacing - Toxics Use Reduction Institute <https://www.turi.org>

Playgrounds Should Be Fun and Toxic-Free <https://www.ecocenter.org/playgrounds-should-be-fun-and-toxic-free>

A recent study showed that PAH levels in dust were 4-5 times higher on PIP playgrounds compared to playgrounds with uncovered bare ground.

Playground Surfaces

The seven most common surface/filler materials for playgrounds are: pea gravel, sand, bark mulch/ wood chips, engineered wood fiber, crumb rubber, synthetic ...

https://www.uml.edu/docs/Playground_surfacing_report_Dec2023_tcm18-377890.pdf

Playground Surfacing - Unitary rubber surfacing, including tiles and PIP surfacing, is made with granulated particles processed from materials such as waste tires, thermoplastic ...

National Center for Health Research

<https://www.center4research.org>

<https://www.center4research.org/?s=Playground+>

Are PIP rubber playgrounds safe for Kingston?

The rubber pieces made from recycled tires contain lead and heavy metals, as well as chemicals that increase the chances of developing obesity.

<https://sfstandard.com/2025/05/02/san-francisco-playground-sunset-park-playground-cost-price/>

Melissa Thurman

From: Peter Fay <lpfay@pacbell.net>
Sent: Sunday, January 25, 2026 1:29 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Public Comment, Agenda item #4, Playground Renovations and Grant and Shoup Park – Jan 27, 2026

Dear City Council members,

I am very concerned about proposed plans to replace natural surfaces at our parks with artificial materials given their associated toxicities and health risks.

Please ask the city staff to retain the natural surfaces in Shoup and Grant Parks for the health and safety of Los Altos' children, their carers and the environment.

yours sincerely,

Peter Fay MD
720 Spencer Court
Los Altos

Melissa Thurman

From: Steve Hill <sghill@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 25, 2026 5:38 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Artificial turf detriments

Artificial turf cannot fulfill the multi-use function of natural grass, and it requires regular, expensive maintenance.

The following will damage artificial turf fields or cause human harm and need to be prohibited:

Usage on hot days
Bare feet
Food and drinks (water is OK)
Golfing
Chewing gum
Sunflower seeds
Smoking
Dirty or muddy shoes
Driving stakes
Lawn furniture, beach chairs, folding chairs
Bicycles, vehicles, skateboards, and scooters
Smoking, barbecuing or open fires
Spikes or metal cleats and spiked heels
Dogs or other pets
Fireworks

Conclusion: artificial turf cannot handle the multi-purpose usage of real grass.

Maintenance activities for artificial turf (requires special equipment)

- Fields need to be kept free of debris, leaves, paper, and windblown material.
- Spray anti-static treatment.
- Complete inspection: weekly
 - Spot if need minor repairs, infill touchups, and sweeping needs.
 - Remove weeds and moss.
- Infill top dressing: needed to maintain proper infill depth. As needed.
- Infill spread: use leaf blower to clear infill lying outside perimeter of field.
- Cleaning and Sanitizing: annually.
- Anti-static conditioning: as needed.
- Brushing: rejuvenates matted plastic fibers and levels infill. Every 2 to 3 weeks.
- Aerating: (Equipment requires a tow vehicle) loosen infill to avoid compaction. Up to 3 times per year.
- Sweeping: (Equipment requires a tow vehicle) remove foreign material. Every 3 to 4 weeks.
- Raking. Every 4 to 6 weeks.
- Water treatment for infill. As needed.
- Spray with water on hot days or shut down the field.
- Perform GMAX tests to measure hardness and determine when unsafe and needs replacement.

Conclusion: artificial turf is not as maintenance free as claimed by the industry.

Regards,
Steve Hill

From: Susan Hinton <suewalt@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, January 25, 2026 10:37 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Public Comment, Agenda item #4, Playground Renovations and Grant and Shoup Park – Jan 27, 2026
Attachments: Sonoma Regional Ragle Ranch Park report 12.24.pdf

January 25, 2026

Subject: Public Comment for Los Altos City Council meeting on 1/27/2026, item #4: Adoption of Resolution - Playground Renovations at Grant Park and Shoup Park

Dear Mayor Meadows, Vice Mayor Lang, and Honorable Councilmembers:

The City of Los Altos should forego synthetic and plastic surfacing outdoors in landscapes, on playgrounds, in dog parks, in community gathering areas and on sports fields.

For playgrounds in particular, where young children play, Los Altos is currently using the best possible playground surfacing, Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF), which is also ADA compliant.

The Toxic Use Reduction Institute's (TURI) updated [2023 report on playground surfaces](#) explains why Pour-in-Place (PIP) surfacing is undesirable. (See the chart at the bottom of this public comment.) Similarly, Valley Water's fact sheet (https://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/valleywater.org.if-us-west-2/f2-live/s3fs-public/Artificial%20Turf%20Fact%20Sheet_042922%20SL.pdf) **explains why plastic grass is another undesirable outdoor surface.**

There are ready biodiverse and natural alternatives for landscapes, on playgrounds, in dog parks, in community gathering areas and on sports fields.

1. For playgrounds there are [well known safe-surfacing alternatives](#) to plastics, synthetic rubber or PIP (pour-in-place) surfaces. One noteworthy one is engineered wood fiber (EWF), which differs from unprocessed wood chips or gardening mulch, and it is ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant and widely used. Los Altos uses EWF today and should continue to do so.

Taking a further step away from plastic, one can provide [a stimulating play experience for children through a nature-based approach](#). The San Mateo County Office of Education has a [webpage on this topic](#). **Stimulating play using a nature-based approach is [also available for children with disabilities](#).**

2. When it comes to dog parks, dogs are less picky than people. However, **because plastic grass becomes noticeably hotter than the ambient air temperature**, and because dogs do not wear shoes to

protect their paws, on hot days **dogs avoid hot surfaces which defeats the purpose of a dog park.** Besides grass, which in dog parks can become aesthetically less than pleasing (though dogs don't care), **crushed granite** surfacing is a good alternative, being cooler than plastic while standing up to active pets. Another, easier care option, is the **engineered wood fiber** mentioned above, **typically in a smaller size** than for playgrounds as this is thought to be kinder on dog paws. In addition, shrubs, trees, arbors, and benches can be placed around a central area, providing shade and a place for people to talk, while plastic grass must be protected from falling plant matter and debris.

3. Community gathering areas, [for picnicking or gatherings,](#) [might deploy a combination](#) of the ideas presented above. Note that California law allows "non functional" lawn in parks and gathering areas, although one would prefer resilient, drought tolerant grass mixes.

4. In landscaping there are abundant drought tolerant California native or related plants, some quite beautiful and easy to grow. There are even forty (40) approved drought tolerant grasses and fescues on [Valley Water's approved plant replacement list](#). These and other approved plants are considered "functional" as opposed to "non functional" as they meet California's regulatory goals by being water-wise and low-maintenance, and by providing ecological benefits. Additionally there exist [garden designs,](#) [planners](#) and [explanatory graphics](#) for multiple landscape scenarios.

[Stanford University](#) is following other campuses across the U.S. (e.g. UC Berkeley and UCLA) in [piloting organically managed landscaping](#). In case studies while some campuses have seen costs initially increase, these have been followed by [a permanent cost decrease. Plus, as an added benefit these new methodologies help save water.](#)

5. Finally, there are living grass alternatives for sports fields, including fields built for baseball, soccer, football or lacrosse. There are successful, organic and sustainably managed grass sports fields in California: **See the Sonoma County document below** and take a look at [McKegney Green in the Town of Tiburon](#). In [North America](#), and overseas there are other examples, e.g., in [Australia](#) there is [a grass field installed four \(4\) years ago that is beloved](#) by residents and the Mossman Football Club (soccer).

Below is a document describing cost, installation and maintenance for a high use, sustainably managed Sonoma County soccer field:

Plastic, which pollutes from the moment petroleum is extracted, through plastic production, use, as well as during end-of-life disposal, is not needed. Los Altos should forego outdoor plastic surfacing in landscapes, on playgrounds, in dog parks, in community gathering areas and on sports fields.

Sincerely,

Susan Hinton

Chair, Plastic Pollution Prevention Committee

Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

<https://www.sierraclub.org/loma-prieta/plastic-pollution-prevention>

P.S. Chart from page 12 of the Toxic Use Reduction Institute's (TURI) updated, 2023 report on playground surfaces.

https://www.uml.edu/docs/Playground_surfacing_report_Dec2023_tcm18-377890.pdf

Table 4. Summary of health, environmental, and performance criteria

Materials are listed in order of least concern (green) to greatest concern (orange) to playground users based on concerns for each material.

Health & Environmental Hazard Criteria		
Material (color coding based on chemical hazards)	Possible chemicals of concern	Health effects associated with chemicals of concern
EWF, wood chips, bark mulch Tested for absence of CCA	— ^e	— ^e
Sand Tested for absence of crystalline silica dust	— ^e	— ^e
Pea gravel	— ^e	— ^e
EWF, wood chips, bark mulch Not tested for absence of CCA	Traces of CCA possible. ²	Arsenic exposure can increase risk of certain types of cancer. ¹⁹
Sand Not tested for absence of crystalline silica dust	Traces of crystalline silica dust. ²⁶	Inhalation of crystalline silica dust can cause respiratory disease, including lung cancer. ¹⁷
Bonded EWF	Binding substances can contain hazardous chemicals (such as MDI) before they have been cured. ²⁷	Respiratory issues, skin sensitization, development of asthma and possible carcinogenicity. (Primarily an occupational exposure concern.) ¹⁶
Artificial grass	PAHs, VOCs, heavy metals, phthalates, and others found in some infills; binding substances can contain hazardous chemicals (such as MDI) before they have been cured; grass blades can pose concerns as well. ^{5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14}	Carcinogenicity, endocrine disruption, respiratory irritation or skin irritation. ^{7, 9, 10}
Rubber tiles, PIP	PAHs, VOCs, heavy metals, phthalates; binding substances can contain hazardous chemicals (such as MDI) before they have been cured. ^{5, 6, 8, 11, 12}	Carcinogenicity, respiratory irritation or skin irritation. (Substances in binder primarily present occupational exposure concerns.) ^{7, 9, 10}
Loose-fill rubber	PAHs, VOCs, heavy metals, phthalates, and others. ^{c, 5, 8}	Carcinogenicity, endocrine disruption, respiratory irritation or skin irritation (CPSC notes that children frequently pick up or pick at, mouth, chew, or spit on loose-fill surfacing.) ^{7, 9, 10, 28}

a. Information on abrasion hazards associated with playground surfacing was not included in this report.

b. Mold growth is unlikely provided that drainage is adequate.

c. Exposure is likely to be greater with loose-fill rubber as children may handle and play with the material.

d. Some

e. TUR

Natural Grass Sports Field Installation and Management

Sonoma County Parks Department Case Study / How-To Guide

Presented by the Petaluma Climate Community

November 2024

SUMMARY

This document provides a technical and practical roadmap for the City of Petaluma to successfully install a sustainable, resilient, natural grass sports field at Lucchesi Park. Choosing climate-aligned natural grass would prevent a third installation of toxic, non-recyclable artificial turf that, despite industry promises, needs to be closed during winter and summer due to flooding and extreme heat hazards, respectively.

This document draws insights from the case study of Ragle Ranch Park Field 1, the first of a nine-field soccer complex, a project of Sonoma County Regional Parks. Ragle Ranch's installation practices align with Sebastopol's Integrated Pest Management Policy (IPMP) ordinance (no synthetic pesticides, including rodenticides),¹ demonstrating how climate and environmentally friendly approaches can deliver high-quality, durable sports fields that meet community needs while minimizing environmental impacts.

Achieving carbon neutrality requires natural grass fields, as they serve as vital carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and releasing oxygen. In addition to improving air quality, grass fields help filter dust and particulate pollution, contributing to healthier environments. Their ability to sequester carbon and mitigate airborne pollutants makes them an essential tool in reducing the ecological footprint of urban spaces, aligning with long-term sustainability goals.

The findings summarized in this document support the recent letter submitted to the City by numerous Petaluma environmental organizations, urging a transition from artificial turf to natural grass:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ngCdG14DB39U9T7fS2hYtGkdjq19J4Sg/view?usp=sharing>

These initial insights are intended solely as an exploratory starting point to encourage the City to initiate a formal study. This study would conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, including detailed assessments of real-world and local installation and maintenance costs, to ensure active recreation fields remain in good condition and provide equitable citywide access across all districts.

The learnings emphasize key techniques of technical flexibility, soil health, and preventive care in order to ensure alignment with Petaluma's climate, environmental, and sustainability goals and to comply with the City of Petaluma's IPMP principles.

¹ <https://www.cityofsebastopol.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/res5108sustainseb.pdf>

- Reduce chemical Inputs: Eliminate toxic chemicals to protect human health and the environment.
- Support soil microbiology/biodiversity: Build a healthy soil environment that promotes resilience to drought, pests, and diseases.
- Prevent runoff and leaching: Use sustainable practices to reduce water contamination and protect nearby ecosystems.

Rationale: Total Cost-Benefit Analysis of Natural Grass and Artificial Turf Sports Fields

Total cost-benefit analysis includes hard costs and soft costs such as climate, environmental, and health impacts. The focus is the hard cost of approximately \$150,000 for the Ragle Ranch natural grass field installation, which compares to the incomplete RFP \$2,500,000 cost of Lucchesi replacement (excludes recycling cost estimated by Republic Services of Sonoma County at \$50,000-\$70,000). The soft cost of Parks staff labor was approximately \$150,000. The true cost is still being realized as irrigation, use, fertilizer and now potentially soil biology tests are adding to the overall cost.

Natural grass has a lower total cost than artificial turf to install.

Ultimately, investing in natural grass fields not only promotes player safety and environmental health but aligns with the City of Petaluma's climate and long-term sustainability goals, offering a greener and more responsible alternative to artificial turf.

Although artificial turf offers more playtime compared to natural grass due to reduced maintenance and rest periods, the environmental and public health costs far outweigh this convenience. The total costs of natural grass vs. artificial turf sports fields includes many factors such as budget, playtime, public health and safety, liability risks, and climate impacts of:

- Destruction of soil and grass ecosystem carbon sequestration functions
- Heat island effects
- Environmental pollution and public health hazards related to micro- and nanoplastics, toxics, and forever chemicals
- Air, water, and soil pollution per micro/nano-plastics, toxics, and forever chemicals
- Significant greenhouse gas emissions generated by production and disposal of artificial turf

Despite the industry's promise of "all-weather" artificial turf, this turf is prone to closure. This has been the case at Lucchesi Park and Casa Grande High School turfs.

During the rainy season, it succumbs to drainage issues and flooding due to the impermeability of the base layer and clogging of the infill drainage system. This compromises player safety as well as usable hours. Although natural fields require downtime to recover, particularly after heavy rains, sustainable management practices—such as rotating fields and using drought-tolerant grass varieties—can extend their usability.

In summer, artificial turf becomes a heat island, reaching temperatures tens of degrees hotter than ambient temperature (often reaching surface temperatures above 160°F). This extreme heat prevents play because of heat stroke incidence rate. Additionally, on hot days, synthetic fields release toxic chemicals into the air, contributing to pollution, triggering headaches, and potentially exposing players to substances classified as possible carcinogens (Class 2B).

Natural grass offers greater utility, satisfaction, and environmental benefits than artificial turf, making it the superior choice for sports fields and public spaces. Ultimately, investing in natural grass fields not only promotes player safety and environmental health but aligns with long-term sustainability goals, offering a greener and more responsible alternative to artificial turf.

Please review the following documents submitted to the City of Petaluma, which offer a detailed analysis of why natural grass sports fields are the superior choice for climate sustainability:

- How-to Brief for Municipalities, “Natural Sports Turf and Playground Surface Solutions: Healthier, Safer, Lower Cost, Superior Performance, and Climate-Responsible.”
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18C-ISRHcwVR0WroVMmW75E-FGERUaYmn/view?usp=sharing>
- Petaluma community’s call for City of Petaluma to ban artificial turf, “The Health and Legal Hazards of Plastic Turf at Lucchesi Park.”
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ngCdG14DB39U9T7fS2hYtGkdjq19J4Sg/view?usp=sharing>

Methodology

The information below is related to Field 1, the inaugural soccer field installed in 2022 at Ragle Ranch in Sebastopol. The purpose was to renovate a grass field while mitigating the impact of gophers. Ragle Field 1 is a pilot project that is still being evaluated and is the first install of a nine-field soccer complex planned for the Park.²³ The projected total cost is \$3.5 million for nine sports fields (compared to Luchessi’s \$2.5 million).

Sonoma Parks: “These are very rough estimates. We are currently getting quotes on fields 3 and 4 based on landscaping drawings that were created in-kind by WESCO. The next step is if we need landscape architect/engineering which can be as much as \$50-\$100k as we have seen at Schopflin Regional Park.”

Dramatically less costly than artificial turf, the Ragle Ranch project is being viewed as a potential model for turf renovation and installation.

² <https://www.sonomacountyparksfoundation.org/ragle-ranch-soccer-fields.html>

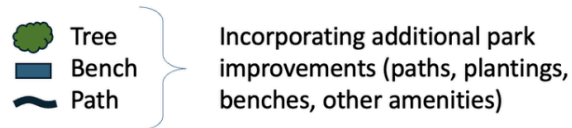
³ Ragle Ranch officially has 5 fields, with 9 total identified

Ragle Ranch Natural Grass Soccer Fields Plan (Estimates for Fundraising Purposes)



	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Field 1	Complete				
Field 2			\$750K		
Field 3		\$375K			
Field 4		\$750K			
Field 5				\$375K	
Field 6				\$375K	
Field 7					\$375K
Field 8			\$375K		
Field 9		\$100K			
TOTAL		\$1,250K	\$1,125K	\$750K	\$375

\$3,500K



The information presented in this document was provided by two sources:

1. Sonoma County Regional Parks management interviews: project management, maintenance staff, and consulting natural grass/sod expert
2. Beyond Pesticides organic land management technical resources

Background

The Sonoma County Regional Parks Department partnered with the local soccer community (WESCO) to install Field 1 of a nine-field soccer complex at Ragle Ranch in Sebastopol.

Per Sebastopol's climate goals and IPMP, the practice of gopher and weasel fumigation was dropped and replaced with their current standards of gopher wiring/caging and soil vitality management, as well as adoption of grass variety and technologies.

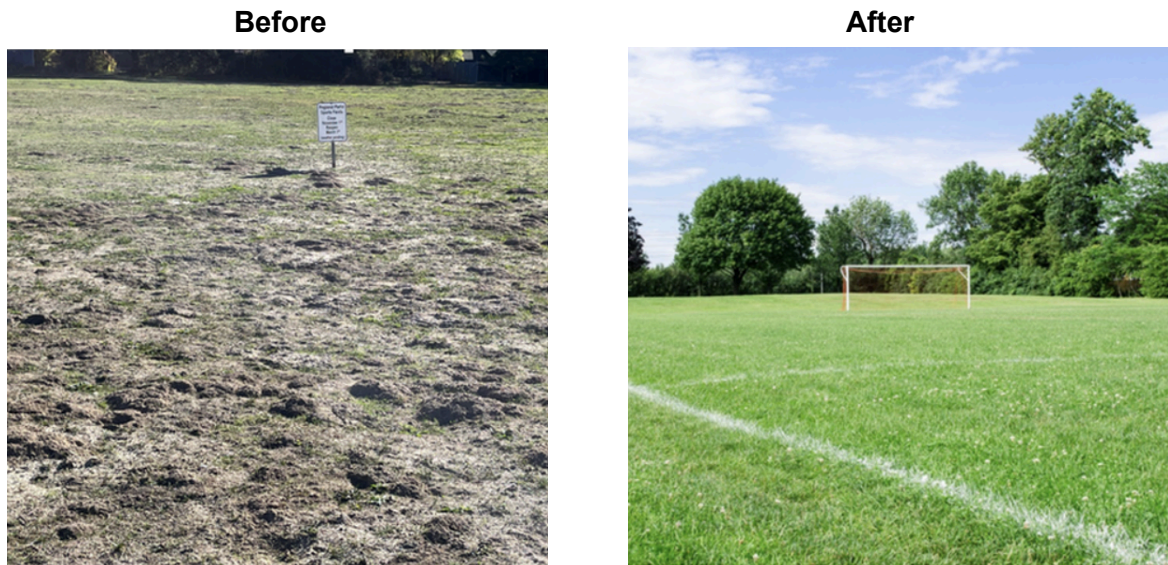
"The soccer fields at Ragle Ranch Regional Park in Sebastopol have been in awful shape for years. The main culprit behind the mounds and holes is a well-known feature of West County [(gophers)]."⁴

Weighing the full cost-benefit trade-offs between artificial turf and natural grass, the vision for Ragle Ranch was shaped through meaningful collaboration between the community and County Parks. The result is a climate-conscious, green sports hub and community gathering space where everyone can enjoy the full spectrum of health benefits – both tangible and intangible –

⁴ <https://www.sebastopoltimes.com/p/soccer-fields-among-improvements>

that come from playing soccer on a living, non-toxic grass-and-soil ecosystem. This model reflects a commitment to sustainability, fostering biodiversity, supporting carbon sequestration, and promoting human well-being through a natural environment that artificial turf simply cannot replicate.

Field 1 was installed in 2022.⁵



Field Specifics

Field 1, a regulation-sized soccer field, was installed by Sonoma County Regional Parks' in-house maintenance staff using the latest technologies for natural grass, irrigation, and gopher control. The native soil there is sand-clay. Similar to artificial turf installations, hardware fabric was placed beneath the field to prevent gopher damage. The project incorporated best practices (pre-stretched; 12-18" overlap; around sprinkler heads), including regular aeration, frequent mowing, soil testing, and the application of sustainable fertilizers and soil amendments (e.g., proper-depth aeration; raptor perch installations). These practices ensure a healthy, resilient playing surface that meets performance standards while supporting long-term environmental sustainability.

Process

There were two components of the installation project:

1. Installation of grass/sod
2. Maintenance to ensure successful establishment of the grass/sod

⁵ <https://www.sebastopoltimes.com/p/soccer-fields-among-improvements>

Budget Overview

Total install cost for Field 1, the inaugural soccer field at Ragle Ranch, was approximately \$300,000 (\$150,000 for field + \$150,000 for Parks staff labor), excluding irrigation infrastructure (compared with \$2.5 million for the Luchessi artificial turf reinstallation project). The total cost per adjustment and maintenance costs is still being realized as irrigation, use, fertilizer and soil biology tests are accrued.

INSTALLATION DETAILS

Below are the steps along with the considerations for installation and care for the Field 1 natural grass soccer field. The software program "Maintain X" was used for the project.

1. Site Evaluation and Soil Preparation

Evaluation and documentation of existing "sandy-clay" soil conditions is the very first step.

1. Assess soil texture, chemistry, and microbial health through soil testing and a baseline analysis: sod, top soil, bottom soil. Consideration of site conditions for drainage.
2. Analyze water.
3. Establish a fertility baseline; conduct soil food web assessments to determine nutrient availability and microbial activity.
4. Create a custom plan based on the site's specific needs; develop a fertility- and weed-control plan tailored to the field's conditions.
5. Plan field layout for intelligent sprinkler placement relative to goal locations and margins on either side to allow wear-management shifting of field lines).

Note on an organic systems approach:

- *Adopt preventive measures to ensure success.*
- *Use organic-compatible products: Apply only approved organic products listed under the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) or as permitted by FIFRA Section 25(b).*
- *Feed the soil: Apply compost, organic fertilizers, microbial inoculants, and soil amendments such as kelp, fish hydrolysate, and humic acids to support soil biology.*

2. Field 1 Installation Steps and Timeline

Five workers installed the Ragle Ranch field. Additionally, a natural grass expert was retained as project consultant.

Installation steps:

- Grade the field.
- Raise sprinklers.
- Install gopher-abatement hardware fabric with overlap, using pins and flattener/stretcher.
- Add topsoil.
- Lay new sod.
- Repair drainage lines and eliminate lips between the new sod and field edges.

- Seed the perimeter.

Field 1 Installation timeline:

- The project began in November 2022 but was paused several times due to rain and wet conditions.
- Grading resumed in July 2023.
- Topsoil and sod installation was completed between September and October 2023.
- Perimeter seeding and final steps were completed on October 19, 2023.
- Key issues: Discovered and repaired a drainage line issue. Some adjustments were needed after storms.

3. Maintenance Staffing

The key to long-term field maintenance is proactive measures like soil testing, irrigation adjustments, and grass care. This includes:

- Sprinkler maintenance, including nozzle adjustments (e.g., I20 and I25 replacements)
- Regular soil testing and analysis
- Seasonal fertilizing, aeration, and regular thatching to improve root penetration
- Ensuring sprinkler heads provide even coverage and checking for field overuse or wet spots
- Regular soil sampling, fungus monitoring, and application of Hydretain to retain moisture
- Mower blade height adjustment and overseed to reduce weed pressure and maintain a dense turf
- Monitoring of watering schedule, with adjustments to match seasonal needs and avoid waterlogging
- Weed and pest management: Use physical (e.g., hand weeding) and biological (e.g., beneficial insects) controls. Monitor pest thresholds and intervene only when necessary.

Note on maintenance resources:

- *Hire qualified personnel, contractors with expertise in organic turf management to ensure proper implementation. Provide clear guidelines and management expectations for subcontracted work.*

4. Continual Monitoring and Culture of Continuous Improvement

Continuous observation, adjustment, and training is key to field success per location-specific nuances.

- Test soil regularly: Perform ongoing soil tests to monitor fertility and microbial activity, ensuring optimal conditions for turf growth.
- Adjust management practices: Adapt irrigation, mowing, and fertilization practices as needed based on weather, field conditions, and test results.

Budget Details

Sonoma Parks reported total budget for the installation of the Ragle Ranch field was approximately \$300,000: \$50K was provided by the community; \$100K was provided by County Parks plus \$150K Parks staff labor.

Select Cost Details

Component	Approx. Quantity	Cost
Gopher wire	–	\$18,500
Pins for gopher wire	–	\$400
Fertilizer (60-20-10 Horizon)	–	\$761
Amended soil	450 cubic yards @ \$36 each	\$24,000*
Sod installation	70K sq ft	\$65,000
Miscellaneous	–	\$10,000
Staff labor		\$150,000

**** Replacing an artificial turf field with natural grass requires 2 feet of soil due to plastic turf killing the existing soil ecosystem. Therefore, multiply this cost (which is for 8" deep) by 3 to calculate the cost to install 2 feet-deep soil.***

Note on Integrated Bid Process: When outsourcing, ensure the management program is incorporated into the bidding process to align with organic management goals.

NEXT STEPS

1. Review Ragle Ranch's inaugural soccer field project:
<https://www.sebastopoltimes.com/p/soccer-fields-among-improvements>
2. Connect with Ragle Ranch natural grass field installation team:
 - a. David Robinson, Park Manager, Sonoma County Parks
 - b. Kristine Rue, Park Maintenance Supervisor, Sonoma County Regional Parks
 - c. Blaise Turek, Park Avenue Turf sod company
3. Connect with Beyond Pesticides
 - a. Rika Gopinath, Community Policy and Action Manager, Beyond Pesticides

Melissa Thurman

From: Sherry Auerbach <sauerbach379@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2026 10:29 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Jan. 27 City Council Meeting---Agenda item to renovate Grant and Shoup park play structures and surfacing

Dear City Council members,

My family moved to Los Altos in 1964 and I am lucky enough to have returned to this charming city in 1990. I spent my childhood playing at Shoup Park, as have my children, and now grandchildren. I see from your Jan. 27 agenda that the renovation of Grant and Shoup Park play structures and surfacing will be discussed. I am asking the Council to defer the approval of the budget designs that include artificial surfaces, in favor of maintaining natural play surfaces. The public should have the opportunity to review and comment on the designs.

My concern lies with the health ramifications if Pour-In-Place rubber playground surfaces are being considered. These surfaces consist of a mixture of rubber granules often made with waste tires that contain chemicals and heavy metals (ie Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, benzothiazoles, ketones, 6PPD quinones and more and variably contains heavy metals such as, lead and cadmium, and PFAS). High levels of lead, leading to playground closures in Montgomery Counties have been reported.

Safety concerns with weather temperature increases as these surfaces become very hot in direct sunlight.

These surfaces are alleged to be durable and low maintenance but when weekly vacuuming is skipped, the surfaces quickly start to fall apart.

As a resident of Los Altos, I am asking the Council to not consider Pour in Place rubber for the playground surfaces at Shoup and Grant Park for health and safety reasons and as an opportunity to maintain the natural beauty of these well used community spaces.

Let the public be a part of this decision.

Thank you,

Sherry Auerbach
379 Hawthorne Ave
Los Altos

References and Resources:

Heat readings at Kemp Mill urban Park Playground on Arcola Ave

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/N8iEA9nM9hpXdin29> Playground Surfacing - Toxics Use Reduction Institute <https://www.turi.org>

Playgrounds Should Be Fun and Toxic-Free <https://www.ecocenter.org/playgrounds-should-be-fun-and-toxic-free>

A recent study showed that PAH levels in dust were 4-5 times higher on PIP playgrounds compared to playgrounds with uncovered bare ground. Playground Surfaces The seven most common surface/filler materials for playgrounds are: pea gravel, sand, bark mulch/ wood chips, engineered wood fiber, crumb rubber, synthetic ...

https://www.uml.edu/docs/Playground_surfacing_report_Dec2023_tcm18-377890.pdf

Playground Surfacing -

Unitary rubber surfacing, including tiles and PIP surfacing, is made with granulated particles processed from materials such as waste tires, thermoplastic ... National Center for Health Research

<https://www.center4research.org>

<https://www.center4research.org/?s=Playground+> Are PIP rubber playgrounds safe for Kingston? The rubber pieces made from recycled tires contain lead and heavy metals, as well as chemicals that increase the chances of developing obesity.

<https://sfstandard.com/2025/05/02/san-francisco-playground-sunset-park-playground-cost-price>

Melissa Thurman

From: Barbara Zieroth-Hoffman <bjzh11@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2026 11:47 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: jan 27 council mtg agenda item #4 Grant/Shoup Parks playground renovations

Hello,

Please consider pausing the allocation of funds for the future renovations of playgrounds at Grant and Shoup Parks, and others, using a plastic (PIP) surface until further investigating the environmental & health impact. The natural surfaces currently work well, have no negative effects on the children who play on them or to the environment, and are economical. I can speak to the play areas at Apricot and Shoup Park where I take my granddaughter as perfect examples where wood chips act as a safe and sensible cushion, without the yucky smell, and heat attributed to toxic plastic surfaces.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Barbara Zieroth-Hoffman (a Los Altos resident for over 30 years)

Melissa Thurman

From: bloebner@sbcglobal.net
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2026 2:23 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: FW: Public Comment City Council Agenda Jan 27, 2026. Item #4 Playground Renovations
Attachments: 01 27 26 Former PARC Letter.pdf

Please include the attached letter in public comments related to Item #4 on the January 27th, 2026, City Council meeting Agenda.

Please acknowledge receipt of the email and attachment.

Thank you so much,

Barbara Loebner
1644 Newcastle Dr.
Los Altos, CA

January 26, 2026

RE: Los Altos City Council Agenda January 27, 2026

Item#4 Playground Renovations at Grant Park and Shoup Park

Los Altos City Council,

As former PARC commissioners, we believe it is unfair, unwise and unacceptable that the \$1,128,086.03 playground renovations at Shoup Park and Grant Park are not being discussed in a public forum prior to City Council confirming, by consent, a contract for the design, purchase and installation of playground equipment and safety surfacing.

Significant alterations to our public environments, built or natural, should not be decided by City Staff and just one “volunteer non-staff community member with knowledge and interest in the playground renovation projects.”

Los Altos has a long and strong tradition of relying on our PARC Commission with its appointed members and a clear purpose—

“The PARC advises the City Council in all matters pertaining to parks, public recreation and cultural arts. It works with all other governmental agencies and civic groups in the advancement of sound Parks and Recreational planning and programming. The Commission also makes budget recommendations to the Council regarding the same topics”

Given that two of our current City Council members are former PARC commissioners, we know you understand the importance and seriousness of the commission’s role in Los Altos.

Any and all alterations to parks and park facilities should begin at the PARC Commission where publicly noticed meetings serve not only to fulfill the PARC Commission duties for oversight and engagement, but to allow the community, and especially neighbors of the parks, an opportunity for robust review and discussion.

When items appear for the first, and only, time on the City Council Consent Calendar, there is no opportunity for public discussion or commission input.

Los Altos benefits from public engagement, and Los Altans deserve the opportunity to have a voice in decisions related to our common spaces.

Please remove *Item # 4: Adoption of Resolution - Playground Renovations at Grant Park and Shoup Park* from the Consent Calendar and send the playground proposals to the PARC

Commission with a staff report that clearly states project goals and requirements, and shows an alignment with the Parks Plan.

We have served a combined total of approximately 50 years on the PARC Commission.

Respectfully,

Cindy Andrews
Maria Bautista
David Casas
Karen Greguras
Shannon Kilgore
Lynette Lee Eng
Barbara Loebner

Melissa Thurman

From: Claire E <clairee44@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 9:24 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: January 27 Council Meeting Agenda #4 Playground Renovations

Dear Mayor Meadows, Vice Mayor Lang, and Honorable Councilmembers,

I am writing to ask you not to approve the conversion of the natural wood fiber playgrounds to synthetic PIP surfaces at Shoup and Grant Parks. I am a resident of Palo Alto. However, as Senior Ecologist for Grassroots Ecology, I helped start a partnership with Los Altos to restore habitat to Redwood Grove Nature Preserve, just upstream on Adobe Creek from Shoup Park. Over the years, I worked with many young people in that preserve to learn about and protect their natural environment.

Maintaining engineered wood fiber surfaces in our children's playgrounds shows them that we care about their futures. These surfaces are ADA compliant, and have no toxic additives. Poured-in-Place surfaces are made from a variety of synthetic materials with the potential to off gas and spall off exposing children and allowing it to enter the local environment, eventually making its way to the creek. Those who manufacture and install these surfaces are also exposed to toxins that are unnecessary.

Please consider improving the plans for these parks by using natural wood fiber, not potentially toxic synthetic materials.

Sincerely,
Claire Elliott
Emeritus Senior Ecologist, Grassroots Ecology

Melissa Thurman

From: Yanhua Mao <maoyanhua@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 5:29 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: non-agenda sepcific public comments for 01/27/26 (tonight's) city council meeting

In the city planning commission meeting two weeks ago, the commission unanimously expressed concern that their hands are tied by recent changes to state law that compelled them to approve eight-story buildings with 16 waivers—decisions the commission is not proud of.

They plan to engage with the city council to update the city's outdated objective design standards to curb similar developments in the future.

I fully support the commission's point of view and believe this is an urgent matter that the city must address quickly to preserve the character of our community and our way of life.

I would like to learn more about how to stay informed and up to date on this matter.



TO: Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture Commission

FROM: Manny A. Hernandez, Parks & Recreation Director

SUBJECT: Work Plan Projects – Process of Managing

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide Commissioners with an outline of expectations on managing work plan projects

BACKGROUND

Annually, the PARC creates their Work Plan with commissioners listed as assigned to the projects. Depending on the project, the Commission's involvement may vary so the commissioner assigned to the project is responsible for organizing whatever needs to be done. This does not mean the assigned commissioner(s) are responsible for all aspects of the project, but they would organize, delegate, update and report on the project through successful completion.

Here is a list of responsibilities that MAY be needed from the commissioners to complete Work Plan projects.

- Find out from the Commission/Staff what is the expected involvement
- Coordinate meetings between the working partners to plan for what is expected
- Schedule with appropriate outside groups (Staff, LAVA, etc.)
- Recruit and schedule additional commissioners for assignments and/or attendance
- Provide updates at commission meetings as applicable (Commissioner Updates)
- Present to the commission for action/recommendation (Discussion Item) as needed

The commission created a draft work plan that City Council expects will be completed in the 2026 calendar year. Staff is always available to answer questions and guide commissioners as much as possible.

Attachments:

- A. 2026 Workplan (Draft)