

DETERMINATION OF NON-SIGNIFICANCE

Description of proposal: **Loyal Heights Playfield Improvements**

Proponent: **Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation**

Location of proposal, including street address, if any: **2101 NW 77th Street**

Lead agency: **Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation**

The lead agency for this proposal has determined that it does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c). This decision was made after review of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.


- There is no comment period for this DNS.
- This DNS is issued under 197-11-340(2); the lead agency will not act on this proposal for 14 days from the date below. Comments must be submitted by October 28, 2005.

Responsible official: Kenneth R. Bounds

Position/title: Superintendent, Department of Parks and Recreation

Phone: 206-684-8022

Address: 100 Dexter Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98109

Date: 10/7/05 Signature: 

You may appeal this determination to Office of the Hearing Examiner at 1320 Alaska Bldg., 618 Second Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104 no later than 5:00 pm on November 4, 2005 by Appeal Letter and \$50.00 fee. You should be prepared to make specific factual objection. Contact the Seattle Examiner to read or ask about the procedures for SEPA appeals.

ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Proposal Name: **Loyal Heights Playfield Improvements**

Address of Proposal: **2101 NW 77th Street**

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

This proposal implements a Pro Parks Levy project. According to the Levy, the intent is to “[u]pgrade and improve play surfaces and field amenities.” This project will rebuild the existing two ballfields and football/soccer field with synthetic FieldTurf© for year-round, all-weather use, improved quality of play and requiring minimal annual field maintenance. The six existing light poles will be removed and up to ten (10) new light poles will be installed. Approximately 3,500 cubic yards of soil will be removed from the site.

SEPA DETERMINATION: Determination of Non-Significance (DNS)

BACKGROUND DATA

Existing Conditions

Loyal Heights Playfield takes its name from the community, which was named by the realtor and developer Harry Whitney Treat to honor his daughter Loyal. The playfield was created in 1942 “for park and playground purposes”. Soon after 1945, playfield development began with grading, drainage, seeding, and fencing. A baseball backstop and irrigation were added in 1949, and a second backstop in 1962. New field lighting and irrigation replacement were installed in 1971 and 1995 respectively.

Loyal Heights Playfield is located in Northwest Seattle on the north edge of the Ballard neighborhood. The playfield site covers two square blocks and is bordered by 22nd Avenue NW on the west, 20th Ave NW on the east, NW 77th Street on the north, and NW 75th Street on the south. The playfield’s six acres includes the community center at the northeast corner, and in the northwest corner, a play area, turf meadow and asphalt path. The actual field play surfaces are slightly less than three acres, covering the south half of the site. There are no identified Environmentally Critical Areas, as defined and mapped by the City of Seattle, located on the site.

Nearby schools include Loyal Heights Elementary, four blocks northwest, and Whittier Elementary, less than one half mile east. Ballard High School is located two thirds of a mile to the southeast.

The current playfield is natural turf, including a baseball field in the southwest corner, Field #1, a softball field in the northeast corner, Field #2, and a combined football/soccer field in the shared outfields set in a northwest to southeast diagonal layout. Ornamental landscape plants surround most of the fields and a recently upgraded irrigation system provides watering and dust control for five and one half acres of fields and landscaping.

During the winter months, the fields become unusable due to rainfall. Play on wet fields can cause significant damage to the fields and requires extensive maintenance prior to allowing use to resume.

Proposal Description

Seattle Parks and Recreation will rebuild the two existing ballfields and football/soccer field for year-round, all-weather use and improved quality of play. The existing grass field surfaces will be removed and resurfaced with FieldTurf® material, fences will be replaced, and the existing bathrooms upgraded for universal (ADA) access. The existing six (6) lights will be replaced and up to ten (10) new light standards and security lighting will be added as part of this project. Excavation will occur to remove the existing turf and subgrade. Approximately 3,500 cubic yards soil and turf will be removed and disposed of off-site at an approved location, as yet to be determined. In its place, clean mineral aggregate will be imported and placed as bedding for the new synthetic turf surface. Drainage through the synthetic turf is designed to be very similar to that through natural grass.

Public Comment

Seattle Parks and Recreation conducted three public meetings in 2005 to discuss the improvements to the site. On August 12th, Parks Superintendent Ken Bounds approved the 7/28/05 Board of Park Commissioner's recommendation to add a synthetic surface to Loyal Heights Playfield. Superintendent Bounds also approved new field lights as part of the project. There is a Pro Parks sign on site generally describing the project. Subsequent notification is expected to occur as the project proceeds. Due to the increase in field lighting the project requires final approval by the Seattle City Council, with additional opportunities for public input.

ANALYSIS - SEPA

Initial disclosure of potential impacts from this project was made in the applicant's environmental checklist and supplemental materials, dated September 22, 2005. The basis for this analysis and decision is formed from information in the checklist, associated graphics and information, and the lead agency's experience with review of similar projects.

Short Term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected: (1) temporary soil erosion; (2) decreased air quality due to increased dust and other suspended air particulates during excavation, filling and transport of materials to and from the site as well as due to vehicle exhaust from operation of construction equipment; (3) increased noise and vibration from construction operations and equipment; and (4) slightly increased traffic and parking demand from construction personnel traveling to and from the work site. These impacts are not considered significant because they are temporary and localized in scope.

Although not significant, the impacts are potentially adverse and for that reason are addressed by City codes and/or ordinances, State of Washington and federal regulations, as well as relevant permits, specifically:

- Grading and Drainage Control Ordinance (storm water runoff, temporary soil erosion and site excavation);
- Street Use Ordinance (tracking mud onto City streets, and potential traffic restrictions during hauling and delivery of soils);
- Noise Control Ordinance (construction equipment); and,
- Street Use Permit from the City of Seattle for any work in the public right of way.

Compliance with these applicable codes, ordinances and regulations will be adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation. The traffic and parking demand impacts of construction personnel, and other impacts not noted above as mitigated by codes or conditions are not sufficiently adverse to warrant further mitigation by conditioning. Erosion will be prevented by implementation of a required Temporary Erosion Control and Sedimentation Plan. Best Management Practices, such as the use of a stabilized construction entrance, mulching and hydro seeding will be implemented at the site to minimize erosion during construction. Construction will take place during the drier months to minimize rain impacts during grading. No significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated and thus no mitigation measures are warranted or necessary.

Long Term Impacts

Lighting, traffic and parking, and increased usage of the fields raise the potential for long-term impacts. The number of light poles will increase from six to up to ten and new light fixtures will be installed on the poles. Parks is in the process of hiring a lighting consultant to spec the proper fixture type and placement. The goal of the new lights is to better light the playing surfaces and eliminate to the maximum amount possible any spillover light and/or glare which could negatively affect surrounding residents. Increasing the number of lights allows the lighting designer to better direct the fixtures to safely cover the playfields while reducing the potential for adverse spillover impacts on surrounding residences. No significant adverse light-related environmental impacts are anticipated and thus no mitigation measures are warranted or necessary.

Part of the submitted information that was reviewed as part of this analysis was a parking study prepared by CTS Engineers, dated September 2005. The report indicated that there are 500 available on-street parking spaces within one block of the park. At no time during the study were more than 200 spaces in use. While the use of the park will be increased with the addition of the synthetic surface, the hours of operation will not be increased. The use of the fields will extend through the winter months, but the hours of operation will be slightly reduced. Thus it is expected that the parking demand will remain constant, year round instead of fluctuating seasonally. The parking study concluded that the resurfacing of the playfields would not generate additional parking demand unless additional activities are planned for the park. No additional activities are planned and the number of fields is not being increased. Thus, no significant adverse parking-related environmental impacts are anticipated and no mitigation measures are warranted or necessary.

As indicated in the checklist, current playfield scheduling allows for the baseball and softball fields to be played on concurrently, or one soccer or football game. That will remain the same with the new surface. The number of fully scheduled hours is expected to increase 1,066 hours over the course of the year, with the increase predominantly attributable to winter usage. The actual hours of the day the fields could be in use will remain basically unchanged with a limited reduction in hours on the weekends in consideration of neighboring properties. Current use of the grass athletic field for informal play (to fly kites, picnic, run) can continue when the field is replaced by a synthetic surface during the times the field is not reserved for scheduled games and practices. Capacity for games and practices will also increase, primarily in the winter months (November to March) when the existing grass field had been closed. Extending the use of the field through the winter will primarily benefit Ballard youth soccer players who must practice and play outside of the neighborhood during the months the field is closed. By a conservative estimate, Ballard youth soccer teams will gain 464 hours of play close to home. Other user groups may also schedule games during the winter months and participants may not be local. Traffic patterns may

change during the winter usage depending on the groups using the fields. However, overall traffic volumes are not expected to increase significantly. No significant adverse recreation-related environmental impacts are anticipated and no mitigation measures are warranted or necessary.

Because the project involves improvements to make a site usable year-round by the community, long-term environmental impacts of the project are generally favorable.

DECISION

This decision was made after the responsible official, on behalf of the lead agency, reviewed a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and final decision on application of SEPA's substantive authority and mitigation provisions. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirement of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21.C), including the requirement to inform the public of agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

- (X) Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).
- () Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. AN EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).

Signature:  _____

David Graves, AICP
Senior Park Planner, Major Projects and Planning Section
Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Date: 3 October 2005