



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL

Planning and Zoning:

Staff Report on Artificial Turf Public Opinion Survey

January 24th, 2023

Purpose and Overview of Data Results

In the October 2022 Planning and Zoning meeting, the board members requested city staff gauge the public's opinion on the artificial turf installed among residential properties. The board sought to determine the popularity of artificial turf with the people before establishing zoning regulations in the city code. The artificial turf public opinion survey was developed by the city planner and city manager and then reviewed by other staffers to ensure the questions were understandable to the general public.

The public opinion survey yielded a maximum of 107 responses, and the lowest documented response (on Question #5) yielded 99 responses. Most of the questions are presented on a Likert Scale of 1-5, including a "Neutral" option. The various rating options allow the reader(s) to distinguish between "extreme" opinions, those uncertain, and individuals who lie in-between strong opinions.

Questions #7 and #10 allowed for individualized comments from participants. These comments demonstrate specific concerns about artificial turf on residential lots at the micro and macro level - among individual lots and for the neighborhood overall. The responses for Questions #7 and #10 are listed below. Based on the written responses provided, the most common concerns for allowing artificial turf within the city dealt with the product's environmental impacts (specifically with Lake Conway's water quality, storm runoff, toxic pollutants, and natural preservation).

Direct Comments Provided from the Survey

Q7: Do you have concerns or reservations about allowing artificial turf on individual residential lots? If so, please explain.

- If not properly installed and maintained it becomes an eyesore.
- My perception is that artificial turf is desirable by some because it is "maintenance free"; however, for some people that will become no maintenance ever, thereby creating areal eye sore. Additionally, allowing this is just going to create the need for more municipal oversight and expense for taxpayers.
- This reduces pervious area, creates plastic microbes, encourages mold growth, and creates a huge plastic waste problem.
- Natural grass allows rainwater to drain into the soil. Keeps trees, shrubs, plants healthy. Allows rain to drain away instead of pooling on top of artificial turf. Artificial turf should not be allowed on residential lots.
- It looks ... cheap and it's not environmentally conscious. Plastic grass? We already have a micro plastic problem.
- My neighbors have artificial grass in their back yard. They have two large dogs that use it to go potty on and the ground doesn't absorb it like traditional grass so I get the pleasure of smelling it all day.
- Where will the water drain off to? City say significant impact with flooding from hurricane Ian.
- would want it limited i.e. portions of driveways, walkways etc. base surface of artificial turf not permeable
- Impacts environment: creates breeding ground for cockroaches, inhibits birds from eating bugs/grubs/and the like. Does not allow soil underneath to gain nutrients it needs for sustainability, trees, etc... The turf will act as a solarization blanket killing the 'good' bugs and organisms for healthy soil. Turf gets worn and can look like a used old carpet with patches of wear - this is not a good look for neighborhood and market
- Artificial turf is just that...Artificial. It is composed of toxic chemicals, which over time leach into our environment. We already have so many pollutants in our soils and lakes. Allowing artificial turf will exponentially increase the toxic load of our environment. It is NOT a good idea.
- AT doesn't seem the best for healthy lakes.
- They do not hold up well to dog and cat pee the edges turnup after a year or two and good turf is very expensive
- No problems with Belle isle grasses.
- Several environmental concerns - loss of animal habitat and synthetic materials
- Environmental impacts, drainage, unsightly (plastic and fake looking), How will it stand up to hurricane winds and torrential rains, rain runoff affects neighbors, Does not absorb CO2 emissions and cannot produce oxygen, it must harbor bacteria when dogs/animals poop and pee on it...ugh. This is not being good stewards of our environment. Our increased emissions associated with more people living here and driving and then putting in artificial turf that cannot help mitigate the emissions effects and may even make it worse. Water filtration before it gets

to the lakes would not happen on a plastic turf with hard compacted soil that does not absorb rain. Therefore, all the chemicals will go directly into the lake. How does the AT hold up to the sun and when it breaks down, will it put harmful chemicals into the lakes, atmosphere, and soil? It is made of plastic, some of which are known carcinogens and others may be found out to be at a later date. Natural turf is not cancerous and will not create gases that are harmful. Those with AT will be blaming you when the next hurricane comes and they flood because the water did not drain. This really cannot be a good idea. It is as bad as letting someone concrete their yard. You let one person then everyone will want to do it because of low maintenance and it stays green. Think of the problems when a whole neighborhood goes that direction.

- There are several environmental concerns associated with artificial turf including loss of wildlife habitat, contaminated runoff and migration of synthetic materials. Contaminants that are harmful to aquatic life, such as zinc, have been found in storm water runoff from artificial turf. Because natural materials such as grass absorb carbon dioxide during photosynthesis, replacing them with artificial grass also directly contributes to the increase of carbon dioxide (a primary greenhouse gas) in the atmosphere.
- Not appropriate-this is not a golf course. No way artificial turf is as eco-friendly as organic materials. My neighbor has artificial turf and it's an eye sore.
- should be like concrete and only allow a percentage
- Cheap, poorly maintained artificial turn looks terrible. Also, need to make sure it doesn't impact drainage.
- Maybe for front yard approval should be considered, I; however, I do not see a reason for well manicured backyards.
- That it be kept clean and free of debris
- It's better than using chemicals to maintain grass.
- Should only be allowed in back yards, less then 25% of total back yard, due to drainage issues the turf will cause.
- Recent street flooding from Ian shows we don't need more run-off.
- 1. Artificial turf will create serious problems for OC landfill. Life is only 8 years. It will prevent rainwater replenishing the aquifer., to subsurface are problematical. Unsightly and a difficult issue for code enforcement. AT was intended for football fields where there are sufficient funds to maintain it.
- I'm concerned about how it would look if it was not properly maintained (rips, tears, weathering, etc.)
- Belle Isle is an ecological paradise where humans, homes, and wildlife thrive because of our landscapes and lakes. Artificial turf can disrupt our local ecology which manages to thrive despite heavy development.
- There is no section to elaborate on support of artificial turf, so I will use this portion of the survey. While artificial turf is not the optimal selection in all landscape instances, there are many scenarios where it is the superlative choice (ie: low light or covered areas, as an option to other hardscape materials for foot traffic areas, pool decks, patio extensions, etc.). Also, please note

that question 8 is not exclusive of artificial turf... Florida Friendly plant selections can be complimented with the use of artificial turf.

- My only concern is what will it look like in time.
- Can't imagine what it would look like after a few years
- Belle Isle is known for its natural beauty. Beautiful lakes, large lots, huge trees, and wildlife. We are a bird sanctuary. We just had flooding and it could interfere with absorption of water into the ground. While it does not need to be mowed, it still has to be maintained.
- In my opinion, it would look too different than other neighboring lots and would take away from the aesthetics of the neighborhood. Another issue would be landscaping and mowing your own yard when that is next to your property line.
- Where will it be allowed? Within view?
- It's trashy if not maintained. Not environmentally friendly.
- While artificial turf may look ok when it is first installed, it will deteriorate over time. It is a relatively impervious surface which will result in an increase in runoff and flooding on neighboring properties, the lakes and roads. Depending on the product it can actually increase temps. It may save on fertilizer run-off into the lakes, but it creates other environmental problems.
- I'm in this Neighborhood because of the nature.
- There is enough plastic in the world and not enough pollinators. Educate and encourage our community to plant Florida native plants
- Look it's well documented that lawns are an environmental disaster. We want the "natural" look but lawn if we're honest isn't natural and in a lake community is something of a disaster. Native options are typically best but are not in line with our cultural expectations of middle and upper class America. The real question is what impact does artificial grass have on the environment esp. our local ecosystem and I don't think enough information is presented in this survey or do the general lay public know enough to make a truly informed decision to guide policy.
- Release of artificial chemicals into the water
- It looks just as its name implies: it is ARTIFICIAL grass. I have seen it used residentially and if not properly cared for it will mildew and etc. bringing down the value of the community.
- We are a suburban area on a lake chain and artificial turf would detract from the natural Florida beauty of the community.
- My neighbor has it in their backyard. When all factors are considered it is not a plus for the environment.
- We need a brief information sheet outlining the pros and cons. I've seen the installation at the school which looks okay. Why are people against it??

Q10: Are you concerned about the impact(s) artificial turf may have on the whole neighborhood? If so, please explain.

- If artificial turf reduces irrigation loads and fertilizer runoff into Lake Conway then I small for it
- If in front yards can become ugly and impact neighboring property values.
- Implied lawn not requiring will evolve into property receiving no landscaping care and maintenance
- No concerns, I'm not sure why turf is such an issue. I think it's beautiful, clean and don't understand why there would be rules to adding turf on your own property.
- Environmental issues mentioned before and un maintained AT.
- Looks fake & may not be maintained properly. Cheapens appearance of community. Can lead to flooding during hurricanes, storms, etc. since water can't drain through.
- In wouldn't want plastic grass in the neighborhood anymore than I would want someone to fill their yard with plastic bags or other non-biodegradable garbage.
- It looks bad and won't be maintained properly
- storm water runoff
- Rain runoff: where will it go with heavy storms? What about residents that want a turf color other than the natural green grass look?
- Never knew it wasn't allowed but considered it for our backyard. Doesn't make much sense to disallow it as long as it looks good and is kept up. In most cases it would look better than 70% of the yards in the city that don't maintain them. It's worked/looks great for CCA, so why not?
- could potentially flood out neighbors if not installed correctly, using minimal amounts of artificial turf as accents to driveways etc. would look nice
- There are different grades of turf and most will not take the Florida sun and rain very well - overtime, it will look ratty, worn, patchy - I cannot see neighbors spending the money to keep turf replaced so it looks good.
- None of the neighbors business. They own the land. It's reasonable to use as the owner sees fit This is an overreach by the city.
- If code enforcement doesn't stay on top of AT it will look like trash.
- My daughter has a neighbor with this turf and it does not hold up well to pets
- Hideous, inconsistent, postage stamp zoning
- Loss of animal habitat, more a synthetic Materials. Florida has beautiful natural options
- [...] ugly and fake looking and will look horrible butted up next to God-made plants and landscaping, lack of proper drainage, impacts to the environment. It really is not environmentally friendly at all.....man-made vs God-made. Hardly a comparison. Definitely not in residential neighborhoods.
- drainage issues, increased heat emissions, leaching of plastics into the lake, looks trashy (devaluation of home and neighborhood property values)
- Not good for the environment. Lowers property values.
- Can look bad if poorly installed or not maintained.

- I've seen artificial turf used in many areas around town and good quality well maintained turfs look very nice and require no water. I feel that front lawns should stay natural; however, not focus area, areas with little sunlight and backyard oasis's should be up to the property owner to determine the right type of permeable alternatives if grass would impose a challenge or they would like to conserve water.
- Just do it's not cheap looking and is kept clean and kept in good shape
- No. Many "manicured" lawns use tacky red dyes mulch so why not artificial turf?
- It only looks good for a few years and will have to be replaced
- Ian showed us that street drainage was overwhelmed. We don't need more runoff
- Repairs are expensive. BI would have a problem enforcing care and maintenance. BI does not have timely code enforcement. Risks to aquifer. We have no info on chemicals used for subsurface soil preparation...
- Artificial turf is HOT. The staff report said the heat can be mitigated...that citation is from the UK, not Florida. Here is a video from UF showing artificial turf reaching 150 degrees F on an average Summer day. The unintended consequences are massive. I have had artificial turf in a shady area in a former home. It is smelly. Just gross!
- Artificial turf materials are similar to other landscape hardscape and ground cover selections. When installed correctly, with reasonable design and well maintained, it can be a true enhancement to our community.
- Will start looking shabby!!
- We need to maintain the natural beauty of our City.
- Appearance, maintenance, micro plastics
- Worried about creating even more dead zone areas where plants and animals should exist. Concerned about water runoff and permeability.
- Nature vs plastic. Yuck
- Run Off, drive nature to other communities, "set it and forget it" mentality - just because it is fake doesn't mean it doesn't need maintenance. If we are the city of trees, does this even remotely make sense?
- You have to show environmental impacts in a survey like this....you can't just say hey do you like this or like that. Lawns aren't good....but is artificial better....your asking for a purely aesthetic consideration in an area with real environment consequences.
- Release of chemicals, increase the ground temperature, decrease in ground absorption
- * CAN IMPACT AMBIANCE OF SURROUNDING REALESTATE. * DELUTE PROPERTY VALUES * JUST PLAINUGLY!!
- Ruins natural continuity of the surroundings.
- Already too much artificial surface which is not good for the environment.
- Need more information!
- No permit should be needed as this is part of landscaping like sodding
- negative effect on wildlife and environment. Loss of natural appearance and functions.