

From: Pam Bond

Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 10:48 AM

To: Council <Council@losgatosca.gov>

Subject: Comments regarding 2/13/24 Special Meeting regarding Strategic Plan

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Los Gato Town Councilmembers,

Please see attached my letter regarding input on the Strategic Plan discussion.

Sincerely,

Pam Bond

February 13, 2024

Dear Los Gatos Town Councilmembers,

I am writing regarding Los Gatos' Strategic Plan and I would like to recommend that a discussion around limiting or banning artificial turf be highlighted for consideration in the 2024-26 timeline if it is not already. This is a pressing matter as people are inclined to install artificial turf as a drought saving measure, particularly in California, but the reality is that artificial turf is not going to help us if we enter a drought period again. I don't know if this might involve an ordinance and so I'd like to flag the possibility of an ordinance relating to the use of artificial turf.

In Section 6.14 Implementation Programs of the 2040 General plan, for the 2020-2025 timeline **Program A Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance** and **Program C Artificial Turf** are very much related and align with Valley Water's stance on use of artificial turf. See: [Valley Water Artificial Turf Fact Sheet](#). I won't go into the details around Valley Water's recommendation against the use of artificial turf, but the main points are that artificial turf is not a living landscape and so it does not contribute to a healthy environment, artificial turf uses water anyway, and there are environmental concerns with use of artificial turf.

As part of the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance I think it is critical that artificial turf not be incentivized or promoted as a product for reducing water use. And ultimately, I would like the Town to consider banning artificial turf.

I have been involved in researching artificial turf since 2020 when the Los Gatos Union School District was considering whether to replace existing grass fields with artificial turf at several elementary schools. Since the decision in 2022 to keep grass fields at the elementary schools, I have remained active in the discussions and decisions in California and the East Coast regarding artificial turf. I and other local parents are in close communication with several non-profits who are advocating for natural grass or other drought tolerant natural landscaping. These non-profits have scientists, epidemiologists, chemists and grass experts and researchers at their disposal for help in getting the science right. And the science is telling us that artificial turf is an unregulated petrochemical with multitudes of environmental and human health issues. Here are just two of the organization's fact sheets on artificial turf to review.

Center for Health and Environment (CHE):

<https://www.healthandenvironment.org/join-us/blog/playing-on-plastic-artificial-turf-hazards-and-safer-alternatives>

Beyond Plastics:

<https://www.beyondplastics.org/fact-sheets/synthetic-turf>

In town, I have seen artificial turf used for gas station landscaping and I have seen it used in front yards that are unused. Residents just like the look of something green or they don't have time to maintain their yard. What no one thinks about is the heat emitted, the shedding of microplastic fibers over time, potential flow of plastic bits and chemicals into storm drains, what to do when you have to replace it, and the emission of greenhouse gases from the plastic for

the life of the product: See Sarah-Jeanne Royer's article. She "is a postdoctoral research fellow with the marine biology research division, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego."

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2019/02/20/synthetic-turf-will-contribute-greenhouse-gas-problems/>

Many think residential and commercial uses for landscaping don't use tire crumb rubber and so it's not as bad. The artificial turf industry is really good at greenwashing and this is incredibly important to keep in mind when you read about their products. The reality is that the artificial turf industry "improves" the plastic grass product by adding more unregulated chemicals to petrochemical-made plastic. And the artificial turf industry adds UV protectants, fire retardants, colorants, chemicals to make the plastic softer, and other unknowns to make their product sound better than the rest. Even if you get a "bio-based" plastic (meaning some percentage of the plastic is derived from plants and not petrochemicals), it almost always still contains petrochemical plastic. And bio-based plastic is still, in the end, plastic, and still contains all of those chemicals added to make the product seem better.

You can look to Millbrae for inspiration and technical advice. The City passed a ban on artificial turf soon after AB676 passed both houses and was signed by Governor Newsom. See more about SB 676 here:

<https://www.ijpr.org/environment-energy-and-transportation/2023-10-24/once-it-was-hailed-as-a-drought-fix-but-now-californias-moving-to-restrict-synthetic-turf-over-health-concerns>

Boston banned artificial turf in parks:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/30/boston-bans-artificial-turf-toxic-forever-chemicals-pfas>

As inspiration, I'd like to note that during a [Beyond Plastics](#) training session, a 12-year-old had registered and was in attendance for the training designed for groups who want to become affiliates of Beyond Plastics. My 11 year old read my public comments before the last Town Council meeting (and approved!), and a local Saratoga High School environmental club currently has artificial turf on its main agenda. Their capacity to try to move mountains in this area is inspiring and I believe their comments and letters have inspired more thought from decision makers. We should take direction from the youth who will inherit the decisions we make today.

I hope you will consider serious discussion regarding General Plan section 6.14 Programs A and C in the near term as laid out in the General Plan and take the wording of Program C a step further than determining the "appropriate use of artificial turf". I believe that any possible use of artificial turf can be addressed with much more environmentally friendly and healthy choices.

Sincerely,

Pam Bond
Los Gatos resident and parent