



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PARKS AND SUSTAINABILITY
COMMISSION REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 10/05/2026

ITEM NO: 2

DATE: October 5, 2026
TO: Parks and Sustainability Commission
FROM: Nicolle Burnham, Parks and Public Works Director
SUBJECT: Receive a Report on Potential Criterion for Field Use and Provide Feedback

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a Report on potential criterion for a field use policy. Staff will use Parks and Sustainability Commission (the Commission) feedback to develop a comprehensive Town-wide Athletic Field Use Policy for future consideration.

BACKGROUND:

The Town of Los Gatos owns and manages fields that serve a variety of users, including youth sports organizations, adult sports groups, nonprofit organizations, individual residents, non-residents, and informal recreational users.

Town fields are a limited public resource and must accommodate competing demands while also allowing adequate time for maintenance, field recovery, and closures when conditions are warranted. A Town-wide Field Use Policy would establish a consistent framework for determining how fields are reserved, allocated, and used.

Staff started to develop a field use policy in late 2024, following a recommendation from the Commission in June 2024. The Commission heard an item related to field use policy in October 2024 and received a draft policy for review in February 2025. At that time the Commission recommended that staff proceed with developing the policy. In 2025, Parks and Public Works experienced staff turnover that prevented further work on the policy.

The purpose of the October 2026 Parks Commission discussion is to allow the current Commission the opportunity to weigh in on the fundamental principles that should guide the Town's management and allocation of athletic fields. With this item staff intend to define the direction and next steps for work in bringing a final draft Field Use Policy forward for Commission and Town Council consideration.

PREPARED BY: Tyler Thomas
Superintendent

DISCUSSION:

Following is a series of policy questions that staff would like the Commission to discuss. Staff intends to develop a policy that could be applied to various Town assets such as soccer fields, tennis / pickleball courts, or other field areas such as at Oak Meadow Park and Blossom Hill Park.

Resident and Non-Resident Rates

The first policy question is whether Town residents and qualifying resident organizations should receive a different field-use rate than non-residents.

A resident/non-resident rate structure could recognize the investment Town residents make in Town facilities while still allowing non-residents and regional organizations to access available field space. If the Town establishes different rates, staff would ultimately need to develop clear definitions of resident and non-resident users and determine how those classifications apply to individuals and organizations.

Reservation Requirements

The second policy question is whether all use of Town athletic fields should require a reservation or permit.

A reservation requirement provides the Town with greater ability to manage field schedules, identify responsible users, prevent scheduling conflicts, coordinate maintenance, and manage the intensity of field use. However, Town athletic fields also function as public recreational spaces. Requiring a reservation for every use could limit the ability of residents to casually use an available field for informal recreation.

One option would be to require reservations for organized use while allowing individuals and small informal groups to use fields on a drop-in basis when the field is open and not reserved. Another option would be to designate certain fields or certain hours as reservation-only while maintaining opportunities for open public use. A Town-wide policy does not necessarily need to apply that same requirement to every park asset.

One example of why reservations could be helpful pertains to the Creekside Sports Park. In the past, youth sport groups reserved the field for certain times through Use Agreements. At times when organized groups were not using the field, pick-up soccer games were often played. The field is not fully fenced so this ad hoc use cannot be prevented or managed. This allows community use of the field but also allows certain users free access, which some might not consider equitable.

Residency Requirements for Organized Sports

Determining whether an individual is a Town resident is relatively straightforward. Determining whether an organization should qualify as a "resident organization" is more complicated.

An organized sports program may be based in Los Gatos but include participants from throughout the surrounding area. Conversely, an organization with an address outside the Town could potentially serve a significant number of Los Gatos residents. For this reason, staff is seeking Commission feedback on whether organizations requesting resident rates or priority should demonstrate the percentage of their participants who are Town residents.

For a Town-wide policy, organizations such as youth soccer and lacrosse programs could be required to provide annual residency information as part of the field allocation process if they wish to receive resident status. Staff would need to develop a verification process that is administratively reasonable and avoids collecting unnecessary personal information, particularly information involving minors.

Priority for Organized Sports

The fourth policy question involves how limited athletic field space should be allocated among competing users.

Organized sports programs generally require recurring and predictable field times for practices and games. Allocating field space in advance allows these organizations to establish schedules and provides the Town with a predictable pattern of field use. At the same time, Town athletic fields are public facilities and should provide opportunities for residents who do not participate in organized sports.

A Town-wide policy could establish an allocation hierarchy giving priority to certain types of users while preserving some field availability for general recreation. That hierarchy should not automatically be assumed to apply Town-wide. The Commission may wish to consider whether priority should instead distinguish between youth sports, adult sports, schools, nonprofits, individual residents, tournaments, camps, commercial programs, and other users.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The four questions presented to the Commission are interconnected.

For example, if resident sports organizations receive both reduced rates and priority access, the definition of a resident organization becomes particularly important. Residency would determine not only what an organization pays, but potentially whether it receives access to limited field space ahead of another organization.

Similarly, prioritizing organized sports without preserving some opportunity for informal use could result in Town fields functioning primarily as scheduled athletic facilities rather than public recreational spaces.

In refining the policy, staff will need to balance several objectives, including:

- Providing equitable access to Town athletic fields;

- Supporting youth and community recreation;
- Recognizing the interests of Town residents;
- Providing reasonable access for regional and non-resident users;
- Establishing a transparent and consistent allocation process;
- Protecting fields from excessive use;
- Providing adequate maintenance and turf recovery periods; and
- Establishing fees that appropriately support the cost of operating and maintaining athletic facilities.

The Commission's direction on these broad principles will allow staff to develop the more detailed administrative provisions necessary to implement a Town-wide policy. Following the October Parks Commission meeting, staff will incorporate Commission feedback into a draft Town-wide Athletic Field Use Policy.

The future policy could address definitions and residency standards; user classifications and allocation priorities; seasonal allocation procedures; reservation and permit requirements; resident and non-resident fee structures; cancellations and refunds; insurance requirements; field closures and wet-field procedures; turf preservation and rest periods; tournaments and special events; prohibited activities; and enforcement.

Staff would return to the Parks and Sustainability Commission with a more detailed policy framework for review before proceeding with final adoption through the appropriate Town process.