

Gleason Fields Community Playfield

Park Board Workshop and Public Input

07-18-19

Purpose of the Meeting

The goal of this meeting is to present a progress report of the feasibility study update and to gain feedback on the proposed park program.

A feasibility study is an exploration of which park program elements (from a limited list) may be included and studied for their potential impacts. It is not the designing of the park.

Background

Gleason Fields is classified in the Parks and Recreation System Plan as a Community Playfield. The System Plan defines a Community Playfield as:

These regionally located facilities are usually 25 to 50 acres intended for intensive recreational use. They are designed and programmed to serve more than the immediate neighborhood. As primarily an athletic complex, each community playfield provides several regulation size athletic fields, parking lot, shelter building with restroom facilities, hockey and pleasure rinks, large play equipment, trails, basketball courts, tennis courts, and playfield lighting as needed. Community Playfields have all the amenities of a Neighborhood Park and more. Occasionally a community playfield will function as the Park Service Area's neighborhood park. Many of the City's community playfields are located on School District site where fields and open space are shared under a Joint Powers Agreement.

Gleason Fields Community Playfield does serve as the neighborhood park for Park Service Area 31 which means it shall include all the components of a neighborhood park within its boundaries.

Gleason Fields Community Playfield opened in 2005 as an athletic complex to serve the growing soccer community as well as provide a neighborhood park for the residents in Park Service Area 31. The facility was planned with a soccer focus which consisted of four lighted rectangular (soccer/football) fields and two diamond (baseball/softball) fields. Included with the athletic fields are a playground, restroom and warming building, two hockey rinks, tennis and basketball courts, trails and 276 parking stalls (2 lots). There have been minimal changes to the park over the last 15 years.

The park was challenged with heavy clay soils and over the years the athletic fields became compacted from use which led to poor drainage and eventually poor turf. The park maintenance team made a significant effort to improve the turf condition through a special turf management program and it responded well but the drainage never improved. The unreliable drainage eventually led to the youth soccer association moving their annual tournament and significant games to other fields within the community. As a result, staff reported to the Board that improvements to the playability of the fields would require a substantial financial commitment and the fields would need to be shut down for a minimum of two years to complete the work. After over ten years of struggling with the field's dependability the youth soccer association led

a push to partner with the City in the development of an artificial turf complex to meet the needs of their growing sport.

2017 Athletic Field Feasibility Study

In 2017 the Park Board enlisted a consultant to complete the Athletic Field Feasibility Study which would help to guide the planning of three separate athletic facilities: 1) create a soccer complex at a new site, 2) in the absence of soccer and playability at Gleason – repair and repurpose it to a baseball focused facility, 3) upgrade Weaver Lake Park ballfields.

At the completion of the feasibility study the Council directed the Park Board to proceed first with the development of the soccer/football/lacrosse complex so the users of Gleason Fields would not be displaced during construction as the city carried out its vision to upgrade its athletic facilities. The new Fernbrook Field – Athletic Field Complex is located at 99th Ave and Fernbrook Lane just north of the high school football stadium and is scheduled for completion by August 1, 2019. Upon the completion of the new complex the Council and Park Board would consider the repurposing of Gleason Fields.

2018 Park and Recreation System Plan Update

During the development of the 2018 Park System Plan update the Park Board hosted numerous community engagement opportunities encouraging the community to share their thoughts on the future of the Maple Grove Park and Trail System. The engagement was focused on the long term needs of the community and not on any individual park. There is a component in the System Plan that does define a list of park system needs born from the community engagement process which include the investment in tournament level athletic facilities.

Gleason Fields Community Playfield – Feasibility Study Update 2019

Anticipating the transfer of the soccer/football user group to the new Fernbrook Fields staff recommended the Board update the 2017 Athletic Field Feasibility Study and revisit Gleason Fields portion of the study to include the option for one or more artificial turf baseball fields and to update the costs for the proposed improvements. The updated study also included some preliminary geotechnical work and a topographic survey to better understand the site and assist with the updating of cost projections.

Staff is currently working with our consultant team to update Gleason Fields portion of the study. The study considers the notion of a baseball/softball focus in the active portion of the park and a neighborhood focus in the less action portions. In its simplest description the study would intend to show a conversion of three full size soccer/football fields into two medium/small baseball/softball fields plus the addition of a structure to accommodate tournament activity and other support amenities. The study will also address the parking needs for the modified facility.

At the Park Board Workshop on July 18, 2019 the Park Board will be provided a progress summary of the work completed to date and hear public input. The Board may elect to give direction to staff at the meeting.

Next Steps for Consideration

- Complete the Feasibility Study Update
 - This may include a concept/schematic design(s) component that would develop a more precise layout of the park.
- Board Review of the Feasibility Study
 - August or September Park Board Meeting
 - Public Input
 - Direction from Board for next steps which may include the development of final park plan with cost estimates to be presented to the Council for consideration.