

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****February 4, 2020**

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**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON COMPETITION FIELDS UPKEEP AND REPAIR**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to address City Council concerns related to the condition of public competition sports fields.

The Park & Recreation Department provides maintenance and facilitates programming on sixty-five (65) Level 1 and seventeen (17) Level 2 soccer and baseball/softball fields throughout the City of Fort Worth. Level 1 fields accommodate competitive games through leagues and tournaments, which are programmed by the Park & Recreation Department, as well as outside providers through rental agreements. Level 2 fields typically accommodate team practices and lower-level recreation play.

Local and regional competitive tournaments and leagues use Level 1 soccer and baseball/softball fields. In 2019, Level 1 soccer fields accommodated 1,091 teams, and 20,534 players, while Level 1 baseball/softball fields hosted 966 teams and 11,355 players.

**Level 1 Field Locations:**

Chisolm Trail Park (2 soccer)	Rockwood Park (4 baseball)
Gateway Park (6 softball, 5 soccer)	Rolling Hills (20 soccer)
Hallmark Park (2 soccer)	Sycamore Park (5 baseball/softball)
Harmon Park (6 soccer)	West Park (4 soccer)
North Park (4 soccer, 1 baseball/softball)	Z. Boaz Park (2 baseball)
Northwest Community Park (4 baseball/softball)	

Level 1 field maintenance includes fertilizing, weed control, and aerating a minimum of five times per year each, and pesticide applications occur a minimum of four times per year. Additional applications will occur at specific fields as conditions necessitate. During playing seasons, fields are mowed twice per week, and irrigated with one inch of water per week. Baseball/softball fields are lined and dragged each day. Soccer fields are lined a minimum of once per week, and more frequently as needed due to weather.

Complaints received by staff have primarily been focused on three sport complexes: Gateway Park softball fields, North Park soccer fields and amenities, and Chisholm Trail Park soccer fields.

This summer at the conclusion of a scheduled softball tournament, staff received feedback regarding the condition of the infields at Gateway Park. In response to customer feedback, the Gateway Park softball fields are currently undergoing infield renovations which include removing accumulated excess drying agents, adding a sports clay mix, and reshaping the infield edge by removing excess build-up. Going forward this practice will be incorporated into the complex maintenance program on a 2-3 year cycle.

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Concerns have also been expressed regarding North Park field conditions and amenities. The \$4.69 million North Park renovation project, scheduled for completion in the summer of 2021, will include field surface improvements along with additional complex improvements including a permanent restroom facility, covered bleachers and vinyl-coated fencing.

Staff received negative feedback regarding field conditions, specifically weed control and water ponding, during a soccer tournament held at Chisholm Trail Park on January 11 & 12, 2020. The Department's turf management strategy includes following a strict scheduling protocol which includes weekly and annual rest periods that allow fields to recuperate following heavy use. December, January, June and July are scheduled rest periods in which fields are typically not programmed in order to provide adequate recuperation time for the sports turf. Rest periods not only apply to play, but also field maintenance as well. Despite best practices, the fields were erroneously scheduled for play, which resulted in the appearance of sub-standard conditions during a normal offline period. The ponding concern will be addressed as part of the \$3.5 million Chisholm Trail Park Phase II project scheduled for completion fall of 2021. This project will also include two additional competition soccer fields and other park improvements.

Additional upcoming sports complex enhancements include completing upgrades to the automated field irrigation and lighting control system. The 20+ year old system is outdated and requires upgrades to remain operational and maximize efficiencies for water and electricity consumption. The 2018 bond program includes \$3 million for athletic field lighting at the Rolling Hills Soccer Complex, Harmon Park, and North Park.

Level 1 fields effectively accommodate local and regional league and tournament play. The Fort Worth Sports Authority recently completed Phase I of a sports facility feasibility study, with the intention of quantifying the need and feasibility of constructing a new sports complex. The primary purpose of the complex is to enhance sports tourism in the city; however, the local community will also benefit from a new complex. The study outlined the need to fund and construct a nearly 100-acre, \$52 million sports complex (not including land acquisition). A facility of this nature would greatly enhance the ability to attract and secure higher-level elite and professional long-field sports.

Level 1 fields are maintained to accepted standards. Planned renovations and new construction will increase the quality of fields for competitive and recreational play. The Fort Worth Sports Authority vision for a sports complex will support the City of Fort Worth's desire to gain market share in the sports tourism industry by supporting regional and national events and tournaments.

If you have any questions please contact Richard Zavala, Park & Recreation Director, at (817) 392-5704.

**David Cooke**  
**City Manager**