

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES**



Interagency Working Group on Artificial Turf and Playgrounds

Results of Research and Next Steps

Executive Summary

The mission of the Interagency Working Group on Artificial Turf and Playgrounds (the Working Group) is to provide policy recommendations to and enact decisions from District leadership related to artificial turf fields and playgrounds maintained by the District, in order to:

1. Ensure all residents and visitors are provided safe and accessible recreational fields and play surfaces;
2. Minimize the inconvenience caused by maintenance to regular users; and
3. Use the dollars of District taxpayers wisely and efficiently.

The Working Group comprises representatives from Department of General Services (DGS), DC Public Schools (DCPS) and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), as well as the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE), the Office of Disability Rights (ODR), the Office of the City Administrator (OCA), and the Office of the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME).

In order to develop the next steps outlined in this overview, the Working Group took the following actions:

- Analyzed the most relevant research from government and research institutions related to hardness testing, maintenance and repair, replacement costs, temperature concerns, and potential chemical and bacterial exposure;
- Inventoried all fields, initiating a unified system for tracking status and maintenance schedules;
- Engaged residents in multiple ways (public meetings, targeted meetings with interested stakeholders, and almost 500 citywide survey respondents) to understand experiences and priorities related to fields and playgrounds; and
- Presented findings and recommendations to District leadership for approval and support.

Next Steps

As a result of this work, the Working Group, on behalf of the District, is moving forward with the following next steps:

- I. Surface Materials
 - Continue moratorium on recycled crumb rubber;
 - Include grass and other non-synthetic materials as options in all materials considerations;
 - Standardize use of shock pads at installation; and
 - Develop a site suitability assessment to better inform decision-making at the local level for each site based on characteristics such as typical user and use, accessibility, size and location, and community feedback.
- II. Community Engagement
 - Engage impacted community members, such as parents/guardians for schools and local ANCs for parks, in providing feedback on materials to use at a replacement/new installation;
 - Post signage at sites to advise the public against certain activities that could affect health and damage surfaces, and warn of heat risks; and,

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- Make information on fields and playgrounds available online.

III. Testing

- Inspect and test surface materials hardness (GMAX) at installation and annually thereafter;
- Develop a heat index guide to better inform decision-making by on-site staff, outlining the link between ambient temperatures and surface temperatures; and,
- Continue to monitor the research related to hardness, heat, and potential chemical and bacteria exposure.

IV. Maintenance

- Conduct routine maintenance on all fields in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines;
- Build a consolidated inventory of all District-owned fields to centrally monitor status of surfaces; and,
- Train on-site staff to identify surface maintenance issues and notify DGS.

The District will maintain the Working Group to implement these next steps as well as monitor any advances in the research regarding field and playground surface materials.

For any questions, contact the Department of General Services at XXX@dc.gov.