



A worker surveys a community park off Silver Avenue that is being re-turfed. —JasonSteinberg/Special to The Examiner

Nonprofit to help The City re-turf two playing fields

By Sajid Farooq
Staff Writer

On Monday afternoon, there was a group of men playing soccer on a lush, green, perfectly level patch of artificial turf at Franklin Square Park.

The synthetic-turf field is one of two that exists in The City, and with San Francisco's infamous rain and fog, Recreation and Park officials were hoping to re-turf more popular fields.

An expensive endeavor for a department that is struggling with budgetary constraints spurred a public-private partnership with the nonprofit City Fields Foundation, started by the sons of Gap Founder Donald Fisher, to re-turf the two additional fields — Garfield Square and Silver Terrace Park — earlier this year.

"We want to encourage as much play as possible for whoever wants to play," Susan Hirsch of the City Fields Foundation said.

Fisher's sons — John, Bob and Bill — grew up playing on San Francisco fields and realized the need for better turf in The City when their own children started playing soccer. The foundation had two people walk more than 60 fields in The City to determine which ones had the worst potholes and the most potential for use after being renovated.

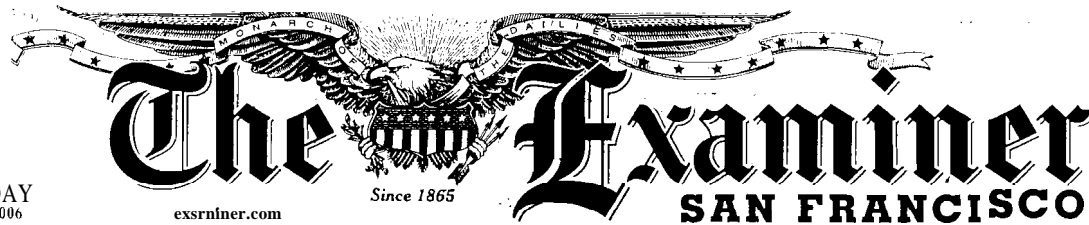
Under the agreement, City Fields will pay \$4.5 million to renovate Silver Terrace Playground and Garfield Square Park with the new turf, which is made up of a layer of recycled tires and sand, anti the Recreation and Park Department will pay \$1 million and maintain the renovated fields. Construction on the two fields began on July 5 and will be completed with new stadium lights by late September.

The new artificial fields look and feel more natural than the artificial turf known for causing injuries and used by many professional sports teams. The new turf is also considered safer than natural grass, according to Patrick Hannan of the City Fields Foundation, partly because it is almost completely level and drains water quickly.

"The whole adage of the Astro-Turf of the 1970s is not the same, and that was the image of the NFL football players tearing up their Achilles because of the turf, but that is not the case today," said Rose Marie Dennis, spokeswoman for the Recreation and Park Department.

The new fields are easier to maintain as well, according to Dennis, because they do not need to be cut and can last from 10 to 12 years, whereas a natural grass field can be worn out in less than a year.

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