

Memo

To: City Council Members

Through: Marcia Conner, City Manager

Through: Sharon Goode Laisure, Assistant City Manager
Mark Greenspan, General Services Director

From: Guillo Rodriguez, Landscape Services Manager

Date: June 7, 2004

Re: Old North Durham Park and Central Park School for Children

This memo is intended to provide additional information regarding the City's plans for the Old North Durham Park. A previous memo to Council dated May 19, 2004, addressed important background information that led to the City's current partnership with the Central Park School for Children. There is no need to reiterate this historical information. This memo will address current conditions, as well as short-term and long-range plans for the park.

Due to an increase in usage the soccer field displays symptoms typical when urban parks are overused. There is a little or no grass within the field boundaries. Two principal causes are soil compaction and lack of an irrigation system. Recognizing the immediate need to alleviate overuse of this and other fields and to increase opportunities for soccer play, the General Services Department's Landscape Services Division undertook minor renovations to the field this spring.

The first issue was assuring proper drainage for the field. To this end, new fill soil was brought in and the entire field graded to take surface water to two existing catch basins. The field now has a "crown", a high point from which all surface water flows. Additionally, the field was seeded with grass. However, without a permanent irrigation system, the grass did not sprout as intended and the field is now primarily exposed soil. In addition to the exposed dry soil, the fill used contained an unacceptable amount of small stones that are now being exposed as the fill compacts and subsides. We are aware of this situation and have responded by using a "field renovator" to pulverize the hard soil surface and rock-like clods of dirt. Subsequently, a "field groomer" was used to rake the stones and debris out of the soil. We will continue to monitor the condition of the field and will bring both pieces of equipment back on an as-needed basis to maintain a playable surface.

To enhance the park's visibility and provide a permanent pedestrian entrance, the General Services Department will be installing a six-foot wide compacted gravel path from the sidewalk on Foster Street into the park. This walkway will be accessible to people of all abilities. Furthermore, a new wooden arch will announce the entrance and establish a visible landmark for park users. The walkway will run along the public right-of-way along the South side of the Central Park School.

Our long range plan includes rehabilitation of the park. A capital project request in the amount of \$100,000 (construction costs) has been funded in the City Manager's Proposed Budget. This project involves the installation of a permanent automatic irrigation system, extensive subsurface drainage will be installed and new top soil will be brought in. The field will be "crowned" once again to provide positive surface water flow. Bermuda Grass will replace the existing grass to provide an appropriate playing surface.

The City also owns a gravel parking lot on the Southeast corner of the park. This lot has a driveway on Geer Street. The lot is currently being used by TROSA for its trash receptacles and for parking. However, due to a severe grade change between the parking lot and the field below, the gravel lot is not accessible from the park. A new stairway must be designed to link the parking lot above with the park below. Alternatively, the City will discuss with TROSA the possibility of creating an easement to the existing stone stairway directly behind the TROSA building (formerly Old North Durham School). Either solution will create much-needed parking adjacent to the park and enhance public access.

These short-term and long-range improvements to the park will not only help identify and make the land-locked site more user friendly, but also create a safer and functional recreation amenity for the Old North Durham neighborhood.

Copy: Darrell Crittendon, Parks Director