

Presented to the Vail Town Council – Tuesday October 5th
By Chris Chantler 4840 Meadow Lane, Vail Co 81657 – 970-393-3062 –
chris@vailcoffee.com

In response to the article in the Vail Daily Titled “Vail may replace grass with turf at soccer fields”. Published September 30th, 2021

Natural grass fields must remain in The Vail Valley

While the concept of plastic turf fields can save money with reduced maintenance costs and water use. The following are items to consider along with the considerable downside of plastic turf fields. This is not a simple cost saving line item. It requires deep discussion and thorough investigation.

Cost - The Vail Athletic Fields are iconic fields in exceptional condition.

It makes no economic sense to spend up to \$1.5 million to replace perfectly good natural playing surfaces with rubber and plastic.

Player Safety - Grass fields are safer for contact sports and greatly reduce the risk of injury and most importantly the risk of concussion. The Vail Athletic Fields are used for rugby, soccer, and lacrosse. All three are high contact sports with significant injury and concussion risks to players.

A University Hospitals Sports Medical Institute Study found athletes were 58 percent more likely to sustain an injury during athletic activity on artificial turf. Injury rates were significantly higher for football, girls’ and boys’ soccer, and rugby athletes. Lower extremity, upper extremity, and torso injuries were also found to occur with a higher incidence on artificial turf. (Study Details Below)

Toxic Run-Off – After heavy rains and spring snow melt, toxic chemicals found in the shredded rubber like arsenic, cadmium, chromium, and selenium can drain into ground water. This is especially concerning for the health of the Gore Creek.

Once artificial, always artificial. - Once a community goes with artificial turf, it has no choice but to install another artificial turf field when the first one needs to be replaced because once plastic replaces natural grass, it kills any living organism in the subsoil making it impossible without years of soil remediation to grow anything on that surface.

Heat Hazard - Artificial turf is made of rubber and a myriad of plastics and is prone to overheating. With our altitude and intensity of the sun during the summer months the field would need to be watered down and cooled before use – reducing the water and cost savings proposed in the Town of Vail proposal.

Bacterial Breeding Ground – According to multiple studies, bacteria not only survives but thrives in polyethylene plastic. In addition, blood, sweat, and skin cells remain on synthetic turf as fields are rarely washed and cleaned properly. This has led to increased risk of antibiotic

resistant infections such as Methicillin-resistant staph aureus (MRSA) due to open skin lesions known as turf burn

The Ecosystem – Natural grass fields give back to the ecosystem. They do this by supplying oxygen, filtering pollution, and absorbing heat. Improving air quality through purification. The grass breaks down airborne pollutants trapped in the grass, resulting in cleaner air.

Overall Guest Experience – We strive and nurture our pristine natural environment offering our visitors a beautiful Rocky Mountain experience. In Vail, we have created iconic natural playing fields. To replace our fields with plastic and rubber is a contradiction to the mission of preserving our natural environment. We have created iconic natural playing fields - let's keep them natural.

Study Details:

The University Hospitals Sports Medicine Institute partners with more than 50 area high schools to keep their athletes injury free. With that goal in mind, the department decided to analyze data to compare injury rates on artificial versus natural playing surfaces among high school athletes — both male and female — for all sports played on a field. Researchers identified a total of 953 injuries during the 2017-2018 athletic seasons, with 585 of them occurring on synthetic turf and 368 on natural grass. Researchers then performed subgroup analysis to determine injuries that took place on artificial turf versus natural grass based on injury location (lower extremity, upper extremity, torso), sport, level of competitive play (freshman, junior varsity, varsity), and practice versus competition injuries.