



*This is the fourth in a series of articles, prepared by Chevy Chase citizens using public sources, that address the growing risks associated with artificial turf playing fields. Hazards of excessive heat and increased injury have long been documented. New findings on the extreme toxicity of PFAS in artificial turf call into serious question its continued use. Maret School plans to install nearly four acres of artificial turf for its field development at the Episcopal Center for Children at Utah and Nebraska Avenues.*

#### 4. **Boston has decided no new artificial turf fields will be installed in their city.**

Despite relentless pressure from turf advocates to provide “year-round” playing surfaces, Mayor Michelle Wu has instituted a moratorium on the installation of any more artificial turf fields in Boston. There are many possible objections to plastic turf, including increased injuries, more severe injuries, heat island effects, harmful off gassing, etc. But in response to *The Guardian*, the Mayor’s spokesperson specifically blamed PFAS: “The city has a preference for grass playing surfaces wherever possible and will not be installing playing surfaces with PFAS chemicals moving forward.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/30/boston-bans-artificial-turf-toxic-forever-chemicals-pfas>

Unlike some earlier bans, this is not about infill. In the recent past, the turf industry has responded to safety concerns by altering the infill material used to weigh down the carpet and hold up the plastic grass blades. Originally made from crumb rubber – ground up used tires – the infill of little black ‘crumbs’ we are all familiar with has been proven by numerous studies to contain high levels of lead and other harmful chemicals. (According to the CDC no amount of exposure to lead is safe for children.) In response the industry has begun to offer alternative infill materials, some based on coconut fibers, cork, or walnut shells. Maret has insisted they will use “safe” plastic turf with an organic infill.

Boston does not consider the infill the issue.

The Boston decision is based on the “grass blades” and their backing, the plastic turf itself. As *The Guardian* states, changing the infill does not make artificial turf safe, as, “**industry has said the grass blades and backing cannot be made without PFAS.**” (emphasis added)

If a major American city has seen fit to call a moratorium, WHY is the installation of almost four acres of plastic turf acceptable and allowable here in Chevy Chase? And unlike the vast majority of plastic fields, this one is being shoehorned into a densely residential neighborhood and directly adjacent to homes, where at least 50 families will be unavoidably exposed to PFAS on a daily basis without their consent.

These families will not have the choice whether to run the risk of spending an hour on a plastic field. These neighbors will be forced to suffer the health consequences of additional, concentrated PFAS exposure, 24/7, for the foreseeable future.

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