

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CITY COUNCIL KILLS PLAN FOR FAKE GRASS FIELD ON RIVERFRONT**

MINNEAPOLIS, Friday, Feb. 29, 2008 – The Minneapolis City Council today voted down a private developer's plan to install artificial turf on an athletic field proposed for Mississippi riverfront parkland. The 13-0 vote was a formality after a surprise announcement that the developer, DeLaSalle High School, had withdrawn its appeal.

The unanimous decision to reject artificial turf came a day after contentious debate on the issue at a Committee of the Whole meeting showed the city council to be deeply divided. At that meeting, several council members said they were concerned about the impacts of synthetic turf's crumb rubber base on the environment and children's health.

Also on Thursday, Friends of the Riverfront released a Braun Intertec review of research on synthetic turf fields, which concluded that "tire crumb infill can be a potential health hazard to the users and other individuals in the immediate vicinity of the field, as well as ... a risk to the neighboring environment."

The Minneapolis action comes amidst growing national outcry against artificial turf fields. As the New York Times reported today, the New York City Public Advocate yesterday joined the Natural Resources Defense Council and other groups in calling for a moratorium on artificial turf, pending a city Department of Health investigation. Bills pending in the California, New York and Connecticut legislatures would ban artificial turf fields and require environmental studies. A website, [synturf.org](http://synturf.org), tracks the backlash.

Like Leap Day, today's vote was exceptional. For the first time the city council upheld rather than reversed a unanimous Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission decision to reject DeLaSalle's stadium as unfit for a historic district. Two earlier council approvals, however, came with a condition: the field must be grass, not artificial turf.

Had today's vote gone the other way, Nicollet Island would have become the site of the city's second artificial turf field built on public parkland without environmental review. Last year, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (co-developer on the DeLaSalle project) rejected petitions for a citizen review panel and an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) on artificial turf at Parade, in a watershed near downtown. In 2005, when DeLaSalle's stadium plans called for a natural grass field, an EAW conducted by the city did not analyze the environmental effects of synthetic turf on Nicollet Island and the Mississippi riverfront. DeLaSalle's plan remains the subject of two current lawsuits.

Friends of the Riverfront ([ourbeautifulriver.org](http://ourbeautifulriver.org)) is a citizens group advocating for preservation of the natural and historic resources in Central Riverfront Regional Park.