

# Edison Multi-purpose Fields - Update -

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*September 20, 2021  
Westfield Recreation Commission*



# Recap of the process...

<b>2019</b>	Strategic Parks & Recreation Master Plan executed
<b>February 2020</b>	Plan unanimously accepted by Town Council
	Priority recommendations submitted by Rec Commission to TC, with multipurpose fields at Edison as a top rec
<b>Spring/Summer 2020</b>	Joint steering committee between Town and BOE created, Spiezle engaged
<b>Fall 2020/Winter 2021</b>	Additional user group inputs gathered (EIS principal, Band director, Athletics & facilities directors, town athletics), conceptual plan created
<b>June 15, 2021</b>	Concept Plan presented at Town Council, Town/BOE Letter-of-intent executed

# Community Involvement & Feedback

- **First ever Strategic Parks & Recreation Master Plan - 2019**

- Led by Brandstetter-Carrol - nationally recognized firm
- Spent ~1 year collecting & analyzing data and community input
  - Numerous public forums structured to gather specific input... attended by hundreds
  - 20 stakeholder group meetings
  - “Statistically valid” mail survey to 600 household, additional online survey elicited 2400 comments
- Published the master plan, accepted unanimously by Town Council and approved by the Planning Board to be added to the Towns Master Plan

- **Edison Fields plan came from first round of priorities recommended to and unanimously accepted by Town Council - February 2020**

- Spiezle engaged to produce Conceptual Plan
- Steering group guided - 11 representatives from BOE and Recreation Commission/Town
- Additional user group input gathered by Spiezle, including sports leagues, Westfield Schools Business Administrator, Athletic Director, Facilities director, EIS principal, WHS band director

# Community Involvement & Feedback

<b>June 15</b>	Edison Multi-purpose Fields conceptual plan presented at Town Council
<b>June 15</b>	Dedicated email channel enabled for input & feedback
<b>Late June / Early July</b>	Informal, in-person neighborhood feedback... meetings, door-to-door
<b>July 14</b>	Formal input & feedback session #1 @EIS
<b>July 21</b>	Formal input & feedback session #2 @EIS
<b>August 10</b>	a) Commitment made at TC to scale back the plan b) Public comment
<b>August 17</b>	Recreation Commission / Edison Neighbors Advisory Group meeting #1
<b>September 13</b>	Recreation Commission meeting - public comment
<b>September 14</b>	Town Council meeting - public comment
<b>September 15</b>	Recreation Commission / Edison Neighbors Advisory Group meeting #2
<b>September 20</b>	Formal input & feedback session #3 @EIS
<b>Early Oct /on-going</b>	<i>Recreation Commission / Edison Neighbors Advisory Group meeting #3 - n</i>

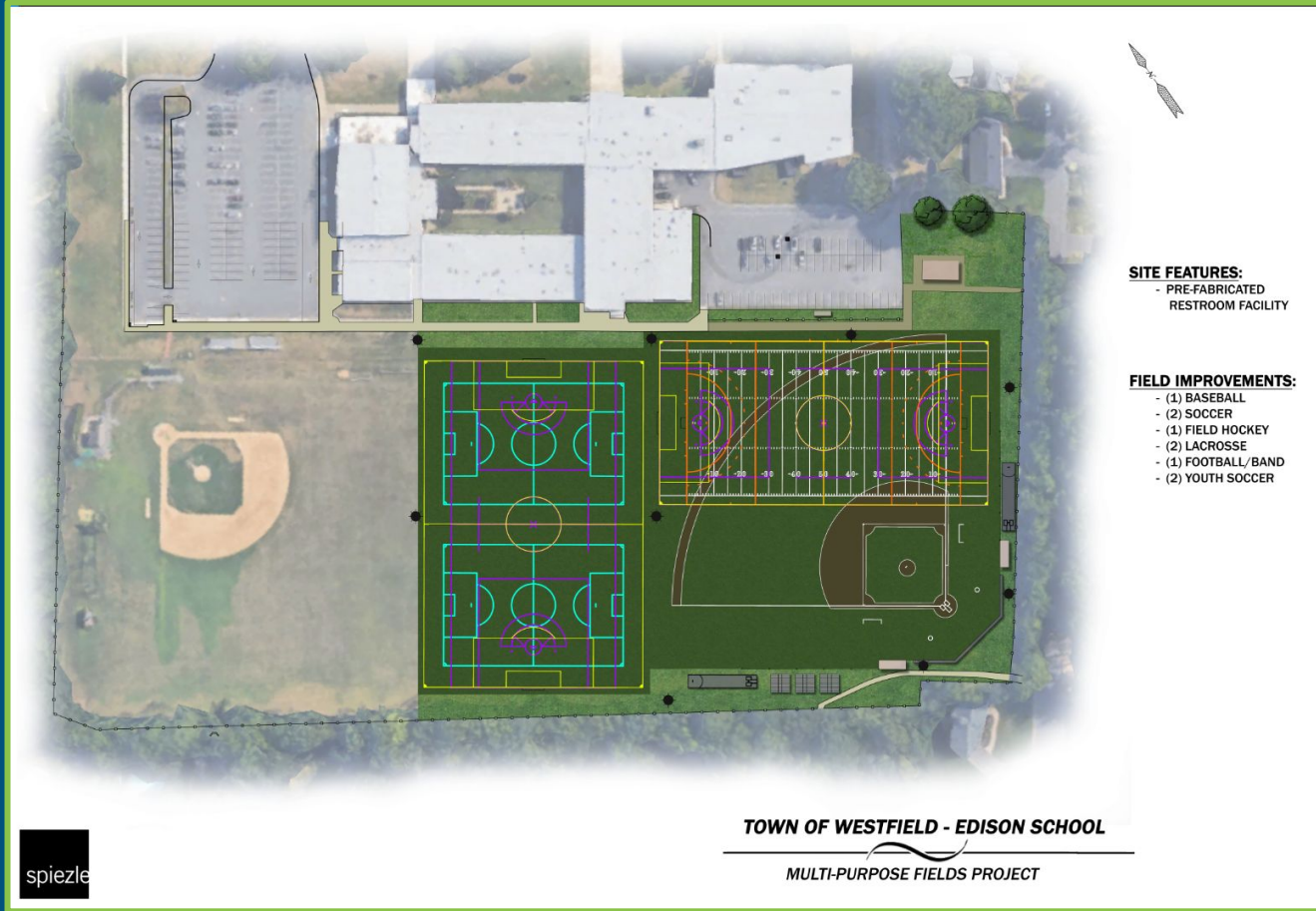
# In response, the original proposal has been scaled back by almost half

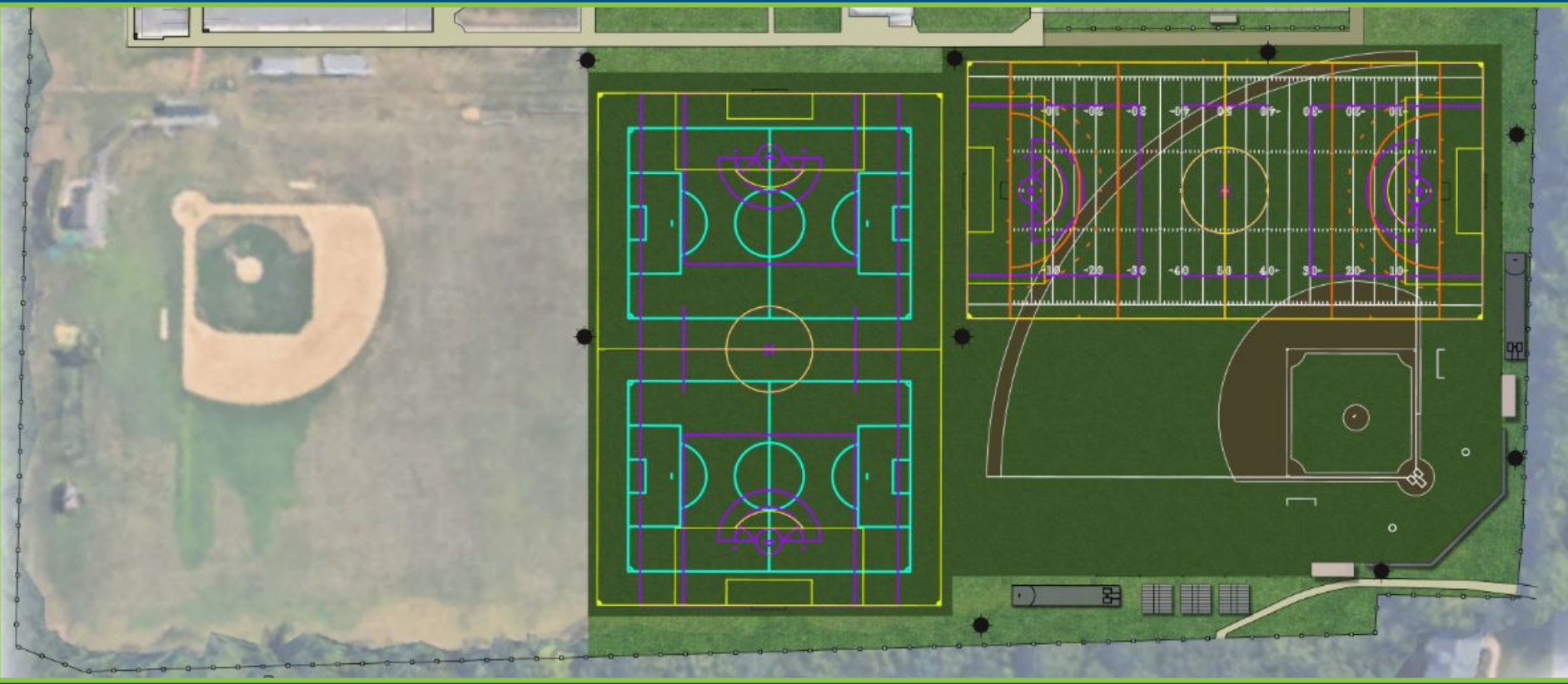
Revised plan covers approximately 60% of the surface area (~250k sq ft) and will include:

- One natural grass baseball field - not lit
- Leaves ~40% of the space in natural grass (equivalent to field size)
- Two artificial turf, lit, multi-purpose fields (NFHS compliant)
- One artificial turf baseball field (NFHS compliant)
- Prefabricated restroom facilities (similar to recent addition at Memorial Park)

High level cost estimate is ~\$9mm (50% of initial plan)

# Revised Conceptual Plan - Edison Multipurpose Fields





# Areas of neighborhood concern

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## Parking & Traffic

- Motorist & pedestrian/cyclist safety
- Street specific concerns
- Quality of life
- Mitigation

## Environmental

- Runoff - storm water
- Health risks
- Heat
- EPA study

## Lights

- Spillage & quality of life
- Mitigation
- Etiquette / policies

## Fields Allocation & Usage

- Who would use
- When would be used
- Public access
- Etiquette / policies
- Noise / PA / mitigation

## Artificial turf - safety

- Injury risks
- Environmental health risks

## Alternatives

- Locations
- Surfaces



# Areas of neighborhood concern (cont.)

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## EIS

- Impacts to PE / recess
- Health risks
- General inequity

## Expense

- Funding
- Maintenance / operations

## Other issues

- Robinson's Branch / flume
- Planning process
- Space utilization
- Other needs identified in Parks Master Plan

# Feedback on the Feedback

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Addressing Your Questions and Concerns

# Allocation/Usage: Why Edison, and Why Now?

- An overwhelmingly large majority has acknowledged that we have a significant issue in Westfield with respect to multipurpose playing field capacity
- Professional benchmark for Westfield population indicates the need for at least eight multipurpose fields, and we currently have three. No single project will deliver on 100% of the need.
- Edison was always intended to be the starting point since there is almost no Town allocation of any of the Edison field space today.
  - Artificial turf delivers true multipurpose capacity that can sustain heavy usage
  - Lighting delivers net new capacity
- Subsequent field plans to be considered at Elm St, Tamaques and/or Memorial, per the Parks Master Plan recommendations.

# Turf Alternatives: Grass Fields Cannot Sustain OUR Demand

- Natural grass cannot sustain more than ~650-800 hours of use/year (if really well constructed and maintained)
- **Existing** usage of Town & BOE natural grass fields already significantly exceeds:
  - Town: 1091 hours avg/year (max = 1302, min = 871)
  - BOE: 823 hours avg/year (max = 1327, min = 492)
- Additionally, our town sports associations rely on heavy usage of fields outside Westfield, including:
  - Garwood Park, Unami Park, Nomahegan Park, Madison Ave Park, Rahway River Park, Echo Lake Park, Wardlaw Hartridge, Oakridge Park, etc.
- Any attempt to maintain existing natural turf fields would fail... while also requiring significant investment... **and would involve the use of chemicals which are not used on Westfield BOE properties today**

# Artificial Turf Safety: Is it safe for our athletes?

*A 2011 study found a higher frequency of ankle injuries on (artificial) turf for football, soccer, and rugby players. Also, a 2012 study showed that more college football players suffered ACL injuries on (artificial) turf than on grass.*

*On the other hand, both a 2010 study on college football players and a 2013 study on female college soccer players showed a higher frequency of all injuries on grass than on turf.*

2020 input from the British Medical Journal (BMJ) is more compelling:

- BMJ is one of the leading medical/science journals in the world
- Screened 42 publications of concussion studies, 12 met criteria for inclusion
- **BMJ Conclusion:** *Analysis of published data demonstrates a decreased incidence of head injury and concussion when contact sports are played on artificial turf.*

# Turf's impact on public health and the environment

- In spite of concerns raised, there has been no definitive evidence that links playing on turf fields to long term health complications such as cancer
- The exposure to turf by our youth athletes is limited, even considering that many of our youth sports teams are already playing on turf at Houlihan/Sid Fay and many, many other out of town locations
- Research studies remain inconclusive about environmental impact, with no direct correlation to date

# Turf's Impact on environment/health: Research

EPA Study (Federal Research Action Plan/FRAP) - mentioned in several comments received

- <https://www.epa.gov/chemical-research/federal-research-recycled-tire-crumb-used-playing-fields>
- “Only Part 1 is being released today (7/30/2019). Part2 is to be released at a later date. When combined, Part 1 and Part 2 will not constitute a risk assessment.”
- “These research activities and the resulting findings do not provide an assessment of the risks associated with playing on or contact with tire crumb rubber used for synthetic turf fields. Instead, these research results would inform future risk assessments.”
- “In general, the findings from the report support the premise that while chemicals are present as expected in the tire crumb rubber, human exposure appears to be limited based on what is released into air or simulated biological fluids.”
  
- Commentary from NERC (Northeast Recycling Council):  
<https://nerc.org/news-and-updates/blog/nerc-blog/2019/09/10/epa-releases-findings-from-crumb-rubber-study>
- “Prior to the (EPA’s) FRAP being initiated, most studies examining the potential risks have been considered inconclusive or otherwise incomplete.”
- “Metals (including lead) and PAHs of potential concern at synthetic turf fields with tire crumb rubber infill are also often found in surface soil in the U.S.”

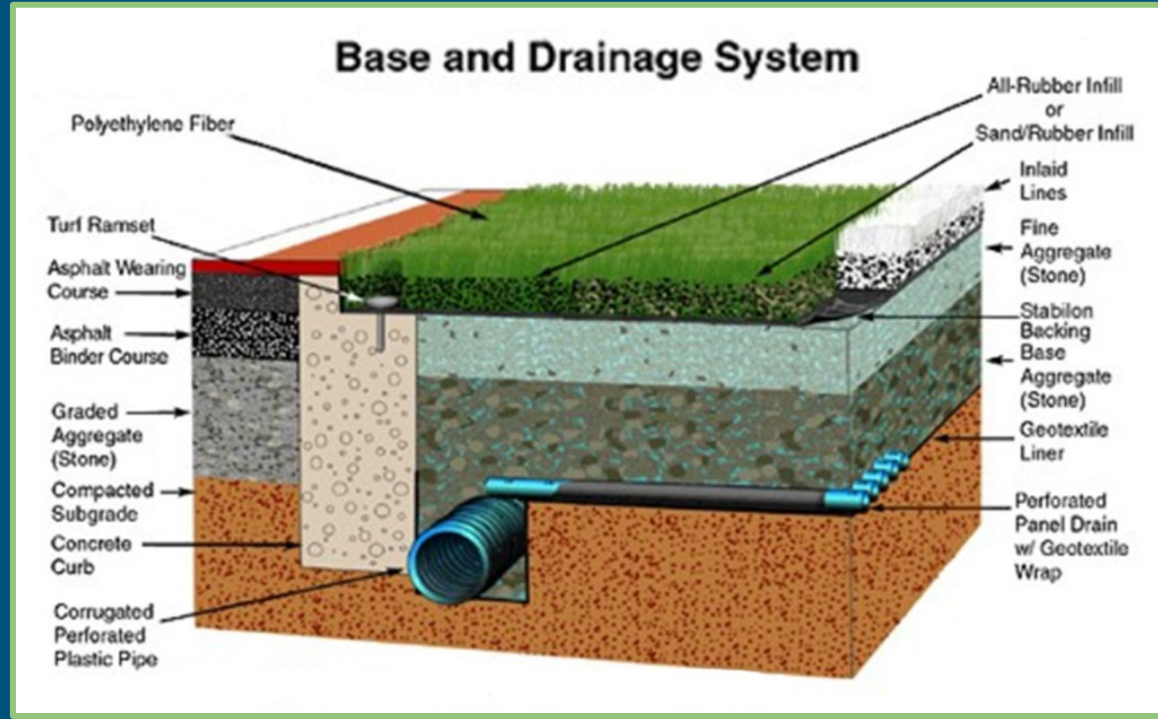
# Turf's impact on environment/health: Research

The Journal of The Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors nicely summarized the dearth of research, layperson bias applied to the research that exists and a consolidated summation of several important studies (actual risk assessments) that have been conducted since 2016: <https://pubs.ciphi.ca/doi/full/10.5864/d2019-026>

- “Artificial turf continues to generate media and public health attention as a potential source of lead and other contaminants harmful to children’s health. This is despite human health risk assessments (HHRAs) showing that exposure to crumb rubber does not result in risk estimates that exceed acceptable thresholds in North America or Europe.”
- “Current epidemiological and risk assessment data indicate that artificial turf does not present a cancer risk to child or adult players.”
- “The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) published a thorough HHRA in 2017 that calculated cancer risks and noncancer hazards for crumb rubber. The chemicals included polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), bisphenol A (BPA), heavy metals (Co, Cd, and Pb), phthalates, and 2 mercaptobenzothiazole (2-MBT). Exposure scenarios included a young child player, a youth player, an adult player, and youth and lifelong goalkeepers. Worst-case oral, dermal, and inhalation exposures were estimated based on assumptions from the literature as well as new analyses (chemical composition and release into artificial gastric fluid and sweat) using samples collected from Dutch soccer pitches. **Overall, the study determined that artificial turf does not pose a health risk.**”



# Stormwater management: DEP regulations will dictate stormwater mitigation plan... with opportunity to improve current conditions



# Specific concerns about Robinson's Branch will be addressed by newly announced WIRC

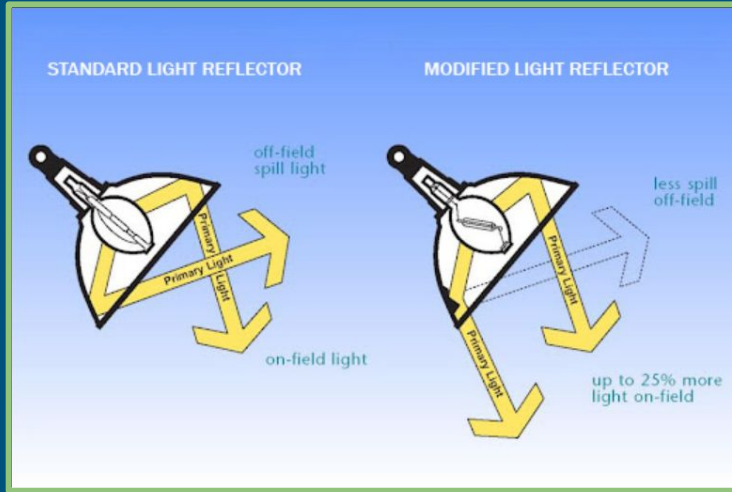
- Westfield Infrastructure Resiliency Committee (WIRC) announced by Town Council in September 2021
- The flume and other general concerns regarding Robinson's Branch are explicitly in scope for this new committee, regardless of whether or not the Edison Multipurpose Fields project proceeds
- We are confident and committed that runoff would likely be improved upon with this project, especially post-Ida. As per NJDEP standards, athletic fields are required to be designed to either meet or reduce the current rate of rainfall runoff. The rate of runoff cannot be increased.

# Lighting Is Key To Solving our Capacity Issue

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- Lighting is fundamental to this proposal. Without lighting, no capacity is gained on the Edison site.
- Modern LED lighting technology that creates little to no spillage combined with landscape mitigation would significantly diminish any neighborhood impact.
- Lights would not be recommended or supported by the Recreation Commission if not for LED technological advancements.

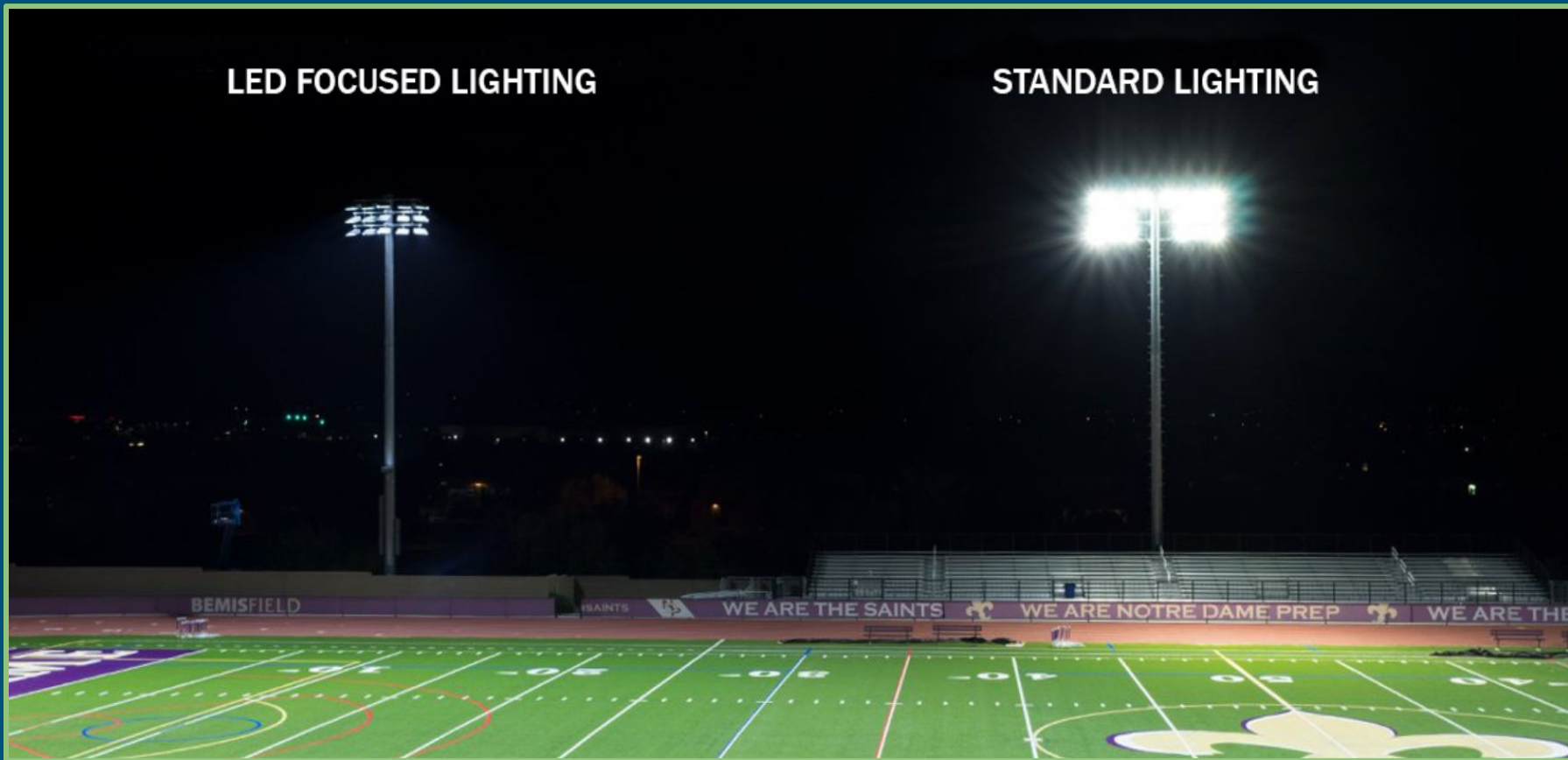
# Lights: LED lighting enables pinpoint accuracy



# Current technology - incredibly focusable... and can be managed remotely

LED FOCUSED LIGHTING

STANDARD LIGHTING



# Highly effective at lighting only what is intended to be lighted...



# Edison Fields are intended exclusively for Westfield residents, athletes, and students

- **Intended users:**
  - Westfield Schools band and sports - predominantly practices/some game usage
  - Town of Westfield - practices/games for Westfield sports teams. No Green Acres designation = no requirement to make available to non-residents
  - EIS - gym classes and other
- **Intended restrictions** - specifics to be defined if/when project is approved. Commitment to good neighbor governance with Advisory Group (on-going) and sensible limitations on use, such as:
  - No usage during Kehler events known to draw larger crowds (varsity football, track invitationals, graduation, etc)
  - Limited or no usage during certain EIS evening events
  - Limited or no usage during seasonal down times
  - Lights on no later than 9:45pm... as with existing town recreational lighting

# Edison Fields is intended to be accessible to the public

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- Public use/access for residents - details to be defined in future - not intended to be locked/gated; policy would be similar to other town facilities (permit required, informal use at town discretion)
- Good faith / Good neighbor - both Recreation Commission/Town and BOE have strong track record, across administrations, of being good partners and good neighbors in a very densely populated and developed town. We are committed to continuing that legacy.



# Parking & Traffic: Safety is paramount

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In the process of collecting additional data in order to make informed recommendations:

- Parking Assessment work is underway by Spiezle (target = Dec. 1)
- Subsequent Neighbors Advisory Group meetings will be held to weigh in and inform recommendations
- Common sense policies/restrictions for field scheduling will be key to mitigating concerns
- Would not be comfortable recommending or supporting any proposal that increases pedestrian or traffic safety risks

# EIS: Revised proposal provides students both grass and turf play area options

Approximately 40% of Edison fields to remain natural grass

- EIS staff/students will have ability to use both natural grass and/or artificial turf for physical education, recess and other uses
- EIS students currently use Edison grass fields and Kehler artificial turf fields for physical education
- According to WHS AD Sanda Mamary, heat protocol has been invoked less than 5 times since Kehler artificial turf was installed, all in August, and requiring increased hydration breaks, not cessation of use
  - NJSIAA requires monitoring of heat conditions for athletes

# Cost: Revised proposal cuts costs in half

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- Revised plan has an estimated cost of ~ \$9 mill, half of original estimate
- Financing of the entire project would be administered by the Town which has greater financial flexibility; full debt service is expected to be borne by the Town and not the school budget
- Anticipate a capital campaign seeking grants, sponsorships, and sports league contributions commencing if and when a final concept is approved
- Expect to issue bonds for this proposed project in 2022 and debt service would begin in 2023.
- Projected PILOT payments from recent South Ave redevelopment project would be directed to service this project's annual debt service obligations
- Provides opportunity for the Town and BOE to work together to maximize residents' tax dollars to deliver high quality facilities for our residents and students.

# Feedback on the feedback - Other topics

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- No Public Address system is intended
- On-going monthly/bi-monthly Advisory Group meetings

# Still much to do before any decisions made...

## Oct./Nov./Dec. 2021

- Elected officials from BoE and Town Council to meet to align next steps
- Recreation Commission & Neighbor Advisory Group to meet each month (next mtg by 10/5)
- Recreation Commission to meet with user groups
- Spiezle to deliver Parking Assessment (target Dec. 1)... incorporate into Neighbor Advisory Group dialogue

## Jan./Feb./March 2022

- Elected officials from BoE and Town Council discuss potential lease agreement
- Continued meetings Neighborhood Advisory Group
- Financial discussions & planning
- Decisions to move forward with project by BoE & TC

# And if approved...

Hire professional engineering/design firm	~2 months
Preliminary Design & Engineering Phase	~1 months
<i>Project Kick-Off, Review Master Plan Documents &amp; Environmental Reports</i>	
Design Development Phase	~2 months
<i>Preliminary Design &amp; Engineers Review of Athletic Fields &amp; Restroom Building, Community Meetings, Finalize DD Package, Cost Estimate, Soil Conservation Permitting Submission, LRFP &amp; DOE / DEP Submissions</i>	
Construction Document Phase	~3 months
<i>Prepare Complete &amp; Final Set of Plans &amp; Specs, Update Renderings &amp; Conduct Community Meetings, Coordinate with Utilities, Outside Agencies &amp; Private Property Owners, Finalize CD Package</i>	
Bidding & Contract Award Phase	~1 months
Construction Phase	~5 months