Town of West Hartford
Town Plan & Zoning

Special Use Permit– Site Narrative

University of Saint Joseph

Baseball Field Project

West Hartford, Connecticut

Submitted by:
SMRT Architects and Engineers

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Project # 22216

smrtinc.com

Table of Contents

A. Project Summary

The University of Saint Joseph (USJ) seeks approval from the Town of West Hartford for the construction of a new NCAA regulation baseball field. In 2022, USJ started a baseball program as a club sport with a plan to use off campus facilities for practice and games. The desire from student athletes to participate in baseball and have it as a Division III NCAA team has exceeded expectations. USJ currently has over thirty athletes on their baseball roster and the head coach has recruited an additional twenty athletes to participate next season. As there is currently no baseball field on campus, USJ has been renting field space and transporting athletes off campus for practices and games. This approach is not sustainable with a larger roster. Therefore, the University is seeking permission to build a baseball field adjacent to (due east of) the existing softball field. This part of campus is currently an open lawn area with a few groupings of trees / vegetation, as well as a natural grass soccer / practice field. The baseball field is proposed to be constructed in synthetic turf using similar materials as those used for the softball field in order to enhance the field playability, reduce maintenance costs / time, and eliminate the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation.

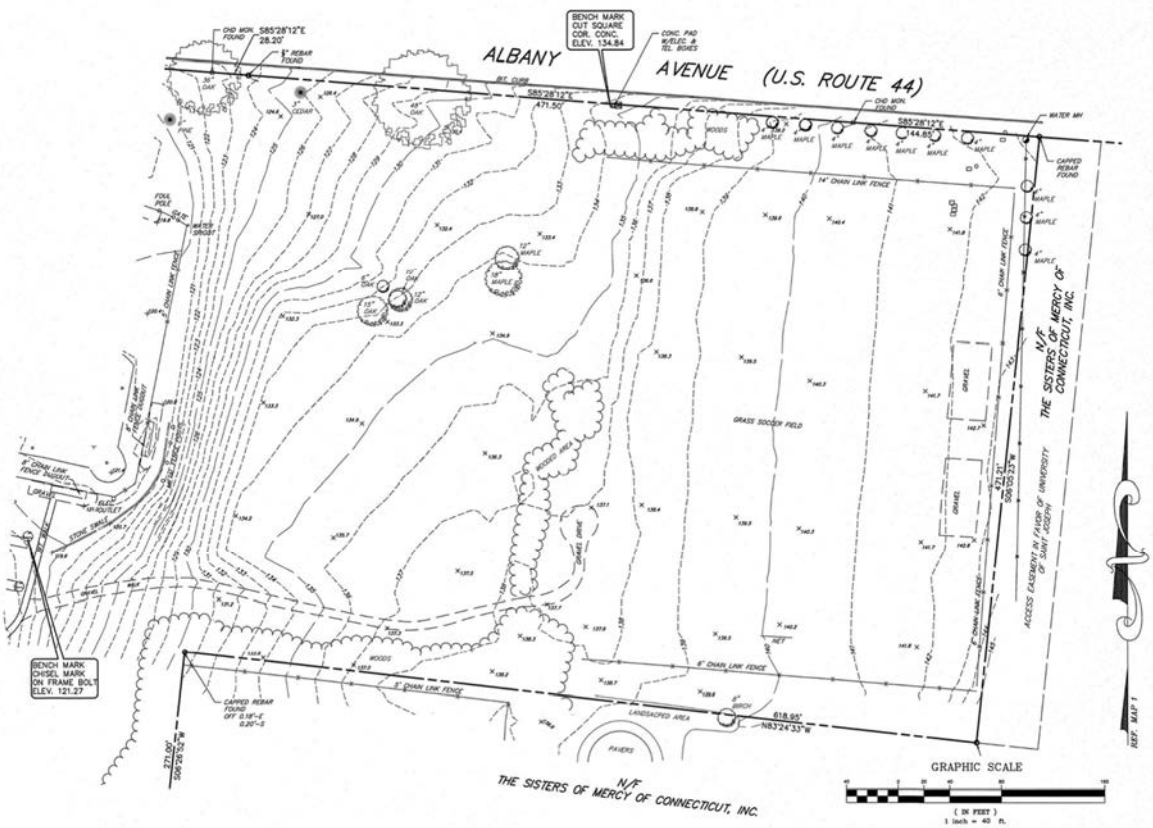
Due to the overall size of baseball fields, the construction of the new synthetic turf baseball field will take up the majority of the open lawn area to the east of the softball field. The field will play 330.0' down the right field line, 375.0' to right center field, 400.0' to center field, 340.0' to left center field, and 315.0' to left field. The playing dimensions of 315' and 340' on the left side of the field is shorter than recommendations and as such, the NCAA recommends adjusting the height of the outfield containment to make the field play longer. There will be no impact to wetland resource areas, and the field is not intended to be lighted. The following narrative highlights the existing site conditions, the proposed improvements, and the measures that will be taken in order to control stormwater, erosion, and sedimentation.

B. Existing Site Conditions

Property Information

Address:	1678 Asylum Ave, New Haven, CT
Parcel ID:	0181 2 1678 0001
Lot Area:	88.48 acres
Development Area:	4.75 acres
Zone:	R-10
Map No:	G

Project Development Area – Aerial Context



Project Development Area – Site Survey

Context

The University of Saint Joseph is located at 1678 Asylum Avenue in West Harford, CT and is bounded by Albany Avenue to the north, Steele Road to the east, and Trout Brook Drive to the west. The project development area is located at the north end of the campus, bounded by Albany Avenue to the north, Stratford Road to the east, the Sisters of Mercy to the south, and the softball field to the west. A (3.0') wide asphalt walkway provides player/pedestrian access from the north end of the O'Connell Athletic Center up to a gravel walkway that leads to the elevation of the proposed site development area.

Topography

The existing natural grass lawn area slopes up from west to east from elevation (+134.0') to (+141.0') and sheet flows with approximately a two (2.0) percent pitch. The area drains to the northwest towards an existing swale at the northeast corner of the tennis courts.

Wetlands

The proposed site development area is outside of all wetland areas and regulated buffer zones on campus.

Vegetation

On site vegetation consists of a mix of mature deciduous and evergreen trees along Albany Avenue, along the southern property line adjacent to the Sisters of Mercy site, as well as a grouping of trees that bisects the open lawn area from the natural grass playing field. The trees primarily include White Oak (Quercus alba), Red Oak (Quercus rubra), Red Maple (Acer rubrum), White Pine (Pinus strobus), and Eastern Redcedar (Juniperus virginiana).

Soils

Geotechnical investigations indicate that the soil is of glacial moraine origin. The moraine deposits consist of compact sand and silt, with trace to little gravel and glacial lake deposits (stiff silt and clay). The water table was evident at 2.5' to 6.5' below the existing finished grade, and inspection samples indicate that the soils below 3.0' are at or close to saturation. The complete subsurface exploration program and geotechnical engineering evaluation report by Welti Geotechnical, P.C. is included in the appendix of the Stormwater Management Report.

Utilities

Drainage:

- The existing drainage pattern of the open lawn area and natural grass field sheet flows from east to west, all leading to the northwest towards and existing swale.
- The grass swale along the north side of the softball field collects the majority of the runoff from the proposed project area. This grass swale then discharges to the swale along the north side of the tennis courts.
- A small portion at the southwest corner of the proposed improvements flow towards the existing wetland to the southwest of the softball field.

Electrical:

There are currently no electrical services to the project area.

Water:

There are currently no potable or non-potable water services to the project area.

Sanitary Sewer:
There are currently no sanitary services in the project area.

C. Proposed Construction Activities

Synthetic Field Construction

The main component of the project is the construction of a new synthetic turf baseball field. This new field will provide the University with a well-draining, level/consistent playing surface allowing for greater flexibility for the athletic department and less maintenance for the facilities department.

Prior to the construction of the new field, all erosion and sediment control measures will be installed as described in Section E (below), and a crushed stone construction access route will be installed from the north end of the O'Connell Athletic Center, north towards the field location. The proposed synthetic turf field area will be stripped of all topsoil, graded to subgrade elevations, and covered with geotextile fabric. Perimeter collector pipes and drainage infrastructure will be installed in conjunction with a 12" section of ¾" crushed stone and a 6" section of compacted 'dynamic stone'. Total depth of field improvements subbase will be 18" in conformance with geotechnical engineer recommendations. The synthetic turf and infill material will be installed on approved stone bases, completing the field construction sequence.

The proposed infill material will consist of silica sand and EPDM (Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer) rubber. EPDM rubber is considered a 'virgin' rubber that is extremely durable and flexible, and therefore has a wide range of applications, including in vehicles (where it is used for window and door seals, as well as cooling system hoses), cold-rooms, non-slip coatings for decks and playgrounds, and as an infill material for synthetic turf fields. EPDM is not a recycled product and has much better resistance to heat, light, and ozone than unsaturated rubbers such as SBR. EPDM is formulated to be resistant to temperatures as high as 150 °C, and as low as -40 °C and can be used outdoors for decades without degradation. See Sheet CI501 through CI503 for specific construction details.

The proposed field will be enclosed with a 7.0' high chain link fence as well as a 30.0' high tension netting backstop (all to be black, PVC-coated). Ball safety netting system will be installed from the left field corner and extending to center field. The netting is proposed to be 35.0' feet in height.

A segmental block retaining wall is proposed in the northwest corner of the development area in order to achieve the grading necessary for the baseball field (maximum of a 1% slope per NCAA). The retaining wall will also allow a mature 48" diameter oak tree along Albany Avenue to remain undisturbed.

Home and visitor player areas (above ground 'dugouts') are proposed on both sides of the field. Player areas will be 40.0' in length by 12.0' in width on the home team side (third base side), and 36.0' in length by 12.0' in width on the visitor team side. The home team player area will accommodate up to fifty-five (55) athletes/coaches and the visitor player area will accommodate up to forty (40) athletes/coaches. Player areas are proposed to be constructed out of pressure treated wood framing, fiber cement clapboard siding, and asphalt shingles. The architectural style is similar to the recently permitted softball field dugouts though slightly longer to accommodate the larger team rosters.

Home and visitor double-loaded bullpens are proposed on both sides of the field as recommended by the NCAA and will be oriented so that pitchers will be throwing in the same direction in practice as when they throw in the game.

A single batting tunnel is proposed to be installed to the west of the new field and will be used by both the home and visiting teams, as well as providing a valuable resource for training and practices.

A new electronic scoreboard will be installed on the north side of the field to provide required scoring recording. The scoreboard will be similar to scoreboard at softball field and will be oriented to provide viewing from infield area.

The proposed construction techniques will require the use of excavators, front end loaders, trucks, bulldozers, and compactors for excavation, earth moving and fill placement on the site. No rock is expected to be encountered based on the geotechnical report. Erosion and sediment control requirements are included in the contract documents and will adhere to all State of Connecticut and Town of West Hartford regulations.

Electrical Improvements

Only minor electrical improvements are proposed, including the installation of GFCI receptacles in each player area, and on the rear side of the new backstop, as well as power to a new scoreboard. No field lighting proposed.

Drainage Improvements

The major adjustment to the existing drainage system is installation of the stone base section installed underneath the synthetic turf field. A collector pipe will be installed along the perimeter of the synthetic turf field and a series of panel drains will be installed to collect and convey the stormwater to the collector pipes. A new 12" drain line will daylight to the existing grass swale to the north of the softball field, which maintains the current drainage pattern.

Landscaping

All disturbed areas will be seeded or sodded. No additional landscaping improvements are proposed. The University is committed to maintaining the trees around the perimeter of the proposed development area.

Future Amenities

The University is seeking approval for future seating amenities for the existing softball field and future baseball field. Seating for each field is expected to be in the 200-250 seat range. The seating systems have not yet been designed, but approximate locations have been considered to aid in the design of the future baseball field. Seating systems will meet ADA accessibility requirements and consist of at-grade and elevated seating structures.

A press box structure for each field is also proposed as a future amenity and is currently being shown behind each backstop. The press box will allow for live streaming of games and play-by-play/color commentary for fans that are unable to attend games in person and general announcements for spectators.

D. Stormwater Management

The project has been designed to meet the State of Connecticut requirements. See the Stormwater Management Report included in this submission for more detailed information.

E. Soil Erosion & Sediment Control

All site work will be constructed using best management practices in accordance with the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control and the 2004 Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual.

To minimize the potential for pollution caused by soil erosion and sedimentation during and after construction, all site construction and inspection and post construction site maintenance will be guided by the provisions of the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan and specifications. The plan provides for construction controls to be implemented to prevent disturbance and transportation of silt to the surrounding areas as a result of construction activity.

Temporary controls will be implemented in accordance with the Connecticut Soil and Erosion Control Manual, including; dewatering filtration, silt sacks, silt fencing, and hay bales. Prior to permanent stabilization of the site, temporary controls upstream of connections to the existing drainage structure will be maintained to prevent siltation into the stormwater system. These controls include storm drainage inlet protection and silt fencing.

F. Neighborhood Outreach

The University is committed to being open and transparent with neighboring properties about all plans for future development. A neighborhood outreach meeting is scheduled for January 25th, at 5:30 PM at the University. Letters will be distributed to all direct abutters, with copies sent to the Town offices.