



DRAFT

December ____, 2008

Jim Combs, Director, Parks & Recreation
City of Sacramento
915 I Street, Fifth Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Witter Ranch Park Field Lights

Dear Mr. Combs,

The field lights at Witter Ranch Park have been a concern of residents in our neighborhood from the moment they were first introduced. They were installed over the strong objections of residents in the area several years ago, prior to the neighborhood being represented by our community association. People who live on the park's perimeter or in its vicinity have reported numerous problems at the park over the years, especially on evenings that the field lights are in use, including but not limited to:

- Peace disturbances due to shouting and whistle-blowing;
- Parking and congestion on Saintsbury Way, Chimney Rock Way, and Far Niente Way;
- Illegal food sales and fundraising;
- Unauthorized use of park facilities after sunset by parties not associated with the use permit, a violation that our police department is unable to enforce;
- Trash in park, on sidewalks, and on streets; and
- Celebratory shouting, loud music from automobiles, and screeching tires following tournament play.

The Sacramento Police Department has been dispatched on numerous occasions to deal with problems at and around the park on evenings the lights are on, which seem to have a regional draw – the lights themselves are visible from miles away, practically announcing “Here’s where the action is” akin to a promotional searchlight. That is **not** the message our community wants to send – on the contrary, we aim to keep a very low profile and for the park to be enjoyed most primarily by the people who live here. In this context, “enjoying” can equally translate to having a peaceful place **not** to hear when in our homes or walking through the neighborhood.

The North Natomas Community Plan clearly defines the different levels of parks our community is expected to have:

“The plan calls for a 200 acre Regional Park to be located north of the Town Center that will serve all of the City of Sacramento. Community parks, generally 6 to 20 acres that serve a radius of about three miles, and Neighborhood parks, 2 to 10 acres that serve a radius of about one half mile, are located within the plan area” (pp. 52-53).

In addition, your Web site describes park sites even more definitively at www.cityofsacramento.org/parksandrecreation/ppdd/park_category.htm:

Neighborhood Parks, **5-10 acres**, service area of ½-mile:

A park intended to be used **primarily by the people who live nearby**, within a half-mile radius of the park. Some neighborhood parks are situated **adjacent to an elementary school** and improvements are usually oriented toward the recreation needs of children. In addition to landscaping, improvements might include a tot lot, adventure area, and **unlighted sport fields** or courts [emphasis added].

Community Parks, **10-60 acres**, service area of 2-3 miles, drivable from several neighborhoods:

A park or facility developed primarily to **meet the requirements of a large portion of the City**. In addition to neighborhood park amenities, a community park may include: a large group picnic area with shade structure, a community garden, a neighborhood/community Skate Park, restroom, **on-site parking**, bicycle trail, a nature area, a dog park, **lighted sport fields** or sport courts. Specialized facilities may also be found in a community park including: a community center, a water play area and/or a swimming pool. Some of the smaller community parks may be dedicated to one use . . . [emphasis added].

We believe the vast majority of people who use Witter Ranch Park's field lights live **beyond** the three-mile radius service area that both the Natomas Community Plan and your Web site describe its intended service use as a community park, based simply upon the fact that nearly all of the participants in the league games and practices drive to and park their vehicles at the site.

By your department's own documented definitions, **Witter Ranch Park is a neighborhood park, not a community park**. We appreciate that funding the development of the long-promised regional park has been a significant challenge in our city, but we believe that is not a valid reason for our humble 9-acre neighborhood park to become a de facto stop-gap surrogate of the forthcoming regional park drawing large numbers of people who do not live in our neighborhood.

Our research indicates there are only six parks in the entire City of Sacramento less than 10 acres in size that either have sports field lights or have sports field lights planned in the future:

- Airfield Park, 9 acres – not developed yet
- Autumn Meadow Park in North Natomas, 6 acres – no lights installed yet
- Peregrine Park in North Natomas, 8.4 acres – no lights installed yet
- River Birch Park in North Natomas, 4.9 acres – not developed yet
- Westlake Community Park, 9.7 acres – lights installed, but plentiful parking is available – angled street parking on west, parallel street parking on north across from clubhouse parking lot, parallel street parking on east across from apartment complex
- Witter Ranch Park – 9 acres, surrounded on 3 sides by homes and adjacent to an elementary school, no dedicated parking

As you can see, Witter Ranch Park stands out conspicuously as the smallest park in the entire City of Sacramento with field lights in place – lights that were installed over the neighborhood's objections.

Based on these findings and experiences, and pursuant to a membership vote we held at our last open general meeting on November 24, 2008, we respectfully request that you execute an affirmative abatement of the public nuisance the field lights at Witter Ranch Park are causing our neighborhood by way of **the immediate and permanent cessation of all field light use at Witter Ranch Park**, followed by the ultimate **relocation of Witter Ranch Park field lights** to the North Natomas Regional Park (or any other park in North Natomas where they would be welcomed by the surrounding neighborhood). We are also seeking **an inflation-adjusted amenities credit for the original cost of the field lights** so that the design of the

park and its upcoming final phase of development can be revisited to incorporate the neighborhood's true wishes.

Enclosed are signed petition letters we circulated in the area closest to Witter Ranch Park that support our representative position in this request.

We would also like to invite you to attend our association meeting on Monday, February 23, in which we would welcome a discussion of how our members can help protect our park assets. We are somewhat aware of your department's "Partners in Parks" program in which we may have an opportunity to provide routine or special stewardship activities and we are interested in learning more about the program. Our association is in the process of forming special committees, one of which may ultimately include park protection and advocacy, so this may be an opportunity for you to share information with us about Partners in Parks and solicit volunteers. Please let us know whether you plan to attend and how much time you will need so that we can ensure there is enough time on our agenda.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your reply.

Your community Partners,

Witter Ranch Community Alliance

Keith Sharward, Co-founder

Judah Grossman, Co-founder

Brandy Kollenborn, Co-founder

Becky Correa, Active Member
& Homeowner, Chimney Rock Way

Cc: Ray Tretheway, City of Sacramento, Councilperson, District 1
Daniel Hahn, North Command Captain, Sacramento Police Department

Attachments: Letters of petition from numerous residents in neighborhood