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On the Fence

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On the Fence: Transcript

“On the Fence” started as an art piece that shows how soccer and soccer players are treated in Salinas. I made this piece because growing up and even now myself and groups of friends turn to soccer as an escape from everyday struggles. Literally all that is needed is a ball and that does it for us, it transports us to a magical place. The problem is that not everyone in town likes where we play. For instance we try to play at local high school, and what happens we get kicked out by the Athletic Director. We go to Salinas Regional Sports Complex, which is literally a big soccer field and because it is private property we get kicked out. So it can be tough at times to find a nice piece of grass to run on. So we resort to cement parking lots usually with lights. But if there's no fence then it's a lot of chasing the ball as it rolls away. So that's where this art piece comes from a frustration of not having sufficient playable grass. I know there are a lot of patches of grass. I've been around town trying to find a park where there aren't potholes, dry grass and dirt or uncut tall grass where the ball won't even roll. The man cut in half is a perfect representation of how I feel after being kicked out of a place for simply trying to play. What frustrates me more is that Salinas Regional Sports Authority announced new plans to construct plenty more fields just behind what they have now, but that was announced back in 2008. Taking this new information I started to delve deep into what was really going on and this is what I found out.

If Salinas builds a sports complex it could lose acres of farmland and eventually that farm land could be turned into residential, retail and office space. The potential damage it could do to the farmland and the city is considerable. The farms claim that their lands were not being adequately protected from polluted downstream runoff that the soccer complex would generate. The parties have come to a settlement which requires the proposed soccer complex, located near East Laurel Drive and Constitution Avenue, to capture any and all runoff before it leaves the property, thereby protecting the vulnerable farmlands to the south. There are several ways to catch stormwater one way is to plant native plants of California. These would create habitats for pollinators which would effectively cause continual growth of the plants. CSUMB has a project started where they are going to plant native plants around the soccer fields. Another way to stop stormwater is to create rain gardens. Given the area surrounding Constitution a rain garden would seem ideal as the Gabilan Creek is already in place, a few modifications and the neighboring farmland have nothing to fear. In fact I would even argue that if the creek was turned into a long rain garden from Boronda to Laurel it would be an attraction to runners, cyclists and walkers. In addition rain gardens can even be created in between rows of parking. Seeing the fields in the middle of town is a reminder to the residents of the hardships citizens of the city go through everyday. Relocating those fields would mean urbanization of the space.

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