



STAFF REPORT

To: Council

File No.: 6120-20

From: Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

Date: September 11, 2024

Subject: Let's Play, Courtenay! Final Draft Park Playground Design Standards

PURPOSE:

For Council to approve the Let's Play, Courtenay! Park Playground Design Standards (Attachment 1).

BACKGROUND:

The Park Playground Design Standards (PPDS) are 2023 - 2026 Council strategic priority. These standards provide guiding principles and best practices for improving Courtenay's park playgrounds, emphasizing diversifying play experiences and enhancing accessibility and inclusion. They are informed by the vision and goals of the Official Community Plan (OCP, 2022) and the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP, 2019), in addition to feedback through community engagement. The project phasing and project process is outlined in Image 1:

Image 1: Project Process

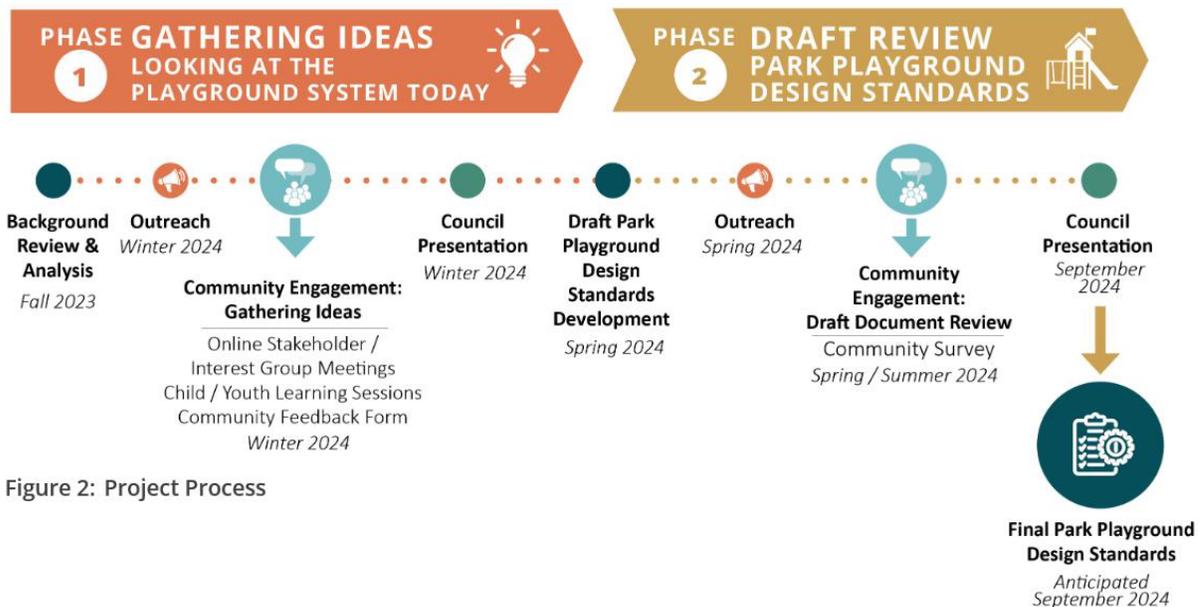


Figure 2: Project Process

In January 2024, the City initiated the "Let's Play, Courtenay!" Park Playground Design Standards project to involve residents in envisioning the future of play in Courtenay. The PPDS project included community engagement as well as leading practice reviews to establish draft design guidelines, followed by internal and external review, to develop this report outlining recommended park playground design standards for the

City's consideration. The playground design standards, if adopted, will guide the City's approach to playground renewal and development by identifying recommended standards to be applied.

At the March 13, 2024 Council meeting, staff presented the Phase 1 Community Engagement Summary and Emerging Directions, including a draft vision statement, goals, and guiding principles.¹

Phase 1 Community Engagement Summary

Phase 1 community engagement heard from 397 participants and respondents and included the following activities:

1. Community questionnaire available on-line between January 23rd to February 20th, 2024.
2. Two in-person child and youth workshops: aged preschool and 8-12.
3. Online interest group meetings: community interest groups and one internal City department interest group.
4. *Let's Play, Courtenay!* Park Playground Design Drawing Contest

The Phase 1 engagement revealed the following key findings related to Courtenay's park playgrounds:

- Preferences for outdoor play
- Desire for nature-based play areas and inclusive spaces
- Innovative and imaginative play structures,
- Splash pads and opportunities for adventurous play
- Need for improving public washroom access
- Enhancing connectivity through active transportation
- Ensuring playgrounds are usable year-round
- Issues related to safety, cleanliness, and maintenance
- Concerns related to substance use in parks, litter, drug paraphernalia, sheltering in parks, and mental health issues.

The results also highlighted the potential for playgrounds to serve as vibrant community gathering spots that foster a sense of belonging and connection to local neighbourhoods. Participants expressed the importance of having playgrounds near their homes, connected by walking and bike paths, and featuring comfortable meeting spaces and amenities, while also reflecting Courtenay's unique character.

Some of the concerns raised, such as sheltering in parks and substance use in playgrounds, fall outside the scope of the Park Playground Design Standards project. However, to reflect the significant amount of responses related to safety, the project's goals were updated to include safety and comfort as a lens in the development of the draft PPDS.

Emerging Directions: Draft Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles

At the March 13, 2024 Council meeting, staff presented the draft vision, goals, and guiding principles for the development of the Park Playground Design Standards.

¹ [Park Playground Design Standards Community Engagement Summary and Emerging Directions \(escribemeetings.com\)](https://www.escribemeetings.com)

The following draft vision statement was developed as an aspirational benchmark for future choices about new or upgraded playgrounds. It evolved from the engagement process, previous park planning work and strategic documents, background research and informed by City staff and Council.

“Our City’s park playgrounds are safe, fun, and inclusive places, where community members of all ages and abilities can gather, socialize, and play. Well-connected by paths and trails, playgrounds are the centre of activity in Courtenay’s parks - inviting and comfortable to enjoy at all year long.

The playground system will offer a diverse range of innovative and exciting play opportunities, allowing everybody to challenge their abilities, stimulate their curiosity, and foster exploration and imagination. Each park playground will provide a different experience, all while celebrating Courtenay’s unique identity and sense of place.”

The following draft guiding principles were presented with the goal of bringing the vision statement to life by offering direction for the development of playground design standards and future projects. These principles serve as a checklist; if the design standards align with them, they will support the goals of the Park Playground Design Standards project.

Image 2: Revised Park Playground Design Standards Goals and Guiding Principles



Following receipt of the staff report, Council resolved the following:

THAT the Let's Play, Courtenay! Park Playground Design Standards Community Engagement Summary (Attachment 1) be received for information; and

THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the next phase of the project based on the Emerging Directions draft vision, goals and guiding principles contained in this report.

THAT Council direct staff to report back with recommendations on sharing the Park Playground Design Standards survey results and feedback with the Provincial government as it relates to mental health, substance use, and homelessness in municipal playgrounds and parks.

DISCUSSION:

Phase 2 Draft Park Playground Design Standards and Engagement

Building on the emerging directions presented to Council at the March 13, 2024 council meeting and informed by the Phase 1 engagement process, as well as leading practice reviews, the draft playground design standards were developed during phase two of the project. The draft standards were made available to the public for review on the City's project website. A survey was open between June 20 and July 12, 2024, to collect feedback on the proposed vision statement, guiding principles, and nine design standards. The survey included an open question to collect any further input the public had on the draft PPDS. A detailed summary of the community engagement findings from Phase 2 can be found in the Let's Play, Courtenay! Park Playground Design Standards Community Engagement Summary Update – Phase 2 attached as an appendix to the PPDS.

The draft Park Playground Design Standards received significant support from the community:

- 87.7% of respondents supported the draft vision statement
- 92.6% of respondents supported the draft guiding principles
- 87.7% of respondents supported the draft design standards

An open-ended question was provided for respondents to contribute additional information on the draft PPDS. The following themes arose from the feedback and have been addressed in the document accordingly:

1. **Safety Concerns:** Safety concerns around substance use in or around playgrounds, pathways and connecting trails and sheltering in parks was highlighted by respondents.
 - a. While substance use and sheltering are outside the scope of the PPDS project, the PPDS highlights a range of actions to encourage safe and activated parks playgrounds such as community or recreational programming, increased opportunities for safe garbage disposal including sharps bins on an as-needed basis, and integration of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles as a lens in site planning, lighting and other placemaking elements.
2. **Need for Shade in Playgrounds:** Respondents indicated a desire to increase shade in playgrounds by planting trees and including shade structures.
 - a. The PPDS have been revised to include recommendations regarding shade trees and shade structures at all park playgrounds (not just Community Park Playgrounds), including considerations for alternative shade methods while trees are established.
3. **Fencing as a Safety Measure:** Fencing is desired in playground areas to prevent young children or individuals who are neurodivergent from bolting or running from unfenced playground areas and to address safety concerns related to traffic and roads.
 - a. The PPDS have been revised to include the requirement for fully-fenced playgrounds in immediate proximity to highways, arterial, or collector streets and at universally accessible playgrounds.

4. Request for Swings or a Variety of Swing Equipment: Significant desire for more swings or different types of swings in Courtenay's playgrounds.
 - a. The PPDS have been updated to prioritize locating swings in playgrounds where there is sufficient adjacent open space to address the safety surface area requirements for swings.

Park Playground Design Standards Summary

The Park Playground Design Standards document pulls together community feedback, highlighting the voices of children and families, and research to present to Council a set of standards and guidelines to inform playground renewal and development in the City into the future. It reflects not only the physical amenities required for successful and engaging play structures, but also the community value and potential associated with well-designed play elements and amenities. If adopted by Council, the PPDS will lead Courtenay towards a future where park playgrounds bring people together, enhance social connection and physical well-being, and attract positive use and visitation in Courtenay's parks.

The PPDS outlines Courtenay's current park playground system, a vision for the future including guiding principles, provides nine recommended design standards, and outlines next steps for implementation.

Playground Benchmarking and Future Needs Assessments

An important project step was to benchmark Courtenay's current playground system and inventory. As established by the Parks and Recreational Master Plan, 2019, Courtenay has eight community park playgrounds and thirteen neighbourhood park playgrounds, with an additional playground being added in 2022 (Cozy Corner Preschool playground), and a new playground (Brookfield Park) to be added later this year or early next year.

These parks were mapped along with Courtenay's community, neighbourhood and nature parks that do not currently have any playground infrastructure as well as School District 71 school playgrounds. Each playground was also mapped with its most recent condition score ranging from one through five: one (1) rating being in excellent condition and a five (5) rating being in poor condition and needing replacement within one year. At the time of this report, based on condition assessments, three playgrounds are due for replacement in the next year, 11 playgrounds in the next two to five years and nine playgrounds in the next 15-25 years. The PPDS will help inform capital budget planning through the community-informed service levels established through this project. The mapping of the current system will be combined with future mapping work being conducted through the Complete Communities project later this year. The combination of these mapping exercises will identify gaps in playground infrastructure, including taking into consideration both the City's park playgrounds and the School District's inventory, alongside population growth projections. The future mapping exercise will also identify any gaps related to the following planning considerations for playground distribution:

- As per the PRMP, all residents are to have access within 800 metres to a community park and 400 metres to a neighbourhood park (PRMP, 2019).
- Universal accessibility and inclusive features
- An age range inventory to identify the distribution of tot lots (0-4), pre-school aged (2-5), and school aged (5-12), as well as intergenerational opportunities such as fit parks.
- Nature based playground additions to parks classified as Nature Parks based on a needs basis, supported by park management plans, and only in the absence of any restrictive covenants.

The process as described will be key to identifying key priority investment areas in Courtenay's park playground system, including considerations and opportunities to consolidate investments. As per the PPDS, there are likely areas that are well-served by playgrounds, that through the reduction of playground infrastructure or integration of alternative play strategies that are less capital intensive (i.e. nature based play), the City can increase its investment in certain locations in order to achieve higher quality play experiences.

The Park Playground Design Standards

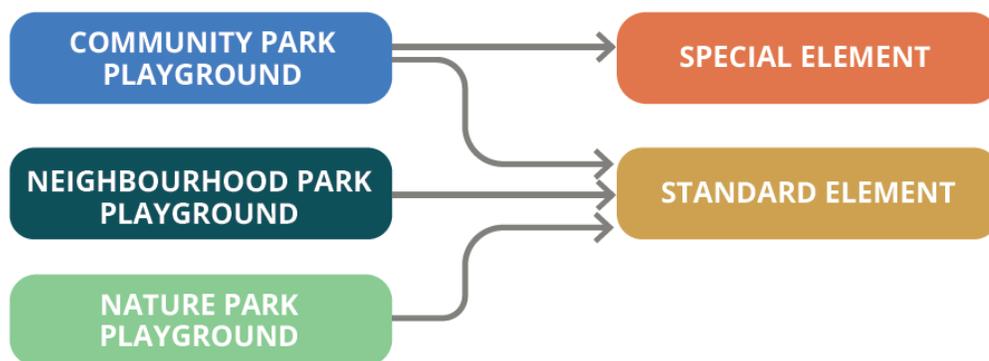
The PPDS provides nine standards that will direct the development and enhancement of Courtenay's park playgrounds, and are aligned with the vision and guiding principles established through the engagement and research process. Each design standard is accompanied by background and rationale, key elements to be implemented, and additional considerations such as public art, playground themes, and elements that reflect the unique local character of the Courtenay region.

The nine standards are:

1. Accessible and Inclusive Design: Plan welcoming inclusive, fun play environments for all ages and abilities.
2. Siting the Playground: Integrate the playground seamlessly with the park and surrounding neighbourhood.
3. Pathways and Connectivity: Provide safe, well-connected paths of travel to access park playgrounds.
4. Boundaries and Enclosures: Assess site features to determine appropriate boundaries and levels of enclosure.
5. Playground Surfacing and Edging: Implement resilient, easy to maintain, inclusive surfacing and edging.
6. Play Elements and Opportunities: Provide a wide range of play opportunities for all to enjoy.
7. Trees and Planting: Integrate shade trees and planting areas surrounding playgrounds.
8. Supporting Amenities: Provide a range of supporting amenities to activate park playgrounds.
9. Programming: Encourage community use of park playgrounds with diverse programming.

The playground standards are structured based on three playground classifications: community, neighbourhood, and nature play areas. The standards articulate what features and amenities are to be included in all park playgrounds and other special features that are prioritized for Community Park Playgrounds, as these serve residents from across the city and beyond, as depicted in the following flow chart (Image 3). In addition to providing guidance on play structure elements and other design considerations, the standards provide recommendations on the supporting amenities that should be included in park playground designs.

Image 3: PPDS - Standard Elements and Special Elements Flow Chart:



Implementation of the Park Playground Design Standards

The implementation of the Park Playground Design Standards will occur over time through playground renewals and new playground developments. As each current playground comes up for renewal or new playgrounds are developed, the PPDS will be applied in the design of the play structure, siting within the park, and supporting amenities.

Community park playgrounds, and some neighbourhood or nature park playgrounds, will require the support and expertise of landscape design professionals to ensure the delivery of playgrounds and amenities that align with the PPDS, including play elements, siting, boundaries, pathways, accessibility, plantings and amenities, as well as support community engagement.

The City's current financial plan budgets for one playground renewal every two years, with historical playground renewal project budgets of \$120,000 (including in 2025) which would result in each current playground being renewed on a 46-year schedule. However, starting in 2027 the playground capital renewal budgets were increased to \$320,000 every two years with additional funds on alternating years to support playground design. These budget adjustments were made prior to the completion of the PPDS and as per the financial implications section of the PPDS, neighbourhood park playgrounds can range in costs from \$75,000 to \$385,000, while community park playgrounds can range in costs from \$240,000 to \$1,770,000. The PPDS provides recommendations to support lifecycle planning for playgrounds, with play equipment lifespans ranging from ten to 25-plus years.

Should Council adopt the PPDS the next steps to support the implementation of the standards include:

1. Asset Inventory of Courtenay's Playgrounds: Conduct a comprehensive inventory of Courtenay's playgrounds as they relate to the nine playground standards. This inventory should be reviewed regularly.
2. Life-cycle planning: Ongoing life-cycle analysis to support asset management planning by considering factors such as usage levels, safety issues, accessibility, the age and condition of play elements, manufacturing quality, materials, climate and weather, and location.
3. Playground Infrastructure and Amenities Mapping: Include playground infrastructure in the Complete Communities Project to identify Courtenay's playground infrastructure and amenities needs and gaps, especially as it relates to growth.

The completion of these steps will inform updated capital budgets, based on life cycle planning and infrastructure mapping, which will be included in the City's financial planning for Council's consideration.

As Courtenay moves forward with the PPDS guidelines, it is important to note that Courtenay's playground system is part of an interconnected ecosystem that is affected by changes in neighbourhoods and the community as a whole as it grows. It is crucial to plan, implement, and continuously reassess, as well as remain flexible in response to unexpected developments and ongoing public feedback.

Next Steps

Should Council adopt and approve the Parks Playground Design Standards, the standards will be applied to upcoming playground projects starting with: Brookfield Park new neighbourhood park playground and Woodcote Park playground replacement. Brookfield park is anticipated to be completed by the late fall of this year or early in 2025.

As a community park, Woodcote Park will require further park planning with a landscape design professional to ensure the PPDS guidelines are appropriately applied, other supporting amenities in the park are considered in addition to the park playground replacement, and the community engagement and feedback received on the Woodcote Park playground replacement project are all considered as part of the playground renewal process. The Woodcote Park Playground replacement is anticipated to be completed in the Spring of 2025.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

Official Community Plan (OCP), 2022:

Building and Landscapes:

- Objective 6: Municipal buildings and site design demonstrate leadership in building performance, accessibility, and design.

Parks and Recreation:

- Objective 1: Parkland in the form of natural areas, open spaces, and outdoor recreation is of sufficient amounts, is well-connected, equitably distributed, and is of high quality to enhance liveability throughout the city.
- Objective 2: Recreation amenities, services, and programming are expanded and enhanced to support increased health, wellness, and social connections for all residents.
- Objective 4: The parks and recreation system exemplifies leadership in reconciliation, climate action, equity, and community well-being through its services, programs, and partnerships.
- Objective 5: Partnerships are in place to achieve parks and recreation objectives.

Social Infrastructure

- Objective 1: All Courtenay residents experience equitable access to services.
- Objective 2: Coordinated, inclusionary, and systems-based responses are in place to address evolving complex social issues.
- Objective 3: Physical spaces are designed with the needs for social connection and accessibility in mind.
- Objective 4: Neighbourhood and community development-based organizing are leveraged as a source of community capacity and resilience.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2019

3.2.1 Apply the design guidelines below to the design of new and upgraded parks:

- Use universal design principles to welcome all park visitors, including some pathway loops that are fully accessible in City-wide parks, and other parks where possible
- Encourage parks to include gathering places, with seating and spaces appropriate for picnics and group activities according to the type and size of the park
- For parks that include parking areas, design the parking efficiently, minimize the amount of hard (or gravel) surface, and keep the parking as close to the perimeter of the park as possible
- For large parking lots, include trees, planting and rain gardens during upgrading projects or new construction
- Plant trees in parks to the degree possible for shade and as a contribution to the urban forest
- Use Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, balancing these with the need to protect and enhance habitats
- Provide seating in all parks with significant levels of use
- Design parks with the goal of increasing creativity and interest, e.g., more interactive play environments and equipment, allow children to experience more nature in parks, and provide options for all ages of children, youth and adults
- Explore opportunities to integrate outdoor exercise equipment in or near playgrounds in community parks
- When planning and designing new parks, consider life cycle cost analysis and water and energy consumption
- Design parks with consideration for protection and enhancement of environmental resources and include rainwater/stormwater infiltration where possible
- Celebrate local artists in parks, with more public art such as murals, mosaics, and sculptures

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The PPDS outline the following financial implications of adopting the design standards, and are based on general assumptions and historical construction data from similarly-scaled projects.

Neighborhood park playgrounds can range in costs from \$75,000 to \$385,000, while community park playgrounds can range in costs from \$240,000 to \$1,770,000. Nature play areas can range between \$50,000 to \$220,000.

Based on the Playground Condition Assessments – Map C of the Park Playground Design Standards, the following are the projected capital implications (including planning, design, and construction costs):

- 2024 – 1 Community Park Replacement (Woodcote Park \$577,500) & 1 new Neighborhood Park (Brookfield \$225,000)
- 2025 – 2 Community Parks (\$480,000-\$3,540,000) & 1 Neighborhood Park (\$75,000-\$385,000)
- 2026-2028 – 3 Community Parks (720,000-\$5,310,000) and 7 Neighborhood Parks (\$525,000 - \$2,695,000)

The City has allocated \$1 million in grant funding from the Province of BC Growing Communities Fund (GCF) for Courtenay playgrounds in the 2024-2028 financial capital plan. Staff anticipate the \$1 million budget will be fully spent on the following playground capital projects: Park Playground Design Standards, Woodcote

Park playground replacement, Brookfield neighbourhood park playground (new), and one further neighbourhood park playground renewal.

The 2024-2028 capital plan also includes the following funding allocations

- \$120,000 in 2025 (tax funded) and \$320,000 in 2027 (gaming funded) for playground renewal
- \$30,000 in 2026 and 2028 for playground design (tax funded)
- Harmston Park: \$75,000 design (2024), \$750,000 construction (2025) with \$500,000 funded through GCF and \$250,000 through Park Reserve.
- Bill Moore: \$75,000 design (2024), \$1,000,000 construction (2026) with \$500,000 funded through GCF, \$250,000 through Park Reserve and \$250,000 through tax funding.

The capital budget for playground renewals will be mainly funded by tax revenue. However, there are other funding opportunities that can be considered and staff will be exploring through the relevant bylaw updates:

- Funds through the Development Cost Charges bylaw to fund park amenities in growth areas limited to:
 - o Fencing
 - o Landscaping
 - o Drainage and irrigation
 - o Trails
 - o Washrooms and change rooms
 - o Playing field equipment
- Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs) for funding playground equipment in play areas that are part of the new housing legislation Bill 44 to support infill and new growth.
- Third-party grant sources: senior government funding, non-government funding, donations, fundraising, community partnerships and private-public partnerships

As per the PPDS, the annual operating and maintenance cost implications estimates for new or renewed playgrounds are as follows:

- \$4,500 to \$75,000 for Community Parks
- \$1,500 to \$19,250 for Neighbourhood Parks
- \$1,000 to \$6,600 for Nature Park Play Areas

Operating budgets will be adjusted based on the addition or renewal of playgrounds in line with the PPDS standards and according to the unique elements of each playground, and will be included in financial plans for Council consideration.

Based on the above high-level financial review, it is clear that the City will need to be strategic in its investment in playground replacements through the Five Year Financial Planning Process as well as consideration of alternative funding sources to achieve a sustainable service level. A needs assessment and asset inventory as recommended by the PPDS that considers the School District 71 inventory, playground design standards and implementation strategy and an assessment through the Complete Communities Project will provide an investment strategy that may result in a reduction in traditional out of the box playgrounds and transition to fewer well-designed playgrounds that meet the desires of the community. Once this assessment work is complete it will inform adjustments to the City's financial plan moving forward.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

The development of the Parks Playground and Design Standards is part of the 2023/2024 Recreation, Culture, and Community Services Department work plan. Implementation of the Park Playground Design Standards will require collaborative efforts from the following internal departments: Development Services, Operational Services, Infrastructure and Environmental Engineering, and Recreation, Culture, and Community Services.

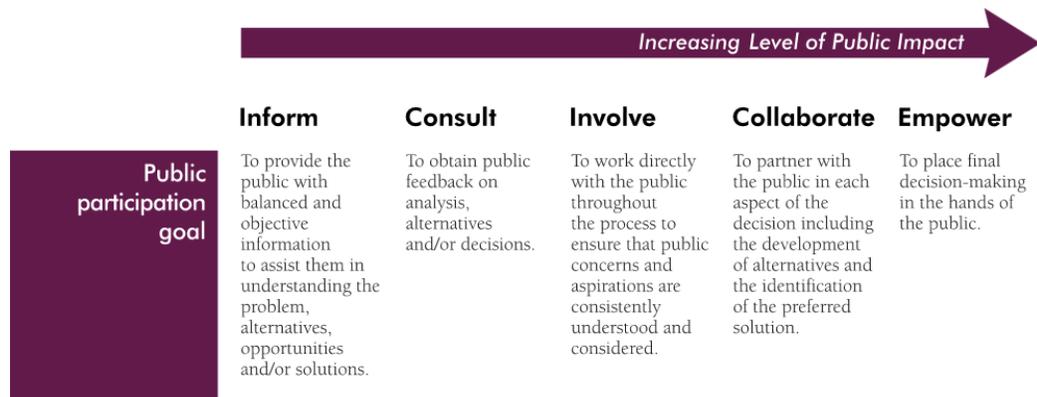
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative will help address the following strategic priorities:

- Parks and Recreation - Provision of public amenities through development (requirements for parks, trees, accessible benches, and public art)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff consulted the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council adopt the *Let's Play, Courtenay!* Park Playground Design Standards (Attachment 1); and, THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the implementation of the *Let's Play, Courtenay!* Park Playground Design Standards.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Attachment 1: Let's Play, Courtenay! Final Park Playground Design Standards

Prepared by: Joy Chan, Manager of Business Administration, Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Reviewed by: Stuart Carmichael, Acting Manager of Parks Services, Operational Services
Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)



Let's Play, Courtenay!

Park Playground Design Standards



**City of
Courtenay**



City of Courtenay

Let's Play, Courtenay!
Park Playground Design Standards

Prepared by LANARC

The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we gather and play is the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.



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1 | **Planning** - *Framing the Standards*

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- 1.2 Related Plans and Initiatives
- 1.3 Project Process
- 1.4 What We Heard
- 1.5 Playground System Today
- 1.6 Park Playground Classification
- 1.7 Needs Assessment
- 1.8 Vision & Guiding Principles

1.1 Project Purpose

In October 2023, the City of Courtenay (the City) initiated the “Let’s Play, Courtenay!” Park Playground Design Standards process. The project will create new playground design standards for the City’s park playgrounds.

The standards will support capital planning efforts by identifying a vision, guiding principles, and best practices for future playground improvements that are safe, inclusive, fun, and best meet the needs of the community.

1.2 Related Plans and Initiatives

The City has developed several plans and initiatives that guide the Park Playground Design Standards. The following key plans and documents, among others, have informed the standards and recommendations in this report:

- Official Community Plan (OCP, 2022)
- Parks & Recreation Master Plan (PRMP, 2019)
- Asset Management Bylaw No. 2981 (2019)

This document is not a consolidation of the previous initiatives, but it considers and carries forward key themes and ideas developed as part of these earlier processes, including opportunities to incorporate creative play elements and natural playgrounds in Courtenay’s parks.

In addition to these strategic documents, the standards were developed through a review of playground design best practices and existing standards.

Figure 1 on the opposite page provides an overview of how the Park Playground Design Standards fits within a hierarchy of City plans and future site-specific works.

What are Playground Design Standards?

The Park Playground Design Standards will provide a set of steps for how to design park playgrounds, including the types of materials to use, activities to include, where to put planting or furnishings, and how to make playgrounds more inclusive for all ages and abilities. Planners, designers, and builders will use the standards when designing new play areas or upgrading existing playgrounds.

The Park Playground Design Standards should be considered a living document that will evolve as the community changes over time. The standards are intended to be reviewed and adjusted regularly to reflect changing community needs.

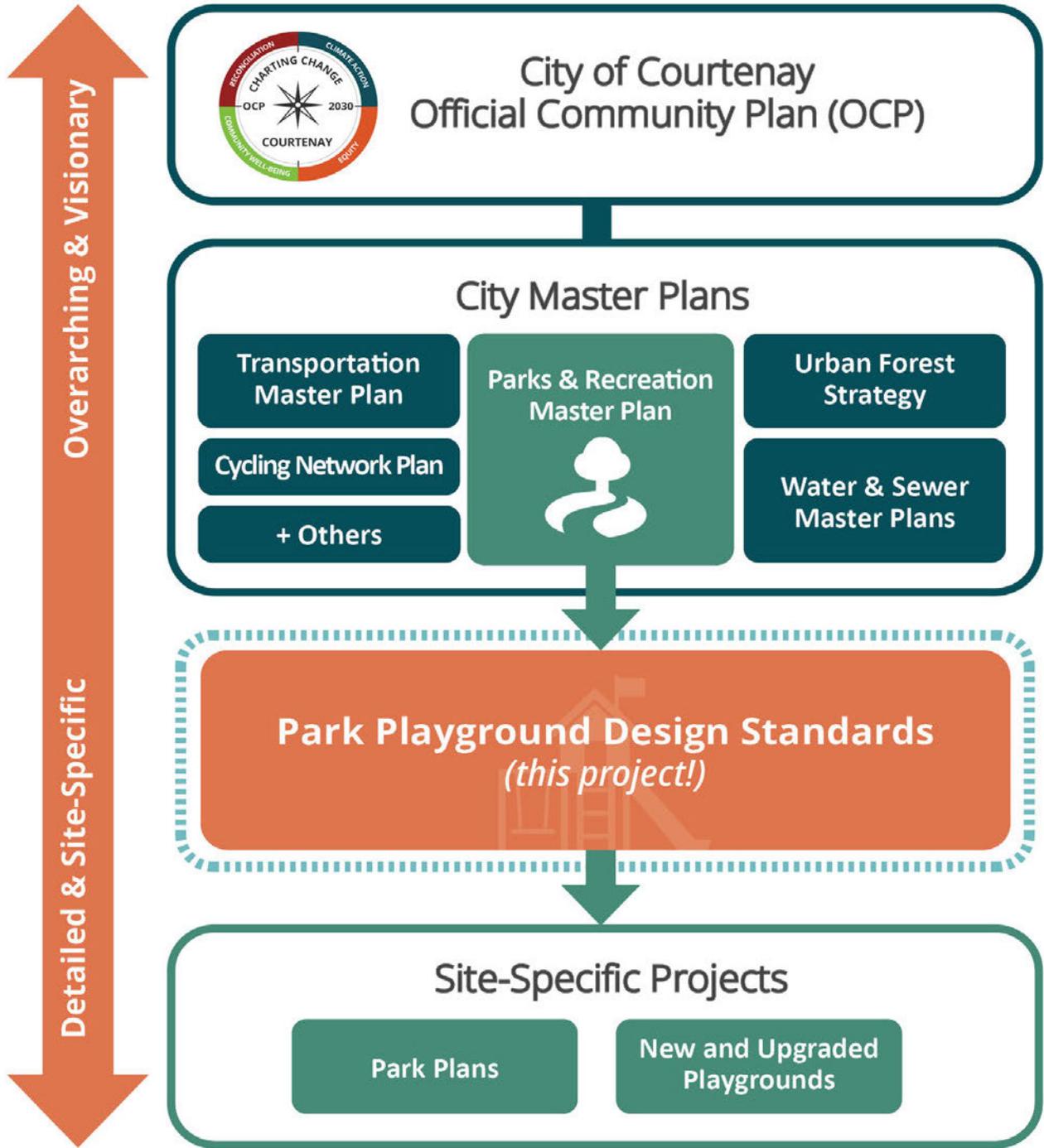


Figure 1: Planning Context

1.3 Project Process

The project process involved two phases from fall 2023 through summer 2024, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Engaging with the community and interest groups was central to the project process and was incorporated in each phase.

PHASE 1 | Compile information, review existing conditions, identify opportunities and constraints, develop a draft vision and guiding principles, gather preliminary ideas from the community.

PHASE 2 | Develop draft playground design standards, work with the community to review and refine the draft standards into a final Park Playground Design Standards document.

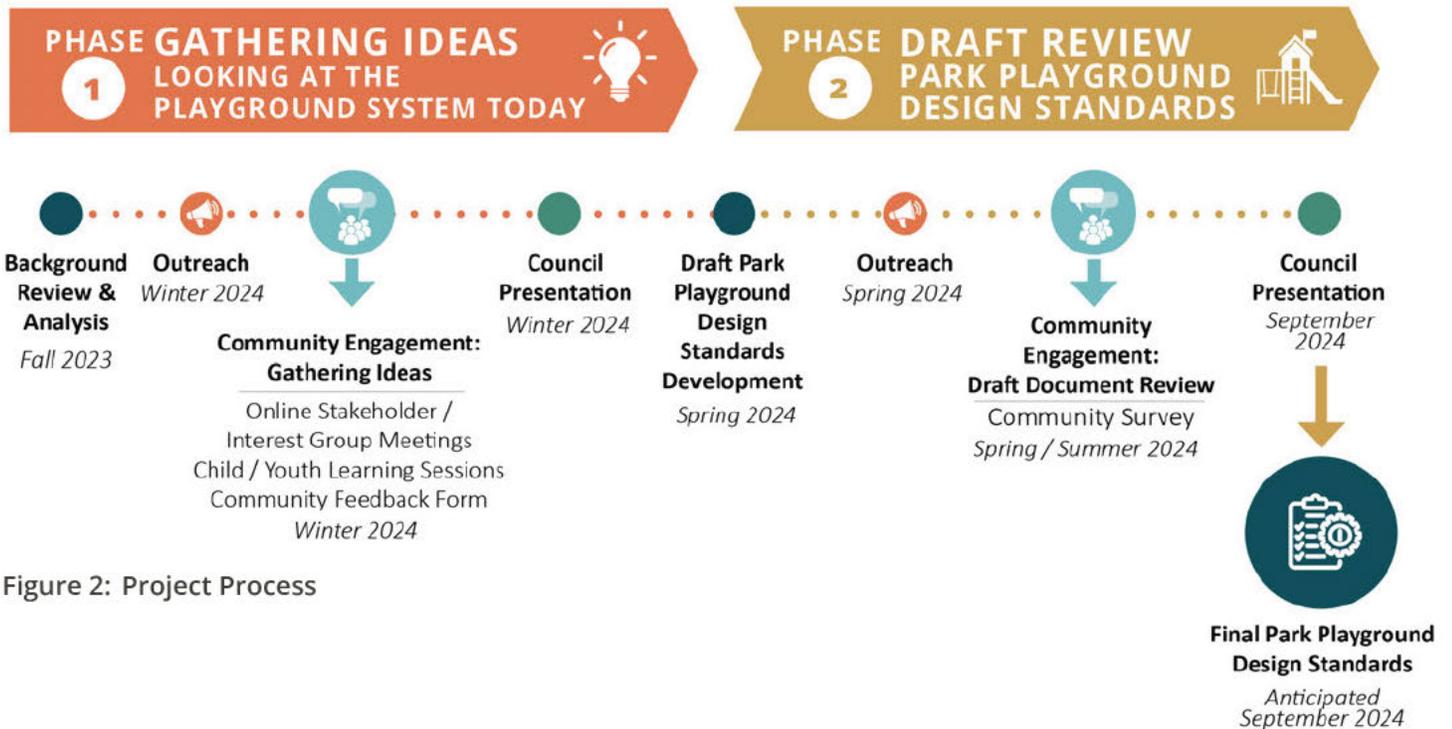


Figure 2: Project Process



Phase 1

Gathering Ideas

Fall 2023 - Winter 2024

Phase 1 involved a background information review, including existing playground conditions in Courtenay and best practices for playground design. This phase also included gathering community and interest group input to understand opportunities, barriers to play, and community priorities for new and improved playgrounds. Key initiatives included:

- Background review of related planning documents and best practices
- Project kick-off meeting with City staff
- Development of an engagement strategy
- Review of existing City park playgrounds including condition assessments
- Park playground tour with City staff
- Launch of public outreach campaign including media release, project website, posters in the parks, e-notifications, newspaper ads, Google ads, and social media posts
- Development and launch of a community input questionnaire (online and hard copy)
- Planning and launch of a community colouring contest
- Kids playground design workshops at the Lake Trail Community School (ages 6-12) and Cozy Corner Preschool (ages 3-5)
- An online interest group meeting and City staff workshop
- Summary of engagement feedback and an update to Council



Phase 1: Who Participated?

3

Written Submissions

12

Online Interest Group Participants

19

Drawing Contest Entries

30

Kids' Learning Session Participants

301

Clicks on Google Ads

336

Community Survey Responses

764

Project Webpage Users



Phase 2

Draft Park Playground Design Standards Review

Spring - Summer 2024

Phase 2 involved developing a draft Park Playground Design Standards document and refining and finalizing the standards. Community members and key interest groups were invited to review the draft standards and provide their feedback.

Key initiatives included:

- Development of a draft Park Playground Design Standards document
- Coordination with local playground supplier representatives to review the draft standards document and provide input on rough-order-of magnitude costing and financial recommendations
- City staff review of draft standards document
- Community and interest group referrals and online posting for feedback
- Recommended updates following community, interest group, and City staff input
- Council presentation of Park Playground Design Standards document
- Final refinements and submission of the Park Playground Design Standards

Phase 2: Who Participated?

1

Hard-Copy Feedback Form Response

81

Online Feedback Form Responses

796

Clicks on Google Ads

1,110

Project Webpage Users

1.4 What We Heard

The community engagement process generated many ideas for Courtenay's park playgrounds. A brief summary of the feedback themes and key points for Phase 1 is provided below. See the following pages for a summary from Phase 2.



➤ Summary Highlights:

Participants love:

- » Nature play (e.g., trees, climbing boulders, balancing logs)
- » Inclusive play areas for all ages and abilities
- » Innovative and imaginative play structures that allow for many different ways to play
- » Playgrounds close to home that are connected to safe walking and biking paths
- » Splash pads and water play
- » Comfortable outdoor meeting and gathering places (e.g. benches, picnic shelters)
- » Risky play
- » Play areas that highlight Courtenay's unique sense of place

Top Vision Words...

Safe



Fun



Accessible



Participants are concerned about:

- Public safety
- Litter and cleanliness
- Maintenance and upkeep
- Public washroom access
- Connectivity and safe access by active transportation (walking, cycling)
- Weather / all seasons use





Please have the parks well lit at night to discourage unsavoury activities from occurring..

- Community Engagement Participant



Community engagement participants shared concerns about safety in park playgrounds during Phase 1 and 2. See Section 1.8 *Guiding Principles* for more information on creating safe, comfortable park playground spaces for all to enjoy.

What We Heard...



Phase 2

Review of the Draft Park Playground Design Standards

➤ Summary Highlights:

Participants shared ideas about:

- **Fencing:** Providing more fully-fenced playgrounds, especially in close proximity to busy roads.
- **Shade:** Integrating more shade structures and shade trees for relief in warm summer months.
- **Lighting:** Adding lighting in key locations to help playgrounds feel safe and inviting in the evening hours.
- **Swings:** Providing more swings and different types of swings for all ages!
- **Water Play:** Adding spray parks, lazy rivers, misting stations, and other water play features for fun and relief from heat.



Participants support:

- Inclusive, universally accessible playgrounds for all ages and abilities to play, take risks, and gain self-confidence.
- Nature play opportunities.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle routes to playground areas and bike parking to support active transportation users.



Participants are concerned about:

- Public safety
- Litter and cleanliness
- Cost of playground improvements



1.5 Playground System Today

Existing Playgrounds Overview

Today, there are 22 playgrounds in Courtenay’s municipal parks. There is a wide variety in the scale, age, and condition of the existing play features. The map on the following page shows the locations of all existing park playgrounds within the City. The City is also planning a new Neighbourhood Park Playground for the green space along Brookfield Drive, with construction anticipated for 2024 / 2025.

In addition to the park playgrounds managed by the City, there are also playgrounds on elementary school properties. These playgrounds are managed by School District #71 and are not subject to the Park Playground Design Standards project, but they do help fulfill community needs.

As part of the Phase 1 community engagement process, community members were asked to help identify issues and barriers to enjoying existing park playgrounds. This information is useful to identify key considerations for inclusion in the standards. The following barriers were commonly mentioned:

- **Safety** - Participants do not feel safe, not enough lights, it feels too far away from other people, it doesn't feel welcoming, etc. (40% of respondents)
- **Activities** - Lack of fun or interesting things to do at park playgrounds (32% of respondents)
- **Maintenance / Upkeep** - The equipment is too old or not in good shape (30% of respondents)
- **Weather or Seasonal Conditions** - Not enough shade or activities to do all year round (26% of respondents)
- **Not Enough Places to Sit** - Including benches or other furnishings (25% of respondents)



Most playgrounds are based around a single metal play structure. It does not offer many opportunities in wet, cold weather and the design is not accessible... and there are many more design options available nowadays. The fact that most parks are not fenced in with a small barrier can be challenging. - Community Engagement Participant



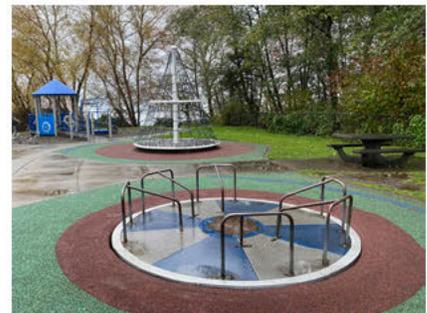
We are concerned that most playgrounds and parks are unsafe spaces and have been avoiding our favourite parks. There have been numerous encounters and situations where we have felt unsafe. - Community Engagement Participant



Existing Conditions:
Puntledge Park Playground



Existing Conditions: Bill Moore Park



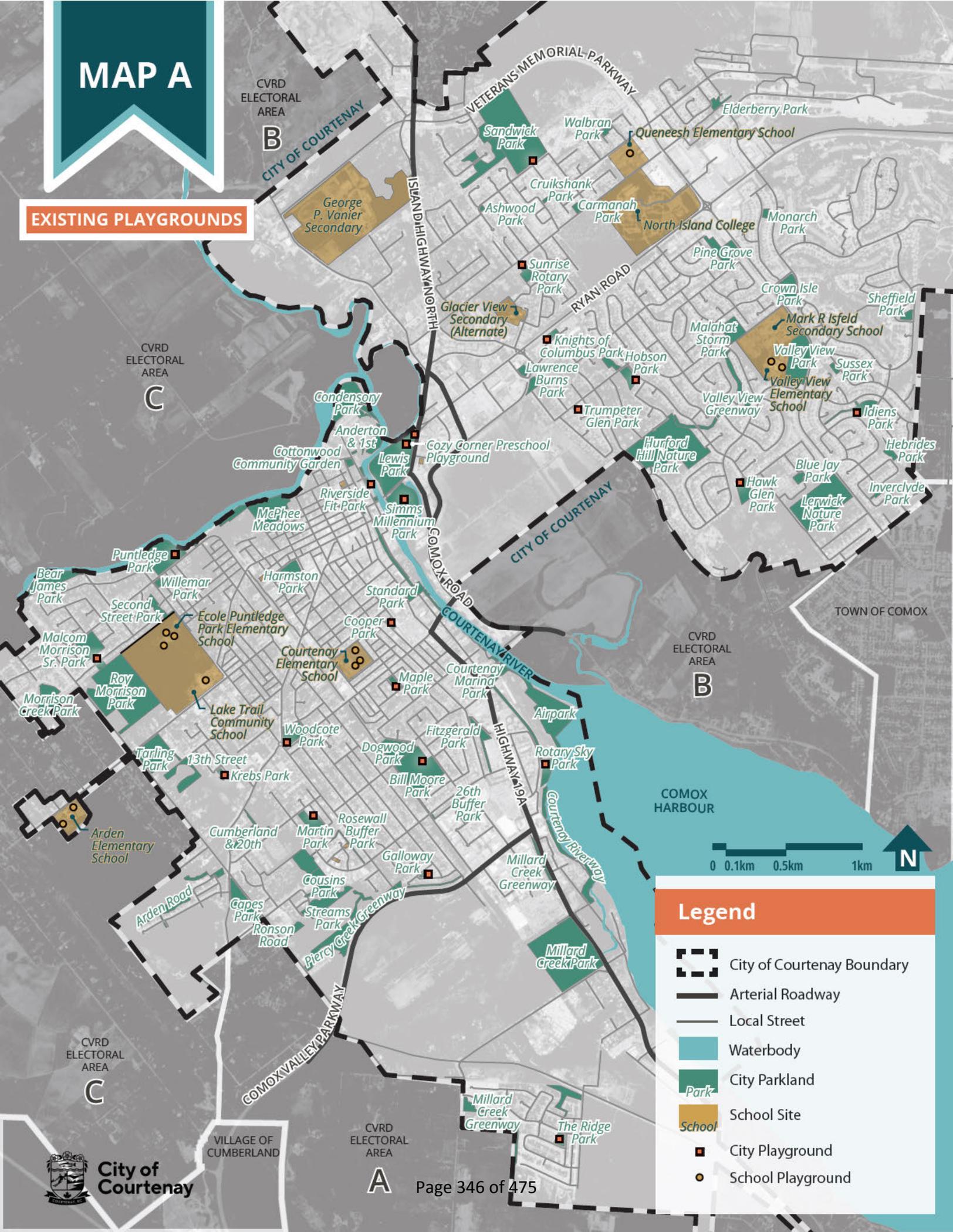
Existing Conditions: Rotary Sky Park Playground



Existing Conditions:
Sandwick Park Playground

MAP A

EXISTING PLAYGROUNDS



Legend

- City of Courtenay Boundary
- Arterial Roadway
- Local Street
- Waterbody
- City Parkland
- Park
- School Site
- City Playground
- School Playground



1.6 Park Playground Classification

The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019) established a park classification system, which assists the City in assessment, planning, acquisition, and management of municipal parks. Classification of parks and open space, and specifically playgrounds, can help provide an understanding of the various roles that these spaces play as part of the overall network. The Park Playground Design Standards document organizes recommendations according to Community Park Playgrounds, Neighborhood Park Playgrounds, and Nature Park Playgrounds.

The table below provides a playground classification overview, including purpose, service level, and list of park playgrounds that fit within each classification. Refer to the map on the following page for park classification locations.



	COMMUNITY PARK PLAYGROUND	NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PLAYGROUND	NATURE PARK PLAYGROUND
Purpose	Destination playgrounds that serve residents from the entire City and beyond.	Playgrounds that serve the surrounding neighborhood.	Playgrounds in parks that are dominated by natural features such as forests and watercourses.
Service Level	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~10 minute walk (800m).	Accessible to the majority of residents within a 5 minute walk (400m).	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~30 minute walk (2.5km radius) or short drive.
Existing Park Playgrounds	Bill Moore, Lewis, Cozy Corner Preschool, Puntledge, Riverside Fit, Rotary Sky, Simms Millennium*, Woodcote	Hobson, Maple, Hawk Glen, Sunrise Rotary, The Ridge, Malcolm Morrison Sr, Martin**, Galloway, Knights of Columbus, Cooper, Krebs, Idiens, Trumpeter Glen, Sandwick***	

Table 1: Playground Classification Overview

*Simms Millennium Park is classified as a Community Park in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; however, the existing play elements are limited. Future playground renewal and planning efforts may change this classification.

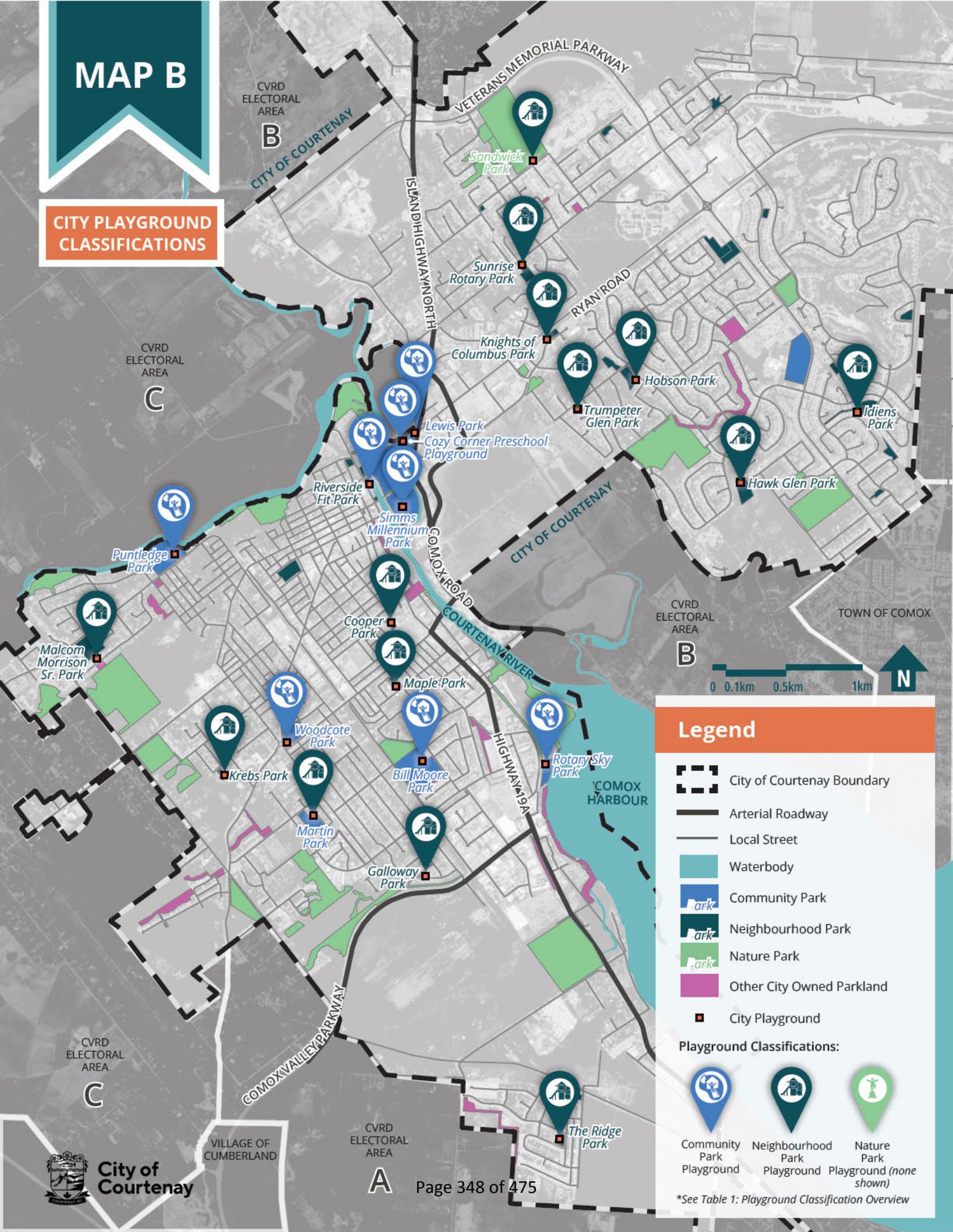
**Currently, Martin Park is classified as a Community Park in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. For the purposes of playground planning, it is suggested for re-classification as a Neighbourhood Park Playground given the footprint of the playground area and proximity to other Community Park Playgrounds.

***Currently, Sandwick Park is classified as a Nature Park in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. For the purposes of playground planning, it is suggested that its current playground is re-classified as a Neighborhood Park Playground, given its character and function. Future playground renewal may change this classification.

Opportunities exist to expand nature play areas in the City's Nature Parks. Locations for playgrounds in Nature Parks should be determined based on need, support by a park management plan, and in the absence of any restrictive covenants. See Section 2, Standard 6 for more information.

MAP B

CITY PLAYGROUND CLASSIFICATIONS



Legend

- City of Courtenay Boundary
- Arterial Roadway
- Local Street
- Waterbody
- Community Park
- Neighbourhood Park
- Nature Park
- Other City Owned Parkland
- City Playground

Playground Classifications:

- Community Park Playground
- Neighbourhood Park Playground
- Nature Park Playground (none shown)

*See Table 1: Playground Classification Overview

1.7 Needs Assessment

Condition Assessment Overview

Playground upgrades are currently managed by the City’s Parks Maintenance staff and are informed by the City’s Asset Management Bylaw, recommendations in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, reviews by the Parks Maintenance staff, and operational planning efforts.

The City has developed a Condition Assessment Framework tool to prioritize playground upgrades based on classification, condition, and age of playground equipment. Each playground is assessed annually and given a score of 1 through 5 to guide asset renewals. Refer to the table below for an overview of condition scores, descriptions, and required actions. Refer to the map on the following page for the current condition scores for all City park playgrounds.

CONDITION SCORE	DESCRIPTION	REQUIRED ACTION
1	New, excellent condition (brand new asset)	No action required
2	Very good condition (relatively new asset)	No action required
3	Good condition (asset condition expected from the age and usage of the asset)	No immediate action - renewal required within 5 years
4	Poor condition (asset condition below expectation from age and usage)	Renewal required within 2-3 years
5	Very poor condition (asset needs to be replaced or rehabilitated very soon to prevent failure)	Immediate action - renewal required within 1 year

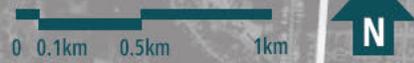
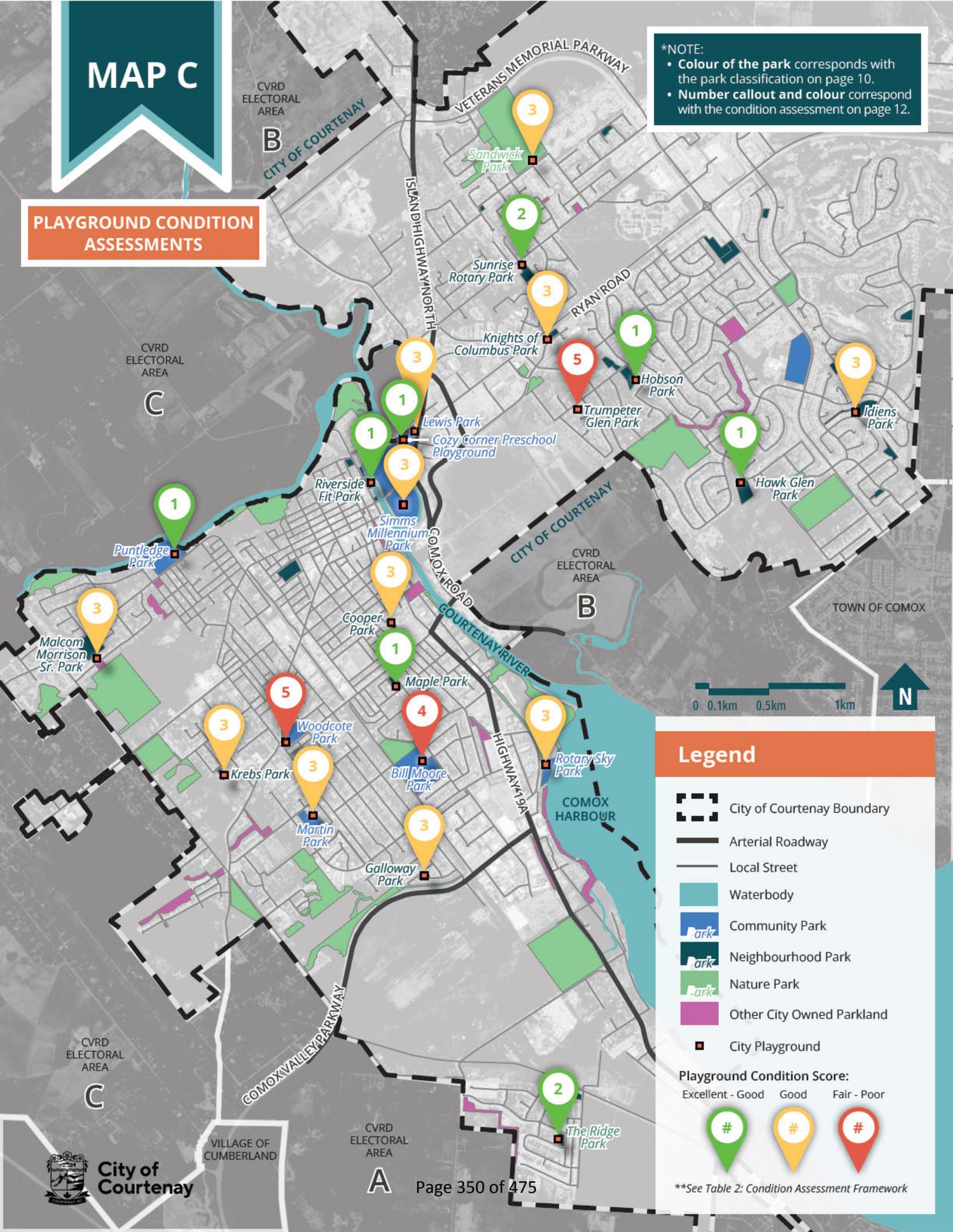
Table 2: Condition Assessment Framework

MAP C

PLAYGROUND CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

***NOTE:**

- Colour of the park corresponds with the park classification on page 10.
- Number callout and colour correspond with the condition assessment on page 12.



Legend

- City of Courtenay Boundary
- Arterial Roadway
- Local Street
- Waterbody
- Community Park
- Neighbourhood Park
- Nature Park
- Other City Owned Parkland
- City Playground

- Playground Condition Score:**
- | | | |
|------------------|------|-------------|
| Excellent - Good | Good | Fair - Poor |
| | | |

**See Table 2: Condition Assessment Framework

Future Needs Assessment Overview

The City will be undertaking a future needs assessment as part of a separate planning effort (Complete Communities Assessment, 2024). This exercise will identify priority playground investment areas by overlaying the following planning indicators:

- **Walking Distance:** The PRMP (2019) includes a metric that all residents should be 400m walking distance from a Neighbourhood Park and 800m walking distance from a Community Park. Identifying areas that meet these target metrics and areas that do not will help clarify key investment zones for new playgrounds.
- **Accessibility Features:** An assessment to identify existing playgrounds with universally accessible features, as identified in CSA Standard Z614:20 Annex H, to help prioritize locations for new and upgraded universally accessible play features with the objective of equitable distribution, to the extent possible. For more information on accessibility and inclusivity, refer to Section 2, Standard 1.
- **Age-ranges:** An assessment to identify distribution of tot lots and playgrounds that serve preschool age (2-5) vs. older kids (5-12) or both.
- **Condition Assessments:** Current condition assessment as summarized on page 12 to indicate priority areas for upgrade based on age, condition, and maintenance considerations.

The resulting “heat map” will illustrate areas that are well-served vs. those where new playgrounds or playground upgrades may be a priority. Additionally, the heat map will help to define what types of investment are needed in specific park playgrounds (e.g., more play features for the 3-5 age group, more accessibility features).

While school playgrounds are not within the City’s playground inventory, they play an important role in meeting community needs. School playground locations and amenities will also be considered in future planning efforts as it relates to prioritizing investment.

The map data will be updated regularly to be used as a tool in combination with the Playground Design Standards (see Section 2) and Playground Asset Inventory (see Section 3) to guide future capital planning efforts.



Figure 3: Future Needs Assessment Layers

Playground Benchmarking

Benchmarking park amenities like playgrounds and spray parks can provide insights into how a City's provision compares with that of other municipalities of similar sizes. This process can to help guide capital budgeting and renewals planning efforts.

An inventory of playgrounds and spray parks was completed for four similarly-scaled benchmark communities: Colwood, Campbell River, West Kelowna, and Penticton. The inventory looked at number of playgrounds and spray parks per capita but did not measure the quality, condition, or size of the facility. The inventory only included playgrounds and spray parks owned and operated by each City and did not include school facilities or facilities operated by other organizations.

When calculating the ratio of number of playgrounds to total City population, Courtenay's playground supply exceeds the benchmark average (refer to Table 3 below).

When calculating the ratio of number of spray parks to total City population, Courtenay's spray park supply aligns with the benchmark average (refer to Table 3 below).

This information should be considered alongside outputs from the future needs assessment process to inform playground renewal and upgrade efforts.

	COURTENAY POP: 28,410		BENCHMARK AVERAGE	COLWOOD POP: 18,961		PENTICTON POP: 36,885		WEST KELOWNA POP: 36,078		CAMPBELL RIVER POP: 35,519	
FACILITY	NO.	RATIO	RATIO	NO.	RATIO	NO.	RATIO	NO.	RATIO	NO.	RATIO
Playgrounds	24	1 : 1,184	1 : 2,529	6	1 : 3,115	10	1 : 3,689	33	1 : 1,093	16	1 : 2,220
Spray Parks	1	1 : 28,410	1 : 27,183	1	1 : 18,691	2	1 : 18,443	1	1 : 36,078	1	1 : 35,519

Table 3: Playground and Spray Park Benchmarking

Table Notes:

1. Population figures are based on 2021 census data
2. Colwood has two additional public playgrounds operated by partner organizations



Create shade with trees, keep the parks looking like a spectacular creature of nature as much as possible. Not just colored metal and rubber. Kids love nooks between trees planted in a circle or big stumps and boulders, tree houses and bridges, look out points, ropes to climb, swings and tall slides.

- Community Engagement Participant



1.8 Vision and Guiding Principles

Developing a Vision for Courtenay's Playgrounds

A vision statement describes a long term future for Courtenay's playground system. Aspirational in nature, it is intended to be a touchstone when making future decisions about new or upgraded playgrounds. The project vision statement was developed based on public input, direction from previous planning efforts, background research, and input from City staff and Council.

Vision Statement

Our City's park playgrounds are safe, fun, and inclusive places, where community members of all ages and abilities can gather, socialize, and play. Well-connected by paths and trails, playgrounds are centers of activity in Courtenay's parks – inviting and comfortable to enjoy all year long.

The playground system will offer a diverse range of innovative and exciting play opportunities, allowing everybody to challenge their abilities, stimulate their curiosity, and foster exploration and imagination. Each park playground will provide a different experience, all while celebrating Courtenay's unique identity and sense of place.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles support the realization of the vision statement by providing direction for development of the playground design standards and future playground projects. These principles act as a "checklist". If a standard meets these principles, it will support the intent of the Park Playground Design Standards project.





Let's Try Different Ways to Play! *Include a range of fun play opportunities.*

- Provide opportunities for all different types of play
 - » Active Play (climbing, jumping)
 - » Sensory Play (touching different textures, smelling flowers or plants, making music)
 - » Creative Play (building, dancing, crafting, acting/dramatic play)
 - » Imaginative Play (make-believe, pretend play, fantasy)
 - » Manipulative Play (scooping, stacking, using loose parts)
 - » Social Play (talking, sharing, gesturing, team activities)
 - » Reflective Play (observing, thinking, daydreaming)
 - » Risky Play (i.e., integrating opportunities for a range of ages and abilities to conquer fears and take risks)



Everyone Can Play Here! *Design inclusive play spaces for all ages and abilities.*

- Design play areas for all people to enjoy, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion, financial status, sexual orientation, ability, or age.
- Foster fun play experiences for all ages – toddlers, children, adolescents, adults, and seniors – and include opportunities for intergenerational play.
- Design play spaces that integrate the key principles of universal design.
 - » Consider accessibility for people with a range of abilities including those with mobility challenges, hearing disabilities, vision challenges, and those with autism and other sensory-processing challenges.
- Provide opportunities for a range of sensory experiences: touch, sight, hearing, smell, proprioception (body in space), and vestibular (movement).
- Integrate opportunities for “intersections” or areas where children of all abilities can interact and play together.
- Provide different zones within the play area for active vs. quiet play, or different ages, and consider the relationship of spaces to one another.
- Consider the playground's connection to the surrounding park when planning for accessibility, including surrounding amenities and pathways.



Safety and Comfort are Key - *Invest in safe, activated, vibrant playgrounds.*

- Provide a wide range of activities and gathering spaces to encourage positive activity within park areas.
- Increase opportunities for safe garbage disposal.
- Integrate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, including clear sight lines, boundaries, and transition zones when planning playground improvements.
- Add lighting in select locations to provide safe and welcoming environments in the evening hours.
- Integrate placemaking elements including public art and signage to strengthen sense of place and create welcoming environments.
- Encourage community stewardship of park playgrounds.



Nature is fun! *Build playgrounds with nature in mind, connecting to the environment around us.*

- Celebrate Courtenay and the surrounding region's unique natural character.
- Provide opportunities for nature play experiences (climbing boulders, water play, balancing logs, sensory gardens, planting, sand, loose parts).
- Integrate new planting areas and retain and protect existing trees and mature vegetation where possible.
- Use plants that are native to the region, pollinator-friendly, resilient, non-toxic, and offer play value.
- Encourage connection to nature by integrating sustainable design principles and educational opportunities (permeable surfaces, stormwater management, reclaimed materials, interpretive signage).



Connect Play, Paths, and Neighbourhoods - *Create connections for healthier communities by bringing people together to gather and play.*

- Consider the relationship of the playground to the greater park context (i.e., adjacent park amenities, natural areas for protection, surrounding neighbourhood uses).
- Link playgrounds to active transportation routes for walking or rolling to and through the park.
- Provide welcoming areas for social connection and community gatherings (large and small groups).
- Create comfortable outdoor spaces for all seasons by including supporting amenities like drinking water, shade, and covered areas.



I think it will be important to provide a diverse array of experiences where certain parks can specialize in certain features. That would then encourage families and other residents to explore more neighbourhoods, as opposed to every park having the same 3-5 play elements or amenities.

- Community Engagement Participant





2 | Design - *Digging into the Details*

- 2.1 Park Playground Design Standards Overview
- 2.2 Park Playground Design Standards

2.1 Park Playground Design Standards Overview

The key outcome of this project is a set of standards that supports the implementation of the ideas and priorities generated through the process. These standards are intended to guide the development of new and upgraded playgrounds in Courtenay's parks.

The standards are based on input from several sources:

- A literature and best practices review, including review of CSA (Canadian Standards Association) standards related to accessibility and playgrounds (see Appendix A).
- Related Planning Documents (including the Official Community Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan).
- Ideas from interest groups and community members gathered throughout the engagement process, surveys, referrals, and activities.
- Input from City Council and staff.

Park Playground Design Standards List

The Park Playground Design Standards include information on the following nine focus areas:

- 1 Accessibility and Inclusivity
- 2 Siting the Playground
- 3 Pathways and Connectivity
- 4 Boundaries and Enclosure
- 5 Playground Surfacing and Edging
- 6 Play Elements and Opportunities
- 7 Trees and Planting
- 8 Supporting Amenities
- 9 Programming

Park Playground Design Standard Format

Each standard includes the following information:

- **Description:** A brief statement about the recommended standard.
- **Background & Rationale:** A summary of issues, opportunities, public input, and background information to support the standard.
- **Design Standards:** Key elements to be implemented as part of future playground design efforts. Some standards include references to relevant Canadian Standards Association (CSA) sections.
- **Additional Considerations:** Ideas that warrant consideration beyond the baseline to help make inclusive, fun, engaging spaces for all.
- **Precedent Imagery:** Inspirational images of park playgrounds to convey design ideas.

Park Playground Design Standards Organization

The standards are organized according to playground classification. Within each standard, information is provided that is specific to Community, Neighbourhood, or Nature Park Playgrounds, where applicable.

Many standards include consideration for standard and special playground elements, including play features and amenities. Standard elements are to be implemented in all park playgrounds, while special elements are prioritized for Community Park Playgrounds, since they will serve residents from the entire city and beyond.

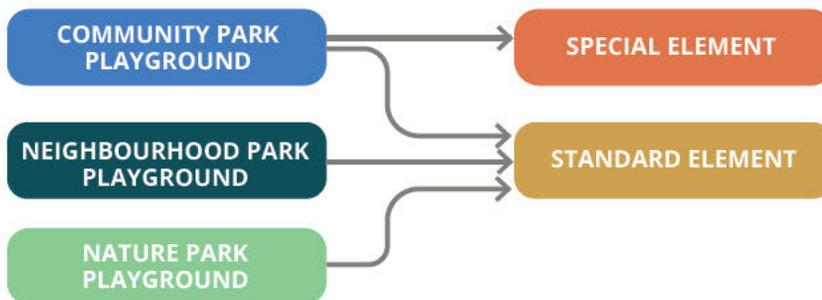


Figure 4: Playground Design Standards Organization

Park Playground Design Standards Summary

For a summary of the key design standards information, organized per playground classification (Community, Neighbourhood, and Nature Park Playgrounds) refer to the **Park Playground Design Standards Summary Table** in Section 3.4 (pg. 55)



1

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Plan welcoming, inclusive, fun play environments for all ages and abilities



Image Credit: Earthscape
Rainbow Park, Vancouver BC

Inspiration: Ground-oriented features that provide play opportunities for a range of abilities



Image Credit: Habitat Systems

Inspiration: Provide safe play features where children of all ages and abilities can play together.



Image Credit: Earthscape
Riverside Park, Guelph, ON

Inspiration: Use high contrast colours and textures to define pathways, spaces, and edges



Inspiration: Leave clear spaces next to play elements for wheelchair parking or care takers in wheelchairs

Background & Rationale

- Increasing inclusive play opportunities was identified as a priority in the PRMP (2019) and OCP (2022).
- Creating accessible, inclusive playgrounds was supported by the community during the public engagement phase.
- Opportunities exist to make many existing playgrounds in Courtenay more accessible and inclusive for all to enjoy.
- Inclusive play spaces allow children with physical and invisible disabilities and diverse needs to enjoy the benefits of play, including enhanced social skills, improved health, and having fun. In inclusive play spaces, all children learn valuable lessons about the world including diversity and acceptance.
- When planning the design of new playgrounds, consider the Rick Hansen Foundation's Seven Principles of Universal Design:
 - » **Equitable Use:** The playground is fun for people with diverse abilities. All children should experience the thrill of a challenge.
 - » **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
 - » **Simple and Intuitive Use:** The playground is easy to understand, regardless of experience, knowledge, or language skills.
 - » **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions.
 - » **Tolerances for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
 - » **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used effectively and comfortably with minimum fatigue.
 - » **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** The design includes the appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Design Standards

- Each new playground should include some universally accessible design features. The degree and amount to which is included can be determined by geographic location, proximity to other playgrounds, play experiences, and community needs.
- Community Park Playgrounds are priority areas for accessible play elements and supporting amenities. The City should identify at minimum one fully universally accessible Community Park Playground for re-development within the next 5 years. Candidate locations for consideration include Lewis, Woodcote, and Bill Moore parks.
- For Neighborhood Park Playgrounds and Nature Play Areas, integrate universal play features and supporting amenities within the overall design. Exact features are to be determined on a site-by site basis.

Design Standards (cont'd)

Mobility Challenges

- Plan for people with mobility challenges including wheelchair users, mobility device users (e.g., walker, braces, crutches, or canes), and people with other physical challenges:
 - » Create accessible paths of travel and multiple access routes in and out of the playground area (Refer to Standard 3).
 - » Ensure a maximum 5% longitudinal slope and 2% cross-slope for play areas and surrounding pathways.
 - » Provide a mix of ground-level equipment and elevated equipment that is accessible by ramp or transfer platform (Refer to Standard 6 and CSA-Z614:20 Annex H for recommended ratios of elevated to ground-oriented features).
 - » Provide open spaces next to play elements, transfer platforms, and furnishings to park wheelchairs or for caregivers in wheelchairs (refer to Standard 6 and 8).
 - » Include back rests on seating elements and play components with seats, such as swings (refer to Standard 6 and 8).

Vision Challenges

- Plan for people with vision challenges including colour-blindness, low vision, and blindness:
 - » Use strong contrasting colours and textures to orient users and define and differentiate spaces, pathways, edges, and grade changes.
 - » Avoid the use of red and green or green and blue components directly adjacent to each other, which are difficult to distinguish for people with colour blindness.
 - » Avoid the use of highly reflective surfaces.
 - » Consider integration of custom braille inlays in signage and wayfinding elements to guide users with vision challenges through the playground area.

Hearing Challenges

- Plan for people with hearing disabilities:
 - » Integrate clear sight lines to support hearing-disabled people to easily navigate spaces.
 - » Avoid elements that create scraping or sharp clanging sounds (e.g. stones and gravel on metal) which can be irritating for hearing-aid users. Choose soft or porous materials that absorb noise for key elements when possible (e.g. wood, bamboo).

Additional Considerations

Consider integration of play elements that encourage universal play experiences in multiple ways. For example, adding a fort or play house can provide a range of benefits:

- » Ground-oriented for users with mobility challenges
- » A quiet respite for users with sensory challenges,
- » Offers opportunities for imaginary play
- » Provides weather protection throughout the seasons
- » Low cost





Image Credit: Martins Park Boston
Martins Park, Boston MA

Inspiration: A sensory garden can create soothing opportunities for tactile and visual input



Maffeo Sutton Park, Nanaimo BC

Inspiration: An accessible merry-go-round provides an opportunity for an “intersection” or chance for many different children to come together and play.

Design Standards (cont'd)

Sensory Challenges

- Plan for people with autism spectrum disorder and other sensory processing challenges:
 - » Create clearly separate active and passive zones, including quiet, soothing, neutral spaces for retreat.
 - » Provide calming opportunities for tactile and visual sensory input including planting and water play (see Standard 6).
 - » Avoid visual over-stimulants like geometric patterns or stripes.
 - » Integrate play equipment that rocks, swings, and spins for children who crave movement to do so safely.
 - » Consider providing a non-climbable fence and gate surrounding the future fully universally accessible Community Playground. Children who are overstimulated can suddenly bolt to remove themselves from unsettling environments (see Standard 4).

Intersections

- Provide “intersections” or areas where all children can safely come together and share play experiences. Examples include:
 - » Swings, merry-go-rounds, platforms, or teeter totters that can accommodate multiple children, including those in wheelchairs.
 - » Informal seats / boulders placed within the playground area but separate from the main play structure for children who need more time to observe and adapt to a play environment to do so before “diving in”.
 - » Sand play areas with universal access points and raised sand tables. Refer to CSA Standard CZ614:20 for recommended depths, composition, drainage, cover, and other design recommendations.
 - » Tunnels or ground-oriented features with climbing elements above for multiple children to enjoy at the same time.

2

Siting the Playground

Integrate playgrounds seamlessly with the park and surrounding neighbourhood



Elk Lake Park, Saanich BC

Inspiration: Design the playground to integrate site features that can provide play value, including hills for embankment slides.



Inspiration: Protect surrounding environmentally sensitive areas and provide signage to provide information about why the area is being protected.

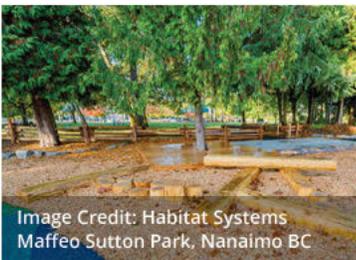


Image Credit: Habitat Systems
Maffeo Sutton Park, Nanaimo BC

Inspiration: A raised deck above the root zone of this existing tree provides a place for gathering and informal play while protecting the tree roots from compaction.

Background & Rationale

- Playgrounds are one component of the larger park and neighbourhood context. Planning for thoughtful integration between a playground and the surrounding park and neighbourhood can enhance user experience, longevity, and ongoing maintenance and upkeep considerations.
- Parks are dynamic places, continuously changing depending on the time of the day, day of the week, and time of year. The City should endeavor to create playgrounds that are as inviting on a January morning as they are on a hot summer afternoon.
- As the City of Courtenay continues to grow and evolve, opportunities exist to evaluate the siting of existing park playgrounds in consideration with the surrounding context and anticipated future uses (e.g., busier roads, surrounding development sites etc.).

Design Standards

- For locating new Community Park Playgrounds or planning Community Park Playground upgrades, enlist the support of a landscape architect early in the project process to provide guidance on siting and overall layout. For Neighbourhood and Nature Park Playgrounds, consider engaging a landscape architect on a site-by-site basis.
- Locate playgrounds with proximity to existing trail networks to maximize active transportation connections. Where existing trail connections are not present, review the trail network to identify potential new linkages and expand the trail system to achieve connectivity (refer to Standard 3).
- Site playgrounds in coordination with the natural lay of the land, including flat areas for large play structures and hills, mounds, and grade changes for embankment slides, climbing, and rolling.
- Provide buffers and setbacks from surrounding residential neighbourhoods to minimize noise impacts.
- Avoid placing playgrounds in immediate proximity to major roads for safety and noise considerations.
- Retain and protect existing trees and vegetation, where possible. Avoid locating play structures or regrading within the root zones of existing trees.
- Ensure playgrounds are placed to adhere to required environmental setbacks from water bodies including riparian areas and wetlands.
- Consider site grading and drainage and place playgrounds on stabilized, free-draining soil.
- Avoid placing playgrounds near environmentally sensitive areas. Provide strategic barriers to limit impacts to natural areas (see Standard 4).
- Consider site micro-climate conditions including site aspect and wind direction. Perform a solar analysis to understand existing and future sun and shade conditions prior to planning improvements. Locate play areas to take advantage of existing shade features (e.g., trees, structures).
- Look for opportunities to co-locate recreational uses. For example, placing playgrounds in close proximity to sports courts and fields can encourage visitation, Page 364 of 475 recreational play, and diversify use.

Provide safe, well-connected paths of travel to access park playgrounds



Inspiration: Accessible paths of travel for all



Parkgate Community Centre
Playground, North Vancouver, BC

Inspiration: Pathways can provide play value in the form of “stop and go” loops for early walkers and striders, with grade changes to navigate including bridges and humps



Image Credit: Decomark
Browning Park, Saanich BC

Inspiration: Pathways provide opportunities to enhance placemaking, including custom markings and integrated public art

Background & Rationale

- Increased connectivity to parks and recreation opportunities was identified as a priority in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019).
- Public engagement participants identified opportunities to increase safe access to Courtenay’s park playgrounds by active transportation, including walking and rolling (cycling, rollerblading, skateboarding, wheelchair / scooter / stroller travel).
- Integration of supporting amenities can encourage active transportation to park playgrounds (e.g., bike parking and water fountains).

Design Standards

- Locate new playgrounds in close proximity to existing park and neighbourhood trails (see Standard 2).
- Plan pathways with CPTED principles in mind, including clear sight lines and boundaries (see Standard 4)
- Integrate a hierarchy of pathways to and surrounding the playground including primary pathways, secondary pathways, and path loops, aligning with the City’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan standards:
 - » All primary pathways to be 3m wide
 - » Secondary pathways to be minimum 1.5 - 3m wide
- For all primary and secondary paths, longitudinal slopes should be maximum 5%, and cross slopes maximum 2%.
- If longitudinal slopes exceed 5%, install an accessible ramp and handrails per BC Building Code standards. Maximum longitudinal ramp slope to be 1:12, with ramp landings at regular intervals.
- For Community Park Playground pathways, surfacing to be cast-in-place concrete, precast concrete pavers (including permeable pavers), or asphalt.
- For Neighborhood Park Playground pathways, surfacing to be cast-in-place concrete, precast concrete pavers, asphalt, or packed gravel.
- For Nature Park Playground pathways, surfacing to be wood chip.
- Install all pathways to suitable depth and compaction and avoid minor grade changes between pathways and adjacent surfaces, which can create tripping hazards or other mobility challenges.
- Plan pathways to provide play value, including pathway loops surrounding the play environment for tricycles, push-toys, and early walkers.
- Integrate “discovery pathways” at the periphery of playgrounds through planted areas with stepping stones to encourage a sense of discovery and surprise.
- Provide supporting amenities along playground pathways including furnishings, lighting, and signage (see Standard 8).
- Provide a different colour, finish, or type of pathway surfacing to differentiate paths from main play areas to reduce conflicts.

4

Boundaries and Enclosure

Assess site features to determine appropriate boundaries and levels of enclosure



Inspiration: Secure boundary - decorative wood and metal post and rail fence with wire-mesh infill



Inspiration: Provide post and rail or split rail fencing to protect environmentally sensitive areas



Image Credit: Seattle Parks and Rec Jefferson Park, Seattle WA

Inspiration: Planting areas surrounding play areas provide permeable boundaries that help define the space and separate use zones



Inspiration: Public art integrated with chain link fence

Background & Rationale

- The relationship of park playgrounds to surrounding park uses and elements can directly impact playground use and perceptions of safety.
- Types of playground boundaries and enclosure should be informed by the park context and playground classification.
- Placement, choice of enclosure type, and extent of fencing are important to consider to provide safety, while avoiding the playground being overly divided from the broader park.
- Many public engagement participants shared concerns about safety. Providing physical barriers or visual cues to define playground boundaries may help discourage unsafe activity near playgrounds and support adult supervision.

Design Standards

- Use a combination of boundary types to surround playgrounds, including secure boundaries, permeable boundaries, and no boundary:
 - » Secure Boundaries: non-climbable chain-link fencing or decorative wood and metal fencing.
 - » Permeable Boundaries: split-rail fencing, bollards, vegetation.
 - » For Community and Neighbourhood Parks, select secure and permeable boundaries (exact types and extent of fencing to be determined on a site-by-site basis).
 - » For Nature Park Playgrounds, integrate permeable boundaries. Avoid the use of chain link or metal fencing or metal bollards, which are not consistent with the character of natural areas.
 - » Where playgrounds are located well away from roads, parking lots, or non-compatible park uses (e.g., dog off-leash areas) integrate no boundary or alternatively, consider permeable boundaries to define the playground area, including planting or bollards.
 - » Where playgrounds are within immediate proximity to roads, parking lots, or other non-compatible park features, provide secure boundaries between the playground and non-compatible feature (non-climbable, 1.2m high fences and gates). If playgrounds are within immediate proximity to highways, arterial, or collector streets, playgrounds should be fully fenced (on all sides), to support the City of Courtenay Transportation Master Plan's safety goals and objectives.
 - » Provide secure boundaries to fully surround universally accessible playgrounds (see Standard 1).
 - » Provide split rail fencing adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas.
- Avoid placing horizontal elements (e.g., benches, seat walls) abutting secure boundaries which can be climbable and render them ineffective.
- Consider opportunities to integrate public art or play features within fences or boundaries to provide opportunities for placemaking.

Implement resilient, easy to maintain, inclusive surfacing and edging



Image Credit: Earthscape, McMaster Children's Centre, Hamilton ON

Inspiration: Universally accessible poured-in-place rubber surfacing is integrated with boulders and other climbing features to create edges and transitions between spaces while also offering play value.



Image Credit: Michelle Mathis Silver Falls State Park, Oregon

Inspiration: Boulders or logs used as edging for loose play surfacing in nature play areas



Image Credit: Martins Park Boston Martins Park, Boston MA

Inspiration: A seamless transition between play surfacing and pathway creates a barrier-free play area for all to enjoy. Contrasting colours between the play area and the circulation route define zones and create clear paths of travel.

Background & Rationale

- Material selection for playground surfacing and edging should be informed by the usage intensity of the site, accessibility, cost, character, play value, lifespan, and maintenance and environmental considerations.
- Many public engagement participants expressed concerns about safety in Courtenay's parks, including presence of unsafe garbage and debris in playground areas. All surface types will require ongoing maintenance and cleaning to support safe and accessible play spaces. Unitary surfaces such as poured-in-place rubber have high degrees of visibility and are easiest to maintain to keep debris-free.
- Poured-in-place rubber surfacing has many advantages including resiliency, fostering inclusive play, lifespan, and maintenance. However, it has a much higher initial cost than other surfacing types and capital budgets may not be able to support rubber surfacing in all of Courtenay's playgrounds. Priority should be given to Community Park Playgrounds and select Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds.

Design Standards

Surfacing

- Plan the appropriate surfacing type according to the playground classification:
 - » For Community Park Playgrounds, integrate poured-in place rubber surfacing for the main play areas, including all areas surrounding universally accessible play features.
 - » Where budget or other factors do not permit the entire play area to be poured-in-place rubber, consider engineered wood fiber or wood chips in select supporting areas.
 - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate poured-in-place rubber surfacing, engineered-wood-fiber or wood chips, to be determined on a site-by-site basis.
 - » For Community and Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, consider use of synthetic turf (e.g. mounds, hills) in limited areas for accessibility, longevity, and play value. Locate playgrounds away from environmentally sensitive areas to reduce environmental impacts (see Standard 2).
 - » For Nature Parks, or nature play areas in Community or Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate engineered wood fiber or wood chips. Sand, sod, or earth / soil may also be used in areas around lower-height structures (450mm or less per CSA standards).
- Install all play surfaces in fall zones to proper thicknesses as indicated by CSA safety standards and manufacturer's recommendations. Extend protective surfacing in all directions from the play equipment, within the fall-zone identified by the equipment manufacturer.

Design Standards (cont'd)

- Ensure unitary surfaces (e.g., poured-in-place rubber, synthetic turf) are installed with min. 2% cross slopes to drain to area drains or other integrated stormwater management strategies (e.g., rain gardens, swales). Install surfacing sub-bases to required depths and compaction per manufacturer's standards to avoid differential settlement.
- If mixing surface types (e.g., poured-in-place rubber surfacing and engineered wood fiber) plan pathways or other transition zones between materials to limit loose materials spilling over and impacting safety, accessibility, and ongoing maintenance.
- Where one surface type transitions to another (e.g., poured-in-place rubber to cast-in-place concrete), install surfaces flush to create barrier-free paths of travel. Avoid minor grade changes, which can create tripping hazards or other mobility challenges.
- Plan surface types with consideration for thermal comfort (e.g., dark rubber play surfacing can retain heat and contribute to heat island effect). Choose light colours and plan in coordination with shade trees and shade structures (see Standard 9).

Edging

- Plan the appropriate edging type according to the playground classification:
 - » For Community Park Playgrounds, add cast-in-place concrete edging surrounding poured-in-place rubber surfacing. Integrate composite bender-board edging or untreated timber edging surrounding loose surfaces such as engineered wood fiber or wood chips.
 - » Consider strategies to reduce the amount of cast-in-place concrete edging where possible, including integrating boulders or logs, placing rubber play surfacing next to new or existing concrete pathways in good condition, and installing surfacing with no edge (on a turn-down slope) adjacent to loose surfacing like engineered wood fiber.
 - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, include cast-in-place concrete, composite bender-board, or timber edging (to be determined on a site-by-site basis)
 - » For Nature Park Playgrounds or nature play areas within Community or Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate timber edging, boulders, logs, or no edging.
- Cast-in-place concrete edging should be installed with a 2% cross-slope to drain towards nearest drainage structure or integrated green stormwater management strategy.
- Ensure edging is installed flush to adjacent surfaces for smooth, even transitions and to avoid tripping hazards.

Additional Considerations

Creative playground surfacing can enhance play value and sense of place. Opportunities exist to create unique play experiences by integrating custom public art, imagery, and themes in poured-in-place surfacing or manipulating ground planes to include mounds, stepping stones, climbing hills or other play features that reflect the character of the Courtenay region.



6

Play Elements and Opportunities

Provide a wide range of play opportunities for all to enjoy



Existing Conditions: Ridge Playground



Image Credit: Berger Partnership
Surrey Downs Park, Bellevue WA

Inspiration: Play area designed in circuit a (floor is lava!)



Parkgate Community Centre
Playground, North Vancouver, BC

Inspiration: Areas for exploration



Inspiration: Specialty play features - Zip-line

Background & Rationale

- Many community engagement respondents indicated that there are not enough fun or interesting things to do in Courtenay's park playgrounds and that many existing park playgrounds provide similar features. When visiting park playgrounds, respondents noted they would like to:
 - » Experience nature (59%)
 - » Be adventurous (55%)
 - » Gather with friends / family / others (55%)
- The top 5 play elements community engagement participants would most like to see in new and upgraded playgrounds are:
 - » New Play Structures (slides, swings, climbing features etc.) - 59%
 - » Nature Play Opportunities (planting, sand, rocks, logs) - 55%
 - » Splash Pad / Water Play - 43%
 - » Areas for Exploration (willow tunnels, stepping stone paths) - 42%
 - » Inclusive Play Features for All Ages and Abilities - 41%
- Community engagement participants expressed a desire for more swings and different types of swings for all ages and abilities.
- Opportunities exist to encourage different types of play in Courtenay's playgrounds, including active play, sensory play, creative play, imaginative play, manipulative play, social play, reflective play, risky play, and potential for multi-purpose spaces.
- The PRMP (2019) indicated an opportunity to expand the range of play features in Courtenay's park playgrounds, including:
 - » Opportunities for risky play
 - » Placement of exercise equipment in close proximity to playgrounds
 - » Integration of nature play
 - » Opportunities to increase creativity and broaden user groups e.g., more interactive play environments and equipment and options for all ages of children, youth, and adults.
- Community Engagement participants noted that special, landmark designs and custom play features could encourage more positive activity in park playgrounds and attract visitation.

Design Standards

Age Ranges

- Plan playgrounds to safely accommodate a wide range of ages, including tot lots (6 mos - 2 years), pre-school (3-5) and 5-12 (+).
 - » For Community Park Playgrounds, provide play features for all age ranges with separate areas for each divided by transition zones, pathways, planting areas, or gathering spaces.
 - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, provide either tot-lots, pre-school, or 5-12 year features, or some combination of all three. Playground locations for specific age ranges and features to be determined based on ongoing upgrades and need.

Design Standards (cont'd)

- Consider opportunities for intergenerational use, including exercise equipment, recreational amenities near playground areas, play elements that different age groups can enjoy at the same time (e.g., swings that allow adults and babies to swing together, climbing / bouldering walls for a range of ages), and supporting amenities like community garden plots and games tables (see Standard 9).

Play Elements

- Organize play elements in a loops or circuits so children can easily navigate their way through spaces and from one feature to another. Circuits also help encourage imagination and games like Grounders or Floor is Lava.
- Install all play equipment per CSA Standards and manufacturer's requirements including subgrade preparation, footings, fall zones, offsets, and heights above grade, taking care to avoid entrapment zones and potential hazards.
- Install appropriate fall surfacing surrounding play equipment (see Standard 5).
- Integrate both raised and ground-oriented features for universal accessibility (see Standard 2).
- Include passive play opportunities in addition to active play (e.g. climbing features and play forts for quiet retreat or seating elements where kids can observe before participating).
- Use a combination of standard and special play features in playground designs:
 - » **Standard Play Features:** swings, slides, climbing structures, monkey bars, stepping stones, bridges, tunnels, merry-go-rounds / spinners, teeter-totters, play houses, nature play.
 - » **Special Play Features:** zip-lines, trampolines, parkour features, custom and landmark play features, creative play elements, musical play elements, exercise equipment, water play.
 - » For Community Park Playgrounds, integrate a mix of standard and special play features.
 - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate standard play features. Special play features to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Due to the large footprint of safety surface area required for swings, prioritize locating swings in Community and Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds where the playground is adjacent to an existing open space or not bound by surrounding spatial constraints.

Additional Considerations

With input from the community, interest groups, and City staff, consider developing a theme for each Community Playground to create unique experiences and destinations. Reinforce the theme through the selection of:

- » Materials, Colours and Patterns
- » Signage
- » Custom / Landmark Play Elements
- » Integrated Public Art



Image Credit:
Earthscape





Image Credit: Greenworks
Westmoreland Park, Portland OR

Inspiration: Nature play with sand and water to introduce an element of change in the play environment



Image Credit: Chicago Botanical Garden

Inspiration: Natural climbing features arranged in a circuit or obstacle course



Image Credit: Habitat Systems
Maffeo Sutton Park, Nanaimo BC

Inspiration: Nature play elements (log tangles, log steppers, and discovery paths through planting) diversify the play experience and help strengthen sense of place



Maggie Daley Park, Chicago IL

Inspiration: Discovery pathways with stepping logs and wooden arches to create a sense of wonder

Nature Play

- Provide opportunities for nature play in Community, Neighborhood, and Nature Parks (with specific focus on Nature Parks).
 - » When Sandwick Park is due for renewal, consider replacing the existing play structures with nature play elements.
 - » Assess opportunities to develop new nature playgrounds in Nature Parks or to convert existing Neighbourhood Park playgrounds to nature play areas. Determine locations based on geographic location, proximity to other playgrounds, community needs, support by a park management plan, and in the absence of any restrictive covenants. Public engagement is suggested prior to converting existing playgrounds to nature play areas.
- When allocating space in playground design, aim for the following areas for nature play opportunities:
 - » **Community Park Playgrounds:** Minimum 15% of the total playground area
 - » **Neighborhood Park Playgrounds:** Minimum 20% of the total playground area
 - » **Nature Park Playgrounds:** 100% of the playground area
- Plan the nature play area to be integrated with the overall flow of the playground, considering relationships to pathways, planting, and other play elements.
- Integrate a range of nature play features for all ages and abilities:
 - » **Natural Climbing Features:** boulders, climbing logs, and stepping stumps for balancing, climbing, jumping, and risky play. Arrange elements in an obstacle course or circuit that links to the overall playground layout.
 - » **Nature Discovery Features:** log tunnels, willow tunnels, “adventure pathways” through planting, gnome homes or fairy doors - elements that create a sense of wonder or mystery.
 - » **Topography and Landforms:** hills or mounds to climb or roll down, integration of landforms and play features including slides, climbing logs, and boulders.
 - » **Water Play:** integrated stormwater management strategies within play areas (e.g., bioswales, biofiltration ponds), or lazy rivers with a hose-bib connection to turn on and off.
 - » **Sand and Mud Play:** for sandcastles and structure building, creative play, imaginary play, and messy play.
 - » **Loose Parts Play:** loose logs, sticks, rocks, bark, leaves, pine cones, and surfacing materials (sand, mud) to invite imaginative play and allow children to modify and manipulate the play environment.
- Natural elements should meet CSA safety standards for fall zones. Integrate appropriate soft surfacing to the required depth within the entire fall zone surrounding all elevated climbing features (see Standard 5).
- When using natural materials such as wood or boulders, provide smooth surfaces. Sand to remove all protruding elements and sharp edges.

Design Standards (cont'd)

- Source materials locally whenever possible.
- Limit the use of synthetic materials for nature-play elements.
- Plant trees and native plant material in the play environment, including opportunities to integrate urban agriculture and pollinator planting areas (see Standard 7).
- Integrate universal design principles in nature play areas (refer to Standard 2, including):
 - » Clear zones for parking wheelchairs.
 - » Raised elements where appropriate (e.g., raised sand / water table, raised urban agriculture planter, or table for loose parts play with wheelchair access).
 - » Ground oriented elements including play forts, willow tunnels, discovery pathways, etc.

Creative Play

- Provide opportunities for creative play in Community Parks and select Neighbourhood Parks, including:
 - » **Multi-purpose Open Spaces:** for creative play and creative programming (building, painting, dancing, crafts etc. (see Standard 9).
 - » **Stages:** for performance and imaginary play.
 - » **Musical Play Features:** bongo drums, wind chimes, etc.
 - » **Drawing Surfaces:** chalk boards or paved areas for sidewalk chalk.

Sensory Play

- Provide opportunities for sensory play in Community Parks and select Neighbourhood Parks, including:
 - » **Tactile Panels:** with a variety of different textures to feel or objects to manipulate.
 - » **Musical or Sound-producing Play Features:** (see above)
 - » **Sensory Gardens:** including plants with a variety of colours, textures, and scents (see Standard 7).
 - » **Water & Sand Play:** see Nature Play section on previous page.
 - » **Light Play:** interactive lit installations to enliven play environments in the evening hours.
 - » **A Variety of Swings:** for varied movement experiences, including basket swings, chairs, hammocks, and cocoon swings.



Image Credit: Lifespace Gardens

Inspiration: Raised planters for urban agriculture or tables for sand / loose parts play help foster universal access to nature play experiences



Inspiration: Paved areas provide blank canvases for a range of art projects including painting and sidewalk chalk



Inspiration: Interactive play installations with lighting to provide unique sensory experiences in the evening hours

Integrate shade trees and planting areas surrounding playgrounds



Inspiration: Pollinator friendly planting areas can attract bees, birds, and butterflies to strengthen pollinator pathways



Inspiration: Sensory gardens can help connect children to the natural world and invite curiosity and learning



Image Credit: Seattle Parks & Rec, Greenwood Park, Seattle WA

Inspiration: Protect existing trees and plant shade trees surrounding playgrounds for comfortable use throughout the seasons

Background & Rationale

- *Nature is fun!* was the most well-supported guiding principle by community engagement participants. Words including “nature, natural, and trees” were commonly mentioned by community engagement participants when asked to describe their ideal outdoor play area.
- Many public engagement participants (30%) identified weather or seasonal conditions (not enough shade or activities we can do year round) as one of the key things that make it hard for participants to enjoy park playgrounds.
- Trees and vegetation help to foster biodiversity, support pollinators, and provide ecosystem services including carbon sequestration and oxygen release, water conservation, shade, and erosion prevention.
- Trees and planting areas can provide play and educational value.
- Time spent in natural areas has been proven to provide physical and cognitive benefits for children including the ability to soothe the mind from stressful sensory triggers and encourage focused attention.

Design Standards:

- Protect existing trees and vegetation wherever possible. Site and plan playground improvements to work around the drip-line of existing trees (see Standard 2). When planning playground improvements in close proximity to existing trees, consult a Certified Arborist for tree protection and management measures.
- For all Community, Neighbourhood, and Nature Parks, plant new shade trees surrounding the playground area, as needed to increase shade. Plan tree locations and quantities based on the outcomes of the solar analysis / shade audit and in coordination with other shade structures (e.g., shade sails and picnic shelters, see Standard 9). Refer to the Shade Lookbook for suggested shade tree plant species (see Appendix A).
- Plan planting areas to provide permeable buffers between playground areas and other park elements. Plant low-growing species surrounding the play area to support clear sight lines to and through the space.
- Plan planting areas in coordination with the overall grading and drainage strategy of the site. Consider potential for integrated stormwater management strategies including rain gardens, bio-filtration ponds, and bioswales.
- Plan planting areas according to the micro-climate conditions of the site, including aspect, soil moisture, and wind exposure.
- Integrate non-toxic, drought tolerant, native, pollinator-friendly planting materials.

Design Standards (cont'd)

- Provide a mix of evergreen and perennial plant material, with varied colour and interest throughout the seasons
- Provide plant materials with play and sensory value. Consider plants that have different scents, textures, and unique shapes, forms, or foliage.
- When planting is added near playgrounds, prioritize resources to maintain these areas to a high standard.
- Provide 450mm minimum depth of top soil for shrubs and 600mm minimum depth top soil for trees. Provide 75mm deep layer of bark mulch. Follow the Canadian Landscape Standard for selection, installation, and maintenance of new plant materials.
- Provide low-flow irrigation to support planting material through the establishment period and beyond.
- Consider integration of “live planted elements” in the play area including willow tunnels and living fences.
- Consider opportunities for urban agriculture next to playground areas, including raised beds and opportunities for universal gardening and horticultural therapy.

Additional Considerations

Seek opportunities to collaborate with K'ómoks First Nation to integrate traditional plants that are culturally significant to the community. Add educational signage to identify why the plant material is important, including Indigenous names and cultural plant uses.



8

Supporting Amenities

Provide a range of supporting amenities to activate park playgrounds



Esquimalt Adventure Park
Esquimalt, BC

Inspiration: Inclusive washroom building



Image Credit: Berger Partnership
Surrey Downs Park, Bellevue WA

Inspiration: Picnic shelter to support community gathering in close proximity to the playground area



Image Credit: Berger Partnership
Surrey Downs Park, Bellevue WA

Inspiration: Gathering space for individuals and groups



Image Credit: Seattle Parks & Rec
Pratt Park Spray Park, Seattle WA

Inspiration: Inclusive splash pads and water play areas were well-supported by community engagement participants

Background & Rationale:

- Many community engagement respondents shared concerns about safety and garbage / debris in gathering spaces, specifically evidence of substance use in or near playground areas. Provision of supporting amenities can encourage positive and increased activation of parks and playground spaces.
- Opportunities exist to expand the range of supporting amenities in Courtenay's park playgrounds. Research has shown that investment in public places to include elements like furnishings and public art helps enable people to feel comfortable and at ease, increasing activation and community wellbeing and decreasing negative behaviours.
- Many community engagement respondents supported the idea that playgrounds can act as gathering spaces and inclusion of amenities like washrooms, benches, picnic areas, and spaces for food trucks, kiosks, or concessions could help attract visitation and community gathering.
- The PRMP (2019) indicated a range of amenities to be included in the design of new and upgraded park areas:
 - » Seating
 - » Gathering places, with seating and spaces appropriate for picnics and group activities
 - » Celebration of local artists in parks, with more public art such as murals, mosaics, and sculptures.
- Many public engagement participants expressed desires for amenities to support all-seasons use, including shade structures during the hot summer months and lighting and covered areas during dark, wet weather.
 - » Benefits of shade include UV protection, energy conservation, heat mitigation, climate adaptation, promotion of outdoor activities, reduced air pollution (from shade trees) and extending the lifespan of outdoor furniture and infrastructure.
 - » Shade structures are important in playgrounds as children are more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses and UV radiation.

Design Standards

Standard and Special Amenities

- Provide a range of amenities to support playground users and attract visitation, including:
 - » **Standard Amenities:** gathering spaces, waste receptacles, shade elements, signage, bike parking
 - » **Special Amenities:** washroom buildings, water fountains, splash pad / water play, picnic shelters, BBQ areas, game tables, multi-sport courts & multi-purpose paved surfaces, space for food trucks / kiosks, public art, lighting
 - » For Community Park Playgrounds, provide a mix of standard and special amenities.
 - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds provide standard amenities. Special amenities to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - » For Nature Park Playgrounds provide standard amenities. Special amenities to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Use materials and furnishings that have a consistent character with each park, e.g., Nature Park Playgrounds should use warm, natural materials like wood and stone. Specialty finishes and custom features should be reserved for Community Park Playgrounds.
- Locate supporting amenities in close proximity to playground areas. Consider required clearance zones for adjacent activity areas (e.g. verge spaces and clearances surrounding playing fields).
- Select and locate amenities with consideration for sun exposure and thermal comfort (refer to the Shade Lookbook, see Appendix A).
- Refer to the tables on the following pages for additional information on supporting amenities, including:
 - » **Amenity Type:** Standard or special amenity
 - » **Description:** Brief overview of the amenity and considerations for implementation
 - » **Priority:** High, Medium, or Low based on community support indicated during the public engagement phase and level of community need
 - » **Capital Cost Estimates:** High-level cost ranges for planning purposes only:
 - \$ = \$0 - \$15,000
 - \$\$ = \$15,000 - \$50,000
 - \$\$\$ = \$50,000 - \$150,000 (if the cost exceeds \$150,000 a rough-order of magnitude cost is provided)

Additional Considerations

Consider fun and playful seating options to attract gatherings and visitation throughout the year, including:

- » Swing Seats
- » Hammocks
- » Movable Furnishings
- » Illuminated / Interactive Installations



Standard Amenities for Park Playgrounds

STANDARD AMENITY	DESCRIPTION AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PRIORITY	CAPITAL COST ESTIMATE
<p>Gathering Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All Playgrounds: Add City of Courtenay standard park benches with back rests near playground areas (min. 2 per playground area). » Community Playgrounds: Provide flexible seating areas for small group gatherings including seat walls, benches, tables, picnic tables, and custom furnishings. » Allocate clear zones next to all benches and furnishings for parking wheelchairs or strollers. 	<p>High</p>	<p>All: \$ Community Parks: \$\$</p>
<p>Waste Receptacles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All Playgrounds: Provide double-stream waste and recycling receptacles in all park playgrounds. Select animal-proof models. » Locate waste receptacles in close proximity to other amenities (e.g., picnic shelters, trail connections). » Provide clearance zones surrounding waste receptacles for maintenance access. » Provide safe sharps disposal bins near park playgrounds on an as-needed basis. » Provide dog-waste bag dispensers near park playgrounds. 	<p>High</p>	<p>\$</p>
<p>Shade Elements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All Playgrounds: Provide shade trees and shade structures including shade sails, covered gathering spaces (see picnic shelters), and playground equipment with built-in shade structures. Locate to shade key playground areas during the warmest hours of the day. » Refer to the Shade Lookbook for appropriate shade tree species (see Appendix A). » Prior to implementing shade elements, conduct a solar analysis and shade audit to maximize effectiveness. » Shade trees may not provide sufficient shade during the establishment period. Consider integration of additional shade elements (e.g., shade sails) while the tree canopy establishes. » Plan shade sails and shade structures with the support of a structural engineer. 	<p>High</p>	<p>\$\$\$</p>
<p>Bike Parking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All Playgrounds: Provide convenient, safe bicycle parking opportunities near primary bike paths. » Community Playgrounds: At select Community Park Playgrounds, integrate amenities to support bikes and electric bikes including electric bike charging stations and bicycle repair stations. 	<p>High</p>	<p>All Parks: \$ Community Parks: \$\$</p>
<p>Signage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All Playgrounds: Provide regulatory signage indicating hours of use and codes of conduct. » Community Playgrounds: Provide welcome signage and playground wayfinding and interpretive signage to guide park users to and from the play area and provide information on the history of the park, playground, and unique design and placemaking elements. 	<p>Medium</p>	<p>All Parks: \$ Community Parks: \$\$</p>

Special Amenities for Park Playgrounds

SPECIAL AMENITY	DESCRIPTION AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PRIORITY	CAPITAL COST ESTIMATE
Washroom Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Provide universally accessible facilities. » If locating in a Community Park with a splash pad or other recreational activities, consider integrating change room facilities. » Prioritize Community Parks with existing water / sewer connections in close proximity to the playground area to reduce costs and construction impact. » Consider composting or pit toilets if capital budgets or infrastructure do not allow for water / sewer connections. » Update maintenance / operational capacity to reflect additions 	High	~ \$250,000 - \$500,000
Splash Pad / Water Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prioritize implementation of a new splash pad at a Community Park on the east side of town (to complement existing amenity at Lewis Park). » Splash pads should be universally accessible with a range of interactive spray features. » Consider alternative use of splash pad area during winter months (e.g., multi-purpose paved space for recreational use). » Use effective water-management systems including high-efficiency nozzles and on-demand activation, Consider water re-circulation systems. 	High	~\$350,000 - \$500,000 (+)
Public Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Integrate public art in the form of sculptures, murals, and interactive installations within or near playgrounds. » Integrate Indigenous art and storytelling within play spaces. » Feature local artists from Courtenay and the surrounding region. 	High	TBD based on capital budgets
Picnic Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Place covered picnic areas in close proximity to the playground and gathering space to accommodate small community gatherings. » Provide universally accessible surfacing and access routes to and from the picnic area. » Provide a range of furnishings including picnic tables and longer community tables. » Integrate clear zones next to tables for wheelchairs and stroller parking. » Consider integration of lighting to support evening use. 	Medium	\$\$\$
Water Fountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Locate new drinking fountains in close proximity to gathering and / or picnic areas. 	Medium	\$

Multi-sport Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Upgrade existing multi-sport courts. » In select Community Parks, consider addition of new pre-fabricated sports courts or flexible paved areas near park playgrounds, with lining for basketball, floor hockey and other recreational activities. » Provide fencing or sideboards around court areas to contain balls, as needed. » Provide benches. 	Medium	\$150,000 - \$300,000
Areas for Food Trucks / Retail Kiosk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Provide paved open areas for food truck parking or pop-up retail kiosks. Allow for vehicular access from adjacent roads or parking areas. » Locate near gathering spaces, waste receptacles, and shade elements » Provide electrical connections compatible for food trucks. » Consider reviewing Business License Amendment Bylaw No. 2847, 2016 to identify other park locations for Food Trucks than those established in the bylaw (i.e. near playgrounds). 	Medium	\$
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Add or upgrade pedestrian-scale lighting at playground entries and along primary park trails. » Integrate building-mounted lighting at washroom buildings and picnic shelters. » Consider addition of low-level lighting recessed in seat walls or mounted to the underside of benches or furnishings. » Use energy-efficient fixtures (e.g. solar LED lights) and consider integration of timers. » Design lighting for dark-sky compliance to avoid light trespass onto habitat areas and adjacent residential neighbourhoods. 	Medium	\$\$
BBQ Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Consider raised charcoal BBQ grills in close proximity to picnic shelters / gathering areas. » Ensure surfacing and furnishings materials directly surrounding grills are non-flammable. » Provide counter tops or tables for placing food and cooking utensils adjacent to grills and coal disposal canisters for safe removal of unused coals. » Provide regulatory signage related to BBQ area codes of conduct. 	Low	\$\$
Game Tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Consider game tables near playground gathering spaces (e.g., chess tables, ping pong, foosball). » Seek opportunities to partner with the K'omoks First Nation to develop spaces for traditional games. 	Low	\$

Table 5: Special Amenities for Park Playgrounds

Encourage community use of park playgrounds with diverse programming



Inspiration: Art in the Playground!



Image Credit: Seattle Parks & Rec

Inspiration: Environmental learning programs



Inspiration: Food trucks and pop-up retail kiosks

Background & Rationale:

- Opportunities exist to increase safety and activation of Courtenay's park playgrounds. Programming helps to create vibrant, community-focused places, which in turn encourages positive activity and a strong sense of place.
- Public engagement participants and interest groups were supportive of increasing programming opportunities in park playgrounds and shared ideas about gathering spaces to support programming, pop-up retail opportunities, and recreational programs coordinated through the City and local community groups.

Design Standards:

- Provide open, multi-purpose paved or lawn spaces adjacent to park playgrounds to support a range of programs and activities.
- Explore opportunities to increase City-led programming at park playgrounds, including:
 - » The Courtenay Playground Trail! A scavenger hunt / map to visit all of Courtenay's unique park playgrounds (with potential incentives)
 - » Pop-up City of Courtenay Recreation programming
 - » Creative programming including art, music, or photography classes
 - » Musical performances
 - » Story walks through the playground
 - » Movies at the playground / park
 - » Indigenous story-telling or other cultural activities at the playground / park
 - » Environmental learning in Nature Park Playgrounds
 - » Grants for neighbourhood-led community gatherings
- Partner with community organizations to diversify programming opportunities.
- Near Community Park playgrounds, provide infrastructure to support community gatherings, including power connections for events and pop-ups (e.g., food trucks, markets) and shade structures for all-season use (see Standard 8).
- Help foster community playground groups to coordinate community efforts and events to create safe, welcoming spaces (e.g. friends of Woodcote Park!).



There is a huge opportunity here to bring people into our community by creating something that is truly a landmark, a brand for the city. Think big, think drawing people here because we have something special and unorthodox for the kids to engage with.

- Community Engagement Participant





Elk Lake Park Nature Play Area, Saanich BC

3 | Implementation - *Moving Forward*

- 3.1 Implementing the Standards
- 3.2 Playground Asset Management Planning
- 3.3 Financial Recommendations for Implementation
- 3.4 Playground Design Standards Summary

Ongoing community discussion and dialogue prior to implementing the Park Playground Design Standards will help create playgrounds that are well used and enjoyed by the community.



3.1 Implementing the Standards

As the City of Courtenay advances the Park Playground Design Standards, the following considerations are provided:

Change will happen over time. Park playgrounds are living spaces. They require ongoing planning to continue to meet the needs of the community that is growing and evolving around them. Change in Courtenay's playgrounds will happen over many years, with each playground upgrade being carefully planned to achieve the intended results.

Adaptation will be required. Successful long-term management of the playground system will require flexibility and adaptation to unforeseen changes and continued public input. Ideas or circumstances that are not known today may become important to a park playground's future. Continuing to reflect on the vision and guiding principles developed with the community, while encouraging creative future planning, will allow positive opportunities to emerge.

It will be important to plan, implement, and re-assess. Playgrounds are one part of a broad, integrated parks system. Changes to one component of a park or the surrounding neighborhood may ripple to impact a playground and planning needs. The Park Playground Design Standards provide a framework for a playground's evolution, but reviewing current circumstances regularly will help support ongoing positive results.

Community Engagement

Continuing to work closely with the community through ongoing engagement and dialogue will support positive outcomes. While the Park Playground Design Standards provide a framework for improvements, future engagement with community members and interest group to identify key site-specific opportunities and design considerations will help create playgrounds that best meet the needs of the community.

Prior to designing and implementing new playgrounds and playground upgrades, it is suggested that the City undertake engagement, following the guidelines established in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan for specific park planning efforts:

Inform the relevant City residents of the process and consult with and involve those interested in each park playground.

- » For Community Park Playgrounds, inform the entire city.
- » For Neighbourhood and Nature Park Playgrounds, inform those within the catchment.
- » For all park playground upgrades, inform interest groups.

3.2 Playground Asset Management Planning

Asset Inventory

To aid with implementation of the Park Playground Design Standards and plan for ongoing upgrades, a more comprehensive inventory of the City's playground assets will be helpful. As the playground system evolves, a regularly updated, finer grained database that documents physical assets within park playgrounds could provide valuable insights on future investments and potential efficiencies.

Potential assets to be inventoried include:

- Playground Surfacing and Edging
- Standard Play Features (slides, climbers, swings, etc.)
- Special Play Features (zip-lines, trampolines, exercise equipment, etc.)
- Standard Amenities (benches, waste receptacles, bike parking, shade structures, etc.)
- Special Amenities (washroom buildings, picnic structures, bbq areas, game tables, etc.)
- Accessible Elements (play features and supporting amenities)

Information about each asset could be organized by park classification. Refer to the spreadsheet on the following page for an example template. Please note, the information provided in the spreadsheet is an example only, the inventory and tool would be developed by the City as playground upgrades progress. A process would be needed to review and update the inventory on an annual basis or every few years.

Life-Cycle Planning

Ongoing life-cycle analysis can assist asset management processes and should account for use levels, safety concerns, accessibility, age and condition of play elements, quality of manufacturing, materials, climate / weather, and location. While the lifespan of playground elements can vary widely depending on those factors, approximate ranges can assist with forecasting. The following approximate lifespan ranges are provided based on historical projects:

- Rubber Play Surfacing: ~7-10 years
- Engineered Wood Fiber Surfacing: ~2-3 years (top-up)
- Wood Chip Surfacing: ~2-3 years (top-up)
- Concrete Edging: ~15-30 years
- Composite Edging (Bender Board): ~15-25 years
- Timber Edging (Untreated): ~5-10 years
- Mixed Metal / Plastic / Rubber Play Equipment (high-end): ~25 (+) years
- Mixed Metal / Plastic / Rubber Play Equipment (standard): ~10-15 years
- Wood Playground Equipment: ~10-13 years
- Nature Play Elements (logs, stumps etc.): ~5-10 years

Table 6: Asset Inventory Spreadsheet Example
Page 386 of 475

COMMUNITY PARK PLAYGROUND ASSET INVENTORY						
STANDARD PLAY FEATURES						
PARK	FEATURE	YEAR OF INSTALL	AGE RANGE	ACCESSIBLE (Y/N)	CONDITION ASSESSMENT	MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS
Lewis Park	Slide	2002	5-12	N	3	
Lewis Park	Swing set	2002	5-12	N	3	
SPECIAL PLAY FEATURES						
PARK	FEATURE	YEAR OF INSTALL	AGE RANGE	ACCESSIBLE (Y/N)	CONDITION ASSESSMENT	MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS
Bill Moore Park	Special Play Feature <i>(Future - TBD)</i>	2028	5-12	Y	1	

3.3 Financial Recommendations for Implementation

Investment Consolidation

Through the future needs assessment and asset inventory processes, the City should consider opportunities to consolidate investments. There are likely benefits to focusing future playground development and budget efforts in fewer locations where high quality play experiences can be created. In areas that are well-served by playgrounds, consider opportunities to reduce the number of existing play structures or integrate alternative play strategies that require less up-front and ongoing investment than a standard playground (e.g., nature play elements, game tables, creative play opportunities).

Preliminary Cost Estimates

To support capital planning efforts, current (2024) planning level cost estimates are provided for supply and installation of each park playground classification type, based on historical construction data from similar projects. In addition to the capital investment required for supply and installation, there are soft costs associated with designing and planning playgrounds, as well as maintaining and renewing them over time. These costs should be considered as part of playground planning and renewals processes.

It is important to read the following estimates in the context of these conditions:

- Costs are developed using unit costs and quantities based on general assumptions and historical construction data from similarly-scaled projects, with the intention of aiding budget planning. Actual costs may vary widely depending on site details, design, market forces, and other variables.
- Costs will continue to be clarified through future steps in planning and detailed design for specific park playgrounds. For example, this document considers a range of potential play features and amenities for Community Park Playgrounds, but these details will continue to be identified and refined through future processes.
- Inflation is not included. Presumably, improvements implemented in the future will be more expensive than estimates allocated today.
- A 30% contingency has been added to each supply and installation estimate to recognize the broad-stroke nature of strategic planning.

	COMMUNITY PARK PLAYGROUND	NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PLAYGROUND	NATURE PARK PLAY AREA
Size Range	~1000m ² - 2000m ²	~250m ² - 1000m ²	~100m ² - 500m ²
Playground Supply and Installation Estimate Range	\$225,000 - \$1,500,000	\$75,000 - \$350,000	\$50,000 - \$200,000
Fee Estimate for Planning & Design (% of Supply & Install)	5-15%	0-10%	0-10%
TOTAL ESTIMATE (rounded)	\$240,000 - \$1,770,000	\$75,000 - \$385,000	\$50,000 - \$220,000
Annual Maintenance & Operations Costs (% of Total)	2-5%	2-5%	2-3%

Table 7: Preliminary Cost Estimate Ranges

Funding Strategies

A combination of funding strategies will be required to implement playground upgrades and additions. It will be important for the City to seek innovative ways to supplement capital budgets so that park playgrounds can be sustainably maintained and improved. It is expected that the City will determine an appropriate combination of funding strategies to implement playground renewals. Potential strategies could include:

Municipal Tools

- **Property Taxation:** Tax allocation increases to support more rapid investment in park playgrounds. This will be the main funding source for the majority of the City's playground projects including replacement of existing park playgrounds and new playgrounds.
- **Development Cost Charges (DCCs):** Review the DCC bylaw for opportunities to include priorities for park upgrades associated with community growth, including playgrounds and park amenity improvements limited to:
 - » Fencing
 - » Landscaping
 - » Drainage and irrigation
 - » Trails
 - » Washrooms and change rooms
 - » Playing field equipment.

In accordance with the DCC bylaw, establish a Parkland Acquisition and Improvement Program informed by the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and associated implementation plans (including the Park Playground Design Standards) to inform the potential amendment of the DCC bylaw.

- **Amenity Contributions:** Review the new Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs) legislation to identify opportunities for funding playground equipment and play areas that are part of the new housing legislation (Bill 44) financial tools to support infill and new growth.

External / Other Funding Sources

In addition to the municipal tools listed, explore other funding sources (recognizing staff time is needed to research and prepare documents and applications).

- **Senior Government Funding:** Continue to research and pursue Senior Government grants to supplement municipal budgets.
- **Non-Government Funding:** Continue to research and pursue non-government funded grants.
- **Donations & Fundraising:** Encourage fundraising, donations, commemorative giving, and/or in-kind donations to park playgrounds.
- **Community Partnerships:** Partnering with community organizations can support playground programming, operations, and funding.
- **Private-Public Partnerships:** Public-private partnerships may be considered as means for financing playground opportunities, including retail kiosk or food services in park playgrounds.

3.4 Playground Design Standards Summary

The chart on the following page provides an at-a-glance summary of the Park Playground Design Standards, organized by Community, Neighbourhood, and Nature Park Playgrounds. It compiles key standards, details, and budget considerations for each playground classification. Refer to Section 2 for more details.

City staff will begin the next phase of work to identify specific playground renewals and action the Park Playground Design Standards through detailed design and construction processes.

The extent of park playground upgrades will depend on the City's financial capacity to deliver playground renewals and funding priority as determined through asset management, playground asset inventory development, and annual budgeting processes.

Successful implementation of the Park Playground Design Standards will require coordination between a number of groups, including (but not limited to):

- » City Mayor and Council
- » City Departments
- » Community Associations
- » Interest Groups
- » Community Members

Ongoing participation and collaboration of all of these groups will help realize the vision, guiding principles, and standards established through the Let's Play, Courtenay! Park Playground Design Standards process.

	COMMUNITY PARK PLAYGROUND	NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PLAYGROUND	NATURE PARK PLAYGROUND
Intent	Destination playgrounds that serve residents from the entire City	Playgrounds that serve the surrounding neighbourhood	Playgrounds in parks that are dominated by natural features such as forests and watercourses
Level of Use	High	Moderate	Moderate
Service Level	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~10 minute walk (800m)	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~5 minute walk (400m)	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~30 minute walk (2.5 km radius) or short drive
Size Range	~1000m ² - 2000m ²	~250m ² - 1000m ²	~100m ² - 500m ²
Accessibility Level (see Standard 1)	Universal priority	Universal elements	Universal elements
Age Range	All ages	Tot Lot, 3-5, or 5-12 based on demand	All ages
Range of Play Elements (see Standard 6)	Diverse Standard and special play features. Features to be determined on a site-by-site basis	Moderate Standard play features. Special features to be considered on a site-by-site basis	Moderate Boulders / climbing rocks, log climbers, willow tunnels, forts, sand play, water play, loose parts play, areas for exploration (exact elements to be determined on a site-by-site basis)
Surfacing (see Standard 5)	Poured-in-place rubber surfacing for main play area (engineered wood fiber, synthetic turf considered for secondary zones)	Poured-in-place rubber surfacing, engineered wood fiber, or wood chips	Engineered wood fiber or wood chips. Sand or soil for low-height elements only
Edging (see Standard 5)	Cast-in-place concrete or composite bender board	Cast-in-place concrete, composite bender board, or timber edging	Timber edging, boulders, or no edging
Boundaries (see Standard 4)	Open, planted, chain-link, decorative, or split-rail fence, considered on a site-by-site basis	Open, planted, chain-link, or split-rail fence, considered on a site-by-site basis	Open, planted, or split-rail fence in select locations to protect sensitive natural areas
Supporting Amenities (see Standard 8)	Standard and special amenities. Amenities determined on a site-by-site basis (see Tables 4&5)	Standard amenities. Special amenities to be considered on a site-by-site basis (see Tables 4&5)	Standard amenities (see Table 4)
Capital Estimate Range	\$240,000 - \$1,770,000	\$75,000 - \$385,000	\$50,000 - \$220,000
Engagement	Engage entire City and interest groups	Engage with surrounding neighbourhood and interest groups	Engage with surrounding neighbourhood and interest groups

Table 8: Park Playground Design Standard Summary Table



Create playgrounds that feel like a "village square" - lots of focus on community gathering spaces, designing in circles to promote integration and connection, features for all seasons...

- Community Engagement Participant





Oak Park Preschool Playground, Vancouver BC

Appendix A

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Appendix B

What We Heard Report - Phase 1 and 2

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Let's Play, Courtenay!

Park Playground Design Standards



City of
Courtenay

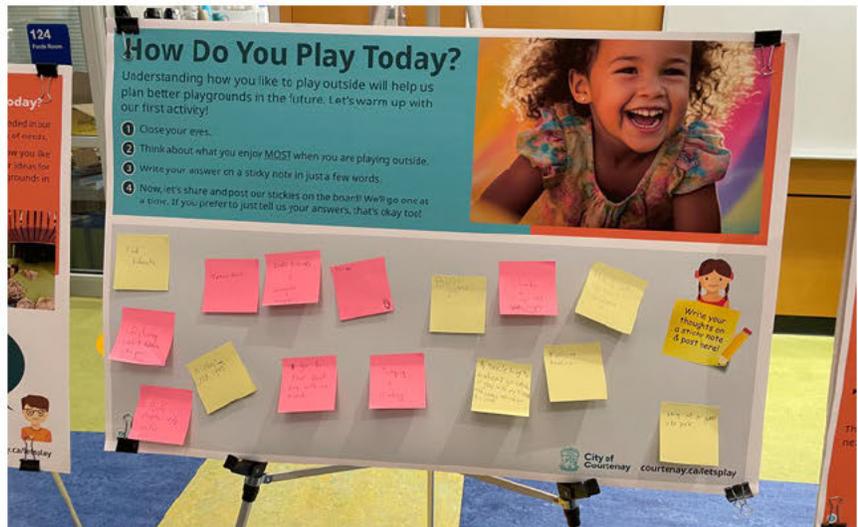
Phase 1: Gathering Ideas

Phase 2: Draft Standards Review

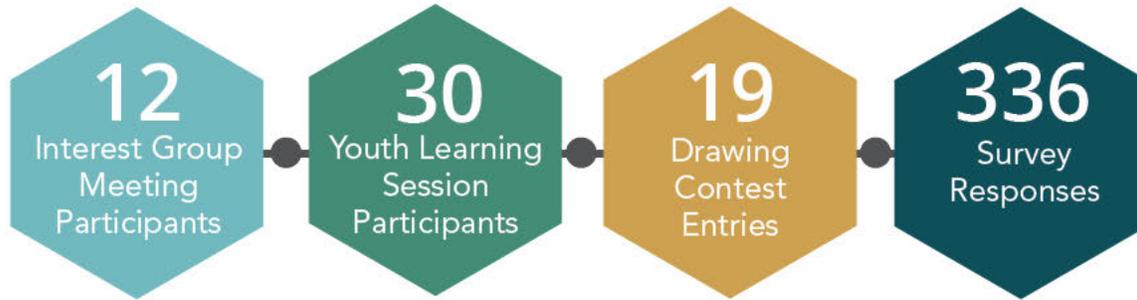


Community Engagement Summary

Phase 1 - Winter 2024 | Phase 2 - Summer 2024



What We Heard...



Phase 1
Gathering Ideas about our Playground System Today

➤ Summary Highlights:

Participants love:

- » Nature play (e.g., trees, climbing boulders, balancing logs)
- » Inclusive play areas for all ages and abilities
- » Innovative and imaginative play structures that allow for many different ways to play
- » Playgrounds close to home that are connected to safe walking and biking paths
- » Splash pads and water play
- » Comfortable outdoor meeting and gathering places (e.g. benches, picnic shelters)
- » Risky play
- » Play areas that highlight Courtenay's unique sense of place



Top Vision Words...

Safe



Fun



Accessible



Participants are concerned about:

- Public safety
- Litter and cleanliness
- Maintenance and upkeep
- Public washroom access
- Connectivity and safe access by active transportation (walking, cycling)
- Weather / all seasons use





24 hour use spaces with lighting and visibility for safe play at night.

-Community Engagement Participant



Community engagement participants shared concerns about safety in park playgrounds during both Phase 1 and 2. See Section 1.8 of the Park Playground Design Standards document (Guiding Principles) for more information on creating safe, comfortable park playground spaces for all to enjoy.



What We Heard...



Phase 2

Review of the Draft Park Playground Design Standards

➤ Summary Highlights:

Participants shared ideas about:

- **Fencing:** Providing more fully-fenced playgrounds, especially in close proximity to busy roads.
- **Shade:** Integrating more shade structures and shade trees for relief in warm summer months.
- **Lighting:** Adding lighting in key locations to help playgrounds feel safe and inviting in the evening hours.
- **Swings:** Providing more swings and different types of swings for all ages!
- **Water Play:** Adding spray parks, lazy rivers, misting stations, and other water play features for fun and relief from heat.



Participants support:

- Inclusive, universally accessible playgrounds for all ages and abilities to play, take risks, and gain self-confidence.
- Nature play opportunities.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle routes to playground areas and bike parking to support active transportation users.



Participants are concerned about:

- Public safety
- Litter and cleanliness
- Cost of playground improvements





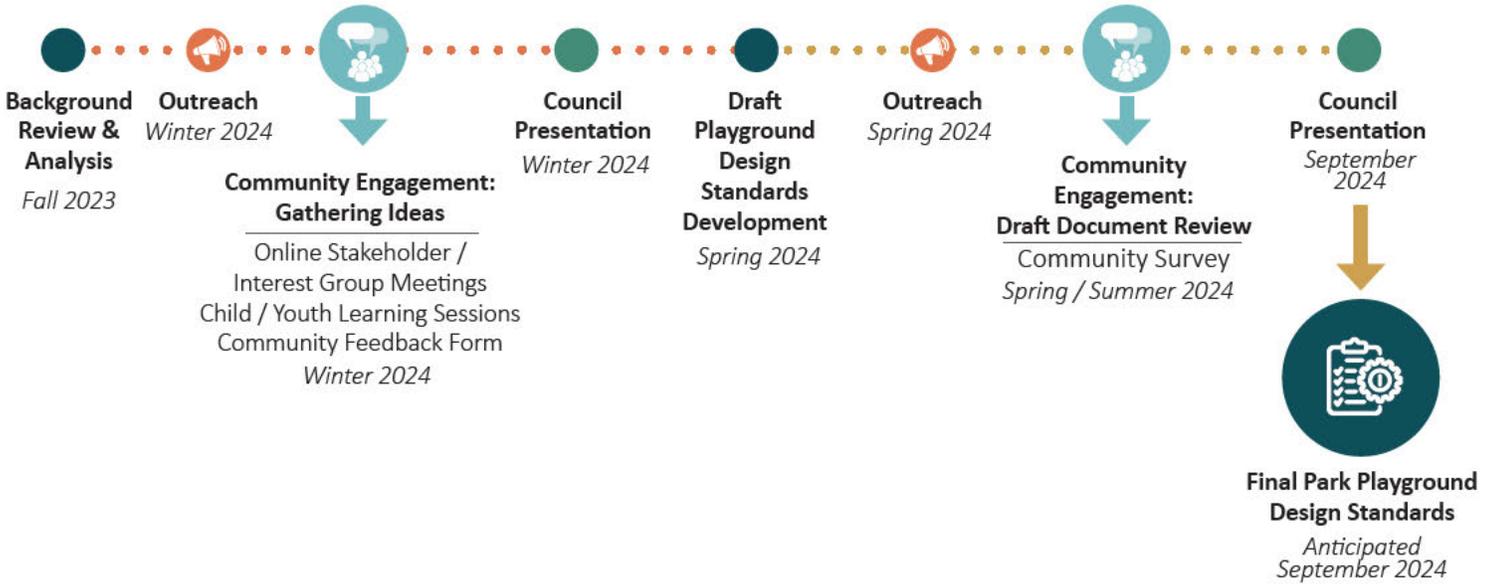
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The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we gather and play is the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.



Our Process



The project process involves two phases, with each phase involving engagement and community feedback. The above diagram provides an overview of the process.



1 | Engagement Overview

1.1 Process Overview

The “Let’s Play, Courtenay!” project will create new playground design standards for City playgrounds. These standards are a set of steps the City will follow to make sure Courtenay’s playgrounds are designed and upgraded to best meet the needs of the community.

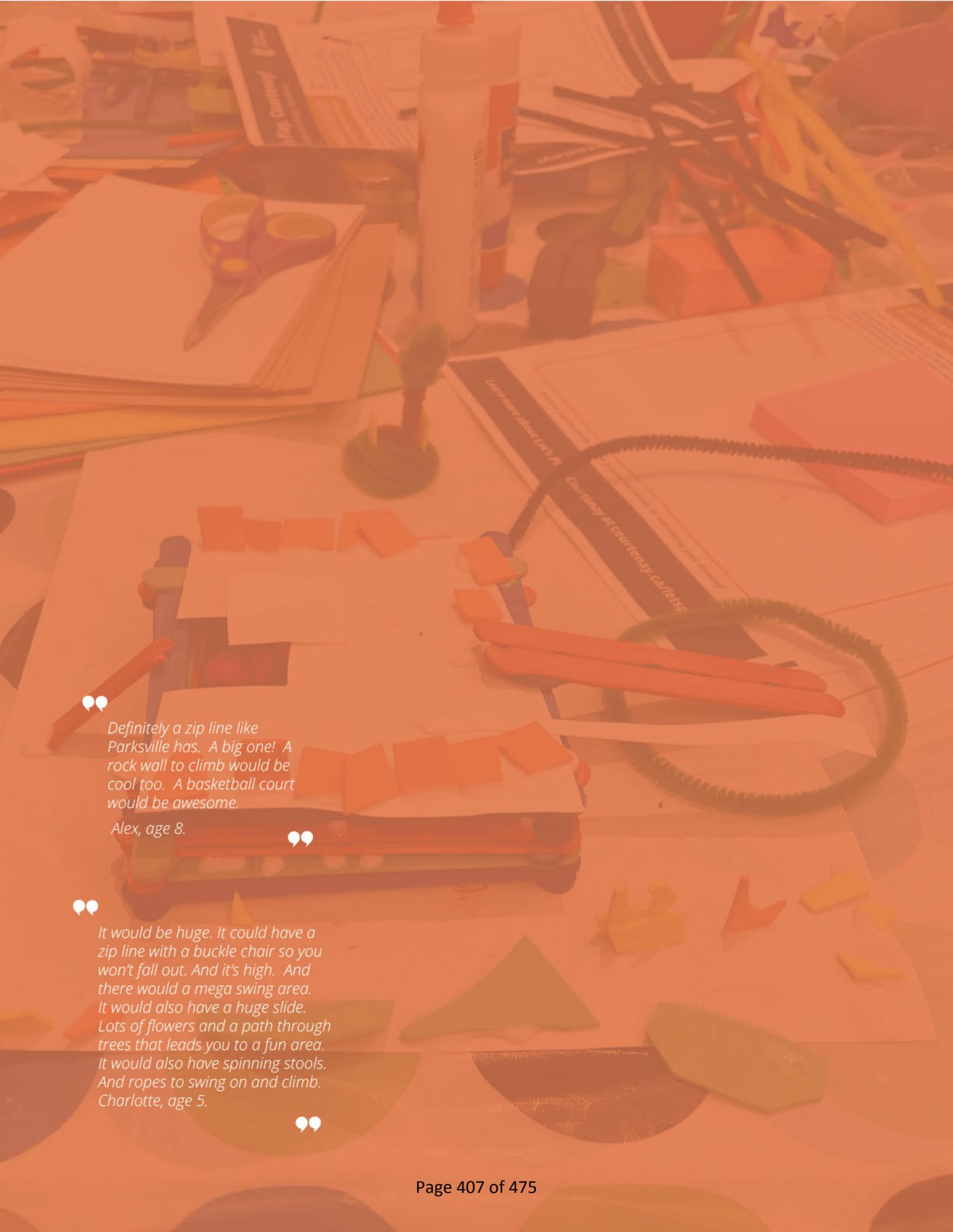
An integral part of the process is engaging with community members of all ages to understand how playgrounds are being used today and what we should consider when planning and designing our outdoor play spaces in the future, including types of features, activities, and supporting amenities.

During Phase 1 of the two-phase process (see diagram on adjacent page), we gathered ideas from the community including key interest groups, youth, City staff, and the public. Topics included how we play today, BIG ideas for tomorrow, goals (guiding principles), and other ideas for future playground improvements.

During Phase 2, a draft of the Park Playground Design Standards document was posted on the City’s website for community review. Community members were encouraged to read the document and complete a short survey to indicate their level of support for the recommendations and share additional ideas or input. Community members were also asked to share their ideas for improvements to the Woodcote Park playground, which is a top priority for replacement.

What are Playground Design Standards?

The Park Playground Design Standards will provide a set of steps for how to design park playgrounds, including the types of materials to use, activities to include, where to put planting or furnishings, and how to make playgrounds more inclusive for all ages and abilities. Planners, designers, and builders will use the standards when designing new play areas or upgrading existing playgrounds.



Definitely a zip line like Parksville has. A big one! A rock wall to climb would be cool too. A basketball court would be awesome.

Alex, age 8.

It would be huge. It could have a zip line with a buckle chair so you won't fall out. And it's high. And there would be a mega swing area. It would also have a huge slide. Lots of flowers and a path through trees that leads you to a fun area. It would also have spinning stools. And ropes to swing on and climb.

Charlotte, age 5.



2 | Phase 1 Engagement

The following pages summarize the Phase 1 community engagement process and the feedback received through the community survey, interest group meetings, youth learning sessions, and drawing contest.

This section includes the following information:

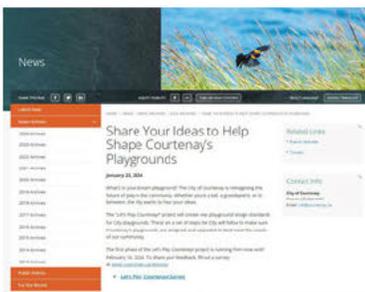
- Phase 1 Outreach Tools
- Who We Engaged
- Phase 1 Engagement Activities
- What We Heard
 - » How We Play - Our Park Playgrounds Today
 - » BIG Ideas - Our Park Playgrounds Tomorrow
 - » Other Ideas
 - » About You (Demographics)

2.1 Phase 1 Outreach Tools

The following outreach tools were used to inform community members about Phase 1 engagement opportunities:



Outreach tools such as social media posts, Google Ads, newspaper ads, and a media release raised community awareness of the project and engagement process.



News release on the City's news page.



Drawing Contest Form.

- **Project Page on City of Courtenay Website:** A project page was developed for the project on www.courtenay.ca/letsplay. This page features an overview of the project, its process, key contacts, and next steps. It also provides important links to project materials.
- **Media Release:** The City issued a media release through its media outlets and posted on the City's news page www.courtenay.ca/news.
- **Social Media Posts and Google Ads:** The City posted Google Ads as well as regular, scheduled posts on City social media channels including Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram, with key information and a link to the online survey.
- **E-Notifications:** Emails were sent out to key interest groups informing them of the public engagement process and inviting them to attend the interest group meetings.
- **Drawing Contest / Newspaper Advertising:** An ad was placed in the community newspaper which included information about the project and a Playground Ideas Drawing Contest. The contest was open from Jan.23 to Feb. 16. Participants could submit ideas for a chance to win a \$50 gift certificate for a Courtenay recreation program.
- **Community Posters:** Community Posters (8.5x11) were posted at park playgrounds and various public locations in Courtenay (e.g., City Hall, Lewis Centre) to direct the interested public to the City's project page and encourage them to complete the questionnaire to share input.
- **Eventbrite:** An eventbrite invitation was developed to invite youth to the learning sessions.
- **Word-of-Mouth:** City staff, project team members, and the general public were asked to share information about the project within their networks.

2.2 Who We Engaged

Key audiences included City staff and committees, interest groups such as child, youth, family support groups, accessibility advocates, recreational organizations, arts and culture groups, other local government, and members of the public (of all ages).

2.3 Phase 1 Engagement Activities



Online Interest Group Meetings (2)

DATE	Community: Tue., February 13, 2024, 12:00 - 1:30 pm City Staff: Tue., February 20, 2024, 2:00 - 3:00 pm
LOCATION	Facilitated online Via Zoom
DETAILS	These interactive online discussions were facilitated by Consultants and City staff and supported by an agenda, presentation, and interactive online activities. Participants were asked to discuss the playground system today including barriers to play, review and confirm draft goals (guiding principles), and share ideas for the future playground system.



Youth Learning Sessions (2)

DATES	Ages 8-12: Tue., Feb. 6, 2024, 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm Ages 3-5: Wed., Feb. 7, 2024, 10:30 - 11:00 am
LOCATION	Ages 8-12: Lake Trail Community School Ages 3-5: Lewis Centre Cozy Corner Preschool
DETAILS	Children were engaged in learning sessions with an introduction to the project and an opportunity to design their own fun spaces to play using a variety of art materials. Input from youth was a key focus for this phase to understand kids' needs, desires, and ideas. Display posters were developed to communicate information and gather feedback.



Community Survey and Drawing Contest

DATES	January 23rd - February 16th, 2024
LOCATION	Online at www.courtenay.ca/letsplay Hard copy versions in person at City Hall
DETAILS	A community survey was available online linked from the City's Project page. Hard copies were also available at City Hall, the Lewis Centre, and at the youth learning sessions. The goal of the survey was to gather input on how playgrounds are being used today and ideas for improvements in the future. A drawing contest was also held during the survey window, which encouraged Courtenay's youth (18 and under) to draw or create their ideal playground. All input received will be used to develop the draft Park Playground Design Standards.

Phase 1 By the Numbers

3

Written Submissions

12

Online Interest
Group Participants

19

Drawing Contest Entries

30

Kids' Learning
Session Participants

301

Clicks on Google Ads

336

Community Survey
Responses

764

Project Webpage Users

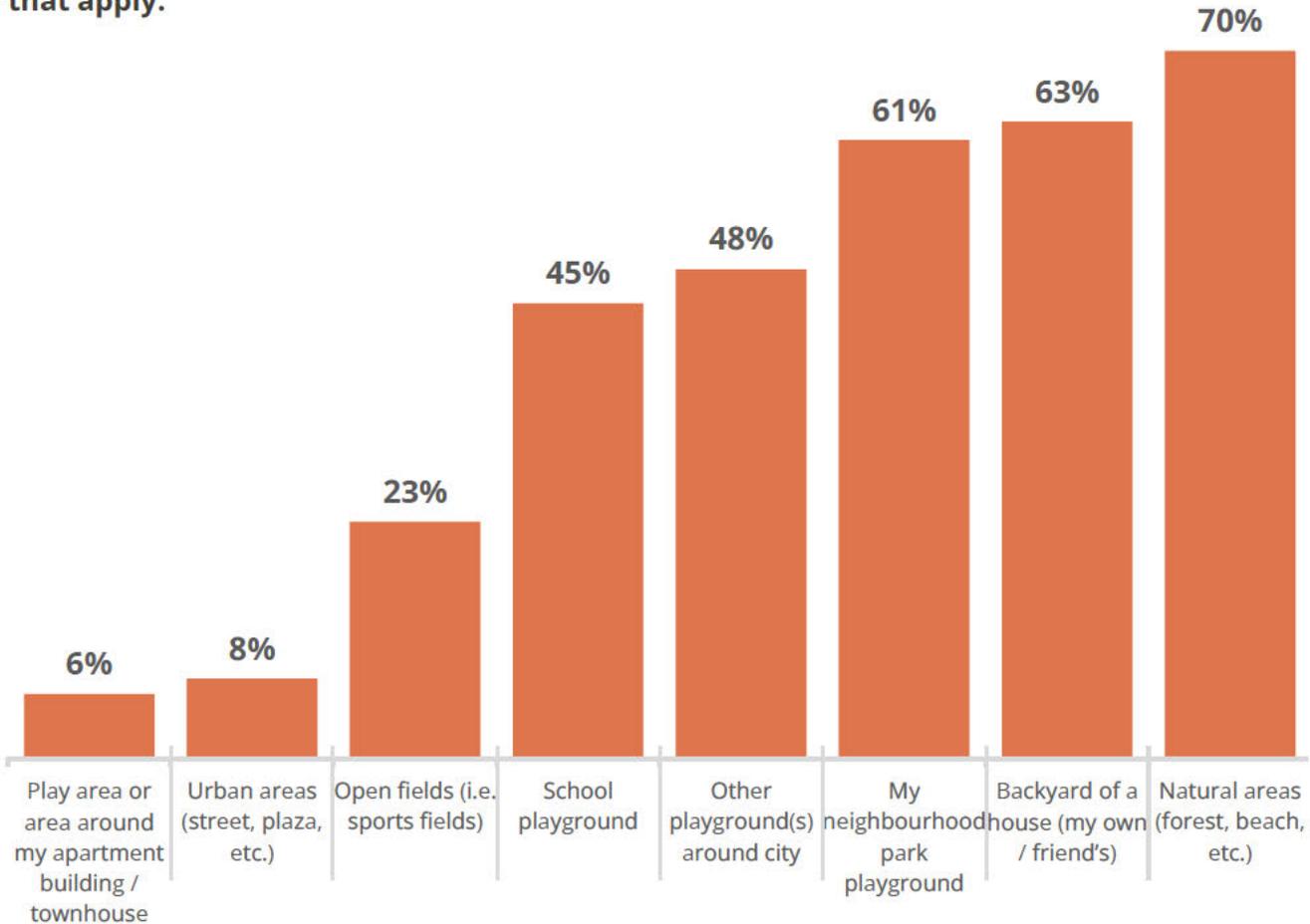
2.4 What We Heard

The graphs on the following pages summarize the data we received from the community survey. The "key findings" boxes provide an overview of input received from all sources of feedback.

How We Play - Our Park Playgrounds Today

Where We Play

Question #1: Where do you usually play (or take children to play) in Courtenay? Select all that apply.



Key Findings

- The majority of respondents (70%) usually play in Courtenay's natural areas (e.g., forests and beaches).
- Many also play in their backyard or their friends/ neighbour's backyards (62%).
- Neighbourhood Park Playground was the third most common answer (61%).
- Feedback indicated that many community members often choose alternatives to Courtenay's Park Playgrounds due to concerns about safety and cleanliness.



Comox Marina Playground/Spray park is a family fave.



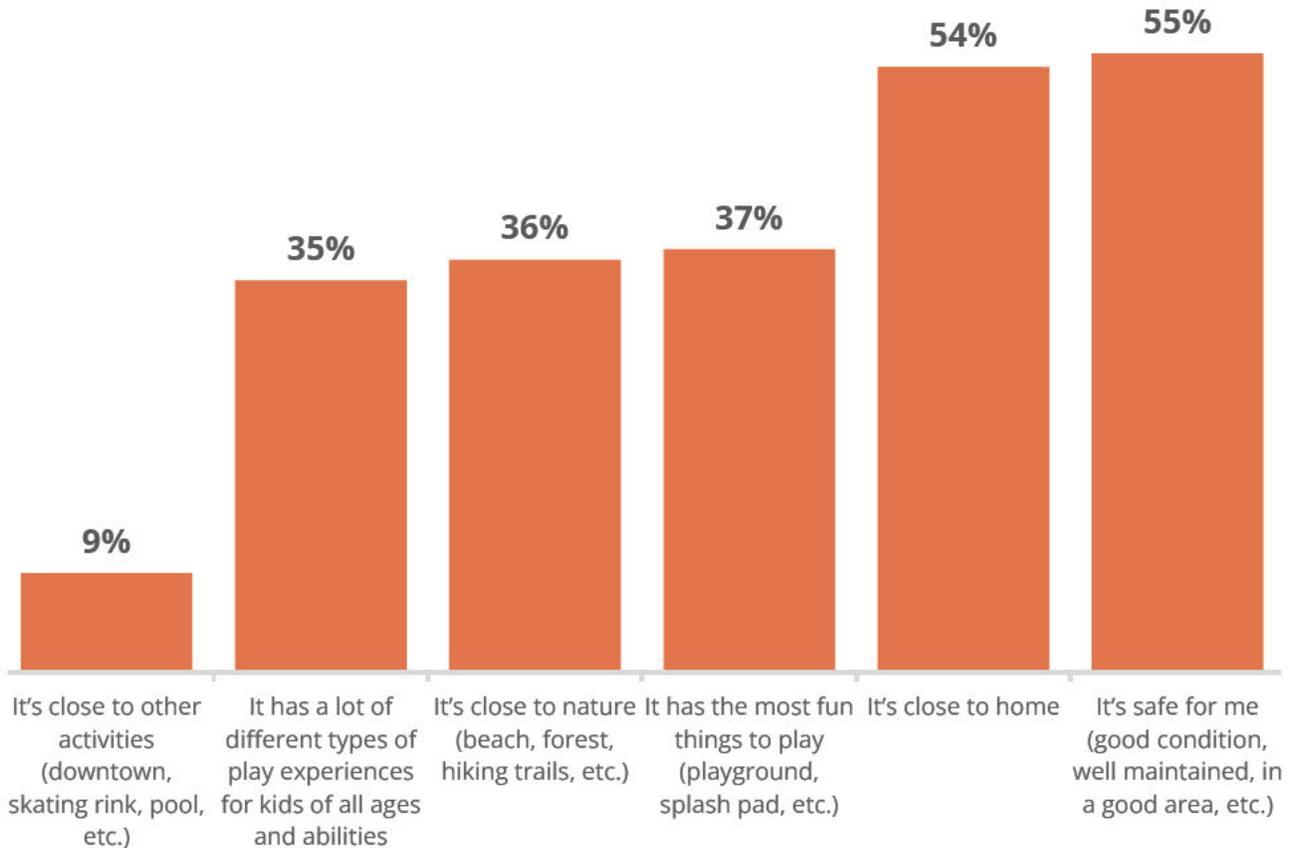
We are most often now at home or in the natural areas on the outskirts of Courtenay. We find that the overrun of unhoused people and drug paraphernalia in the local parks to be concerning as of late.



How We Play - Our Park Playgrounds Today (cont'd)

Why We Choose Playgrounds

Question #2: Think of the park playground that you go to the most. Why do you choose that playground to play at? Select all that apply.



Key Findings

- Most respondents indicated that they value playgrounds that are safe and close to home.
- Proximity to other activities was not selected as a top priority (9%).
- Many participants noted that they often visit playgrounds in nearby communities to play (e.g., Comox, Cumberland, Parksville) because they feel safer in those locations and they offer more diverse play experiences and amenities.



Beckton Estate Park. Diverse play equipment, lots of swings, safe, green space.



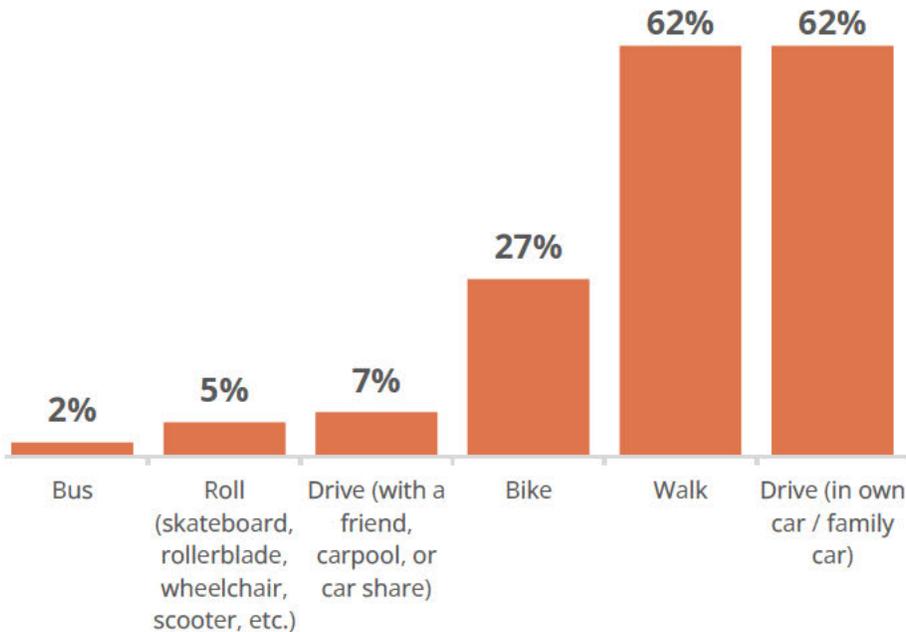
Martin Park. Its the closest playground thats still nice. Woodcote and Bill Moore are quite dated and not as fun to play on.



How We Play - Our Park Playgrounds Today (cont'd)

How We Get to Playgrounds

Question #3: How do you usually get to the park playground that you visit the most? Select all that apply.



Key Findings

- An equal amount of people either walk or drive to the park playground that they visit the most (62% each).
- Walking or driving to the park playground was the most common response with other modes of transportation such as biking garnering only 27%.
- Many noted that they would prefer to walk or bike more often but they are concerned about safety, especially in urban areas.



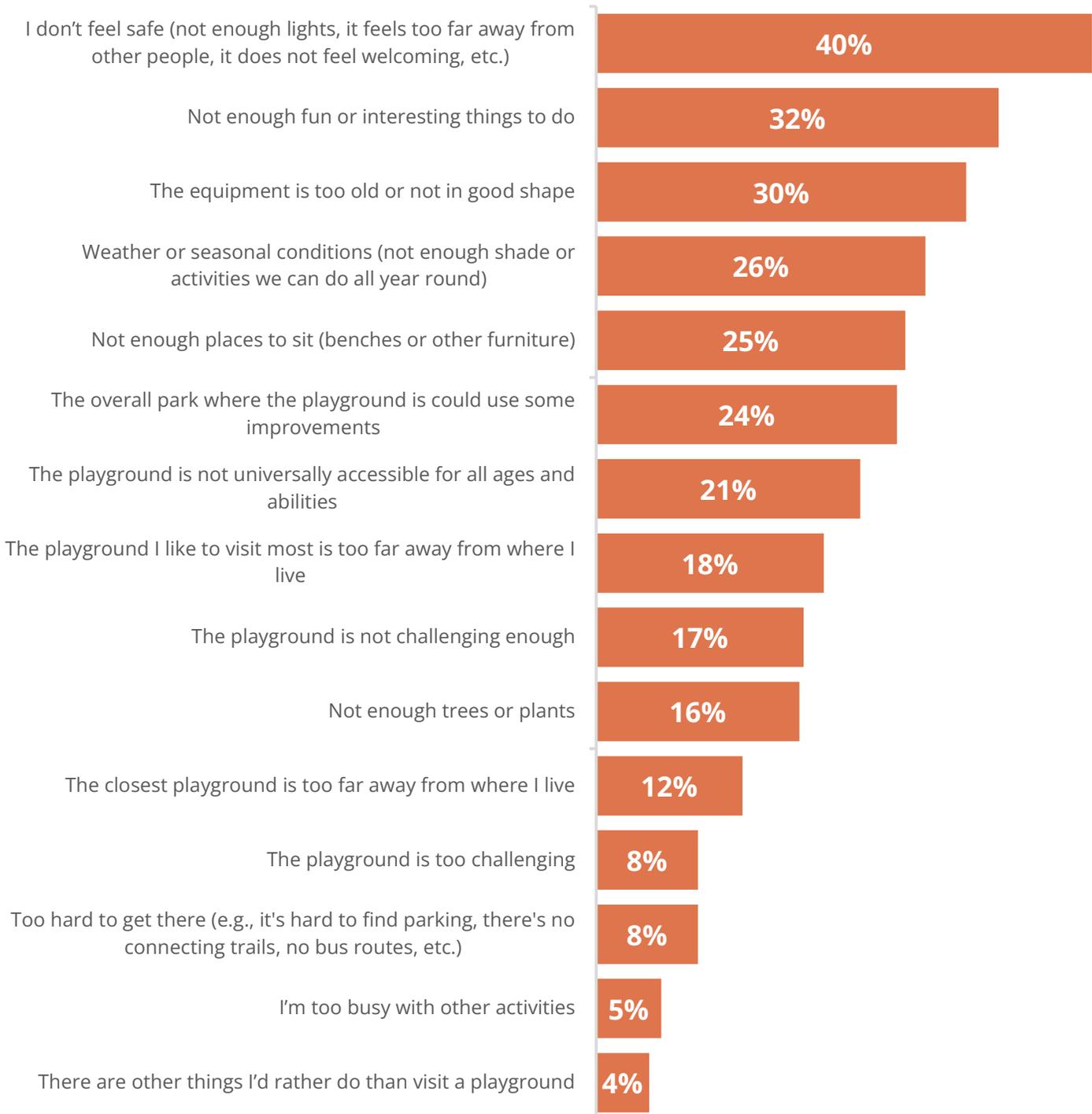
But we want to walk! Please improve walking/stroller safety between Lewis Park and Exhibition Grounds!



How We Play - Our Park Playgrounds Today (cont'd)

Playground Barriers

Question #4: What are some of the things that make it hard for you to enjoy park playgrounds? Select all that apply.



Key Findings

- A broad range of answers were provided, with most respondents indicating that they do not feel safe (40%). Many respondents noted specific concerns about substance use in or near playground areas.
- Not enough fun and interesting things to do (32%) and age / condition of play equipment (30%) were also common answers.
- Other key barriers frequently noted were lack of washrooms and lack of shade or covered areas for all seasons use.



The youth learning sessions included opportunities for children to share their favourite ways to play outside, and design their ideal playground.



Can be difficult to find a playground that everyone wants to visit, e.g., good for all of the kids.



Safety is a huge concern, maintenance with garbage and debris.



Mainly that most playgrounds are based around a single metal play structure. It does not offer many opportunities in wet, cold weather and the design is not accessible... and there are many more design options available nowadays. The fact that most parks are not fenced in with a small barrier can be challenging.



How We Play - Our Park Playgrounds Today (cont'd)

How We Play Outside!

Question #5: Tell us about how you play outside! What do you (or the kids you are with) enjoy doing most when you play outdoors? Adults and big kids, think back to when you were younger. Share a memory of your best outdoor play experience.

Key Findings

- The following themes emerged from the answers received:
 - » Nature Play / Natural Features (boulders, logs, sand/mud play)
 - » Water Play (splash pads / water features, lazy rivers, creeks, fishing)
 - » Active Play Opportunities (climbing walls, slides, swings, monkey bars, hills for climbing and rolling, trampolines)
 - » Games (tag, hide and go seek, grounders)
 - » Free Play (pretend play, imaginative play)
- Respondents shared a broad range of thoughts, ideas, and memories about how they love to play outside, indicating Courtenay's park playgrounds could provide positive experiences for the community by including many different types and ways to play.
- Multiple respondents expressed ideas about socializing and gathering in addition to playing (picnicking, bbq'ing, birthday parties).
- Courtenay loves swings!
- Many respondents expressed concerns about safety and noted that safe play spaces for kids and families are a top priority.



Playgrounds with natural features like logs, rocks, boulders, climbing walls, splash pads that also contain off-season play areas/features. Playgrounds with multi-age features so that big and little kids can play in tandem. Swings for kinesthetic learning and regulation.



Bike to the playground - climb, balance, swing, glide, spin, water park - have a picnic or snack - enjoy the view and explore nature - play in the sand, hike, beachcomb, climb kid-sized boulders and driftwood.



Best memory was when parks were safe. Kids rode bikes to the park... you could feel safe going alone with your child to a park. We don't use parks anymore for this reason.



My kids love risky play, and playgrounds that also have shelters/forts type structures so that the playground play can also turn into more imaginative play.



BIG Ideas - Our Park Playgrounds Tomorrow (cont'd)

Goals Review (Guiding Principles)

Question #7: Take a moment to review the goals below and then give us a thumbs UP if you AGREE with the goal, or a thumbs DOWN if you DON'T AGREE. Tell us why in the space below. To read more about the goals visit www.courtenay.ca/letsplay.



Let's try different ways to play!

Include a range of fun play opportunities.



Everyone can play here!

Design universally accessible play areas that are safe and welcoming for all.



Nature is fun!

Build playgrounds with nature in mind, connecting to the environment around us.



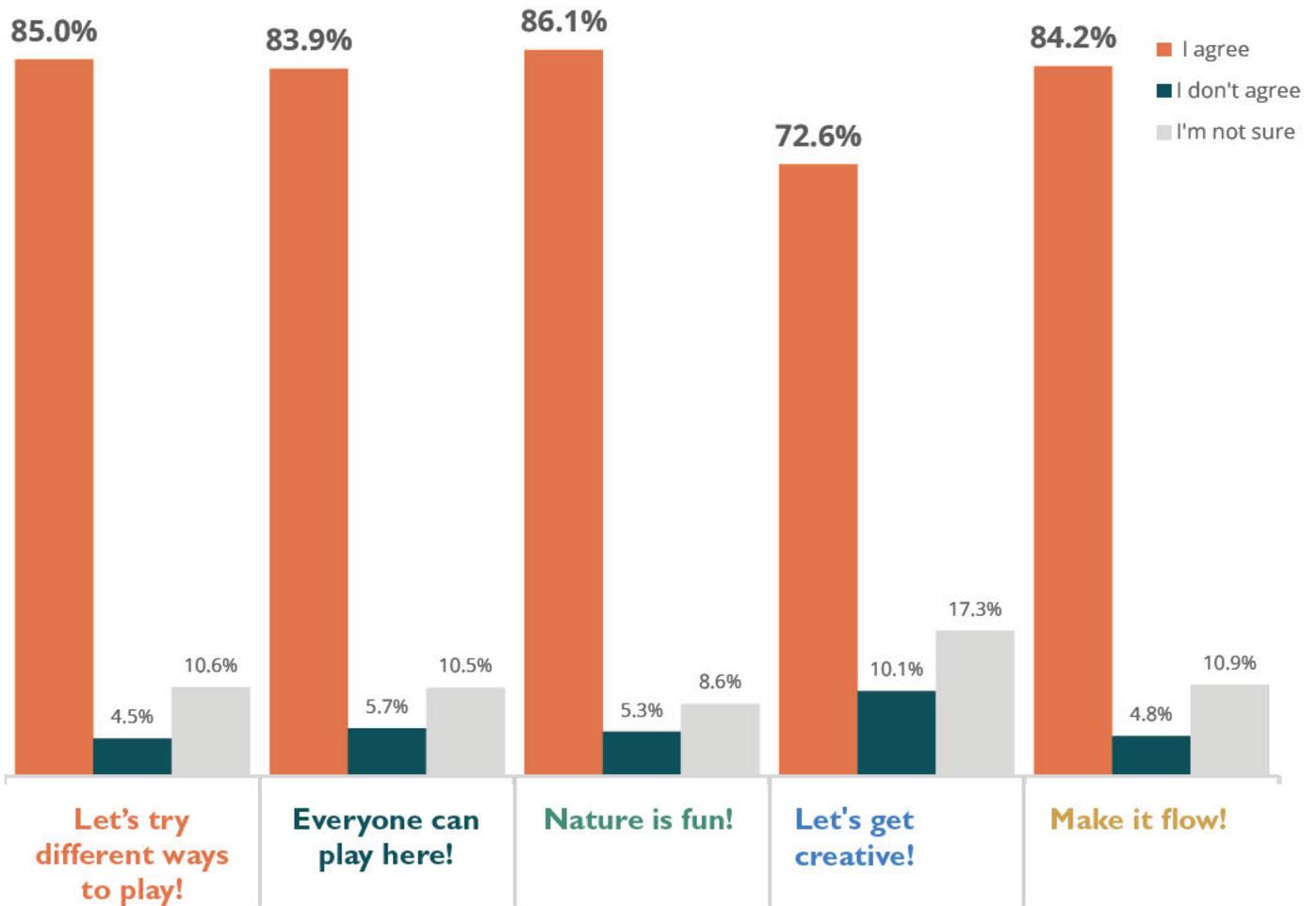
Let's get creative!

Allow for creative play and expressions of arts and culture.



Make it flow!

Connect play areas to the park and surrounding neighbourhood.



Goals Review (Guiding Principles) Continued

Participants were asked to share more about why or why not they agreed or disagreed with the goals as well as share goals that were not listed.

Key Findings

- The goals were strongly supported. Over 70% of respondents agreed with each goal.
- "Nature is Fun" received the most support (86% of respondents agreed).
- Many respondents shared that they would like to see safety emphasized further within the goals or as a separate goal altogether.
- Many respondents supported the idea that playgrounds can act as gathering places, indicating the project goals could be revised to provide a stronger emphasis on community and family gathering.
- Some respondents shared ideas for revising "Everyone can Play Here" including:
 - » Provision of separate spaces for different ages, abilities, and challenges, as well as central spaces where all can plan together.
- Respondents also shared feedback about emphasizing the following ideas as part of the goals:
 - » Ongoing maintenance and upkeep.
 - » Inclusion of supporting amenities like washrooms and seating areas
 - » Fostering all-seasons use
 - » Integrating sensory considerations (e.g., quiet / calming spaces for kids with diverse sensory needs),
 - » Using resilient, locally-sourced materials where possible.



I think all of these goals are equitable. Depending on location some may lean towards one thing than the other. Sandwich Park, my local park, could really lean into the nature theme more considering it borders plenty of forest etc.



It would be nice to include some educational components too - i.e., tie-in to arts/culture or info about the community the park is in, be that history about nature or ancestral indigenous lands.



Playground Experiences

Question #8: What types of experiences would you (or your child / children you know) like to have at a playground? Choose your top FIVE.



Key Findings

- The top playground experience chosen by respondents was, "I like to experience nature" (59%), followed by "I like to be adventurous" (55%), and "I like to gather with friends / family / others" (54%).
- Experiences that received less support included "I like to be competitive / win" (6%), I like to spend time by myself / reflecting (11%), and I like to be creative (14%).
- When asked if there were other types of experiences not listed, respondents commonly answered that they would like to:
 - » Feel safe
 - » Enjoy a strong sense of community

BIG Ideas - Our Park Playgrounds Tomorrow (cont'd)

Playground Inspiration

Question #9: Let's get inspired! Time to put on your playground designer hat! If you were creating a new playground for your neighbourhood, or improving an existing playground, what types of things would you like to include? Choose your FIVE favourite items from the list.

The coloured circles below indicate the percentage of respondents who selected the image as one of their five favourite. **The green circles were the top five most commonly chosen.** Yellow circles indicate images that received moderate support, and red circles show images that received less support.



43%

Splash Pad / Water Play



41%

Inclusive Play Features for All Ages / Abilities



55%

Nature Play Opportunities (planting, sand, rocks, logs)



10%

Creative Play Opportunities (music, art programming, etc.)



42%

Areas for Exploration (willow tunnels, stepping-stone paths through planting, etc.)



28%

Open Lawn Areas (flat areas for running, field games, and picnicking, and hills for climbing and rolling)



17%

Outdoor Games (game tables, ping pong, square ball, etc.)



59% TOP PICK!

New Play Structures (swings, slides, climbing features, etc.)



12%

Areas for Quiet Play (playhouse, area for retreat, etc.)



8%

Exercise / Physical Fitness Stations (for all ages)



31%

New Adventure Pathways (trike loop with speed humps, "crosswalks", etc.)



39%

Other Park / Playground Amenities (washrooms, water fountains, lighting, etc.)



23%

Green Design Elements that Help the Earth (pollinator gardens, stormwater management, recycled materials, permeable surfaces)



2%

Smart Playground Features (wi-fi, app guided experiences, etc.)



30%

Covered Areas (shade structures, picnic shelter, etc.)



13%

New Furnishings and Gathering Spaces (benches, movable furnishings etc.)

BIG Ideas - Our Park Playgrounds Tomorrow (cont'd)

Playground Inspiration Continued...

Key Findings

- From a review of inspiration images, the top 5 elements survey participants would like to include in their ideal playground are:
 - » New Play Structures (59%)
 - » Nature Play Opportunities (55%)
 - » Splash Pad / Water Play (43%)
 - » Areas for Exploration (42%)
 - » Inclusive Play Features for All Ages (41%)
- These answers were also well supported by participants in the kids' Learning Sessions and Interest Group Meetings, along with "Other Park Amenities".
- Less supported playground elements include:
 - » Smart Playground Features (wi-fi, app guided experiences) (2%)
 - » Exercise / Physical Fitness Stations (8%)
 - » Creative Play Opportunities (music, art programming (10%)).



Create playgrounds that feel like a "village square" - lots of focus on community gathering spaces, designing in circles to promote integration and connection, features for all seasons not just summer splash pads. Lots of community gardens that incorporate school/ nonprofit programs, playground structures that are nature-based as much as possible.



Playground ideas like Mission Creek Park playground in Kelowna, or an all abilities playground like Julius Junction in West kelowna. These are great playgrounds really for kids of all ages. With 2 autism kiddos, it hard to find a structure they can both play on with ease and with things they can do safely.



I love natural spaces, but not all kids have the choice about how they can play. Play spaces that are inclusive to all abilities in the entire play area are very important. Otherwise those kids are stuck in one area or on the sideline or they can't go at all. I think natural play spaces can be adjacent to built ones. The MOST important thing about inclusive play is the surfacing. If rubber matting is put beside wood chips it actually makes the matting more dangerous. More spaces that allow for creative and imaginary group play like accessible forts or forts would be amazing, structures or spaces built into the natural landscape or slope would be amazing and support different abilities.



Other Ideas

Question #10: Do you have any other ideas about how we can make the best possible playgrounds in Courtenay's parks?

Commonly mentioned themes from the input questionnaire and engagement events included:



Safety

- Many public engagement participants shared concerns about safety in Courtenay's park playgrounds.
- Safety concerns were mostly related to mental health challenges and evidence of substance use in or near playground areas.
- Public engagement participants also shared safety concerns about the maintenance, upkeep, and condition of some existing play structures within the City.
- Survey respondents indicated that they often bring their children to natural areas outside of the city or visit play areas in other nearby communities where they feel more safe.



We are concerned that most playgrounds and parks are unsafe spaces and have been avoiding our favourite parks. There have been numerous encounters and situations where we have felt unsafe.



A Note About Safety

We received a large number of comments and concerns related to safety in Courtenay's parks and playgrounds, primarily focused on evidence of substance use in playground areas. The City has heard these comments and the creation of safe, welcoming playgrounds will be a key focus of this project moving forward.

Engagement participants also shared feedback about many other important community concerns that are not directly related to playground design standards including:

- » Sheltering in parks
- » Bylaw enforcement
- » Community mental health support



Diverse, Multi-purpose Play Opportunities

- A broad range of play ideas were shared, from roller coasters, to boba stands, to trampolines, to reading huts, indicating support for diverse and different ways to play in Courtenay's playgrounds.
- Many participants noted potential for multi-purpose spaces that could be used in various ways throughout the day or seasons. Examples included splash pads that could become multi-purpose paved spaces in the winter, flexible lawn areas, and multi-sport courts / areas for games.
- Multiple respondents, especially youth, shared ideas about play areas organized in a circuit or loop where you could hop / climb / swing / slide from one "destination" to another.



I think it will be important to provide a diverse array of experiences where certain parks can specialize in certain features. That would then encourage families and other residents to explore more neighbourhoods, as opposed to every park having the same 3-5 play elements or amenities.



Spaces for Community Gathering

- There was strong support for gathering in and around playgrounds and the potential for playgrounds to act as central gathering spaces for community members of all ages to come together.
- Respondents often mentioned opportunities for sharing meals and special occasions at park playgrounds. Ideas included:
 - » Picnic and bbq areas
 - » Spaces for birthday parties or family gatherings
 - » Food trucks or concessions



Group picnic areas are great so that families have an easy and affordable way to host gatherings (like birthday parties, reunions).



Unique to Courtenay

- Respondents noted an opportunity for new and upgraded playgrounds to reflect Courtenay's unique sense of place.
- Special, landmark designs and custom play features could help encourage more positive activity in the City's parks and attract people from within Courtenay as well as the surrounding areas.



There is a huge opportunity here to bring people into our community by creating something that is truly a landmark, a brand for the city... Think big, think drawing people here because we have something special and unorthodox for the kids to engage with.

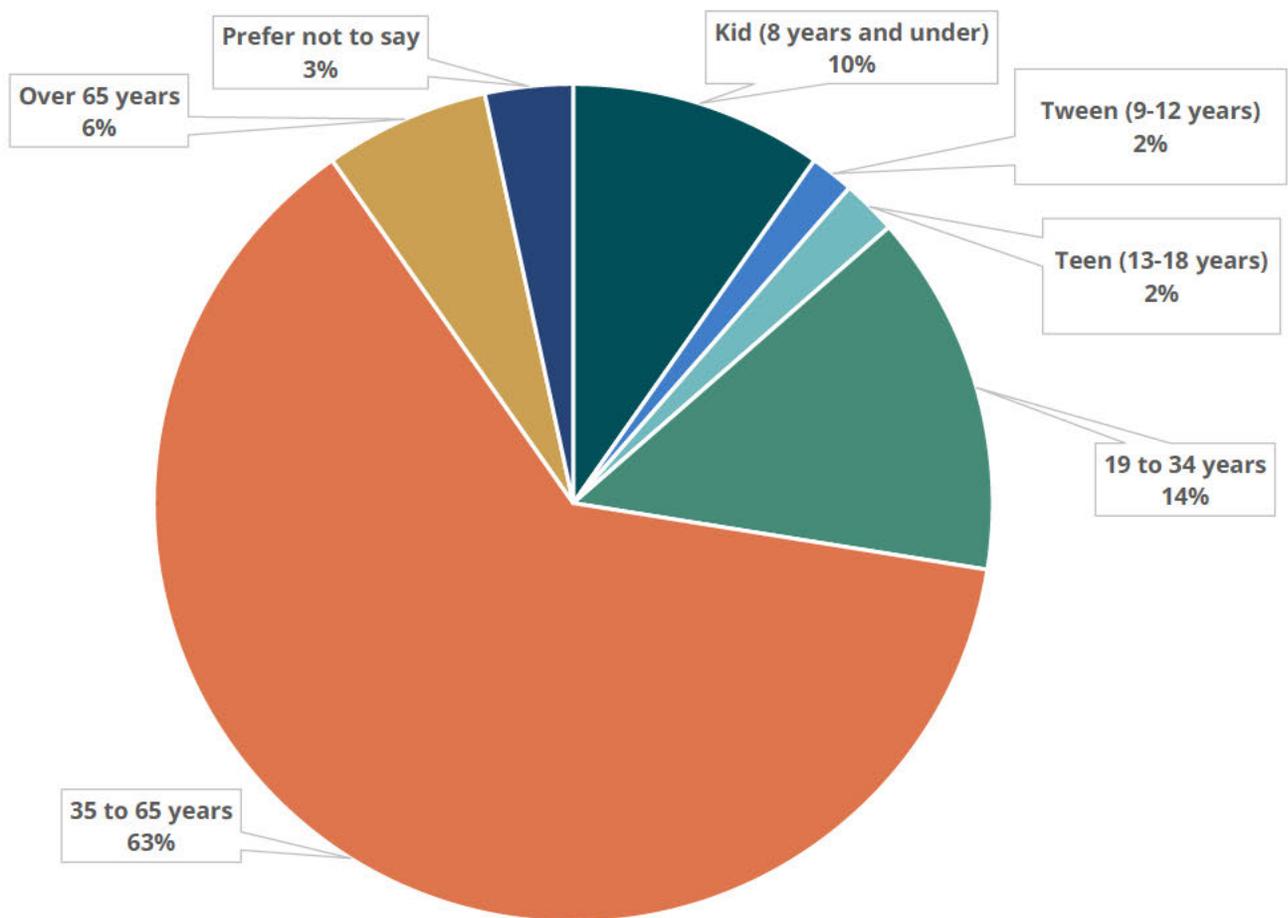


About Participants (Demographics)

Participants were asked to answer some questions to help the City understand who is participating in this survey to make sure we are listening to a range of voices. This section was optional to complete.

Participant Age

Question #11: What is your age

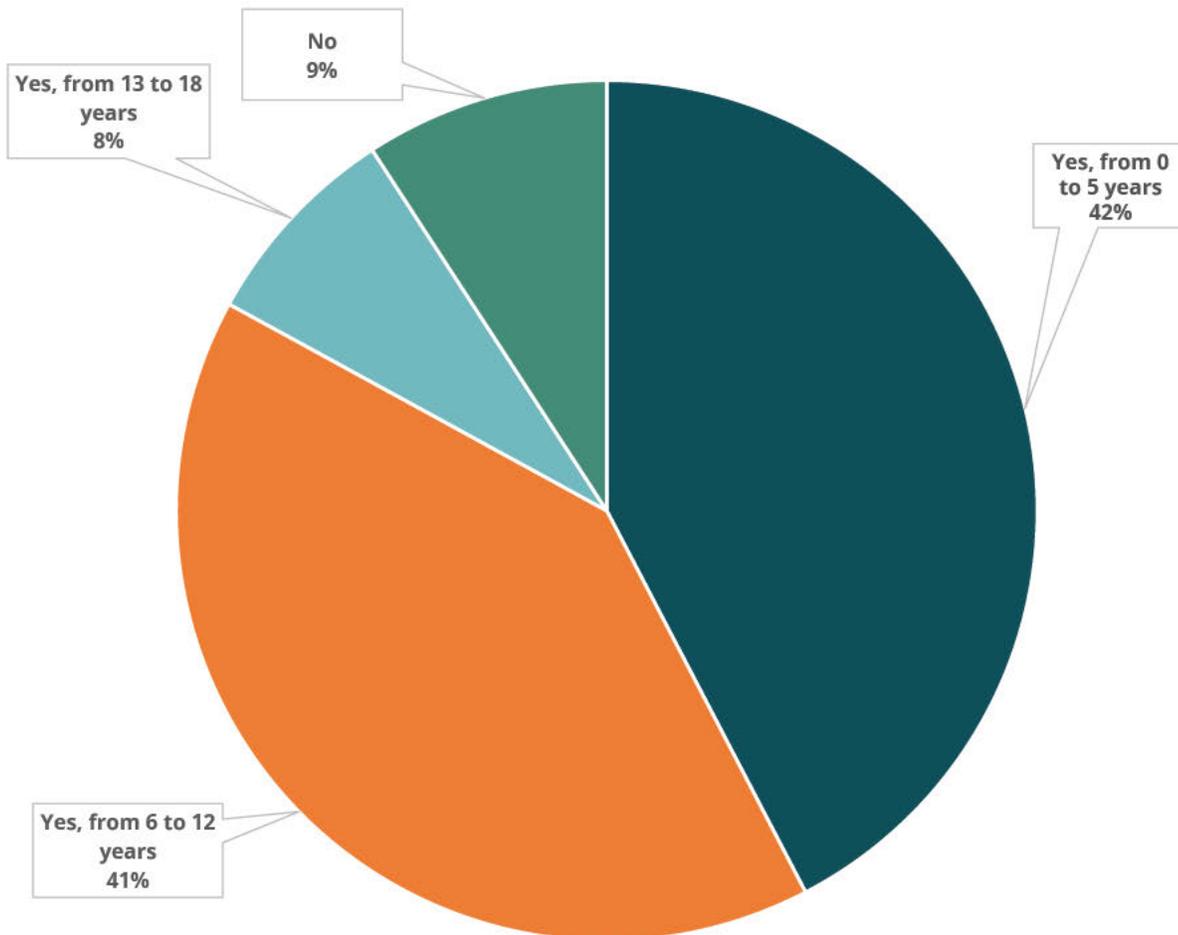


Key Findings

- The majority of survey participants were ages 35 - 65 (63%)
- The fewest survey respondents were in the Tween age group (9-12 years) however 8-12 year olds participated in the in-person learning session to share their ideas and 41% of parents who responded have 6-12 year-olds at home (see following page).

Children & Caregivers

Question #12: If you are an adult, do you either have children under the age of 18 living at home OR do you look after children (e.g., daycare operator, grandparent)?

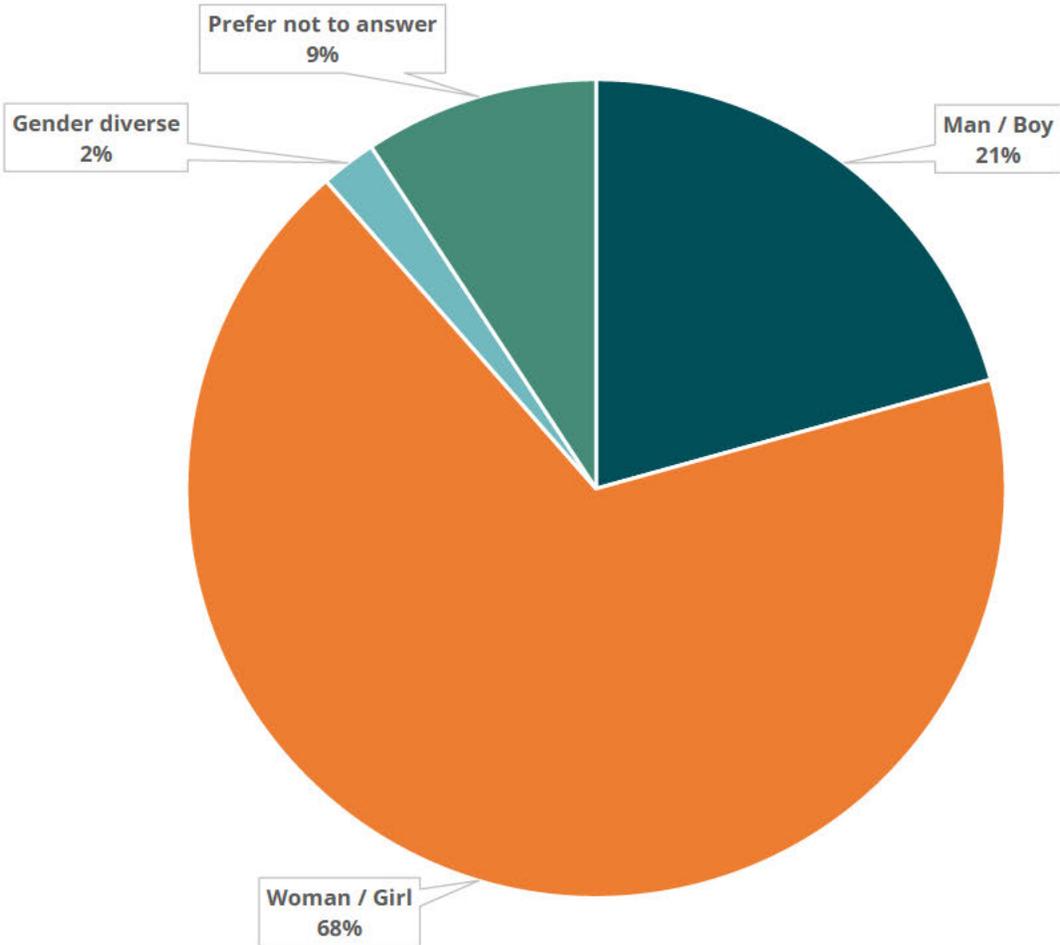


Key Findings

- The majority of respondents (91%) are parents with children under the age of 18 living at home.

Gender Identity

Question #13: Which gender identity do you most identify with?

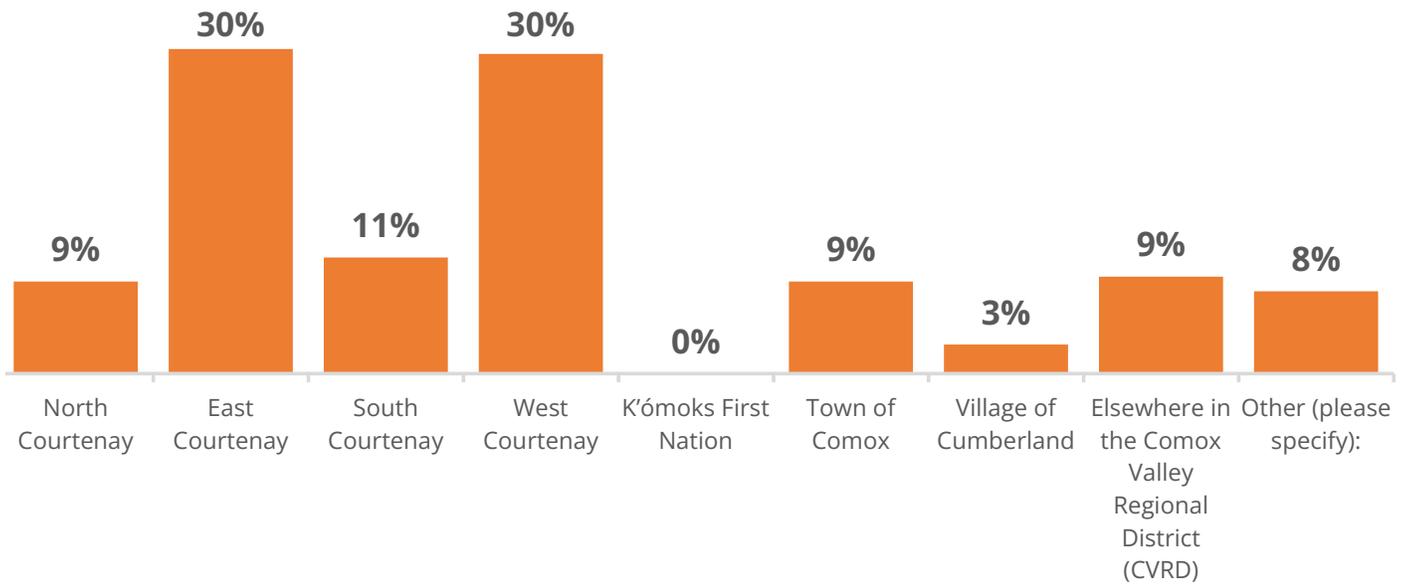


Key Findings

- The majority of respondents identified as female (68%).

Where Participants Live

Question #14: What area do you live in? If you are not sure, you can skip this question.



Key Findings

- Most respondents lived in East Courtenay (30%) or West Courtenay (30%).
- Answers within the "Other" category included Downtown, Union Bay, Black Creek, and Royston.

**Note: Percentages have been rounded up and participants could select "Other" as a response in addition to the rest of the options, which is why results exceed a total of 100%.*



I've seen a few parks with little 'rivers' that kids are intrigued with. With tunnels. -sand play -covered areas by trees or shade sails so play can take place during rainy weather -lots of climbing nets with height. -I saw one in the US which was like a maze, 2 or 3 storeys with ramps, cubbies. Made for a lot of fun for hide and seek with lots of exits. -I did see a free play pop up in Richmond which was supervised. It had branches, wood, hammers and donated items. VERY well used and fun for older kids.





3 | Phase 2 Engagement

The following pages summarize the Phase 2 community engagement process and the feedback received. The Phase 2 process focused on reviewing the draft Park Playground Design Standards document and welcoming ideas for potential refinements.

This section includes the following information:

- Phase 2 Outreach Tools
- Who We Engaged
- Phase 2 Engagement Activities
- What We Heard
 - » Draft Vision Statement
 - » Draft Guiding Principles
 - » Draft Park Playground Design Standards
 - » Other Ideas
 - » Woodcote Park Playground Replacement

3.3 Phase 2 Engagement Activities



Community Feedback Form

DATES	June 20, 2024 - July 12, 2024
LOCATION	Online at www.courtenay.ca/letsplay Hard copy versions in person at City Hall
DETAILS	A community feedback form was available online linked from the City's project page. Hard copies were also available at City Hall, the Lewis Centre, and upon request. The purpose of the feedback form was to refine and finalize the draft Park Playground Design Standards based on community input. Key questions included gathering thoughts about the draft vision statement, guiding principles, nine design standards, and additional ideas. The feedback form also included an optional question about the Woodcote Park playground replacement project. All input was reviewed and considered to refine the draft Park Playground Design Standards for Council review.

Phase 2 By the Numbers

1

Written Feedback Form
Response

81

Online Feedback Form
Responses

796

Clicks on Google Ads

1,110

Project Webpage Users

3.4 What We Heard

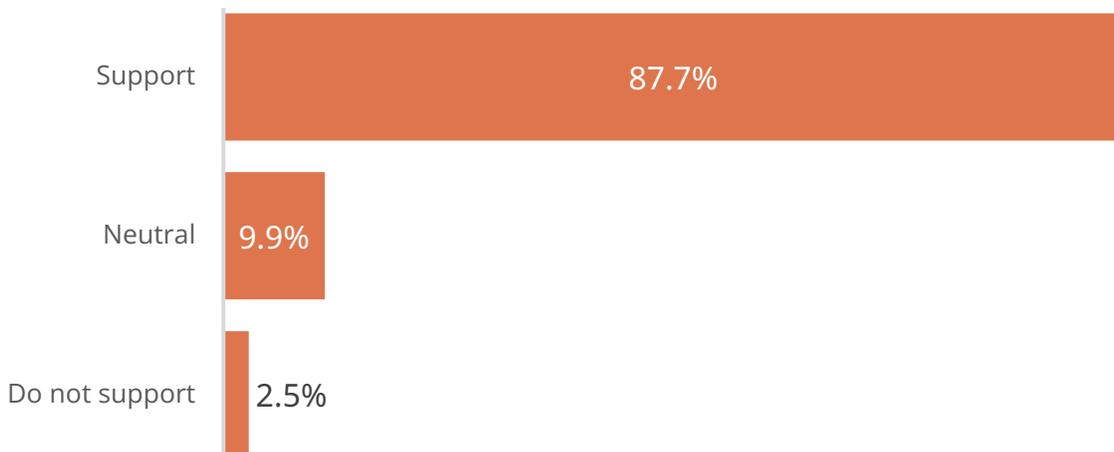
The graphs on the following pages summarize the input received from the community feedback form, including insights that might be considered for draft Park Playground Design Standards refinement.

Draft Vision Statement

Question #1: Participants were asked to review the draft vision statement for Courtenay's park playgrounds and indicate whether they support the vision, are neutral, or do not support.

Our City's park playgrounds are safe, fun, and inclusive places, where community members of all ages and abilities can gather, socialize, and play. Well-connected by paths and trails, playgrounds are centers of activity in Courtenay's parks – inviting and comfortable to enjoy all year long.

The playground system will offer a diverse range of innovative and exciting play opportunities, allowing everybody to challenge their abilities, stimulate their curiosity, and foster exploration and imagination. Each park playground will provide a different experience, all while celebrating Courtenay's unique identity and sense of place.

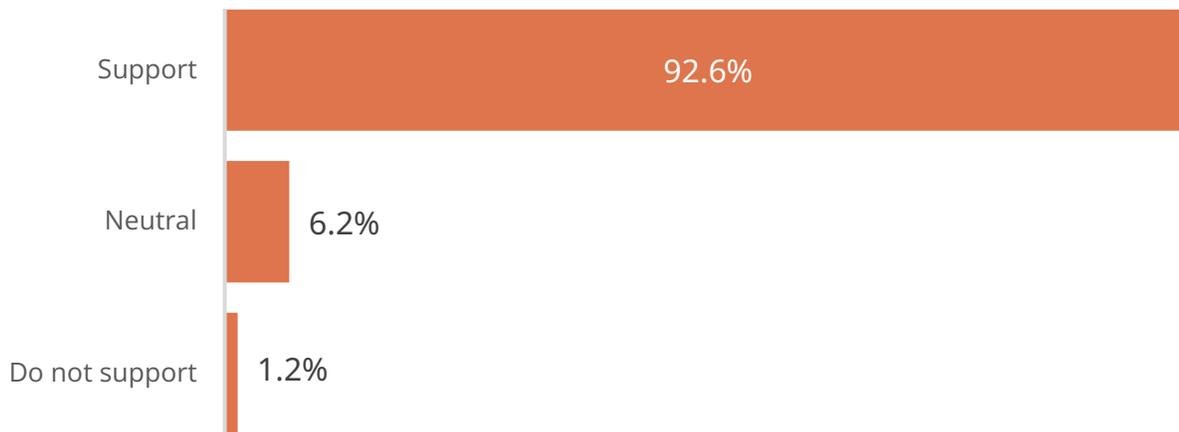


Key Findings

- Most respondents indicated that they support the draft vision statement with 87.7% of participants supporting it.
- A small number (2.5%) of participants do not support the vision while 9.9% were neutral.

Draft Guiding Principles

Question #2: Participants were asked to review the draft Guiding Principles that reflect the community priorities shared in Phase 1 and indicate whether they support the principles, are neutral, or do not support.

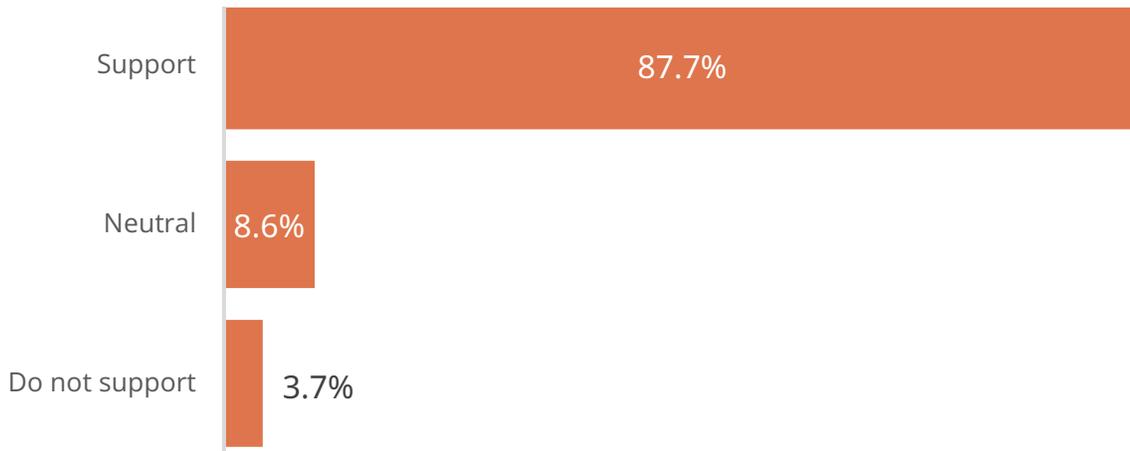


Key Findings

- The majority of participants support the draft park playground guiding principles with 92.6% support.
- Only 1.2% do not support the guiding principles and 6.2% remain neutral.

Draft Park Playground Design Standards

Question #3: Participants were asked to review the nine (9) design standard areas for designers, builders, and staff to consider when renewing or building new playgrounds and indicate whether they are supportive, neutral, or don't support the standards.



Key Findings

- The majority of participants support the draft park playground design standards with 87.7% support.
- Only 3.7% do not support the design standards and 8.6% remain neutral.

Other Ideas

Question #4: Participants were asked to provide additional feedback. Commonly mentioned themes included:



Safety

- Many public engagement participants shared concerns about safety in Courtenay's park playgrounds.
- Safety concerns were mostly related to evidence of substance use in or near playground areas.
- Survey respondents indicated that they often bring their children to natural areas outside of the city or visit play areas in other nearby communities where they feel more safe.

A Note About Safety

The City is focused on creating safe, activated playground spaces for our community. To address the safety concerns previously voiced by the community during Phase 1, the Guiding Principle *Safety and Comfort are Key* was added (see pg, 21 of the PPDS document).

The Park Playground Design Standards document features a range of measures to encourage safe and activated park playgrounds including provision of community/recreational programming, increased opportunities for safe garbage disposal (sharps bins on an as-needed basis), integration of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in site planning, lighting, and other placemaking elements.

In Phase 2, engagement participants also shared feedback about many other important community concerns that are not directly related to playground design standards including:

- » Sheltering in parks
- » Evidence of substance-use on City trails and pathways.



Please have the parks well lit at night to discourage unsavoury activities from occurring.



I do not feel safe in our parks due to drug related activities that happen there. I drive my grandchildren to parks in other communities where it is safer. The most important and first priority needs to be making the parks a safe place to bring children to.





Shade

- Many public engagement participants shared ideas about increasing shade in park playgrounds, including both shade trees and shade structures.
- Some participants indicated that shade trees do not always provide enough shade over playground areas. In full sun, playground elements can become very hot, leading to safety hazards and thermal discomfort.



My problem with playgrounds is that even if there are shade trees there is rarely shade on the actual play structure. Structure elements get hot to the touch in the summer sun and my kids get burnt, hot and sunstroke while playing. I'd love to see a playground where play elements are amongst trees - almost intertwined - allowing for shade cover where children are actually playing as well as a feeling of being in nature while on the structure...



Fencing

- Multiple respondents provided feedback that they would like more fully-fenced playgrounds in Courtenay's parks.
- Parents of younger children and children with Autism and sensory processing disorders expressed concerns about their children bolting or running away from unfenced playground areas.
- Participants also shared ideas about providing fully-fenced playground areas in close proximity to busy roads.



I think it is important to have more fully fenced parks as many are within close proximity to busy roadways/parking lots or bodies of water.



Swings

- Several community engagement participants indicated that they would like to see more swings and different types of swings in Courtenay's playgrounds



Really need more swings. You could incorporate inclusive swings like mommy and me swings, and swings with seat belts like they have in Parksville.



Woodcote Park Playground Replacement

Question #4: The City is testing the Park Playground Design Standards in an upcoming playground replacement project at Woodcote Park. As an optional question, participants were asked if there is anything else the City should consider for the Woodcote Park Playground replacement project that was not covered in the playground standards?

The following ideas were commonly noted:

- Fences and gates to provide barriers between the playground and the surrounding streets
- Swings for all ages and abilities
- Water play opportunities (e.g., splash pad)
- Spaces for food trucks or kiosks
- Play opportunities for a wide range of ages (i.e. structures for older kids / 5-12 years in addition to 3-5 years).
- Rubber play surfacing
- More benches and gathering spaces
- Lighting
- Shade trees or structures



The existing playground at Woodcote Park



The road access from that park is so dangerous I can't go there with my two small kids. The exits by the playground are in different areas so with two toddlers you can't make sure they won't get out. Please improve this. Have gates, and set playground further from roads so parents can see multiple children at once. Thank you, we're really excited for this upgrade.

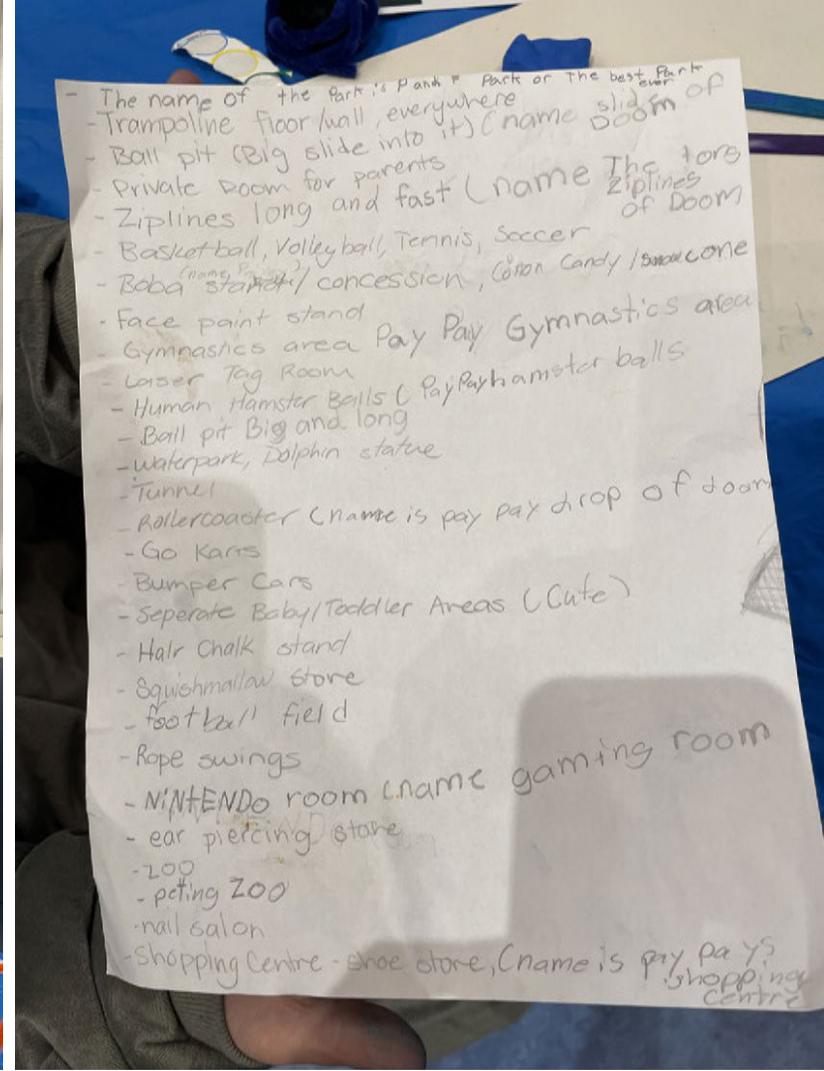


Wonder if this route is part of BC Transit's existing infrastructure? If not, bus access is key. More shaded areas, more seating, a water feature like a splash park and space for food trucks/ice cream stands (permanent structure like a concession would be awesome!)



I've asked my children ages 8 and 4 about their favourite playground equipment. Their wish list includes, sea-saws, merry go rounds, zip lines, big kid and little kid swings, slide and monkey bars. This is my children's closest playground and they are extremely excited to get an upgrade!







4 | Next Steps

Following are the next steps in the project process:

- Refinement and finalization of the Park Playground Design Standards
- Presentation of the final Park Playground Design Standards to Council
- Continued updates posted to the Project webpage: www.courtenay.ca/letsplay
- Future park playground improvements (starting with Woodcote Park).

The final Park Playground Design Standards will support capital planning efforts by identifying guiding principles, best practices, and design standards for future playground improvements that diversify play experiences and best meet the needs of the community.



What We Heard Appendix A:

The following pages contain the community input received during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the engagement process, including:

- Interest Group Meetings:
 - » Community Interest Group Online Meeting
 - » City of Courtenay Staff Workshop
- Kids' Learning Sessions (ages 8-12 and 3-5)
- Graphic Facilitation from kids' Learning Sessions
- Written Submissions (Phase 1 and Phase 2)
- Drawing Contest Entries (Public and City Staff Kids)

Interest Group Meeting

Activity #1: Introductions & Visioning



What to do: Please introduce yourself and the organization you represent (if applicable). Then share ONE WORD that describes your idea of a great playground experience. Think about your priorities as well as what matters most to your children or children you know.

1. Name
2. Organization
3. One word

1. Nikki Holokamp
2. CVCDA
3. Inclusivity

1. Alan Douglas
2. School District, Courtenay Rec Board Member, PR Advisory Committee
3. Laughter

Nancy Clemanis
Island Health
FUN!

Activity #2: Goals / Guiding Principles Review



What to do: Do you feel the draft Goals (Guiding Principles) are a good fit for Courtenay's playgrounds? Why or why not? Are there other goals you can think of that you would like to share?



Let's try different ways to play!



Everyone can play here!



Nature is fun!



Let's get creative!



Make it flow!

Parksville Community Park

accessibility vs. inclusivity. what does that actually mean in terms of entire space being accessible and inclusive

Rotary park at airpark in Courtenay is a great example of inclusivity. surfacing is working well

Valley View playground is supposed to be accessible but only one feature is. Inclusive for everyone not just bits and pieces of it

Airpark location is great to watch planes / overall location / proximity to beach. Interaction within community space

Maffeo Sutton Park

built up wall all around is a barrier for mobility challenges. Sand surfacing or wood chips to navigate across and that makes it really difficult. Airpark is well done.

climate change impacts on health. How can we address climate change impacts with playground design

trees for shade and comfort - slides are too hot. How can we be strategic about removing and replacing vegetation

locating play spaces adjacent to natural areas to allow for adjacencies.

How can we make parks function for multiple uses? How can we hold water and manage it appropriately. Reducing impermeable surfaces

places for programming / pop up in parks. making sure spaces are complementary for a wider range of activities

access to park washrooms, especially for young families

hereford park - so many children interacting with nature. Sticks and rocks and loose parts. You don't always need swings and slides to keep kids interested. They really love to interact with nature

Other goals? Write them here:

Interest Group Meeting

Activity #3: Playing Today



What to do: Let's think about our playgrounds today. Can you think of any barriers or issues that limit use of playgrounds or positive experiences in our playgrounds?

unsheltered / unsheltered people are posing some risks for people

looking for hazards (needles / glass) in sand. Broken glass in playgrounds. Likely a barrier for others

not as many play spaces that focus on a wide range of age groups (older and younger kids can safely play). Incorporate activities for a wide range of age

materials don't always work well in our climate (wet, mucky)

accessibility: pathways and surface materials - sand, gravel, woodchips are a barrier for use

not as many parks that incorporate areas for quiet play, dramatic play - not a wide enough range of play experiences

Connectivity to the wider community - is it easy for folks to walk or stroll there. Ensuring interconnectedness to the wider community (crosswalks, pedestrian safety)

inadequate lighting

BIG Ideas for Our Park Playgrounds Tomorrow

What ideas below are you most excited about?



Splash Pad / Water Play



Inclusive Play Features for All Ages / Abilities



Nature Play Opportunities (plantings, sand, rocks, logs)



Creative Play Opportunities (music, art, programming, artistic play elements)



Areas for Exploration (e.g., willow tunnels, stepping-stone paths through planting)



Open Lawn Areas (flat areas for field games and picnicking, hills for climbing and rolling)



Outdoor Games (e.g., game tables, ping pong, square ball)



New Play Structures (e.g., swings, slides, climbing features, etc.)



Areas for Quiet Play (e.g., playhouse, area for thinking, reflecting, chatting)



Exercise / Physical Fitness Stations (for all ages)



New Adventure Pathways (trike loop with speed humps, "crosswalks", etc.)



New Park Amenities (washrooms, water fountain, lighting)



Smart Playground Features (Wi-Fi, app guided experiences, etc.)



Green Design Elements that Help the Earth (e.g., pollinator gardens, stormwater gardens, recycled materials)



Covered Areas (shade structures, picnic shelter, etc.)



New Furnishings and Gathering Spaces (benches, movable furnishings etc.)

Use the stickers to choose your top 3 favourite ideas for an outdoor play space. You can share your own ideas too!



Let's Get Inspired!

There are SO MANY things that can be included in an outdoor play area — the items here are just a FEW ideas.

- First, have a look at the ideas on the left. What ideas are you most excited about?
- Place a sticker next to the pictures you like the most and make you the most excited. Choose your top 3!

Other Ideas?

We want to hear YOUR ideas for how we can make our outdoor play spaces in Courtenay the best for everyone (families or even your adults or grandparents!)

Get ready for the next activity to design your own outdoor play space!

Interest Group Meeting

Activity #3: Ideas for the Future



? **What to do:** Think back to when you were a kid. What did you enjoy doing most when you played outside? Where did you play? What kinds of activities did you do? Let's get inspired by some images then we'll brainstorm ideas for fun and inclusive outdoor play experiences. We will capture ideas on the online whiteboard. Feel free to type, draw your ideas, or use photos or graphics. If you prefer, you can share your ideas verbally and we will capture them on the whiteboard. You can also share examples you've seen in other communities that you feel are successful.

The school district has schools located in neighborhoods - share standards with School District. This is what we are thinking about doing in City's Parks - could this be of use for planning your playground. Cumberland, Comox, and Courtenay could share vs. separate ideas

playing in natural spaces - incorporating natural play spaces adjacent to playgrounds. Not overlapping surfaces (i.e. woodchips not being next to rubber surfacing because they spill over and make places less accessible).

how do we make parks function in a way that is similar to how we use and enjoy our backyard spaces - bbq's, cook dinner, amenities to support more diverse use in parks. What are some of the other amenities and features families might be looking for (considering dense neighbourhoods multi / family housing)

simple additions like logs - visiting, gathering,

what does the space look like in the fall when it's raining

seasonality of spaces. Making sure that playgrounds can be used in all seasons. Sledding - don't put the parking lot at the bottom of a sledding hill

grants to support funding for rubber surfacing. VI grant funding for recycled tire surfacing

Area near Superstore - apartments and dense areas, where will they play?

Amenity contributions opportunities

garbage cans - they need to be accessible to keep parks clean and safe as well.

build with the existing context (slide example). Can present cost savings and overlapping play opportunities and safer access for parents and kids

safety surfacing for seniors areas. Non permeable surfacing - design for integrated stormwater management

Opportunities for grant funding partnerships - letters of support from Island Health or School Districts

Opportunities within the design of multifamily developments to accommodate play and gathering (rooftops, gathering spaces, community gardens getting to know your neighbours). How do we make those spaces inviting to get to know neighbours

working with grading / groundplane to build hills and mounds and opportunities for play (aspen grove in comox). Hereford Hill no playstructure but huge hill that gets used. Ropes or slides built into natural topography already

Wrap-Up

City Staff Workshop

Activity #1: Introductions & Visioning



What to do: Please introduce yourself and the department you represent. Then share ONE WORD that describes your idea of a great playground experience. Think about your priorities as well as what matters most to your children or children you know.

<p>Name Department One word</p>	<p>Susie, RCCS, Variety</p>	<p>Mike Keams, Manager of Parks Services Options for Multiple Age Groups</p>	<p>Shane, parks supervisor urban forestry & natural areas - Risk</p>
<p>Curtis Moussou, Engineering Services Safety</p>	<p>Kathy, Manager of Recreation and Programs Inclusivity - youth and gathering spots</p>	<p>Alexis, Supervised Children and Youth Programming Accessible</p>	<p>Adam Pitcher Manager of Capital Projects - Something for Adults</p>
			<p>Marlanna Wade Development services - Use of recycled and natural materials , olympic plaza in whistler opportunities for interaction</p>
			<p>Joy Manager of Business Admin. Intergenerational Opportunities or included in overall park design</p>

Activity #2: Goals / Guiding Principles Review



What to do: Do you feel the draft Goals (Guiding Principles) are a good fit for Courtenay's playgrounds? Why or why not? Are there other goals you can think of that you would like to share?



Let's try different ways to play!



Everyone can play here!



Nature is fun!



Let's get creative!



Make it flow!

Expand to include gathering spots for everybody to recreate or socialize for health and well being

support for integrating nature play (logs, balancing - Miracle Beach Park. Integrating natural surroundings - changing, opportunities for risk.

Something unique to Courtenay that is a destination for people that highlights what Courtenay is all about.

Opportunities to improve connectivity (busy roads, roads without sidewalks, really hilly). Pedestrian connectivity (still drive to most parks).

Other goals?
Write them here:

What are the maintenance considerations?
What are the life cycle considerations

All seasons use (rainy day places)

how different spaces flow together and are visible. Connections between elements of a park and park setting (visibility and comfort, both for kids, parents, and all. How the playground influences how the entire park is experienced

shade structures closer to playgrounds as we experience hotter, dryer summers.

City Staff Workshop

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Budget is a barrier to infrastructure improvements. no current budget for placemaking strategies. Look at whole park vs. just playgrounds

Parks within floodplains - with climate change and rising sea levels the flooding we experience will be increasing

Campbell River Pumptrack - Provincial Campsite - Kin Beach Cumberland Civic Park

Access to washrooms, water fountains,

Nowhere to sit and stay

Urban issues / use - some community members are reluctant to visit City playgrounds / play spaces

lighting (especially in winter months where it gets dark at 4)

Shade or cover from rain

places that encourage large mobile play - places to ride bikes (pumptrack)

Rotary Club contributing to paving existing pump track (Cumberland) for accessibility

surfacing choices - poured in place rubber are more accessible to wheelchairs (another common comment from community). Better than engineered wood fibre, sand - Rotary Sky Park is preferred

more diversity within our playground inventory (more choices, more ages, different types, to choose from)

more water play

more multi-sport courts

City Staff Workshop

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Gathering of people indicate success - activating park spaces in a way that makes people feel welcome and space

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City of Courtenay courtenay.ca/letsplay

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30 minutes

Lowie Park - could be improved but serves a great range of ages, nice variety. Range of amenities surrounding

bigger play structures with elements that could be use different ways - some of the 'log' like play structures from the 90s

Mix of age appropriate play elements - allows you to "grow" within the park

as a tween: Somewhere I could get to by bike - stop at the store to grab snacks - play in a wading pool get out and hang out in the park - there all day

limitations: playground budget and placemaking budget (lack of); and the playground is just one part of the park, so need to look at overall park and park plan (and budget); more than the playground that makes the experience.

Options - play tennis then go play on a swing

Rotary Sky Park good for multi-ages

neighbourhood playgrounds that may just have swings, but can be accessible to a variety of ages vs play structures more geared to 'younger' ages

meeting friends / family friends at the playground and spending time there

access to food / snacks / drinks

multi sport surfaces for informal games

embrace the seasons - could a space be used differently in the winter than the summer (outdoor rinks)

Shipyard - north van: water park in the middle of the food court on the wharf

accessible park in nanaimo (maffeo park?)

Million Dollar Playgrounds in Vancouver-VancouverMom.ca

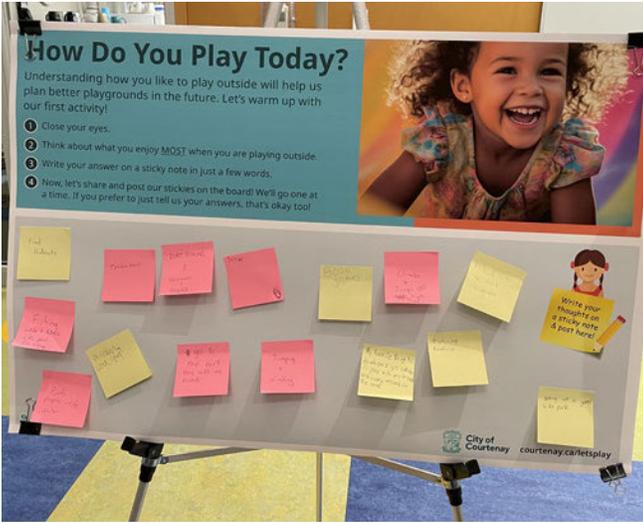
Indoor/covered options

School district collab

Youth Learning Sessions



Youth Learning Sessions



Children ages 8 to 12 in the Youth Learning Session wrote comments about how they play today.



Children ages 3 to 5 also shared their comments about what they most enjoy when playing outside. The facilitator captured these comments on the poster board.



Children ages 8 to 12 in the Youth Learning Session placed stickers on the images of playground elements that they liked the best.



Children ages 3 to 5 placed stickers on the images of playground elements that they liked the best.

Community Feedback



Large-scale posters were posted in the Lewis Centre during the engagement window for community members to leave their feedback

Graphic Facilitation



Graphics highlighting feedback heard about kids' dream play areas during the Learning Session for 8-12 year-olds.

Graphic Facilitation



Graphics highlighting feedback heard about kids' favourite ways to play during the Learning Session for 8-12 year-olds.

Graphic Facilitation



Graphics highlighting feedback heard on the project goals during the Learning Session for 8-12 year-olds.

Written Submissions

Phase 1: Gathering Ideas

Hi

I had some pretty specific feedback and images I wanted to share with your for the park consultation.

I am originally from the UK and was involved in the team that redeveloped a city park called The Level in Brighton, UK. You should check out some images. There is also a park called Blakers Park which was redesigned in a similar way: [Second playground revamp starts – Brighton and Hove News](#)



Second playground revamp starts

The second playground revamp in the city's £3million overhaul of park play equipment is set to begin next week....

The playground spaces in the UK are more exploratory and exciting than any park I have visited here.

One thing I would love to see in the Valley is a nod to the way we use our natural spaces for recreation. It would be amazing to have a playground in the forest. Check out Moors Valley Country Park in the UK for some inspiration. This is such an incredibly creative playful space that adults and children enjoy.

Written Submissions

Phase 1: Gathering Ideas



Written Submissions

Phase 1: Gathering Ideas

Good day.

I am a father, coach, sports enthusiast, member of Masters soccer club and a retired Search and Rescue Technician that definitely knows how to play.

I have played on many great playgrounds around BC with the kids over the years and consider myself connected to what is fun.

One thing for sure is that a zip line should be the centre piece of this new playground. There are numerous other gems like a bouldering pillar and much more. Kids of all ages including adults should be able to enjoy it. There are so many examples in many hip towns around BC and beyond of playgrounds that work. We do not need to reinvent the wheel or waste money on something that really does not challenge, excite or get the kids active.

I myself have a climbing wall up the side of my house on Dike rd to challenge local kids supervised of courses, but there are much safer options for the public.

Hi there,

My son wanted to send this drawing of his for ideas for the new playground.

He forgot to include a water play trough, but we've added a picture and a video of the in-ground trampoline.

Elevated temperature trees platforms and ramps that go up through and around the trees.

Places for natural shade

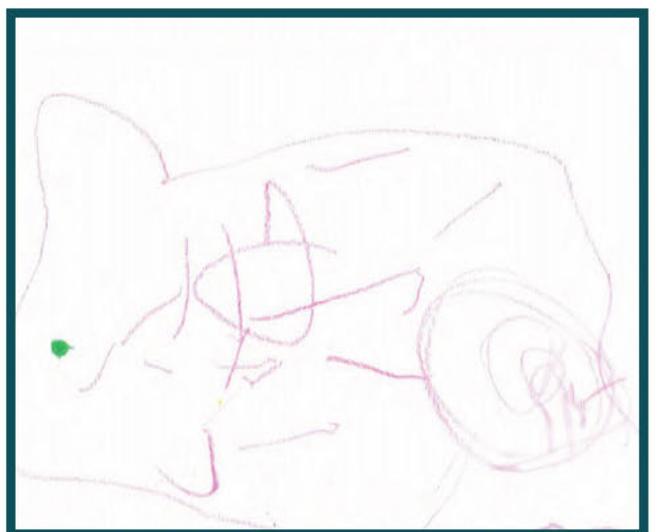
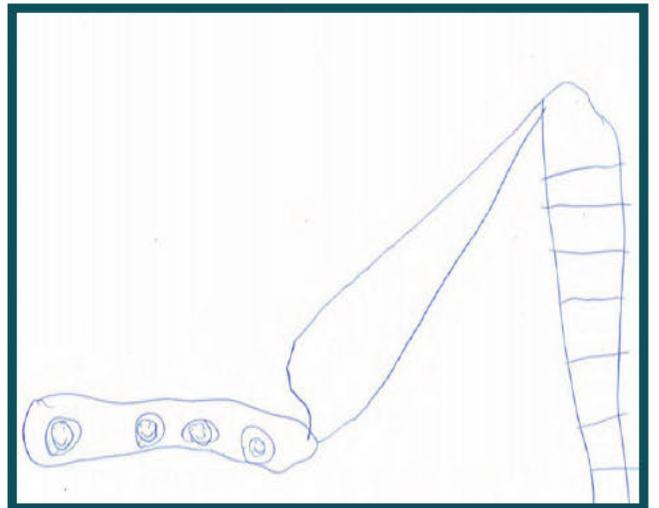
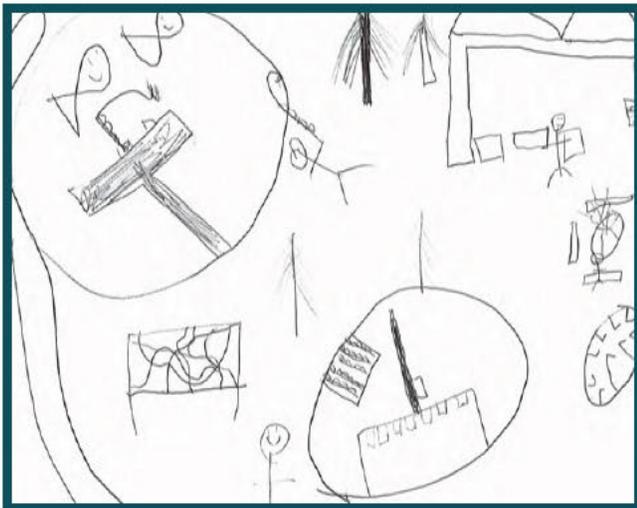
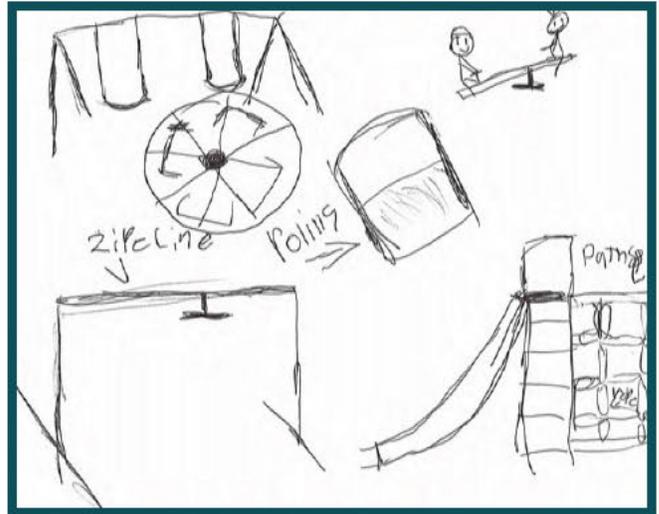
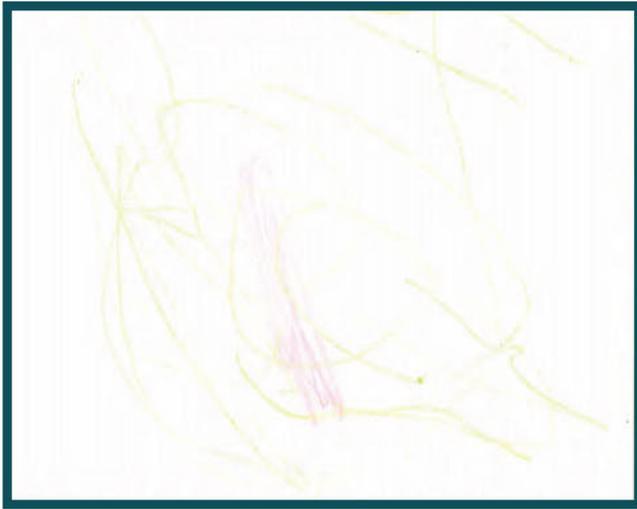
Inspiration Parks.

Terra Nova Play Environment in Richmond BC

Waterfront Park, Whitianga, New Zealand

Thanks!

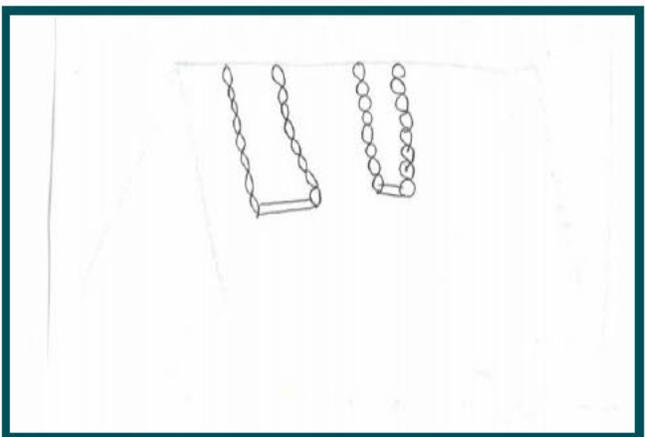
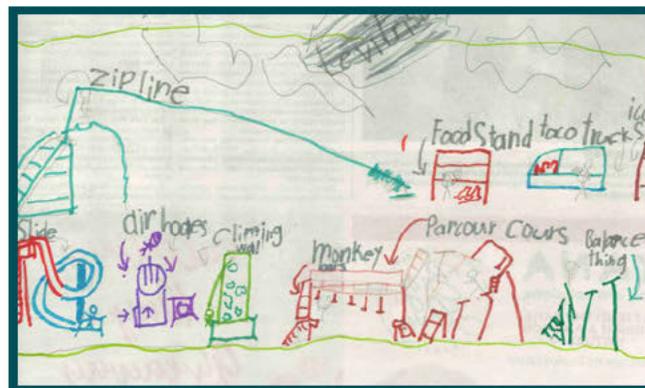
Drawing Contest Entries - Public



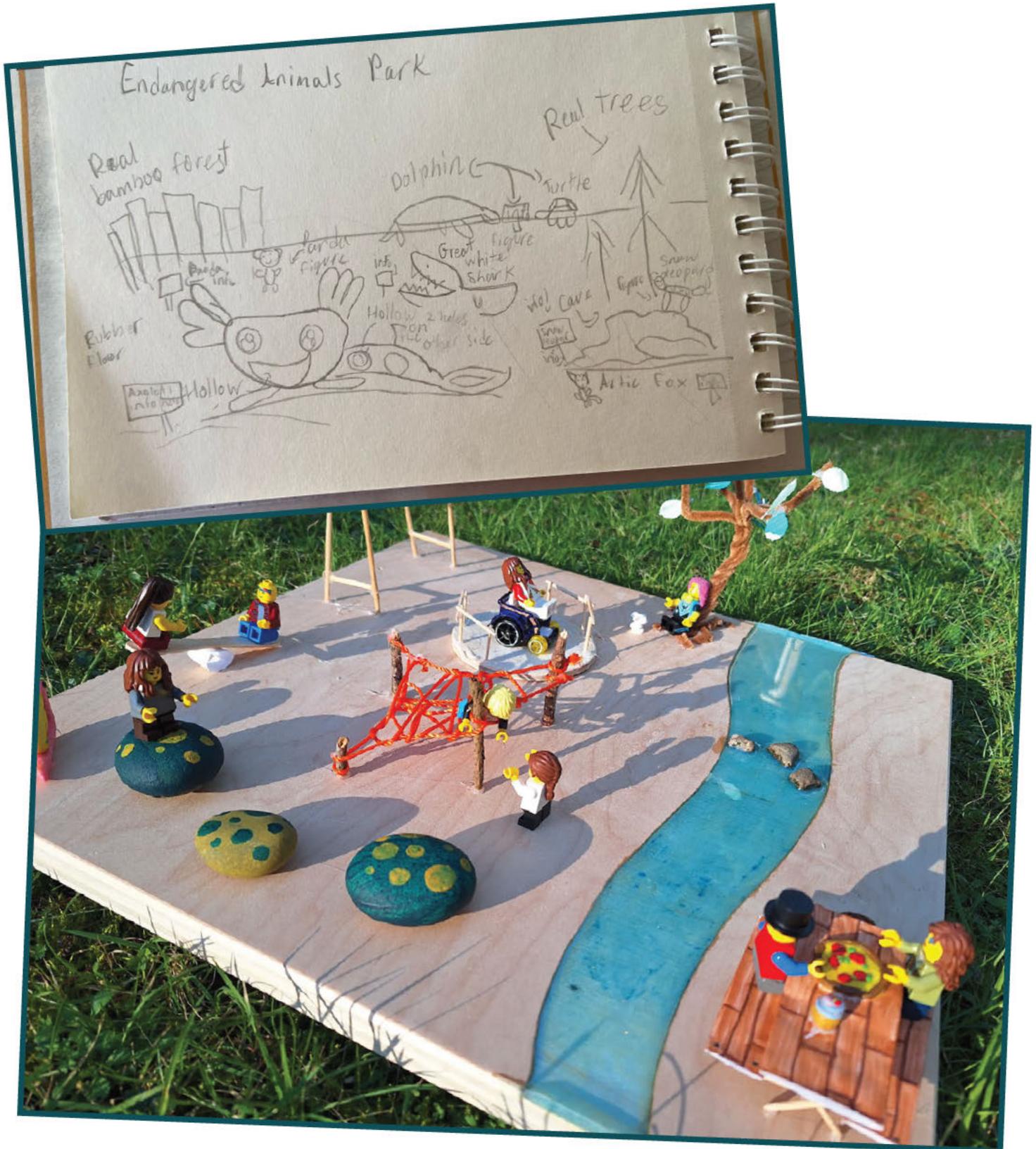
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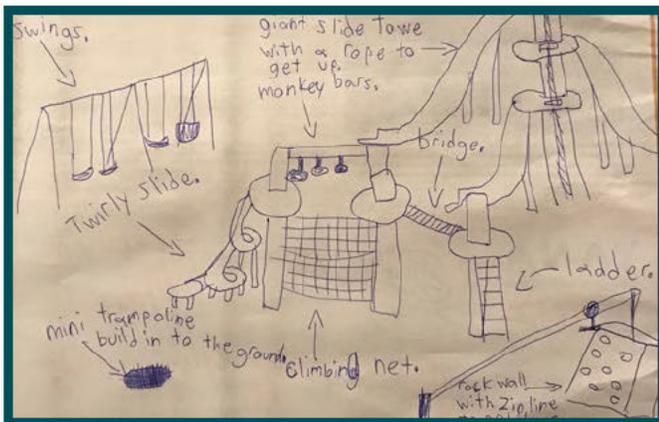
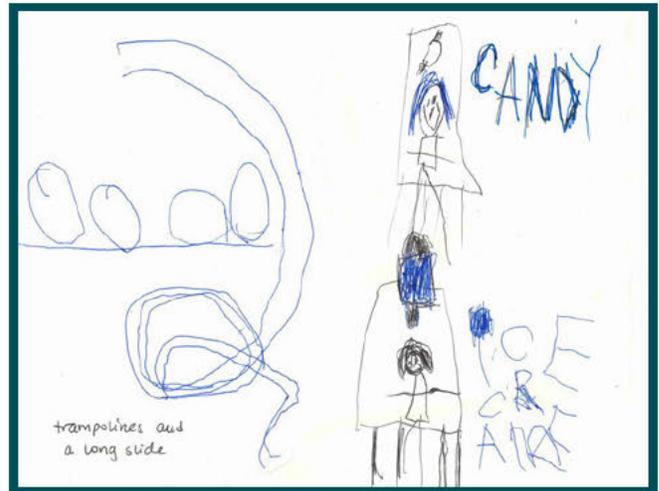
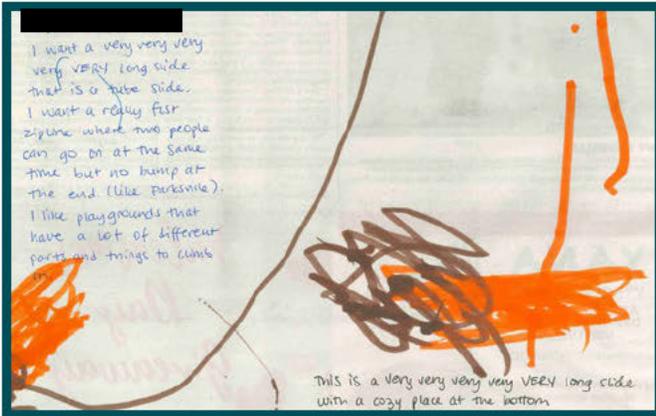
Let's Play, Courtenay!



Contest Entries - Public



Contest Entries - City Staff Kids



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City of Courtenay

Stay Connected

Visit www.courtenay.ca/letsplay to learn more and receive updates as the project progresses.

Questions?

Recreation & Cultural Services

Phone: 250-334-4441

Email: rsc@courtenay.ca

Follow us!

Keep in touch by following us on Facebook, X (Twitter), or Instagram.



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