

Kiwanis[®]

International

Serving the Children of the World[®]

A service idea for Young Children: Priority One

Grounds for building a playground

THE CHALLENGE

“Play is the child’s work.” So says Joe Frost, Ph.D, noted childhood development expert and professor emeritus at the University of Texas. Frost has dedicated his career to discovering the keys to healthy child development, and play is a large focus of his research. Play makes possible the development of children by facilitating creativity; individuality; and social, physical and intellectual growth. Play experiences provide enjoyment and emotional fulfillment that ultimately will lead to children becoming productive and contributing members of society.

Other benefits:

- Play establishes healthy exercise habits.
- Play demonstrates that exercise can be fun.
- Play combats the obesity epidemic facing today’s youth.
- Play encourages family activity. Go to any park with a playground and witness the parents pushing their children on a swing, siblings running, playing, looking out for each other, and everyone enjoying time as a family, simple fun that is so often overlooked in today’s busy society.

THE NEED

Unfortunately, many of today’s parks and recreation facilities either don’t offer playgrounds, or are the site of unsafe equipment. With budgets tight, there is often no funding to improve the situation, and the scarcity of play environments for children is a growing concern. With more and more schools cutting back on recess and free time, the need for public play environments becomes greater all the time.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Kiwanis clubs can take action in their communities by adopting a playground as a worthy service project. As a vital presence in our communities, we can affect the steps necessary to add play environments that will enrich the lives of community children. The purpose of this manual is to take you step by step through discovery, plan, execution and grand opening. A playground can make a huge difference in the life of a child, and we can be the catalyst for making that personal growth possible. Whether you choose to evaluate and renovate an existing playground, or build a new one where play opportunities do not



Playgrounds

SERVICE BULLETIN

Stepping stones

A club interested in pursuing a playground project should follow these steps:

- 1 Evaluate and select a site.**
- 2 Choose a vendor.**
- 3 Choose the equipment and design.**
- 4 Define your budget.**
- 5 Choose peripheral equipment.**
- 6 Establish a time frame.**
- 7 Put the “fun” in fundraising.**
- 8 Organize volunteers.**
- 9 Arrange public relations.**
- 10 Install the playground.**
- 11 Host a grand opening!**

1

EVALUATE AND SELECT A SITE.

The first item of business is to determine a site that best meets the needs of the community. Choosing a place for your play area can be a fun assignment for the group. Begin by contacting your community parks and recreation department, schools, recreational facilities and any other organization that offers play opportunities for children. Survey them as to their need, the number of children they serve, whether they have equipment on site that needs replacing and their general recommendations for your plan. Sample letters can be found in the appendix of this document. If you choose to renovate an existing playground rather than install a new site, you also can use the safety checklist included in the appendix as a guideline. It provides a simple overview of playground safety questions. To assist in this evaluation, you may want to contact the people in charge of the playground, local experts on safety and childhood development, doctors and concerned parents. Invite a committee of four to six people to aid in the evaluation so potential dangers are not overlooked. You may also want to contact one of the many child/play organizations to give you additional recommendations to improve playgrounds and how best to meet these goals. We have listed several resources in the appendix to assist you.

When selecting a site, keep in mind:

- A park or facility within walking distance of a large suburban population is desirable.
- Keep your budget in mind. For instance, doing extensive site preparations, leveling or removal of old equipment will use more of your funds than building on a level site with no existing equipment.
- When several suitable sites have been selected, you can narrow them based on need or other considerations chosen by your club and advisors.
- Building a new playground is a major undertaking that should be addressed by a coalition of people. Be sure to involve families, school personnel, the local parks and recreation department, safety officials, businesses, child organizations, other service clubs and even elected officials.

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CHOOSE A VENDOR.

Your playground vendor is a valuable tool in the planning process, as they have already planned many projects and will have the experience to act as a consultant on your project. Choose two to three to consult with and let them know what you are planning.

Potential vendors will need to visit the site in order to:

- Draw up top views and renderings of a playground plan that will not only let you know what funds you will need to raise, but can also serve as valuable visual tools in the fundraising itself.
- Prepare the playground proposal.
- Evaluate the drainage, existing land features such as trees and shrubs, and onsite utilities in order to best plan the size and orientation of your playground. (Ignoring drainage and topography issues often end up with pooling water and similar issues that can render them unusable for extended periods.)
- Take note of how much sunlight and shade your proposed area will get, and use it in the recommendation.

3

CHOOSE THE EQUIPMENT AND DESIGN.

Making valid equipment choices is one of the most important steps you'll take. If a playground is not inviting or enticing to children, they simply will not play there.

Over the years, playground design in the United States has advanced dramatically from the traditional playgrounds of isolated metal pieces of play equipment to today's modular structures of imaginative play activities that are designed to high standards of safety and durability. Still, it is important to remember that the quality and methods of play are not purchased. This factor of play is provided by the child's imagination and desire.

Therefore, the goal of designing for play is simply to create an environment that will beckon to children and enrich their "work" of play.

Consider these factors in choosing your equipment:

- **Existing equipment.** If you are incorporating older equipment in a renovation, does it meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Guidelines for Public Playground Safety and the American Society for Testing Materials' Safety Standards? If not, it should be removed and replaced as part of the new playground plan.
- **Age appropriateness.** Play must provide children with a comfort level to pursue the activities without fear, while still offering a challenge. The height of the equipment should not exceed the recommendations set forth by playground experts. Frost, in his book, *The Developmental Benefits of Play*, recommends 5 feet as the maximum platform height for children 2–5, and 8 feet for children in the 5–12 age group.

Also note that children who are age 2–5 have different levels of intensity and speed at play, and should be separated from children in the 5–12 group. Within each age group's play area, a variety of challenges should be offered so that kids have a slide and climber that is comfortable, one that is a bit of a challenge and one that they can aspire to. For instance, for a 2–5 year old's play area, it is reasonable to plan 3-foot, 4-foot and 5-foot slides, in addition to a leaning-type climber, a climber with closed frame steps and perhaps an upper body development climber, all of which are age appropriate for this group, but provide graduated levels of challenge.

- **Accessibility.** Is the playground and equipment accessible to children or adults with disabilities? In order to meet the guidelines for access, there is a ratio of ground level to elevated activities that need to be provided. Your playground vendor can answer all your questions about accessibility and should be able to provide a plan that will meet or exceed the guidelines.

Considerations to make your playground accessible:

- † Keep in mind that the route of travel encompasses the entire area, from the parking area to the pathways to the play zone, and on to the equipment itself. If any of these areas are overlooked, the play area cannot be accessed by children in mobility devices.
 - † Make every effort for integration, not just access. Provide play opportunities where children with special needs can play alongside their more typically developing peers. This type of environment promotes understanding and acceptance among children.
 - † Special needs does not just mean a wheelchair. Providing tactile, sound and quiet places on the play area will help integrate children with hearing, sight and autistic challenges, respectfully.
- **Play opportunities.** Besides offering accessible, age-appropriate opportunities, a well-loved playground will offer the one thing kids want most...FUN! Providing a variety of activities is crucial to keeping kids engaged. Beware the playground designer who suggests their design is better because it simply offers "more" activities. More does not mean better if those activities are not things to keep a child engaged.

Panels are often overused as a way to offer an inexpensive activity. Though some panels are fun, and can provide opportunities for children in wheelchairs, the simple fact is that kids do not come to the playground to play tic-tac-toe or to trace a maze with a finger. Rather, offer climbers, slides and play activities with moving parts to challenge them both physically and mentally.

- **Traffic flows.** A good playground will offer a dynamic route of travel from one activity to the next, so the very act of moving between play components becomes part of the play. Children should never have to bunch up and wait at one end of a structure, or collide because too many paths converge at the same point.

- **Developmental benefits.** Play can provide a range of developmental experiences for children that will encourage growth in these areas:

- ‡ Physical: Cardiovascular exercise, as well as muscle development, occurs naturally as children play. Slides develop abdominal strength; overhead climbers, upper body strength; and vertical climbers, hand-eye coordination. The more variety your playground offers, the wider the opportunity for development.
- ‡ Social: Play develops social behavior and cooperation among children. Quiet places, dramatic play stages and swings invite cooperative turn-taking, make-believe play and sharing behaviors.
- ‡ Cognitive: Children learn to solve problems as they play. For instance, on overhead bars, they learn the swinging motion, the reach distance and the way they need to grip the bar to travel from one to the other. If you want to learn more, Frost’s book, *The Developmental Benefits of Play*, is one of the most comprehensive guides available on the subject of play and its importance to children.

- **Surfacing.** One of the most important aspects of providing a safe play environment is the installation of high-quality surfacing with proper impact attenuation properties. When installed correctly, safety surfacing greatly helps to reduce serious injuries that can occur if children fall from the play structure.

In the mid-1970s, it was not uncommon to find playgrounds with concrete or asphalt surfaces, with asphalt being the preference, as it was “softer” than concrete! Unfortunately, serious injury was a regular occurrence, and sources sought to provide a surface that was softer, to help reduce falls and reduce injury. At that time, sand and pea gravel were both readily available and inexpensive, and were generally accepted as a better alternative than the hard surfaces of the past. However, sand became hard when wet and was often polluted by animal waste. Both surfaces were easily thrown by children and were difficult to walk or run in. Then, with the advent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the surfacing industry evolved again, as the product now needed to provide a firm, stable, and slip-resistant footing for mobility devices to wheel across, which neither sand nor gravel would provide.

Today, there are several industry-accepted playground surfaces available that provide both the soft, attenuating properties needed, as well as the firm stability required for the ADA:

- ‡ Loose-fill, like wood fiber and rubber chunks. Generally speaking, loose-fill surfaces are less expensive but can require more maintenance over the life of the product. As we’ve mentioned, some loose-fill surfaces meet ADA accessibility, while others are not suited to mobility devices. Loose-fill surfaces are also harder to keep clean, as trash can be mixed in and not easily noticed.

- ‡ Unitary, or solid surfaces, like bonded or poured rubber. Solid or unitary surfaces provide excellent ADA accessibility, as it is very easy for a mobility device to wheel over. Unitary surfaces are generally lower maintenance and easy to clean, but usually require a higher initial investment than with loose-fill surfaces.

We’ve included surfacing guidelines in the appendix with additional information.

Other factors to keep in mind for surfacing:

- ‡ When planning a play area, your playground manufacturer will calculate its “use zone.” This zone includes all surfaces under the equipment, as well as the distance outside and around the equipment that a child may fall in the normal course of play. The use zone is the minimum area that surfacing should be placed in, though some play environments extend the use zone to increase the play area or enhance the surrounding environment.
- ‡ The depth of surfacing required depends on the height of the play equipment, and the type of surfacing used. A critical fall height (CFH) is assigned to the components within the play area, and is defined as the “fall height below which a life threatening head injury would not be expected to occur.” The CPSC Handbook indicates recommended depths of materials calibrated to various fall heights. For example, 9 inches of compressed wood chips will protect children falling from a height of 10 feet, while the same depth of coarse sand only protects from a fall height of 4 feet, less than half the distance. Although it will cost more, 6 inches of shredded rubber protects children from fall heights of 10 to 12 feet. And because it does not decompose, it does not need to be replaced as frequently as sand or wood chips.
- ‡ In addition, the American Society for Testing and Materials has published national voluntary standards. The play equipment and the surfacing you install should comply with these standards. The standards are of more practical use to professional designers and playground equipment manufacturers, but it helps to be aware of them, as you can ask your supplier if their product meets these guidelines:
 - ASTM F1292: Specification for impact attenuation of surfaces under and around playground equipment (1991)
 - ASTM F1951: Specification for determination of accessibility of surfaces under and around playground equipment (1999)
- ‡ It also helps to be familiar with two sets of federal guidelines: the US Consumer Product Safety Commission’s Handbook for Public Playground Safety (CPSC Pub. 325) and the US Access Board’s ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas, covering compliance under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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DEFINE YOUR BUDGET.

Deciding how much money you will need to raise is one of the main parts in planning a successful playground project. Any way you look at it, this will be an expensive undertaking. The process of estimating the construction costs for a playground is similar to that of any construction, in that a certain part of the budget will need to be earmarked for the particular part of the project.

Factors to consider when planning your budget:

- A volunteer installation will save a great deal of money over hiring a professional crew. (See the Community build section for additional information.)
- Using loose-fill wood fiber surface over more expensive unitary material will save initial material costs and give you the option of self install versus professional.
- The cost of initial site work is also often substantial and should be determined early in the design process.
- Be sure to examine all options when determining the final cost of your project.
- For projects that are to be developed through a standard construction process, the following formula may be useful. The Access Board, as part of the Play Area Accessibility Guidelines, developed this formula to provide an estimate of the costs associated with the development of the play zone within a playground:

Cost of playground equipment (x) + Cost of installation (.30x) + Cost of surfacing (.12x) + Cost of design fees, grading, landscaping, and other expenses (.10x) = Total project cost or budget.

Community build

Many playground equipment manufacturers offer the option of a community build, in which volunteers within the community erect and assemble the play structure. Some companies provide advice on organizing a successful build day and will provide trained supervisors to oversee the work. This process may save up to 30 percent of the cost of the playground.

There's nothing quite like the feeling of watching children play on equipment you helped to build. In many ways, it's a lot like putting a kid's bike together; there's just a lot more pieces!

DIY tips:

- Be sure your manufacturer provides an easy-to-follow instruction book to guide you through the building process.
- Get organized to make your installation process a smooth one. Appoint two or three people to organize volunteers; have them begin immediately after your order is placed.
- A good guideline for volunteers is one person for each \$1,200 in value.
- If your installation will require more than one day, having some people return on subsequent days will reduce training time and help things progress faster.
- The main structure of an average-sized playground can be installed in a weekend.

5 CHOOSE PERIPHERAL EQUIPMENT.

You may also want to consider adding additional features to your play area to increase its usability and appeal.

- **Shade structures.** In particularly sunny areas, incorporating shade into the plan may be of benefit.
- **Benches and tables.** These features keep parents close, giving them a place to rest, wait, supervise and picnic.
- **Freestanding equipment.** Freestanding slides, spring riders, swings and other peripheral equipment will require a larger use zone and additional budget, but will also help spread the traffic throughout the play area and provide additional play opportunities.

6 ESTABLISH A TIME FRAME.

Your fundraising efforts will be the most direct influence on your overall time frame for completion. It is likely to expect that the overall time frame will span nine months to a year from the first meeting to the grand opening. This includes roughly 60 days between order and delivery of the equipment. The installation will take two to three full days, with an additional day for surfacing.

7 PUT THE "FUN" IN FUNDRAISING.

Now that you know what you are building, where it is going and what preparation is needed, you will have a good idea of the funds that are needed to complete the project.

The first step to successful fundraising is to develop a plan that will suit the needs of your overall vision. Discuss all fundraising ideas, choosing the most viable, realistic options for your project.

Consider these factors when planning your fundraising effort:

- Look to your community and surrounding areas for unique fundraising ideas: What is your community known for? What is the main source of income? Who are the local celebrities? How can this benefit your fundraising?
- Make sure you have sufficient volunteers to carry out your fundraising plan. The entire community, including parents, school/park personnel, area merchants and neighbors, have an interest in the playground, and each can contribute in his or her own way.
- Survey the school and/or community for people willing to donate resources or skills: artists, business owners, computer designers, etc.
- Fundraising that promotes physical fitness might be particularly effective for a new playground. Activities such as tennis tournaments, field days or 10K walks encourage community participation and may lead to annual community events.
- Playgrounds designed for children with special needs are often eligible for funding from public and private sources. Municipalities frequently have money available to assist in these types of projects. Contact your local recreation department or the mayor's office to learn of these possible sources. You may also find information on federal and state assistance on the Internet or in the reference section of your public library. Some playground companies also

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ORGANIZE VOLUNTEERS.

Getting committees in place, with chairmen and members who know their areas of responsibility is very important and will help your project run smoothly. In the appendix you will find a list of committees you'll want to consider, as well as sign-up sheets for each committee.

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ARRANGE PUBLIC RELATIONS.

Fundraising for a playground project can bring neighbors together. Be sure to inform area newspapers and media regularly of your upcoming fundraisers and playground project events.

- **Use visuals.** Put signs up in the park with the drawings of the playground that your vendor has prepared and include information about where people can send contributions.
- **Present your progress.** Create and display a "fund thermometer" or other graphic which can be updated as money comes in. One park put up a picture of a slide with each step of the slide signifying more money collected. When they got all their money, they drew a picture of someone joyfully going down the slide with the caption, "We did it thanks to all of you!"
- **Be neighborly.** Consider bringing letters with return envelopes to all the homes in the vicinity of the park.
- **Stay onsite.** On two or three busy Saturdays, weather permitting, set up a table in the park and ask people in the park for money.
- **Get the word out.** Every time you hold a fundraising event, reach a milestone in your efforts, sign on a major sponsor and plan your grand opening, the local radio stations, TV stations and newspapers should receive media releases they can publish.
- **Take in the scenery.** Include a good, clear photograph that can be used, as it may contribute to getting exposure in the front of the publication.
- **Know who can help you.** Ask the local media for the appropriate person to contact, and whether they prefer e-mail, as many do. Add the names of new media members to your distribution list as they contact you.
- **Be reachable.** Include a contact name and phone number where reporters can call to get more information about the project on your press releases.
- **Keep them posted.** Consider sending out a fundraising newsletter via e-mail to contributors to let them know where things stand.
- **Get Googled.** If you have a Web site, update it often with your progress, news releases, links to stories or coverage in the press and other information.
- **Acknowledge contributions.** Have someone on your publicity team responsible for thanking those who make a donation. (Phone calls are OK, but substantial donations should always receive a written thank-you in the mail.)

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INSTALL THE PLAYGROUND.

The big day has come! Here are the steps to success.

- **Prepare your site.** Once you have placed your order, it will take five to six weeks to manufacture and deliver. During that time, you will want to make sure your site has been prepared for the installation. The surface should be level, and if the equipment is being installed within a fenced area, you'll want to make sure that the proper use zone has been marked out within the fence. Your trained sales representative can help you understand minimum use zone requirements.
- **Delivery day.** Here's how to prepare for the arrival.
 - ‡ On the day of delivery, if you are doing a volunteer installation, you'll want to have several able-bodied volunteers to help unload the truck.
 - ‡ Appoint one or two people to inventory each piece against the packing list as it is unloaded.
 - ‡ The larger pieces likely will be wrapped in heavy plastic; smaller, stackable parts probably will be encased in a large pallet. A forklift would be helpful to offload, but if one is not available, strap cutters, hammers and box knives will allow you to break open the pallets and offload the components individually.
 - ‡ If your installation will not begin that day, be sure the equipment is stored in a secure area.
 - ‡ When it's time to begin the installation, it's a good idea to have everyone sign in on a volunteer sheet. In many cases, your organization will have a pre-written release form.
 - ‡ Be sure that workers wear good, sturdy shoes, comfortable clothing and work gloves.
- **Digging holes.** This is one of the most crucial elements of the installation and can generally be accomplished in a day.
 - ‡ All of the holes should be dug in advance of your installation day, so that you'll be free to focus on the playground.
 - ‡ Your instruction book should feature a grid that shows the layout, quantity, size and location of holes.
 - ‡ For playgrounds with more than 15 holes, it is worthwhile to rent a power auger to do the digging for you.
 - ‡ You may be able to get an auger donated or ask the local power utility company to do it.
 - ‡ Call all of your local utilities before digging to mark underground utilities, in order to prevent damage to water, gas or power lines.
- **Hospitality issues.** Consider these factors to help your volunteers:
 - ‡ Baby sitting. It is advisable to have several parents available to watch kids if necessary. Although they are eager to help, it is advisable for safety's sake to keep them off the site until the installation is complete.
 - ‡ Food. Having food on site will not only energize your workers, it will help keep them there longer. (Sometimes the crew that comes back after leaving the site for lunch is much smaller than the one that left!)

Coffee, juice and donuts in the morning, and sandwiches or pizza with fruit for lunch are great options. Often, a parent may have a connection with a restaurant or store that will donate food for community good will.
 - ‡ Restrooms. Access to a restroom will also be needed.
- **Concrete.** Pouring the concrete footings is a rather easy task to accomplish. This is usually done after all of the components are installed and all bolts are tightened. There are several options from which to choose.
 - ‡ Mobile batch mixer. This is a great option if available. A small mixer truck brings the concrete, mixes it at your site and charges you only for what is used.
 - ‡ Redi-mixers. Regular cement mixers come out with a predetermined amount and pour at the site, you pay for the amount ordered. There may be a minimum order required for this service.
 - ‡ U Cart. Some rental and home improvement shops can mix a cubic yard at their shop and you tow it to your site.
 - ‡ Hand mixing. This is best for smaller jobs. Purchase bagged cement and mix in a rented mixer or a wheelbarrow at the site. This takes a lot of muscle power, so several "mix masters" should be available to help.

Additional tips:

- ‡ Make sure the hose and water are ready to wash cement off your tools quickly when finished.
- ‡ Don't forget to look into donated materials if one of your parents or volunteers is connected to the building or home-improvement industry.
- **Security.** Remember, the playground may look ready, but until the concrete is dry and the surfacing laid, children must be kept off the equipment. Bright surfacing tape and "Keep Off" signs should be posted, or use flexible orange construction fence available at local hardware stores for added security.
- **Surfacing.** No playground is complete until the safety surfacing is installed. This is the final item and should not be installed until the concrete has set. Regardless of which surfacing you choose, it must cover the minimum use zone of your playgrounds.
- **Supervision.** Some playground companies also will provide, for a cost, a supervisor for the installation. The salary of the supervisor varies but can be worth every penny. They will oversee every aspect of the build, including plotting out the layout so every post hole is dug exactly where it should be. You also have the option of using trained installation crews, who can be hired to assist you with the installation of your new playground equipment. They can arrive in advance of construction day to stake your site; remain on-site as construction supervisors; or even completely install your playground according to the manufacturer's specifications. Your committee should decide how much or how little assistance you need.

Equipment checklist

Your coordinators will want to ensure you have the right tools available for your installation.

- ‡ Hoses and a water source for cleaning mixers and wheelbarrows
- ‡ Power source for tools, plus long outdoor extension cords
- ‡ Cement mixer or other cement arrangements
- ‡ Either an electric jackhammer if you have to drill through asphalt, concrete or very hard soil or a power auger if structure is large or soil is tough
- ‡ Security tape or fencing
- ‡ Builder's level (transit) with rod
- ‡ Dumpster
- ‡ S hook pliers

Tool checklist

It is not necessary that all individuals bring these items, but the more, the better. Please make sure that individuals who bring their own tools mark them for easy identification.

- ‡ Wheelbarrows
- ‡ Shovels
- ‡ Ratchets, sockets and wrenches (9/16" and 5/16" are the most-needed sizes)
- ‡ Electric drills with a variety of bits
- ‡ Tape measures and levels
- ‡ Rat tail and flat files
- ‡ Utility knives, heavy-duty scissors and strap cutters
- ‡ 6-foot or 8-foot step ladders
- ‡ A great attitude!

11

HOST THE GRAND OPENING.

You did it! You started with a need, developed a plan, designed the layout and raised the funds. Now there is a beautiful playground, built by all your hard work. A grand opening ceremony is your chance to congratulate yourselves on a job well done, give recognition to all those who have worked so hard on the project and welcome the children and community to enjoy the play area.

You'll want to make the day special.

- Town officials, committee heads, corporate sponsors, special friends and, of course, members of your Kiwanis club themselves should take part in the dedication festivities. There will be many people to thank, so invite them all and celebrate!
- Invite the local media and anyone assisting with the project. A community playground is great news: It's colorful, it's positive and it shows the wonderful things that can happen when people work together. Let your project serve as inspiration to others as a human-interest story. If you need assistance in writing a press release for your local media, see the samples in the appendix for ideas.

A word about liability

Anyone undertaking a playground project must consider the question of liability. It would be difficult to find a company involved in the design and manufacture of playgrounds that has not been involved in litigation because of injuries on the playground. The causes of injury on a playground may be caused by a number of factors, including design, layout, installation, inadequate maintenance and supervision, misuse or unsuitable clothing.

A Kiwanis club should not be the agency officially responsible for the creation or remodeling of a playground. The club should form an organization specifically for the improvement of the playground, and one member should be an attorney who understands the state laws on liability. The organization must obtain liability insurance and professional assistance from someone with a record of experience in design.

This consultant should be separate from the playground builder in order to evaluate the work of the builder. All companies hired to design or build the playground

should be asked to provide references and information about their liability insurance, lawsuits and training of their representatives. Before being hired, they should provide documentation that the playground conforms to national safety standards and guidelines.

The community organization that creates the playground should also make provisions from the beginning of the process to donate the playground to the school, park, town or other organization that will be liable for the maintenance, supervision and upkeep of the playground. The agreement to donate the playground should involve a plan for the school or government agency to sign a hold harmless agreement that states liability for the playground is assumed by the school or government agency. Before signing a hold harmless, their agency representatives will want to see design plans and the evidence that the playground meets safety standards. They also may want to arrange for their own safety inspection. The agency that assumes responsibility should be urged to develop a maintenance program, train adult supervisors and

RESOURCES: Playground contractors

BCI Burke Company, LLC

Playground equipment, site furnishings/ site amenities
660 Van Dyne Road
Fond du Lac, WI 54936-0549
800-266-1250
Fax: 920-921-9566
sales@bciburke.com
www.bciburke.com

BigToys, Inc.

Earth-friendly playground equipment for kids 6 months to 12 years old, climbing nets and boulders, integrated shade
7721 New Market Street
Olympia, WA 98501
866-814-8697
www.bigtoys.com
Free color catalog

Bomar Soft Playgrounds International

Custom soft urethane play areas including characters and theme products
PO Box 495
Mount Dora, FL 32778
352-742-9193
www.bomarsoftplaygrounds.com

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Playground equipment, surfacing, benches/ tables, spray / water parks, shade structures, climbing nets, sports field equipment
PO Box 680121
Fort Payne, AL 35968
800-235-2440 (sales)
256-997-5430 (marketing)
www.gametime.com

International Play Company

Indoor play structures, outdoor playgrounds, soft modular play, toddler play structures, interactive games, obstacle courses, ballistic ball shooters
20216 - 98th Avenue
Langley, BC V1M 3G1 Canada
604-882-1188
Fax: 604-882-1977
sales@iplayco.com
www.iplayco.com

Landscape Structures

601 7th Street South
Delano, MN 55328
888-4FUNLSI
www.playlsi.com

Play Mart, Inc.

Playground equipment, playground safety surfacing, site amenities, park benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles, climbing equipment, fitness equipment, early childhood play equipment, recycled plastic playground equipment, playground installation, playground safety inspection
170 Allens Way
Somerset, KY 42501
800-43-PLAYS
www.playmart.com

Play & Park Structures

Playground equipment, surfacing, benches, sport equipment
401 Chestnut Street, Suite 310
Chattanooga, TN 37402
800-727-1907
www.playandpark.com

Play With A Purpose®

Playground equipment; independent play events; sand and water products; climbing equipment; mulch, tile and synthetic grass; playground safety surfacing; park benches and picnic tables; basketball hoops; installation; and equipment financing
220 24th Avenue NW
Owatonna, MN 55060-0998
888-330-1826
www.pwaponline.com

Progressive Design Playgrounds

Playground equipment, playground design, playground installation, playground safety surfacing, park benches, picnic tables, outdoor trash receptacles, site timbers, landscape borders, planters, trellises, arbors, shade structures, shelters
2665 Vista Pacific Drive
Oceanside, CA 92056
800-585-3131
www.pdplay.com

Pilot Rock/R.J. Thomas Mfg. Co. Inc.

Picnic tables, park benches, trash and recycling receptacles, bike racks
PO Box 946
Cherokee, IA 51012-0946
800-762-5002 or 712-225-5115
Fax: 712-225-5796
www.pilotrock.com
pilotrock@rjthomas.com

Sof' Surfaces

Resilient and protective soft surfaces for playground safety
4393 Discovery Line
PO Box 239
Petrolia, ON N0N 1R0 Canada
800-263-2363
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International: 519-882-8799
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Surface America

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Williamsville, NY 14231
800-999-0555 or 716-632-8413
www.surfaceamerica.com

Other resources

International Play Association

Audrey Skrupskelis
President and National Representative
University of South Carolina Aiken
471 University Pkwy
Aiken, SC 29801
803-641-3240
www.ipausa.org

International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA)

8300 Colesville Road, Suite 250
Silver Spring, MD 20910
800-395-5550
www.ipema.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

1509 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20006
202-232-8777
www.naeyc.org

National Playground Safety Institute (NPSI)

22377 Belmont Ridge Road
Ashburn, VA 20148
703-858-0784
www.nrpa.org

National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS)

School of HPELS, WRC 205
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0618
800-554-PLAY (7529)
Fax: 319-273-7308
www.uni.edu/playground

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

22377 Belmont Ridge Road
Ashburn, VA 20148
703-858-0784
www.nrpa.org

National Safety Council

1121 Spring Lake Drive
Itasca, IL 60143-3201
630-285-1121
www.nsc.org

NPCAI

International Playground Contractor's Association
PO Box 2364
Salt Lake City, UT 84110
888-908-9519
www.playground-contractors.org

Sample releases

Sample "Name the Playground" media release

For immediate release

For more information:

{insert name of local club contact}

{insert phone number or e-mail address}

Community playground named "Playville"

ANYTOWN – The community playground sponsored by the Anytown Kiwanis Club finally has a name. The winning entry, "Playville," was chosen from more than 300 entries in the "Name the Playground" contest held this week.

"Playville" was the creation of Jimmy Smith, a third grader at Anytown Elementary. To him, the playground plan looked like a big city, so he thought his choice was appropriate. The new name will be featured on a sign to be unveiled by Jimmy at the dedication of the playground. The playground is a community effort, funded by donations from the Anytown community and area merchants. More than 75 percent of the money necessary to complete the project already has been raised. If you wish to make a donation, please contact June Smith, Project Playground project coordinator, at 555-1234.

(Enclose several photos of various activities related to the playground project whenever issuing a news release. You will keep interest and enthusiasm piqued within your committees and your community if you keep them informed of your progress.)

Sample fundraising media release

For immediate release

For more information:

{insert name of local club contact}

{insert phone number or e-mail address}

Activities set for playground fundraising

ANYTOWN – Fundraising is under way for Anytown's new playground. Anytown's Kiwanis Club, in conjunction with leaders in the community, are designing the playground, to be installed at Anytown Park. Various events are scheduled throughout the next month, with all proceeds to be used for the new playground.

A spaghetti dinner is slated for next Tuesday, March 8, from 5 to 8 p.m. in the Anytown Elementary School cafeteria. Faculty and staff will serve as waiters and waitresses for the evening.

An auction is planned for Sunday, March 28, at 7 p.m. in the school auditorium. Items to be auctioned will include services such as house painting, tutoring, wills and real estate planning, as well as donated merchandise from local retailers. If you have an item or service to donate to the auction, please contact Jane Smith at 555-1234.

One-third of the funds necessary to complete the playground already has been raised. Fundraising progress will be charted on the "Slide Poster" located on the project bulletin board in the main lobby of the Anytown Park Clubhouse. If you would like to donate, or contribute to the effort, please contact the Anytown Kiwanis Club at 555-1234.

Sample letters

Use as is or combine text from different letters to suit the situation. Always include your contact information.

Solicitation for familiar party

Dear Mr. Wilson:

I may have mentioned to you that I am a member of the Anytown community playground committee. Each of the members is setting up meetings with contacts in the community to discuss the plans for the new playground and ask for support. Because of our relationship, I volunteered to speak with you personally.

I'd love to share the drawings that have been developed for the playground as well as our preliminary budget. I'm very interested in also discussing how you could help the playground committee's efforts.

I will give you a call this week to set up a meeting time. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Solicitation for donation, combined with announcement of specific fundraising event

Dear Mr. Wilson:

As a member of the local Kiwanis club, I have accepted the challenge of raising funds to build a new playground at Anytown Community Park.

We have a large fundraising goal for the playground. The expected cost of the project is \$_____, which includes the equipment, safety surfacing and installation. I have set a personal fundraising target of \$_____ for myself. I would greatly appreciate your help in reaching this target. Research has shown that play is a healthy way for children to develop physical, social and cognitive skills, as well as establish fitness habits to help combat the epidemic of obesity so prevalent in the modern world.

I have started my fundraising off with a personal donation of \$_____. Your donation will bring me closer to my goal and help bring this much needed play environment to our community.

As part of our fundraising, we also are holding a silent auction on June 25. I will invite people from the local business community, as well as local families. If you could donate an item for our auction, provide the food/ drinks/ decorations, or help us with a donation to pay for printing the tickets and posters for the event, I will be sure that your support is acknowledged at the auction.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. As one of my sponsors, I will personally let you know how we do. If you would like any more information, please contact me at your convenience, at 555-1234.

Sincerely,

Clever fundraising letter

Dear Mr. Wilson:

We are committed to raising funds to build a new playground at Anytown Community Park. I am writing to ask for your assistance, and I am counting on your generosity and support to help make this goal a reality.

Top 10 reasons to help me raise money for our new playground:

10. Because play can help fight childhood obesity.
9. Because studies show 30 minutes of daily play can advance a child's daily caloric burn to half the Surgeon General's daily recommended.
8. Because free play helps children develop strength, coordination and social skills.
7. Because play develops cognitive reasoning in children.
6. Because there is currently no modern play facilities within walking distance of this community.
5. Because a playground project like this one instills a sense of community pride.
4. Because a playground invites children to come outside again!
3. Because a playground brings families together.
2. Because we have committed to making this dream a reality, and we want you to be a part of our vision.
1. Because all donations (large and small) make a difference.

Please, help us make a difference. You can send a check or money order payable to the Anytown Playground Fund to the address above, or feel free to call me for more information at 555-1234.

Sincerely,

Solicitation to unfamiliar party (great for manufacturers/packagegers of snack foods/beverages!)

Dear Mr. Wilson:

As you may be aware, childhood obesity is a major concern in today's society. To help raise awareness and spark action in our community, we are raising funds to build a new playground at Anytown Community Park. Research shows that free play is one of the most important tools we can offer children to develop strength, raise their daily caloric burn and help establish healthy fitness habits.

In order to fund the project, we are looking to raise \$_____ to pay for the project, which includes the playground, safety surfacing and installation. We are looking to your organization/business to help us by supporting our efforts to keep our community and its young people healthy. Any amount is appreciated, and your company will be recognized as a donor at our grand opening. We also will be contacting local media to cover the event and partner with us in making sure that our community understands the importance of play for the health and well being of children, and to publicize your dedication to our cause.

If you have any questions or would like to further discuss how your organization/business can help, please call me at 555-555-1212. We also have several playground sponsorship opportunities available.

Thank you and best regards,

Sample partnership Letter

Dear _____:

The Kiwanis Club of Anytown has conducted a preliminary survey of the playgrounds in the community and has concluded that it should work with organizations and community leaders to evaluate the building of a new playground at Anytown Community Park. We would very much like you to be a part of the discussion, and we invite you or your representative to attend a meeting on Monday, June 25 at 4 p.m., to be held in the West meeting room at the Anytown Library Annex.

One of the topics we will discuss is our desire to form a coalition to investigate this project. If the participating organizations feel there is a need for a new playground, a separate organization supported by the entire community will be created to build the playground.

For this initial meeting, we have invited community leaders from the area around Anytown Community Park—service club members, PTA and school officials, business owners and managers, and others who could support the effort. We hope you will be able to attend. Please contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at 555-555-1212.

Sincerely,

Sample survey letter

Dear _____:

The Kiwanis Club of Anytown is conducting a survey to learn whether the playgrounds in the community are safe for young children, as well as have sufficient capacity to serve the families of the community. We are contacting local schools, parks, recreation facilities and child-care providers to learn more about play facilities they may have available.

We would like to work with you to evaluate your playground's safety, the kind of play experiences available to young children and the number of children who can play at a given time. If there are needs for improvement, we hope to involve the community to meet those needs.

We are not experts on play or playgrounds and, quite frankly, need the assistance of experts like you to conduct our survey. We have reviewed several books on play to better prepare us for the project, and we are enclosing a copy of a safety checklist we would like to use to help us in the playground evaluations. We would appreciate it if you could review the document then call us to schedule a meeting to discuss the best way to evaluate the playgrounds.

Please call at your earliest convenience; I can be reached at 555-555-1212. If I haven't heard from you by next Thursday, I will give you a call to follow up.

Sincerely,

A guide to safety surfacing materials

UNITARY SURFACES. Bonded rubber, sheet rubber over foam mats, tiles, poured in place, urethane and rubber compositions.

Fall-absorbing characteristics:

- Manufacturer should be contacted for information on critical height of materials when tested according to ASTM F1292.

Installation/maintenance:

- Some unitary materials can be laid directly on hard surfaces such as asphalt or concrete. Others may require expert under-surface preparation and installation by the manufacturer or a local contractor. Materials generally require no additional means of containment. Once installed, the materials require minimal maintenance. Some must be professionally installed (poured in place, bonded rubber) others can be installed by experienced volunteers (tile, sheet rubber over foam).

Advantages:

- Low maintenance.
- Easy to clean.
- Consistent shock absorbency.
- Material not displaced by children during play activities.
- Generally low life-cycle costs.
- Good footing (depends on surface texture).
- Harbors few foreign objects.
- Generally no retaining edges needed.
- Is accessible to mobility devices.

Disadvantages:

- Initial cost relatively high.
- Under-surfacing may be critical for thinner materials.
- Often must be used on almost level uniform surfaces.
- May be flammable.
- Subject to vandalism (e.g., ignited, defaced, cut).
- Full rubber tiles may curl up and cause tripping.
- Some designs susceptible to frost damage.

RUBBER CHUNKS. Loose-fill surface made of cleaned, ground tires.

Fall-absorbing characteristics:

- Rubber chunks provide one of the highest fall attenuation ratings of all surfaces.

Installation/maintenance:

- Should not be installed over existing hard surfaces (e.g., asphalt, concrete).
- Method of containment needed (e.g., retaining barrier, excavated pit).
- Good drainage required underneath material.
- Requires continuous maintenance (e.g., leveling, grading, sifting, raking) to maintain appropriate depth and remove foreign matter.

Advantages:

- Ease of installation.
- Has superior shock-absorbing capability.
- Is not abrasive.
- Less likely to compact than other loose-fill materials.
- Not conducive to microbial growth.
- Does not deteriorate over time.

Disadvantages:

- Is flammable. (Note: Other studies have shown it is not easily ignited)
- Unless treated, may cause soiling of clothing.
- May contain steel wires from steel belted tires.
- Depth may be reduced due to displacement by children's activities.
- May be swallowed.

LOOSE-FILL SURFACES. Wood chips, bark mulch, engineered wood fibers, etc.

Fall-absorbing characteristics:

- Cushioning effect depends on air trapped within and between individual particles, and presupposes an adequate depth of material.

Installation/maintenance:

- Should not be installed over existing hard surfaces (e.g., asphalt, concrete).
- Requires a method of containment (e.g., retaining barrier, excavated pit).
- Requires good drainage underneath material.
- Requires periodic renewal or replacement and continuous maintenance (e.g., leveling, grading, sifting, raking) to maintain appropriate depth and remove foreign matter.

Disadvantages:

- The following conditions may reduce cushioning potential: rainy weather, high humidity, freezing temperatures.
- With normal use over time, combines with dirt and other foreign materials.
- Over time, decomposes, is pulverized and compacts requiring replenishment.
- Depth may be reduced by displacement due to children's activities or by material being blown by wind.
- Can be blown or thrown into children's eyes.
- Subject to microbial growth when wet.
- Conceals animal excrement and trash (e.g., broken glass, nails, pencils and other sharp objects that can cause cut and puncture wounds).
- Spreads easily outside of containment area.
- Can be flammable.
- Subject to theft by neighborhood residents for use as mulch.

UNSUITABLE SURFACING MATERIALS

Sand or gravel:

- Not ADA accessible.
- Small sand particles bind together, become less cushioning when wet: When thoroughly wet, sand reacts as a rigid material.
- Difficult to walk on.
- May be thrown into children's eyes and/or swallowed.
- Susceptible to fouling by animals and trash.

Public playground safety checklist

Here are 10 important tips for parents and community groups to ensure playground safety.

1. Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
2. Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
3. Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
4. Check for dangerous hardware, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
5. Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
6. Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
7. Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks.
8. Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
9. Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
10. Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they're safe.

For additional copies of the playground checklist, contact:

Consumer Product Safety Commission
4330 East West Highway
Bethesda, MD 20814
800-638-2772
www.cpsc.gov

Committees

Community-built playgrounds require the enthusiasm, resourcefulness and a team of dedicated group of volunteers. The project chairman may find it helpful to organize these volunteers into committees, each with its own specific responsibilities. Here are some suggested committee structures.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members:

- ‡ Project chairman: Unifies and oversees all efforts, timelines and committees.
- ‡ Project co-chairman: Assists project chair as needed.
- ‡ Project treasurer: Oversees, tracks and manages funds that are raised, including disbursements.
- ‡ Design chairman: Oversees design effort, including site, equipment and surfacing choices.
- ‡ Fundraising chairman: Oversees fundraising efforts, committees and teams.
- ‡ Construction chairman: Works with vendors and installers to coordinate delivery and construction. Oversees efforts for volunteer build, if applicable.
- ‡ Public relations chairman: Oversees public relations efforts for every aspect of the project.
- ‡ Hospitality chairman: Oversees the solicitations and donations of food, child care and other services at community installations, etc.

DESIGN COMMITTEE

Members:

- ‡ Two to four club members
- ‡ Two to four parents
- ‡ Facility owner
- ‡ Risk management consultant/evaluator

Roles:

- ‡ Organizes and coordinates design efforts.
- ‡ Chooses final design/vendor/surfacing/equipment.
- ‡ Chooses colors for play structure.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Members:

- ‡ Corporate sponsorship chairman: Obtains sponsorships from local business community.
- ‡ Promotions chairman: Organizes and executes fundraising promotions such as T-shirt sales, walkathons, etc.
- ‡ Special events chairman: Coordinates auctions, spaghetti dinners, pancake breakfasts, etc.
- ‡ Special funding chairman: Researches and obtains grants and donations from charitable, municipal and corporate foundations.

CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

Members:

- ‡ Two to four people (familiarity with construction helpful)
- ‡ Playground maintenance personnel

Roles:

- ‡ Outlines site requirements and addresses any special needs before installation.
- ‡ Determines extent of involvement in actual construction.
- ‡ Enlists adequate volunteers for construction.
- ‡ Checks local zoning and building codes.
- ‡ Contacts local utility companies prior to installation.
- ‡ Obtains tools required for completion.
- ‡ Plans security at the construction site.
- ‡ Supervises construction day.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Roles:

- ‡ Issues regular media releases.
- ‡ Updates and maintains Web site.
- ‡ Recognizes corporate and local sponsors regularly in school newsletters, community newspapers, etc.
- ‡ Maintains and updates the fundraising progress sign.
- ‡ Organizes and executes dedication day ceremony.
- ‡ Keeps scrapbook of entire project.

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

Roles:

- ‡ Sets up child care for meetings, design day (if needed) and construction day.
- ‡ Provides meals and snacks for meetings and construction day.

SUPPORT GROUP

Roles:

- ‡ Provides support and backup for all other committees. This group is for individuals who cannot, for various reasons, commit to a designated committee, but would like to lend a hand when needed.

Sign-up sheets

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Project chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Project co-chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Project treasurer _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Design chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Fundraising chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Construction chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Public relations chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Hospitality chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Facility owner/manager _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

DESIGN COMMITTEE

Kiwanis members

Name	Phone	E-mail

Parents

Name	Phone	E-mail

Facility owner/manager/representative

Name	Phone	E-mail

Risk management consultant

Name	Phone	E-mail

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Corporate sponsorship chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Committee volunteers

Name Phone E-mail

Promotions chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Committee volunteers

Name Phone E-mail

Special events chairman _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell _____

Committee volunteers

Name Phone E-mail



www.kiwanis.org

3636 Woodview Trace Indianapolis, IN 46268 USA • service@kiwanis.org
317-875-8755 ext. 211 US and Canada: 800-KIWANIS