




# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

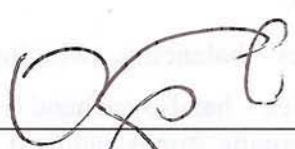


**To:** Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee      **Date:** June 8, 2010  
**From:** Dave Semple  
General Manager, Parks and Recreation      **File:** 06-2345-01/2010-Vol 01  
**Re:** Pre-School Playground Areas

### Staff Recommendation

That the attached report, Pre-School Playground Areas, from the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, be received for information.

  
Dave Semple  
General Manager, Parks and Recreation  
(604-233-3350)

Att. 1

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY		
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER		
		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES	NO
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY CAO	YES	NO
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## Staff Report

### Origin

During the April 27<sup>th</sup> 2010 meeting of the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee meeting, a discussion regarding tot swings occurred and staff were requested to investigate and report back on the feasibility of installing secure tot-swings in City Centre parks, including school ground parks, and investigate cost sharing with the Richmond Board of Education.

The purpose of this report is to respond to that discussion as well as to provide general information on playground equipment in parks.

### Analysis

#### Background

Playgrounds are fun for children and their developmental value is profound. Play promotes brain development, physical success and social development. Every playground should provide a variety of play opportunities that are at the appropriate level of challenge for different age groups, that are open ended allowing children to explore their world on their own terms, and that are accessible to all. Structured playgrounds offer a specific, unchanging range of activities and are incomplete play environments in terms of developmental objectives. The optimal playground includes a broad range of types of play including a surrounding environment that is complex offering children elements of unpredictability, loose materials, and interaction with nature.

Developmental objectives for playgrounds, by age group, are identified below:

#### *Physical Development:*

1. Balancing activities – balancing, swinging, rocking/swaying, climbing.
2. Navigation activities – hand-over-hand (i.e. monkey bars), hands and feet coordination (i.e. climbing walls, stepping stones, ladders), in-under-over spatial learning (i.e. crawl tunnels).
3. Motion activities – jumping, sliding, swinging, running.

#### *Social Development:*

1. Active group play – cooperative games (i.e. grounders), cooperative equipment (i.e. teeter totters, tire swings).
2. Quiet group play – places of refuge separate from the main activity area (i.e. play house).

#### *Imaginative/Sensory Development:*

1. Manipulative play – loose parts such as sand and water.
2. Spatial variety – nooks and hideouts, overlooks.

3. Sensory experiences – textures (smooth/rough,), sounds (natural and equipment), smells (fragrant plants, wood, grass).

*Universal Design:*

1. Barrier Free – use of edges, surfacing and play equipment that allow children and care-givers of all abilities to use the playground (i.e. rubber or engineered wood fibre safety surfacing).
2. Emphasis on ground-based play – play opportunities accessed directly from ground level as opposed to elevated structures. While it is intriguing for kids to climb and to be able to have a look-out from above, some play equipment can be accessed directly from the ground.

Pre-school aged children and the corresponding playground elements can be considered in three age groups:

*Infant/Toddler (to 2 yrs)*

- Focus on objects that are nearby, that can provoke experimentation with cause and effect.
- Spend more time in contact with the ground so textures and simple obstacles can be used to provide stimulation and the desire to explore.

Only the most physically advanced have the upper body strength and physical control required to safely engage with most playground equipment except for crawl tunnels, enclosed play spaces (playhouses and under-deck play areas), and activity panels that develop fine motor skills. Loose materials like water, sand, rocks, sticks, and plant material are as valuable as structured playground elements.

*Toddler (2-3 yrs)*

- Interested in manipulation of their environment and imaginative play.
- A growing ability to walk and move both horizontally and vertically, and beginning jumping.
- Beginning to develop social skills through observation while primarily engaged in solo play.

The types of equipment appropriate for this age group include swings with supportive seats (tot swings), stairs and climbing elements with small gaps, crawl tunnels, small straight slides, enclosed play spaces (playhouses and under-deck areas), rocking elements (spring toys and see-saws) and activity panels that develop fine motor skills. Loose materials like water, sand, rocks, sticks, and plant material are as valuable as structured playground elements.

*Preschool Age (3-5yrs)*

- Developing strength, balance, visual and spatial perception, and fine motor skills.
- Expanding their range of gross motor skills like climbing, jumping, and running.
- Developing social skills through imaginative play.

This age group can benefit from activities that promote intense physical effort including small climbing elements, ladders and other small climbing elements, ramps, and tunnels. Balancing



activities include rocking elements (spring toys and see-saws), low balance beams, swings (tot swings and regular belt swings) and slides. Playhouses or other small spaces, play counters, themed play elements and natural materials facilitate imaginative and cooperative play.

School age children break down roughly into two groups and use play equipment in a slightly different way.

Primary (5-7 yrs) - The first group are at the younger end of the age range and/or are children who are not physically aggressive. In order to be inclusive, some play options that address the size and strength of this group should be included. This group may be more likely to use the equipment in the course of imaginary play where over/under, high/low, inside/outside are important spatial considerations.

Intermediate (7-12 yrs) - The second group includes the older and more physically adventurous children. Equipment that provides a sense of risk and is organized as a continuous circuit appeals to this group. Games of tag, often called grounders, are commonly played on composite structures. These games have the effect of dominating the space and so some separation between the linked, challenging elements and the less challenging and imaginary play elements is a good idea.

In addition to play equipment, the playground should be comfortable and accessible for everyone including people with disabilities (both children and care givers) and allow parents/care givers to interact with children while they are playing. The borders around the play equipment, the type of safety surfacing, and the provision of places to sit are all important considerations that go along with any playground project.

#### Playground Equipment Replacement Program

The City maintains a inventory, which was developed in cooperation with the School District, identifying those playgrounds most in need of updating in order to better comply with Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines. Each site is prioritized and, on an annual basis, funds are requested through the capital program to update at least two playground sites. At the time of the park update, the play equipment is reviewed and new equipment purchased to best reflect the needs of the playground users.

In 2009, the Hugh Boyd School / West Richmond Community Centre Park and the Westwind School Park were both upgraded through this program. At West Richmond, tot swings were added to meet the needs of the many preschool users at the park. In 2010, Walter Lee School Park and McKay School Park are being upgraded in consultation with the School District and the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). No tot swings are planned for either site although they will both include pre-school aged play equipment. Through this program, it is common for the School District or PAC to provide some funding to the project in order to add on special features or more play equipment to create a better playground for all users.

#### New Parks & Playgrounds

The development of a new park is often an opportunity to also develop a new playground. Most recently, playgrounds have been included in the development of Paulik Neighbourhood Park as

well as Garden City Community Park. These playgrounds are developed with the needs of park users in mind. At Garden City Community Park, the innovative play environment is a large playground with play opportunities for all age groups. At Paulik Neighbourhood Park, the playground is more traditional and provides play opportunities for neighbourhood users. The park is not yet finished and tot swings will be included in the playground area by the end of the year. A new playground is also planned for Terra Nova Rural Park in 2011 or 2012. This playground will be suitable for a broad range of users and recognize the regional destination status of the park.

#### Current Inventory of Pre-School Playground Facilities

Planning Area	Pre-School Aged Population	# of Parks with Pre-school Age Equipment	Parks with Tot Swings
City Centre	1615	6 (Birch, General Currie, Katsura, Minoru, Paulik, Garden City)	Garden City
Hamilton	310	3 (Hamilton VLA, McLean, Hamilton)	Hamilton VLA, McLean, Hamilton
Sea Island	30	1 (Burkeville)	Burkeville
East Cambie	595	3 (Albert Airey, King George, McNeely)	Albert Airey, King George, McNeely
Broadmoor	830	2 (Palmer/Garden City School, Heather/Dolphin, Walter Lee *, South Arm)	Heather/Dolphin, South Arm
Gilmore	0	0	0
West Cambie	305	3 (Odlin, Odlinwood, Talmey)	Odlinwood, Talmey
Bridgeport	140	1 (Tait)	0
Seafair	755	3 (Morris, High Boyd, Dixon)	Morris, High Boyd, Dixon
Shellmont	600	2 (McNair, Agassiz)	McNair
Blundell	700	4 (Blundell, Park Lane, Jess Wowk, London / Steveston, McKay*)	Blundell, London/Steveston
Thompson	715	4 (Terra Nova West, Terra Nova School / Park, Dover, Thompson, Burnett)	Terra Nova West, Terra Nova School / Park, Dover, Thompson, Burnett
Steveston	1090	5 (Westwind, Richmond St, Sandiford, Sotuh Cove, Steveston Community Park)	Sandiford, Steveston Community Park

\*to be replaced in 2010

#### Notes:

1. This inventory does not include playgrounds owned and maintained by the Richmond School District or playgrounds associated with pre-school and daycare programs operated by others and not available for public use.
2. The City will be monitoring playgrounds at schools where additional classroom space is being added to accommodate expanded kindergarten programs to determine if the playgrounds have enough capacity for the larger number of children and the potential increase in use of school/park playground equipment by that age group.

The School District solely owns and maintains a number of playgrounds which are used by the community. These playgrounds often include pre-school equipment although none of them include tot swings at this time. Again, as the playgrounds are renewed, the School District, the PAC and the City will work together to identify the appropriate equipment for the school and the neighbourhood. In particular, the City has received funding from a developer to assist with playground equipment at Cook School for 2011 and the City Centre Community Association has also shown an interest in being involved in the redevelopment of the playground at this school site.

The cost for tot swings as well as individual pieces of pre-school age appropriate equipment (Attachment 1) are approximately \$12,000 - \$15,000 per piece. These costs are taken into account when reviewing playground project budgets.

### **Financial Impact**

There is no financial impact of receiving this report for information.

### **Conclusion**

While parks with play equipment for toddlers are relatively well distributed by planning area throughout the City, there is a definite lack of toddler swings in the City Centre given the relative large number of toddlers in the area. Additional upgrades are planned for Paulik Park Playground at the end of 2010 as part of the park completion and tot swings will be included at this location. As well, Minoru Park Playground is proposed to be upgraded in the 2012 capital budget and tot swings can be included in the upgrade. Finally, the City, School District and the City Centre Community Centre are reviewing an upgrade to Cook School Playground in 2011 and tot swings will be considered as part of the upgrade.



Serena Lusk  
Manager, Parks - Planning & Design  
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SL:sl

ATTACHMENT 1

Playground Equipment for Pre-School Aged Children



Net climber with platform scaled for children age 3 to 5 years.



Playhouse with interactive panels and play counter suitable for children age 2 to 5 years.



Typical Tot Swings at a neighbourhood Park