



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee Date: June 5, 2012

From: Dave Semple File:

General Manager, Parks and Recreation

Re: Terra Nova Play Environment Concept Plan

Staff Recommendation

That the Terra Nova Play Environment Concept Plan as detailed in the report dated June 5, 2012 from the General Manager, Parks and Recreation be approved for implementation.

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

Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
REVIEWED BY TAG SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS:
REVIEWED BY CAO	INITIALS:

Staff Report

Origin

In July, 2011 Council approved the following:

"That the future plans for Terra Nova Rural Park, as outlined in the staff report dated June 6, 2011 from the General Manager, Parks and Recreation be endorsed."

These future plans included the design and construction of a unique play environment. As part of the 2011 Parks Capital Program, \$1million was approved for this project.

The purpose of this report is to present the proposed Terra Nova Rural Park Play Environment Concept Plan to Council for approval prior to implementation.

Analysis

Background

Terra Nova Rural Park (TNRP) is the result of a long history of community engagement starting with its roots in the late 1980's of saving former farm land for park purposes. In 1996, a referendum item was held approving the acquisition and development of Terra Nova Rural Park.

While this land was being assembled, an inventory and analysis of the biophysical, heritage and landscape character features was undertaken and completed in 2002. This information was invaluable in identifying and assessing the cultural and ecological values of the different parts of the park and was used as the background context for the park planning process.

After an extensive public process the final concept plan for Terra Nova was adopted by Council in 2004.

Passive Open Space was a key feature of the plan and included picnic tables, open grass areas for informal play, and a children's play environment.

Over the last eight years, the phased implementation of the park plan has been guided by the adopted park vision:

"to preserve the unique rural character while providing a balance between agricultural heritage, wildlife conservation, and recreational uses."

To date, the City has received two national and two provincial awards for the innovative approach to park development and programming at TNRP. Much of the work in the park has focussed on stabilizing, preserving, and enhancing the environmental and cultural assets of the park including daylighting the buried slough, constructing the community gardens and Sharing Farm, and restoring heritage buildings. In addition, strong partnerships have been established with a number of community groups including the Sharing Farm Society, the Richmond School Yard Society and Food Security Society.

The Concept Plan

The following is an outline of the planning process and a description of the proposed Play Environment Concept Plan.

The Play Environment Vision and Design Guidelines

The overarching goals for the TNRP play environment are to:

- 1) Create a unique play experience that complements and adds to a growing variety of play environments throughout the City; and
- 2) Respond and respect the unique landscape of Terra Nova Rural Park.

The vision for the TNRP play environment (Attachment 1) is to create a nature and history oriented play experience for all ages and abilities.

The Plan took into consideration the following design guidelines:

- Design a unique, play space appropriate for Terra Nova that celebrates and brings to life the many layers of the site's histories;
- Protect sensitive habitats, limiting play space to specific areas with lesser or more resilient habitat value;
- Use play experience to draw people to the park and allow children and adults to discover its multiple, interesting layers;
- Extend use of River Road as a recreational corridor;
- Encourage local schools to have a special relationship with the site;
- Provide picnic space for families and groups of 30-100 people adjacent to the play space;
- Design an inclusive, accessible, safe and secure play experience with open sightlines in proximity to parking and washrooms; and
- Create places that are comfortable and interesting for toddlers as well as exciting and challenging for bigger kids.

The Planning Process

In order to design an imaginative and inclusive play environment a consultation process was undertaken that involved five meetings with *Big Kids* (community and staff adults) and *Little Kids* (Grade 4,5,6 children from Spul'u'kwuk and Gilmore Elementary schools). The *Little Kids* process involved staff presentations on Terra Nova heritage and wildlife followed by the children describing in words what play meant to them, making clay models and drawings, and even creating a song and dance routine. These children, who garden in Terra Nova, showed a real sensitivity to the landscape and incorporated many natural features in their 'ideal' play experience.

The Big Kids first workshop focussed on identifying universal and memorable play experiences that the participating adults remembered from their childhood. These experiences were captured in illustrations and compared with the Little Kids experiences to seek out common themes. The second workshop was held to review the initial design plan and ideas.

On June 6th, 2012 an Open House was also held at the Thompson Community Centre for the public to review and comment on the proposed Concept Plan and play features. Approximately 50 people attended the Open House. Feedback ranged from overwhelming support and excitement for the play environment to concerns for preservation of the natural elements of the park.

The Concept Plan and Play Themes

The proposed play environment (Attachment 1) is located at the north end of the Park and west of the slough. It takes advantage of a beautifully treed homestead landscape, a former horse paddock area, and the recently constructed 6.0 meter viewing mound. This site was identified in the original 2004 Plan as an opportunity for recreational uses compared to other areas that had higher ecological values. It was the most disturbed and impacted landscape in the park due to the former uses and a major clean up was required to allow for public access and the development of the play environment.

This location in the park also has excellent access from River Road and the Middle Arm and West Dyke trail system. In addition, the mature treed area of the former homestead provides shade and creates a contained outdoor ‘room’, the paddock area to the south is open and sunny and allows for play and running and agricultural interpretation, and the mound is ideal for climbing and sliding.

To support the success of the play environment, a picnic area will be created on the east side of the slough in amongst a heritage and newly planted orchard. Oversized harvest tables will accommodate larger groups and could be programmed with a variety of activities such as a cooking class or an art class in the park. The orchard and the open field area will also be used for smaller tables and/or portable furniture allowing people to create their own spaces.

The proposed plan layout and play features support six key themes that respond to the Big Kids/ Little Kids input and the design guidelines. These themes are:

History and Heritage – The many layers of historic uses will be incorporated into the play environment. Materials and artefacts from past uses – farming implements, tractor tires, paddock fences are utilized in the design. The tracings of architectural forms such as stilt homes, original sheds and houses and property lines serve as an inspiration for the play structures and layout of the area.

Natural Elements- Play will encourage engagement and exploration of the surrounding natural environment of Terra Nova, demonstrating habitat value in the play experience and encouraging children to view the natural world through different eyes. The design will encourage sensitive interpretation of natural features like the slough, existing hedgerow, the mound, grassy fields and ditches.

Imagination- The play environment will provide areas for exploration and imaginative play, collaboration opportunities and free play. Strongly connected to the inherent cultural and natural features of Terra Nova Park, these open-ended spaces allow children to explore through navigating a maze of their own design, crossing the slough on a rope ferry, or quietly observing and exploring areas adjacent to the play experience. The meadow maze would be designed to be variable from season to season and could include children as part of the design. The sand factory allows for manipulation and shaping of sand while recalling the dunes of the Fraser River estuary

Thrill and Movement- Swinging, sliding, spinning and movement were identified as highly desired play elements consistently in the consultation with children and adults. The Spinnery encourages cooperative play and will accommodate a range of ages and abilities. Hammock swings and trampolines provide a variety of thrill-inducing activities. A double zipline that allows kids to race in tandem forms part of a circuit that includes a hillside range of slides.

Height and Prospect- The play area design takes advantage of existing conditions – the tree canopy of the homestead site and the big mound that provide opportunities for long views, lookouts, climbing, sliding and rolling. A large climbing structure called the Gymcrazium is hidden in the tree canopy of mature cypress, horse chestnut and maples and provides views from a different prospect. The north side of the 6.0 meter mound is the perfect tobogganing hill and edge for a slide, ziplines and other climbing structures.

Supporting Features- The site design will require other ancillary spaces to support a successful play environment. Additional parking is proposed in the park and will be integrated into an orchard that will mask the parking and allows pedestrians to have priority over cars. Picnic areas will be located in close proximity to the main play area and will provide a range of seating and tables for different sized groups. Wayfinding signage and trails will allow people to move easily through the site and create a number of walking loops.

Next Steps

Subject to Council approval of the Concept Plan, staff will commence with site preparation and phased construction of the play environment in the summer of 2012. Completion is anticipated in the spring of 2013.

Financial Impact

Funding for capital improvements and operating of \$1.0 million and \$20,000 respectively was approved in 2012 as part of the 5 Year Financial Plan (2012-2016).

Conclusion

The Terra Nova Rural Park has become a very special and unique asset within Richmond's parks and open space system. The diversity of natural, cultural and recreational uses will be further enhanced with implementation of the play environment.



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THE VISION

In 2003, the City began the park planning process with a series of well attended Open Houses. Community feedback was very positive with 96% approval of the Park plan and park features.

The Vision adopted by Council in 2004 included **Passive Open Space**. The intent was to have areas and features that allow for informal leisure uses such as picnic tables, open grass areas for informal play, creative children's play facilities, new planting and washrooms.

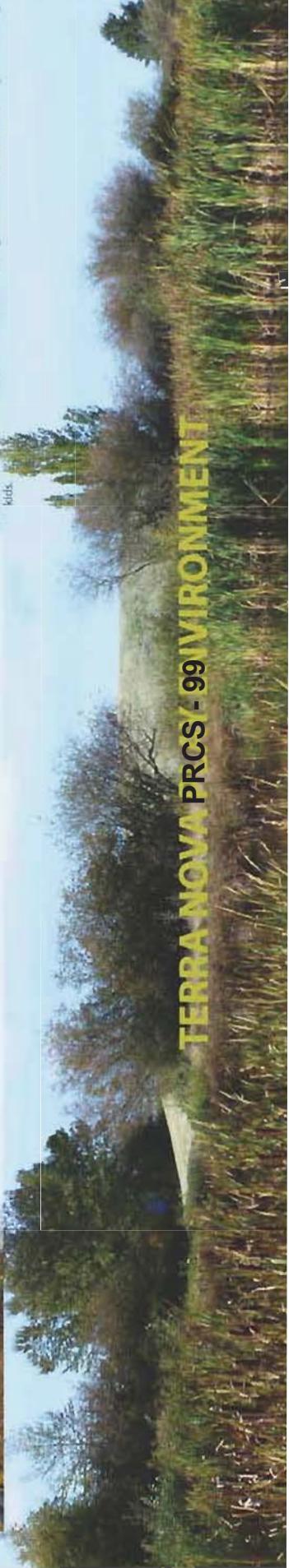


2004 Terra Nova Rural Park Master Plan



2004 Terra Nova Rural Park Vision

"...to preserve the unique rural character while providing a balance between agricultural heritage, wildlife conservation, and recreational uses."



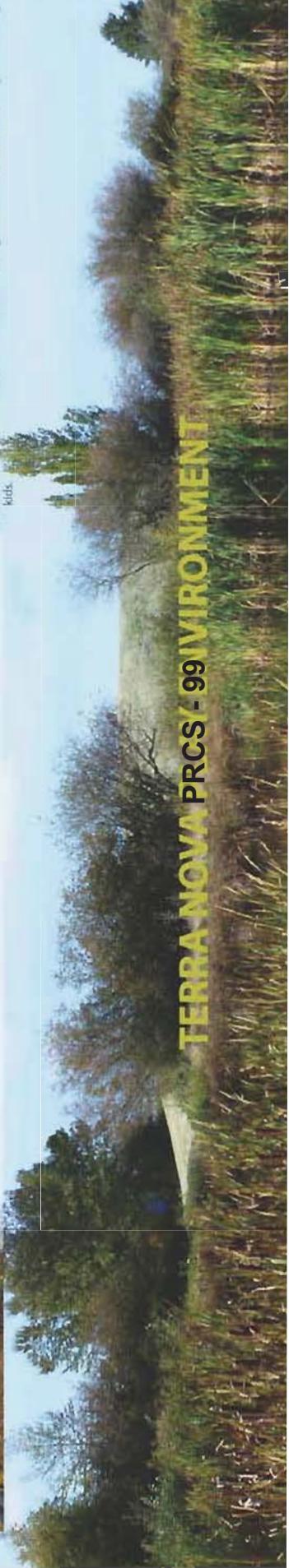
TERRANOVA PRCS - 99 ENVIRONMENT



design guidelines

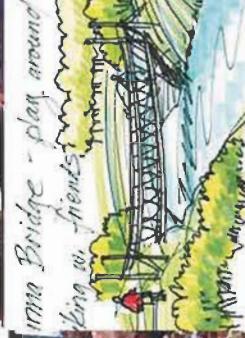
- Design a unique play space appropriate for Terra Nova that celebrates and brings to life the many layers of the site's histories.
- Protect sensitive habitats, limiting play space to specific areas with less habitat value.
- Use play experience to draw people to the park and allow children and adults to discover its multiple interesting layers.
- Extend use of River Road as a recreational corridor.
- Encourage local schools to have a special relationship with the site.
- Provide picnic space for families and groups of 30-100 people adjacent to the play space;
- Design an inclusive, accessible, safe and secure play experience with open sightlines in proximity to parking and washrooms; and
- Create places that are comfortable and interesting for toddlers as well as exciting and challenging for bigger kids.

2012 Play Vision
"...a nature and history oriented play experience for all ages and abilities



OUR PROCESS



Dec 6 2011	In order to design the most imaginative and inclusive play experience possible, we enriched our design process by engaging with a group of adults we called The Big Kids. With the understanding that certain ways of playing are universally significant, we gathered the Big Kids and asked them to tell us about their most memorable childhood play experiences. Their stories were captured in illustrations (shown below) by Lori Brown.			
Jan 11 2012	Little Kids workshop at James Gilmore Elementary school. After a discussion about Terra Nova—the site of their classroom garden, we asked them to describe [in pictures, stories, models, and songs] what their ultimate play experience would be at Terra Nova Park. Some of the models and drawings they made are shown below and throughout these boards.			
Feb 1 2012	We visited the "Little Kids" class of 3rd and 6th graders at James Gilmore Elementary school. After a discussion about Terra Nova—the site of their classroom garden, we asked them to describe [in pictures, stories, models, and songs] what their ultimate play experience would be at Terra Nova Park. Some of the models and drawings they made are shown below and throughout these boards.			
Apr 27 2012	Little Kids on-site play exploration			
May 2 2012	Big Kids Design Direction Verification			
June 6 2012	We gathered the Big Kids for a second workshop at Terra Nova where we updated them on our design process, showed them our initial design directions, and asked for their input on the look & feel of play spaces. They also shared with us their memories of Richmond and how Terra Nova's unique heritage can be referenced in the Play Experience.			

TERRA NOVA PLAY ENVIRONMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

3

BIG KIDS
Word Play

FREEDOM ENERGY OPENNESS
UNSUPERVISED ADVENTURE
COLLABORATION MAINTENANCE
MYSTERY IMAGINATION INCLUSIVE
SENSE OF DANGER FRIENDSHIP
UNSTRUCTURED IMAGINATION
RISK IMAGINATION GIGGLING FOOD
ADVENTURE INNOVATIVE EXCITEMENT
UNEXPECTED IMAGINATION LEARNING
FUN NO BOUNDARIES SENSES HEALTHY
IMAGINATION DISCOVERY OUTSIDE FREE
CREATIVITY NATURAL FARMING LISTENING



"...I want to play on something that makes me feel sick!"



"We want to cross the water and it HAS to MOVE."



"There should be an adult hangout area."



"We want to see through glass into the water!"



"I want to get up really high"

TERRA NOVA PRCSY-101 ENVIRONMENT

LITTLE KIDS
Word Play

GAMES ACTIVITIES FRIENDS
FALLING DOWN FEED DUCKS
RUN SAFARI CATCH BUGS
SKIPPING EXERCISE
AWESOME MENESS ENJOY
GETTING WET SOCCER
SPORTS CLIMB TREES
FUN CHEERFUL ADVENTURE
EXCITEMENT FREEDOM
HAPPINESS

what's the **first** thing
you think of
when you hear
the word
play?



"...you climb up, you slide down, you climb up, you slide down...it's like a pattern!"



"...you climb up, you slide down, you climb up, you slide down...it's like a pattern!"



"There should be an adult hangout area."

WHAT WE LEARNED

Word play revealed that play occurs in common themes...

...around which we created a design framework...

- Recognize that **edges**, height and hollow spaces are potent places of **prospect and refuge**.
- Provide loose natural materials for endless manipulation and assembled parts for **creative deconstruction**.

- Equip for open-ended **physical play** that **challenges** children to go beyond what they previously thought possible.

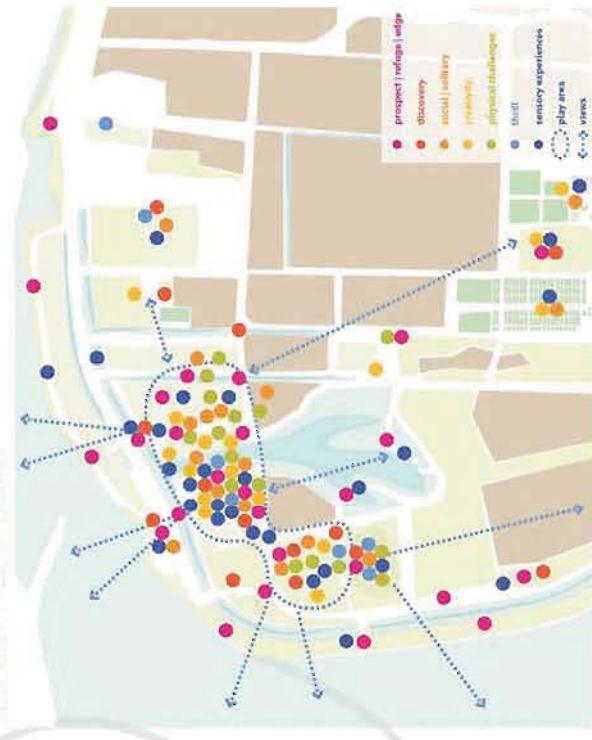
- Incite a hair-raising response to environment as **vivid sensorium**.

- Inspire risk-taking, **thrill-seeking**, fun, and adventure.

- Accommodate both **military** and **sociality**-engaged activities, as well as **different play preferences** across gender, age, ability and inclination.

- Appreciate the potential for profound **discovery** in play and foster an enduring sense of discovery into additional...

...which we used to audit the site for play value in order to locate the play area within the park to take advantage of existing natural and cultural features...



PLAY CONCEPT PLAN

PLAY EXPERIENCE THEMES

HISTORY AND HERITAGE

NATURAL ELEMENTS

IMAGINATION

THRILL AND MOVEMENT

HEIGHT AND PROSPECT

SUPPORTING FEATURES



TERRA NORRCSS-A103PERIENCE

HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Miniature Farm

"This used to be someone's backyard, where kids used to play."



"Can we use fishing nets like from the cannery?"

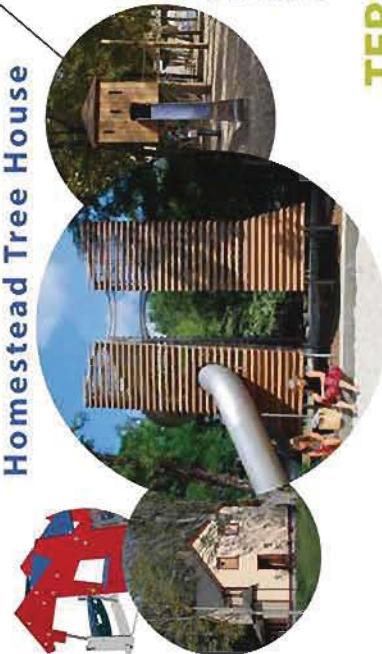
From First Nations, to farm homesteads and backyards, to cannery activity, the many layers of historic uses in Terra Nova will be incorporated into the play experience. Materials and artifacts from past uses – farming implements, tractor tires, equestrian fences – will be utilized in the design. The tracings of architectural forms – like stilt homes, original sheds and houses and property lines – will serve as inspiration for the play structures and overall organization.

Fishing Net Gymcrazium



Net climbing structures supported by wooden and steel posts, reference the net drying racks which existed at the Terra Nova Cannery.

Homestead Tree House



A play house will be perched in the trees in the homestead play area. This is the same location where the homestead house was located historically. The play house will encourage make believe play - but also incorporate a climbing element - to get into it, and a big slide.

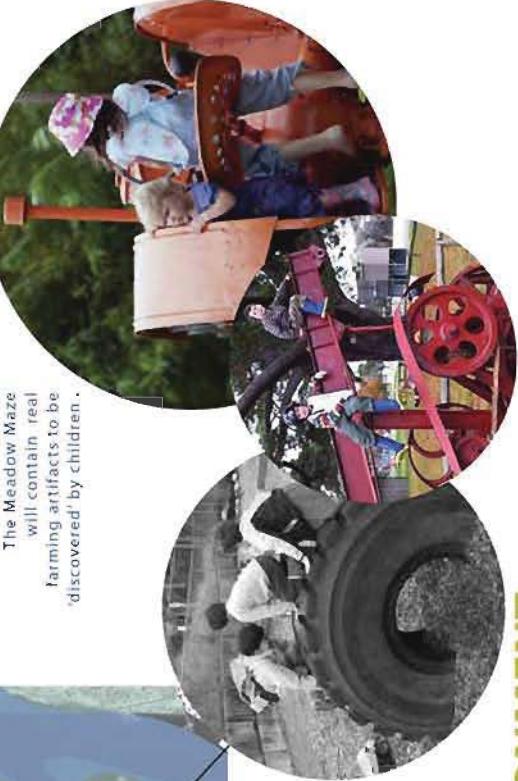
Paddock Fence Maze

The Paddocks site at Terra Nova is still crossed by rustic fences leftover from its time as a horse paddock. Some existing fences can be retained and fixed, and new ones built, creating a maze like feature for climbing, running, and jumping over.



Meadow Maze Farming Relics

The Meadow Maze will contain real farming artifacts to be 'discovered' by children.



NATURAL ELEMENTS

Rockery

The Rockery is simply a small hill made up of large boulders. It provides a landscape feature which doubles as a climbing challenge.



"It would be cool to have a crossing over the water."

"We want to see through glass into the water!"

Access to Water



Play at Terra Nova isn't just about thrill or excitement. It will also be about engagement and exploration of the surrounding natural environment of Terra Nova, demonstrating habitat value in the play experience and encouraging children to view the natural landscape through different eyes. The design will encourage sensitive interpretation of natural features like the slough, existing hedgerows, the mound, grassy fields and ditches, to enrich the play experience and encourage small and delightful discoveries.

Navigators Rope Ferry

A rope ferry is simply a raft which is tethered to a rope, anchored to each bank of the slough, and powered by pulling the raft along the rope. Our version will have enclosed sides for safety. The ferry could have a viewing window in its floor, allowing kids to see the water.



"It would be cool to have a crossing over the water."

"We want to see through glass into the water!"

Celebrating Existing Trees



Existing Trees are key elements in the play experience design. The Golden False Cypress and Horse Chestnuts anchor the Homestead, while the Poplar Meadow Maze. The design will work to make sure that the trees are kept healthy.

Seasonal Meadow Maze



A seasonal Meadow Maze is cut every summer. The design can be altered from year to year. In the winter the maze could be created with bales of hay. The maze will contain a variety of discoveries within it.

Fields for Free Play



Much of the land of Terra Nova Park is environmentally valuable and rare old field habitat. Designating a few tall grass areas for children to run and jump allows them the quintessential experience of rural adventure play which they may not get a chance to experience otherwise.



Docks on either side of the slough allow for confined access to water. This means that kids can learn about wetland habitat and can touch the water, but fences and dense vegetation bordering the slough and ditches limit the children's access.

IMAGINATION

Listening to Water and Wind

A water listening wall, singing stone, Wind Harp and other listening devices are proposed to enhance the appreciation of the natural movements of the site. These elements may be in 'outposts' around the park.



"Sometimes it's nice to just have a little quiet time."

"Ahhhhh!" Fifth Grader lying in the grass.

The play experience will provide areas for exploration and imaginative play, collaboration opportunities and free play. Strongly connected to the inherent cultural and natural features of Terra Nova park, these open-ended spaces allow kids to explore and understand the inherent characteristics of the site, whether it be a navigating a maze of their own design through the horse paddock, crossing the slough on a rope ferry, or quietly observing and exploring areas adjacent to the play experience. The meadow maze would be designed to be variable from season to season and could include children's drawings as part of the design. The sand factory allows for manipulation and shaping of sand while recalling the dunes of the Fraser River estuary.

Telescopes, Kaleidoscopes, and Prisms



Carefully placed telescopes, kaleidoscopes and other viewing elements will heighten the experience of the park.

Post Forest

The Post Forest is a grouping of vertical logs at one of the main entrances to the Homestead. This acts as an entrance gateway, but is also a play feature in and of itself.



Across Slough Talk Tubes

At the docking points of the rope ferry, talking tubes will allow children to communicate secrets back and forth across the water without having to yell.



Hiding Spots



Hiding spots made of living willow, or hollow logs, will be placed in the park. These may be found in the Meadow Maze, or in various other locations around the park, to be found by accident while on a walk with the family.



Sand Factory



The Sand Factory is a collection of play equipment which allows children to move sand by using pulleys, chutes, trolleys, cranes... The activity provides a great tool for playing pretend.

THRILL AND MOVEMENT

Bouncing Grove



A protected area between the hazelnut trees and the Rockery is home to several small in-ground bouncing mats. The mats are fun for children of all ages.

"... I want to play on something that makes me feel sick!"

"We need a zip line for sure!"

We heard consistently in our consultation with children and adults that swinging, sliding, spinning and movement were highly desired play elements. The Spinnery encourages cooperative play and will accommodate a range of ages and abilities. Hammock swings and trampolines provide a variety of thrill-inducing activities. A double zipline, that allows kids to race in tandem, anchors a play zone at the base of the mound and forms part of a circuit with a hillside tangle of slides.

The Spinnery



The Spinnery is a collection of spinning play equipment that provides social and solitary play experiences for younger and older children.

Swinging



A variety of traditional swings and swinging elements are proposed for the play experience. Big swings, infant swings, and swings for several children at a time will be included.



Racing Hedgerow Ziplines

Ziplines are extremely popular with children. A double zipline allows for races!



Slides

Three slide experiences are proposed. One large slide exits from the Homestead House. One small slide for younger children is attached to the Little Gymrazium. The most exciting slides are the Hillslide tangle. They are tucked onto the side of the big mound.

HEIGHT AND PROSPECT

Fishing Net Gymcrazium

"I want to get up really high."



"I can see the water from here!" Fifth Grader in Tree

The play area design takes advantage of existing conditions – the tree canopy of the homestead site and the big mound – that provide opportunities for long views, lookouts, climbing, sliding and rolling from a point of elevation. A large climbing structure called the Gymcrazium is hidden in the tree canopy of mature cypress, horse chestnut, and maple to create the sense of climbing in the forest, while still allowing views from a point of prospect. The mound edge is the perfect tobogganing hill and edge for a slide, ziplines and other climbing structures.



The Fishing Net Gymcrazium is a structure which wraps itself through the Homestead starting as a tall wood supported structure, bridging over the pathway, and then ending up as a lower steel supported structure for younger children. The Gymcrazium includes bouncing, swinging, sliding, and climbing elements.

Eagles nest Lookout Tower
The Eagle's Nest Lookout Tower is proposed for a later stage of the park's development. It would be located near the centre of the park, along the route from parking to the play experience. This allows children and adults to appreciate the agricultural arrangement of Terra Nova's fields.



Climbing, Rolling, Sliding Slope

The north side of the mound is especially good for rolling and sledding. The play experience will aim to provide for the natural play use of the hill by keeping a clear area at its base. Access to the Hillslide Tangle is by steps, or by a challenging climbing route up the side of the hill.



Bridge

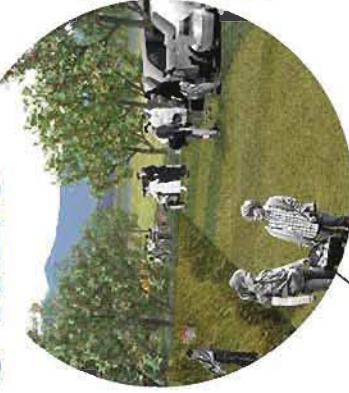
The Gymcrazium spans across a walking surface and at this point becomes a bridge! Children will really feel that they are in a special tree top world.

TERRA NOVA PLAY ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORTING FEATURES

Parking Orchard

Though parking is necessary to support such an exciting play experience, the park is a sensitive environment and any parking must be implemented very carefully into the site. This proposal is to design a parking lot that is also an orchard. The orchard trees and fences hide the cars and the experience of driving into an orchard enhances one's entrance into the park.



"Provide a route for wheelchairs, tricycles and strollers."

"This would be a great place for a big picnic."

"Can you hide parking so that it's not visible?"

The site design will require other ancillary spaces to support a successful play experience, but each should also respond to the unique conditions of the park environment. Additional parking is proposed in the park but integrated in a heritage orchard that essentially hides parking from view and makes parking an event. Picnic areas will be located in close proximity to play and will provide a range of seating and tables for different



Picnicking for Large Groups and Families

Picnicking is an important activity in the park. Smaller tables for family gatherings and larger harvest tables will provide for many enjoyable meals in the park. A group of large tables are provided next to the homestead play area so that families can picnic and play at the same time.



Seating

Benches in the same language as the existing benches will be provided in the play experience. Multiple seating options will be central to the play areas allowing parents comfortable places to enjoy the play area. In the Homestead, a central deck is proposed. Seating is provided along its edge, but also on benches on top of it.



Circulation and Accessibility

Routes through the park and to the play experience will provide a sequence of experiences as one moves through the landscape. The play areas own major routes, and all of its surfaces, other than the sand area, are all accessible. A wayfinding design will create signage which is appropriate to the site, made of materials which speak of the park's agricultural and industrial past.



Thresholds

Terra Nova Park is home to many beautiful thresholds, through hedgerows and along old driveways. The play plan aims to create these experiences along major routes to play.

