

The following is design criteria used by Community Development Department staff when planning park renovations:

Design Criteria:

- Playgrounds besides structures can be meeting grounds for a neighborhood, places to be seen and to observe, places to play with friends, to socialize in groups or to be solitary.
- Successful playgrounds work both for children, their caregivers and for everyone else. A good playground offers lots of opportunity for play while also making supervision manageable and comfortable for adults.
- Play is the main way children learn about themselves, others and the world around them. Since socializing with other children is a major component of play, children learn to cooperate, to accomplish tasks, resolve conflicts, to share, etc.
- Play/learning environments need to offer levels of difficulty, challenge and age appropriate play experiences.
- Playgrounds need to be safe. Safety does not mean building padded enclosures where children will never scrape a knee or have a minor fall. Rather it means creating a place where kids are free to interact with others, and to test their physical limits without serious consequence should they fail.
- Some new challenges facing all playground designers include current safety and accessibility guidelines. These are givens. Newer play structures require more space or "safety zones" than a decade ago.

(For example swings require more space and fewer seats (two) per frame. In addition more play components or events on a structure need to be wheelchair accessible, and larger structures need more than one means of wheelchair access.

- City playgrounds and especially school play yards are typically crowded therefore the play structures need to be chosen based on their capacity to accommodate the greatest number of children possible in a small area. In addition the structures should have multiple ways to be accessed to help avoid "bottlenecks" and to maintain a good distribution of foot traffic.

- Besides play structures, there should be spaces that are flexible and allow different activities to take place.
- We use only products and equipment with a proven track record of success in public spaces, quality park furniture and equipment, and we tend to use products and construction materials within the ability of the DPW to maintain.
- Playgrounds should not be entirely artificial or plastic environments. Urban children especially may need to scamper over a rock, have trees to climb and plantings nearby that attract birds and insects.
- Playgrounds need to be inviting to frequent users and attractive to passersby who may never set foot inside the play area. Good playgrounds are an asset to the surrounding neighborhood.