Healthy Parks and Playgrounds

A new old way to think about play and public space

Elm & Hampshire Plaza February, 2014



Why does the city care about **play and the public realm**?

We dedicate **space for play**

because it is a **public good**. Play is important to the

Public play shows how a community values **imagination** and **creativity** lay is important to the health and development of **individuals** and the **community** at large

Play invites participation from all segments of the community

How should we plan for play?







Play is **NOT**

- Just for little kids
- Just burning calories
- Just wasting time
- Just for playgrounds



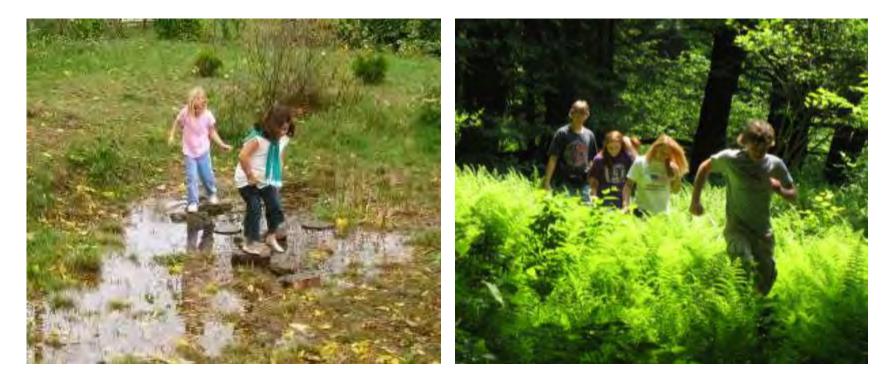
Start at the beginning – What is Play?

How is play **healthy**?

- Part of human development
- Part of public life



Play is an integral part of human nature



- Play happens everywhere
- Play happens all the time
- Play is for everyone (kids are just better at it!)

Play is free, often unstructured and can be messy



- Play is a process, an activity
- Purposeful, but not a means to an end
- Self-directed
- Participatory
- Improvisational

Play is fun and makes people happy



- Emotional health and well-being
- Lifelong benefits

Play is a self-directed learning process, self-initiated

- Active thinking
- Players make their own rules
- Independent learning
- Applied knowledge
- Testing ideas
- Following ideas to conclusions



Play is exploratory, creative and imaginative



- Exploring the unknown
- Building new things
- Storytelling
- Not unlike the process of artists, innovators

Play is physical, experimental, challenging and sometimes risky

- Uses energy
- Improves circulation, reduces stress
- Coordination, balance and motor skills
- Thinking and movement



Play is learning about the outside world





- Natural and urban
- Using all senses
- How objects and materials interact
- Manipulating materials, objects
- Plants, soils, sand, water
- Fresh air, sunshine, greenery

Play can be solitary or social



- Sharing
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Competition
- Trust

- Reflection •
- Introspection
- Independence ullet



Parks and playgrounds should be **integrated play environments**, not just collections of play features in an enclosed area





Meaningful play opportunities should be available to all levels of ability and ages





Play opportunities should be provided during all seasons of the year and all weather conditions

Beyond Parks and Playgrounds





- Inviting play throughout the public realm
- Inviting all ages to participate



Vision for the Future



The Public Realm (e.g., Sidewalks, Plazas)

- Playfulness and whimsy in unexpected places
- Spaces for imaginative interaction
- Spaces for socializing, community

Parks and Playgrounds

- Different parks for different needs – one size does NOT fit all!
- More focus on "environment" than "equipment"



www.cambridgema.gov/healthyplaygrounds