Children Discovering Nature in Northwest Minnesota: Implementing Natural Playspaces

Interim report 9/23/11

prepared by
Daniel Handeen, Research Fellow, CSBR
Virajita Singh, Research Fellow, CSBR
## Contents

1 Northwest Minnesota Natural Play Spaces Design Timeline  
2 Northwest Minnesota Natural Play Spaces Phase I Project Partners  
3 Project Introduction and Orientation  
  3.1 The Problem  
  3.2 Partnership  
  3.3 Proposal  
4 Process  
  4.1 Getting the Players Together  
  4.2 NOT Starting from Scratch  
  4.3 A Fresh Perspective  
  4.4 From the Telephone Line to the Ground  
  4.5 Crookston’s Castle Park: Meeting #1  
  4.6 Warren’s Island Park: Meeting #1  
  4.7 Compiling the Evidence  
  4.8 Interpreting the Input  
  4.9 Effectiveness Evaluation  
  4.10 Warren’s Island Park: Meeting #2  
  4.11 Crookston’s Castle Park: Meeting #2  
  4.12 Design Development and Refinement  
  4.13 Implementation  
5 Next Steps  
  5.1 Attachment 1  
  5.2 Attachment 2  
  5.3 Attachment 3  
  5.4 Attachment 4
Northwest Minnesota Natural Play Spaces Design Timeline

- **Children and Nature Conference**: June 15, 2010
- **Community design input workshops Round 1 in Warren & Crookston**: Summer 2010
- **Children’s input workshop in Crookston**: June 23, 2011
- **Community design input workshop Round 2 in Warren**: July 27, 2011
- **Community design input workshop Round 2 in Crookston**: Aug 2, 2011
- **Installation begins!**: 09.23.2011
- **Creation of Advisory Committee**: 09.23.2011
- **Grand Opening of Crookston and Warren Natural Play Spaces**: Fall 2011
- **Art Installation**: Spring 2012
- **Ongoing additions...**: Summer 2012
Northwest Minnesota Natural Play Spaces Phase I Project Partners

The City of Crookston, MN
The City of Warren, MN
North Valley Public Health (Warren, MN)
Frances Tougas - North Valley Health Center/SHIP Coordinator

Polk County Public Health (Crookston, MN)
Sarah Reese - SHIP Coordinator
Kirsten Fagerlund - Interim SHIP Coordinator
Sheri Altepeter - Executive Director

Northwest Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership
Linda Kingery - Executive Director

U of M Crookston
Eric Castle - L. Arch. professor
Kristine Neu - L. Arch. student

U of M Twin Cities
Eileen Harwood, Ph. D. - U of M School of Public Health Researcher
Annie Fedorowicz - Public Health grad student, Evaluation Researcher
Kristen Murray - L. Arch. grad student, CSBR Research Assistant
Virajita Singh - Research Fellow & DCR Program coordinator, CSBR
Dan Handeen - Research Fellow, CSBR

Children in Nature Network
Laura Bell - NW MN Coordinator

Northwest Minnesota Arts Council
Mara Wittman - Director

Marshall County Early Childhood Initiative

The Warren Jaycees
Forward

This report is an interim report prepared at the conclusion of the first of three phases for the Children and Nature project. It describes the process, phasing, and results of the first phase in order to provide a format and share successes of the project, and to inform stakeholders and interested parties of the current state of the project.

The nature-based play spaces in Crookston and Warren are two of several regional installations under the Children Discovering Nature in Northwest Minnesota Project. The project team includes Daniel Handeen and Virajita Singh, both research fellows at the U of M, Twin Cities Center for Sustainable Building Research (CSBR), and Linda Kingery, executive director of the Northwest Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership (NWRSDP). Sarah Reese, Polk County Public Health Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Coordinator and Kirsten Fagerlund, SHIP staff, served as the liaison between the community of Crookston and the project team. Frances Tougas, North Valley Public Health Statewide Health Improvement (SHIP) coordinator, served a similar role in Warren. A portion of the financial support for the planning and implementation of each play space is being provided by a grant received from the Otto Bremer Foundation and the U of M Office of Community Engagement for Health’s Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

Project Introduction and Orientation

The Problem
Childhood obesity is a growing national, regional and local problem, impacting greater numbers of children at earlier and earlier ages. Despite the growing body of evidence of health benefits from physical activity, most adults and children do not get enough physical activity. The Polk County Behavioral Risk Summary states that 40.4% adults reported insufficient levels of physical activity (Behavioral Health Risks for Polk County Adults, 2008). In addition, 21.8% of Polk County students reported insufficient physical
activity and 16.4% reported no weekly physical activity. The latter number was significantly greater than the corresponding proportion of sedentary students in the state of Minnesota (10.4%) (Minnesota Student Survey, 2007). Physical activity is a proven determinant of health and is a fundamental strategy to promote quality of life and to reduce the risk and severity of chronic illnesses.

**Partnership**

To address this problem, the University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership is partnering with the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Northwest Minnesota Cluster (http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/), the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and Crookston campuses and two communities in northwestern Minnesota to design and implement natural play areas (Discovery Areas). This project continues the work emerging from a very successful “Connecting Children and Nature Conference” held on Sept. 29, 2010 at the University of Minnesota Crookston funded by the 2010 Challenge grant to Rydell National Wildlife Refuge. (See summary posted at this link: http://umcrookston.edu/childrenandnature)

Several partners are involved in the overall design process:

- **U of M Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership** provides project coordination and guidance.
- **Northwest Minnesota SHIP Community Leadership Team** provides the framework for developing nature play areas in the context of its community intervention to increase physical activity.
- **Center for Sustainable Building Research**’s Design for Community Resilience Program at the College of Design, University of Minnesota Twin Cities provides overall guidance for the design process.
- **University of Minnesota Crookston** hosts a site on campus; faculty and students in Horticulture and Landscape Design collaborate with the College of Design in community engagement and design process, and students in class and club activities work on projects.
- **Tri-Valley Childcare Resource and Referral** is an advocate and provides resources for each of the community sites.
Proposal
Two communities were chosen for initial implementation based on available support, community interest, available park space, and likelihood of successful partnership. The cities of Crookston and Warren both had park land that was suitable for implementing natural play areas, as well as interested and engaged community members. These two communities represent the pilot phase of a series of five initial natural play space installations, and it is hoped that the success of these projects will encourage the development of natural play spaces in communities across northwestern MN.

This rich partnership leverages the priority of the NW SHIP region, namely to create more active communities by increasing physical activity through getting children, families and other

Crookston’s Castle Park, with schematic layout for future installations. The placeholder for the natural play space is the circle in the middle.
residents outdoors. These natural play spaces will provide safe and convenient opportunities to be active, explore and expand their innate desire to learn based on the unique characteristics of the natural environment. We know that children who are active outdoors are happier, smarter and healthier. In addition to the physical health benefits, children benefit from time in nature in many ways.

This report documents the process of implementation thus far. It provides a timeline of the steps taken, identifies the people involved, and their stories.

**Process**

**Getting the Players Together**

As mentioned in the introduction, this project was a result of collaborations begun at the Children and Nature conference held in Sept. 2010. Linda Kingery at the NWRSDP and SHIP coordinator Sarah Reese from Polk county began identifying potential partners for the project. These connections were crucial to gain local engagement and feedback, and to ensure that the health improvement goals were being met.

In addition to community engagement, there was the need for design assistance. Eric Castle, who teaches horticulture and landscape installation at the U of M Crookston, and one of his students, Kristine Neu, funded by the UROC program, came to the table with the ability to both design and install what emerged from the community’s suggestions.

At the U of M Twin Cities, CSBR’s Design for Community Resilience program provides design assistance for communities across Minnesota, and this project was an excellent fit for their program. In addition, landscape architecture grad student Kristen Murray, supported by the U of M’s Center for Urban and Rural Affairs’ Community Assistanceship Program, joined CSBR to bring precedent research and further design assistance.

The project got rolling with a series of weekly conference calls to define each person’s roles and responsibilities. Through the calls, an integrated design approach was created. This approach consisted of an initial community meeting where members of the community gave ideas and identified their concerns and priorities. Following this would be a design period where the comments from the community meeting would be interpreted and synthesized into a number of possible layouts. Then another community meeting
would be held to present the layouts and gather feedback and critique.

The initial community meetings were convened by Sarah in Crookston and Frances in Warren. They sent out invitations to targeted individuals, and encouraged them to invite others, as well. The invitations were sent to city administrators, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) coordinators, daycare providers, doctors, family members, and community service clubs. Additionally, signs were posted at various community locations to publicize the event.

NOT Starting from Scratch

One of the most important things that helped provide a common understanding was to see what has been done already. Both Kristen and Kristine performed extensive research on nature-based play spaces that had been implemented nationally and internationally. By gathering images, text, and examples, they were able to provide the team with a strong sense of possibility, and aid in creating a framework that helped other community members see potential outcomes.

Kristen gathered images from other natural play spaces and excerpted information from books and reports on the subject, and compiled them into a slideshow that formally introduced the concept of nature-based play, and a number of ways it could be fostered.

A Fresh Perspective

Meanwhile, Kristine analyzed the potential sites for the two play spaces. The city of Crookston had a park on the West edge of town that was undergoing some big changes, and the design was evolving rapidly. Along with the inclusion of a dog park and an RV camp, it had a children’s natural playspace delineated, but not developed.

Because of its lack of established infrastructure, its proximity to the Red Lake River and the adjacent woods, Castle Park obviously had a lot of potential to incorporate a natural play space.

In the City of Warren lay a quiet piece of land called Island Park. There was a picnic shelter, restrooms, a basketball hoop, and some playground equipment, but it seemed that the space was underutilized.
Using aerial photos, along with photos taken while on site, Kristine was able to assemble a presentation that would introduce everyone to the spaces, and show them a little of what the spaces had to offer from a designer’s viewpoint. The aerial views would also help people who were familiar with the parks get a fresh perspective on what they knew already.

**From the Telephone Line to the Ground**
The project really got underway in the summer of 2011, with two kick-off meetings taking place on June 15. This was the first time many of the project players had a chance to meet face-to-face, and the first time they were able to share what they had been working on.

**Crookston’s Castle Park: Meeting #1**
The first meeting was held at the Sheriff’s office in Crookston, which was just a few blocks from the area being considered for a natural playspace. The project team setup for the meeting, and then had an interview with the local radio station, KROX. The interview would serve as a way for many members of the community to know about the proposed play space installation and how they could get involved.

By the time the KROX interview wrapped up, a large group of community members had gathered to hear the presentations and provide input. The group consisted of a wide variety of citizens, including city administrators, headstart teachers, university professors, city council members, the park and rec director, a pastor, a pediatrician, and a few children. The meeting started
with a light lunch, over which everyone introduced themselves and share why they were present.

Fortunately, Crookston’s Castle Park is just a few blocks from the Sheriff’s office. After lunch, the whole group was able to walk over to the park and see first hand what space was available. While at the park, Kristine provided an overview of the physical area, giving everyone some context with which to approach the design. The group leisurely walked around the site, sharing stories and knowledge about Castle Park and its features.

The group returned to the Sheriff’s office, where Kristen gave her presentation on the natural play space concept, and provided examples of how it has been done elsewhere. She described how natural play spaces encourage vigorous, active play, as well as intricate, imaginative play. In particular, she identified the primary characteristics of a natural play space: 1) They use natural materials (such as wood, rock, sand, mud, water, and vegetation) to create the play area instead of using fabricated metal or plastic components, 2) They have a defined boundary so that both children and adults recognize the extents of the area, 2) They are designed by the community, for the community, and are subject to evolution and change over time.

Kristine then gave her analysis of the site, providing historical and spatial context, and showing photos of particular features present on the site.

After the presentations, the meeting attendees were broken into four groups for a design exercise. Inspired by Kristen’s presentation of other examples and drawing on their own experience, the groups came up with ideas of what they thought should go on the site. Kristen and Kristine had printed out large base maps of the site, and then provided trace paper, markers, and post-its so that the groups could physically indicate where they thought particular elements could be installed.

The suggestions ranged from educational (informational placards), to contemplative (a “quiet” place where
people could meditate or commune with nature), and from fanciful (mini-golf and ziplines), to inspiring (art produced by local artisans). (See attachment 2 for the complete list of suggestions)

Following the design sessions, each group presented their ideas and layout to the other groups. While there were some similarities among the designs, there were also distinct differences and particular insights provided.

**Warren’s Island Park: Meeting #1**

The project team then traveled to Warren, about 45 minutes away, to convene a similar meeting for that community’s play space design. The first part of the meeting was held at Melody’s Restaurant on Warren’s Main Street. Members of city government, the mayor of Warren, and members of the local Jaycees came to learn, discuss, and share their ideas for the future of Island Park. Over dinner, the attendees introduced themselves and the project team gave an introduction to the project. After dinner, the group walked the 1/2 mile over to Island Park, where the proposed natural play space would be implemented. As everyone toured the park, Kristine again provided some analysis of the various features and opportunities.

The group headed back to Main Street, to the Warren Community Center just half a block from the restaurant. As in the Crookston meeting, Kristen provided an overview of natural play spaces and the best practices of implementation. Kristine then presented her site information, and afterward the attendees were split into three groups for the design session. Each group was provided a base map of Island Park, trace paper, and markers in order for the groups to locate specifically where they saw particular playspace elements. The ideas once again covered a broad range, including treehouses and vegetative mazes (See attachment 1 for the complete list). Discussion of liability and insurance came to the fore, as the mayor, despite her support of the project, wanted to be sure that it was affordable for the city to administer.
Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership

With additional support from Otto Bremer Foundation

Play space location within Castle Park

Play space location within Castle Park

INTERIM REPORT
09.23.2011
Compiling the Evidence

Following the meetings, Kristen and Kristine organized the input from the meetings. A spreadsheet of all the suggestions was compiled and elements with similar character were sorted into groups. The spatial suggestions were documented by scanning the manipulated base maps, complete with the words, drawings, and Post-its that had been placed on them.

While the input from the community meetings was compiled, SHIP coordinators Sarah Reese and Frances Tougas were getting input from a very important user group: Area children. On June 23rd, Sarah met with a group of young children at Castle Park for a walkabout and brainstorming session, and Frances met with a group of children at Island Park a week later to get their suggestions. The children were extremely excited about the idea, and continued to offer many suggestions about what they wanted to see at the natural play space. Some of the common themes from the kids were 1) Fort-building materials, 2) Water, flowing and able to play with, 3) Musical equipment such as xylophones. (See complete lists of kids’ ideas in attachments 3 and 4).

Interpreting the Input

Using suggestions gathered from the community meetings and the children’s meetings, Kristine and Kristen set about creating a number of schematic designs for the layout of the playspaces. Since Kristen was based in the Twin Cities and Kristine up in Crookston, email and the online file sharing site were invaluable assets to be able to share ideas, drawings, and designs.

It was decided that two schemes would be developed for each site so that the designers’ manifestations could take multiple forms and allow for broader community feedback. The four schematic designs follow.

The schemes each took the recurrent suggestions from the communities, combined them with other elements from the research and precedent studies, and put them in graphic form. The colors and labelling allowed everyone to easily understand the layout of each one.

Effectiveness Evaluation

At this time, another project partner came to the table to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Eileen Harwood from the U of M Twin Cities’ School of Public Health led the development of a survey to assess the impacts the project was having. The evaluation is
two-fold, first to measure the impressions and concerns that community members might have about natural playspaces, and second to assess whether those impressions change over the design and implementation process. The survey consisted of questions to determine demographic and geographic data, and a series of multiple choice questions that allowed respondents to give their impression of natural playspaces. The surveys were offered as hard copies and as an online survey.

**Warren’s Island Park: Meeting #2**

On July 27th, members of the team went to gather feedback at the Pope County Fairgrounds. The SHIP coordinators in Warren had secured a booth in one of the buildings, and it is was seen as a good opportunity to present the schemes to many members of the community who might not otherwise get to see them, and to get their feedback.

The Island Park playspace layouts were printed out on large board, with an additional one describing the concept and how it could potentially benefit children and the community. The hard copy surveys were also available for anyone to take.

Over the course of the fair, responses were gathered from the fairgoers. The response was generally positive and there was a great deal of excitement shown by the children. One woman claimed that her kids “dragged her across the fair” to see the boards.

**Crookston’s Castle Park: Meeting #2**

The evening of National Night Out, Aug. 2nd, was chosen for a good opportunity to share the preliminary designs with the Crookston community. Large boards were also prepared for this meeting, and a table was set up on Main Street where passers-by could come upon the project. It turned out to be the perfect scenario, and many Crookston citizens and neighbors were able to offer feedback and ideas on the proposed layout for Castle Park.

**Design Development and Refinement**

Following the feedback meetings, Kristen and Kristine went back to the drawing board to polish up the designs, integrate community feedback, and edit anything unwanted.

**Implementation**

A follow-up conference call was held in late August to tie up any loose ends of Phase I before the University’s classes began. Unfortunately, both Kristine and Kristen found work opportunities
elsewhere, but two new students are joining the team. Anna Bierbrauer, another landscape and Alyssa will take up the reins from

In the communities, there has been some success of finding groups of local stakeholders to oversee and manage the playspaces as the University’s involvement wanes. A few individuals have stepped forward in Crookston, with a few others soon to step on board. The Warren Jaycees are excited to see the Island Park project move forward, and will serve as the interim Citizen Advisory Board for Island Park. These local Citizen Advisory Boards will take over long term care and development of the playspaces.

Eric Castle’s Landscape Installation class got underway by early September in Crookston. The class took the final design prepared by Kristen and Kristine and met with the community to get any final feedback. The class is currently doing cost estimation in hopes of installing the Castle Park play space before snow flies this winter. Class members were also working to establish relationships with local businesses and donors to gather materials and other donations for the park.

The playspace implementation in Warren will be phased, as it will rely more on community input. The Warren Jaycees will start the installation, and call for help from the community over time. The plans developed by the design team show a three implementation phases to help the process.

**Next Steps**

1) With advocacy and encouragement from the University and the Counties, Citizen Advisory Boards comprising local stakeholders will maintain oversight of the natural playspaces into the future.

2) The surveys for the effectiveness evaluation are still being administered and compiled. Data collection and analysis will continue over the course of the next year, ending with a final report in Spring 2012.

3) As the playspace project continues, there will be two more phases and three more communities involved. The next two communities will be the City of Fertile, MN and the childcare facility at the University of Minnesota in Crookston. New UROP and CAP students have been hired to assist in design and coordination for those communities, but the project has been otherwise idle over
the start of the school year and because of other major life impacts (new children) for some of the team members.

As installation of the playspaces in Crookston and Warren occurs, preliminary meetings will be held to identify stakeholders for the Fertile and UMC childcare facility projects.

4) This report will be amended and updated as phases conclude. It will include observations and recommendations for future playspace implementations, and culminate in a final report complete by Summer of 2012.
Attachment 1
Warren Community Input session #1
Categorized Design Suggestions

Water
Additional rocks/fill in Snake River - for a fast flooding stream area
Water troughs/rocks with recycled water system, sand
Access to stream/water structure
Flowing water

Active Play
Natural swings/tire swings
Tree forts - ups and downs (slides, ropes, etc.)
Rock piles with bridge between -- circuit of rocks, logs, ropes to walk
Stacked logs/wood to climb
Rock climbing area
Stump paths for walking/jumping games
Natural slides - sliding hill, natural logs to climb up
Old stagecoach for climbing
Sandbox boat & climbing structure
Climbing on fallen tree
Climbing options
Hopscotch (with log slices?)
Tree house and rope climbing between trees
Spider web climbing structure (Danks, pg 46)
Rope bridge from tree to tree
Stumps of different sizes for jumping
Culvert (crawling)
Slide of some kind
Hanging ropes with many different lengths
Balancing beams
Towers of rocks/boulders
Tire ropes between trees to go up (Danks, pg 144)

Digging, Building, Artistic Play, Loose Parts
Natural music area
Sticks, rocks, loose material
Sitting rocks - cluster of rocks
Digging area/sand
Creative building area with memorial stone
Wind chime
Messy materials area (big logs, bark)
Sand (near shelter)
**Interpretation, Wayfinding**
Trails throughout
City education stations throughout
Log path connecting shelter to other areas
Flat stone path to quiet tree area - more moveable stumps so kids can rearrange

**Gardens/Plants/Wildlife**
Natural fruit trees, blueberries, raspberries by shelter
Old log cabin (1874) - move historical marker
Natural grass maze
Hosta maze - could hide objects
Rain garden
Color - flowering shrub, bright things, fruit trees - chokecherry
Raspberries, strawberries, asparagus around perimeter
Apple tree
Above-ground planters with veggies
Willow hut

**Structures (both light and heavy) & Spaces**
Fort by the lone tree
Bonfire areas (rock circles)
More shelters on west side
Platform around tree
Hiding/sitting area (by lone tree)
Ampitheater seating
Tree house
Big hill
Materials
Log planters out of old trees
Take down some ash trees and use stumps for planters, tables - use trunks for building blocks, discs

**Existing resources (to augment or modify)**
Pier/“wings” off of walking bridge on the west (to make it a destination and keep people from going to the other side)
Natural grasses, ivys - around bathrooms
Use of cement court: paint games, murals, brick oven, remove hoop (comment made that teens use court regularly)
Basswood multi-stem tree
Take down some ash trees and use stumps for planters, tables - use trunks for building blocks, discs
Shelter - redo pillars with tiles or mosaics
Bathroom - reside with natural/wood materials
Utilize the foot bridge

**Things for Adults**
Markers for length on path/road (for adults to walk)
Attachment 2
Crookston Community Input session #1
Categorized Design Suggestions

**Water**
Culvert with rocks and water play area
Mud pie kitchen
Rain catchers
Create-a-flood sand/water area
Sand point well or pump that children can manipulate or city water access that allows for interaction to keep it running
Flowing water - stream
Water feature (need water source, flowing water/waterfall)
Water feature

**Active Play**
Climbing (with trees)
Tire swing, zip line, teeter totter, slide, monkey bars, swings
Sledding & cross country skiing (winter)
Basketball court
Natural bridge structures (ropes, rocks, logs)
Slide built into the hill
Climbing ropes, embedded slides
Rope/tire swing
Rock climbing structure
Tree slabs and uprooted tree to climb/jump on
Recycled tire play area
Rope walking throughout woods
Rocks climbing area with slide (Lyle Wilkins)
Plant an eventual climbing tree (prune to help climbing shape)

**Community Members**
Community artists - create sculptures, signs, etc.
Art component (Lennea Barton, Trey Everett, Jen Steinbrihn)

**Digging, Building, Artistic Play, Loose Parts**
Sandbox digging area
Drawing center
Building (birdhouses)
Cloud watching
Moveable play items (sticks, moss, seed pods, branches, antlers)
Big rocks - big sand box - even replicate glacial action
Different lengths of large logs that children can walk on - or by - perhaps some that are moveable
Digging area
Checker/chess board with wood pieces/stumps
Area for kids to “stake out” claim to build in woods
Natural building materials area
Digging gardening area (with artifacts)

Materials
Wood chunks cut into the hill for climbing, sitting, standing
Stepping stones or pavers that allow drainage and don’t create impervious surfaces
Wood chips for “impact” issues
Natural fencing and barriers to establish boundaries for safe activity
Mosaic (wood/rock) pattern at entry to trails

Interpretation, Wayfinding
Signs (Warning! Poison Ivy!, Bug-finding, leaf-finding)
Watershed information/education - our water goes to Canada
Keep kids away from the river with a visible boundary (“don’t go past…”)
Scalable explanations of features - simply choose to pass through or stop to read and learn
Insect/plant wildlife signage

Gardens/Plants/Wildlife
Frog catching
Food for wildlife (winter bird feeder)
Butterfly catching & butterfly garden
Prairie, grasses, native flowers
Surround water area with a rain garden that drains away
Winter birding options, perhaps viewing from a sod house
Plant small trees on the campground, may have some campsites that are wooded
Rain garden catch basin, butterfly-attracting plants - educational opportunity
Willow sculpture
Willow tunnel
Willow tunnel
Butterfly garden in shape of a butterfly
Log “amphitheater” for parents to observe kids
Lookout/deer stand over the river
Trees/vines/shrubs - something to separate dog park from the rest
Ampitheater
Planted area along edge of Soil 1 - in center, community garden; on edges, wildlife/bird feeding plots (sunflowers, corn) - phase 1 (?)
Observation bee hive
Butterfly garden
Wildlife interaction (with gardens)
Willow structures (wet soil) - wetland area
Plant natives, do programs to involve community in removing invasives

Structures (both light and heavy) & Spaces
Sod house (shade)
Soddy addition - climb thru (resting place, hiding place)
Ampitheater (stage - down the road, educational area)
Treehouse or canopy viewing
Bridge
Nooks & Crannies “Discovery” (see Sherlock Park)
Maze
Ampitheater gathering place - embellished by local artists
Can more “nooks” be created in the woods in addition to the current proposed trail?
Create more sheltered/natural picnic areas (people may wish to sponsor an area)
Tree house
Teepee structure with heps (plants? Hops?) growing on
Tree house
Observation area (up in trees) - binoculars
Sod houses - phase 1 (?)
Winter house - bird viewing (windows) - phase 2 (?)

Things for Adults
Parents and families will be close to the features for safety and supervision
Distance trails for hikers/walkers, mulch

Programs/Events/Activities
Annual events (teens) - laser tag, field trips
Geocaching for older children/teens

Existing resources (to augment or modify)
Clear understory for more accessible play
Use the Burr Oak trees - make them accessible to children/families for climbing

Other Activity Infrastructure
Ranger station, dumpster pad, combined kiosk & bath house (move to north side of campground)
Mini golf
Food stand
Floating fishing pier
Recycling center by Campground
Fruit/veg cut-outs (picture opportunity)

Process
Big picture thinking about on-going changes and developments
Moveable pieces might be donated or sponsored
parent Sadie Gornowicz
Andon 6 yrs, Tanner 4 yrs, Keira 2 yrs

parent Michelle Gullikson
Payton 13 yrs & Kinzie 8 yrs

Taylor (13 yrs) & Reegan (4 yrs) Mortimer

Play in the dirt
Climb trees by the red bridge (Linden and Ash)
Rope climbing structure (like the picture)
Fort building
Music
Pianos
Drums
Guitars
Maracas
Sand with water
Messy material area
Put an old boat in the park
Forts
Path- by basketball court- similar to the “yellow brick road” picture
Garden
Corn
Flowers
Pink
Snapdragons
Daffodils
Arts & crafts
Walk in water
Get wet
Waterfalls
Snow forts
Older kids liked the idea of stage/amphitheater
Tunnels
Rivers
Slide on trees
Sliding down dirt
Nontraditional swings
Make a mountain/hill on the site
Castle
Monkey Bars
The current playground slides get hot- different slides
Hollow log slide
Interactive swings (keep the two person swings)
Arts activities
Get kids involved in painting, building, creating
Warren HS has a community service day- utilize these students
Merry go round playground equipment
Zip line in the trees
Concerns:
Teenagers drive around the park at night
Dogs- droppings
Sitting spaces w/ gardens & paths for elderly
Basketball court
New lines/new hoop
Older girls suggested a space to hang out
Chairs
Sitting spaces on the ground
Fire pits
New bathrooms ☺
Boulders
Tree swings- put swings in the trees
Create climbing hills, slopes, sliding
Bike riding area- areas of dirt/hills to be challenged
Pave the gravel road to allow rollerblading and for easy of use for elderly
Jumping! Logs to jump
Parking space
Tree slide
Tree house
Flower picking
Garden by the shelter
Tall rope to climb with a bell at the top
Conserve water- water features would have a button to push to make it run- then a shut off after a period of time
Put a tunnel by the foot bridge area (go down into the earth and then emerge on the hillside)
Slide down the hill by the footbridge- smooth rocks to slide on
Log slide on the same hill
Stairs to climb back up- rock or logs
Put the hangout space on the SW corner that is tucked into the woods
Ropes between the trees
Put the jumping area on the west side between all of the trees
Put the water area in the sun by the shelter
Put forts on the North end outside the road (near the entrance); put a fence behind the forts so children can’t fall into the drainage ditch
More paths for walkers in the park
“Lunch spots” for people who drive into the park on lunch break
Give people a reason to get out of their cars during lunch break
Better food preparation area by the shelter
Garden w/ herbs by the shelter?
Giant Hammock
Blanket Fort
Wood forts
Dirt Forts
Boat
Rowing
Sandbox
Pretend fishing
Near the ground to jump in and out of
Rock island w/ shelter
Put the boat by this area with the boat tied to a log
Have water coming out of a well to create a water feature near/around the island
Garden
½ food- cucumbers, peas
Raspberry Maze
Strawberry picking
½ flowers
Trees @ corners- apple trees- crab apples
Use the log/rock “yellow brick road” swirl as the center of the site w/ paths branching off
Water!
Lots of rocks with water running down
Mini water tower (to look like city’s tower)
Slide with water coming out at you and a pool at the bottom
Water park
Tree houses
Mazes
Corn Maze (Hatton, ND)
Tree walking bridge
Amphitheater w/ stage area for acting out stories/dramatic play
Items for “little ones/younger children”
Tree swing with tire
Log cabin
Shorter platforms to climb on
Frogs
Digging
Watching rabbits
Digging grass and putting it back
Log houses!
Cut outs to put your face through
Abraham Lincoln cut out by the log house
Animals- bears, birds, rabbits, squirrels, bugs, deer, moose
Log benches
Herbs
Dramatic Play
Teepees
Campfires
Swinging from platforms
Walking sticks
Zip line
Logs
Flowers along the trails
Trail signs
Information on trails
Music makers
Balancing
Climb w/ ropes on the hillside/slopes
Build a Castle- “Castle Park” – Rock Castle
Gazebo- incorporate art

One child commented, “I’ve never climbed a tree” We need to fix this!

**Castle Park Design Ideas**
6/29/2011 Children Input

parent Lori Matlack
Patrick Matlack (9), Sara (7), Kristin (4)
Hunter Hitchen (9)
Gunner Gunderson (7)

Pond & picnic tables in the sheltered microclimate
Bridges
Cattails
Statue of a castle
Water gun
Fishing
Casting into the river
*Love to get dirty & go in the woods
Roll in the mud
Mud River
Castle with water coming out of the top
River to walk through/in
Mimic the Red Lake River on the site
ZIPLINING (their favorite idea)
In the edge of the woods
Tree climbing
Tire castle with tunnels and doors
Ropes for older kids to climb in
Rope swing
Giant tires to climb with rope ladder
Rock climbing wall
Water sliding down the rock wall?
Monkey bars- a long set to test endurance
Harness on the monkey bars if you fell (they would be TALL)
Slide down a hole and go through a tunnel that emerges somewhere else in the park (tall slide)
Music-
Bongos
Xylophones
Attach the mallets to the xylophones so they don’t get stolen
Little tree forts with kitchen toys inside
Bigger tree forts for older children
Steering wheels (big hit with little kids)
Log Fort
Jumping out of the fort and landing on a trampoline
20’ wide pond
Remote boats
A boat to sail around on the pond
Tee Pee
Indian type toys in the tee pee to play with
Tunnels
Water slide
4 wheeling
Natural rock wall on the hillside w/ a rope to climb up the wall
Paths in the park with signs about where to go
Exercise equipment in the woods along the path for adults
West Lake, Ohio Glague Park
Kickball
Ping pong
Didn’t like the food garden idea
Concession stand with water for sale
Greenhouse
Trail signs with plants
Wildflowers
Minnows in the water
Pretend stage area
Acting
Bring in bands
Stage on hillside- built into the woods
Mini golf
A slide that goes through the ground
Zipline (again for emphasis ☺)
Bridge crossing the Red Lake River