

The Trust for Public Land

MEETING SUMMARY

Civic Center Plaza Playgrounds
Community Meeting

Meeting: July 15, 2014, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Location: Latino/Hispanic Meeting Room .SF Main Library

INTRODUCTION (*Jennifer Isacoff, The Trust for Public Land*)

- Welcome
- Thank you. The playground renovations are a generous gift from the Helen Diller Family Foundation, which has supported a number of programs and institutions in the Bay Area and throughout the world, including other award winning playground renovations in the city, such as the Helen Diller Play Area at Julius Kahn Playground in the Presidio and the recent Helen Diller Playground in Dolores Park.
- Team introductions: The Trust for Public Land (Jen Isacoff, Alejandra Chiesa), SF Recreation and Parks (Karen Mauney-Brodek, Steven Cismowski), ACLA (Andrea Cochran, Emily Rylander)
- Why we are undertaking project
 - Playgrounds are very popular but they are almost 20 years old
 - Opportunity for doing something very special, artful, inspirational
 - We want people to be comfortable and safe at night too - lighting
 - Scope for this project is only the playgrounds but hope the playgrounds will catalyze improvements for the whole plaza
- Goals for the meeting: Introduce project and the goals, understand what is working and what is not working with the current playgrounds, see what people are interested in seeing in the new play space.

PRESENTATION – Context / Need (*Alejandra Chiesa, The Trust for Public Land*)

- Physical and planning context of the site . This is a changing neighborhood which means the need for the playground will increase
- Brief history of the plaza. Playgrounds are 20 years old and in need for renovation.
- The Trust for Public Land conducted a user survey. Playgrounds get lots of use by many different types of users (school groups, neighborhood parents, caretakers, etc.)

DISCUSSION / WORK SESSION (*Alejandra Chiesa, The Trust for Public Land*)

Divided workshop attendees in groups to discuss each of the following topics. The discussion was guided by boards where people recorded their thoughts

- What do you like about the playgrounds
- What don't you like about the playgrounds
- What is the most evocative play experience you remember from childhood?

Summary from Group Discussions

Likes

- Location close to key destinations (Library, Museum, etc).
- Cross programming ability with Museum, Library, Theater. Nice to go there with families or for a break
- Having lots of seating. Seating is well used and has been full on multiple occasions
- Bench design that discourages people from sleeping on them
- Having a fence/enclosure – consider enlarging the fence area to push some uses away more
- North playground good for little kids
- Swings and tire swings
- Rubber surfacing (no sand)
- North playground feels secure and safe, can leave stroller and bags
- Having different levels of play
- Slower pace
- Event space observing
- Children are exposed to poverty and this opens the door for important conversations
- Diverse crowd tourists, people from neighborhood, all coming together
- South playground is better for above toddler age children
- Swings and Tire swing

Dislikes

- Vent structures
- Homeless
- Safety- location cuts across two police stations
- Stand-alone bathrooms
- Poor lighting
- Splinters
- No garbage cans
- Not enough swings.
- Only two baby swings- not enough for the number of kids
- No gathering space (need for about 16 to 24 children)
- No picnic tables
- Negative activities near stairs

- Swings too close to play structure
- No shade-too hot
- Large groups-problem for small children – suggest signage for age separation
- Bird poop on rubber surfacing
- Not enough swings- need more for small children
- There is no water drinking fountain inside the play area
- Gap behind the benches is muddy and likely filled with urine. However it is still where kids want to go.
- Not very small kid friendly (pre-toddler) parents have to be hands on with younger kids)
- No signage designating age restrictions
- The fence is too low for safety from snatchers
- No grass at South playground
- Space is small

Suggestions

- Is there a way to get Exploratorium involved?
- Position entrance to make it difficult to have homeless avoid the police, keep corners open, meet with police
- Maybe have a playground monitor during peak times
- Needs signage –use conflicts, e.g. discouraging very large groups (school field trips)
- Performance space needed
- Explore possibility of moving play equipment into larger areas
- Trees that can be walked on like at the SF zoo
- Work out stations at each corner of the park, each different.
- Colorful benches

Memorable childhood play experiences (summarized)

- Rolling down on a slope in Portsmouth Square – open grassy area to roll down
- Swinging (long rope swing, tire and bucket swings, trashcan lid rope swing)
- Swinging at the drive in before the movie
- Trying to outswing my friends
- Exercise running, climbing, jumping off swings
- Jumping in leaves
- Climbing (dome, trees, up the slide instead of down, monkey bars)
- Hanging upside down
- Skating
- Jumping rope
- Sliding (racing down the slides and playing tag, concrete cardboard box slide, really fast slides)
- Seesaws

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- Running across bridges
- Learning to bike – first touch of freedom
- Drawing with chalk
- Building and making things (Imagination-building forts, castles, spaceships out of recycled boxes, build boats and let them go)
- Sensory experiences (finding bugs, learning how plants grow)
- Playing with snow
- Spending all day and night eating loquats
- Wandering in open land
- Exploring outside with grass and trees
- Running in water at the beach / swimming holes
- Frogging
- Logs and nature play
- Jumping on rocks across a creek
- Bubble machine
- Maze
- Noise/ clatter bridge playground like a ship
- Playing games (hot lava game, kickball, 4-square, Hide and go seek, Hopscotch)
- Watching planes at Crissy field
- Neighborhood scavenger hunts
- Running around role playing
- Playing pirates on the see saws (flexible equipment as vehicle for imagination and adventure)
- Glen park summer camps
- Sitting at stern grove
- Playground as a space for learning how to make moral decisions (grew up in Richmond- found a wallet and figure out how to return it to the owner)
- Bird fell and died and children had gathered around to bury it and give it a funeral (connection to nature)
- Playground as a place to feel safe to meet people (met best friend at a playground and learned how to roller skate)

PRESENTATION – Experience of Play (*Emily Rylander, ACLA*)

- Talked about the experience of play
- Showed precedents to provide inspiration.

QUESTIONS

Questions from Attendees:

Q: is ADA part of this? A: yes

Q: Pre-teens we still want to include them. Can this demographic be accommodated?

Q: How to give very young kids and pre-teens/teens a place to enjoy as well?

Q: What is the project timeline? A: 2 more community meetings end of September and end of October, concept design by November, detail design and construction by 2017

Q: How complex can this playground be? How much imagination can go into it? Can it be as complex as the playground at the SF zoo? A: Yes.

Q: Can the two areas connect? How can they relate to each other? A: Probably not physically, but hopefully there will be a connection built into the design somehow

Q: A lot of manufactured elements in the presentation – likes the artful space – but wants to know how to reflect natural environment, too. Everything in the neighborhood is so built up it would be a refreshing contrast for something to be less manufactured.

Q: As an iconic place in the city – how to make it reflect San Francisco and be unique to the city.

BRAINSTORM

How to make it reflect San Francisco and be unique to the City included the following words from attendees:

- Crooked Street-Lombard
- Bridges
- Coit Tower
- Trans Am. Building
- Cable Car
- Hills
- Civic gathering
- City Hall
- Culture
- Music
- Ballet
- History
- Neighborhoods
- Chinatown, Japantown
- Beach
- Ocean
- Seals
- Embarcadero
- Pier 39
- Street art
- Festivals
- Pigeons
- A place to doodle: chalk area for kids
- UN Plaza
- Major peace accords
- Multicultural (45 languages)
- Incorporating art/mural

CLOSING/NEXT STEPS (*Jennifer Isacoff, The Trust for Public Land*)

- Make sure you signed up so you can receive updates/info about this process
- Send us follow up comments or thoughts
- Date has not been set yet but September – second community meeting, end of October third community meeting