

2012

Playground Report Card



*Helen Diller Playground at Dolores Park,
Opening Day on March 31, 2012*

prepared by



SAN FRANCISCO

Parks
Alliance

The Playground Initiative



The Playground Initiative is a partnership between San Francisco Parks Alliance (SFPA) and San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) dedicated to ensuring that all children in San Francisco have access to safe and engaging play spaces in their own neighborhoods. SFPA works closely with RPD, neighborhood groups, and elected officials to

advocate, fundraise, and mobilize communities for playground improvements citywide. SFPA also identifies playground gaps (neighborhoods not served by a playground) and supports response initiatives to open school playgrounds to public use during non-school hours and to construct new playgrounds where needed.



This report is published by the San Francisco Parks Alliance (SFPA), an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. SFPA was created through the union of the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) and the San Francisco Parks Trust (SFPT) in October 2011, to create a larger, stronger, more effective park-serving organization for San Francisco.

SFPA's mission is to inspire and promote civic engagement and

philanthropy to protect, sustain, and enrich San Francisco parks and green open spaces. SFPA is dedicated to fulfill a vision of parks that acknowledges and supports their critical environmental functions while striving to ensure that they are accessible, beautiful, safe, clean, fun, and managed in a manner that makes them accountable, open, and welcoming to all.

The Playground Report Card: A Project of the Playground Initiative



Duboce Park's new Youth Play Area

History of the Playground Report Card

The 2006 Playground Report Card provided the first comprehensive baseline detailing the status of playgrounds in San Francisco.

Understanding Playground Grades

It is noteworthy that a playground's grade does not necessarily reflect its "fun factor" or the diversity and quantity of its play equipment. For example, a playground with two or three play structures that are in good condition may receive a high grade.

Every two years SFPA and RPD survey public playgrounds to determine the condition and quality of individual playgrounds. The playground grades that result from these surveys are published in the Playground Report Card. The Report Card helps identify which playgrounds are in the worst condition and in need of the most attention.

In intervening years between surveys, the Playground Report Card is utilized as an advocacy tool. The results from the Playground Report Card provide timely data to RPD and other City

SFPA's predecessor organizations, NPC and SFPT, fostered playground improvement projects since their organizational inception in 1996 and 1971, respectively.

In 2006, SFPA (as NPC) developed its first playground-survey tool (based on the work of the National Program for Playground Safety), and engaged volunteers from across the city to complete playground surveys in their own neighborhoods. Thus the Playground Report Card was born!

The playground survey evaluates the quality and condition of each playground's equipment, fall surfaces, fencing and gates, signage, and overall cleanliness and upkeep. A playground's potential to cause injury is the overriding consideration.

Like school grades, a playground's grade provides a snapshot of how it measures up. An "A" grade signifies that a playground's equipment and play structures are in good condition and have been designed and installed in a manner that provides utmost safety. Playgrounds with conditions that

departments that pinpoint playground sites in greatest need of maintenance and capital investment.

RPD and SFPA also utilize the Playground Report Card data to prioritize which playgrounds would most benefit from immediate improvements through community and corporate volunteer work days. The ultimate goal of SFPA's Playground Initiative is to so greatly improve the overall condition of all our city's playgrounds that no "failing" playgrounds remain.

Playground Report Cards were published in 2006, 2008, 2010, and, now, 2012 – providing an objective basis for raising and allocating resources, and for fostering community organization around playground needs and improvements.

The Playground Initiative has been instrumental in reducing the number of "failing" San Francisco playgrounds from 30 in 2006 to 16 in 2012.

may cause injury (sharp edges, broken equipment, splintered wood, inadequate fall zones, damaged rubber surfacing, metal corrosion, etc.) receive successively lower grades, depending on the number of hazardous conditions. In general, the newest, best-maintained playgrounds receive an "A" grade while older playgrounds with deteriorating equipment and maintenance challenges receive lower grades. No playground lasts forever and play structures naturally deteriorate over time. In most cases, an "F" grade signifies that a playground has outlived its useful life, and should be completely renovated.

How is the Playground Report Card Used?



In addition to assessing which playgrounds are in need of capital investment, the Report Card also is used as a catalyst for volunteering.

The Playground Initiative uses each Report Card to plan playground advocacy, fundraising, and community mobilization. SFPA distributes the Report Card to the Mayor's Office, Board of Supervisors, and other City leaders to inform and foster their support, and presents the Report Card in meetings to focus attention on neighborhoods' specific needs. Where and when residents express interest, Playground Initiative staff orients the organization and action of volunteer playground support groups. These "Friends of" groups then raise funds for improvements, participate in playground clean ups with RPD, and otherwise support and steward their neighborhood playgrounds.

RPD uses the Report Card to identify playgrounds that are in greatest need of capital investment. The 2012 Playground Report Card will play a particularly important role in the design of the \$195 million 2012 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond, to be presented to voters in November 2012, which will dedicate 15.5 million to

improve "failing" playgrounds citywide. SFPA will play a leading advocacy role in conducting a public education campaign in favor of the Bond.

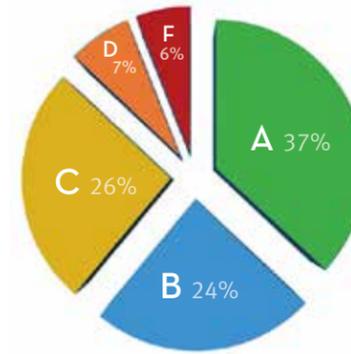
The Report Card is also used as a catalyst for volunteer activation and engagement with the end goal of improving conditions at select playgrounds. Working in tandem and utilizing the information in the Report Card, SFPA and RPD staff determine which playgrounds (graded C or worse) could most substantially improve from a work day conducted by community and/or corporate volunteers. Activities may include sifting sand to remove debris; adding clean, sterilized sand; enhancing landscaping around play areas; and cleaning and painting equipment. After volunteer work days have concluded at targeted playgrounds, a reassessment is conducted by SFPA and resulting improvements and grades are released in an annual Playground Reassessment Report. Twenty such work days were held in 2010-2011, improving the grades at 13 of the 20 sites.



St. Mary's Playground

2012 Results

Playground Grades Holding Steady with an Upward Trend



The 2012 survey (123 playgrounds total) found a citywide-average playground grade of "B" (82%), as compared to "B" (83%) in 2010 and "C+" (79%) in 2008. Thirty seven percent of all playgrounds received an "A" grade, 24% received a "B", 26% received a "C", and 13% were "failing" (7% "D" and 6% "F").

Playgrounds that were closed for renovation during the assessment period (February - April 2012) were not surveyed.

At the District level, District 9 (Mission, Bernal Heights, Portola) had the highest

2012 average (85%). District 10 (Bayview, Hunters Point, Potrero Hill, Visitacion Valley) showed the greatest rate of improvement since the last survey, going from 81% in 2010 to 84% in 2012. District 6 (Civic Center, Tenderloin, South of Market, South Beach) suffered the greatest decline, sliding from 84% in 2010 to 77% in 2012, primarily due to recent redistricting - because District borders have changed, three highly graded playgrounds (Franklin Square, Hayward Playground, and Kid Power Park) are now located in other Districts.

Improvement City-wide

Grades	A	D + F
In 2006	25%	20%
In 2012	37%	13%



2012 Average Grades

District 1	84%
District 2	84%
District 3	82%
District 4	82%
District 5	83%
District 6	77%
District 7	80%
District 8	82%
District 9	85%
District 10	84%
District 11	81%
City	82%

The playground surveys show a considerable improvement in citywide playground quality over time.

In comparison to 2010 when the last Playground Report Card was published, the number of "A" playgrounds has risen, from 42 playgrounds in 2010 to 45 in 2012. This represents an increase from 33% in 2010 to 37% in 2012. Compare this year's figures to earlier Report Cards, and the upward trend in the percentage of "A" playgrounds is more evident. In 2006, 25% of the playgrounds were given an "A", and in 2008, 29% of the playgrounds were ranked with "A" grades.

Looking at the other end of the spectrum, in both the 2010 and 2012 Report Card, the percentage of failing playgrounds was 13% of all playgrounds surveyed, while in 2006 the percentage of failing playgrounds was at 20% and in 2008 it was at 21%.

In summary, since the first Report Card in 2006, grades of playgrounds have consistently improved, with more "A"

playgrounds each time and less failing playgrounds. The results show positive, upward momentum in the overall state of our city's playgrounds.

The improvement is due in large part to investments from the 2008 Clean & Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond, RPD's Community Opportunity Fund, and private contributions via "Friends of" playground groups. SFPA contributed to these investments by leading a public education campaign in support of the Bond. All told, twelve playgrounds were renovated under the 2008 Bond. (Playgrounds renovated were in dire need of repair - of the twelve playgrounds renovated, eleven were ranked with "C" grades or worse pre-renovation.)

At the publication of this report, funds for playground renovation are still available through RPD's Community Opportunity Fund, so further playground improvements from 2008 bond monies are pending.

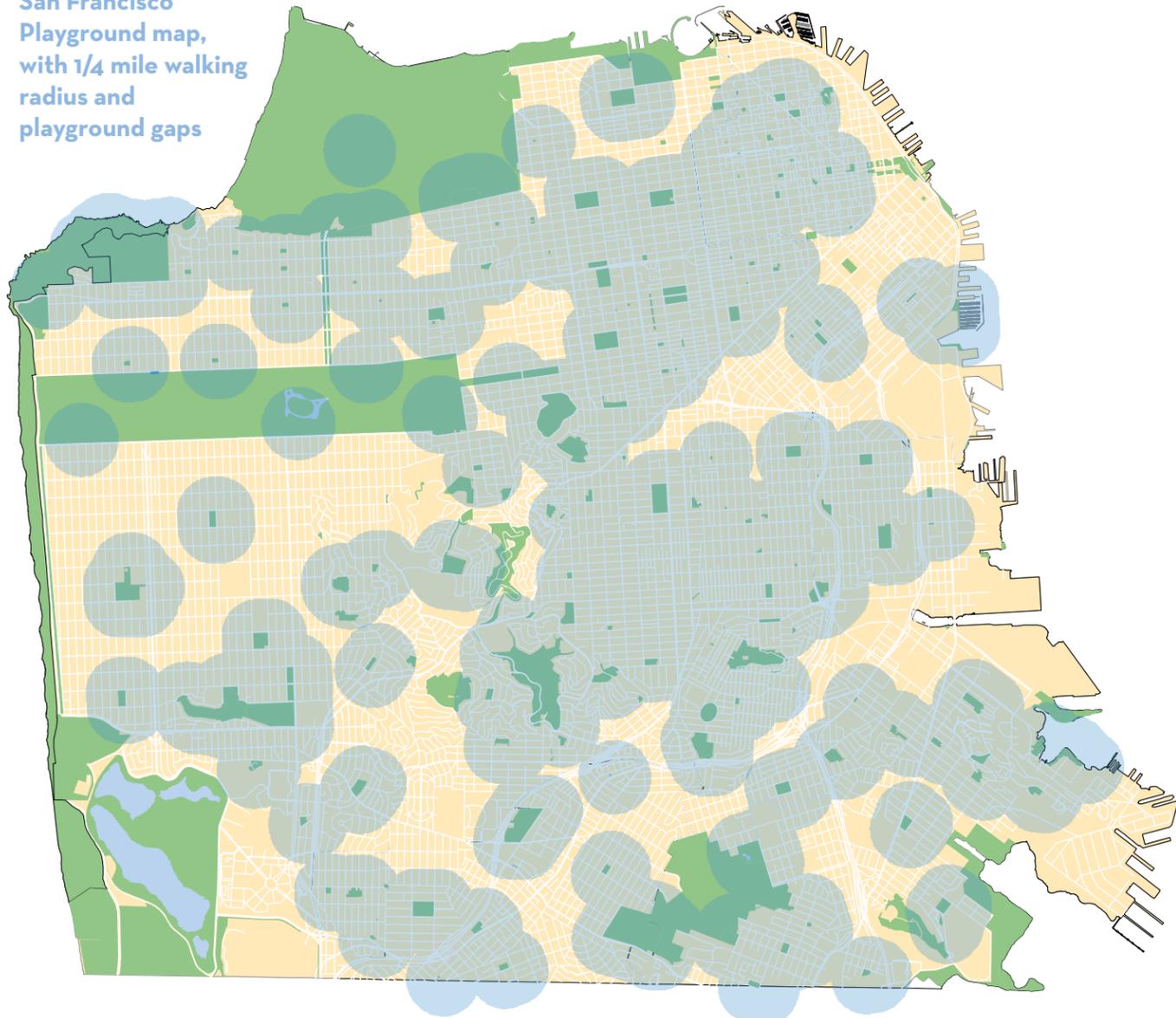
2012 Results

More Playgrounds are Needed

In May 2012 San Francisco was ranked by the Trust for Public Land as having the best urban park system in the U.S. While there is much to celebrate regarding SF's parks and open space, much work remains to provide access to clean and safe play areas for children. As reported in the City's Recreation & Open Space Element of the General Plan (SF Planning

Department, Revised Draft, June 2011), many "playground gaps" remain: these are areas of the city that are outside a quarter-mile walking distance to a playground. Building playgrounds in "gap" neighborhoods is a crucial step in ensuring equitable access to playgrounds for all San Francisco children and families.

San Francisco Playground map, with 1/4 mile walking radius and playground gaps



Map Credit: Recreation & Open Space Element, An Element of the General Plan of the City and County of San Francisco, (Revised Draft, June 2011) Published by SF Planning Department



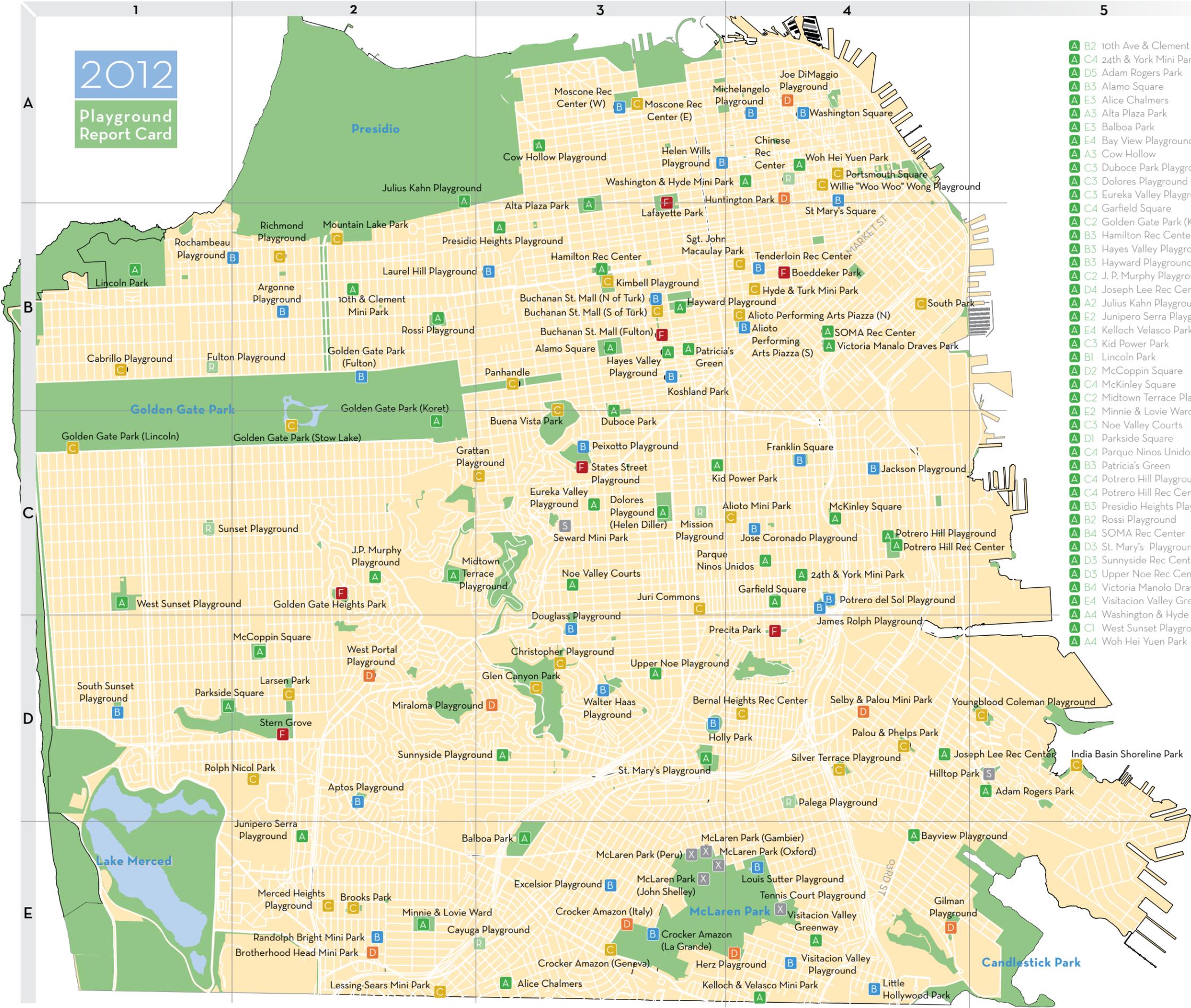
Removal of Equipment at Oldest Playgrounds

One trend related to the city's oldest playgrounds that should be noted is that at some sites structures and equipment are being removed over time. The removal is taking place because the structures and equipment have been deemed unsafe by the City. Perhaps a structure is removed because it is dilapidated and consists of hazardous splintery wood, or has a negative design feature that poses safety risks, such as unprotected high platforms. While removal of unsafe equipment by the City is logical and prudent, sometimes community

members don't fully understand why the amount of play equipment at their local playground is being reduced.

Because unsafe equipment is removed over time, the result is that some older playgrounds sites may have only two or three pieces of equipment remaining, or none at all. Sites with no remaining equipment are not surveyed, as there is no equipment left to evaluate. Instead, these sites are listed in the "Playgrounds Removed" section of the Report Card.

2012
Playground Report Card



- A B2 10th Ave & Clement Mini Park
 - A C4 24th & York Mini Park
 - A D5 Adam Rogers Park
 - A B3 Alamo Square
 - A E3 Alice Chalmers
 - A A3 Alta Plaza Park
 - A E3 Balboa Park
 - A E4 Bay View Playground
 - A A3 Cow Hollow
 - A C3 Duboce Park Playground
 - A C3 Dolores Playground (Helen Diller)
 - A C3 Eureka Valley Playground
 - A C4 Garfield Square
 - A C2 Golden Gate Park (Koret)
 - A B3 Hamilton Rec Center
 - A B3 Hayes Valley Playground
 - A B3 Hayward Playground
 - A C2 J. P. Murphy Playground
 - A D4 Joseph Lee Rec Center
 - A A2 Julius Kahn Playground
 - A E2 Junipero Serra Playground
 - A E4 Kellogg Velasco Park
 - A C3 Kid Power Park
 - A B1 Lincoln Park
 - A D2 McCoppin Square
 - A C4 McKinley Square
 - A C2 Midtown Terrace Playground
 - A E2 Minnie & Lovie Ward
 - A C3 Noe Valley Courts
 - A D1 Parkside Square
 - A C4 Parque Ninos Unidos
 - A B3 Patricia's Green
 - A C4 Potrero Hill Playground
 - A C4 Potrero Hill Rec Center
 - A B3 Presidio Heights Playground
 - A B2 Rossi Playground
 - A B4 SOMA Rec Center
 - A C3 St. Mary's Playground
 - A D3 Sunnyside Rec Center
 - A D3 Upper Noe Rec Center
 - A B4 Victoria Manolo Draves Park
 - A E4 Visitacion Valley Greenway
 - A A4 Washington & Hyde Mini Park
 - A C1 West Sunset Playground
 - A A4 Woh Hei Yuen Park
 - B B4 Alioto Performing Arts Piazza (S)
 - B D2 Aptos Playground
 - B E2 Argonne Playground
 - B B3 Buchanan St. Mall (N of Turk)
 - B E3 Crocker Amazon (La Grande)
 - B D3 Douglass Playground
 - B E3 Excelsior Playground
 - B E4 Franklin Square
 - B B2 Golden Gate Park (Fulton)
 - B A3 Helen Wills Playground
 - B D3 Holly Park
 - B C4 Jackson Playground
 - B C4 James Rolph Playground
 - B C4 Jose Coronado Playground
 - B B3 Koshland Park
 - B B3 Laurel Hill Playground
 - B E4 Little Hollywood Park
 - B E4 Louis Sutter Playground
 - B A4 Michaelangelo Playground
 - B A3 Moscone Rec Center (West)
 - B C3 Peixotto Playground
 - B C4 Potrero del Sol Playground
 - B E2 Randolph Bright Mini Park
 - B B2 Rochambeau Playground
 - B A4 St. Mary's Square
 - B D1 South Sunset Playground
 - B B4 Tenderlion Rec Center
 - B E4 Visitacion Valley Playground
 - B D3 Walter Haas Playground
 - B A4 Washington Square
 - D E2 Brotherhood Head Mini Park
 - D E3 Crocker Amazon (Italy)
 - D E4 Gilman Playground
 - D E4 Herz Playground
 - D A4 Huntington Park
 - D A4 Joe DiMaggio Playground
 - D D3 Miraloma Playground
 - D D4 Selby & Palou Mini Park
 - D D2 West Portal Playground
 - F B4 Boeddeker Park
 - F B3 Buchanan St. Mall (Fulton)
 - F C2 Golden Gate Heights
 - F A3 Lafayette Park
 - F D4 Precita Park
 - F C3 States Street Playground
 - F D2 Stern Grove
- Closed for renovation in 3/2012**
- R E3 Cayuga Playground
 - R A4 Chinese Recreation Center
 - R B1 Fulton Playground
 - R C3 Mission Playground
 - R D4 Palega Playground
 - R C1 Sunset Playground
- Concrete slides only**
- S D5 Hilltop Park
 - S C3 Seward Mini Park
- Playgrounds Removed**
- X E3 McLaren Park (Gambier)
 - X E3 McLaren Park (John Shelley)
 - X E3 McLaren Park (Oxford)
 - X E3 McLaren Park (Peru)
 - X E4 McLaren Park (Tennis Courts)
- Grade Ranges**
- A 90%-100%
 - B 80%-89%
 - C 70%-79%
 - D 60%-69%
 - F 59% & below



2012 Parks Bond

Similar to the 2008 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond, which was approved by 71.6% of San Francisco voters, the 2012 Parks Bond will be a \$195 million General Obligation bond to address outstanding capital needs in the city's parks.

Thanks in large part to the ongoing advocacy of SFPA and the legacy of the Playground Report Card, the 2012 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond calls for a substantial investment of \$15.5 million for renovations of our city's playgrounds.

Passage of the 2012 Parks Bond in November means a majority of the failing playgrounds will be addressed, and through renovations be elevated up to A grade status. If approved in November, the 2012 Parks Bond represents a major victory for San Francisco's children and families, and RPD should be commended for diligently championing the goals of the Playground Initiative.

For more information on the 2012 Bond, please see sfrecpark.org/bondoutreach.aspx.

Parks Alliance Success Stories

Among its more than 120 Park Partner groups, SFPA proudly serves as the fiscal sponsor to seventeen "Friends of" playground groups, fostering an effective and robust cadre of playground advocates.

SFPA provides the groups expertise in fundraising and funding sources, authorization to receive tax-deductible contributions, liability insurance, bookkeeping, and administration – to enable their initiatives to improve their neighborhood playgrounds. Among them:

Help McLaren Park

Portola and Excelsior Districts are densely populated and have limited open space. Their residents depend on McLaren Park (the city's second largest) for play, recreation opportunities and nature experiences. Unfortunately, five playgrounds in the northwest section of the park were dismantled and removed in the 1980s and 1990s because of unsafe equipment.

The volunteer group "Help McLaren Park" (HMP) formed in 2007 with a vision for restoring the Burrows & Peru Street former-playground site into a beautiful, new children's playground. With orientation and support from

SFPA, HMP hosted community design workshops, and worked with RPD and an architect to develop a great playground design, featuring swings, a tepee rope climbing structure, and a naturalistic, tree house structure. To date, HMP has secured a \$250,000 award from RPD's Community Opportunity Fund, a \$65,000 Community Challenge Grant, and the endorsement and support of District 11 Supervisor, John Avalos. Groundbreaking is scheduled for August 2012, with the playground reopening by year's end.

Koret Children's Quarter



Rossi Playground



Five playgrounds have been removed in McLaren Park due to hazardous equipment. SFPA Park Partner Help McLaren Park has held community design meetings (above) and raised funds toward a new playground at Burrows and Peru Streets.

Parks Alliance Success Stories

Friends of Balboa Park Playground

Balboa Park Playground, in the Mission Terrace neighborhood, received a “D” grade in the 2006 Playground Report Card. Neighborhood residents formed the Friends of Balboa Park Playground (FOBPP), which, with support from SFPA and RPD, organized, advocated,

and fundraised their way to a new, “A” grade playground that reopened in June 2008. FOBPP continues to initiate projects to expand and further improve their playground. For more information, please see www.fobpp.com.

Friends of Dolores Park Playground

Dolores Park Playground received a failing grade in the 2008 Playground Report Card, and was identified for renovation via the 2008 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond. SFPA served as the fiscal agent for the project and Friends of Dolores Park Playground, which also received a \$1.5 million grant from the Mercer Foundation. Koch Landscape Architecture developed the conceptual designs based on community input from

participatory design workshops. The fabulous new playground, renamed the Helen Diller Playground, reopened at the end of March 2012. It features a one of a kind, ADA-accessible, suspension bridge, shipwrecked boats (climbing structures) and climbing nets, and a 40’ super slide built into the hillside behind the playground. For more information, please see www.friendsofdolorespark.org.

Friends of Presidio Heights Playground

A group of neighborhood moms formed the Friends of Presidio Heights Playground in 2005, when they decided to wait no longer for the City to improve their playground (Presidio Heights Park was ranked 254th on the city’s park improvement waiting list.) The renovation broke ground in March

2010, following five years of organizing, planning, and fundraising by the Friends of Presidio Heights, which raised more than \$800,000 for their project. Presidio Heights Playground reopened to the public in March 2011, and earned an “A” grade in the 2012 Playground Report Card.



Presidio Heights Playground



Helen Diller Playground at Dolores Park

Friends of Huntington Park Playground

Receiving a “D” grade in the 2012 survey, the play structures at Huntington Park Playground are over 40 years old and are deteriorating, presenting hazardous conditions on site. Concerned Nob Hill neighbors formed the Friends of Huntington Park Playground in 2011, and

are in the process of informing and gathering input from the wider community to develop concept designs and initiate fundraising. For more information, please see www.huntingtonparkplayground.org.

Friends of Lafayette Park Playground

Lafayette Park Playground, in Pacific Heights, received a “C” grade in 2010, and an “F” in the 2012 survey. The park and playground are slated for renovation via the 2008 Clean & Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond. The Friends of Lafayette Park Playground have raised an additional \$475,000 (toward a goal of \$575,000) to include new

features such as swing sets for toddlers and older children, and a unique, nature-themed playground featuring a creek bed with old-fashioned water pumps. For more information, please see www.friendsoflafayettepark.com.

Parks Alliance Success Stories

New Lafayette Park Playground
Design Rendering



Friends of Mountain Lake Park Playground

Mountain Lake Park Playground is located in a beautiful woodland site in the Inner Richmond District, at the end of 12th Avenue just north of Lake Street. Its 30+ year-old wooden play structures have deteriorated and present hazardous conditions. Neighborhood residents formed the Friends of Mountain Lake Playground in March

2011, and are in the process of informing and gathering input from the wider community to develop a playground design that meets the needs and desires of its users. Their goal is to open the new playground in early 2014. For more information, please see www.fmlpp.org.

Friends of Waterfront Playground

Founded in 2011, this group of residents of the northeast Embarcadero is raising funds to build a new children's playground in Sue Bierman Park. Currently, there is no playground within a mile of the Ferry Building, limiting

options for the growing number of resident-families. For more information, please see www.waterfrontplayground.org.

Friends of West Sunset Playground

Sunday, September 10, 2012 marked the long awaited grand re-opening of the West Sunset Playground. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Friends of West Sunset Playground (FOWSP), a dazzling world-class playground and "town square" now stands at a site previously occupied by aging and hazardous play structures. It all began in 2008 when FOWSP formed after their playground once again received a failing grade in the Playground Report Card,

and the site was not slated as part of the 2008 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond. That year FOWSP started a strong fundraising campaign, securing funding from PG&E and AT&T. They then received their biggest boost in late 2009 when Supervisor Carmen Chu secured over a million dollars for the project. For more information, please see www.fowsp.org/home.php.

West Sunset Playground



Thank you

The Playground Initiative received financial support this past year from the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund, San Francisco Federal Credit Union, Wells Fargo Foundation and many

individuals. If you would like to support SFPA's playground work, please visit sfparksalliance.org/support/donate.

Acknowledgments

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