DRAFT

Let's Play, Courtenay!

Park Playground Design Standards

City of Courtenay

City of Courtenay

Let's Play, Courtenay!
Park Playground Design Standards

Prepared by LANARC

The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we gather and play is the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation

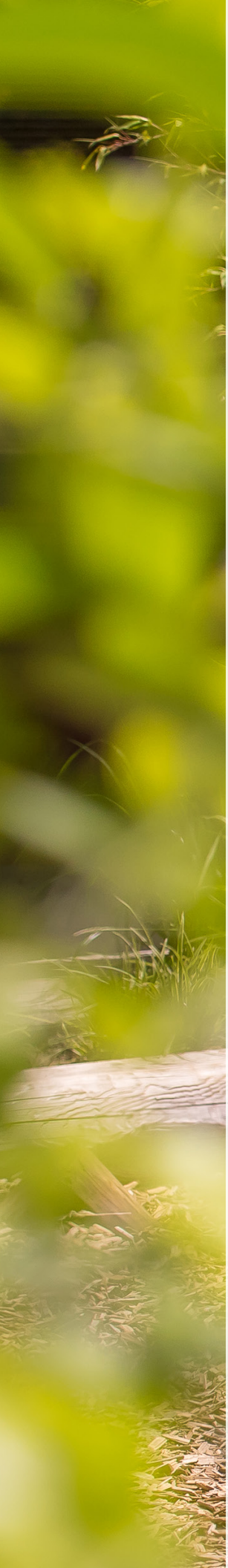


Table of Contents

"Dreaming big" for Courtenay's playgrounds at the Lake Trail Community School and Cozy Corner Preschool during Winter 2023

1 | Planning - *Framing the Standards*

1.1 Project Purpose

In October 2023, the City of Courtenay initiated the **"Let's Play, Courtenay!" Park Playground Design Standards** process. The project will create new playground design standards for the City's park playgrounds.

The standards will support capital planning efforts by identifying a vision, guiding principles, and best practices for future playground improvements that are safe, inclusive, fun, and best meet the needs of the community.

1.2 Related Plans and Initiatives

The City of Courtenay has developed several plans and initiatives that guide the Park Playground Design Standards. The following key plans and documents, among others, have informed the standards and recommendations in this report:

- Official Community Plan (OCP, 2022)
- Parks & Recreation Master Plan (PRMP, 2019)
- Asset Management Bylaw No. 2981, 2019

This document is not a consolidation of the previous initiatives, but it considers and carries forward key themes and ideas developed as part of these earlier processes, including opportunities to incorporate creative play elements and natural playgrounds in Courtenay's parks.

In addition to these strategic documents, the standards were developed through a review of playground design best practices and existing standards.

Figure 1 on the opposite page provides an overview of how the Park Playground Design Standards fits within a hierarchy of City plans and future site-specific works.

What are Playground Design Standards?

The Park Playground Design Standards will provide a set of steps for how to design park playgrounds, including the types of materials to use, activities to include, where to put planting or furnishings, and how to make playgrounds more inclusive for all ages and abilities. Planners, designers, and builders will use the standards when designing new play areas or upgrading existing playgrounds.

The Park Playground Design Standards should be considered a living document that will evolve as the community changes over time. The standards are intended to be reviewed and adjusted regularly to reflect changing community needs.

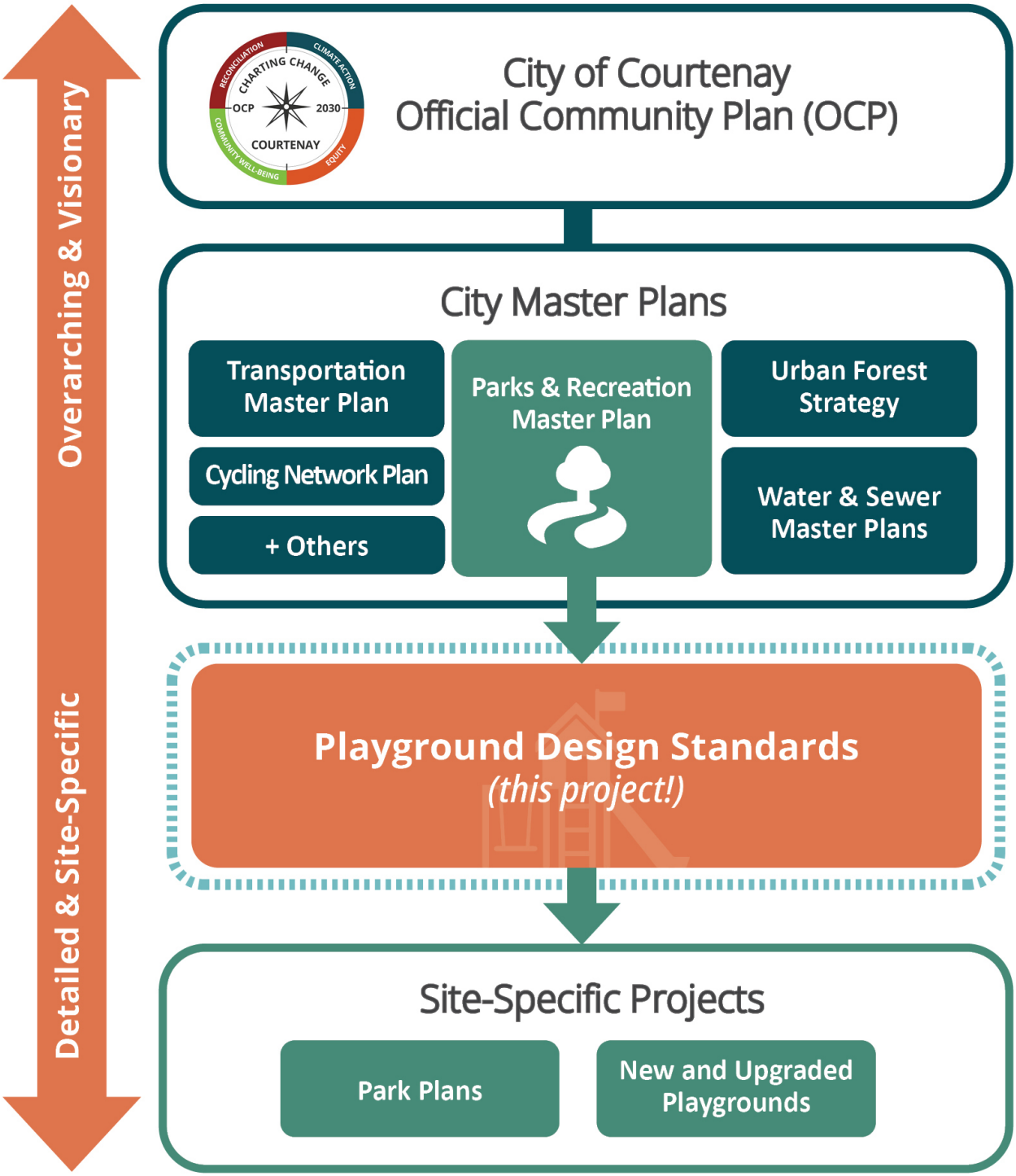


Figure 1: Planning Context

1.3 Project Process

The project process involved two phases from fall 2023 through summer 2024, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Engaging with the community and interest groups was central to the project process and was incorporated in each phase.

PHASE 1 Gather information, review existing conditions, identify opportunities and constraints, develop a draft vision and guiding principles, gather preliminary ideas from the community.

PHASE 2 Develop draft playground design standards, work with the community to review and refine the draft standards into a final Playground Design Standards document.

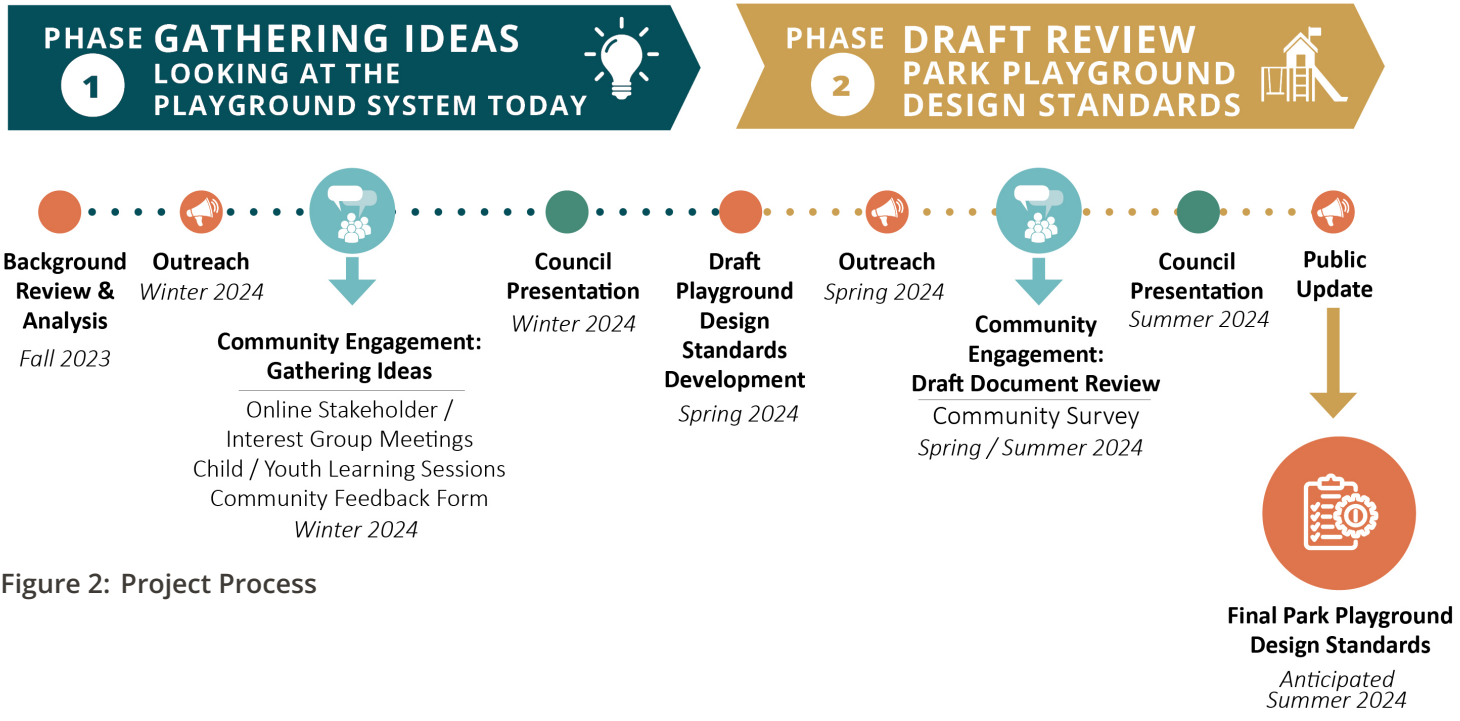


Figure 2: Project Process

Phase 1

Gathering Ideas

Fall 2023 - Winter 2024

Phase 1 involved a background information review, including existing playground conditions in Courtenay and best practices for playground design. This phase also included gathering community and interest group input to understand opportunities, barriers to play, and community priorities for new and improved playgrounds. Key initiatives included:

- Background review of related planning documents and best practices
- Project kick-off meeting with City staff
- Development of an engagement strategy
- Review of existing City park playgrounds including condition assessments
- Park playground tour with City staff
- Launch of public outreach campaign including media release, project website, posters in the parks, e-notifications, newspaper ads, Google ads, and social media posts
- Development and launch of a community input questionnaire (online and hard copy)
- Planning and launch of a community colouring contest
- Kids playground design workshops at the Lake Trail Community School (ages 6-12) and Cozy Corner Preschool (ages 3-5)
- An online interest group meeting and City staff workshop
- Summary of engagement feedback and an update to Council

Phase 1: Who Participated?

3
Written Submissions

12
Online Interest Group Participants

19
Drawing Contest Entries

30
Kids' Learning Session Participants

301
Clicks on Google Ads

336
Community Survey Responses

764
Project Webpage Users

Phase 2

Draft Park Playground Design Standards Review

Spring - Summer 2024

Phase 2 involves developing a draft Park Playground Design Standards document and refining and finalizing the standards. Community members and key interest groups are invited to review the draft Park Playground Design Standards document and provide feedback.

Key initiatives will include:

- Development of a draft Park Playground Design Standards document
- Coordination with local playground supplier representatives to review the draft standards document and provide input on rough-order-of magnitude costing and financial recommendations
- City staff review of draft standards document
- Community and interest group referrals and online posting for feedback
- Recommended plan updates following community, interest group, and City staff input
- Council presentation of Park Playground Design Standards document
- Final refinements and submission of the Park Playground Design Standards document

Phase 2: Who Participated?

X

Written Submissions

X

Community Survey Responses

X

Project Webpage Users

PLACEHOLDER - to be updated following Phase 2

1.4 What We Heard

The community engagement process generated many ideas for Courtenay's park playgrounds. A brief summary of the feedback themes and key points is provided below.

12 Interest Group Meeting Participants

30 Youth Learning Session Participants

19 Drawing Contest Entries

336 Survey Responses

Phase 1 Gathering Ideas about our Playground System Today

Summary Highlights:

Participants love:

- Nature play (e.g., trees, climbing boulders, balancing logs)
- Inclusive play areas for all ages and abilities
- Innovative and imaginative play structures that allow for many different ways to play
- Playgrounds close to home that are connected to safe walking and biking paths
- Splash pads and water play
- Comfortable outdoor meeting and gathering places (e.g. benches, picnic shelters)
- Risky play
- Play areas that highlight Courtenay's unique sense of place

Top Vision Words...

Safe

Fun

Accessible

Participants are concerned about:

- Public safety
- Litter and cleanliness
- Maintenance and upkeep
- Public washroom access
- Connectivity and safe access by active transportation (walking, cycling)
- Weather / all seasons use

1.5 Playground System Today

Existing Playgrounds Overview

Today, there are playgrounds in 24 of Courtenay's municipal parks. There is a wide variety in the scale, age, and condition of the existing play features. The map on the following page shows the locations of all park playgrounds within the City.

In addition to the park playgrounds managed by the City of Courtenay, there are also playgrounds on elementary school properties. These playgrounds are managed by School District #71 and are not subject to the Park Playground Design Standards project, but they do help fulfill community needs.

As part of the Phase 1 community engagement process, community members were asked to help identify issues and barriers to enjoying existing park playgrounds. This information is useful to identify key considerations for inclusion in the standards. The following barriers were commonly mentioned:

- **Safety -** Participants do not feel safe, not enough lights, it feels too far away from other people, it doesn't feel welcoming, etc. (40% of respondents)
- **Activities -** Lack of fun or interesting things to do at park playgrounds (32% of respondents)
- **Maintenance / Upkeep -** The equipment is too old or not in good shape (30% of respondents)
- **Weather or Seasonal Conditions -** Not enough shade or activities to do all year round (26% of respondents)
- **Not Enough Places to Sit -** Including benches or other furnishings (25% of respondents)

> *Most playgrounds are based around a single metal play structure. It does not offer many opportunities in wet, cold weather and the design is not accessible... and there are many more design options available nowadays. The fact that most parks are not fenced in with a small barrier can be challenging.* - Community Engagement Participant

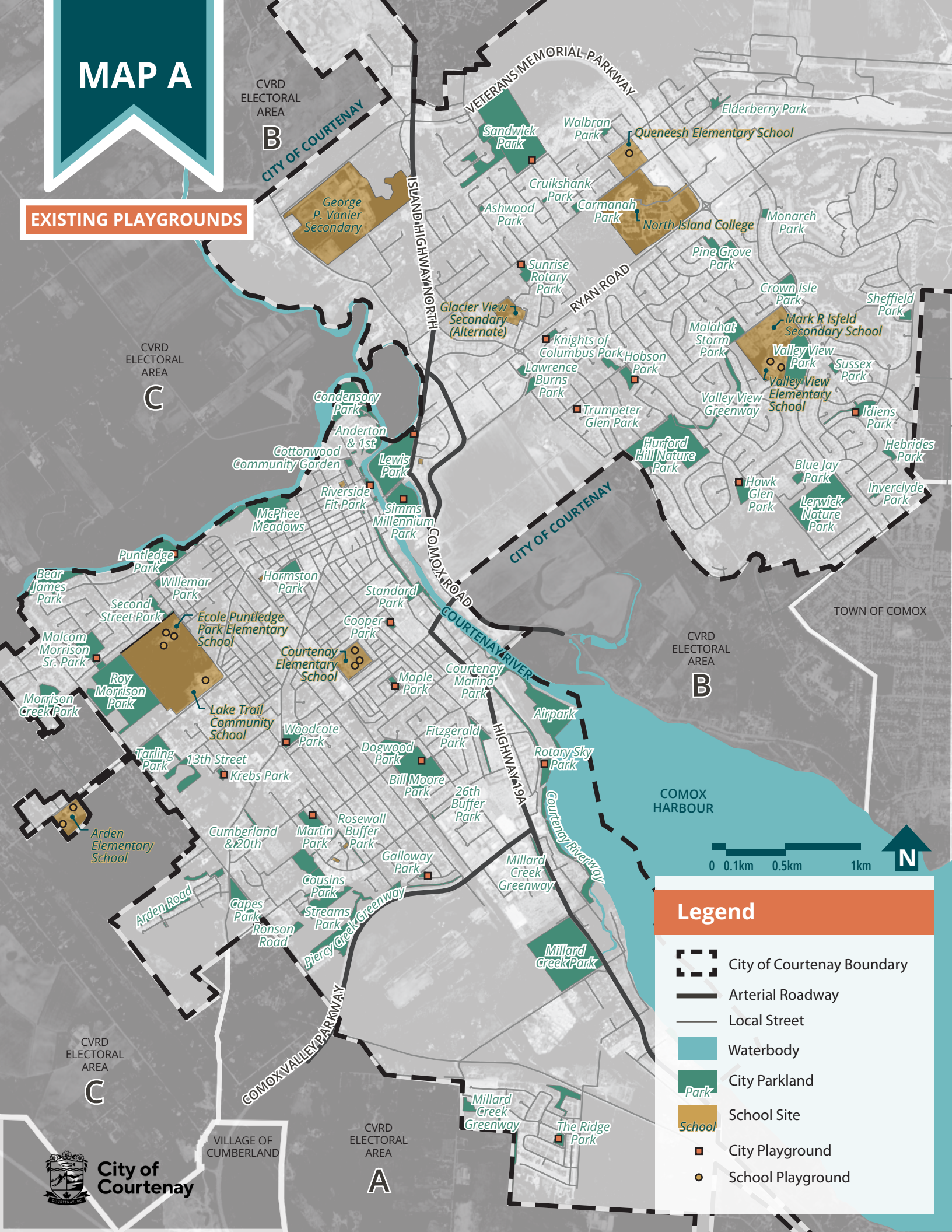
> *We are concerned that most playgrounds and parks are unsafe spaces and have been avoiding our favourite parks. There have been numerous encounters and situations where we have felt unsafe.* - Community Engagement Participant

Existing Conditions: Puntledge Park Playground

Existing Conditions: Bill Moore Park

Existing Conditions: Rotary Sky Park Playground

Existing Conditions: Sandwick Park Playground


MAP A
EXISTING PLAYGROUNDS
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA B
CITY OF COURTENAY
VETERANS MEMORIAL PARKWAY
ISLAND HIGHWAY NORTH
RYAN ROAD
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA C
CITY OF COURTENAY
COMOX ROAD
COURTENAY RIVER
TOWN OF COMOX
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA B
HIGHWAY 19A
COMOX HARBOUR
Courtenay Riverway
COMOX VALLEY PARKWAY
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA C
VILLAGE OF CUMBERLAND
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA A
Elderberry Park
Walbran Park
Queeneesh Elementary School
Sandwick Park
Cruikshank Park
Carmanah Park
North Island College
Ashwood Park
George P. Vanier Secondary
Monarch Park
Pine Grove Park
Sunrise Rotary Park
Crown Isle Park
Sheffield Park
Glacier View Secondary (Alternate)
Mark R Isfeld Secondary School
Malahat Storm Park
Knights of Columbus Park
Hobson Park
Valley View Park
Sussex Park
Lawrence Burns Park
Valley View Elementary School
Valley View Greenway
Trumpeter Glen Park
Idiens Park
Hurford Hill Nature Park
Hebrides Park
Blue Jay Park
Hawk Glen Park
Inverclyde Park
Lerwick Nature Park
Condensory Park
Anderton & 1st
Cottonwood Community Garden
Lewis Park
Riverside Fit Park
Simms Millennium Park
McPhee Meadows
Puntledge Park
Bear James Park
Willemar Park
Harmston Park
Standard Park
Second Street Park
Ecole Puntledge Park Elementary School
Cooper Park
Malcom Morrison Sr. Park
Courtenay Elementary School
Courtenay Marina Park
Roy Morrison Park
Maple Park
Morrison Creek Park
Lake Trail Community School
Airpark
Woodcote Park
Fitzgerald Park
Tarling Park
13th Street
Dogwood Park
Rotary Sky Park
Krebs Park
Bill Moore Park
26th Buffer Park
Arden Elementary School
Cumberland & 20th
Martin Park
Rosewall Buffer Park
Galloway Park
Millard Creek Greenway
Cousins Park
Arden Road
Capes Park
Streams Park
Ronson Road
Piercy Creek Greenway
Millard Creek Park
Millard Creek Greenway
The Ridge Park
0 0.1km 0.5km 1km
N
Legend
City of Courtenay Boundary
Arterial Roadway
Local Street
Waterbody
City Parkland
Park
School Site
School
City Playground
School Playground
City of Courtenay

1.6 Park Playground Classification

The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019) established a park classification system, which assists the City in assessment, planning, acquisition, and management of municipal parks. Classification of parks and open space, and specifically playgrounds, can help provide an understanding of the various roles that these spaces play as part of the overall network. The Park Playground Design Standards document organizes recommendations according to Community Park Playgrounds, Neighborhood Park Playgrounds, and Nature Park Playgrounds.

The table below provides a playground classification overview, including purpose, service level, and list of park playgrounds that fit within each classification. Refer to the map on the following page for park classification locations.

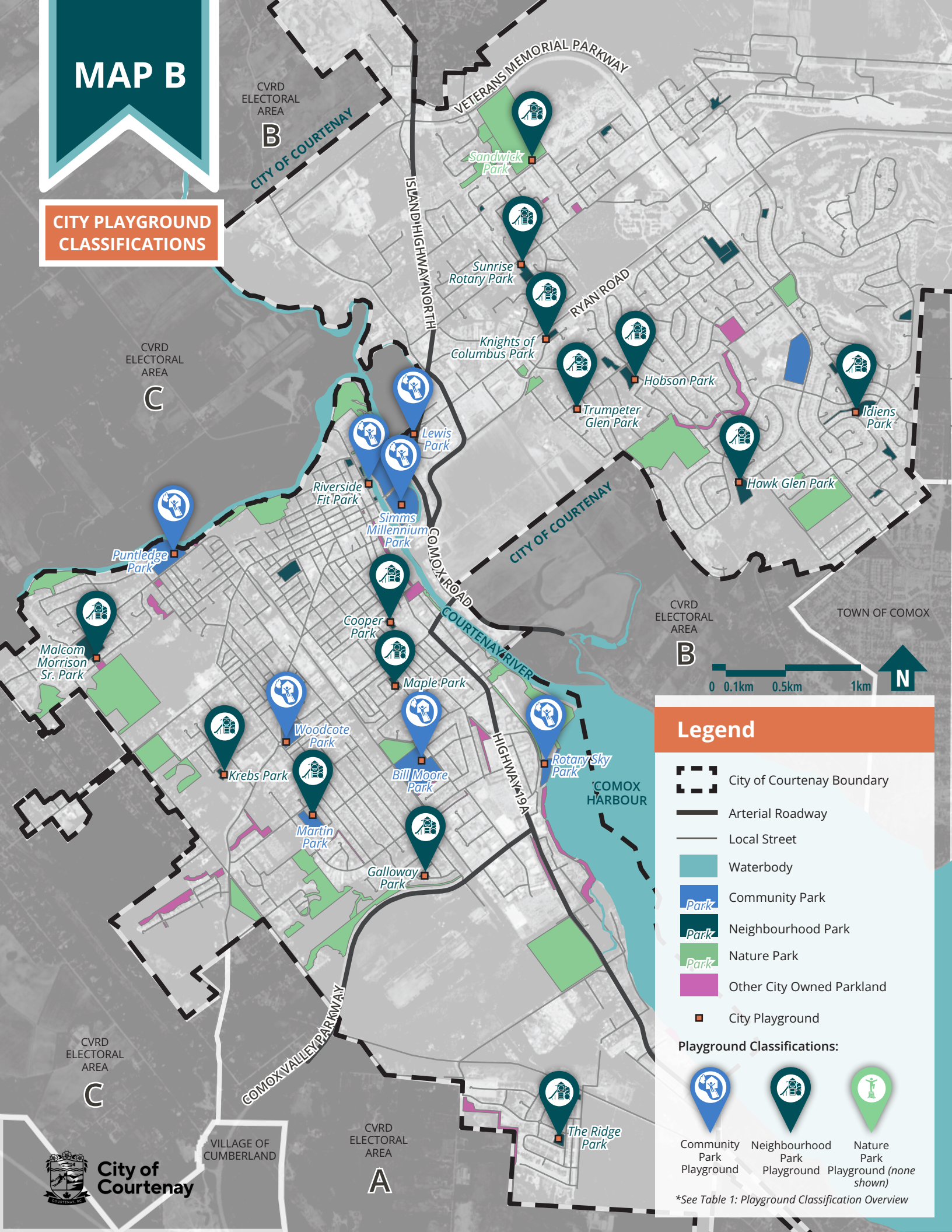
	COMMUNITY PARK PLAYGROUND	NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PLAYGROUND	NATURE PARK PLAYGROUND
Purpose	Destination playgrounds that serve residents from the entire City and beyond.	Playgrounds that serve the surrounding neighborhood.	Playgrounds in parks that are dominated by natural features such as forests and watercourses.
Service Level	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~10 minute walk (800m).	Accessible to the majority of residents within a 5 minute walk (400m).	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~30 minute walk (2.5km radius) or short drive.
Existing Park Playgrounds	Bill Moore, Lewis, Puntledge, Riverside Fit, Rotary Sky, Simms Millennium, Woodcote	Hobson, Maple, Hawk Glen, Sunrise Rotary, The Ridge, Malcolm Morrison Sr, Martin*, Galloway, Knights of Columbus, Cooper, Krebs, Idiens, Trumpeter Glen, Sandwick**	

Table 1: **Playground Classification Overview**

*Currently, Martin Park is classified as a Community Park in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. For the purposes of playground planning, it is suggested for re-classification as a Neighbourhood Park Playground given the footprint of the playground area and proximity to other Community Park Playgrounds.

**Currently, Sandwick Park is classified as a Nature Park in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. For the purposes of playground planning, it is suggested for re-classification as a Neighbourhood Park Playground, given its character and function.

Opportunities exist to expand nature play areas in the City's Nature Parks. Locations for playgrounds in Nature Parks to be determined based on need, support by a park management plan, and in the absence of any restrictive covenants. See Section 2, Standard 6 for more information.


MAP B
CITY PLAYGROUND CLASSIFICATIONS
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA B
CITY OF COURTENAY
VETERANS MEMORIAL PARKWAY
ISLAND HIGHWAY NORTH
Sandwick Park
Sunrise Rotary Park
RYAN ROAD
Knights of Columbus Park
Hobson Park
Trumpeter Glen Park
Idiens Park
Hawk Glen Park
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA C
Lewis Park
Riverside Fit Park
Simms Millennium Park
Puntledge Park
COMOX ROAD
CITY OF COURTENAY
Cooper Park
Malcom Morrison Sr. Park
Maple Park
COURTENAY RIVER
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA B
TOWN OF COMOX
Woodcote Park
Krebs Park
Bill Moore Park
Rotary Sky Park
HIGHWAY 19A
COMOX HARBOUR
Martin Park
Galloway Park
0 0.1km 0.5km 1km
N
Legend
City of Courtenay Boundary
Arterial Roadway
Local Street
Waterbody
Community Park
Neighbourhood Park
Nature Park
Other City Owned Parkland
City Playground
Playground Classifications:
Community Park Playground
Neighbourhood Park Playground
Nature Park Playground (none shown)
*See Table 1: Playground Classification Overview
COMOX VALLEY PARKWAY
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA C
VILLAGE OF CUMBERLAND
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA A
The Ridge Park
City of Courtenay

1.7 Needs Assessment

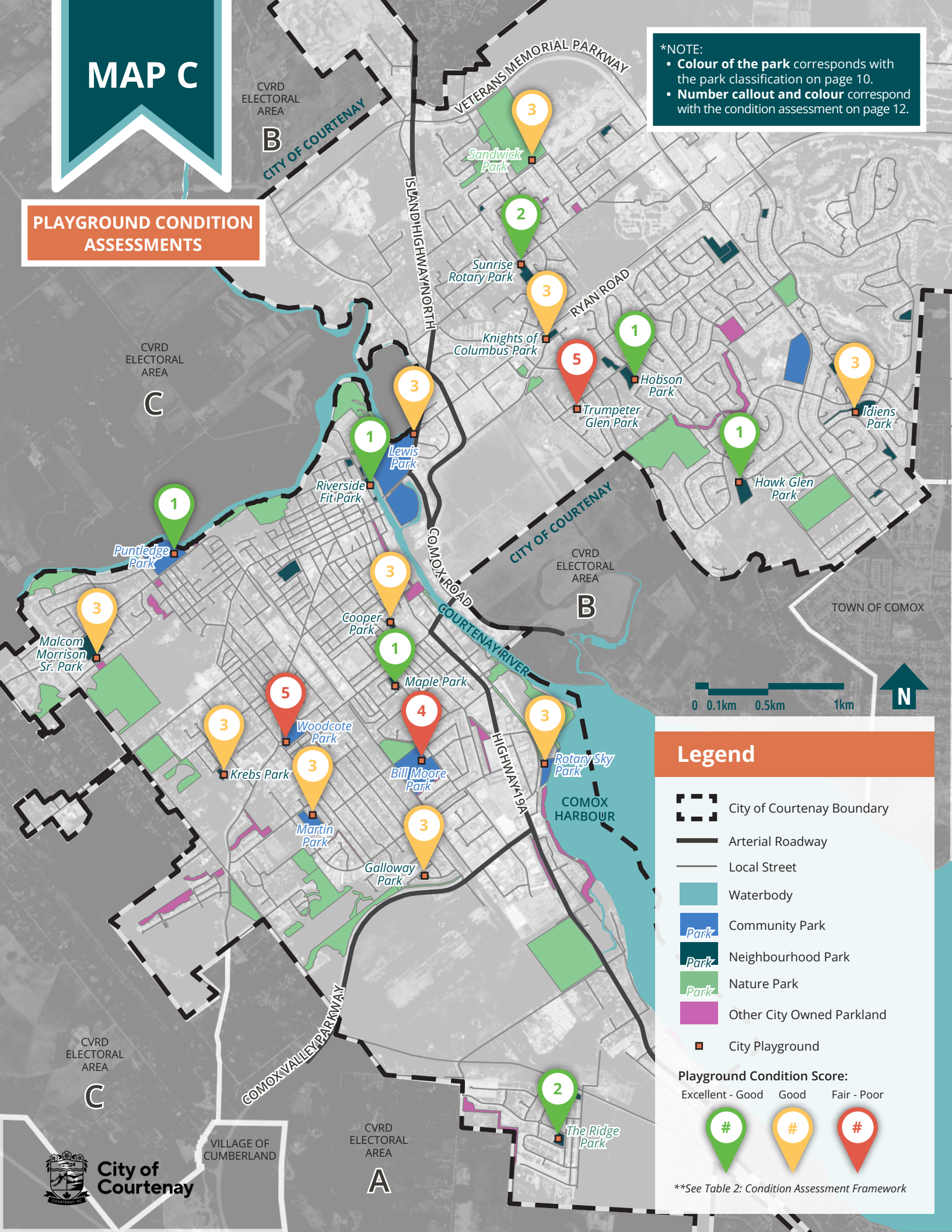
Condition Assessment Overview

Playground upgrades are currently managed by the City's Parks Maintenance staff and are informed by the City's Asset Management Bylaw, recommendations in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, reviews by the Parks Maintenance staff, and operational planning efforts.

The City has developed a Condition Assessment Framework tool to prioritize playground upgrades based on classification, condition, and age of playground equipment. Each playground is assessed annually and given a score of 1 through 5 to guide asset renewals. Refer to the table below for an overview of condition scores, descriptions, and required actions. Refer to the map on the following page for the current condition scores for all City park playgrounds.

CONDITION SCORE	DESCRIPTION	REQUIRED ACTION
1	New, excellent condition (brand new asset)	No action required
2	Very good condition (relatively new asset)	No action required
3	Good condition (asset condition expected from the age and usage of the asset)	No immediate action - renewal required within 5 years
4	Poor condition (asset condition below expectation from age and usage)	Renewal required within 2-3 years
5	Very poor condition (asset needs to be replaced or rehabilitated very soon to prevent failure)	Immediate action - renewal required within 1 year

Table 2: **Condition Assessment Framework**


MAP C
PLAYGROUND CONDITION ASSESSMENTS
*NOTE:
• Colour of the park corresponds with the park classification on page 10.
• Number callout and colour correspond with the condition assessment on page 12.
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA B
CITY OF COURTENAY
VETERANS MEMORIAL PARKWAY
ISLAND HIGHWAY NORTH
RYAN ROAD
Sandwick Park
Sunrise Rotary Park
Knights of Columbus Park
Trumpeter Glen Park
Hobson Park
Idiens Park
Hawk Glen Park
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA C
Lewis Park
Riverside Fit Park
Puntledge Park
Malcolm Morrison Sr. Park
COMOX ROAD
CITY OF COURTENAY
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA B
TOWN OF COMOX
Cooper Park
Maple Park
COURTENAY RIVER
Woodcote Park
Krebs Park
Bill Moore Park
Martin Park
Galloway Park
HIGHWAY 19A
Rotary Sky Park
COMOX HARBOUR
0 0.1km 0.5km 1km
N
Legend
City of Courtenay Boundary
Arterial Roadway
Local Street
Waterbody
Park Community Park
Park Neighbourhood Park
Park Nature Park
Other City Owned Parkland
City Playground
Playground Condition Score:
Excellent - Good
Good
Fair - Poor
**See Table 2: Condition Assessment Framework
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA C
COMOX VALLEY PARKWAY
VILLAGE OF CUMBERLAND
CVRD ELECTORAL AREA A
The Ridge Park
City of Courtenay

Future Needs Assessment Overview

The City will be undertaking a future needs assessment as part of a separate planning effort (Complete Communities Assessment, 2024). This exercise will identify priority playground investment areas by overlaying the following planning indicators:

- **Walking Distance:** The PRMP (2019) includes a metric that all residents should be 400m walking distance from a Neighbourhood Park and 800m walking distance from a Community Park. Identifying areas that meet these target metrics and areas that do not will help clarify key investment zones for new playgrounds.
- **Accessibility Features:** An assessment to identify existing playgrounds with accessible features to help prioritize locations for new and upgraded accessible play features with the objective of equitable distribution, to the extent possible.
- **Age-ranges:** An assessment to identify distribution of tot lots and playgrounds that serve preschool age (2-5) vs. older kids (5-12) or both.
- **Condition Assessments:** Current condition assessment as summarized on page 12 to indicate priority areas for upgrade based on age, condition, and maintenance considerations.

The resulting "heat map" will illustrate areas that are well-served vs. those where new playgrounds or playground upgrades may be a priority. Additionally, the heat map will help to define what types of investment are needed in specific park playgrounds (e.g., more play features for the 3-5 age group, more accessibility features).

While school playgrounds are not within the City's playground inventory, they play an important role in meeting community needs. School playground locations and amenities will also be considered in future planning efforts as it relates to prioritizing investment.

The map data will be updated regularly to be used as a tool in combination with the Playground Design Standards (see Section 2) and Playground Asset Inventory (see Section 3) to guide future capital planning efforts.

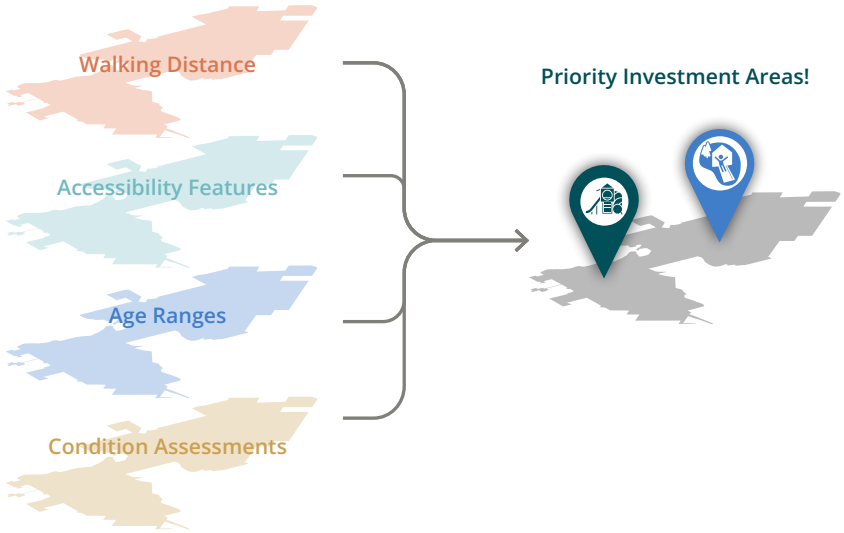


Figure 3: Future Needs Assessment Layers

Playground Benchmarking

Benchmarking park amenities like playgrounds and spray parks can provide insights into how a City's provision compares with that of other municipalities of similar sizes. This process can to help guide capital budgeting and renewals planning efforts.

An inventory of playgrounds and spray parks was completed for four similarly-scaled benchmark communities: Colwood, Campbell River, West Kelowna, and Penticton. The inventory looked at number of playgrounds and spray parks per capita but did not measure the quality, condition, or size of the facility. The inventory only included playgrounds and spray parks owned and operated by each City and did not include school facilities or facilities operated by other organizations.

When calculating the ratio of number of playgrounds to total City population, Courtenay's playground supply exceeds the benchmark average (refer to Table 3 below).

When calculating the ratio of number of spray parks to total City population, Courtenay's spray park supply aligns with the benchmark average (refer to Table 3 below).

This information should be considered alongside outputs from the future needs assessment process to inform playground renewal and upgrade efforts.

	COURTENAY POP: 28,410		BENCHMARK AVERAGE	COLWOOD POP: 18,961		PENTICTON POP: 36,885		WEST KELOWNA POP: 36,078		CAMPBELL RIVER POP: 35,519	
FACILITY	**NO.**	**RATIO**	**RATIO**	**NO.**	**RATIO**	**NO.**	**RATIO**	**NO.**	**RATIO**	**NO.**	**RATIO**
Playgrounds	24	1 : 1,184	1 : 2,529	6	1 : 3,115	10	1 : 3,689	33	1 : 1,093	16	1 : 2,220
Spray Parks	1	1 : 28,410	1 : 27,183	1	1 : 18,691	2	1 : 18,443	1	1 : 36,078	1	1 : 35,519

Table 3: **Playground and Spray Park Benchmarking**

Table Notes:

1. Population figures are based on 2021 census data
2. Colwood has two additional public playgrounds operated by partner organizations

> *Create shade with trees, keep the parks looking like a spectacular creature of nature as much as possible. Not just colored metal and rubber. Kids love nooks between trees planted in a circle or big stumps and boulders, tree houses and bridges, look out points, ropes to climb, swings and tall slides.*
> - Community Engagement Participant

Qualicum Beach Seaside Nature Park, Qualicum Beach BC

1.8 Vision and Guiding Principles

Developing a Vision for Courtenay's Playgrounds

A vision statement describes a long term future for Courtenay's playground system. Aspirational in nature, it is intended to be a touchstone when making future decisions about new or upgraded playgrounds. The project vision statement was developed based on public input, direction from previous planning efforts, background research, and input from City staff and Council.

Vision Statement

Our City's park playgrounds are safe, fun, and inclusive places, where community members of all ages and abilities can gather, socialize, and play. Well-connected by paths and trails, playgrounds are centers of activity in Courtenay's parks – inviting and comfortable to enjoy all year long.

The playground system will offer a diverse range of innovative and exciting play opportunities, allowing everybody to challenge their abilities, stimulate their curiosity, and foster exploration and imagination. Each park playground will provide a different experience, all while celebrating Courtenay's unique identity and sense of place.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles support the realization of the vision statement by providing direction for development of the playground design standards and future playground projects. These principles act as a "checklist". If a standard meets these principles, it will support the intent of the Park Playground Design Standards project.

Let's Try Different Ways to Play! *Include a range of fun play opportunities.*

- Provide opportunities for all different types of play
  - » Active Play (climbing, jumping)
  - » Sensory Play (touching different textures, smelling flowers or plants, making music)
  - » Creative Play (building, dancing, crafting, acting/dramatic play)
  - » Imaginative Play (make-believe, pretend play, fantasy)
  - » Manipulative Play (scooping, stacking, using loose parts)
  - » Social Play (talking, sharing, gesturing, team activities)
  - » Reflective Play (observing, thinking, daydreaming)
  - » Risky Play (i.e., integrating opportunities for a range of ages and abilities to conquer fears and take risks)

Everyone Can Play Here! *Design inclusive play spaces for all ages and abilities.*

- Design play areas for all people to enjoy, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion, financial status, sexual orientation, ability, or age.
- Foster fun play experiences for all ages – toddlers, children, adolescents, adults, and seniors – and include opportunities for intergenerational play.
- Design play spaces that integrate the key principles of universal design.
  - » Consider accessibility for people with a range of abilities including those with mobility challenges, hearing disabilities, vision challenges, and those with autism and other sensory-processing challenges.
- Provide opportunities for a range of sensory experiences: touch, sight, hearing, smell, proprioception (body in space), and vestibular (movement).
- Integrate opportunities for "intersections" or areas where children of all abilities can interact and play together.
- Provide different zones within the play area for active vs. quiet play, or different ages, and consider the relationship of spaces to one another.
- Consider the playground's connection to the surrounding park when planning for accessibility, including surrounding amenities and pathways.

Safety and Comfort are Key - *Invest in safe, activated, vibrant playgrounds.*

- Provide a wide range of activities and gathering spaces to encourage positive activity within park areas.
- Increase opportunities for safe garbage disposal.
- Integrate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, including clear sightlines, boundaries, and transition zones when planning playground improvements.
- Add lighting in select locations to provide safe and welcoming environments in the evening hours.
- Integrate placemaking elements including public art and signage to strengthen sense of place and create welcoming environments.
- Encourage community stewardship of park playgrounds.

Nature is fun! *Build playgrounds with nature in mind, connecting to the environment around us.*

- Celebrate Courtenay and the surrounding region's unique natural character.
- Provide opportunities for nature play experiences (climbing boulders, water play, balancing logs, sensory gardens, planting, sand, loose parts).
- Integrate new planting areas and retain and protect existing trees and mature vegetation where possible.
- Use plants that are native to the region, pollinator-friendly, resilient, non-toxic, and offer play value.
- Encourage connection to nature by integrating sustainable design principles and educational opportunities (permeable surfaces, stormwater management, reclaimed materials, interpretive signage).

Connect Play, Paths, and Neighbourhoods - *Create connections for healthier communities by bringing people together to gather and play.*

- Consider the relationship of the playground to the greater park context (i.e., adjacent park amenities, natural areas for protection, surrounding neighbourhood uses).
- Link playgrounds to active transportation routes for walking or rolling to and through the park.
- Provide welcoming areas for social connection and community gatherings (large and small groups).
- Create comfortable outdoor spaces for all seasons by including supporting amenities like drinking water, shade, and covered areas.

> *I think it will be important to provide a diverse array of experiences where certain parks can specialize in certain features. That would then encourage families and other residents to explore more neighbourhoods, as opposed to every park having the same 3-5 play elements or amenities.*
>
> - Community Engagement Participant

Image Credit: Habitat Systems, Maffeo Sutton Park, Nanaimo BC

2 | Design - *Digging into the Details*

2.1 Park Playground Design Standards Overview

The key outcome of this project is a set of standards that supports the implementation of the ideas and priorities generated through the process. These standards are intended to guide the development of new and upgraded playgrounds in Courtenay's parks.

The standards are based on input from several sources:

- A literature and best practices review, including review of CSA (Canadian Standards Association) standards related to accessibility and playgrounds (see Appendix A).
- Related Planning Documents (including the Official Community Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan).
- Ideas from interest groups and community members gathered throughout the engagement process, surveys, referrals, and activities.
- Input from City Council and staff.

Park Playground Design Standards List

The Park Playground Design Standards include information on the following nine focus areas:

1. Accessibility and Inclusivity
2. Siting the Playground
3. Pathways and Connectivity
4. Boundaries and Enclosure
5. Playground Surfacing and Edging
6. Play Elements and Opportunities
7. Trees and Planting
8. Supporting Amenities
9. Programming

Park Playground Design Standard Format

Each standard includes the following information:

- **Description:** A brief statement about the recommended standard.
- **Background & Rationale:** A summary of issues, opportunities, public input, and background information to support the standard.
- **Design Standards:** Key elements to be implemented as part of future playground design efforts. Some standards include references to relevant Canadian Standards Association (CSA) sections.
- **Additional Considerations:** Ideas that warrant consideration beyond the baseline to help make inclusive, fun, engaging spaces for all.
- **Precedent Imagery:** Inspirational images of park playgrounds to convey design ideas.

Park Playground Design Standards Organization

The standards are organized according to playground classification. Within each standard, information is provided that is specific to Community, Neighbourhood, or Nature Park Playgrounds, where applicable.

Many standards include consideration for standard and special playground elements, including play features and amenities. Standard elements are to be implemented in all park playgrounds, while special elements are prioritized for Community Park Playgrounds, since they will serve residents from the entire city and beyond.

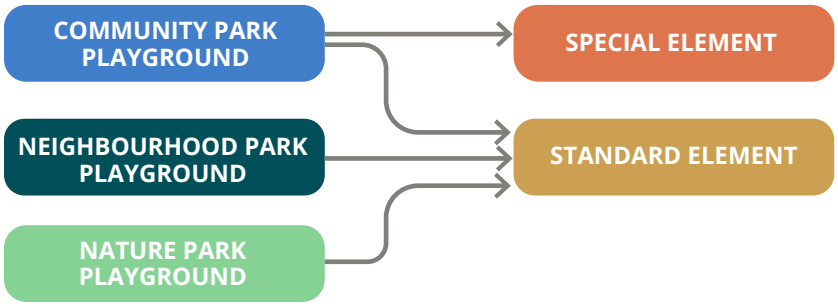
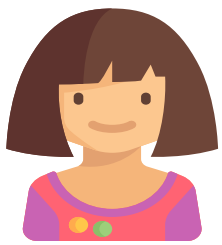


Figure 4: Playground Design Standards Organization

Park Playground Design Standards Summary

For a summary of the key design standards information, organized per playground classification (Community, Neighbourhood, and Nature Park Playgrounds) refer to the **Park Playground Design Standards Summary Table** in Section 3.3 (pg. 51)



1 Accessibility and Inclusivity

Plan welcoming, inclusive, fun play environments for all ages and abilities

Image Credit: Earthscape
Rainbow Park, Vancouver BC

Inspiration: Ground-oriented features that provide play opportunities for a range of abilities

Image Credit: Habitat Systems

Inspiration: Provide safe play features where children of all ages and abilities can play together.

Image Credit: Earthscape
Riverside Park, Guelph, ON

Inspiration: Use high contrast colours and textures to define pathways, spaces, and edges

Inspiration: Leave clear spaces next to play elements for wheelchair parking or care takers in wheelchairs

Background & Rationale

- Increasing inclusive play opportunities was identified as a priority in the PRMP (2019) and OCP (2022).
- Creating accessible, inclusive playgrounds was supported by the community during the public engagement phase.
- Opportunities exist to make many existing playgrounds in Courtenay more accessible and inclusive for all to enjoy.
- Inclusive play spaces allow children with disabilities to enjoy the benefits of play, including enhanced social skills, improved health, and having fun. In universal play spaces, all children learn valuable lessons about the world including diversity and acceptance.
- When planning the design of new playgrounds, consider the Rick Hansen Foundation's Seven Principles of Universal Design:
  - **Equitable Use:** The playground is fun for people with diverse abilities. All children should experience the thrill of a challenge.
  - **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
  - **Simple and Intuitive Use:** The playground is easy to understand, regardless of experience, knowledge, or language skills.
  - **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions.
  - **Tolerances for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
  - **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used effectively and comfortably with minimum fatigue.
  - **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** The design includes the appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Design Standards

- Each new playground should include some universally accessible design features. The degree and amount to which is included can be determined by geographic location, proximity to other playgrounds, play experiences, and community needs.
- Community Park Playgrounds are priority areas for accessible play elements and supporting amenities. City of Courtenay should identify at minimum one fully universally accessible Community Playground for re-development within the next 5 years. Candidate locations for consideration include Lewis, Woodcote, and Bill Moore parks.
- For Neighborhood Park Playgrounds and Nature Play Areas, integrate universal play features and supporting amenities within the overall design. Exact features are to be determined on a site-by site basis.

Design Standards *(cont'd)*

Mobility Challenges

- Plan for people with mobility challenges including wheelchair users, mobility device users (e.g., walker, braces, crutches, or canes), and people with other physical challenges:
  - » Create accessible paths of travel and multiple access routes in and out of the playground area (Refer to Standard 3).
  - » Ensure a maximum 5% longitudinal slope and 2% cross-slope for play areas and surrounding pathways.
  - » Provide a mix of ground-level equipment and elevated equipment that is accessible by ramp or transfer platform (Refer to Standard 6 and CSA-Z614.20 Annex H for recommended ratios of elevated to ground-oriented features).
  - » Provide open spaces next to play elements, transfer platforms, and furnishings to park wheelchairs or for caregivers in wheelchairs (refer to Standard 6 and 8).
  - » Include back rests on seating elements and play components with seats, such as swings (refer to Standard 6 and 8).

Vision Challenges

- Plan for people with vision challenges including colour-blindness, low vision, and blindness:
  - » Use strong contrasting colours and textures to orient users and define and differentiate spaces, pathways, edges, and grade changes.
  - » Avoid the use of red and green or green and blue components directly adjacent to each other, which are difficult to distinguish for people with colour blindness.
  - » Avoid the use of highly reflective surfaces.
  - » Consider integration of custom braille inlays in signage and wayfinding elements to guide users with vision challenges through the playground area.

Hearing Challenges

- Plan for people with hearing disabilities:
  - » Integrate clear sight lines to support hearing-disabled people to easily navigate spaces.
  - » Avoid elements that create scraping or sharp clanging sounds (e.g. stones and gravel on metal) which can be irritating for hearing-aid users. Choose soft or porous materials that absorb noise for key elements when possible (e.g. wood, bamboo).

Additional Considerations

Consider integration of play elements that encourage universal play experiences in multiple ways. For example, adding a fort or play house can provide a range of benefits:

- » Ground-oriented for users with mobility challenges
- » A quiet respite for users with sensory challenges,
- » Offers opportunities for imaginary play
- » Provides weather protection throughout the seasons
- » Low cost

Image Credit: Earthscape

Inspiration: A sensory garden can create soothing opportunities for tactile and visual input

Design Standards *(cont'd)*

Sensory Challenges

- Plan for people with autism spectrum disorder and other sensory processing challenges:
  - » Create clearly separate active and passive zones, including quiet, soothing, neutral spaces for retreat.
  - » Provide calming opportunities for tactile and visual sensory input including planting and water play (see Standard 6).
  - » Avoid visual over-stimulants like geometric patterns or stripes.
  - » Integrate play equipment that rocks, swings, and spins for children who crave movement to do so safely.
  - » Provide a non-climbable fence and gate surrounding the future fully universally accessible Community Playground. Children who are overstimulated can suddenly bolt to remove themselves from unsettling environments (see Standard 4).

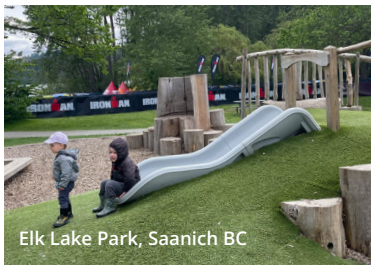
Inspiration: An accessible merry-go-round provides an opportunity for an "intersection" or chance for many different children to come together and play.

Intersections

- Provide "intersections" or areas where all children can safely come together and share play experiences. Examples include:
  - » Swings, merry-go-rounds, platforms, or teeter totters that can accommodate multiple children, including those in wheelchairs.
  - » Informal seats / boulders placed within the playground area but separate from the main play structure for children who need more time to observe and adapt to a play environment to do so before "diving in".
  - » Sand play areas with universal access points and raised sand tables. Refer to CSA Standard CZ614.20 for recommended depths, composition, drainage, cover, and other design recommendations.
  - » Tunnels or ground-oriented features with climbing elements above for multiple children to enjoy at the same time.

2 Siting the Playground

Integrate playgrounds seamlessly with the park and surrounding neighbourhood



Elk Lake Park, Saanich BC

Inspiration: Design the playground to integrate site features that can provide play value, including hills for embankment slides.

Inspiration: Protect surrounding environmentally sensitive areas and provide signage to provide information about why the area is being protected.

Image Credit: Habitat Systems
Maffeo Sutton Park, Nanaimo BC

Inspiration: A raised deck above the root zone of this existing tree provides a place for gathering and informal play while protecting the tree roots from compaction.

Background & Rationale

- Playgrounds are one component of the larger park and neighbourhood context. Planning for thoughtful integration between a playground and surrounding park and neighbourhood can enhance user experience, longevity, and ongoing maintenance and upkeep considerations.
- Parks are dynamic places, continuously changing depending on the time of the day, day of the week, and time of year. The City should endeavor to create playgrounds that are as inviting on a January morning as they are on a hot summer afternoon.
- As the City of Courtenay continues to grow and evolve, opportunities exist to evaluate the siting of existing park playgrounds in consideration with the surrounding context and anticipated future uses (e.g., busier roads, surrounding development sites etc.).

Design Standards

- For locating new Community Playgrounds or planning Community Playground upgrades, enlist the support of a landscape architect early in the project process to provide guidance on siting and overall layout. For Neighbourhood and Nature Park Playgrounds, consider engaging a landscape architect on a site-by-site basis.
- Locate playgrounds with proximity to existing trail networks to maximize active transportation connections. Where existing trail connections are not present, review the trail network to identify potential new linkages and expand the trail system to achieve connectivity (refer to Standard 3).
- Site playgrounds in coordination with the natural lay of the land, including flat areas for large play structures and hills, mounds, and grade changes for embankment slides, climbing, and rolling.
- Provide buffers and setbacks from surrounding residential neighbourhoods to minimize noise impacts.
- Avoid placing playgrounds in immediate proximity to major roads for safety and noise considerations.
- Retain and protect existing trees and mature vegetation, where possible. Avoid locating play structures or regrading within the root zones of existing trees.
- Ensure playgrounds are placed to adhere to required environmental setbacks from water bodies including riparian areas and wetlands.
- Consider site grading and drainage and place playgrounds on stabilized, free-draining soil.
- Avoid placing playgrounds near environmentally sensitive areas. Provide strategic barriers to limit impacts to natural areas (see Standard 4).
- Consider site micro-climate conditions including site aspect and wind direction. Perform a solar analysis to understand existing and future sun and shade conditions prior to planning improvements.
- Look for opportunities to co-locate recreational uses. For example, placing playgrounds in close proximity to sports courts and fields can encourage visitation, foster intergenerational play, and diversify use.

3 Pathways and Connectivity

Provide safe, well-connected paths of travel to access park playgrounds

Inspiration: Accessible paths of travel for all

Parkgate Community Centre Playground, North Vancouver, BC

Inspiration: Pathways can provide play value in the form of "stop and go" loops for early walkers and striders, with grade changes to navigate including bridges and humps

Image Credit: Decomark Browning Park, Saanich BC

Inspiration: Pathways provide opportunities to enhance placemaking, including custom markings and integrated public art

Background & Rationale

- Increased connectivity to parks and recreation opportunities was identified as a priority in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019).
- Public engagement participants identified opportunities to increase safe access to Courtenay's park playgrounds by active transportation, including walking and rolling (cycling, rollerblading, skateboarding, wheelchair / scooter / stroller travel).
- Integration of supporting amenities can encourage active transportation to park playgrounds (e.g., bike parking and water fountains).

Design Standards

- Locate new playgrounds in close proximity to existing park and neighbourhood trails (see Standard 2).
- Plan pathways with CPTED principles in mind, including clear sightlines and boundaries (see Standard 4)
- Integrate a hierarchy of pathways to and surrounding the playground including primary pathways, secondary pathways, and path loops.
  - » All primary pathways to be 3m wide
  - » Secondary pathways to be minimum 1.5 - 3m wide
- For all primary and secondary paths, longitudinal slopes should be maximum 5%, and cross slopes maximum 2%.
- If longitudinal slopes exceed 5%, install an accessible ramp and handrails per BC Building Code standards. Maximum longitudinal ramp slope to be 1:12, with ramp landings at regular intervals.
- For Community Park Playground pathways, surfacing to be cast-in-place concrete, precast concrete pavers (including permeable pavers), or asphalt.
- For Neighborhood Park Playground pathways, surfacing to be cast-in-place concrete, precast concrete pavers, asphalt, or packed gravel.
- For Nature Park Playground pathways, surfacing to be wood chip.
- Install all pathways to suitable depth and compaction and avoid minor grade changes between pathways and adjacent surfaces, which can create tripping hazards or other mobility challenges.
- Plan pathways to provide play value, including pathway loops surrounding the play environment for tricycles, push-toys, and early walkers.
- Integrate "discovery pathways" at the periphery of playgrounds through planted areas with stepping stones to encourage a sense of discovery and surprise.
- Provide supporting amenities along playground pathways including furnishings, lighting, and signage (see Standard 8).
- Provide a different colour, finish, or type of pathway surfacing to differentiate paths from main play areas to reduce conflicts.

4 Boundaries and Enclosure

Assess site features to determine appropriate boundaries and levels of enclosure

Inspiration: Secure boundary - decorative wood and metal post and rail fence with wire-mesh infill

Inspiration: Provide post and rail or split rail fencing to protect environmentally sensitive areas

Image Credit: Seattle Parks and Rec Jefferson Park, Seattle WA

Inspiration: Planting areas surrounding play areas provide permeable boundaries that help define the space and separate use zones

Inspiration: Public art integrated with chain link fence

Background & Rationale

- The relationship of park playgrounds to surrounding park uses and elements can directly impact playground use and perceptions of safety.
- Types of playground boundaries and enclosure should be informed by the park context and playground classification.
- Placement, choice of enclosure type, and extent of fencing are important to consider to provide safety, while avoiding the playground being overly divided from the broader park.
- Many public engagement participants shared concerns about safety. Providing physical barriers or visual cues to define playground boundaries may help discourage unsafe activity close to playgrounds.

Design Standards

- Use a combination of boundary types to surround playgrounds, including secure boundaries, permeable boundaries, and no boundary:
  - » Secure Boundaries: non-climbable chain-link fencing or decorative wood and metal fencing.
  - » Permeable Boundaries: split-rail fencing, bollards, vegetation.
  - » For Community and Neighbourhood Parks, select secure and permeable boundaries (exact types to be determined on a site-by-site basis).
  - » For Nature Park Playgrounds, integrate permeable boundaries. Avoid the use of chain link or metal fencing or metal bollards, which are not consistent with the character of natural areas.
  - » Where playgrounds are located well away from roads, parking lots, or non-compatible park uses (e.g., dog off-leash areas) integrate no boundary or alternatively, consider permeable boundaries to define the playground area, including planting or bollards.
  - » Where playgrounds are within immediate proximity to roads, parking lots, or other non-compatible park features, provide secure boundaries between the playground and non-compatible feature (non-climbable, 1.2m high fences and gates).
  - » Provide secure boundaries to fully surround universally accessible playgrounds (see Standard 1).
  - » Provide split rail fencing adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas.
- Avoid placing horizontal elements (e.g., benches, seat walls) abutting secure boundaries which can be climbable and render them ineffective.
- Consider opportunities to integrate public art or play features within fences or boundaries to provide opportunities for placemaking.

5 Playground Surfacing and Edging

Implement resilient, easy to maintain, inclusive surfacing and edging

Image Credit: Earthscape, McMaster Children's Centre, Hamilton ON

Inspiration: Universally accessible poured-in-place rubber surfacing is integrated with boulders and other climbing features to create edges and transitions between spaces while also offering play value.

Image Credit: Michelle Mathis Silver Falls State Park, Oregon

Inspiration: Boulders or logs used as edging for loose play surfacing in nature play areas

Image Credit: Martins Park Boston Martins Park, Boston MA

Inspiration: A seamless transition between play surfacing and pathway creates a barrier-free play area for all to enjoy. Contrasting colours between the play area and the circulation route define zones and create clear paths of travel.

Background & Rationale

- Material selection for playground surfacing and edging should be informed by the usage intensity of the site, accessibility, cost, character, play value, lifespan, and maintenance and environmental considerations.
- Many public engagement participants expressed concerns about safety in Courtenay's parks, including presence of unsafe garbage and debris in playground areas. All surface types will require ongoing maintenance and cleaning to support safe and accessible play spaces. Unitary surfaces such as poured-in-place rubber have high degrees of visibility and are easiest to maintain to keep debris-free.
- Poured-in-place rubber surfacing has many advantages including resiliency, fostering inclusive play, lifespan, and maintenance. However, it has a much higher initial cost than other surfacing types and capital budgets may not be able to support rubber surfacing in all of Courtenay's playgrounds. Priority should be given to Community Park Playgrounds and select Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds.

Design Standards

Surfacing

- Plan the appropriate surfacing type according to the playground classification:
  - » For Community Park Playgrounds, integrate poured-in place rubber surfacing for the main play areas, including all areas surrounding universally accessible play features.
  - » Where budget or other factors do not permit the entire play area to be poured-in-place rubber, consider engineered wood fiber or wood chips in select supporting areas.
  - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate poured-in-place rubber surfacing, engineered-wood-fiber or wood chips, to be determined on a site-by-site basis.
  - » For Community and Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, consider use of synthetic turf (e.g. mounds, hills) in limited areas for accessibility, longevity, and play value. Locate playgrounds away from environmentally sensitive areas to reduce environmental impacts (see Standard 2).
  - » For Nature Parks, or nature play areas in Community or Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate engineered wood fiber or wood chips. Sand, sod, or earth / soil may also be used in areas around lower-height structures (450mm or less per CSA standards).
- Install all play surfaces in fall zones to proper thicknesses as indicated by CSA safety standards and manufacturer's recommendations. Extend protective surfacing in all directions from the play equipment, within the fall-zone identified by the equipment manufacturer.

Design Standards *(cont'd)*

- Ensure unitary surfaces (e.g., poured-in-place rubber, synthetic turf) are installed with min. 2% cross slopes to drain to area drains or other integrated stormwater management strategies (e.g., rain gardens, swales). Install surfacing sub-bases to required depths and compaction per manufacturer's standards to avoid differential settlement.
- If mixing surface types (e.g., poured-in-place rubber surfacing and engineered wood fiber) plan pathways or other transition zones between materials to limit loose materials spilling over and impacting safety, accessibility, and ongoing maintenance.
- Where one surface type transitions to another (e.g., poured-in-place rubber to cast-in-place concrete), install surfaces flush to create barrier-free paths of travel. Avoid minor grade changes, which can create tripping hazards or other mobility challenges.
- Plan surface types with consideration for thermal comfort (e.g., dark rubber play surfacing can retain heat and contribute to heat island effect). Choose light colours and plan in coordination with shade trees and shade structures (see Standard 9).

Edging

- Plan the appropriate edging type according to the playground classification:
  - » For Community Park Playgrounds, add cast-in-place concrete edging surrounding poured-in-place rubber surfacing. Integrate composite bender-board edging or untreated timber edging surrounding loose surfaces such as engineered wood fiber or wood chips.
  - » Consider strategies to reduce the amount of cast-in-place concrete edging where possible, including integrating boulders or logs, placing rubber play surfacing next to new or existing concrete pathways in good condition, and installing surfacing with no edge (on a turn-down slope) adjacent to loose surfacing like engineered wood fiber.
  - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, include cast-in-place concrete, composite bender-board, or timber edging (to be determined on a site-by-site basis)
  - » For Nature Park Playgrounds or nature play areas within Community or Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate timber edging, boulders, logs, or no edging.
- Cast-in-place concrete edging should be installed with a 2% cross-slope to drain towards nearest drainage structure or integrated green stormwater management strategy.
- Ensure edging is installed flush to adjacent surfaces for smooth, even transitions and to avoid tripping hazards.

Additional Considerations

Creative playground surfacing can enhance play value and sense of place. Opportunities exist to create unique play experiences by integrating custom public art, imagery, and themes in poured-in-place surfacing or manipulating ground planes to include mounds, stepping stones, climbing hills or other play features that reflect the character of the Courtenay region.

Parksville Community Park, Parksville BC

Maffeo Sutton Park, Nanaimo BC

6 Play Elements and Opportunities

Provide a wide range of play opportunities for all to enjoy

Existing Conditions: Ridge Playground

Inspiration: Play area designed in circuit a (floor is lava!)

Inspiration: Areas for exploration

Inspiration: Specialty play features - Zip-line

Background & Rationale

- Many community engagement respondents indicated that there are not enough fun or interesting things to do in Courtenay's park playgrounds and that many existing park playgrounds provide similar features and experiences. When visiting park playgrounds, respondents noted they would like to:
  - » Experience nature (59%)
  - » Be adventurous (55%)
  - » Gather with friends / family / others (55%)
- The top 5 play elements community engagement participants would most like to see in new and upgraded playgrounds are:
  - » New Play Structures (slides, swings, climbing features etc.) - 59%
  - » Nature Play Opportunities (planting, sand, rocks, logs) - 55%
  - » Splash Pad / Water Play - 43%
  - » Areas for Exploration (willow tunnels, stepping stone paths) - 42%
  - » Inclusive Play Features for All Ages and Abilities - 41%
- Opportunities exist to encourage different types of play in Courtenay's playgrounds, including active play, sensory play, creative play, imaginative play, manipulative play, social play, reflective play, risky play, and potential for multi-purpose spaces.
- The PRMP (2019) indicated an opportunity to expand the range of play features in Courtenay's park playgrounds, including:
  - » Opportunities for risky play
  - » Placement of exercise equipment in close proximity to park playgrounds
  - » Integration of nature play
  - » Opportunities to increase creativity and broaden user groups e.g., more interactive play environments and equipment and options for all ages of children, youth, and adults.
- Community Engagement participants noted that special, landmark designs and custom play features could encourage more positive activity in park playgrounds and attract visitation.

Design Standards

Age Ranges

- Plan playgrounds to safely accommodate a wide range of ages, including tot lots (6 mos - 2 years), pre-school (3-5) and 5-12 (+).
  - » For Community Park Playgrounds, provide play features for all age ranges with separate areas for each divided by transition zones, pathways, planting areas, or gathering spaces.
  - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, provide either tot-lots, pre-school, or 5-12 year features, or some combination of all three. Playground locations for specific age ranges and features to be determined based on ongoing upgrades and need.

Design Standards *(cont'd)*

- Consider opportunities for intergenerational use, including exercise equipment recreational amenities near playground areas, play elements that different age groups can enjoy at the same time (e.g., swings that allow adults and babies to swing together, climbing / bouldering walls for a range of ages), and supporting amenities like community garden plots and games tables (see Standard 9).

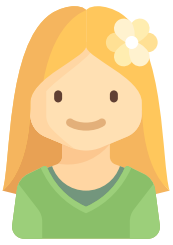
Play Elements

- Organize play elements in a loops or circuits so children can easily navigate their way through spaces and from one feature to another. Circuits also help encourage imagination and games like Grounders or Floor is Lava.
- Install all play equipment per CSA Standards and manufacturer's requirements including subgrade preparation, footings, fall zones, offsets, and heights above grade, taking care to avoid entrapment zones and potential hazards.
- Install appropriate fall surfacing surrounding play equipment (see Standard 5).
- Integrate raised and ground oriented features for universal accessibility (see Standard 2).
- Include passive play opportunities in addition to active play (e.g. climbing features and play forts for quiet retreat or seating elements where kids can observe before participating).
- Use a combination of standard and special play features in playground designs:
  - » **Standard Play Features:** swings, slides, climbing structures, monkey bars, stepping stones, bridges, tunnels, merry-go-rounds / spinners, teeter-totters, play houses, nature play.
  - » **Special Play Features:** zip-lines, trampolines, parkour features, custom and landmark play features, creative play elements, musical play elements, exercise equipment, water play.
  - » For Community Park Playgrounds, integrate a mix of standard and special play features.
  - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds, integrate standard play features. Special play features to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Considerations

With input from the community, interest groups, and City staff, consider developing a theme for each Community Playground to create unique experiences and destinations. Reinforce the theme through the selection of:

- » Materials, Colours and Patterns
- » Signage
- » Custom / Landmark Play Elements
- » Integrated Public Art



Inspiration: Nature play with sand and water to introduce an element of change in the play environment

Inspiration: Natural climbing features arranged in a circuit or obstacle course

Inspiration: Nature play elements (log tangles, log steppers, and discovery paths through planting) diversify the play experience and help strengthen sense of place

Inspiration: Discovery pathways with stepping logs and wooden arches to create a sense of wonder

Nature Play

- Provide opportunities for nature play in Community, Neighborhood, and Nature Parks (with specific focus on Nature Parks).
  - » When Sandwick Park is due for renewal, consider replacing the existing play structures with nature play elements.
  - » Assess opportunities to develop new nature playgrounds in Nature Parks or to convert existing Neighbourhood Park playgrounds to nature play areas. Determine locations based on geographic location, proximity to other playgrounds, community needs, support by a park management plan, and in the absence of any restrictive covenants. Public engagement is suggested prior to converting existing playgrounds to nature play areas.
- When allocating space in playground design, aim for the following areas for nature play opportunities:
  - » **Community Park Playgrounds:** Minimum 15% of the total playground area
  - » **Neighborhood Park Playgrounds:** Minimum 20% of the total playground area
  - » **Nature Park Playgrounds:** 100% of the playground area
- Plan the nature play area to be integrated with the overall flow of the playground, considering relationships to pathways, planting, and other play elements.
- Integrate a range of nature play features for all ages and abilities:
  - » **Natural Climbing Features:** boulders, climbing logs, and stepping stumps for balancing, climbing, jumping, and risky play. Arrange elements in an obstacle course or circuit that links to the overall playground layout.
  - » **Nature Discovery Features:** log tunnels, willow tunnels, "adventure pathways" through planting, gnome homes or fairy doors - elements that create a sense of wonder or mystery.
  - » **Topography and Landforms:** hills or mounds to climb or roll down, integration of landforms and play features including slides, climbing logs, and boulders.
  - » **Water Play:** integrated stormwater management strategies within play areas (e.g., bioswales, biofiltration ponds), or lazy rivers with a hose-bib connection to turn on and off.
  - » **Sand and Mud Play:** for sandcastles and structure building, creative play, imaginary play, and messy play.
  - » **Loose Parts Play:** loose logs, sticks, rocks, bark, leaves, pine cones, and surfacing materials (sand, mud) to invite imaginative play and allow children to modify and manipulate the play environment.
- Natural elements should meet CSA safety standards for fall zones. Integrate appropriate soft surfacing to the required depth within the entire fall zone surrounding all elevated climbing features (see Standard 5).
- When using natural materials such as wood or boulders, provide smooth surfaces. Sand to remove all protruding elements and sharp edges.

Design Standards *(cont'd)*

- Source materials locally whenever possible.
- Limit the use of synthetic materials for nature-play elements.
- Plant trees and native plant material in the play environment, including opportunities to integrate urban agriculture and pollinator planting areas (see Standard 7).
- Integrate universal design principles in nature play areas (refer to Standard 2, including):
  - » Clear zones for parking wheelchairs.
  - » Raised elements where appropriate (e.g., raised sand / water table, raised urban agriculture planter, or table for loose parts play with wheelchair access).
  - » Ground oriented elements including play forts, willow tunnels, discovery pathways, etc.

Inspiration: Raised planters for urban agriculture or tables for sand / loose parts play help foster universal access to nature play experiences

Creative Play

- Provide opportunities for creative play in Community Parks and select Neighbourhood Parks, including:
  - » **Multi-purpose Open Spaces:** for creative play and creative programming (building, painting, dancing, crafts etc. (see Standard 9).
  - » **Stages:** for performance and imaginary play.
  - » **Musical Play Features:** bongo drums, wind chimes, etc.
  - » **Drawing Surfaces:** chalk boards or paved areas for sidewalk chalk.

Inspiration: Paved areas provide blank canvases for a range of art projects including painting and sidewalk chalk

Sensory Play

- Provide opportunities for sensory play in Community Parks and select Neighbourhood Parks, including:
  - » **Tactile Panels:** with a variety of different textures to feel or objects to manipulate.
  - » **Musical or Sound-producing Play Features:** (see above)
  - » **Sensory Gardens:** including plants with a variety of colours, textures, and scents (see Standard 7).
  - » **Water & Sand Play:** see Nature Play section on previous page.
  - » **Light Play:** interactive lit installations to enliven play environments in the evening hours.
  - » **A Variety of Swings:** for varied movement experiences, including basket swings, chairs, hammocks, and cocoon swings.

Inspiration: Interactive play installations with lighting to provide unique sensory experiences in the evening hours

7 Trees and Planting

Integrate shade trees and planting areas surrounding playgrounds

Inspiration: Pollinator friendly planting areas can attract bees, birds, and butterflies to strengthen pollinator pathways

Inspiration: Sensory gardens can help connect children to the natural world and invite curiosity and learning


Image Credit: Seattle Parks & Rec, Greenwood Park, Seattle WA

Inspiration: Protect existing trees and plant shade trees surrounding playgrounds for comfortable use throughout the seasons

Background & Rationale

- *Nature is fun!* was the most well-supported guiding principle by community engagement participants. Words including "nature, natural, and trees" were commonly mentioned by community engagement participants when asked to describe their ideal outdoor play area.
- Many public engagement participants (30%) identified weather or seasonal conditions (not enough shade or activities we can do year round) as one of the key things that make it hard for participants to enjoy park playgrounds.
- Trees and vegetation help to foster biodiversity, support pollinators, and provide ecosystem services including carbon sequestration and oxygen release, water conservation, shade, and erosion prevention.
- Trees and planting areas can provide play and educational value.
- Time spent in natural areas has been proven to provide physical and cognitive benefits for children including the ability to soothe the mind from stressful sensory triggers and encourage focused attention.

Design Standards:

- Protect existing trees and vegetation wherever possible. Site and plan playground improvements to work around the drip-line of existing trees (see Standard 2). When planning playground improvements in close proximity to existing trees, consult a Certified Arborist for tree protection and management measures.
- For all Community, Neighbourhood, and Nature Parks, plant new shade trees surrounding the playground area (see Standard 9). Refer to the Shade Lookbook for suggested shade tree plant species (see Appendix A).
- Plan planting areas to provide permeable buffers between playground areas and other park elements. Plant low-growing species surrounding the play area to support clear sight lines to and through the space.
- Plan planting areas in coordination with the overall grading and drainage strategy of the site. Consider potential for integrated stormwater management strategies including rain gardens, bio-filtration ponds, and bioswales.
- Plan planting areas according to the micro-climate conditions of the site, including aspect, soil moisture, and wind exposure.
- Integrate non-toxic, drought tolerant, native, pollinator-friendly planting materials.
- Provide a mix of evergreen and perennial plant material, with varied colour and interest throughout the seasons

Design Standards *(cont'd)*

- Provide plant materials with play and sensory value. Consider plants that have different scents, textures, and unique shapes, forms, or foliage.
- When planting is added near playgrounds, prioritize resources to maintain these areas to a high standard.
- Provide 450mm minimum depth of top soil for shrubs and 600mm minimum depth top soil for trees. Provide 75mm deep layer of bark mulch. Follow the Canadian Landscape Standard for selection, installation, and maintenance of new plant materials.
- Provide low-flow irrigation to support planting material through the establishment period and beyond.
- Consider integration of "live planted elements" in the play area including willow tunnels and living fences.
- Consider opportunities for urban agriculture next to playground areas, including raised beds and opportunities for universal gardening and horticultural therapy.

Additional Considerations

Seek opportunities to collaborate with K'ómoks First Nation to integrate traditional plants that are culturally significant to the community. Add educational signage to identify why the plant material is important, including Indigenous names and cultural plant uses.

8 Supporting Amenities

Provide a range of supporting amenities to activate park playgrounds


Esquimalt Adventure Park
Esquimalt, BC

Inspiration: Inclusive washroom building


Image Credit: Berger Partnership
Surrey Downs Park, Bellevue WA

Inspiration: Picnic shelter to support community gathering in close proximity to the playground area


Image Credit: Berger Partnership
Surrey Downs Park, Bellevue WA

Inspiration: Gathering space for individuals and groups


Image Credit: Seattle Parks & Rec
Pratt Park Spray Park, Seattle WA

Inspiration: Inclusive splash pads and water play areas were well-supported by community engagement participants

Background & Rationale:

- Many community engagement respondents shared concerns about safety and garbage / debris in gathering spaces, specifically evidence of substance use in or near playground areas. Provision of supporting amenities can encourage positive and increased activation of parks and playground spaces.
- Opportunities exist to expand the range of supporting amenities in Courtenay's park playgrounds. Research has shown that investment in public places to include elements like furnishings and public art helps enable people to feel comfortable and at ease, increasing activation and community wellbeing and decreasing negative behaviours.
- Many community engagement respondents supported the idea that playgrounds can act as gathering spaces and inclusion of amenities like washrooms, benches, picnic areas, and spaces for food trucks, kiosks, or concessions could help attract visitation and community gathering.
- The PRMP (2019) indicated a range of amenities to be included in the design of new and upgraded park areas:
  - » Seating
  - » Gathering places, with seating and spaces appropriate for picnics and group activities
  - » Celebration of local artists in parks, with more public art such as murals, mosaics, and sculptures.
- Many public engagement participants expressed desires for amenities to support all-seasons use, including shade structures during the hot summer months and lighting and covered areas during dark, wet weather.
  - » Benefits of shade include UV protection, energy conservation, heat mitigation, climate adaptation, promotion of outdoor activities, reduced air pollution (from shade trees) and extending the lifespan of outdoor furniture and infrastructure.
  - » Shade structures are important in playgrounds as children are more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses and UV radiation.

Design Standards

Standard and Special Amenities

- Provide a range of amenities to support playground users and attract visitation, including:
  - » **Standard Amenities:** gathering spaces, waste receptacles, shade elements, signage, bike parking
  - » **Special Amenities**: washroom buildings, water fountains, splash pad / water play, picnic shelters, BBQ areas, game tables, multi-sport courts & multi-purpose paved surfaces, space for food trucks / kiosks, public art, lighting
  - » For Community Park Playgrounds, provide a mix of standard and special amenities.
  - » For Neighbourhood Park Playgrounds provide standard amenities. Special amenities to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
  - » For Nature Park Playgrounds provide standard amenities. Special amenities to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Use materials and furnishings that have a consistent character with each park, e.g., Nature Park Playgrounds should use warm, natural materials like wood and stone. Specialty finishes and custom features should be reserved for Community Park Playgrounds.
- Locate supporting amenities in close proximity to playground areas. Consider required clearance zones for adjacent activity areas (e.g. verge spaces and clearances surrounding playing fields).
- Select and locate amenities with consideration for sun exposure and thermal comfort (refer to the Shade Lookbook, see Appendix A).
- Refer to the tables on the following pages for additional information on supporting amenities, including:
  - » **Amenity Type:** Standard or special amenity
  - » **Description:** Brief overview of the amenity and considerations for implementation
  - » **Priority:** High, Medium, or Low based on community support indicated during the public engagement phase and level of community need
  - » **Capital Cost Estimates:** High-level cost ranges for planning purposes only:

    $ = $0 - $15,000

    $$ = $15,000 - $50,000

    $$$ = $50,000 - $150,000 (if the cost exceeds $150,000 a rough-order of magnitude cost is provided)

Additional Considerations

Consider fun and playful seating options to attract gatherings and visitation throughout the year, including:

- » Swing Seats
- » Hammocks
- » Movable Furnishings
- » Illuminated / Interactive Installations

Standard Amenities for Park Playgrounds

STANDARD AMENITY	DESCRIPTION AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PRIORITY	CAPITAL COST ESTIMATE
Gathering Spaces	» **All Playgrounds:** Add City of Courtenay standard park benches with back rests near playground areas (min. 2 per playground area). » **Community Playgrounds:** Provide flexible seating areas for small group gatherings including seat walls, benches, tables, picnic tables, and custom furnishings. » Allocate clear zones next to all benches and furnishings for parking wheelchairs or strollers.	High	All: **$** Community Parks: **$$**
Waste Receptacles	» **All Playgrounds**: Provide double-stream waste and recycling receptacles in all park playgrounds. Select animal-proof models. » Locate waste receptacles in close proximity to other amenities (e.g., picnic shelters, trail connections). » Provide clearance zones surrounding waste receptacles for maintenance access. » Provide safe sharps disposal bins near park playgrounds on an as-needed basis.	High	$
Shade Elements	» **All Playgrounds:** Provide shade trees. Locate accordingly to shade key playground areas during the warmest hours of the day. Refer to the Shade Lookbook for appropriate shade tree species (see Appendix A). » **Community Playgrounds:** Provide shade trees and shade structures including shade sails or covered gathering spaces (see picnic shelters). » Prior to implementing shade elements, conduct a solar analysis and shade audit to maximize effectiveness. » Plan shade sails and shade structures with the support of a structural engineer.	High	All Parks: **$** Community Parks: **$$$**
Bike Parking	» **All Playgrounds:** Provide convenient, safe bicycle parking opportunities near primary bike paths. » **Community Playgrounds:** At select Community Park Playgrounds, integrate amenities to support bikes and electric bikes (e-bikes) including electric bike charging stations and bicycle repair / fix-it stations.	High	All Parks: **$** Community Parks: **$$**
Signage	» **All Playgrounds:** Provide regulatory signage indicating hours of use and codes of conduct. » **Community Playgrounds:** Provide welcome signage and playground wayfinding and interpretive signage to guide park users to and from the play area and provide information on the history of the park, playground, and unique design and placemaking elements.	Medium	All Parks: **$** Community Parks: **$$**

Table 4: **Standard Amenities for Park Playgrounds**

Special Amenities for Park Playgrounds

SPECIAL AMENITY	DESCRIPTION AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PRIORITY	CAPITAL COST ESTIMATE
Washroom Building	» Provide universally accessible facilities. » If locating in a Community Park with a splash pad or other recreational activities, consider integrating change room facilities. » Prioritize Community Parks with existing water / sewer connections in close proximity to the playground area to reduce costs and construction impact. » Consider composting or pit toilets if capital budgets or infrastructure do not allow for water / sewer connections. » Update maintenance / operational capacity to reflect additions	High	**~ $250,000 - $500,000**
Splash Pad / Water Play	» Prioritize implementation of a new splash pad at a Community Park on the east side of town (to complement existing amenity at Lewis Park). » Splash pads should be universally accessible with a range of interactive spray features. » Consider alternative use of splash pad area during winter months (e.g., multi-purpose paved space for recreational use). » Use effective water-management systems including high-efficiency nozzles and on-demand activation, Consider water re-circulation systems.	High	**~ $200,000 - $350,000 (+)**
Public Art	» Integrate public art in the form of sculptures, murals, and interactive installations within or near playgrounds. » Integrate Indigenous art and storytelling within play spaces. » Feature local artists from Courtenay and the surrounding region.	High	**TBD based on capital budgets**
Picnic Shelter	» Place covered picnic areas in close proximity to the playground and gathering space to accommodate small community gatherings. » Provide universally accessible surfacing and access routes to and from the picnic area. » Provide a range of furnishings including picnic tables and longer community tables. » Integrate clear zones next to tables for wheelchairs and stroller parking. » Consider integration of lighting to support evening use.	Medium	**$$$**
Water Fountain	» Locate new drinking fountains in close proximity to gathering and / or picnic areas.	Medium	**$**

Multi-sport Court	» Upgrade existing multi-sport courts. » In select Community Parks, consider addition of new pre-fabricated sports courts or flexible paved areas near park playgrounds, with lining for basketball, floor hockey and other recreational activities. » Provide fencing or sideboards around court areas to contain balls, as needed. » Provide benches.	Medium	**$150,000 - $300,000**
Areas for Food Trucks / Retail Kiosk	» Provide paved open areas for food truck parking or pop-up retail kiosks. Allow for vehicular access from adjacent roads or parking areas. » Locate near gathering spaces, waste receptacles, and shade elements » Provide electrical connections compatible for food trucks. » Consider reviewing Business License Amendment Bylaw No. 2847, 2016 to identify other park locations for Food Trucks than those established in the bylaw (i.e. near playgrounds).	Medium	**$**
Lighting	» Add or upgrade pedestrian-scale lighting at playground entries and along primary park trails. » Integrate building-mounted lighting at washroom buildings and picnic shelters. » Consider addition of low-level lighting recessed in seat walls or mounted to the underside of benches or furnishings. » Use energy-efficient fixtures (e.g. solar LED lights) and consider integration of timers. » Design lighting for dark-sky compliance to avoid light trespass onto habitat areas and adjacent residential neighbourhoods.	Medium	**$$**
BBQ Area	» Consider raised charcoal BBQ grills in close proximity to picnic shelters / gathering areas. » Ensure surfacing and furnishings materials directly surrounding grills are non-flammable. » Provide counter tops or tables for placing food and cooking utensils adjacent to grills and coal disposal canisters for safe removal of unused coals. » Provide regulatory signage related to BBQ area codes of conduct.	Low	**$$**
Game Tables	» Consider game tables near playground gathering spaces (e.g., chess tables, ping pong, foosball). » Seek opportunities to partner with the K'omoks First Nation to develop spaces for traditional games.	Low	**$**

Table 5: **Special Amenities for Park Playgrounds**

9 Programming

Activate park playgrounds with diverse community programming

Inspiration: Art in the Playground!

Image Credit: Seattle Parks & Rec

Inspiration: Environmental learning programs

Inspiration: Food trucks and pop-up retail kiosks

Background & Rationale:

- Opportunities exist to increase safety and activation of Courtenay's park playgrounds. Programming helps to create vibrant, community-focused places, which in turn encourages positive activity and a strong sense of place.
- Public engagement participants and interest groups were supportive of increasing programming opportunities in park playgrounds and shared ideas about gathering spaces to support programming, pop-up retail opportunities, and recreational programs coordinated through the City and local community groups.

Design Standards:

- Provide open, multi-purpose paved or lawn spaces adjacent to park playgrounds to support a range of programs and activities.
- Explore opportunities to increase City-led programming at park playgrounds, including:
  - The Courtenay Playground Trail! A scavenger hunt / map to visit all of Courtenay's unique park playgrounds (with potential incentives)
  - Pop-up City of Courtenay Recreation programming
  - Creative programming including art, music, or photography classes
  - Musical performances
  - Story walks through the playground
  - Movies at the playground / park
  - Indigenous story-telling or other cultural activities at the playground / park
  - Environmental learning in Nature Park Playgrounds
  - Grants for neighbourhood-led community gatherings
- Partner with community organizations to diversify programming opportunities.
- Near Community Park playgrounds, provide infrastructure to support community gatherings, including power connections for events and pop-ups (e.g., food trucks, markets) and shade structures for all-season use (see Standard 8).
- Help foster community playground groups to advocate for playground spaces and coordinate community efforts and events to create safe, welcoming spaces (e.g. friends of Woodcote Park!).

> *There is a huge opportunity here to bring people into our community by creating something that is truly a landmark, a brand for the city. Think big, think drawing people here because we have something special and unorthodox for the kids to engage with.*
>
> - Community Engagement Participant

Image Credit: Seattle Parks and Recreation, Jefferson Park Splash Pad

Elk Lake Park Nature Play Area, Saanich BC

3 | Implementation - *Moving Forward*

Ongoing community discussion and dialogue prior to implementing the Park Playground Design Standards will help create playgrounds that are well used and enjoyed by the community.

Let's Play, Courtenay! Community Engagement Event at the Lake Trail Community School

3.1 Implementing the Standards

As the City of Courtenay advances the Park Playground Design Standards, the following considerations are provided:

- **Change will happen over time.** Park playgrounds are living spaces. They require ongoing planning to continue to meet the needs of the community that is growing and evolving around them. Change in Courtenay's playgrounds will happen over many years, with each playground upgrade being carefully planned to achieve the intended results.
- **Adaptation will be required.** Successful long-term management of the playground system will require flexibility and adaptation to unforeseen changes and continued public input. Ideas or circumstances that are not known today may become important to a park playground's future. Continuing to reflect on the vision and guiding principles developed with the community, while encouraging creative future planning, will allow positive opportunities to emerge.
- **It will be important to plan, implement, and re-assess**. Playgrounds are one part of a broad, integrated parks system. Changes to one component of a park or the surrounding neighborhood may ripple to impact a playground and planning needs. The Park Playground Design Standards provide a framework for a playground's evolution, but reviewing current circumstances regularly will help support ongoing positive results.

Community Engagement

Continuing to work closely with the community through ongoing engagement and dialogue will support positive outcomes. While the Park Playground Design Standards provide a framework for improvements, future engagement with community members and interest group to identify key site-specific opportunities and design considerations will help create playgrounds that best meet the needs of the community.

Prior to designing and implementing new playgrounds and playground upgrades, it is suggested that the City undertake engagement, following the guidelines established in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan for specific park planning efforts:

- Inform the relevant City residents of the process and consult with and involve those interested in each park playground.
  - » For Community Park Playgrounds, inform the entire city.
  - » For Neighbourhood and Nature Park Playgrounds, inform those within the catchment.
  - » For all park playground upgrades, inform interest groups.

3.2 Playground Asset Management Planning

Asset Inventory

To aid with implementation of the Park Playground Design Standards and plan for ongoing upgrades, a more comprehensive inventory of the City's playground assets will be helpful. As the playground system evolves, a regularly updated, finer grained database that documents physical assets within park playgrounds could provide valuable insights on future investments and potential efficiencies.

Potential assets to be inventoried include:

- Playground Surfacing and Edging
- Standard Play Features (slides, climbers, swings, etc.)
- Special Play Features (zip-lines, trampolines, exercise equipment, etc.)
- Standard Amenities (benches, waste receptacles, bike parking, shade structures, etc.)
- Special Amenities (washroom buildings, picnic structures, bbq areas, game tables, etc.)
- Accessible Elements (play features and supporting amenities)

Information about each asset could by organized by park classification. Refer to the spreadsheet on the following page for an example template. Please note, the information provided in the spreadsheet is an example only, the inventory and tool would be developed by the City as playground upgrades progress. A process would be needed to review and update the inventory on an annual basis or every few years.

Life-Cycle Planning

Ongoing life-cycle analysis can assist asset management processes and should account for use levels, safety concerns, accessibility, age and condition of play elements, quality of manufacturing, materials, climate / weather, and location. While the lifespan of playground elements can vary widely depending on those factors, approximate ranges can assist with forecasting. The following approximate lifespan ranges are provided based on historical projects:

- Rubber Play Surfacing: ~10-15 years
- Engineered Wood Fiber Surfacing: ~2-3 years (top-up)
- Wood Chip Surfacing: ~2-3 years (top-up)
- Concrete Edging: ~15-30 years
- Composite Edging (Bender Board): ~15-25 years
- Timber Edging (Untreated): ~5-10 years
- Mixed Metal / Plastic / Rubber Play Equipment (high-end): ~25 (+) years
- Mixed Metal / Plastic / Rubber Play Equipment (standard): ~10-15 years
- Wood Playground Equipment: ~10-13 years
- Nature Play Elements (logs, stumps etc.): ~5-10 years

Table 6: Asset Inventory Spreadsheet Example

COMMUNITY PARK PLAYGROUND ASSET INVENTORY						
STANDARD PLAY FEATURES						
PARK	**FEATURE**	**YEAR OF INSTALL**	**AGE RANGE**	**ACCESSIBLE (Y/N)**	**CONDITION ASSESSMENT**	**MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS**
Lewis Park	Slide	2002	5-12	N	3	
Lewis Park	Swing set	2002	5-12	N	3	
SPECIAL PLAY FEATURES						
PARK	**FEATURE**	**YEAR OF INSTALL**	**AGE RANGE**	**ACCESSIBLE (Y/N)**	**CONDITION ASSESSMENT**	**MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS**
Bill Moore Park	Special Play Feature *(Future - TBD)*	2028	5-12	Y	1	

3.3 Playground Design Standards Summary

The chart on the following page provides an at-a-glance summary of the Park Playground Design Standards, organized by Community, Neighbourhood, and Nature Park Playgrounds. It compiles key standards, details, and budget considerations for each playground classification. Refer to Section 2 for more details.

City staff will begin the next phase of work to identify specific playground renewals and action the Park Playground Design Standards through detailed design and construction processes.

The extent of park playground upgrades will depend on the City's financial capacity to deliver playground renewals and funding priority as determined through asset management, playground asset inventory development, and annual budgeting processes.

Successful implementation of the Park Playground Design Standards will require coordination between a number of groups, including (but not limited to):

- City Mayor and Council
- City Departments
- Community Associations
- Interest Groups
- Community Members

Ongoing participation and collaboration of all of these groups will help realize the vision, guiding principles, and standards established through the Let's Play, Courtenay! Park Playground Design Standards process.

	COMMUNITY PARK PLAYGROUND	NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK PLAYGROUND	NATURE PARK PLAYGROUND
Intent	Destination playgrounds that serve residents from the entire City and beyond	Playgrounds that serve the surrounding neighbourhood	Playgrounds in parks that are dominated by natural features such as forests and watercourses
Level of Use	High	Moderate	Moderate
Service Level	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~10 minute walk (800m)	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~5 minute walk (400m)	Accessible to the majority of residents within a ~30 minute walk (2.5 km radius) or short drive
Size Range	~1000m^2 - 2000m^2	~250m^2 - 1000m^2	~100m^2 - 500m^2
Accessibility Level (see Standard 1)	Universal priority	Universal elements	Universal elements
Age Range	All ages	Tot Lot, 3-5, or 5-12 based on demand	All ages
Range of Play Elements (see Standard 6)	**Diverse** Standard and special play features. Features to be determined on a site-by-site basis	**Moderate** Standard play features. Special features to be considered on a site-by-site basis	**Moderate** Boulders / climbing rocks, log climbers. willow tunnels, forts, sand play, water play, loose parts play, areas for exploration (exact elements to be determined on a site-by-site basis)
Surfacing (see Standard 5)	Poured-in-place rubber surfacing for main play area (engineered wood fiber, synthetic turf considered for secondary zones)	Poured-in-place rubber surfacing, engineered wood fiber, or wood chips	Engineered wood fiber or wood chips. Sand or soil for low-height elements only
Edging (see Standard 5)	Cast-in-place concrete or composite bender board	Cast-in-place concrete, composite bender board, or timber edging	Timber edging, boulders, or no edging
Boundaries (see Standard 4)	Open, planted, chain-link, decorative, or split-rail fence, considered on a site-by-site basis	Open, planted, chain-link, or split-rail fence, considered on a site-by-site basis	Open, planted, or split-rail fence in select locations to protect sensitive natural areas
Supporting Amenities (see Standard 8)	Standard and special amenities. Amenities determined on a site-by-site basis (see Tables 4&5)	Standard amenities. Special amenities to be considered on a site-by-site basis (see Tables 4&5)	Standard amenities (see Table 4)
Capital Estimate Range	$240,000 - $1,650,000	$75,000 - $385,000	$50,000 - $220,000
Engagement	Engage entire City and interest groups	Engage with surrounding neighbourhood and interest groups	Engage with surrounding neighbourhood and interest groups

Table 7: **Park Playground Design Standards Summary Table**

Create playgrounds that feel like a "village square" - lots of focus on community gathering spaces, designing in circles to promote integration and connection, features for all seasons...

- Community Engagement Participant

Image Credit: Seattle Parks and Recreation- Occidental Park Plaza and Play Space

Oak Park Preschool Playground, Vancouver BC

Appendix A

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City of Courtenay