

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.