



Mills Park

What we heard report back

July 6, 2016

Project overview

Mills Park – Calgary Parks is looking to redevelop Mills Park, located on the corner of 9 Ave SE and 14 Street SE in the community of Inglewood. The new design of the park will be one of the first City parks to incorporate a natural play space.

Engagement overview

Engagement for Mills Park was intended to help design the space and learn what kind of play items stakeholders would like to see in the space. There were two components to the engagement for Mills Park. The first was a face-to-face session that included a walking tour of the play spaces at St. Patrick's Island and East Village, followed by a hands-on activity. The second component was an online survey which ran May 9 – 30, 2016.

What we asked

Participants were asked to assist in designing the new natural play space at Mills Park. In the activity portion of the face-to-face sessions, they were given magnets in the shape of the most commonly used natural play items as well as dry-erase markers and asked to help us design the park to include the types of natural play structures they would like to see in the space using the illustration of the park space provided.

The online survey asked participants to of the following:

1. Rate, in order of preference, from a list of eight common play structures
2. Each participant was given a visual, to reference, and asked to identify their favourite version of each of the eight play types.

Note: An opportunity to provide additional comments was provided within the survey. To review, please refer to the 'Verbatim' section of this document.

What we heard

Four key themes were derived from the face-to-face and online opportunities. They were:

► LAYOUT:

- Park design to incorporate quieter play areas nearest to 14th St and the established trees
- The more active play areas closer to the new development on the East side of the park. Balancing and climbing styles of play were the top two choices of the majority of respondents, with log balance and climbing boulders being the top two types of play items in those choices.

- Swings were a lower priority on the overall survey rankings, but rated higher in the comments.
- Hands on play was lower on the priority for the survey ranking and some concerns were noted around the mud and water play.

► SAFETY:

- Key comments regarding the right balance of safety.
 - Safety of the participants in the play space: *"Kids need danger at a playground"* and *"Please consider safety first"*.
- There are also concerns that some of the design elements used as examples may attract other, potentially "less desirable" activities in the park

► MATERIALS:

- It was clear that a preference to use a variety of 'natural' materials in the play space i.e. trees, boulders, less manmade materials were identified as a priority when selecting the mode of play for the play space in Mills Park.
 - *"Great idea, let's get away from the garish plastic playgrounds and get natural"*
 - *"Add more natural loose parts for kids to create and build on their own- larger rocks, tree pieces of various sizes, etc. Also put in a water source (could even look like an old hand water pump) so the kids can add water to their play."*

► PROXIMITY:

- Numerous contributors noted that Nellie Breen Park is close by and is tailored to young/toddler-aged children.
 - *"Since Nellie McBreen park is very close to this park, and it is geared to toddlers and very young children, could Mills Park be developed with elements geared towards older elementary school children."*
 - *"Please consider what is at the parks walkable to this one - Nellie Breen already has a disc swing, let's get something else at this park."*

These themes in addition to the other comments, will be reviewed and taken into consideration by the project team and where possible, incorporated into the final design. The final design will be presented to the community in July 2016.

- For a detailed summary of the input that was provided, please see the [Summary of Input](#) section.
- For a verbatim listing of all the input that was provided, please see the [Verbatim Responses](#) section.

Next steps

- The Mills Park project team is developing a design concept for the park.
- A design concept will be shared with participants and other community member and citizens in July 2016.
- More information can be found at calgary.ca/millspark.



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Summary of Input

Online Ranking of preferred play type

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5	Choice 6	Choice 7	Choice 8	Total Responses
Balancing and Jumping Play	18 (23.7%)	11 (14.5%)	13 (17.1%)	14 (18.4%)	8 (10.5%)	3 (3.9%)	6 (7.9%)	3 (3.9%)	76
Variable Climbing Play	27 (36.0%)	16 (21.3%)	11 (14.7%)	6 (8.0%)	3 (4.0%)	6 (8.0%)	4 (5.3%)	2 (2.7%)	75
Theatre Play	3 (4.1%)	2 (2.7%)	1 (1.4%)	2 (2.7%)	5 (6.8%)	14 (18.9%)	17 (23.0%)	30 (40.5%)	74
Music Play	4 (5.5%)	7 (9.6%)	6 (8.2%)	10 (13.7%)	7 (9.6%)	5 (6.8%)	16 (21.9%)	18 (24.7%)	73
Hideout Play	5 (6.9%)	7 (9.7%)	17 (23.6%)	8 (11.1%)	6 (8.3%)	13 (18.1%)	8 (11.1%)	8 (11.1%)	72
Steps and Slide Play	4 (5.3%)	13 (17.3%)	10 (13.3%)	14 (18.7%)	18 (24.0%)	6 (8.0%)	7 (9.3%)	3 (4.0%)	75
Swinging Play	6 (8.0%)	11 (14.7%)	9 (12.0%)	11 (14.7%)	10 (13.3%)	14 (18.7%)	8 (10.7%)	6 (8.0%)	75
Hands-On Play	10 (13.7%)	9 (12.3%)	8 (11.0%)	9 (12.3%)	15 (20.5%)	12 (16.4%)	6 (8.2%)	4 (5.5%)	73

Verbatim Comments (Online Survey)

Please note: For the sake of transparency in the engagement process, these comments are not edited for spelling or grammar.

- As many natural materials as possible!
- My husband and I actually contacted Parks about this park about five years ago. We thought it was a great space that could be used better. We hope to see the trees kept, and would suggest a way of creating a sound barrier from the traffic. Perhaps a water feature with running water? More trees/hedges, though I understand that in the past residents asked for them to be removed due to undesirable behaviour happening in those edges. I would love for this space to be natural, a retreat for both adults and kids. Look forward to having our kids use this space.
- The current satellite image of the park so is a walking path that you used regularly, it would be great if we could keep it with a stone pathway that kids could use to hop on. Seeing as how this park is on the music mile there should be some elements of music in it for sure.
- A mud pond is a risk for mosquito breeding - no standing water should be allowed in the park. Please consider what is at the parks walkable to this one - Nellie Breen already has a disc swing, let's get something else at this park. Nellie Breen is also suited to older children. The neighbourhood could use a park with at least one area geared towards children 2-5yrs. There are a LOT of little ones in this neighbourhood who are home more than school aged children and could use a nice park.
- Kids need danger at a playground. Don't be worry warts
- Please consider safety first.
- A larger fence or sound blocked her along ninth Avenue should be considered. Waterworks that appear natural and waterfall over natural slate drawing board be a nice idea. I believe this park would serve the community well if it focussed on the development of arts and entertainment and children, with the stage and musical play equipment and perhaps a natural slate drawing wall
- You need to take the sharp edges and corners off all equipment. The children at Mills will be mostly be small, spatially unaware who will probably find all the sharp edges in this very exciting natural concept park.
- kids size seating, picnic tables



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- Please spend as little as possible on this project. The massive tax burden that Mayor Spendshi is slowly crushing Calgarians under is already high enough. Keep costs low please.
- there must be one piece of a very high structure
- With other surveys lead with the pictures first and not the written description. Would have made it easier and more likely for people to fill out. Very excited about this space as a natural play space. Keep it open to kid's imagination as possible. Most of what was shown was for younger children. How can something be designed for older kids, teens and adults to play on.
- I picked features that I think would be suited for our area. We have several transient/homeless individuals that I would not want to see structures that give shelter or hiding spots. Mud ponds and sand box would be concerning and needles can be hidden (our inner city reality). Safety and visibility are key. I would like to have the play structure use natural elements (logs, boulders) making the park enticing and pleasing to view from our main street 9 Ave. Having it different/unique and more interactive than the typical play area making it a desirable park to play keeping it busy and a feature in Inglewood. It would bring more families to shop if the kids have somewhere to blow off some steam.
- Get rid of playground zone speed trap. There is no need with a fenced in playground.
- Just because it's made of wood, doesn't make it "natural." Some of this stuff still looks pretty contrived. Why not actual trees for climbing? My son always wishes there were trees to climb at the playground. How about some rope swings with some kind of chasm to swing across?
- The enclosed cabin might attract other activities at night- at the Alexandra centre they used to find people sleeping in theirs occasionally! The mud pond would be a nightmare and parents wouldn't take their kids to this park! Adding more trees would be great. Some of the biggest trees were removed for the I.D. Inglewood building. There was the best climbing tree for older kids in the neighbourhood that was cut down.
- The best playgrounds seem to take into consideration activities for kids of all ages. Small kids grow up into big kids and play areas that are only geared to smaller children have a shorter "lifespan" with kids. Although the old playground here wasn't used as much as others in the neighbourhood, there were always people on the swings, parents, teenagers, adults who came just to swing! Some of the best playground take into consideration, somewhere to sit, somewhere for shade, somewhere to eat, and open spaces for play. This field is used often for soccer games and throwing a football as well there is some kind of school at the church on 8th ave that uses this grassy space daily. What about parking? If this will be Calgary's first Natural Playground it will attract a lot of visitors. Parking is already becoming an issue all over this side of Inglewood.



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- Once the i.d. Inglewood building opens there will be a lot more traffic coming down this alley and on 14th street. Something to think about.
- If it is a nature playground I think a piece of board or sign or interactive something that has pictures and names of common trees and/or birds and/or mammals for kids to learn to identify. I think the best would be a large sign (or multiple small ones) at kids eye level. Or some sort of interactive flip the picture over or open a door/window to see the name of the organism would be cool!
- Great idea, let's get away from the garish plastic playgrounds and get natural.
- We spent some time on a natural playground in Switzerland. My daughter and her cousins LOVED IT. I took lots of pictures and would love to put them in a PDF form and send them to you for ideas/inspiration. There were a few great items in there (e.g. large swing, not just basked or single; big sand/water playarea, etc.). <redacted due to personally identifying comment> Thanks for all the hard work!
- Add more natural loose parts for kids to create and build on their own- larger rocks, tree pieces of various sizes, etc. Also put in a water source(could even look like an old hand water pump) so the kids can add water to their play. Please build a very large but simple mud kitchen! I'm sure parents would bring own bowls and spoons!
- Try seeking community input BEFORE designing a concept for a park.
- Planting a tree that will eventually be a good climbing tree would be really lovely. And maybe some berry bushes or something for foraging and snacking. Both would be healthy, fun, and good for the environment!
- One specific comment about the "in-ground culvert" option: that seems like it could be inadvertently dangerous as with many other culverts (especially outside the city) they are definitely not places you'd want to teach children to hide in or play in as many are or quickly become very unsafe (e.g. animals, flood/water, criminal activity/no sightline to the street/sidewalk, etc.) Otherwise, I am excited by the idea of a natural play area and hope it's possible in this park!
- I love the focus on play and children and different styles of play/learning. Thank you!!
- Please install lights at the crosswalk at 9th Ave and 14 St it is a very dangerous crosswalk.
- I love that the city is doing the natural play area- if you need any fabulous natural playground ideas, I have a plethora of photos and videos I took while we were in Denmark last summer and am more than happy to share them. The only weakness in the survey examples were the slides, these are pretty boring. Are there plans for lots of trees for shade and comfortable sitting area like Nellie Breen? Thanks for this great initiative.
- Adding a gate to the street access side. Kids run fast, and even though it is a playground zone many



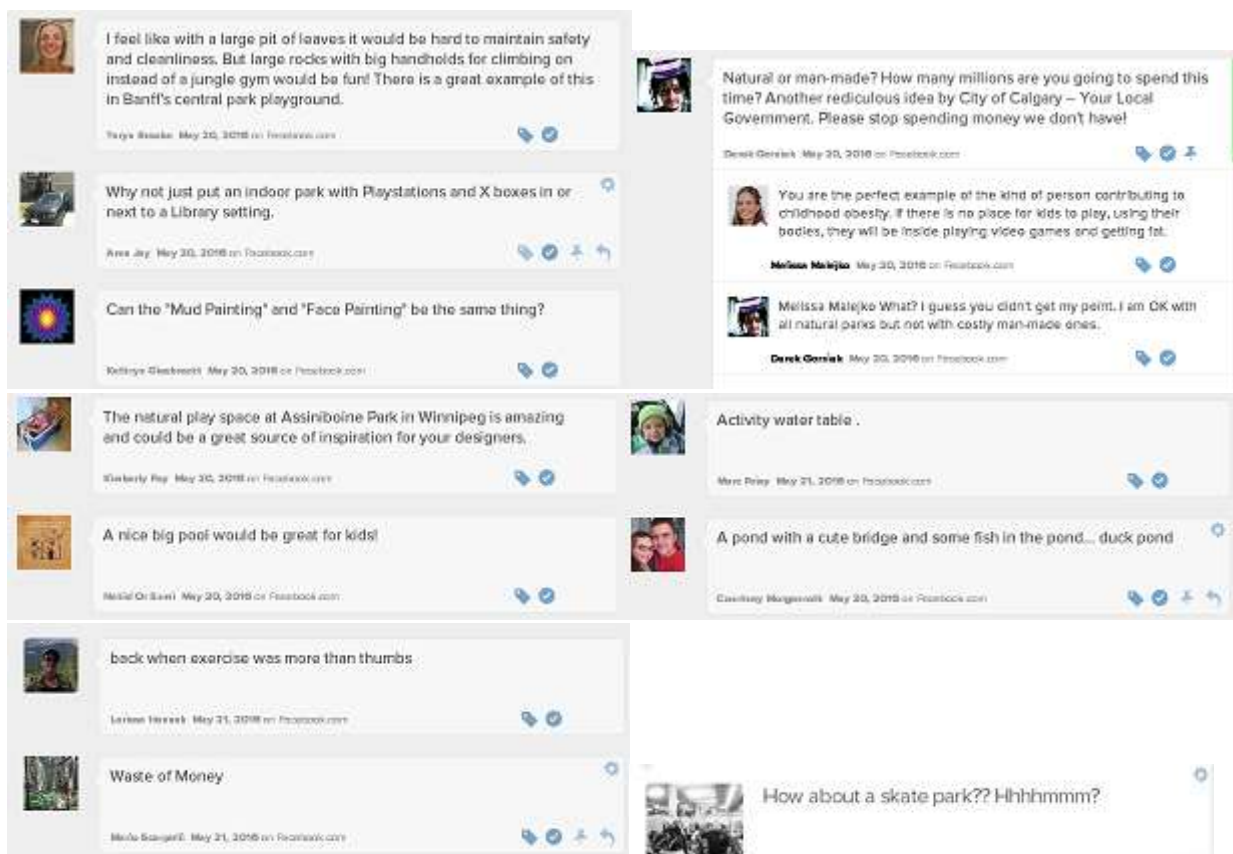
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- motorists do not follow the speed limit and a kid running out into the street could easily get hit. Adding a gate on 9th avenue access would decrease that potential.
- After trying both the new St. Patrick's Island Playground and the Fort Calgary Crossroads playground, we believe the Crossroads experience is far superior to the island experience both in terms of access for all ages, scale (it's spaced smaller) and the natural elements. The boulders and logs are played with every visit, and the slide is for all-ages. The St. Patrick's playground slide is too fast, too inaccessible and too long for young kids. If you do a slide, think about two options for young and old, or do one that is for all ages like at young kids. Thanks.
- I've found the new playgrounds at Fort Calgary and on St Patrick's Island seem like they were designed to look nice but aren't overly functional or safe for little children. I'd like to see more consideration given to how children will use the space and not just aesthetics (for example, the roller slide near Fort Calgary looks great for toddlers but they can't climb the ropes and big step to get to the slide, the slides on St Patrick's island have concrete steps placed on jaunty alignments which invites head smashing). My little guy loves collecting sticks and rocks as much as the play structures but there are some traditional pieces he really likes (places to hide, slides, swings). I'd also like to see some of the park remain as open space or an open play area for picnics, kicking a soccer ball, playing catch, etc.
- Please no mud or sand with water. I recognize that kids love this kind of play, but mine are able to experience this in our own back yard. I would be 100% less likely to utilize a play space, if I knew they would be caked in mud afterwards. Water is just as sensory and fun and I would much rather see water play incorporated.
- Since Nellie McBreen park is very close to this park, and it is geared to toddlers and very young children, could Mills Park be developed with elements geared towards older elementary school children. My 10 year old is very active but there are no play parks geared towards his age group in Inglewood. Also please do not use gravel for the surfaces in this new park.
- Please keep this a green space and not a development. Green spaces and places for children and young people are needed around the city. Don't clutter the park and area. Make sure the park is safe, visible, welllit and easily accessible for parents, children, law enforcement and emergency services.
- How about some uneven-ness considerations - mimic more of real life i.e. not have evenly spaced and totally level structures - kids need to learn how to pinpoint and adapt. Lots and lots of trees please, to provide shade and mental/physical separation from traffic on 9th Ave. Leave-in-place and extend the fence along 9th Ave for safety reasons due to high traffic flow. Would like to see 4-season useable equipment (sand/mud pit not useable in winter). Please consider that the alley will see increased traffic flow due to new daycare - how can this risk be mitigated, will there be a new fence put in?

Verbatim Comments – Other online mediums



My opinion about Mills Park:

I think your concept of natural playgrounds is *great* for Calgary, but I don't think Mills Park is the best place for it. One of Inglewood's charms is that its "main street" has grown stronger over time. The best way for it to continue to grow is eastward, not upward. In my opinion, the best use for Mills Park would be to sell it to developers to build retail at grade with residential and offices above, as has been done for decades (preferably at the same historical height, 2-4 storeys), thereby extending the contiguity of use and form of 9th Ave. The revenues from the sale could be used to buy a great piece of land off the main drag for a natural playground. (Who wants to play or sit and read beside traffic anyway and natural landscaping is hard to nurture near exhaust generated by 4 lanes of traffic.) Could something be negotiated with the owners of the brewery lands perhaps? Could the



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City buy the white barn and the adjacent property at the west end of the park for community use and a natural playground away from traffic?

Thank you for asking for public input.

I attended the Mills Park Engagement with my children and have attached my feedback and drawing.

I am excited to see the next step of this process!

Thank you,

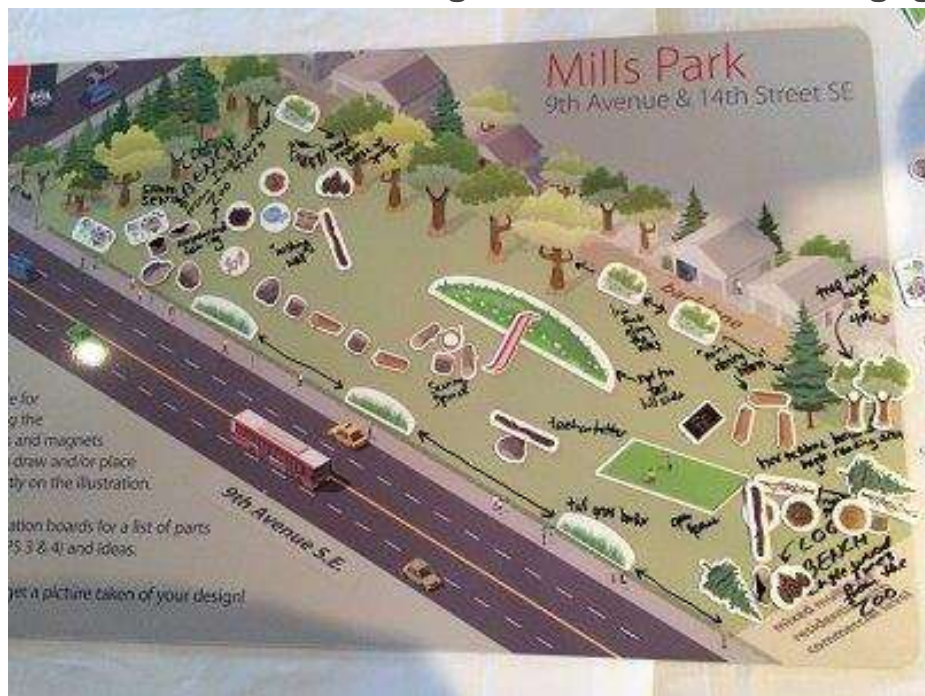
Hi there - I've filled out the online questionnaire on the Mills Park Redevelopment. We recently spent some time in Switzerland and visited the most amazing Natural Playground. It felt like a "true/real" natural playground and not like some of the recent playground developments that have "pretend" trees to climb on or have very specific uses (as in climb up a succession of tree stumps without there being much else that can be played on it).

I have attached a pdf with some pictures and comments. Perhaps these photos can be used for inspiration/ideas. I looked online to see if the City of Bern has some more information posted online but all the information I could find was in German only.

Looking forward to this redevelopment,

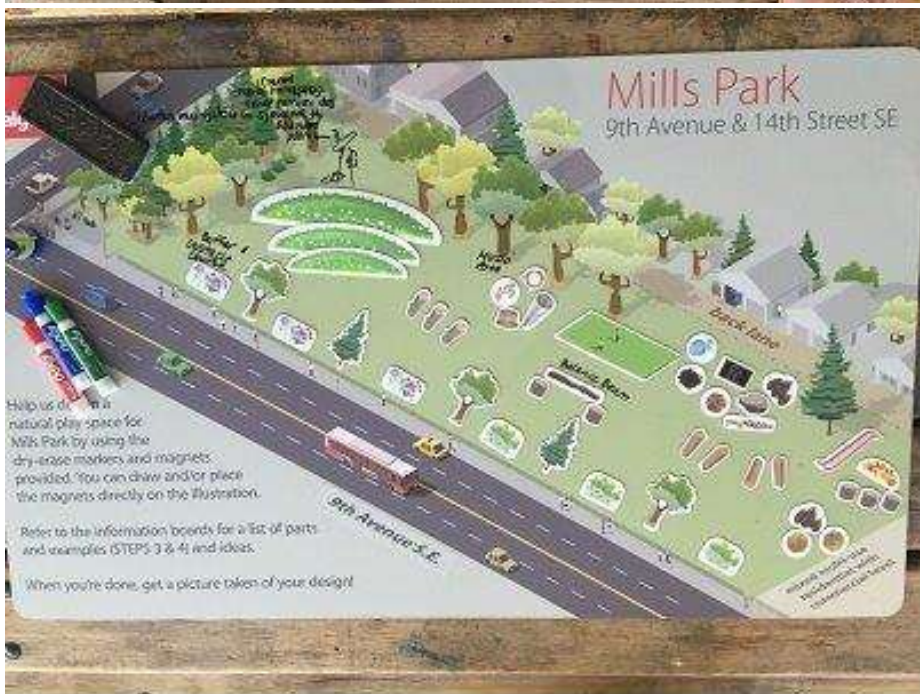
Best regards,

Verbatim Comments – Inglewood face to face engagement sessions



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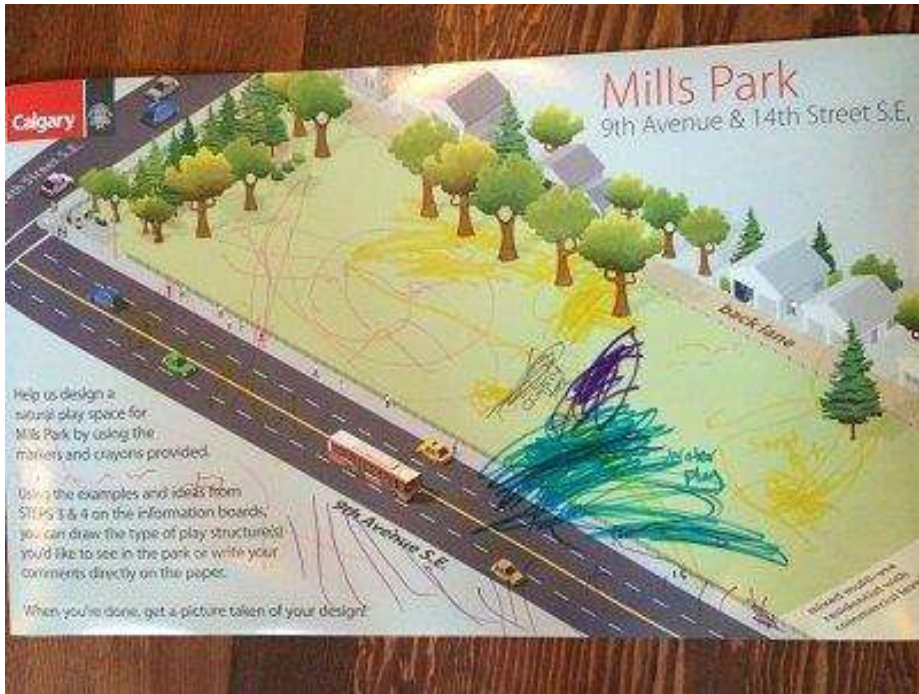
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Evaluation form feedback

- I'm not a big fan of taking my kids to a park to get dirty. So I'm not interested in muddy-type play. This being said: water, water, water!! Still a tactile, sensory play without covered in mud on shoes and clothes. I love the idea of bubbling water – boulder fountains. "Painting" with water on slate or large rocks or even a simple waterfall-type-interactive thing (I imagine water gets expensive, so the simpler the better).
- This park needs a tree/bush screen on the South edge for privacy, but even more importantly, SHADE!! I hates sunscreen (chemicals) so I am much more likely to take my kids to a partially shaded site like the Nellie Breen Park.
- I am very excited for this park and the idea of natural play spaces geared towards inventive play instead of structured play. Thank you for taking this so close to home!

Mills Park Online ranking for each play style

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5	Choice 6	Choice 7	Choice 8	Total Responses
Balancing and Jumping Play	18 (23.7%)	11 (14.5%)	13 (17.1%)	14 (18.4%)	8 (10.5%)	3 (3.9%)	6 (7.9%)	3 (3.9%)	76
Variable Climbing Play	27 (36.0%)	16 (21.3%)	11 (14.7%)	6 (8.0%)	3 (4.0%)	6 (8.0%)	4 (5.3%)	2 (2.7%)	75
Theatre Play	3 (4.1%)	2 (2.7%)	1 (1.4%)	2 (2.7%)	5 (6.8%)	14 (18.9%)	17 (23.0%)	30 (40.5%)	74
Music Play	4 (5.5%)	7 (9.6%)	6 (8.2%)	10 (13.7%)	7 (9.6%)	5 (6.8%)	16 (21.9%)	18 (24.7%)	73
Hideout Play	5 (6.9%)	7 (9.7%)	17 (23.6%)	8 (11.1%)	6 (8.3%)	13 (18.1%)	8 (11.1%)	8 (11.1%)	72
Steps and Slide Play	4 (5.3%)	13 (17.3%)	10 (13.3%)	14 (18.7%)	18 (24.0%)	6 (8.0%)	7 (9.3%)	3 (4.0%)	75
Swinging Play	6 (8.0%)	11 (14.7%)	9 (12.0%)	11 (14.7%)	10 (13.3%)	14 (18.7%)	8 (10.7%)	6 (8.0%)	75
Hands-On Play	10 (13.7%)	9 (12.3%)	8 (11.0%)	9 (12.3%)	15 (20.5%)	12 (16.4%)	6 (8.2%)	4 (5.5%)	73

Please rank the options, from 1 to 4, based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Total Responses
Log Balance	20 (26.7%)	34 (45.3%)	16 (21.3%)	5 (6.7%)	75
Log Jam with rope	30 (40.0%)	23 (30.7%)	15 (20.0%)	7 (9.3%)	75
Logs on end jump	1 (1.4%)	7 (9.5%)	26 (35.1%)	40 (54.1%)	74
Natural log	24 (32.4%)	11 (14.9%)	17 (23.0%)	22 (29.7%)	74



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Please rank the options, from 1 to 6, based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5	Choice 6	Total Responses
Climbing Boulders	30 (41.1%)	9 (12.3%)	9 (12.3%)	12 (16.4%)	8 (11.0%)	5 (6.8%)	73
Climbing Net	12 (16.4%)	21 (28.8%)	14 (19.2%)	12 (16.4%)	7 (9.6%)	7 (9.6%)	73
Climbing Wall	16 (21.6%)	13 (17.6%)	16 (21.6%)	10 (13.5%)	10 (13.5%)	9 (12.2%)	74
Log Steps	3 (4.2%)	8 (11.1%)	15 (20.8%)	9 (12.5%)	17 (23.6%)	20 (27.8%)	72
Monkey Bars	6 (8.1%)	10 (13.5%)	8 (10.8%)	18 (24.3%)	12 (16.2%)	20 (27.0%)	74
The Log Ladder	7 (9.6%)	12 (16.4%)	12 (16.4%)	12 (16.4%)	19 (26.0%)	11 (15.1%)	73

Please rank the options, from 1 to 4, based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Total Responses
Framed	10 (13.9%)	17 (23.6%)	11 (15.3%)	34 (47.2%)	72
Horseshoe arena	23 (31.9%)	14 (19.4%)	22 (30.6%)	13 (18.1%)	72
King of the hill	27 (36.5%)	25 (33.8%)	15 (20.3%)	7 (9.5%)	74
The Stage	13 (17.8%)	16 (21.9%)	25 (34.2%)	19 (26.0%)	73

Please rank the options, from 1 to 3, based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Total Responses
Natural Wood Instrument	48 (65.8%)	16 (21.9%)	9 (12.3%)	73
Painted Instrument	5 (7.1%)	13 (18.6%)	52 (74.3%)	70
Wood-metal Instrument	20 (27.4%)	43 (58.9%)	10 (13.7%)	73

Please rank the options, from 1 to 6, based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5	Choice 6	Total Responses
Above Ground Culvert	7 (9.9%)	15 (21.1%)	12 (16.9%)	16 (22.5%)	13 (18.3%)	8 (11.3%)	71
Door Hut	14 (19.7%)	13 (18.3%)	14 (19.7%)	15 (21.1%)	9 (12.7%)	6 (8.5%)	71
Logs on End	13 (17.8%)	11 (15.1%)	11 (15.1%)	10 (13.7%)	14 (19.2%)	14 (19.2%)	73
In-Ground Culvert	13 (18.1%)	8 (11.1%)	4 (5.6%)	6 (8.3%)	9 (12.5%)	32 (44.4%)	72
Teepee	2 (2.7%)	11 (15.1%)	17 (23.3%)	20 (27.4%)	17 (23.3%)	6 (8.2%)	73
Wood Cabin	22 (30.6%)	14 (19.4%)	15 (20.8%)	5 (6.9%)	10 (13.9%)	6 (8.3%)	72

Please rank the options, from 1 to 5, based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5	Total Responses
Boulder Hill Slide	21 (29.2%)	20 (27.8%)	15 (20.8%)	8 (11.1%)	8 (11.1%)	72
Rubber Mound	4 (5.6%)	7 (9.9%)	5 (7.0%)	7 (9.9%)	48 (67.6%)	71
Timber Slide	17 (23.9%)	14 (19.7%)	23 (32.4%)	11 (15.5%)	6 (8.5%)	71
Timber Step Grass Hill	23 (31.5%)	22 (30.1%)	13 (17.8%)	14 (19.2%)	1 (1.4%)	73
Wood Log Climber	8 (11.3%)	8 (11.3%)	15 (21.1%)	32 (45.1%)	8 (11.3%)	71



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Please rank the options based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Total Responses
Basket Swing	36 (49.3%)	37 (50.7%)	73
Seat Swing	37 (52.1%)	34 (47.9%)	71

Please rank the options, from 1 to 4, based on your personal preference

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Total Responses
Drawing Board	16 (22.2%)	17 (23.6%)	20 (27.8%)	19 (26.4%)	72
Log Rolling	10 (13.7%)	16 (21.9%)	24 (32.9%)	23 (31.5%)	73
Mud Pond	33 (46.5%)	8 (11.3%)	8 (11.3%)	22 (31.0%)	71
Sand Play	12 (16.9%)	31 (43.7%)	20 (28.2%)	8 (11.3%)	71