



Agenda Item Report

Legislative Board:

Parks and Recreation
Commission

Date:

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Contact:

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2026-460- / H.1

ITEM TITLE: Deliberation and recommendation to City Council regarding the final playground layout and associated amenities for the City Park Playground Replacement capital project. (Parks Director Tony Host, Parks Superintendent Shane Heffernan) [PUBLIC TESTIMONY]

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to present 3 proposed conceptual layout and playground feature options for the City Park Playground Construction Project and to obtain Parks Commission recommendation on the preferred playground components and associated site amenities prior to presenting to city council for final design development and procurement. Staff will finalize the design following City Council direction and will bring forward a separate item to consider the contract.

The proposed playground improvements are intended to modernize the existing playground area, improve ADA accessibility, increase inclusive play opportunities, expand age-specific play zones, enhance safety and visibility, and create a destination-quality recreational amenity for residents and visitors.

2. BACKGROUND/HISTORY

City Park serves as one of the City's premier communities gathering spaces and hosts numerous community events, festivals, recreational activities, and family-oriented programming throughout the year. The existing playground infrastructure has experienced weather-related wear and represents a safety hazard. no longer fully reflects the community's expectations for modern recreational amenities, inclusive play opportunities, and destination-quality park experiences.

Through previous Parks Master Plan discussions, playground inspection reports, and ongoing capital improvement planning efforts, the replacement and modernization of the City Park Playground have been identified as a priority project.

Additionally, during the May meeting of the City Park Ad Hoc Committee, the committee reviewed the originally proposed playground layout and provided feedback regarding desired enhancements to the project. One of the primary recommendations from the committee was the inclusion of a playground zip line feature within the overall playground space to provide a unique destination-style play element and expanded recreational opportunities for older children.

The proposed project is intended to accomplish the following objectives:

Replace dilapidated and unsafe playground infrastructure

Improve ADA accessibility and inclusivity

Provide an all-abilities playground for children and parents/guardians

Increase safety and visibility

Expand play opportunities for multiple age groups

Enhance parent seating and gathering areas

Improve aesthetics and park identity

Create a signature community destination playground

Provide durable, safe, and long-term recreational infrastructure

The project also complements other ongoing or planned City Park improvements, including:

Amphitheater improvements

Event infrastructure upgrades

Lighting and security enhancements

Parking and circulation improvements

3. ANALYSIS

The City Park Playground Construction Project represents a significant long-term investment in community infrastructure, recreational quality of life, and family-oriented public amenities. As one of the most visible and heavily utilized park assets within the community, the playground serves not only as a recreational feature but also as a gathering space that supports community events, tourism, social interaction, and overall park activation.

The existing playground infrastructure has reached a stage where modernization is necessary to meet current expectations for accessibility, safety, durability, and inclusive recreation. Industry standards for public playgrounds have evolved substantially over the past decade, particularly in the areas of ADA accessibility, inclusive play opportunities, shade coverage, safety surfacing, and multi-generational usability. The proposed improvements allow the city to align the park system with those evolving standards while also positioning City Park as a premier destination within the region.

From an operational standpoint, staff believes the layout and design direction selected by Council will significantly impact long-term maintenance costs, lifecycle replacement planning, staffing requirements, and overall user experience. While lower-cost playground systems may reduce initial capital expenditures, those systems often result in increased long-term maintenance demands, reduced durability, and shorter replacement cycles. Conversely, investing in premium commercial-grade infrastructure, poured-in-place surfacing, and expanded shade structures will result in improved longevity, reduced annual maintenance burdens, enhanced safety performance, and increased resident satisfaction.

Additionally, inclusive and ADA-accessible playground design has become an increasingly important expectation within municipal park systems. Incorporating accessible ramps, sensory play elements, inclusive swings, communication boards, and ground-level activities ensures that the playground serves a broader range of residents and visitors. These features also align with the City's goals of providing equitable recreational opportunities for all members of the community.

Shade coverage and thermal comfort are also critical considerations given the regional climate conditions in Central Texas. Modern playground design increasingly prioritizes shade structures, tree canopy expansion, and heat-mitigating materials to improve usability during warmer months. Staff anticipates that playground usage rates and visitor duration will significantly improve with expanded shade coverage and improved seating opportunities.

Security, visibility, and park supervision are additional important elements within the proposed design framework. Open sightlines, strategic lighting placement, and clearly defined circulation paths support both public safety and operational oversight. These elements become increasingly important during high-attendance events and peak seasonal park usage.

Staff also recognizes that the final scope selected by Council will directly influence procurement timelines, construction duration, and future phasing opportunities. Should Council desire a playground layout beyond currently available funding levels, a phased implementation approach may provide flexibility while still allowing the City to establish the core infrastructure needed for future expansion.

Overall, staff believes this project presents an opportunity to create a highly visible, long-lasting community asset that supports recreation, family engagement, and community identity for many years into the future.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

Option 1: Original Proposal/Design cost \$825,900.00

Option 2: Original Proposal/Design w/swingset and zipline in place of the 5-12 playscape: cost \$860,500.00

Option 3: Original Proposal/Design w/stand-alone zip line. \$873,298.00

5. STRATEGIC PLAN/GOALS

FUN EXPERIENCES FOR ALL

6. STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

Quality facilities for the community to enjoy.

7. PROS AND CONS

Pros

- Modernizes aging infrastructure
- Enhances family recreation opportunities
- Improves accessibility and inclusivity
- Increases Park usage and visitation
- Creates destination-quality amenity
- Enhances community image
- Supports tourism and event activity

Cons

- Significant capital investment
- Increased maintenance obligations
- Possible phased funding requirements

8. ALTERNATIVES

Direct staff to construct proposed playground with an off-site, traditional zipline. This will require a phased approach to accommodate infrastructure planning and construction to facilitate traditional zipline equipment and ensure safety requirements are met.

Direct staff to construct proposed playground with an integrated, track-style zipline (similar to Summer Pointe Park).

Direct staff to construct playground as proposed, to include swing set and no zipline.

Direct staff to construct playground as proposed to include swing set and integrated, track-style zipline.

Direct staff to re-evaluate layout and amenities and bring back a new proposal for consideration.

9. REQUESTED ACTION / SUGGESTED MOTION / RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to City Council the original inclusive playground design proposal, with the addition of the swing set, that includes a separate toddler and youth play zones, poured-in-place safety surfacing, shade coverage, and ADA-inclusive play components.

Attachments:

[AOT City Park TIPS quote option 2.pdf](#)

[AOT City Park op2 -1.jpg](#)

AOT City Park op2-2.jpg
AOT City Park op2-3.jpg
AOT City Park op2-4.jpg
AOT City Park zipline pic 1.jpeg
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