

Community-Build PlaySpace Manual

KaBOOM!

TM

From the leading authority on a child's right to play,
a "roadmap" that allows your community to believe in,
plan, and build a great community playspace!



Preface

If you wanted to make an immediate, tangible and long-lasting impact on the life of a child, what would you do? Perhaps you'd take that child to a playground - what better way to get outside, meet new friends, experiment, dream, and collapse in fits of giggles? Perhaps on that playground, he or she would start dreaming of being an astronaut, a sea captain or an athlete. Play is what makes childhood great and memorable.

If you wanted to make an impact on a whole generation of children, what would you do? Perhaps you'd make sure that every young person in every neighborhood in every city has access to a safe and healthy place to play. You'd make sure that they have the opportunity to develop important physical, mental and social skills, as well as experience the freedom and joy of childhood. At KaBOOM!, we've taken on that task, and we're engaging communities in every aspect of building playspaces. We're working to empower ordinary individuals to enact extraordinary change - starting with YOU!

Children are indeed our future, but what kind of future are we preparing them for by allowing them to play in abandoned cars and needle-strewn lots, or on deteriorated playground equipment? An estimated 75% of America's existing playgrounds are unsafe¹, and every two and a half minutes, a child goes to an emergency room due to a playground-related injury. Children and youth need safe outlets for releasing their energy, and communities need more welcoming public spaces where we can relax, socialize and build networks of community support.

At KaBOOM!, we don't just believe in play - we believe in giving power and responsibility back to the very people who use and maintain community playspaces in their neighborhoods. Throughout North America, KaBOOM! has guided more than 2,000 communities through the process of building and renovating safe playgrounds, skateparks and fields using a grassroots, volunteer-led model. Your community is next! By opening this book, you've opened the opportunity to change a child's world, one playspace at a time. Welcome to the community-built playspace journey! Thank you for beginning this exciting process and joining our movement. Seize the day for play!

STRENGTH!



¹Data from the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, 2002.



Stone Soup

There was once a man who had been traveling for a long time. Having run out of food, he was weary and hungry from his journey. When he came upon a small village, he thought, "Maybe there is someone I could share a meal with."

But when the villagers saw him, they decided to hide their food. It had been a long winter and they didn't have very much. "Let's hide it under the bed," one person said. "Let's say a wolf ate all of it," said another.

When the man knocked at the first house, he asked the woman who answered, "Could you spare a bit of food?" I've traveled a long way and am very hungry."

"I'm sorry, but I have nothing to give you," the woman replied.

So the traveler went to the next door and asked again. The answer was the same. He went from door to door and each time he was turned away.

But then one villager said, "All I have is water."

"Oh, good," said the traveler. "We can make some soup from that water. We can make stone soup."

He asked the man for a cooking pot and started building a small fire. As the water started boiling, a passing villager stopped and asked him what he was doing. "I'm making stone soup," the traveler replied. "Would you like to join me?" The curious villager agreed.

"First, we must look for a special stone," said the traveler. "One with magic in it." Together they searched the village, looking for just the right one. When they found it, they put it in the pot to simmer.

People from the village heard about this strange man who was making soup from a stone. They started gathering around the fire. "What does your stone soup taste like?" one of the villagers asked. "Well, it would be better with a few onions," the traveler admitted. "Oh, I have some onions," he replied.

Another villager said, "I could bring a few carrots." Someone else offered, "I'll get some potatoes from my garden."

One by one, each villager brought something to add to the pot. What had started as nothing but a pot of boiling water and a magic stone was now a delicious soup - enough to feed the whole village. They all sat down together to enjoy the miracle they'd helped to create.



The Community-Build PlaySpace Manual

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Construction Team Workbook

Food Team Workbook

Fundraising Team Workbook

Logistics Team Workbook

Public Relations Team Workbook

Safety Team Workbook

Volunteer Recruitment Team Workbook



PlaySpaces 101: A Brief History

Before you begin planning your dream playspace, let's take a brief look at the history of playspaces in the United States. Playspaces certainly aren't new here, but they have come a long way. Throughout the 20th century, as researchers learned more and more about child development and the importance of an unstructured childhood, playspaces have adapted and grown to meet those needs.

Playspaces, as we know them, got their start at the end of the 19th century, and were based on European ideas about children's development. The Germans were the pioneers in early childhood education ("kindergarten" is actually a German word and concept), and they emphasized outdoor recreation and physical activity for youth. One of the first U.S. playgrounds was a German-inspired outdoor "gymnasium" built in Salem, Massachusetts in 1821. However, the notion of exercise for children gradually lost its appeal, and people began designing parks that encouraged simple play. Again, the Germans led the way by introducing sandboxes; Massachusetts again followed suit and built children's "sand gardens" in 1886 in Boston.

Public school and park playspaces began to crop up throughout the country in the early 1900's. Likewise, educators and researchers began to emphasize the importance of play, and in 1907 the Playground Association of America (PAA) was established. Their recommendations for play included lots of space for organized games, and exercise equipment like parallel and chin-up bars. Massachusetts cemented its reputation as the leader for child's play by establishing a state law in 1909 that required all towns with a population over 10,000 to have a community playspace. In 1928, the National Recreation Association, a precursor to today's National Recreation and Park Association, was established. They published important guidelines for playspaces that began to resemble the ones we know today. Their guidelines included sandboxes, slides, climbers and balance beams.

Manufacturers contributed to the development of playspaces by commercially producing wood, iron and steel equipment for public playspaces. This was discontinued, however, during the war years as interest in playspaces waned. In the 1950s and 1960s, the interest in playspaces was rekindled and lots of new features became available, such as color for metal equipment, themed parks and more movable parts.

Today, play equipment is made of advanced materials like plastic, galvanized steel and fiberglass. Research has proven that play is instrumental for a child's healthy cognitive and physical development. Today's play activities are more imaginative and are designed to stimulate creativity. Most importantly, huge improvements have been made in reducing equipment hazards and cushioning falls with soft, durable surfacing; today's playspaces are safer than ever before.

Now it's your turn to add to the history of play. What will people say about play when they think back to today? Hopefully, they will highlight how people in communities across the country recognized the importance of providing children with safe and healthy playspaces and worked together to plan, design and build them.





How to Use this Community-Build PlaySpace Manual

So you've decided that your community needs a new playspace. Fantastic! Active play and outdoor public spaces are vital ingredients for a healthy community, and every child deserves access to them. This practical, step-by-step manual will show YOU how to bring a new playground, skatepark or field to your neighborhood while strengthening community bonds, building civic capacity, and saving lots of money - all through a volunteer-led process.

We like to think of the community-build process as a "road trip" where the trip itself is just as much fun as the destination. Your destination, of course, is a new playspace for the children or youth in your community. But as you work toward that goal, it's important to reflect on the unique opportunity that lies before you. Through the community-build model, you can use your playspace project as a launching pad to build new friendships, discover hidden talents in yourself and others, empower community leaders, instill lasting volunteer spirit, and spread joy and pride in your community. Surprises wait around every bend, and if you rise to the challenge you'll arrive at your destination stronger and more confident than when you began. The more you put in, the more you'll get out - so seize this opportunity!

Once you're in the driver's seat, the KaBOOM! Community-Build PlaySpace Manual will serve as the ultimate "Road Map" for your playspace trip. It sets out a step-by-step itinerary for researching playspaces, building community support, raising money, designing a unique facility, recruiting volunteers, and building and using the playspace - in short, everything you'll need! We've divided the Road Map into eight chapters or "mile markers." Each one represents a definable goal and new phase in the process. Take a moment to glance through each chapter to determine which activities, if any, you've already accomplished. The Road Map is designed to accommodate organizers at any stage of project planning. It is also designed to fit any timeline; whether your project takes two months or two years, it should progress along the same path of sustainable and collaborative community organizing.

Please note that the KaBOOM! Road Map model works for any type of playspace project: playgrounds, skateparks and fields. However, any **technical information in this manual (such as building materials, design and construction) will be specific to playgrounds.** For complete information on building skateparks and fields, please refer to our FREE Getting Started series of brochures and our Community-Build Skatepark Manual.

Following the Road Map chapters, we've provided an expandable Toolkit Template full of project worksheets, sample forms and templates; An Online Resources section with a comprehensive list of play-related websites; and individual Team Workbooks that provide more specific advice and detail for each team on your planning committee.

TIP!

KaBOOM! offers a range of services to empower community playspace-builders. You've already got the complete road map in hand, so all you need is the engine to power you across the finish line - our FREE online Project Planner. Set up yours today! You can access the project planner by visiting www.kaboom.org.

COURAGE!



Finally, the Community-Build PlaySpace Manual works in conjunction with our FREE Online Project Planner service, which allows you too organize your volunteer lists, manage budgets, plan fundraisers, solicit donations and generate a personalized public Website. You can access the project planner by visiting www.kaboom.org. In addition, the other books in the KaBOOM! Toolkit series supplement this guide with in-depth information on specific topics: The Community FUNdraising Guide, The Community Assets and Resources Handbook and The PlaySpace Owner's Manual.

You're on the road to a stronger, more child-friendly community, so pack your lunch and step on the gas. We've got the map!

Let's zoom to a new community-built playspace!



JOY!



INSPIRATION!

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

- Confucius



The Traveler

A weary traveler comes to a crossroads and encounters a wise old man. The traveler is looking for a place to rest and inquires of a large town sighted off in the distance: "What kind of people live there?" The old man answers his question with the question, "What kind from whence you came?" When the traveler confides that the last town he visited was full of filthy streets and vicious people, knaves and thieves, the old man tells him, "Avoid that town; it's exactly the same. You will find no peace there." The weary man thanks him profusely for saving him a needless journey and trudges off in the opposite direction. The next day another dusty and tired traveler comes to that same crossroads, meets the same old man, and asks the same question, "What kind of people live there?" But this traveler tells the old man that the town from whence he came was a place of flower-strewn streets, good and giving people who always greeted each other with a smile. And the wise old man said, "The town waiting over the horizon is exactly the same. Go down there and rest in peace."

- Told by Gloria Naylor, in the Foreword to Bill Shore's *Revolution of the Heart*.
New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.



VENTURE!

SPIRIT!



Important PlaySpace Rules

The KaBOOM! Community-Build Playspace Manual is intended to provide community groups and other teams of volunteers with general guidelines for transforming an important element of childhood, a neighborhood playspace. We have attempted to help you envision ways of unleashing playspace resources to create a synergistic volunteer experience and a playspace where children will be safe, happy, active and engaged.

However, because we don't have control over specific conditions, tools and individual skill levels, we cannot assume responsibility for any damages that occur, injuries suffered, or losses incurred as a result of following the suggestions in this guide.

Before you begin any playspace project, review the plans and instructions carefully. If you have any doubts or questions before you begin or while working on any project, consult local experts or authorities. You should always check with local authorities to ensure that your project complies with all applicable codes and regulations. Always read and observe all of the safety precautions provided by tool or equipment manufacturers, and follow all accepted safety procedures.

KaBOOM! is dedicated to providing accurate, helpful, do-it-yourself information. We welcome your comments about improving this guide and your ideas for other products to serve playspace and community-building enthusiasts.



GOALS!

SUCCESS!





KaBOOM! PlaySpace FAQ's

What is the difference between a playground and a playspace?

Playspace is a general term used by KaBOOM! to refer to playgrounds, skateparks, youth sports fields, or any other structure providing play opportunities for children and/or adolescents. Every child and young person needs a safe, healthy outlet for physical activity and social interaction; we encourage communities to address these needs throughout a child's life and through a variety of available playspaces. Playspaces may be part of a larger park or play environment; in this manual, the term "playspace" refers specifically to the play surface and equipment.

What does "community-build" mean?

"Community-build" means that a group of local citizens - usually organized as a parent committee, child care center, school board, non-profit association, or parks department - takes the lead in initiating and planning a project to benefit the whole community. It means that local volunteers help to prepare the site and install the playspace, and it means that community residents - especially children - are active in the design process. Although funding for community builds often comes from outside companies or foundation grants, the organizing committee usually raises a portion of the funds locally. Finally, decisions about safety and usage lie in the hands of the community that will use and maintain the playspace. Playspaces that are built with the contribution and "sweat equity" of local volunteers are much more likely to be taken care of and enjoyed.

What is the PlaySpace Planning Committee?

The PlaySpace Planning Committee is a group of concerned citizens who lead the planning and execution of a community-build project. This committee might include government officials, business owners, non-profit employees, religious leaders, parks professionals, school principals, teachers, parents and students ... but whatever the committee members' backgrounds, they all **volunteer their time** and talents to the playspace project. They should also be committed to representing local interests. According to the KaBOOM! model, the PlaySpace Planning Committee is led by two co-chairs, and each of the remaining members recruits and leads a "team" that is responsible for a certain aspect of planning: children's activities, construction, food, fundraising, logistics, public relations, safety, volunteer recruitment and so on. Dividing up the tasks reduces everyone's workload while encouraging each individual to take ownership of the project. It also allows committee members to specialize in their favorite area, improving the quality and passion of the team's work. A well-organized committee is worth more than the sum of its parts!



How long does it take to build a playspace, and how many people do we need?

With the right amount of dedicated volunteers, your community can come together to build a playground, skatepark or sports field in **one day**. Pulling off this kind of ambitious community barn-raising requires months of planning by a playspace committee, from fundraising to volunteer recruitment to preparation of the site. For a medium-sized playground (50'x50'), we recommend having 10-20 volunteers to assist with advance site preparation, which may include removing asphalt, leveling a slope, and digging post holes for the play equipment. On the day



of the build, we recommend having 100-120 volunteers to install the playspace, haul safety surfacing, and complete side projects. (Playgrounds using poured-in-place rubberized surfacing, which is installed by professionals, can be assembled with just 50-80 volunteers.) Communities have done successful builds with fewer people, but you may be up all night! If you spread your build event over several days, you can easily build a playspace with 30-40 committed volunteers ... or work in shifts and bring in hundreds of part-timers!

Why build in a day?

KaBOOM! builds its playspaces in *one day*. That's right, *one day* - just six to eight hours to assemble equipment, haul safety surfacing, mix concrete and cut the ribbon! (Of course, this requires a lot of planning and some advance site preparation.) There are several reasons why we do this. For one, it's easier to get people to commit to volunteering for a single day. Who wouldn't want to give up their Saturday or Sunday when there's free food and fun activities for the kids? Make your one-day build a spirited community event and you **will** find the volunteers to make it happen. The sheer ambition of a one-day project will pique interest and draw curious onlookers!

Secondly, it's easier to get business sponsors and media organizations involved in a building blitz. Challenge local businesses and corporations to donate just one day of their employees' time, and you can get a huge volunteer turnout. An eight-hour project is a natural fit for corporate team-building activities and/or publicity events tied to a conference or company anniversary. Media will also be attracted by a speedy playspace "barn-raising" - that's a story in itself! Reporters prefer having a defined day and time in which they can show up and be guaranteed a great story with great photos.

You know what else happens at a one-day build? Fantastic, face-to-face community networking. Imagine having all of your sponsors, local officials, parents, association leaders and playspace neighbors working side by side. Special supporters often want to lend a hand, and a lot of new relationships can be forged atop the mulch pile!

Finally, a one-day build is inspiring! No one will really believe that it's possible until they see it happen, and then each person will feel overwhelmed by the power of a dedicated community at work. After more than 700 community builds, we still get chills each and every time. *If your community can do this today, what can you do tomorrow?*

Of course, a well-planned community build fosters all of these great outcomes, no matter how many days it lasts! Many, many communities spread their playspace construction over the better part of a week, and longer builds have their own advantages. Perhaps your core group of volunteers is small but committed - a multiple-day build will better accomplish your goals and cultivate close working friendships. Or maybe people in your community simply can't give up a whole day - divide your build into several half-day shifts and go after busy professionals and parents. Most volunteers will get hooked and come back for more! You can also increase business participation by giving each day of the build a different theme and encouraging businesses to be the exclusive, "signature" sponsor for that day. With a multiple-day build your community's imagination can run wild...custom-build your playspace to a unique design; incorporate natural elements like boulders, trees and running water; or plan a week-long series of site improvements. The sky's the limit!



Do the volunteers need construction skills? Do the people working on the playspace need to be really strong?

There are no skills that are absolutely necessary to build a playground, skatepark or field. Although there are many types of community builds, in this manual we suggest purchasing modular equipment from a certified playspace manufacturer; many companies will provide a professional community-build installer to oversee the construction. Assembling most playspace equipment is like putting together a puzzle, and the most common tool used is a ratchet (for tightening bolts). Remember that a community-built playspace project relies on teamwork for success; therefore, what might be a strenuous task for one person is an easy task for four people.

How far in advance should we plan our project?

You should give yourself enough time to raise the needed funds and resources, recruit volunteers, and have the equipment manufactured. Your community must determine the fundraising and recruiting timeline, but the manufacturing of the equipment does have a timeline that is beyond your control. Most play equipment companies generate custom playspace designs and colors; therefore, the component parts are not waiting on a shelf in a warehouse, and you need to allow the company approximately three months to manufacture and deliver the equipment. This timeline can vary depending on the time of year (summer is an especially busy time) and other manufacturing factors. Some companies also offer quick ships of pre-designed playspaces that are in stock and can be shipped in less than a month.

How much do playgrounds cost?

Playgrounds can vary greatly in cost, from \$5,000 to more than \$100,000. When developing a playground budget, you'll need to factor in the size of the site, the number of children who will use the space at any given time, the age of the children, site preparation needs (such as removing rocks or trees from the site, digging up concrete and old structures beneath the site), the kind of play equipment, and the choice of safety surfacing. Some communities also choose to invest in side projects such as picnic tables, community gardens, tricycle paths and blacktop areas; all these increase the cost of a project. Using the community-build model, a top-of-the-line playground structure of average size (50' by 50' including all use zones) with engineered wood-fiber surfacing can be installed for \$30,000 or less.

What safety standards are there for playgrounds?

Some states have passed laws for playground safety; be sure to check with your state or local parks and recreation department to find out about laws in your area. For those states without specific mandates, there are three important guidelines and standards to follow to ensure that your playground is safe for your children. The CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) has a set of guidelines that are updated every couple of years. The CPSC also issues recalls and warnings on their website (www.cpsc.gov). The ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) also has issued a set of standards (ASTM F1487-95) for playgrounds. Both CPSC and ASTM cover similar topics. There is also a standard for accessibility that comes from the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) that insures that children of all abilities can have the opportunity to play. See Chapter 1: Researching PlaySpace Safety and Accessibility for more information.





What is the difference between a playground and a play environment?

A playground has slides, swings, tubes and safety surfacing; "play environment" refers to the public space surrounding the actual play equipment. Why is this important? Parents and other community residents will be reluctant to visit even the best playground equipment if it's hidden behind a building, next to a busy roadway, or lacking places to sit and get out of the sun. Such playgrounds suffer from poor "play environments." Simple additions to the playground site can encourage people of all ages to participate in playful and social activities. For example, adding benches and shade structures will encourage adults to supervise their children, creating a safer play experience. Trash receptacles encourage everyone to help keep the space clean. Art projects like mosaics and murals can add a theme to the play area or reinforce a community's heritage. Walking paths, community gardens and chess tables can help bring together several generations of community members. A well-designed play environment incorporates ideas and needs from the entire community, building a strong sense of ownership that will ensure support for long-term safety and maintenance programs.

Is there a lot of maintenance to be done on playgrounds?

The most common maintenance work that needs to be done regularly is ensuring that the safety surfacing is kept up. Engineered wood fibers must be raked and kept at a consistent depth, while synthetic rubber surfaces must also be kept clean. The maintenance for a playspace structure varies greatly depending on the quality and type of materials used to construct it. Wooden materials require more maintenance than steel, and steel more maintenance than aluminum. Selecting a playspace equipment company that has IPEMA (International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association) certified equipment and has a solid warranty will insure high quality and low maintenance costs for your playspace. No matter what kind of playspace your community has, someone should be responsible for regularly inspecting the playspace equipment and surfacing.

What is the "play value" of a playground?

Play value is a term generally used to describe the number of children who can play on a structure at one time - in other words, the amount of fun per square foot. It also refers to the number of play activities (e.g. sliding, swinging, playing tic-tac-toe) that you get for your dollar. Therefore, it is possible to have two playspace designs that cost the same yet one has twice the play value of the other. By counting the play activities and reviewing the overall layout and cost of those components, it is possible to determine the play value of a design and compare it to other designs. When looking at the layout of the equipment, look for a design that creates a circuit. A figure-eight layout is a great circuit design that provides a variety of continuous play paths.

We live in an ironic society where even play is turned into work.
But the highest level of existence is not work; the highest level of existence is play.
- Conrad Hyers, modern American scientist



Glossary of Terms

ADA & ADAAG

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law prohibiting disability-based discrimination. ADA includes a set of Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) for playground design including public, commercial and childcare playground facilities. For more information visit www.access-board.gov or call 1-800-872-2253.

ASTM

The American Society for Testing and Materials is a non-profit scientific organization that develops standards for testing all kinds of materials, including playground equipment and surfacing. For more information, contact ASTM, 100 Barr Harbor Drive, West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania 19428, call 1-610-832-9585, or visit www.astm.org.

CPSC

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent agency of the federal government which informs the public of unreasonable risks associated with consumer products. It publishes guidelines that can be used in designing, constructing, operating and maintaining public playgrounds. For more information, contact the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207, call 1-800-638-2772 or visit www.cpsc.gov.

IPEMA

The International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) provides a third-party certification service for playground equipment and surfacing. For more information, visit www.ipema.org.

NPSI

The National Playground Safety Institute (NPSI) is a training program sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). For more information, contact National Recreation and Park Association, 22377 Belmont Ridge Road., Ashburn, Virginia 20148, call 1-703-858-2148 or visit www.nrpa.org.

PIRG

The United States Public Interest Research Group is a national public-interest advocacy group. They conduct bi-annual surveys of public playground safety. For more information, contact U.S. PIRG, 218 D Street., SE, Washington, DC, 20003, call 1-202-546-9707 or visit www.uspirg.org.

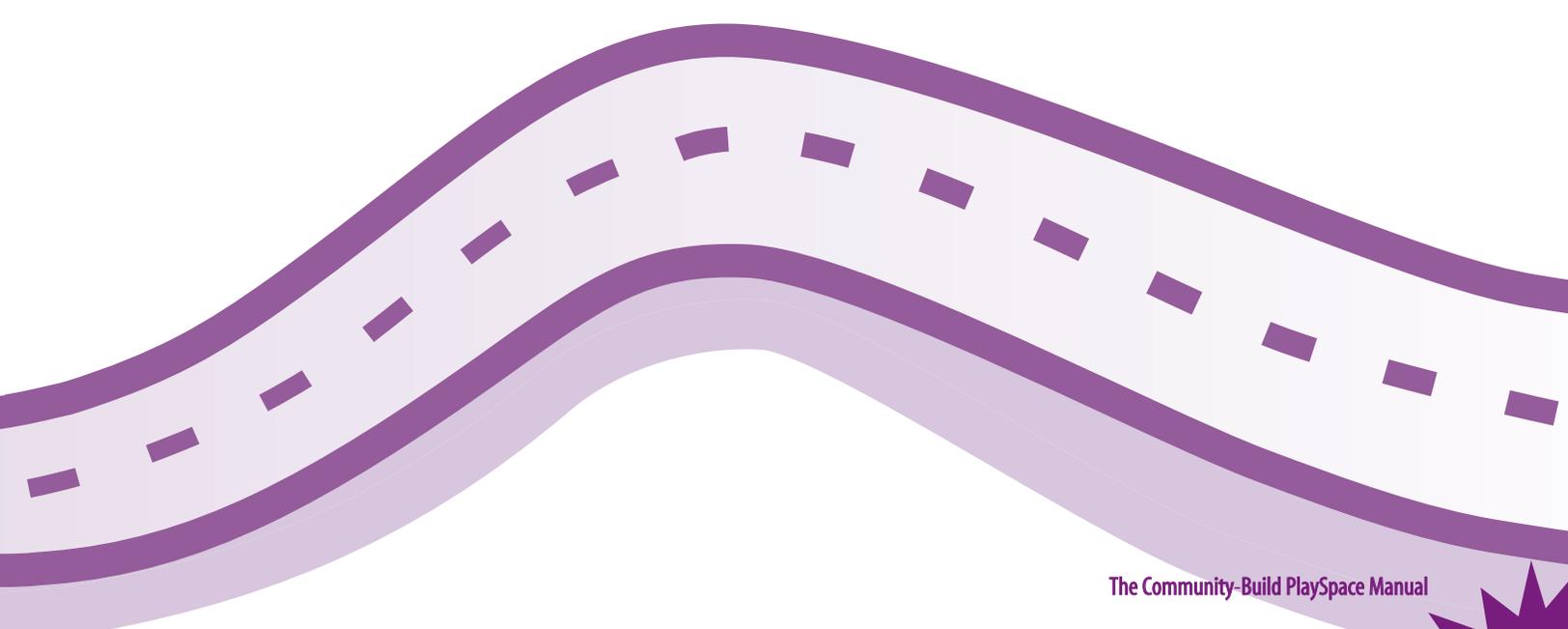
EXCITEMENT!







Congratulations! You've taken the first step toward positive community action by opening up the KaBOOM! Community-Build PlaySpace Manual. You are committed to changing a child's world, and your energy will soon inspire everyone around you. But before you can Believe It, Plan It and Build It, you've got to Learn It! This is **Mile 1: Research**. Your goal is simply to build a foundation of knowledge for the many planning tasks ahead. Don't let the amount of information in this chapter overwhelm you - you don't need to be an expert, and you will have help! Remember that you'll be joined by a whole committee of team captains as well as professional playspace designers, and they'll help you manage the details. Now is the time to cast your idea net wide and explore all destinations and itineraries that appeal to you. The more you learn during this phase, the better equipped you'll be to plan a smooth and successful playspace journey.



MILE 1: RESEARCH

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Researching Play & Community-Built PlaySpaces

If someone were to ask you why they should invest time or money into building a new playspace, what would you say? Many people take play for granted, or see it as a luxury that few can afford. But **active play is a necessity** for children's physical, mental, emotional and social development. In a 2003 Gallup poll commissioned by KaBOOM! and The Home Depot, large majorities of Americans said that they believe playspaces promote physical fitness, creativity and leadership. Don't all children deserve that opportunity? Meanwhile, safe, well-maintained playspaces are becoming an endangered species. As you begin your project, it's a good idea to rally convincing arguments that will win over your neighbors and colleagues. Become an advocate of play!

Benefits of PlaySpaces

Have you ever thought of all the benefits a playspace brings to a community? From parents and teachers to business owners and empty-nesters, here's how to convince everyone that they can benefit from a new playspace:

For Kids and Youth

Everyone knows that kids enjoy playing, but the value of play for a child's healthy development is often underemphasized. On a playground, a child develops key motor skills and coordination through physical activities like running, jumping and climbing. Children learn to take risks and gain confidence. They learn to play cooperatively with others, and their imaginations are stimulated. Studies show that children who use playgrounds regularly are less likely to develop life-threatening obesity, and they are less likely to use aggression to solve problems.

Finally, with the widespread reduction of recess time in schools and the rise of competitive extracurriculars, today's children experience less unstructured play time. Children and youth thrive on the opportunity to just be *kids*, free from adult pressures and expectations. Youth playspaces (such as skateparks and sports fields) provide a healthy physical outlet, a means for personal expression, and a productive after-school activity. According to the Action Sports Foundation, 1 in 10 U.S. teenagers owns a skateboard ... what they don't have is a safe place to use it.





For Adults

Playspaces aren't just for kids! Parents, grandparents, teachers and other adults frequent playspaces, usually in a supervisory role. That means spending quality time with their children, and all adults benefit from the opportunity to relax outdoors, chat with friends and neighbors, and plan community initiatives. In many neighborhoods and small towns, a playspace serves as the main community meeting place, used for festivals, fairs and celebrations. Innovative programming like art projects, games, and physical exercise for seniors will benefit all the members of your community and encourage them to invest time and resources in your project.

For Communities

Even the physical space is an important asset. A well-maintained and enjoyed playspace is a sign of a safe community, and it tends to increase property values and attract young families. Neighborhoods take pride in their playspaces, especially if residents were involved in the park's planning, design, installation and maintenance. The National Recreation and Park Association documented that in one Philadelphia neighborhood, burglaries and theft dropped by 90% after citizens and police banded together to plant gardens and clean up vacant lots. This kind of turnabout benefits not only the people who live in a neighborhood but also the businesses that serve it; it's their community too!

You may be surprised to find how many social issues are directly impacted by play and playspace-building, from public health to youth violence and civic empowerment. Consider taking this opportunity to educate yourself further about community development; the Resources section of this book contains a list of suggested magazines, books and websites.



DASH!



If play is the work of children, what happens if they're unemployed?
Ninety percent of a child's character is formed by age five.
Play is every day for children.
We need to provide the opportunity and the outlet.
- Darell Hammond, co-founder and CEO of KaBOOM!



The Play Deficit

Consider these statistics about the state of play in the U.S.:

- Children in low-income households are estimated to spend 50% more time watching television than their affluent peers. (Miller, et al, 1997)
- Since 1980, obesity rates have doubled among children and tripled among adolescents. 15% of children between the ages of 6 and 19 are overweight. (CDC 2003)
- During after-school hours (from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.), juvenile crime triples. Experts have called for safe playspaces, constructive activities and adult supervision as a deterrent to criminal behavior. (Fox and Newman, 1997)
- 50% of the 16,000 public school systems in the U.S. have eliminated recess or are considering eliminating it. (American Association for the Child's Right to Play)
- Fewer than half of American children have a playground within walking distance of their homes; in rural areas, the figure falls to 38%. (Gallup 2003)
- By 1998, children under the age of 13 were spending just 25% of their day engaged in unstructured play, down from 40% in 1981. (University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, 1998)
- According to a 2000 CDC report, only 8% of elementary schools provide daily physical education for all grades throughout the school year.
- Two-thirds of parents surveyed believe that they don't spend enough time playing with their children. (Gymboree Play Programs, 1998)
- 61% of Americans say that not having access to a nearby playground was a barrier to playing on one. (Gallup 2003)

Play keeps us vital and alive. It gives us an enthusiasm
for life that is irreplaceable.

Without it, life just doesn't taste good.

- Lucia Capocchione



What is a Community-Built PlaySpace?

For decades, schools and parks departments have been purchasing ready-made playspace equipment and hiring professional contractors to install it. This method has a quick turnaround and it ensures the safe and proper installation of a playspace. Unfortunately, it also carries a large price tag that is out of reach for more and more schools and community groups. In addition, this method tends to generate uniform playspaces that have little community investment and are not tailored to the needs and wishes of local children.

As cash-strapped cities look for alternate ways to build and renovate necessary playspaces, "community build" has become an industry buzzword. But what does a "community build" entail? In simple terms, it's an old-fashioned "barn raising" that calls on everyone in the community to pitch in, building lasting relationships in addition to building the playspace. "Community build" means that **volunteers from the community** are involved in any or all of the following project activities:

Planning Committees: Concerned citizens from a broad spectrum lead one or more committees to organize the planning and execution of the playspace build.

Fundraising: Community fundraising can draw support from a wide range of funding sources, including individuals, associations, local businesses, corporations, grant-making foundations, charitable organizations and special fundraising events.

Design: Children or youth submit drawings of their "ideal playspace" to playspace designers, who work to incorporate their ideas in the design. Parents and guardians should also weigh in on safety features and park projects that will promote adult participation.

Construction: Adults from the community volunteer their time and "sweat equity" to assemble and install the playspace equipment, along with any side projects (such as landscaping, murals or gardens) chosen by the community. Community-build equipment can be purchased from a commercial play equipment manufacturer to insure safety and accessibility, or it can be built from scratch. Note: If a community is building from scratch, project leaders **must** master and incorporate relevant safety standards and federal accessibility guidelines.

Maintenance and Programming: Volunteers may set up a "Friends of the PlaySpace" committee to plan recreational programming, raise maintenance funds and organize clean-up days.



The KaBOOM! playspace model shows you how to engage community volunteers in all of these activities and more! When researching playspaces, you may come across several different definitions of the "community-build" process. That's because above all, the community-build model is adaptable to your needs and your resources. If you're concerned about a tight budget, you can recruit volunteer builders for your Build Day(s) and plan grassroots fundraisers. If you already have funds or building contractors lined up but you want to instill a sense of ownership toward the playspace, consider holding a Design Day with local children and their parents. If your playspace is about to be finished, use the community-build model to plan recreational programming for children and adults, and to organize a long-term maintenance program.



In the end, your "community build" is what you make of it! The level of your community's involvement will ultimately depend upon your commitment, energy and leadership. All over North America, in small towns and big cities from the Northwest to the Southeast, KaBOOM! has seen thousands of skeptics turned into believers through inspired and collaborative community-build projects. The more you put in, the more you'll get out of it. We know you can do it!

Advantages of the KaBOOM! Community-Build Model for PlaySpaces

Affordable	Through grassroots fundraising and volunteer labor, any community can afford to build and maintain a quality playspace. Eliminating the labor cost of installation can reduce your total project budget by up to 40%.
Designed by Kids	The real playspace experts are the kids or youth who will be using it! Not only will a community-built design process give kids a valuable lesson in project planning, but it will also give them a sense of ownership and pride toward the playspace itself.
Increases Community Involvement & Maintenance	When people have invested their time, money and sweat into a playspace, they're much more likely to use, enjoy and defend it against vandalism, misuse and deterioration. Your playspace will have a longer and more productive life.
Stronger Communities	The collective effort of building a playspace brings people together and encourages them to put aside their differences for the sake of children. New relationships will be forged, and the playspace itself will inspire great pride.
Attracts Donors & Sponsors	Businesses stand to gain from being associated with (e.g. sponsoring) a positive, high-impact, well-organized and visible community initiative. Child-serving organizations may give grants to projects with a demonstrated need and organized leadership.



No Experience Necessary	Many play equipment companies sell products that are easy to assemble, even for volunteers with little to no construction experience. Many hands make light work!
Encourages Ongoing Positive Change	If you build a playspace today, what can you do tomorrow? The success or "achievable win" of a playspace project builds hope and confidence; many communities have used their newfound capacity and leadership skills to spearhead new community initiatives and address difficult social problems.
Employee Team-Building	Employers recognize that a great way to inspire employee loyalty and satisfaction is through company-wide volunteer opportunities and fun team-building exercises ... so invite them to donate volunteers for your playspace build! It's a natural win-win situation.
Fun!	From Kiss-a-Pig and Flamingo Hop fundraisers to children designing their dream playspace, our model will really show your community a good time. Special playspace events often become annual traditions! And on your Build Day(s), dump that mulch ... jump to the music ... pump your hands! Look around and we promise that a big smile will spread across your face.

When your kids grow up, they may be just like you or quite different. We don't know what their world will be like. But we do know that if they play, their problem solving and adaptive abilities will be in good shape to handle their world, and they'll be more likely to choose healthy answers to situations they encounter.

- The Institute for Play
www.instituteforplay.com



Community-Building: A Theory of Change

What would YOU do to turn around the apathy and isolation that plague so many communities? How would you address the serious social and economic challenges of our cities? Community development experts have pointed to the need for small, probable, achievable "wins" that spark a transformation of attitudes. Once a community has successfully won their battle for something tangible, like a playground or a skatepark, they're much more likely to believe that they can act individually and collectively to make a difference, and they're more likely to address future challenges head-on.

Researchers also point to a need for individual courage, and courage isn't built in a day. People who perform monumental feats of courage usually begin with small, civically minded acts early in life. These "cascading steps of courage" shape an empathetic value system leading to greater and greater acts, until the moment when extraordinary courage is needed...and the person is ready. Now your community needs your courage in taking on a complicated and difficult project. We know you're ready, and we're here to help!

SWING!

SLIDE!

TWIRL!

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.

- Helen Keller



A Community-Build Case Study:

Re-Building the Heart of a Neighborhood

Imagine losing everything that is most dear to you ... in a single heartbeat. On July 10th, 2003, Atlanta resident Brad Cunard was driving with his family when a tree suddenly fell on the vehicle, killing his wife Lisa and their two sons, 3-year-old Max and 5-month-old Owen. Shocked and grieved by this tragic loss, the small Virginia-Highland community began discussing ways to show their support. Someone mentioned replacing a swing set at nearby John Howell Park, a frequent play place of the Cunard family. The existing equipment had grown moldy, and the park itself was sparse and muddy. The playground idea struck a nerve and began to grow, from replacing just one piece of equipment to creating a whole new playground park that would stand as a tangible, living memorial to the Cunards.

Cynthia Gentry, the Cunards' next-door neighbor, agreed to spearhead the project. Just a week and a half after the devastating accident, Cynthia presented Brad with the plan for a community-built memorial playground. "I went to him first and ran it by him. I didn't want to cause him more pain. The minute I told him, his face lit up." Perhaps something good would come out of this terrible tragedy. Energized by the thought of the memorial playground, the Virginia-Highland community began researching community builds. "When we walked into this, we had no idea what we were doing," explained Cynthia. She stumbled upon the KaBOOM! online project planner and was hooked. Having their own project website added a sense of professionalism and it "was where we sent everyone for more info. It was also a great way for people to contact us."

Because of Cynthia's advertising, a local Atlanta tool bank found out about the project and agreed to donate all the necessary tools. The local Whole Foods market donated 5% of the store's profits during a special playground fundraising day, and a local radio station took calls of support and donations for the project. Neighbors, friends, loved ones and caring strangers all helped to make the memorial playground a reality.

On November 15 and 16, 2003, members of a local Cub Scout pack camped out at the park to provide security for the playground site. That Saturday, over 100 community members came out to help construct the new playground. They fixed a drainage problem, covered the play area in soft rubber, and replaced the moldy equipment with bright blue and yellow pieces. Volunteers also leveled an adjacent area to create a playground for older children. Perhaps the most poignant addition to the park was a big, bright red fire engine - young Max's favorite toy.

But even that wasn't enough - Virginia-Highland had caught the community-build bug. Volunteers came back to plant a memorial garden with beautiful plants donated by local nurseries. They re-sodded the entire park space, and commissioned a vibrant bronze sculpture of Lisa and the two boys, happy and smiling. Next to the sculpture are three young trees, planted in memory of Lisa and Owen. Finally, on March 28, 2004 over 500 community members came together for an emotional grand opening of the park. "People stayed all day," commented Cynthia. "It was the most amazing day. The playground has become the heart of our neighborhood."



MILE
1
RESEARCH

"I would never do anything but a community build," Cynthia said. "It has brought everyone together and it belongs to everyone. The kids are gonna grow up knowing that you give to your community. It's part of your life. And this project is both giving and receiving at the same time. It's just been amazing."

On the one-year anniversary of the Cunards' deaths, flower bouquets appeared at the base of the beautiful bronze sculpture; the largest was placed there early in the morning by Brad. "He has a place to remember his family," Cynthia said. "He loves to drive by and see kids playing there. And now his family will always be remembered."



Researching PlaySpace Design

Now that you're ready to trumpet the benefits of community-built playspaces all over town, it's time to talk about the nuts and bolts of playspaces - literally! Children and youth in your community will be glad to tell you which equipment is fun, so save that for Design Day. Before then, it's your job to decide which type of equipment is the right one for your playground. Remember that for now, your goal is just to build a foundation of knowledge while researching all available options. In Chapter 2, you'll begin narrowing down those options and making concrete decisions for your project.

PASSION!

ENGAGE!

DEDICATE!



Equipment Materials

The support systems of most playgrounds are built of wood or metal (either aluminum or steel). When KaBOOM! builds with community groups, we typically use metal supports, anchored in concrete, with custom, molded-plastic components. There are some all-plastic structures available commercially, but they do not have the structural integrity and durability of wood or metal structures, and should be avoided. Here's a chart explaining the basic advantages and disadvantages of play equipment materials:

Material	Advantages	Disadvantages	Special Notes
Wood	<p>Less expensive (lower initial investment)</p> <p>"Natural" look</p>	<p>Is not as durable against normal usage, weather and vandalism</p> <p>Requires regular maintenance: yearly sanding and replacement of rotting pieces</p>	<p>Commercial lumber is treated to resist insects and rot, and these treatments usually contain small amounts of arsenic. Wood with an arsenic content of 4% or less has been deemed safe by the EPA; however, consumers should be aware of its presence and of possible alternatives. Playspaces can also be built using untreated wood that is sanded and finished.</p>
Metal <i>(Steel or Aluminum)</i>	<p>Very durable; requires less maintenance</p> <p>Vandal-resistant</p> <p>Weather-resistant</p>	<p>More expensive (higher initial investment)</p> <p>If untreated, can get very hot when exposed to heat</p>	<p>Many manufacturers use recycled metals for major play structures.</p> <p>Metal surfaces should be treated (with heavy-duty vinyl, for example) to resist heat and prevent slipping.</p> <p>Metal should be painted or galvanized to prevent rust or corrosion.</p>



Site-Built vs. Site-Assembled Playgrounds

In addition to choosing equipment materials, you'll need to decide whether you want a site-assembled or site-built playground. "Site-assembled" means that volunteers put together custom-designed, factory-built components, typically in one or two days. This method can be used with either metal or wooden playground equipment. A "site-built" playground can also be built by volunteers, but it is constructed from scratch using raw materials - usually wood.

With a site-built playground, there is no limit to the imagination potential of your design. However, there are three things to consider with this method. First, the build will be much more time-consuming and labor-intensive; it will be more challenging to recruit volunteers, and volunteers will need more advanced skills. Second, if you choose to hire professional designers and installers, the resulting labor costs will increase your budget drastically. Third, if you choose to design and install a site-built playground on your own, it will be a challenge to ensure that both the materials and the design meet all applicable safety and accessibility guidelines for playgrounds. If you choose this method, you **must** be familiar with all guidelines from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). You also must hire a certified safety inspector to inspect the playground before allowing children on it.

The site-assembled method, using either wood or metal structures, keeps costs down while ensuring that your playground meets all applicable safety and accessibility standards. A safety-certified playground, in addition to protecting children from unnecessary injury, will lower your insurance costs. For these reasons, KaBOOM! has found site-assembled playspaces to be the most cost-effective and time-efficient method for communities struggling with tight budgets and busy volunteers.

Age-Appropriateness

Who will use your playground - how many children, and of what age? This is probably the single most important question to answer when designing the activities on your playspace. The reason is simple: The physical size and developmental needs of toddlers and elementary-school children are distinct, and one structure cannot safely serve both groups. For example, a fun and challenging activity like overhead monkey bars might be fun for a 10-year-old but would be unsafe for a four-year-old. Conversely, a 10-year-old would be bored with a two-foot slide! For this reason, the play equipment industry typically divides children into two developmental age groups: 2 to 5 years old and 5 to 12 years old.





Play Needs of a Pre-Schooler (2 to 5 years old)

Physical Play: Children are learning how to control simple movements, balance and coordination; they are also building courage and confidence. They need opportunities for crawling, walking, jumping, throwing, kicking, striking, rocking, spinning, sliding, swinging, and bouncing at low heights.

Pretend Play: Children begin acting out their emotions and observations through make-believe stories, both alone and in small groups. They need quiet, partially enclosed spaces (often underneath play equipment) and unique fixtures to stimulate imagination.

Exploration/Sensory Play: Young children are actively exploring their world - not only visually but also through touch, sound, smell and taste. They need a variety of textures, as well as loose objects that they can manipulate and experiment with.

Social Play: Children are often interacting with other children for the first time; they need components that require them to share and take turns.

Play Needs of a School-Age Child (5 to 12 years old)

Physical Play: Older children are mastering complex coordination and building upper-body strength. They need more opportunities for gliding, hanging, climbing, and balancing at higher heights.

Pretend Play: School-age children form larger play groups and create elaborate rules to follow; open structures and linked components encourage the flow of dramatic play.

Exploration/Social Play: Older children move away from pure exploration to more structured, social sports and games. They will also introduce scientific and problem-solving activities into their play.

However you choose to design your space, make sure that the age-appropriateness of the equipment is obvious to a casual user. If you're catering to both age groups, a physical separation can be achieved by using entirely separate equipment (the toddler playground is frequently referred to as a "tot lot"), by signs indicating the targeted age group, or by using pathways/landscaping to separate age-appropriate components.

ADVENTURE!



Variety of Kinds of Play

Do you remember the equipment that you played on as a child? Traditional play equipment usually allowed one child to engage in one play activity emphasizing one developmental skill at a time. BORING! Today's play equipment offers so much more - and variety is a key consideration when choosing play equipment. After all, a playground is where children go to have fun, and variety will keep them engaged for longer periods of time. Just as importantly, playgrounds help children develop a number of crucial skills: Gross and fine motor skills, social cooperation, imagination, discovery, experimentation, problem solving and reasoning. Don't let the enormous variety of new play equipment intimidate you! Use common sense to choose a variety of activities that will stimulate all kinds of active, creative, cooperative and sensory play.

Kinds of Play

**Physical Play:
Coordination/Balance**



Upper Body Strength

Pretend Play:

Social Play:

Sensory Play:

Appropriate Play Equipment

Climbers, Balance Beams, Climbing Walls, Chain Bridges, Swings, Rockers, Spinners

Overhead Climbers, Chinning Bars, Motion Slides, Track Rides, Swings

Theme Panels, Storefront Panels, Playhouses, Steering Wheels, Telescopes, Stages, Amphitheaters

Double Slides, Climbing Walls, Teeter-totters, Tire Swings, Talk Tubes, Sports Equipment

Sand, Water, Textured Surfaces, Drums, Panels with Bells and Chimes, Talk Tubes, Trees and Gardens

Play Value

The idea of "play value" goes hand-in-hand with the play variety discussed above. Basically, how much fun will your playspace provide per square inch? How many children will be able to play together at one time? Playgrounds with a high "play value" create more play opportunities for more children by maximizing the space and money that you have available. Consider a talk tube, for example. A talk tube has high play value because it encourages children to interact with each other (social play), can be part of a creative game (imaginative play), and can be used by multiple children at a time. It's also inexpensive! Or how about a double slide in place of the traditional single slide? Double slides encourage cooperative play among multiple users, increasing play value.

Shopping for play equipment is just like shopping for anything else - always keep in mind how much bang for your buck you're getting. Is there only one way to use a component, or can it be used in different ways? How many children can safely use it at a time? What kinds of play does it encourage? By shopping around and consulting more than one company, you should be able to get the best play value for your dollar.





The Big Picture: Your Play Environment

Remember the tale of two cities? At KaBOOM!, we tell a tale of two playspaces. Each one is well-designed, well-built and kept in great condition. Kids and their parents flock to each one at playtime. However, one of these playspaces also serves as a common meeting place and public park. Older students, local associations, clubs and elderly folks often come to relax and hang out. Its picnic tables and shady lawn are always buzzing with social activity, games and laughter. Kids feel safe because adults are always around. And the other playspace? The hot, empty lot around it clears out on summer evenings, and even during busy hours, people without children just walk on by.

What's the moral of this story? Community-built playspaces aren't just for kids! A few simple additions to the area around your playspace will transform it into an inviting community space and an active part of everyday life. Below is a list of easy-to-build projects and ideas for building your community's "play environment":

Side Projects: Turning a PlaySpace into a Community Space

Benches	Trash Receptacles	Shade Canopy
Picnic Tables	Flag Poles	Water-Misting System
Murals	Hopscotch Markings	Sculptures
Mosaics	Walking Paths	Arched Entryways
Tricycle Paths	Four-Square Markings	Wooden Planter Boxes
Chess and Checker Tables	Shuffleboard Markings	Interpretive Nature Signs
Birdhouses/feeders	Double Dutch Posts	Rocker Benches
Gazebos	Basketball Hoops	Tetherball Poles
Planting Trees	Volleyball Nets	Rock Garden
Raised Flower Beds	Sand Boxes	Vine Trellis
Community Garden Plots	Fences	Message Board/Kiosk
Open Air Theater	Water Play	Adult Exercise Stations
Outdoor Classroom	Science Gardens	Backgammon Tables
Country or World Map	Plastic Painting Panels	Herb or "Pizza" Garden

★ The Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind, a public school serving students with visual and hearing impairments, successfully engaged their students in great playground side projects. Associates from the local Tucson Home Depot contributed their landscaping expertise to enhance a meaningful sensory garden for the children, a place where students could peacefully explore their senses through plants, trees, rocks, etc. Students created individual stepping stones leading to the garden and worked side-by-side with The Home Depot volunteer team to build planter benches for the garden.





Building Community Through Play

By Teri Hendy, CPSI and president of Site Masters, Inc.

So you want to build a playground. But who will come and play? How will they get there? What will they do? Why will they come? What is a playground anyway? We all think we know what a playground is, but do we really know?

Before reading any further, take a moment to think about your earliest recollections of play. As a young child, what gave you the greatest joy? As an adult, do you still play? What do you do when you play? Write these recollections down so that you will remember them.

As a society, we have forgotten how to play. We have lost touch with the child within us. Many adults have to take classes to learn how to play with their children. Our children have become so regimented by childcare centers, schools and organized sports that they don't know how to play freely. In fact, many children can't organize their peers to play a pickup game of baseball without adult interaction. Much of the reason for this is the fast-paced lives that we lead and the loss of the sense of security that we had in our old neighborhoods. The days of "Pleasantville," where everyone watched out for one another, are gone.

I very strongly believe that by providing well-planned playgrounds throughout our communities, we can bring back the neighborhoods of the past where people of all ages interacted with one another. The playground should be thought of as an environment for recreating. Remember your list of fond memories from childhood. How can you create that feeling of reckless childhood abandon that we so cherished?

Think seriously about the elements that you want in your playground. How will these elements encourage people of all ages to communicate or interact? You must also be aware of the purpose of your playground. What do you want your playground to do? A small neighborhood tot lot might be very different from a large mega park that is the focal point of a community. By gaining an understanding of how you want your play environment to function, you will be better prepared to design it.

Once you have decided what the purpose of your playground is, you are ready to begin the process of selecting the elements that will make up the play environment. A well developed play environment is one that is complex, with varying levels of challenge as well as a great variety of both active and passive play opportunities. Modern playground equipment can be quite exciting and at the same time, limiting in diversity of experience. Don't just focus on manufactured play equipment. The playground must provide passive areas for quiet play that encourage a young child to fantasize and to role play. Adding natural elements such as low earth mounds, mud piles, large boulders, tree stumps, plant mazes, flowers, trees and shrubs provide opportunities for children to be in direct contact with nature.

Sand and water play are also wonderful for all ages. Consider placing shade structures and plenty of seating around the sand area. Even senior citizens enjoy touching the sand. Provide opportunities to get into the sand area or to reach in from the perimeter.

Adding water elements such as zero-depth streams (just enough water to splash!), bubblers, water falls and fountains create an element of fun and relaxation. All ages enjoy watching water flow. The sound of moving water is also very soothing.

Walking and biking trails around a playground enable caregivers to exercise while keeping an eye on older children. These pathways can be incorporated into the play environment to create accessible routes of travel and to provide for children's riding tracks. Seniors enjoy being able to walk among young families playing. Provide covered seating along the walking trails as seniors often need to sit and rest.

TIP!

Getting a little fatigued? Remember that the best way to learn about play and play equipment is to visit playspaces! Check out sites in your area and take notes on what you see. What do kids like most? How are the equipment and surfacing holding up? What's missing? Talk to the people who purchased the equipment as well as the staff who maintain it. They've been down this road before!

The need for movement does not end in childhood. The swings that were important in developing a child's inner ear can also keep the inner ear of the adult healthy, helping us to strengthen depth perception and balance. Providing swinging opportunities for adults will enhance the recreation area. There are a variety of swinging benches on the market that will definitely be used by all ages. Take care to locate these benches out of the playground equipment area.

If the playground is large enough and your budget allows, consider amenities such as restrooms, shelters, picnic areas, sledding hills, ice skating, hockey, skate boarding and other athletic opportunities. By creating environments that are comfortable, safe, and interesting we will bring people of all ages together and begin the important process of building a community.

Remember, the more fun you have, the greater your value to yourself and to your society. The more fun you share with others, the more fun you have.



Researching PlaySpace Safety & Accessibility

You're probably already starting to picture eager children, running to swing and climb all over your playground. Can you hear the giggles yet? Think of the kind of positive experience you initially wanted to provide for children in your community - that carefree experience of learning, social interaction and fun. In order to fully realize that goal, you're going to need a safe playground that is accessible to all children, regardless of their physical ability.

Every year in America, nearly 200,000 children visit the emergency room because of serious playground injuries. Countless other children are discouraged from playing because there's an obstacle at the playground entrance, because they can't travel over sand or gravel, or because there are no play activities at ground level. **Using certified equipment and proper safety surfacing** helps prevent playground injuries while also ensuring full access for children with disabilities.

Full accessibility is mandated under federal law, but more importantly, it facilitates two of the best outcomes of a community-built playspace - equal opportunity and fun for all children, and the chance for children to learn from one another's differences. An accessible playground encourages older relatives and guardians (who may use walkers, wheelchairs and canes) to visit, supervise and spend time with their children. This, in turn, promotes a safe and social atmosphere. Read on to find out how you can protect children, address parent concerns, and ensure fun for all!



Types of Surfacing

Since approximately 80% of all playground injuries are caused by falls to the ground, protective surfacing is the most critical safety factor on playgrounds. Choosing the right ground cover for your playground is just as important as choosing the slides and swings that go on top! **Hard surfaces such as asphalt, concrete, dirt, and grass are unacceptable** because they have poor shock-absorbing characteristics. A fall onto these hard surfaces could be life threatening.

There are several synthetic and natural materials that offer adequate protection from falls. Acceptable surfaces include sand, pea gravel, mulch, engineered wood fiber, synthetic rubber mats and poured-in-place rubberized surfaces. Keep in mind that although the following surfaces are all recommended for safety purposes, only certain types of engineered wood fiber and rubberized surfaces are fully accessible to children in wheelchairs.



BOUNCE!



Comparison of Acceptable Playground Surfacing Systems from the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Handbook for Public Playground Safety

Organic Loose Materials - Wood Chips, Bark Mulch, Engineered Wood Fibers*, etc.

ADVANTAGES

Low initial cost.

Ease of installation.

Good drainage.

Less abrasive than sand.

Less attractive to cats and dogs (compared to sand).

Attractive appearance.

Readily available.

DISADVANTAGES

The following conditions may reduce cushioning potential: rainy weather, high humidity, freezing temperatures.

With normal use over time, combines with dirt and other foreign materials.

Over time, decomposes, is pulverized, and compacts requiring replenishment.

Depth may be reduced by displacement due to children's activities or by material being blown by wind.

Can be blown or thrown into children's eyes.

Subject to microbial growth when wet.

Conceals animal excrement and trash (e.g. broken glass, nails, pencils, and other sharp objects that can cause cut and puncture wounds).

Spreads easily outside of containment area.

Can be flammable.

Subject to theft by neighborhood residents for use as mulch.

Inorganic Loose Materials - Sand, Gravel

ADVANTAGES

Low initial cost.

Ease of installation.

DISADVANTAGES

The following conditions may reduce cushioning potential: rainy weather, high humidity, freezing temperatures.

With normal use, combines with dirt and other foreign materials.





Does not pulverize.	Depth may be reduced due to displacement by children's activities and sand may be blown by wind.
Not ideal for microbial growth.	May be blown or thrown into children's eyes.
Nonflammable.	May be swallowed.
Materials are readily available.	Conceals animal excrement and trash (e.g. broken glass, nails, pencils, and other sharp objects that can cause cut and puncture wounds).
Not susceptible to vandalism except by contamination.	Sand - spreads easily outside of containment area.
Gravel is less attractive to animals than sand.	Sand - small particles bind together and become less cushioning when wet; when thoroughly wet, sand reacts as a rigid material. Sand - may be tracked out of play area on shoes; abrasive to floor surfaces when tracked indoors; abrasive to plastic materials. Sand - adheres to clothing. Sand - susceptible to fouling by animals. Gravel - difficult to walk on. Gravel - if displaced onto nearby hard surface pathways, could present a fall hazard. Gravel - hard pan may form under heavily traveled areas.

Synthetic Loose Materials - Shredded Tires

ADVANTAGES

- Ease of installation.
- Has superior shock absorbing capability.
- Is not abrasive.
- Less likely to compact than other loose-fill materials.

DISADVANTAGES

- Is flammable.
- Unless treated, may cause soiling of clothing.
- May contain steel wires from steel belted tires. Note: Some manufacturers provide a wire-free guarantee.
- Depth may be reduced due to displacement by children's activities.



Discourages microbial growth.	Is accessible to the handicapped.
Does not deteriorate over time.	May be swallowed.

Fixed Synthetic Material - Shredded Tires, Rubber Tiles, Poured-in-Place

ADVANTAGES

- Low maintenance.
- Easy to clean.
- Consistent shock absorbency.
- Material not displaced by children during play activities.
- Generally low life cycle costs.
- Good footing (depends on surface texture).
- Harbors few foreign objects.
- Generally no retaining edges needed.

DISADVANTAGES

- Initial cost relatively high.
- Undersurfacing may be critical for thinner materials.
- Often must be used on almost level uniform surfaces.
- May be flammable.
- Subject to vandalism (e.g. ignited, defaced, cut).
- Full rubber tiles may curl up and cause tripping.
- Some designs susceptible to frost damage.

What is engineered wood fiber? Engineered wood fibers may look like mulch, but they are specially cut to a uniform size and thickness, and the manufacturing process eliminates most bark and twigs - adding to the product's durability, shock absorption and smooth surface. Most brands of engineered wood fiber are accessible to people in wheelchairs, and they are also naturally fire-resistant.

If you choose another type of surfacing, you must create an accessible pathway (usually from interlocking rubber tiles) between the perimeter of the playspace and the structure. Talk to your play equipment company and/or surfacing vendor for specific advice.





Depth & Placement of Surfacing

How much surfacing you need to purchase will depend on the size of your playground. Refer to the experts! Once you choose play equipment and surfacing vendors in Mile 2, they will work with you to meet your surfacing needs. Basically, safety surfacing needs to extend to wherever a child might jump or fall from equipment (known as the "use zone"). Each specific play component has a standard use-zone measurement; for example, the use zone extends at least 6 feet in all directions from the edge of any stationary playground component. For swings, it extends in front and back to twice the height of the suspending bar. The entire use zone must be free of other equipment, obstacles or natural objects (such as roots and tree branches) onto which a child might fall. Refer to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines for complete information on your playground components.

The depth of surfacing required will depend upon the type of surfacing you use (e.g. shredded tires provide twice as much impact absorption as sand) as well as how high your equipment is. Generally, 12 inches of mulch, pea gravel, sand or engineered wood fiber is recommended. In your research, you may see references to surfacing's "critical height." This refers to how high your play equipment can be - if you build any higher, falls may result in life-threatening head injuries. When measuring your equipment's height, it's important to remember that children may climb up onto guardrails and roofs; your surfacing needs to cushion falls from the highest possible point onto which a child might climb. This point is known as the "fall height."

To give you a general idea of the relationship between surfacing depth and equipment height, here is a chart based on ASTM materials testing:

Critical Height of Various Surfacing Materials

If you install 12 inches of this material:	The fall height of your playground can safely be this high:
Coarse Sand	6 feet
Medium Gravel	6 feet
Fine Sand	9 feet
Fine Gravel	10 feet
Wood Chips	11 feet
Double Shredded Bark Mulch	11 feet
Engineered Wood Fibers	more than 12 feet
Shredded Tires	N/A (six inches of shredded tires were found to have a critical height of 10-12 feet)
Source: Consumer Product Safety Commission.	

Remember that over time, surfacing compresses and falls become more dangerous. Periodic replenishment of surfacing needs to be factored into your long-term playspace budget.



Equipment Hazards

Remember that safe equipment will save your money as well as your children! Equipment that carries third-party safety certification (from the International Play Equipment Manufacturers' Association - IPEMA) will generate lower insurance costs and probably require less maintenance over time. In general, there are four hazards to watch out for:

 **Protrusions and Entanglements:** Pieces that stick out and could cut or wound a falling child are called protrusions. Pieces that might catch drawstrings and/or clothing are entanglements. Examples include: bolts that extend beyond the nut more than two threads, hardware that forms a hook, hardware that leaves a gap between components and open "S" hooks.

Entrapments: This refers to any opening that is large enough for a child's body, but not her head, to pass through. No completely bounded opening on a playground (for example, the spaces between rungs on a ladder) should measure between 3.5 and 9 inches.

Pinch, Crush, Sharp and Shearing Edges: Sharp and shearing edges may cut or puncture the skin. Moving components and hardware (on suspension bridges, seesaws, swings, etc.) should be checked for places where a child's finger might be pinched or crushed.

Accidental Fall Hazards: Elevated surfaces above a certain height should always have guardrails or enclosures. For preschool children, that height is 20 inches; for older children, 30 inches.

Source: Consumer Product Safety Commission

CATCH!

Dealing With Old Equipment

For many communities, the driving force behind a playspace project is the need to replace old, unsafe equipment. Whenever possible, you should consult with professionals to determine how much, if any, of your existing equipment needs to be fixed or removed. One option is to hire a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) to perform an official safety audit. Your local Park and Recreation department, local insurance carriers, and the National Recreation and Park Association (www.nrpa.org) can generally provide a list of CPSIs in your area.

A playspace audit will guide your decision-making, and it can also serve as a rallying point for parents and donors - when KaBOOM! Community Partner Annie Guyon of Saxtons River, Vermont commissioned an audit, the inspector reported that 73% of the existing playground was potentially life-threatening! That figure created a sense of urgency and garnered immediate support for Annie's playground project. Once you have had your existing equipment inspected, you have several options:



Keep it if the equipment meets all safety and accessibility guidelines. Maybe it just needs a new paint job, landscaping or side projects!

Renovate it if you can eliminate safety hazards or barriers to accessibility without making major structural changes to the equipment. Remember that altering equipment may destabilize the entire structure, and if done without the manufacturer's consent, it may also void the warranty.

Move it if its current location presents a safety hazard, for example, if the equipment sits next to a busy roadway or is hidden behind a building.

Remove it completely if repairs cannot be made to improve safety and accessibility, or if it doesn't conform to current safety standards. If you plan to install new equipment on the same site, always remember to remove the concrete "footers" that anchor the structure in place!

Signs, Signs, Everywhere a Sign!

Signs are an important but frequently overlooked aspect of playspace safety. After all, what happens when you and your team captains aren't around to field questions and monitor the playspace? We recommend installing a permanent, eye-catching sign that displays the age-appropriateness of the equipment, playspace usage rules, hours that the playspace is open, the importance of adult supervision, and where to report equipment damage or misuse. You may also want to acknowledge major donors, or commemorate a person's memory.

Keep in mind that a playspace sign must be geared toward every possible user. Considerations include: making the letters big enough to read easily, adding other languages spoken in your community, and including simple graphics for non-readers. Choose bright colors, and position the sign in a prominent location, either at the entrance to the playspace or on the equipment itself. Signs are generally inexpensive and easily customized; if you don't have a local signmaker, order a sign from your play equipment company or ask them for a reference.

Accessibility Guidelines: Equal Play for All

Defend every child's right to play! No child should be denied access to a playspace simply because of a disability. A fully accessible and interactive playspace also promotes understanding between children, and it encourages elderly adults to participate in and supervise play. Whether you are building a playground, skatepark or other recreation area, you should become familiar with the guidelines established by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. This Act prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities, and it requires that public buildings and spaces (including playgrounds) provide access and accommodations for the disabled. This includes playspaces that are owned and operated not only by parks and schools but also by non-profit organizations, clubs, private businesses, restaurants and most child care centers. For a full report, visit www.access-board.gov or contact the Access Board at (202) 272-0080. In addition, some states have accessibility laws that are more stringent than the current ADA, so be sure to verify your state's requirements.





Despite some public perceptions, designing an accessible playspace is neither difficult nor more costly. It just requires some forethought and planning. The first thing to remember is that not all children with a disability use wheelchairs.

Children cope with a variety of disabilities that affect the way they play, including visual, hearing, developmental, emotional and social impairments. In order to meet the play needs of these children, you may want to investigate special types of play activities that stimulate hearing, touch and social cooperation; you may also consider creating a position for a volunteer moderator and/or mentor on the playground.

For those children who do use wheelchairs, ensuring accessibility simply requires the incorporation of a few basic design elements; you can work with your play equipment designer to meet federal guidelines.

ZOOM!



FUN!

Imagine everyone connected by a giant rope, helping each other, compensating for individual weaknesses, using everyone's abilities to the fullest. We'd be an unstoppable force.

- Erik Weihenmayer, skydiver, biker, runner, skier, rock & mountain climber, author and blind man



Designing Playgrounds for Children with Special Needs

Information from Heather Fantini OTR/L and Michael Yucha MSOTR/L
-Occupational Therapy Staff, Easter Seals of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Play is the medium through which all children learn and interact with their world. Unstructured play in particular offers children the opportunity to create and inhabit a personal world in which they are free to invent rules, make independent decisions and test their abilities. For all children, but especially for those with special physical, emotional and developmental needs, independent play is a critical learning tool. How can playspace design cater to those special needs and accelerate children's development? In this section we'll briefly address design considerations for children with sensory impairments (visual/hearing), autism and emotional disorders.

Sensory Impairments. For children with visual and hearing impairments, the sense of touch becomes an important means of engaging with their environment. Therefore, choose play components that build fine-motor skills and/or emphasize use of the senses.

Fine-Motor Skills. These are the hand-manipulation skills that allow us to do things like holding a pen, eating with a fork, and tying our shoelaces. Play equipment should encourage a variety of fine-motor movements, including circular motion and use of both hands at the same time. Examples are miniature car tracks, activity panels, pianos, turning knobs, steering wheels and beads that children push through mazes.

Sensory Stations. Choose play components that incorporate different textures, especially those that can be manipulated: water tables, sand boxes and activity panels are ideal. For children with visual impairments, talk tubes, pianos, xylophones and chimes are also good choices.

Color. Remember that there are varying degrees of visual impairment. Children who have trouble distinguishing shapes or colors will be able to navigate the playspace more easily if it uses high-contrast colors. For safety, you also may want to lay brightly-colored tape or paint a fluorescent strip along the edges of steps.

Autism. Autism is a developmental disability that affects social skills, language and behavior. It is categorized as a "spectrum disorder," meaning that it affects each person differently, creating a wide range of symptoms. Although it is impossible to generalize about children with autism, there are certain common characteristics to consider when designing your playspace:

Behavioral Patterns. Children with autism require close supervision by playspace monitors or personal guardians. Because they are often unaware of where their body is in space (e.g. when they have climbed to a dangerous height and may fall) they may be brave to the point of recklessness. Therefore, guardrails and other safety features are extremely important.

TIP!

All children, but especially those with emotional disorders, love "cozy spaces" where they feel enclosed and secure. Consider adding crawl spaces or play houses, but keep in mind that close supervision is crucial.

TIP!

For children with mobility impairments, industry guidelines focus on specific measurements that facilitate movement and ease of access. Some of these guidelines are summarized on the next page. You can contact the Access Board for a complete guide to play areas.

You may also want to design a structure with multiple points of entry - that is, stairs and/or ladders on all sides. This will encourage active supervision and allow adult guardians to reach the upper levels quickly and easily. In addition, children with autism may have difficulty with social interactions; see below for more.

Physical Needs. Some children with autism have advanced gross-motor skills such as throwing, kicking and balancing. Others may not have advanced coordination, but they may have boundless amounts of energy and their bodies crave repetitive "deep pressure" activities that put the whole body in motion. Examples include bouncing, hanging, jumping, sliding, spinning, climbing and see-sawing. Any kind of swing will also be beneficial - traditional, tire, or specially designed "bolster swings" that children grip with their legs. For children with autism, these activities can release physical aggression and produce a calming effect.

Emotional/Social Disorders. Children who show patterns of unusual defiance, aggression, irresponsibility and/or unkindness may be dealing with a variety of emotional disorders. (Children with autism may also display similar characteristics.) Their basic play needs are no different from other children; however, certain considerations for the overall space can help ease behavioral problems.

Layout of Play Activities. The key here is to strike a balance between opportunities for independent play and for social, group play. Chaotic playspaces with dozens of children everywhere may be challenging for those with emotional disorders. Therefore, if the number of users cannot be controlled, the playspace should have a few separate areas so that a child can get away from the group when necessary. To encourage healthy social play, incorporate open platforms or play activities large enough to accommodate several (e.g. 8-10) children comfortably.

Social Needs. To instill a sense of physical security and emotional connection, choose mediated, one-on-one play activities such as bucket swings. Play components that require inclusion, cooperation and/or turn-taking among children are also important for building social skills. When children are waiting in line, encourage them to remain engaged in play by cheering and singing along.



American Society for Testing & Materials (ASTM) Accessibility Recommendations for Wheelchair Users

Provide a Barrier-Free Environment

A 1/2-inch vertical rise can create a barrier for a wheelchair user.

ROLL!

Accessible Route of Travel (Ground Level)

From the perimeter of the play area to the equipment there must be an accessible route that minimizes trip hazards (wheelchair tipping hazards) and is at least 60 inches wide (the width of two wheelchairs to allow traffic in both directions). At ground level, a maximum slope of 1:16 (a one-foot rise for every 16 feet of distance) is allowed. The route must also travel over protective safety surfacing when it passes through playground use zones (areas where a child might fall).



Note: There are two options for ensuring accessible routes of travel. First, you can purchase safety surfacing that meets accessibility requirements - these include poured-in-place rubber, rubber tile systems and some engineered wood fibers. Second, you can create a pathway (usually from interlocking rubber tiles) and lay it over a non-accessible surfacing such as sand, gravel or mulch. Remember to provide access to the full play experience - for example, if a child enters your structure from a set of stairs, she should be able to exit from a slide or tube and still be on an accessible route!

Accessible Route of Travel (Elevated)

These ramps and passages allow children to travel from the ground to the structure, and between elevated play components. Ramps must be at least 36 inches wide, with a maximum slope of 1:12. Each segment of the ramp can rise no more than 12 inches. At the end of every ramp there must be a landing.

Landings and Platforms

The minimum diameter of any platform must be 60 inches, and each platform must provide a parking space for the wheel chair outside the 60-inch area of at least 30" x 48". A passage for one wheelchair is 36 inches, for two 60 inches, and for one wheelchair and a person walking is 44 inches.

Handrails

Handrails are required on both sides of ramps connecting elevated play components. They must be 0.95 to 1.55 inches in diameter, placed between 20 and 28 inches above the ramp surface.



Transfer Points

A "transfer point" or "transfer system" is an entry point that allows a child to pull him- or herself onto the play equipment. Ground-level access decks must be between 14 and 18 inches above the surfacing, have 24 inches of clear width, and be 14 inches deep.



Handrails should be provided to aid in transferring from the wheelchair to the playground. The turning space at the base of the transfer point should be at least 60 inches in diameter to allow the wheel chair to turn.

Stepped Platforms

To allow access from the transfer point to playground components, there should be no vertical rises greater than 8 inches and each step should be 24 inches wide and 14 inches deep.

TIP!

Play Events

Don't forget about the fun! A wheel chair user has a reach of between 9 and 48 inches.

When choosing activity panels and other stationary activities, it is important that all children can reach the component. There must be a minimum of one ground level activity (e.g. rockers, talk tubes, game boards) for every two elevated activities.

Very young children with under developed motor skills may get "stuck" at the bottom of a slide, unable to move themselves onto the ground to continue playing. For universal playgrounds, particularly those with rubberized surfacing, consider purchasing slides that exit close to the ground.

GROOVE!



GRIND!

There are millions of people out there ignoring disabilities and accomplishing incredible feats. I learned you can learn to do things differently, but do them just as well. I've learned that it's not the disability that defines you, it's how you deal with the challenges the disability presents you with. And I've learned that we have an obligation to the abilities we DO have, not the disability.

- Jim Abbott, one-handed professional baseball player



Evaluating PlaySpace Sites

Factors Influencing Site Evaluation

At this point, you probably have some area in mind that will be the site of your future playspace. However, it's important to analyze potential sites carefully before you make a decision, since many different factors will influence your playground's ultimate cost, design and usage. To minimize site-prep costs and maximize safety, you'll need to consider all of the following factors when evaluating potential sites:

Ownership

Who owns the land? This is not always as obvious as you might think. Find out for sure, because the owner of the land will ultimately be liable for the playspace and the children who play on it. If you (or your organization) does not own the land, we encourage you to contact the landowner. Discuss the benefits and responsibilities of a playspace project, and request proof of land ownership and liability coverage. (For more information, see Mile 2: Working with Landowners.) You'll need to check local zoning ordinances for your site; specific restrictions might affect your plans for landscaping, signage, fences and barriers to visibility. It's especially important to check building codes before hiring any professional contractors to perform work such as removing asphalt or laying a concrete slab for rubber surfacing.

Neighbors

Do people live close to the site? Is there a public facility there now? Building a playspace sometimes means trading in peace and quiet for extra noise, increased traffic, and trash problems. Neighbors can have valuable input as well as potential objections, and they are often overlooked in the planning process. Involve them early on and you'll lay the groundwork for success.

Size

How big is the area? Some equipment, like swings, requires lots of extra space, so measure as large an area as you can for planning purposes. Of course, the larger the area, the more expensive it will be to surface it properly, so keep this in mind.

Topography

There are two factors to consider: First, does the site have large bumps, holes or hills? A flat site greatly reduces the amount of site-prep work needed. If bumps are slight, a good crew of volunteers can remove them with good old-fashioned sweat and elbow grease; large bumps will require machinery for leveling the site. A third option is to bring in backfill soil to even up the land.

Second, does the site have a slope? A slight grade of 1-2% (a 1-2 foot rise for every 100 feet of distance) is good for drainage purposes, but if you go any higher your loose-fill surfacing may slowly slide out of the play area. If there is an obvious slope, machinery may be required to excavate the existing "hill."

Drainage

Examine the site after a heavy rainfall. Do puddles form? Standing water can cause mold formation and reduce the shock absorption of your surfacing. If a site has poor drainage, you may need to install a base layer of pea gravel, drain tiles or a foam liner underneath loose-fill surfacing. You can also purchase special drainpipes; remember that all of these options add to the overall cost of surfacing.



Man-Made Elements

What's on the site now? If there is an existing playground, a certified playground safety inspector (CPSI) can help you determine whether to keep it, renovate it or remove it. Does the site have an asphalt or concrete surface? Depending on the equipment and surfacing you choose, you may need to remove it, and this is typically done by professionals. Ask your play equipment company or a local landscape architect to help you make this decision.

Are there buried utilities, sewage pipes, or sprinkler pipes underground? All of these "hidden" elements can present hazardous situations during a build. Later on, you'll be working with the site's landowner and your Construction Captain to arrange utility checks and dig test holes. If a sprinkler system is in place, you'll have to consult a landscaping company.

Finally, don't just concentrate on what's below the surface - look up! Check for available lighting that will promote safety and discourage vandalism. Also make sure that overhead utilities (such as power lines) won't endanger children playing on your structure.

Soil Quality and Type

More and more cities are finding that their soils contain dangerous qualities of lead, arsenic and other contaminants - test your soil as soon as possible so that your playspace plans don't get derailed! Your local and state health departments, as well as the water utility, should have information on possible toxins in your area. Equipment for testing your soil may be available through local landscaping companies, greenhouses and gardening stores. Universities and colleges also typically offer inexpensive soil testing for farmers; contact their horticultural and/or geological departments.

Also, you'll need to dig post holes to install most playgrounds, and the type of soil might determine which tools can be used. Again, you'll be working with your construction captain to secure tools and arrange the various site prep tasks.

Natural Elements/Shade

Does the site have leafy trees or shrubs? Green, shady spaces naturally attract visitors, and they also protect children from the heat and harmful UV rays of a midday summer sun. Trees and bushes cool the air around them, and they also provide another base for physical, sensory and dramatic play. Just be sure that exposed roots and low-hanging branches won't cause safety hazards on the play equipment, and trim large bushes so that the playspace will be visible to passers-by.



Function/History

What's the space being used for now? Is it already a designated public space where people meet and hang out? What has it been in the past-was it ever home to a tall building or another park? Do your archaeological duties and research the space's history over the past one hundred years, because you may incur a huge, unwanted and surprise cost (like a building foundation) as you begin digging!

Central Location

To be truly safe and welcoming, your playspace should occupy an open, visible space (e.g. not hidden behind a building). This helps with supervision of children and can cut down on vandalism. A playspace should also be a safe distance from any roads or otherwise congested areas.



Sun Safety for Kids

Why protect against the sun?

When most people think of playspace health hazards, they probably think of bullies, scraped knees, or hurt feelings. But the most prevalent and perhaps the most dangerous hazard - sun exposure - is often ignored. The sun is the primary cause of all forms of skin cancer, and it also contributes to premature aging. We can't achieve the goal of "healthy outdoor play opportunities" without sun protection!

What kind of damage does sun exposure cause?

Part of the sun's energy reaches us as rays of invisible ultraviolet (UV) light. When UV rays enter the skin, they damage the skin cells, causing visible and invisible injuries. Sunburn and tanning, the same visible type of damage, appear just a few hours after sun exposure. Invisible damage, on the other hand, accumulates year after year. Eventually, it will appear as wrinkles, age spots, and even skin cancer.

When should sun protection begin?

Sun protection should begin in infancy and continue throughout life. It is estimated that children get 80 percent of their total lifetime sun exposure by the time they turn 18. The earlier parents incorporate sun protection into their children's daily activities, the lower their lifetime risk will be for developing skin cancer, including melanoma.

How can I protect my children from the sun?

Begin now to teach your children to follow the ABCs for FUN in the SUN.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| A = AWAY. | Stay away from the sun in the middle of the day. |
| B = BLOCK. | Use SPF15 or higher sunscreen. |
| C = COVER UP. | Wear a T-shirt and a hat. |
| S = SPEAK OUT. | Talk to family and friends about sun protection. |

How can we make our community playspace sun-safe?

You can begin by choosing a site with plenty of natural shade. If you live in a region or neighborhood with few trees and lots of sun exposure, select equipment that has a built-in "roof" over open platforms. You can also build permanent or semi-permanent shade structures to shield the entire play structure; these should be seven feet above the highest point of the structure. Don't forget about gazebos or awnings for adult supervisors!

-Information from the American Academy of Dermatology (www.aad.org)



Site Evaluation Checklist

Date ____/____/____

- Reviewed all historical information sources (zoning maps, photographs, city records) and noted past uses of the land. Underneath the surface, site may contain:



- Identified the official landowner: _____
Discussed the project with him/her.

- Checked building codes and zoning requirements; project is acceptable.

- Consulted neighbors regarding the project and the site.

- Site measurement: _____

- Slope: _____

- Drainage: Good _____ Fair _____ Poor _____

- Soil type: Rocky _____ Sandy _____ Clay _____ Other _____

- Conducted soil test. Arsenic level: _____
Lead level: _____

- Site is accessible to wheelchairs: Yes No

- Located and marked all trees and shrubs.

- Created scaled map of proposed playspace site.



- Noted man-made elements:

Asphalt/Concrete Surface _____

Utilities _____

Buildings _____

Fences/ Walls _____

Available Lighting _____

Adjacent Land Use _____

Other _____

- Identified hazardous conditions (if any):

Streets/Parking Lots/Traffic _____

Overhanging Trees/Branches _____

Visibility/Security _____

Other Groups Using the Site _____

Nearby Ball Fields _____

Notes: _____





Finding the Resources Within: Community Asset-Mapping

Okay, enough with the nuts and bolts! Let's shift gears for a moment and talk about the heart and soul of your playspace: your community. After all, a true *community-built* playspace will express your town's unique spirit and talents, and it will inspire people to reach across traditional barriers. To do that, you first need to research your community and find out what it has to offer.

You can probably list quite easily the things that your community lacks. (For one, it lacks a safe playspace!) But can you name the things your community already has? Community organizers have witnessed an important shift recently, from a focus on the needs of a particular community (the negatives) to a focus on its assets (the positives!). In other words, communities that used to compete for funding by proving that they lived in the *worst* place with the *biggest* problems are now empowering themselves to fix those problems internally. The process of identifying and harnessing local resources to address social problems is called "asset-mapping," and across the country it is transforming despair into lasting community pride and a sense of independence.

Besides being important for community self-esteem, asset-mapping is a highly practical strategy for making your playspace a reality. First of all, external resources (like government grants or foundation funds) aren't always available for your playspace. Secondly, if you concentrate on local resources, you are more likely to instill a sense of ownership and get sustained, long-term interest and involvement in your playspace. Third, a planning process that engages local talents, interests and hobbies is much more fun!

Every community contains a wealth of assets. A good leader will identify all of those assets, and connect as many of them as possible to the project at hand. There are two basic kinds of assets: people and materials. People are undoubtedly a community's best asset. They can lend not only their individual skills and talents, but also their personal connections and their roles in powerful organizations and businesses. "Material assets" are the tangible things that help your project along. They might include donated lumber for benches, paper for printing flyers, or the great Build Day pasta salad made by your neighbor (who is himself an asset!). Physical structures (like a room for holding your committee meetings) or public spaces (like your playspace site) can also be considered material assets.

Asset-mapping can take different forms, from a simple list to an actual community map - drawing the location of organizations and businesses in relation to your playspace site might give you new ideas! Use whichever method works best for you, and be sure to continue brainstorming assets with your planning committee throughout Miles 2 and 3. As you develop your asset map, think about how you will use it. The short-term objective is to identify local resources you can tap into for your playspace project. A good asset map will serve as a general "blueprint" for future community projects, including the maintenance and programming of your playspace. You may even consider sharing it with other local organizations and community groups!

America has had a long and rich tradition of generosity
that began with simple acts of neighbor helping neighbor.
- Helen Boosalis



Where Can You Find the Information to Develop Your Community's Asset Map?

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Friends | Chamber of Commerce |
| Family | Community Bulletin Boards |
| PlaySpace Planning Committee | Community Newspapers |
| Yellow Pages | Local Events |



There are many places to look for asset-mapping ideas, but one way to begin is simply to brainstorm, brainstorm, brainstorm! In Miles 2 and 3 you'll begin approaching and organizing these individuals and institutions; for now, just write down as many names as you can think of. Here's one way to break down the resources for your asset map:

1) Individuals

Planning a playspace is a big job, so find people to help you! You should begin by thinking of dedicated, talented individuals to form a central playspace planning committee. Brainstorm a potential co-chair, as well as 6-8 team captains to oversee specific tasks such as Children's Activities, Construction, Food, Fundraising, Logistics, Public Relations, Safety and Volunteer Recruitment. Who are you close to in your community? Contact them, and ask for their help in connecting you with others they know. Make an effort to be ultra-inclusive and reach out to everyone: Children, teenagers and seniors can all contribute. Finally, target the wider community by soliciting help through advertisements/flyers/signs.



Individual Skills for Your PlaySpace Project

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| First-Aid | Fundraising |
| Meeting Facilitation | Leadership |
| Construction/Repair | Writing |
| Food Preparation/Service | Organizing |
| Child Care | Communication Skills |
| Transportation (cars, trucks, machinery) | Cleaning |
| Music/Art | Accounting |
| Marketing/Publicity Skills | Landscaping/Gardening |
| Enthusiasm | Creativity |

2) Organizations

People can bring different skills to the project when they are part of an organization. Associations are like athletic teams—each player has something special to offer. Together they create a whole new set of talents and skills. After you map out the assets of individuals, also consider the opportunities organizations can bring to your playspace project:



Organizations/ Associations to Consider

Service organizations (Rotary, etc.)
Fraternal organizations (Elks, etc.)
Women's groups
Athletic organizations
Neighborhood organizations
Habitat for Humanity/Youth Build
Labor unions

Business associations
Community foundations
Youth organizations
Cultural/ tribal organizations
Religious organizations
PTO/PTA
High school wood-shop/home-
economics classes



3) Institutions

The next level of resources to consider is local institutions. Obviously, institutions vary widely in their organization and operations. Yet every community should consider calling upon its neighborhood institutions and businesses. Some may be able to provide skilled manpower or tools, others may be able to offer free meeting space, and others may be able to provide technical advice.

Local Institutions to Consider

Churches/temples/mosques
Parks departments
Libraries
Fire/Police departments
Prisons (for making signs!)
Post offices

Universities/Community Colleges
Hospitals
Social service agencies
Schools/Childcare centers
Military bases/U.S. National Guard
Public-health agencies

4) Businesses

Local businesses stand to benefit from having their name associated with a positive, high-impact and visible project like yours, and businesses located near the playspace will benefit from a safer neighborhood with more foot traffic. Business resources include the donation of money, materials (either for the playspace planning and build itself, or for fundraising) and/or the labor of their employees. Don't limit yourself to locally-owned businesses; large corporations operating in your area also have a stake in the community, and they often have departments and budgets set aside for charitable giving and/or community affairs.

KEEP MOVIN'!





Types of Businesses to Consider

- Construction companies
- Sporting-goods stores
- Factories/plants
- Grocery stores
- Hardware/lumber stores
- Radio/ TV stations
- Dance/Martial arts studios
- Discount superstores
- Home-improvement retailers
- Fencing contractors
- Cable TV companies
- Rental companies
- Craft stores
- Video-rental stores
- Video arcades
- Bowling alleys/driving ranges
- Engineering firms
- Real-estate companies
- Car dealerships
- Major/minor league sports teams
- Technology companies
- Restaurants/bakeries
- Utilities (gas, electricity, water)
- Toy stores
- Printing/copy shops
- Party-supply stores
- Banks
- Indoor sports facilities
- Gardening suppliers
- Tool dealers/distributors
- Nurseries/ foresters
- Landscaping companies
- Doctors'/Dentists' offices
- Insurance companies/agencies
- Car washes
- Mini-golf courses
- Skating rinks
- Law offices
- Hotels
- Shopping Malls
- Casinos
- Doctors'/Dentists' offices

TiP!

When recruiting, don't overlook the people in your life who aren't regular "joiners." Maybe your uncle, hairdresser, mail carrier, or car mechanic has never volunteered before ... invite them to a playspace meeting! Many people don't become involved in community life simply because no one has ever asked them. Make a difference in someone's life, starting today!

5) External Resources

Finally, the last "rim" of your asset map should include external resources such as state government, national foundations, fundraising websites and relevant nonprofits (like KaBOOM!). Although you shouldn't rely on these for principal funding, such resources can supplement your local efforts and expand the scope of your project.

Once your asset map is complete, you'll be ready to build community relationships, skills and infrastructure while you build your playspace! We call it "building from the inside out," one brick at a time. For complete information and strategies for community-building, get your copy of *The Community Assets and Resources Handbook*. Good luck!

One can build a mountain by
collecting specks of dust.
- Korean proverb



Mile 1 Activity Checklist

Are visions of nuts and bolts dancing in your head? By now, you've surely become the resident playspace expert in your community, and you've established a broad base of knowledge for the tasks ahead. In Mile 2, you'll begin conceiving the specifics of your project vision ... you're well on your way toward changing a child's world! But first, take a pit stop to check that you've completed these Mile 1 activities:

- Yes! I can convince people that our children need a new playspace, and that a community build is the best way to achieve that goal.
- Yes! I understand the pros and cons of different equipment and surfacing materials, and I've thought about which ones are best for our play environment.
- Yes! I understand how to meet our children's developmental needs through play, and I'll be on the lookout for equipment with a high play value.
- Yes! I can reassure parents and donors that our playspace will be safe and fully compliant with ADA guidelines.
- Yes! I've evaluated available sites and determined which ones would be most cost-effective, accessible and attractive.
- Yes! I've mapped my community assets and resources, and I know where to begin to find the people power and materials I need.

Congratulations!
You're ready to cruise ahead to
Mile 2: Conceive...



Whoever acquires knowledge but does not practice it is like one who ploughs a field but does not sow it.
- Calvin Coolidge

A stylized illustration of a road with a sign that says "PLAYSPACE PLANNING: START HERE". The road is a light purple color with a dashed white line down the center. The sign is a rectangular sign with a white border and a purple background, mounted on two purple posts. The sign has a black and white striped pattern at the bottom. The background is a light purple color with stylized white clouds and a purple horizon line. The overall style is flat and modern.

**PLAYSPACE PLANNING:
START HERE**



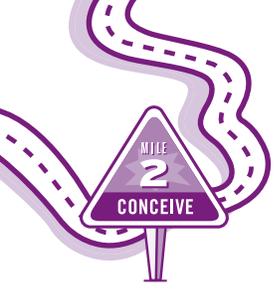
At this point, you've done your homework and learned a little bit about playspace design, site selection, safety, accessibility and your community's assets. Great work! Now it's time to use that knowledge to create the basic outline for your project. This is **Mile 2: Conceive**. You are still primarily in the idea phase, and it's important to begin your project with the end in mind. What is it that you want to accomplish - for children, for your community, and for yourself? In Mile 2, you'll be making decisions that will form the foundation for the rest of your planning process. It's important to start by surrounding yourself with the right people, and working together to create a solid vision and mission statement. These will prove invaluable down the road in helping you recruit volunteers, raise funds, and spread your energy and excitement to the whole community.

MILE 2: CONCEIVE

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Organizing a PlaySpace Planning Committee

As you've probably noticed, a community-build playspace project is too large and complicated for any one person - or even two or three people - to plan! You'll need to organize a central planning committee to divide and share responsibilities. And not just for your own sake - the more people who feel a sense of ownership toward the project and the playspace, the better! A committee allows for greater diversity in the planning process, and it maximizes individual skills and interests.

The KaBOOM! ideal playspace committee has two co-chairs and eight team captains, but your committee should reflect the needs and scope of your project, so fit it to size! We recommend meeting every few weeks throughout the planning process. Each team captain will also organize and lead a sub-committee (or "team") of volunteers responsible for a specific aspect of the project: fundraising, public relations, recruitment, and so on. Feel free to mix and match responsibilities, or to assign two team co-captains to difficult jobs.

You'll notice that some teams require more of a time commitment or a larger number of volunteers than others, so keep this in mind when picking team captains. Bring in people with a range of interests and levels of commitments, and try to nominate people from a broad cross-section of the community: parents, coworkers, local government officials, business owners, teachers, school administrators, members of local community groups, and members of local churches.

You may have some people in mind already, and now it's time to start recruiting. Begin with your co-chair, who will serve as your main planning partner. He or she can help you recruit team captains and create your project plan. When you approach each potential committee member, briefly discuss the project and encourage their input and feedback. Always state clearly the time commitment that is required, and explain which aspect(s) of the project they'll be overseeing. Here is a brief description of each committee member's tasks:

Planning Committee Tasks & Responsibilities

Co-chairs

Time Commitment: 3-4 hours per week on average, slightly more in the weeks leading up to major events.

The co-chairs are responsible for the overall management and administration of the entire project. A good co-chair acts as a leader and coach, not as someone who carries the whole weight of the project on his or her shoulders. Therefore, you'll want to look for someone who works well with others and can delegate responsibility. co-chairs work together to:

- Recruit team captains.
- Supervise team captains and provide guidance/support as needed.
- Keep team captains on track and on task.

TEAM!



- Facilitate communication and coordination among team captains and professional installers/ vendors.
- Organize and lead playspace meetings.
- Make final decisions on contested issues.
- Forecast potential problems and solutions, and resolve personal conflicts.
- Write any final reports.
- Coordinate the recognition and appreciation of all financial donors.
- Make sure that all committee members, volunteers and supporters receive proper thanks.

CHEER!

Children's (or Youth) Activities Team Captain

Time Commitment: 1-2 hours per week on average, slightly more in the weeks leading up to Design Day and Build Day(s)

Team Membership: 3-5 people

The Youth Activities Team is responsible for developing ways in which children and youth can participate in the project from the beginning to end. This person needs to be creative, responsible, and able to work well with young people! The youth activities captain should:

- Organize childcare for meetings and fundraising events (recruit older youth as baby-sitters!).
- Work with the fundraising captain to involve children and youth in fundraising efforts.
- Get children and youth involved in the planning process through special activities and school events.
- Coordinate children's or youth participation in Design Day.
- Organize activities for children and young people during Build Day(s), including volunteer appreciation activities.
- Recruit and advise Youth co-chairs or a youth council to take on planning tasks.



Construction Team Captain

Time Commitment: 2-3 hours per week on average, more during site prep and preparation for Build Day(s)

Team Membership: 2-4 people

The goal of the Construction Team is to prepare for and facilitate the construction of the playspace, along with any side projects. Although construction experience certainly helps, it's more important for this team captain to have people skills - particularly the ability to lead volunteers with confidence. The construction captain should:

- Help identify and organize major site-prep tasks such as leveling a slope, removing asphalt, or filling in holes (if applicable).
- Work with playground installer to coordinate digging and border marking.
- Solicit, collect and track all tools and materials.
- Recruit build captains (volunteer leaders).
- Lead the volunteers during Build Day(s), together with a playspace installer (if applicable).
- Work with co-chairs and safety captain to develop a maintenance plan.

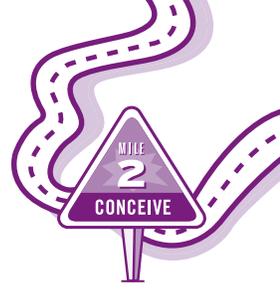
Food Team Captain

Time Commitment: 1-2 hours per week on average, slightly more in the week leading up to Build Day(s)

Team Membership: 1-4 people

The Food Team deals with the most pressing and immediate crisis experienced by volunteers: their appetite! This person must be fearless in asking for food donations, and it helps to recruit someone with connections to local restaurants or grocery stores. The food captain should:

- Solicit Build Day breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinks.
- Provide snacks and refreshments for Design Day and other planning meetings.
- Solicit food and drink donations for fundraising events.
- Coordinate food delivery and service on Build Day(s).
- Supervise trash clean-up on Build Day(s).



Fundraising Team Captain

Time Commitment: 3-4 hours per week on average, concentrated in the first two-thirds of the planning process

Team Membership: 6-15 people, depending on your fundraising goals

The Fundraising Team is in charge of raising money on both a grassroots and corporate level. This is a big job! Try to find someone who has fundraising experience as well as broad ties to many community organizations. The fundraising captain should:

- Work with co-chairs and other team captains to develop a project budget and fundraising strategy.
- Launch a grassroots campaign aimed at individuals, small businesses and local organizations.
- Solicit larger donations from big businesses, foundations and corporations.
- Maintain accounting records of all solicitations, donations and expenses (including in-kind material donations).
- Help manage donor acknowledgment and thank-you's.

Logistics Team Captain

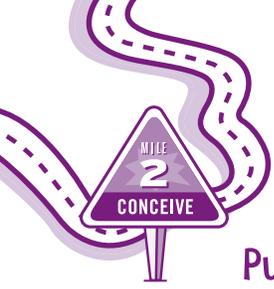
Time Commitment: 1 hour per week on average, more during the weeks leading up to Build Day(s)

Team Membership: 1-2 people

If the Logistics Team does their job right, no one will notice - because everything will run smoothly for meetings, fundraisers and the Build Day(s)! This person needs to be extremely well-organized and level-headed. The logistics captain should:

- Locate and secure community spaces for meetings and fundraisers.
- Establish water and electricity sources at the build site.
- Arrange for parking space, restrooms, trash receptacles, tables, chairs, tents and microphones/speakers to be available on or near the build site.
- Coordinate deliveries and storage of play equipment and surfacing, as well as temporary site security.





Public Relations Team Captain

Time Commitment: 1-2 hours per week on average, slightly more around major recruitment drives, fundraisers, Design Day and Build Day(s)

Team Membership: 3-5 people

The Public Relations (PR) Team generates widespread interest in your project by coordinating media coverage, community outreach and any publicity materials. They will often be the public face of your project, so look for someone with lots of energy who can articulate the project vision in an inspiring, compelling way. Writing skills also help! The PR captain should:

- Create all posters, flyers and public service announcements asking for support, resources and volunteers.
- Help publicize playspace meetings and fundraising events.
- Design a printed program for the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony.
- Make sure that sponsors are recognized properly in programs, banners and the media.
- Contact and give regular project updates to local television stations, newspapers, radio stations and other media.
- Organize "photo ops" and generate story ideas to encourage media to cover several different aspects of the project.
- Organize a media event (with high-profile community members) for the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony.
- Spread project information through community-outreach activities.

TIP!

We recommend printing a program for any playspace ceremony at which local officials, dignitaries or celebrities will be present. Throughout this manual we use the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony as an example, but your celebration could be during kick-off, at lunch, or even after the playspace has opened. Whenever it is, be sure to make it special!

(See Mile 8 for some favorite KaBOOM! ideas.)

Safety Team Captain

Time Commitment: 1 hour per week on average, slightly more during the week leading up to Build Day(s)

Team Membership: 1-3 people

Bringing volunteers onto a construction site is a big responsibility, and it's the job of the Safety Team to make sure that Build Day participants are protected from potential hazards and accidents. Leading up to the build, your safety captain should also educate children on playspace safety rules and maintenance. The perfect safety captain is someone who has some first-aid training/experience, can work with all age groups, is understanding, and is not afraid to speak up for safety's sake! The safety captain should:

WONDER!





- Design a curriculum of safety materials for the children who will use the playspace.
- Create and implement a safety plan for Build Day(s), including the assignment of skilled volunteers, unskilled volunteers and children.
- Enforce safety rules on Build Day(s).
- Secure a first-aid provider for the build.
- Create a playspace maintenance plan/safety inspection schedule.
- Establish an evacuation plan for Build Day(s).

Volunteer Recruitment Team Captain

Time Commitment: 1-2 hours per week on average, spread out evenly throughout the planning process

Team Membership: 4-8 people

The Volunteer Recruitment Team is responsible for recruiting Build Day volunteers. This is an exciting and challenging task, which demands a real "people person" who isn't afraid to ask others to lend a helping hand! The Volunteer Recruitment should:

- Determine the number of volunteers needed for the build.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Organize a volunteer registration and assignment system for the day of the build.
- Recognize volunteers (publicly and privately) for their contribution to the playspace.

TIP!

We encourage you to add more teams if it suits your project! For example, some of our community partners have found it helpful to have a "Design" team responsible for researching play equipment and coordinating the design process. Others have formed a "Side Projects" team to oversee significant landscaping or play-environment building projects.

People have to feel needed. Frequently, we just offer a job and 'perks.'
We don't always offer people a purpose. When people feel there is a purpose
and that they're needed, there's not much else to do except let them do the work.

- Maya Angelou



Team Captain Recruitment Worksheet

Children's Activities Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Construction Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Food Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Fundraising Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____



LEARN!





Logistics Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response

Public Relations Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response

Safety Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response

Volunteer Recruitment Team Captain

Name	Affiliation/Group	Phone #	Response

★ The power of play is important to your local government authorities. The National Capital Police Fund teamed up with the Washington, DC Housing Authority and a newly-opened Home Depot to build a playground in a child-rich, playground-poor neighborhood. Policemen actively supported the project by serving on the Planning Committee and by volunteering to deploy extra patrols to help with the safety and security of the equipment prior to the build. DC Mayor Anthony Williams and Police Chief Charles Ramsey attended the Ribbon-Cutting ceremony, thanking the community volunteers and The Home Depot for their support of the project.



Your First "Official" Planning Meeting

Building a planning committee is an ongoing process. In the early stages of your project, you may be working informally with a small team - for example, just a co-chair, a fundraising captain and a construction captain. As you plan events and activities, your project will slowly generate interest and people will come forward to volunteer for team captain roles. Don't scramble to find ten people right now! It's okay to begin by "planting seeds" and reaching out to various community groups.

However, even if you only have three or four people helping you, it's a good idea to set up an organized meeting structure as soon as possible. Your first "official" planning meeting will set the tone for all meetings to follow, so show up on time, distribute an organized and efficient meeting agenda, and plan a fun game! Here are a few things to accomplish:

- Personal introductions
- Share any research materials that you've gathered
- Answer questions about the project
- Discuss the project vision (see below)
- Discuss each person's goals and expectations
- Distribute team workbooks (included in this manual)
- Discuss the overall project timeline (see below)
- Discuss the overall project budget
- Discuss preparations for a community meeting and other volunteer-recruitment opportunities (see Mile 3)
- Decide on a regular committee meeting schedule
- Distribute planning committee contact information (names, addresses, phone numbers and/or e-mails)
- Decide on goals and tasks to accomplish by the next meeting
- Say thank you to everyone!

DANCE!



INSPIRE!



Creating a Project Vision and Identity

In the months ahead, nearly everyone you encounter - friends, donors, parents, coworkers and media reporters - will ask you why you are doing this project, and sharing your personal vision is the best way to draw them in. It will also help you stay motivated when you run up against delays and obstacles.

Here's an exercise that is great to do alone and/or with your planning committee. It's simple - just close your eyes for a minute and imagine what your playspace will look like. Go ahead...really close them!

What did you see? Giggling children racing down a bright yellow slide, or pumping their legs to swing higher? Lanky teenagers showing off their newest skateboarding tricks, or a youth soccer team running drills? What about parents and neighbors chatting with each other at picnic tables, or underneath a shade tree? Maybe you saw sponsors dropping by to check the information board and throw a football with the kids. All of these are common sights on community-built playspaces, and now is the time to be creative and idealistic as you envision the impact of your project on everyone in your community.

To round out your vision, here are a few questions worth reflection:

- What does the word "community" mean to you?
- Who/what makes up your community?
- Why did you choose a playspace?
- What is your goal; what is it that you hope to achieve?
- What will make your project different from other community projects?

PASSION!

At KaBOOM!, we work with diverse groups of people from all over the country ... but when we ask them, "What impact has your playspace had on the community?," they give us very similar answers. As you reflect on your own project goals, take a moment to listen to some of their thoughts:

- "The teachers have a much more 'can-do' attitude, saying things like 'We can do anything - we built a playground.'"
- "[The playground] shows parents, temple and staff that the Executive Director cares about the kids. New people to the temple see how the congregation cares and is a community."
- "The safety factor is huge. The staff doesn't have to be hyper-vigilant anymore. Teachers can be interactive rather than preventative and disciplinary."

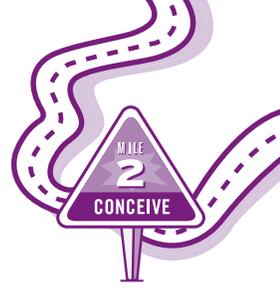




- "The children don't seem to fight as much. They play cooperative games and the games seem to last longer. The children don't get bored. They are very engaged and play lots of imaginative games."
- "There is a guy from the city government who attended the Build Day who continues to come by and check on the playground and the school to see if they need anything. The Executive Director's son used the community-build model for his Eagle Scout project to accomplish multiple projects in one day that everyone (including the Boy Scout council) said couldn't be done."
- "Because of the build, the parents have developed relationships between each other, and parental involvement is way up. They are more involved than just dropping their kids off."
- "Church members told the project leader that it was the most spiritual thing they've ever done with the church! The high-school football team and the new parents thought it was amazing that the Build Day happened... it kicked off the year really well. Families really want to feel a sense of community and now they do here."
- "California Conservation Corps wants to stay involved with Head Start in any volunteer capacity that they can. The Build Day healed some of the misconceptions that the church had toward Head Start."
- "The structure is challenging enough for all the kids. There is a student with Down's Syndrome and she works on going up the Beanstalk Climber at her own pace, so she got to a higher step by herself. Her mom was ecstatic!"
- "This project definitely strengthened our bond with our neighbors. The YMCA is next door, and they have asked to use our yard; in exchange, we can use their facilities. It's a great partnership."
- "Many parents were able to help out that have never been involved in the school before, especially dads and grandpas."
- "The community has embraced the school and is aware of them now. The executive director has attended city council meetings and spoken about it."

BRIGHT!





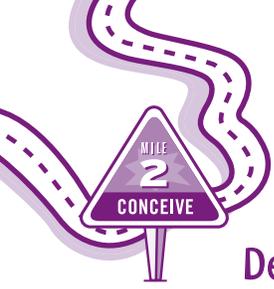
PlaySpace Vision Worksheet

Okay, enough reading - time for the fun part!

Take a few minutes to put your project vision into words and/or pictures:



You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, "Why not?"
- George Bernard Shaw



Developing an Identity for Your Project

Think about some of the products that you see advertised on TV. Can you picture their brand logos, such as the swoosh or the golden arches? Can you sing their catchy jingles, or recite famous taglines? Companies work hard to create a memorable look and feel for the product or lifestyle that they're selling, and savvy community organizers use those same branding techniques to "sell" their playspace vision to the community. Consistency and quality are key to the success of your project, so work with your planning committee to maximize your resources and develop the following project elements:

Name/Theme

We're not talking about naming the playspace - save that for later! (It makes for a great fundraiser, or an exercise to get children involved!) For now, let's concentrate on giving an identity to your committee and its campaign for a playspace.

For starters, think about the terrific, resourceful, and unique community that you asset-mapped in Mile 1, including your potential team captains. Now think of the children or youth who will use the playspace. How would you describe them? Comical ... athletic ... adventuresome... compassionate ... hopeful? Try to incorporate those stand-out qualities into a name and theme for your playspace project. Consider using a play-on-words or a reference to a popular movie, musician, local hero or product. Playfulness is strongly encouraged!

Your project-vision worksheet is another source of branding ideas. Think about what you are trying to accomplish, and what sets your project apart from others. However serious or playful you are, make sure that your name and theme are memorable; make it real!

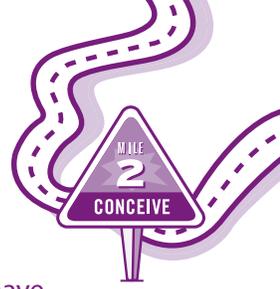
Example: Is your planning committee a highly trained, crime-fighting team of independent female organizers? Call yourselves **the Momma Angels**, with the tagline: **"We Don't Destruct ... We Construct!"**

Logo/Colors/Writing Style

Is there anyone in your asset map who is artistically inclined? Any graphic designers, artists, or art teachers? Share your project vision with them and ask them to draw a bold, simple logo that will copy easily (on paper as well as t-shirts). Decide on a consistent look for all official project materials, including a color scheme, font, writing style and logo. Use this look on everything that your committee produces.

Example: Have your resident artist draw up an outline of three females, poised and ready for action, with hearts on their sleeves and wrenches in hand - **the Momma Angels!**

LIVELY!



Project Headquarters (with contact person, address, phone, e-mail and/or fax)

This can be the home or office of a co-chair, or it can be a central meeting location that you have secured for the length of the project. Having an official "project headquarters" will signal to volunteers and donors that you are organized and professional; it instills confidence and encourages people to take you seriously. It will also greatly facilitate communication during the planning process.

TiP!

Writing a project theme song will really give you extra PR mileage. Not a songwriter? Just change the lyrics of your favorite song so that it's about play! Children love this exercise.

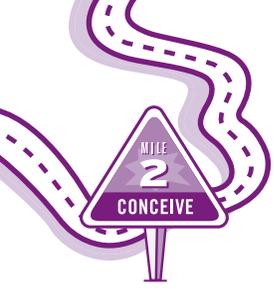


FRESH!

PLAYSPACE!



FUTURE!



Choosing Your Site

Knowing where your playspace is going to be will really fire up your planning committee, allowing you to complete your project vision and brainstorm design ideas. So take your site-evaluation worksheets and choose the best one! It's important to establish a good working relationship with your landowner right off the bat, and you'll also want to evaluate how much site preparation will be necessary. Get ready to turn ideas into reality!

Working with your Landowner

If you or your organization does not own the land that you plan to build on, you'll need to foster a good relationship with the site's owner. A landowner who enthusiastically supports your idea for a playspace is a great asset - not only during the planning process but also for the long-term maintenance and programming of the space. To get your landowner on board, share your vision and emphasize the project's short- and long-term benefits to the property value, neighborhood quality of life, and the community at large. It's your job to assure your landowner that a community playspace is the best possible use of the land!

Once he or she agrees to the project, be sure to communicate expectations up front. Schedule a meeting to go over all the details of the project, from the type of play equipment and surfacing you'd like to install to the number of volunteers you might host on your Build Day(s). (If you don't know, follow up as soon as you do know!) The fewer surprises that come along for the landowner, the better. There are also important responsibilities that come with playspace ownership.

Responsibilities of PlaySpace Ownership

FAST!

Your landowner should:

- **Provide proof of land ownership.** Be sure to obtain a copy of the land deed, lease agreement or other proof of ownership for your playspace files.
- **Hold a policy of insurance on the land.** Obtain a copy of the accord certificate or other proof of insurance.
- **Consent to having** a playground, skatepark or sports field on the land. Be specific about your plans for the space, including landscaping, themes and side projects.
- **Agree to** the excavation, grading and landscaping of the land.
- **Work with you** and your planning committee to make sure the site has been checked by local utility companies and granted clearance for digging. Find a company who will agree to perform a utility check before you confirm your choice of a site, and again just before Build Day(s). (You can dig test holes to secure an early check.) Once an underground utility check is performed, you have authorization to dig for a limited number of days, typically two to four weeks depending on your state.



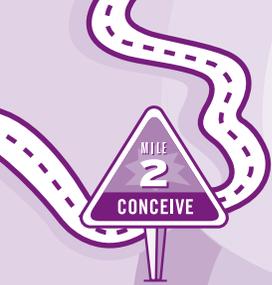


- **Work with** you and your planning committee to arrange for soil testing; the site must have safe levels of lead, arsenic and other contaminants.
 - **Know** that the play equipment itself will be purchased by your planning committee, non-profit partner, and/or business sponsors (this may or may not be the landowner).
 - **Understand** the warranties and guarantees of the play equipment.
 - **Agree to** the installation of permanent signs displaying safety information, age-appropriateness, and playspace partners (including, if you choose, business sponsors).
 - **Have access to** a maintenance fund or project account for future clean-up and repairs. The money to start this fund may come from your project fundraising, or from a future "Friends of the Playspace" Committee. (See Mile 8.)
 - **Realize that** as the landowner, he or she is ultimately responsible for long-term maintenance and liability of the playspace.
- And finally, your landowner should:*
- **Clarify and agree to these responsibilities in a written document.**

You can also plant the seeds NOW for a long-term partnership with your landowner. Extend invitations to committee planning meetings, Design Day and Build Day(s). Share news stories about the project, and have local kids make and present thank-you cards. Also, be sure to recognize the landowner(s) throughout your planning process - at media events, in written materials, at the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony, and on signs at the playspace site. Finally, keep him or her "in the loop" when developing a maintenance plan. Remember that the landowner will be around long after your volunteers have finished building the playspace!

ENERGETIC!

"Our playground is as beautiful today as it was when we built it two years ago, thanks to the early buy-in and long-term upkeep of the local church who committed their land for the playground!"
- Mary Anne, Columbus, Ohio



Won't You Be My Neighbor?

If you moved into a new neighborhood, what's the first thing you might do? You'd probably greet your next-door neighbors! So if you plan to move a children's playspace into a previously empty lot, the first thing you should do is consult with the neighbors - early and often. After all, these are the people who may be awakened early in the morning by the shouts of parents and children. They may be disturbed by increased car and foot traffic, and the playspace may attract unsightly trash and graffiti. Perhaps the neighbors already use the space for sport or relaxation. In short, playspace neighbors deserve your consideration, and they can be a great project resource, offering you valuable advice or information about the site.

Consider a recent letter that appeared in a Massachusetts newspaper. Describing a playground project that was imposed abruptly onto a residential neighborhood, one resident writes, "There was a brief mention in the local newspaper of the idea being proposed. We received no notice as abutters, no invitation to public hearings or planning meetings. Merely, we awoke one day to find trees being cut down and garish colored playground equipment being erected in the once bucolic tree-bordered field 30 feet from our front door." She goes on to list the negative aspects of living next to a carelessly planned facility, but she concludes that "The playground could well have been a tolerable addition to the neighborhood had the exact location been carefully chosen. Had anyone made the effort to consult those of us who live in the neighborhood prior to finalizing the installation of the playground, the result might have been very different ... Town land or not, residents who are expected to live with the resulting impact of any proposed civic project should be allowed inclusion in the decision-making process."

*We couldn't have said it better.
Make sure your playspace is a good neighbor!*



Site-Prep Questionnaire



What is the current surface? Dirt/Grass Asphalt Concrete Other

If asphalt or concrete, does it need to be removed? Yes No

Are there trees or shrubs that need to be removed? Yes No

Brainstorm ideas for organizations (city government, local contracting companies) who might rent or donate machinery and services for asphalt/tree removal:

Organization/Contact	Phone Number	Reply
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Is the site level? Yes No

If not, how will you level it? Excavate with Machinery Remove Bumps Manually
 Bring in Backfill Soil



Brainstorm ideas for organizations and contractors to provide machinery and services:

Organization/Contact	Phone Number	Reply
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Will you need to dig post holes to install your equipment? Yes No

If yes, how will you dig the holes? Manual Labor Hand-held Power Auger
 Compact Track Loader/Skid-Steer Loader
 Utility Auger (see table below)

Brainstorm a list of organizations and contractors (consider cost-cutting options!):

Organization/Contact	Phone Number	Reply
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____



Site-Prep Questionnaire

Have you obtained permission to dig from a utility company? Yes No

Have you dug any test holes? Yes No

Have you checked the soil for contaminants? Yes No

Is there existing play equipment on the site? Yes No

If yes, have you hired a professional to perform a safety check? Yes No

What are your plans for the existing equipment? Keep It Repair It
 Move It Remove It

Brainstorm people and organizations to help you repair, move or remove the equipment.

Organization/Contact	Phone Number	Reply

What was in the existing location?

- (a) Five years ago?
- (b) Ten years ago?
- (c) Twenty-five years ago?
- (d) One hundred years ago?



Playground Digging Equipment

Manual Labor

Requires tools such as post-hole diggers, shovels, digging bars, etc. This is very long and tiring work, and is not recommended!

A Hand-Held Power Auger

This kind of machine usually requires two fairly strong people to operate and is basically like a large drill bit that spirals itself into the ground. Power augers can usually be rented at a tool rental company. They do not work well on rocky or hard soil.

A Compact Track Loader or Skid-Steer Loader with an Auger Bit Attachment

These machines require an experienced operator, and the right size auger bit must be rented or borrowed (check with your play equipment company for the proper specs).

Utility Auger

These can be useful but may be available only to a large entity, like a power company. Equipment and services are usually donated.



Choosing Your Equipment & Surfacing Vendors

There are dozens of play equipment and surfacing companies whose products are available regionally, nationally and internationally. Finding the right vendor for your project is like interviewing candidates for a job - and you're the boss! Remember that you'll be working with your company for several months to select designs, negotiate prices and work out an installation agreement. There are a number of factors to consider. For one, your company should offer creative, appealing products that carry third-party safety certification (CPSC, ASTM, IPEMA). They should carry product liability insurance and offer a strong warranty. Their designs should have high play value, and they should adhere to environmental standards for manufacturing. Your company should be knowledgeable about, and compliant with, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

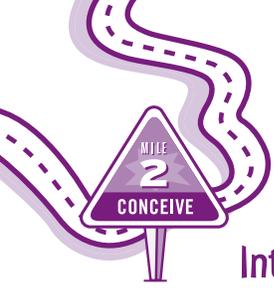
Fortunately, you'll find that most North American play equipment companies fit the criteria above. There's a lot of great play equipment out there! In the end, under a community-build model, **quality service is what sets a company apart and turns an okay community-build experience into a great one.** Representatives should provide helpful, hands-on service during three distinct periods: in the months leading up to your build, during site preparation and the build itself, and once the structure is in the ground.

How can you gauge a company's service? One way is to find out whether they have representatives that live in your area. Most large play equipment companies manufacture their product in a single location. From there, they either distribute it through local, independently-owned dealers (somewhat like car dealerships) or through company salesmen who travel long distances to meet with clients. A locally-based representative who knows your community can be a great project resource, in addition to offering immediate, hands-on service. Ask for specifics about when and how the rep will be involved in your project. Secondly, does the company return your phone calls in a timely manner? Are they polite and helpful? Trust your instincts. Finally, don't hesitate to ask for references from past clients; companies with a reputation for good service will gladly put you in touch with their satisfied customers.

Don't know where to start? Your school board, PTA/PTO and city recreation department will probably be familiar with companies that operate in your area; you can also request information from the International Play Equipment Manufacturer's Association (IPEMA). Using those recommendations and your research notes from Mile 1, draw up a list of companies that seem to be a good fit with your community's needs. (You can record their information for quick reference in the Contacts section of your Toolkit Template.) Request their catalogues and schedule phone interviews with their representatives. Be sure to tell them that you're gathering information for a community build, since many companies have extensive experience with (and special products for) volunteer-led projects.

TIP!

In today's play industry, new product designs tend to be widely imitated, and third-party safety certification ensures that equipment is safe and accessible. Therefore, focus on service when choosing a vendor - your equipment company can become one of your greatest project assets.



Interview Questions for Play-Equipment and Surfacing Companies

Don't be afraid to take your time and ask lots of questions. Representatives should be eager to help! Below is a list of questions to ask potential vendors:

Company Information

- What is the history of your company? Do you have a solid reputation and record in the design, production and installation of playspace equipment/surfacing? Have you won any awards/certificates for product, and/or service?
- How many playspaces does your company build/surface each year? How many of those are volunteer-led community builds?
- Can you provide references from former clients?
- Play Equipment Only: Does your company have staff members who are aware of children's developmental needs and play patterns?

Regional Expertise

- Is your company licensed to work in our state?
- Can you help us meet all local, state, and federal codes regarding playspaces?
- Have you built or surfaced any playspaces in our area? Where are they?

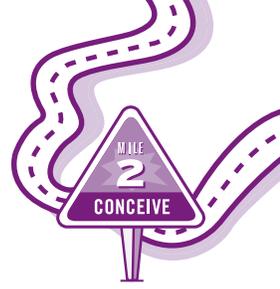
Note: Whenever possible, it's a good idea to visit playspaces that are currently using a specific company's product. This is particularly important for safety surfacing, because a company's products can vary from state to state and region to region; specific plants or material sources may produce surfacing of different qualities.

Product

- Does your equipment/surfacing meet all guidelines and standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM), and the International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA)?

Note: It is strongly recommended that you choose a company that provides a manufacturer's certificate of compliance with CPSC and ASTM Standard guidelines F1487-01 (for equipment) and F1292 or F2075/4.6 (for surfacing).

- Do you offer custom-designed playspaces? Can we choose our own components and colors?
- Do your equipment designs/surfacing materials adhere to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines?



- What warranties and guarantees come with the equipment/ surfacing?
- Do you carry product liability insurance?

Note: This insurance, carried by a manufacturer, provides coverage if an accident occurs due to faulty design of equipment/ surfacing, NOT if there is improper maintenance, unauthorized modifications or inadequate supervision by the community. A reputable manufacturer will supply you with certificates of insurance. KaBOOM! recommends a minimum of one million dollars liability insurance.

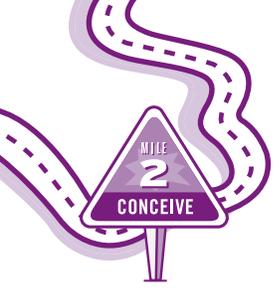
- How much time do you need to process an equipment/surfacing order?
- Play Equipment Only: If our neighborhood is prone to vandalism, what recommendations can you make for vandal-proof play equipment?
- Surfacing Only: If our site has poor natural drainage, does your company offer special products to improve drainage and prevent mold formation (e.g. pea gravel, spongy base layer, pipe system?)



Service and Installation

- How is your system of sales representatives and installers organized? Do you have locally-based representatives, or will reps need to travel to our area from your head quarters?
- Do you have staff members who can explain ADA guidelines and assist us in designing a fully accessible playspace?
- Can you send a representative to our site during the design process? Will he or she take design input from local children?
- Will you provide a representative or certified installer to supervise site preparation? Which tasks, specifically, does he or she perform? Do you provide any specialized tools or equipment?
- Will you provide a representative or certified installer to help us install our playspace/ surfacing during Build Day(s)? What services does he/she provide?
- How many people are needed to install equipment/surfacing for a typical playspace?
- What kind of services do you offer after the playspace is installed? What kind of maintenance plan or kit do you provide?
- Play Equipment Only: How long will it take to receive our playspace design drawings? How many different drawings will we receive? Can we make changes to the proposed designs once we receive them?





TIP!

When comparing costs, remember that quality, durable play equipment doesn't come cheap. If a manufacturer's prices seem too good to be true, they probably are! Compare the type of metal or wood being used, the quality of the finish, and the product warranty. Cutting corners now will only decrease the life of your playspace.

Community-Build Experience

- Does your company have experience with community builds? Does it have its own community-build program? Explain.
- Does your company have any upcoming community/volunteer builds in our area? If so, may we attend them?
- Can you provide a reference from a previous community build?
- Have you participated in a community design process involving children?

Cost

- What is the estimated range of your equipment/surfacing costs?
- What fees do you charge over the cost of equipment/surfacing? (These may include service, labor, shipping, freight, etc.) Are these fees negotiable?
- Do you negotiate product prices or offer any discounts for non-profit organizations?
- Do you offer payment plans?

Other Things to Consider:

Communication

- Is this company easy to contact?
- Does this company keep you informed of any issues or updates?
- Does the representative return calls in a timely manner?
- Is the representative on time to meetings? Is he or she courteous and professional?

Your Community

- Have you consulted all the proper people in your community before making a final decision?
- Is this company recommended by the Park and Recreation department, or by another group in your area?
- Do you get a good, comfortable feeling about working with this company and their representatives?

YEAH!

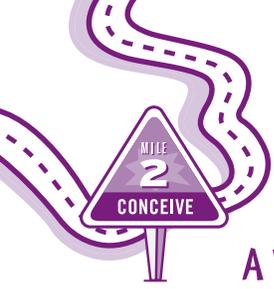


Questions for References

- Did you have a design process that engaged local children? If so, describe how the company's representative was involved.
- Did you use volunteer labor to build your playspace? If so, describe your experience with the company's installer (level and type of service, time spent on site, site preparation and the build itself.)
- When you needed help during the planning process, were you able to contact your representative? Was he or she helpful? Was help available locally?
- How often did you meet with your representative during the planning and building process?
- Now that your playspace has been installed, what is your relationship with the company? Have you used a maintenance kit, plan or any company services since your build?
- Were the costs and service what you expected?

If you've narrowed it down to two or three companies and are having trouble selecting just one, consider asking representatives to give presentations in front of your planning committee - sometimes that will help tip the scales in one direction. Also, you should visit relevant playspaces and playspace builds whenever possible - see the product and service in action! Still having difficulty? In the end, you should go with the company you feel most comfortable with.

TOSS!
OLLIE!
FLIP!



A Word about Professional PlaySpace Installers

Choosing a community-build project doesn't mean you have to do everything on your own! There are two ways to ensure that your community-build playspace equipment is installed correctly: First, your volunteers can be supervised by a hands-on installer through your play equipment company. Many companies offer this service, and it easily fits within a community-build budget. Your second option is to hire an independent contractor to supervise your community-build installation; the NPCA (International Playground Contractors Association) <http://www.playground-contractors.org> or 1-888-908-9519) can help you locate an installer in your area. In both cases, installers will generally lead site preparation - that is, they furnish any special machinery, mark the location of post holes and borders, and help dig the holes. During the build, they will manage volunteers to make sure that decks are level, components are assembled properly, bolts are tightened and so on. Qualities you should look for in an installer are: patience, good "people skills," energy, attention to detail, organization, and the ability to think on his/her feet.

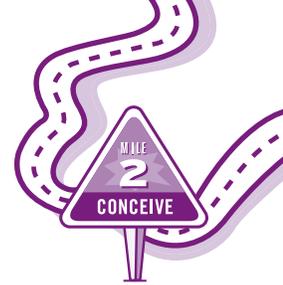
Some communities choose to install their playspace equipment without professional supervision; while this may save you money in the short term, it greatly increases the risk that your playspace will be installed incorrectly, creating safety hazards and insurance liability. If you choose this method, you **MUST** hire a certified playspace safety inspector (CPSI) to inspect the playspace before anyone uses it.

Note: Ask your surfacing vendor about whether or not professional installation is recommended for the type of surfacing you choose. Many loose-fill surfacing materials can be installed exclusively by volunteers, without professional supervision. On the other hand, poured-in-place rubber and some types of rubber tiling must be installed by professionals, so you'll need to ask companies about their labor costs and schedules.



FOCUS!

SAFETY!



Estimating Your Project Budget

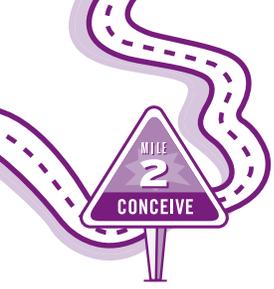
Now that you've confirmed your site, chosen vendors, and begun to pull together a planning committee, you're ready (along with your fundraising captain) to draw up a preliminary budget! In the **Budget section of the Toolkit Template CD** you'll find a complete budget narrative explaining typical playspace budget items; we've also included a series of budget-building worksheets to help you plan your budget step by step.

Establish a PlaySpace Checking Account

It's best to get money matters settled right from the start. You, along with your fundraising Captain, will need to establish a "Community PlaySpace Checking Account." This could be a new account, or if you are working with an established non-profit it could be an existing account that they designate specifically for your project. If this is the case, be sure that the account has been opened in the non-profit partner's name, so that checks written to it are tax-deductible. Your co-chair and fundraising captain should have authority to deposit and withdraw money from the account. One of you also needs to be responsible for maintaining the account ledger, as well as a master list of all businesses and individuals that donate to the playspace in the months ahead.

DEDICATE!

HARD WORK!



Creating a Fundraising Strategy

The word "fundraising" strikes fear into the heart of many a community organizer, but it's not as scary as you think - especially when you think of it as FUNdraising! When done well FUNdraising can also be *friend-raising*, and it should be thought of as a process of building important relationships with donors. Remember that your project will benefit hundreds of children in the community - if you tell a compelling story, people will want to know how they can help!

Have you been thinking of soapy car washes and corner bake sales? Those old standards still work well, but community fundraising has become increasingly sophisticated and diverse. From the inner city to rural villages, community-build projects generally use a mix of several different strategies. These include individual giving, direct-request campaigns, special events, corporate and business giving, sponsorship agreements, foundation grants, attention-getting stunts and the Internet. **Any community is capable of raising tens of thousands of playspace dollars through a committed and communal effort!**

A Brief Guide to Community Fundraising Methods

Business Support: Apply for grants from large corporations that operate in your area, or ask them to send volunteers for a team-building activity. Approach small business owners who might have a personal stake in the project; ask them to donate money or in-kind materials. In both cases, offer positive media coverage in return for business sponsorship.

Government & Foundation Support: Seek out those agencies that specifically target child welfare, recreation and/or community development. Allow plenty of time for the application process, and don't be afraid to ask for help and advice - most grant-makers want to see you succeed.

Non-Profits/Local Religious & Community Organizations: Churches, temples and service clubs such as Kiwanis and Rotary often sponsor playspace projects; they also have access to a broad network of concerned citizens.

PlaySpace Property Owner: A playspace is a great investment, both socially and financially ... let them know how important their support is.

Individual Donors: When ordinary people believe in a cause and they are given a chance to feel connected and appreciated, they are astoundingly generous - most charities rely heavily on small donations from individuals. They add up! Use letter-writing campaigns, phone banking, door-to-door pitches or a personal Web site.





Grassroots Fundraising/Special Events: Do you know people who aren't so passionate about your cause? Turn them out with a car wash, spaghetti dinner or raffle! Always be creative and playful.

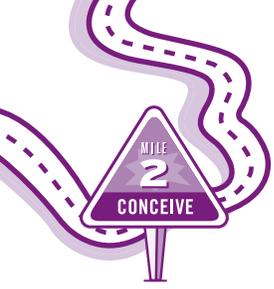
Souvenirs: Create t-shirts, foam fingers, cookbooks, calendars ... anything that will sell in your community!

Take some time now to think about which fundraising strategies best suit your community and your planning committee, but don't rule anything out! Use your asset-map to brainstorm individuals, groups and businesses who might contribute dollars or in-kind materials to your project. The more ideas you brainstorm now, the more time you'll have to test different activities and adjust your strategy accordingly. Get ready to raise the level of involvement in your community!

TIP!

Looking for more? You'll find detailed fundraising information in the **Budget section of your Toolkit Template** as well as the **Fundraising Team Workbook**, both included in this manual. There are also great tips just ahead, in Mile 3. For a complete guide to implementing fundraising strategies, along with creative event ideas, purchase your **KaBOOM! FUNdraising Manual** today - or visit the **KaBOOM! Website** at www.kaboom.org for the newest tips.

★ A successful playground project can be a great way to kick-off or sustain a meaningful relationship with a donor. The House of Refuge East, a nonprofit serving homeless families and victims of domestic violence in Arizona, built with KaBOOM! and The Home Depot in 2001. In part due to their fantastic experience with the playground build, local associates from The Home Depot have continued to support the center in a variety of ways since the build, from constructing more benches for the playground to building new library shelves.



Establishing a Project Timeline

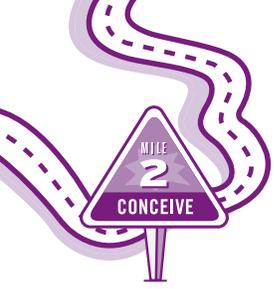
For most communities, the playspace build date is determined by how long it takes to raise the necessary funds. However, it's very, **very** important that you and your planning committee set goals and work toward completing your fundraising by a certain date. Why? Committing to a timeline up front will create a sense of urgency, making it easier to stay motivated and focused. Open-ended projects tend to lose steam as people get pulled in different directions. We recommend that you allow at least three months for your planning process, but your timeline will depend entirely upon your community assets, involvement and the ambition of your project. This manual is flexible; whether your project takes three months or three years, it should progress along the same general path of sustainable community organizing.

To set up your timeline, pick ideal build days (or an ideal week or month) and work backwards. Your play equipment company will need approximately six weeks to process a custom equipment order, and you should schedule Design Day a few weeks before the ordering deadline - this will allow plenty of time to review design proposals and choose your favorite. From there, you should be able to fill in approximate dates for meetings and fundraising goals. On the next page is a sample to get you started:

ACHIEVE!
SPEED!

The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don't define them, learn about them, or even seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them.

- Denis Waitley



Form a Partnership with an Existing Non-Profit (Optional)

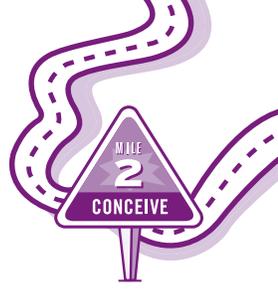
Entering into a partnership with an incorporated non-profit organization or association gives your planning committee three main advantages: Donations will be tax-deductible, your project will have instant credibility, and your partner's infrastructure will be in place to assist with things like bank accounts, legal concerns, and so on. Your community's asset-map (see Mile 1) can help you identify potential partners, such as child-serving non-profits, a PTA or PTO, or a fundraising organization associated with a school or park. You also have the option of incorporating your playspace planning committee as a 501(c)3 (the IRS designation for non-profits) although this adds more time and paperwork to your project.

GET TOGETHER!

SPIRIT!

EXPLORE!

Mile 2 Activity Checklist ✓

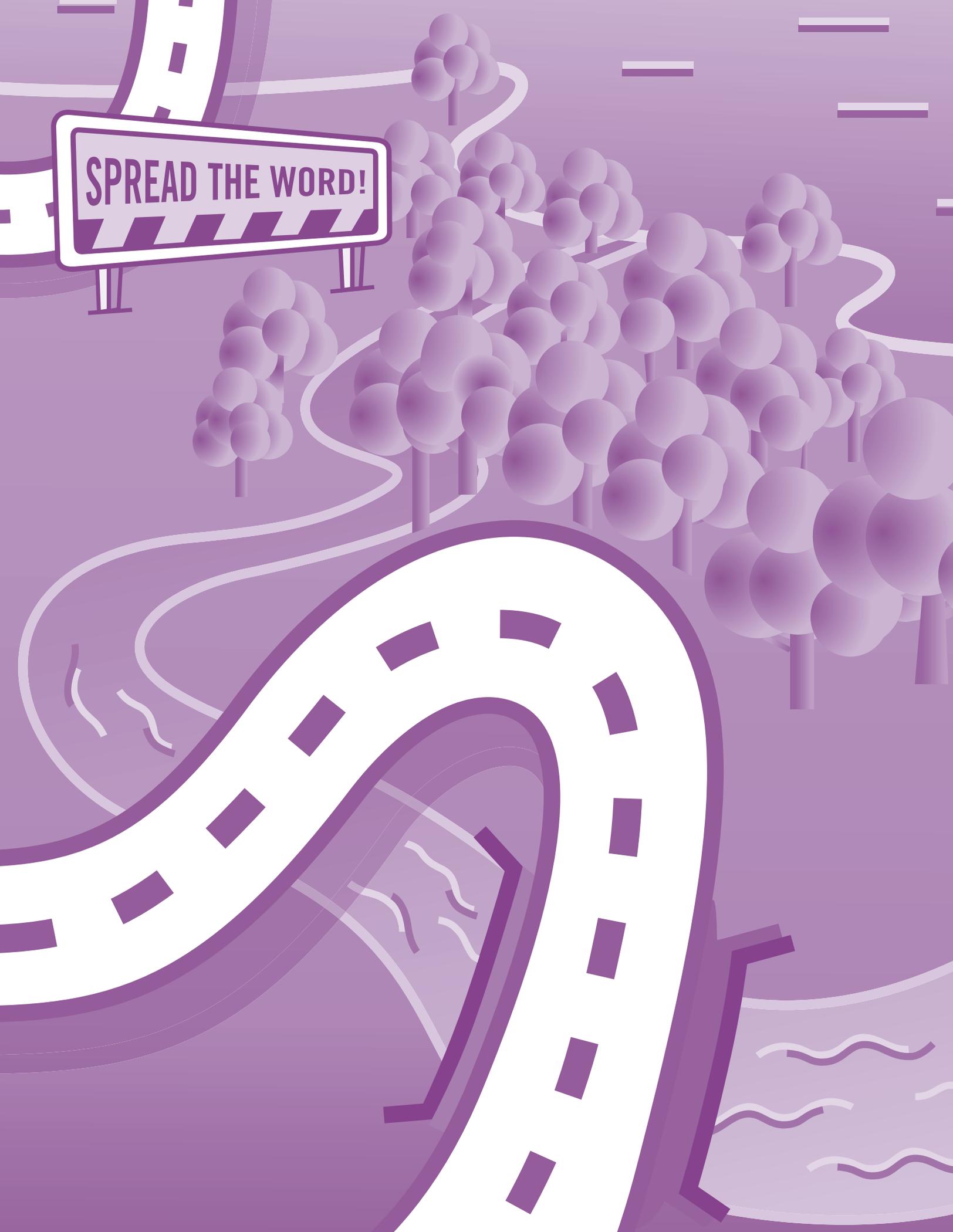


Are visions of nuts and bolts dancing in your head? By now, you've surely become the resident playspace expert in your community, and you've established a broad base of knowledge for the tasks ahead. In Mile 2, you'll begin conceiving the specifics of your project vision ... you're well on your way toward changing a child's world! But first, take a pit stop to check that you've completed these Mile 2 activities:

- Yes! I've recruited a few members of my PlaySpace Planning Committee, and they've each made a long-term commitment to the project. They have copies of their individual responsibilities, and we're ready to go!
- Yes! We can envision the playspace that we'd like to create, the landscape that will surround it, and the different ways that children, teenagers and adults can all benefit from the space.
- Yes! We've created a fun project name, logo, "tagline," and "headquarters" that will tell people who we are and spark community interest in our project.
- Yes! We've confirmed the site for our new playspace and obtained proof of ownership/insurance.
- Yes! We've contracted a play equipment company and surfacing supplier that meet our community's needs and budget.
- Yes! We have thought through and developed a draft budget so that our committee has something to work with in early meetings; we've also opened a playspace checking account to keep project finances in one place.
- Yes! We've thought through different types of fundraising activities, and we've drafted a preliminary fundraising strategy that fits our community's style.
- Yes! We've established a project timeline and we're prepared to meet our goals.
- Yes! We're ready to take our project to the public and get the whole community involved!

SUCCESS!

SPREAD THE WORD!





Are you having fun yet? If you've recruited members of your planning committee and chosen a site, an equipment manufacturer, and an ideal build date, your odometer now reads **Mile 3: Organize**. You're flying banners with your project logo, your budget and fundraising strategy are laid out on the dashboard, and you're fully committed to changing a child's world. Congratulations! You've still got a lot of ground to cover, but you're well prepared and if you plan carefully during this stage, your project will go into cruise control in the miles ahead. Keep your foot on the gas, it's time to rally support in your community!

MILE 3: ORGANIZE

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Holding a PlaySpace Community Meeting

Now that you've established the basic "who, when, where and how" of your playspace project, it's time to build widespread support by taking your vision to the public. Make a great first impression! A fun community meeting will draw lots of attention to your project and officially kick off the planning and fundraising phase. Instill confidence right off the bat by being prepared, organized and enthusiastic. Focus on inspiring people, getting them excited about your vision for a new playspace, and letting them know exactly how they can help. Remember that successful community-build projects involve as many people as possible from a broad cross-section of the community, so invite everyone you can think of, and be sure to reach out to people from diverse backgrounds.



Your Meeting Objectives: Inform and Build Support!

Whenever you decide to lead a meeting, the first thing to do is establish a clear objective: Why do I want to call people together? Maybe you need to announce information, initiate a formal relationship, brainstorm for ideas, make a decision, develop a plan, or evaluate progress. Clear objectives will help you target the right audience and create a focused agenda, leading to a more productive meeting.

The objectives for your playspace community meeting may include:



1) Sharing Information about your Project and Planning Committee.

To get people on your side, you'll need to go beyond simply giving them the facts. Pretend that you're a lawyer in front of a jury box, and make your case for a new playspace! Rather than overwhelming people with facts and theories, select compelling information that directly affects them, and make the issue come alive by **telling a story** about the children in your community. Try to be brief, but be sure to share the following information:

- Your project vision.
- The names, backgrounds and responsibilities of yourself, your co-chair and your team captains.
- The benefits of play and the community-build process.
- The safety conditions of your current play equipment (if applicable).
- Your chosen playspace site.
- Your play equipment company.
- Your surfacing supplier.
- Your estimated project budget and general fundraising strategy.
- Your project timeline: Design Day and proposed build date(s).



RUN!



Generating Enthusiasm and Support.

Set the tone for the entire project by staging a fun game (on page 87) and by stimulating people's senses. Enlist children to make playful decorations, and have them perform a playspace song in front of the group. The enthusiasm you'll generate is key, but it can fade quickly - in order to build lasting support, you'll need to tell people exactly how they can help. Whenever possible, give concrete information about when and where to show up, and what to do. This applies to major milestones like Design Day and your Build Day(s), and also to any fundraisers, children's activities or media events along the way. Here are the groups whose support you'll need, and questions you should address:

- **Volunteers.** What individual skills and talents are needed? Are there upcoming volunteer events or fundraisers? Are you still looking for team captains or sub-committee members? What are some easy ways that people can give just an hour or two to your project?
- **Businesses.** What material donations might they give? Are donations tax-deductible and to whom should they be given? Can businesses "sponsor" your project and receive publicity in return? Can businesses send volunteers to your playspace build for a "team-building" corporate event? How can businesses help advertise the project?
- **Charity Organizations/Clubs/Government Bodies.** How can organizations and agencies get their members involved? How can they help advertise the project? How does a new playspace affect them? What resources do they have that might help you?

Preparing for the Meeting: Nuts and Bolts

Now it's time to shift gears and think of yourself as an event planner. What kind of meeting format, style and materials will best achieve your goals? Great meetings don't just have a clear and worthy objective; they're also carefully planned to maximize attendance and participation.

Plan Logistics. Here are a few important factors to consider when setting up a meeting space:

- **Location.** Try to choose a place in your community that is easily accessible, fits your expected turnout, and provides the right kind of setting. For a meeting that's open to the public, the space should be large but not too cavernous - a huge space with high ceilings can diminish the welcoming, collaborative feel that you'd like to achieve. Check your asset-map for organizations that might be able to provide a free meeting space: a conference room, community center, library, classroom or church hall. Make sure there's enough parking, and provide clear driving directions.

Every knot has someone to undo it.
- Syrian proverb



- **Attendance.** Later on in your planning, you may want to control the size of your meetings to promote productive discussion and fast decision-making ... but at a community meeting, the more the merrier! Because you're trying to build a base of support, be sure to record each attendee's contact information in a guest book, and distribute volunteer surveys to gather more specific information. (See Contacts section of Toolkit Template CD.)

- **Physical Arrangements.** Choose a seating plan that facilitates your meeting's objectives. For example, in your community meeting you'll be reporting a lot of information, so you may want to opt for traditional row seating. If you are encouraging your planning committee to get to know each other or to brainstorm, you may want to sit in a circle. Last but not least, make sure you have enough chairs!



TIP!

For a clear and concise meeting, remember these three easy steps

1. Tell them what you're going to say.
2. Say it.
3. Tell them what you said. It's that simple!

- **Sound and Lighting.** Will you need a microphone? Is there enough light for people to read handouts? Do you know how to control the lighting?
- **Children.** To ensure parents' full attention (and attendance!), it's always a good idea to provide a baby-sitting service during meetings.
- **Equipment Needs.** If you plan to use a flip chart, chalkboard, overhead projector, slide projector, microphone, tape player, television or computer, make sure they are available and in good condition.
- **Refreshments.** Snacks and drinks are always appreciated.
- **Advance Notice.** Give people enough notice to fit the meeting into their schedules, but not so much that they'll forget. Two weeks' notice is usually fine for large meetings.
- **Note-Taking.** Designate a secretary to record everything that goes on in the meeting from planned agenda items to unexpected issues that may arise. You'll be amazed by how quickly you forget details, and you'll need a solid record to follow up on contacts and action items.
- **Sign-In.** How will you collect contact information from the people who come to your meeting? Consider setting up a guest book at the entrance, and/or handing out a more detailed survey to all attendees. *(See the Contacts section of your Toolkit Template CD for a sample volunteer-interest survey.)*





Create an Agenda. An agenda is like a "To Do" list for your meeting, and a solid one will keep everyone focused and on track. To prepare your agenda:

- State your meeting objectives at the top.
- List the topics you'd like to cover, then put them in a logical order. Think about the best way to address those topics: by brainstorming, presenting information, open discussion, breaking into groups, or question/answer sessions.
- Designate a lead person for each topic, and estimate how much time is needed for each one. It's important to set a time limit, both for each item and for the meeting as a whole. Without someone keeping an eye on the clock, meetings tend to drag on and on!
- For smaller meetings, distribute the agenda to all participants ahead of time so that they can prepare. For a large, open-invitation gathering like a community meeting, it may be more convenient to write your agenda on a large piece of paper or chalkboard at the front of the room. This will save paper and help focus the group's attention.
- Remember to allow time at the end of your agenda for a recap of what was said, as well as "next steps." Give participants something to think about, as well as a concrete way to follow up, as they leave the meeting.

TIP!

Planning for a large meeting? Keep in mind that without an experienced moderator, an open question-and-answer session can quickly get out of hand. If you have a lot of information to present, we recommend holding all questions until the end of the meeting.

ENGAGE!

SMILES!



Sample Community Meeting Agenda

Thursday, June 9, 7:00 - 8:30 PM

Welcome to the Anyville PlaySpace Community Meeting! We're excited that you could join us. Please help yourself to refreshments on the back table.

-- Sally Slider & Chip Woods, Committee Co-chairs

<i>15 minutes</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Ice Breaker Game</i>
<i>30 minutes</i>	<i>Co-chairs</i>	<i>Why We Need a Playspace! Project Vision Introduction of team captains Where We're Building Our Play Equipment and Surfacing Fundraising Goals Project Timeline What is Design Day?</i>
<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>Recruitment Captain</i>	<i>How to Get Involved as a Volunteer</i>
<i>15 minutes</i>	<i>Fundraising Captain</i>	<i>Individual Giving Program Business Donations and Sponsorship County Fair Fundraiser: July 27-28</i>
<i>15 minutes</i>	<i>Co-chairs</i>	<i>Question & Answer Session Review of Meeting & Next Steps Volunteer Sign-Up (at the side table)</i>

*Committee for a Better Tomorrow
c/o Anyville PTO
1111 Frolic Court
Anyville, USA 49203
(555) 555-1205*

e-mail: playforall@playground.net

We appreciate your donation! Please make checks payable to Anyville PTO.



SLIDE!



Breaking the Ice!

Here are some KaBOOM!-errific ideas to spice up your meetings with giggles and guffaws!

- **Caterpillar Race**

Break into small groups (5-6 people). Form straight lines, and have everyone bend at the waist and hold the ankles of the person in front of them. Each "caterpillar" should try to move forward as a team. If someone loses their grip, the group must stop until everyone is connected. Give a prize to the winning team!

- **Beach Ball Brainstorming**

Announce a topic such as play, children or healthy communities. Have everyone stand up and pass around an inflatable beach ball. When someone catches the ball, they shout out something related to the topic (giggling! slides! clean air!) and then toss the ball to someone else. If people don't know each other, add a memory game: everyone has to name the person who passed the ball as well as what he or she said.

- **The Web**

Split the group into teams of 6-10 people, and have each team stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle. Each person puts his or her right hand in and grasps the right hand of someone across from (but not next to!) them. Then each person reaches his or her left hand in and grasps the left hand of a different person across the circle. Make sure all hands are clasped. Now everyone has to "untie the knot" without letting go of hands. Each team should end in a circle, but not necessarily all facing the same way.

- **Getting-to-Know-You Gobble (for smaller groups)**

The key to this game is the element of surprise! Bring a bag of small candies like M&M's, candy corn or jelly beans, and pass it around as you're about to start the meeting. Encourage people to help themselves. Once everyone has grabbed a handful, inform them that for every piece they've taken, they have to share one piece of information about themselves.

Build Enthusiasm: Get the Word Out!

The first step toward having a productive and fun-filled community meeting is to get the word out on the street. After all, you can't rally support unless people show up! Here are some easy, low-cost ways to publicize any event:

- At work, post flyers on bulletin boards, coffee machines, microwaves and water coolers. (See the Publicity section of your Toolkit Template CD for a sample flyer.)
- Visit busy shopping areas and place flyers under car windshield wipers.

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

- Plato (3rd century B.C.), Greek philosopher



- Start your very own Playspace Newsletter with a catchy, playful name! Include personal stories of children who need a place to play, photos of the old equipment or empty play lot, and advertisements for upcoming meetings or sponsorship programs. Distribute it to community groups, friends and businesses.
- Does your town have parades? Make a playspace float! Or simply ask the organizers if you can march along the parade route handing out flyers and collecting donations.
- Have a member of the playspace committee sit in on every civic meeting in town. Ask if it's possible to say a few words about the project and the upcoming meeting.
- Distribute flyers after religious services. Ask religious leaders to make announcements during their meetings, or place ads in their bulletins.
- Set up an information table, volunteer sign-up and fundraising jars at junior-high and high school sporting events.
- Place project flyers on the front counter of all local restaurants.
- Ask the local pizza parlor to place a playspace flyer on top of every pizza box they sell; your local newspaper also might accept advertising inserts.
- Establish a relationship with a local grocery, convenience or discount store. Ask the manager to consider printing your artwork on their paper bags, or a brief playspace message on tape receipts.
- Hang signs and flyers in the windows of participating local businesses.
- Send regular e-mail messages to all of your contacts. Announce upcoming meetings and fundraisers, ask for specific items that are needed, or suggest specific ways for volunteers to help out. This is a great opportunity to work with local corporations and service organizations; ask for permission to send e-mails to their employees and members.
- Place an ad inside company newsletters - many corporations will gladly advertise volunteer opportunities for their employees.
- Build a sign for your playspace site that reads "Future Site of Our Playspace. Build Dates: September 18-20. For further information, call Joe Boomer at 555-1234."
- Set up an information booth at a local mall or retail store. See if stores will donate small items for a raffle - every volunteer who signs up gets a chance to win!
- Stuff envelopes! Department stores, phone and cable utilities, and other high-volume mailers sometimes allow non-profit groups to provide inserts that accompany monthly statements to customers.



- Pass out information at local fairs or carnivals. Even better, set up a game of your own to raise funds and show off your playful spirit!
- Have the local radio and TV stations play short Public Service Announcements (PSAs) letting listeners and viewers know important dates and how to get more information. (See Publicity section of Toolkit Template CD)
- Once you've confirmed dates for your build, hang a banner in the middle of town that counts down the number of days. (Beside it, you could include another countdown until Design Day!) Make sure project information is included as well as the site address.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, announcing the project and inviting all community residents to the meeting. You can also contact local news reporters and ask them to write a story about the project.
- Do your local newspapers, radio stations, or TV stations publish a regular calendar of community events? Get on it!

Following Up: Build on Your Success

So you held a successful community meeting ... congratulations! After all your hard work, it's important to turn that excitement and goodwill into concrete action during the weeks ahead. Remember that people are very busy, and they'll need gentle reminders to keep your project in mind.

First, review the meeting notes and guest book with your recruitment Captain, co-chair and secretary. Make a list of action items that need follow-up and assign responsibility for each one. Set firm deadlines for contacting new volunteers, and make sure to provide them with several options for getting involved. Next, send copies of the meeting notes to everyone who came, as well as important people and organizations who were interested but not able to attend. Let them know that it's never too late! Attach flyers, extra information and volunteer-interest surveys.

It's also a good idea to hold a "debriefing" with all of your team captains to summarize what was accomplished and look forward to next steps. Now that the planning is officially underway, make sure that everyone is on the same page and that they understand their individual goals.

Finally, be sure to thank people who made an important contribution to the meeting, especially those who donated food, meeting space and/or materials. Remind them that this is only the beginning, and ask if they'd like to be contacted about future events and opportunities!

TIP!

When putting out public notices, don't worry about overkill! The community landscape is crowded with so many messages and advertisements that it's easy to get lost in the shuffle unless you're passionate and persistent. Remember that potential volunteers need several reminders before they'll make room in their schedules.



Kick-Starting Your Fundraising Strategy

Do you feel awkward asking people for money? It's a natural feeling, but remember your playspace vision and remember that you're working to change a child's world. According to Independent Sector, people are far more likely to contribute to a cause or project if asked; they're more than twice as likely to give money, and more than four times as likely to volunteer! The bottom line is that your project's success hinges on asking. Ask alumni, grandparents, neighbors, associations, businesses and foundations. Ask in person, in letters, in e-mails and over the phone. Just ask! Practice your "sales pitch" with your committee members so that everyone projects confidence and enthusiasm. Use planning meetings to evaluate your success, keep your fundraising captain motivated and coordinate fundraisers with other team activities. Here are a few general tips to keep in mind ... for a comprehensive, detailed guide to fundraising strategies, check out the KaBOOM! FUNdraising Manual.

TIP!

A coordinated approach is the key to team fundraising! It's your job to keep close tabs on which businesses and organizations your team captains are approaching, so that you don't inspire donor fatigue. Potential sponsors sometimes complain that they've had three or four separate solicitations for the same project; this gives the impression that you're disorganized.

7 Simple Fundraising Tips

- **Set Lots of Small, Achievable Goals.** Keep your volunteers motivated with focused and time-sensitive milestones. For example, you may set a goal of raising \$6,000 from individuals and \$15,000 from local businesses. You may set a monthly fundraising target, or strive to raise half your total budget by Design Day. When you reach each goal, honor your volunteers with an achievement certificate, dinner party or other thoughtful thank-you.
- **Report Progress.** Keep your committee members aware of each new development. Create a public "thermometer" or other visual graphic that displays how close you are to your goal. Hang a banner at the new playspace site that says "Fix Me Please!" and tells passers-by how much money you need. Make all of your signs bold and eye-catching, and shout your progress from the rooftops! Make your fundraising drive the buzz of the neighborhood - this sense of timeliness and urgency will be a boon to your project.
- **Connect Donations Directly to the PlaySpace.** Naturally, people want to see their money produce tangible results. Many communities sell memorial playspace bricks that are etched with the donor's name and used to create a scenic wall or pathway. Another strategy is to assign a dollar amount to each component of the playground - we call this the "Buy a Swing" campaign. Small donations might purchase a box of bolts, a rake, or ten square feet of surfacing, while larger donations buy a swing or a slide. Be savvy when setting prices - factor in not only how much the equipment itself costs, but also how much joy it will bring to your children and how long it will serve the community.



To create a personal connection for donors, enlist children to draw or paint thank-you cards. Or think how delighted people would be to receive a playspace photo album following the build! All of these strategies instill a sense of collective pride and ownership.

- **Write a Grant.** Money may be available at the local, state and federal levels for your playspace, so research those agencies and organizations that target child welfare, parks or community development. Although grant applications need to be formal, avoid flowery language - your writing style should be straightforward and concise. Tell the story of what the new playspace will mean to your community, and the reader will follow along accordingly. The grant process takes a long time, so start as soon as possible!
- **Set Up Company "Sponsorship Packages."** Company sponsorship is not as mystical as it might appear. Just be strategic. Approach businesses where your committee members work, play and shop. Learn whether they support charities, and whether there is a formal request process. Always try to meet with your contact in person; it's much harder to say "no"! Rather than focusing on your needs, focus on how the company can benefit from supporting your project - for example, think of publicity opportunities that you can offer them, from putting their name on a banner to including them in positive press coverage. Find out the "going rate" for similar partnerships in your area, and then decide on a price tag for each publicity item. The more money businesses give to your project, the more they get in return! And feel free to negotiate for the best deal - good publicity is a valuable commodity!
- **Create a Corporate "Day of Play."** Many businesses prefer to be active sponsors, so give them a chance to get their employees involved. For example, employees might donate an hour's salary to the playspace fund, with the company matching their donations dollar for dollar! You might also encourage a community-wide "dress down day" during which employees donate \$1 for each t-shirt worn and \$3 for each pair of jeans worn. Be sure to get the boss's permission!
- **Mind Your Manners!** Always, always remember to thank your donors personally and publicly. If they walk away from this project with a great feeling, you'll lay the foundation for a long-term relationship that will add value and life to your playspace.

To ask is no sin and to be refused is no calamity.
- Russian Proverb



Finalizing Your Teams and Monitoring Progress

By now, we hope that you have a solid group of committed team captains to manage your project. It's time to rev your engine - there's nothing but open road ahead! Stand back and let your committee members handle their responsibilities, and use planning meetings to monitor progress, brainstorm solutions, motivate each other and coordinate events.

To assist you in managing your committee, we've broken up the major planning tasks into five at-a-glance checklists. Below are the first two; feel free to set your own deadlines and modify the tasks to meet your needs. Each team's checklists also appear in their Team Workbooks. You may not finish everything on Checklists #1 and #2 before reaching Mile 4, but don't worry - focus on engaging your community and raising funds.

TIP!

What makes an effective committee?

- Strong leadership
- Common purpose
- Regular communication and reporting
- Flexibility from members
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- FUN and A SENSE OF HUMOR!

BOUNCE!

FRESH

Go!



Team Checklist #1

Children's Activities Team

- Formed Children's Activities Team; held first team meeting.
- Assigned responsibility for arranging childcare during meetings and fundraisers.
- Brainstormed activities and fundraisers to involve children in the planning process.
- Brainstormed ideas for Design Day activities.
- Drafted a children's activities budget.

Construction Team

- Formed Construction Team; held first team meeting.
- Drafted a Construction Team planning timeline (tool collection, site prep, etc.)
- Drafted a construction budget estimate (including design fees, labor and machinery for site prep, materials, shipping, storage, tools and installer fees.)
- Mapped tool/material assets in the community (individuals, groups, businesses).
- Made initial list of construction tools and machinery needed.

Food Team

- Formed Food Team; held first team meeting.
- Mapped food assets in the community (individuals, restaurants, stores.)
- Brainstormed types of food to serve on Build Day(s) along with special dietary considerations.
- Assigned food-preparation responsibilities for upcoming meetings and Design Day.
- Drafted a food budget.

Fundraising Team

- Formed Fundraising Team; held first team meeting.
- Developed overall project budget and fundraising goals.
- Identified groups with fundraising skills and experience within the community.
- Brainstormed groups to approach for major donations (city agencies, businesses, local non-profits, foundations).
- Assigned fundraising responsibilities.
- Discussed grassroots fundraising strategies with Children's Activities Team.
- Drafted written fundraising materials (grant proposal, query letter, etc.)
- Practiced "the ask" through team role-playing.

Logistics Team

- Formed Logistics Team; held first team meeting.
- Investigated existing facilities at build site.
- Brainstormed potential spaces for meetings and fundraising events.



LOOK!



Public Relations Team

- Formed Public Relations Team; held first team meeting.
- Brainstormed all local media.
- Established "talking points" (brief summary of project, memorable sound bites, etc.) for speaking about the project.
- Developed Public Relations campaign strategy and timeline.
- Brainstormed ways to involve media in Design Day.
- Created flyers requesting playspace volunteers.
- Drafted a public relations budget.

Safety Team

- Formed Safety Team; held first team meeting.
- Brainstormed Build Day safety issues and solutions (including recruitment of medical personnel).
- Developed brief safety presentation for Design Day.
- Drafted a safety budget.

Volunteer Recruitment Team

- Formed Recruitment Team; held first team meeting.
- Completed follow-up with interested town-meeting participants.
- Estimated number of volunteers needed for Build Day(s).
- Brainstormed different groups from which to recruit.

LISTEN!

YEAH!



Team Checklist #2

Children's Activities Team

- Approached potential sponsors of children's Build Day activities.
- Initiated children's planning activities and fundraisers.
- Organized children's participation in Design Day.
- Created strategy for recruiting Build Day children's volunteers.

Construction Team

- Performed initial utility check; dug test holes.
- Approached potential "in-kind" tool & material donors.
- Began soliciting tools and materials from the community.



Food Team

- Started food solicitation process at local businesses.
- Made list of supplies needed for Build Day(s): plates, utensils, napkins, etc.
- Working with Fundraising Team to provide food for fundraising events (if applicable.)

Fundraising Team

- Scheduled local fundraising events; planning underway.
- Approached local government agencies, non-profit groups and businesses for major donations.
- Initiated a "Buy a Swing" Campaign (or other direct-request program).
- Presented proposals to potential business sponsors and/or foundations.

Logistics Team

- Secured locations for upcoming meetings and/or fundraising events.
- Made list of Build Day facilities that need to be added or upgraded.
- Worked with other team captains to compile list of all tables, chairs, tents, etc. needed for Build Day(s).

Public Relations Team

- Sent letters about project to local newspapers.
- Distributed PSAs (Public Service Announcements) to local radio stations.
- Submitted ads seeking volunteers, to local newspapers, newsletters and bulletins.
- Developed media releases and publicity materials for Design Day.
- Brainstormed list of local celebrities, guests and speakers for Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony.

Safety Team

- Developed safety and maintenance curriculum to educate children.
- Determined major safety issues, solutions and materials for Build Day(s).
- Drafted permanent Playspace Safety Rules; discussed signage with Construction Team.



Volunteer Recruitment Team

- Worked to recruit volunteers with a variety of skills and interests.
- Canvassed diverse neighborhoods with flyers for Build Day volunteers.
- Coordinated fundraising/recruitment drives with Fundraising Team.



Establishing a System of Accountability

Having five, six or eight team captains reporting to you can become a little hectic and stressful ... that's why you have a Co-chair! It's also important for your team captains to get the support and attention they need. Therefore, we recommend that you and your Co-Chair decide between yourselves who will be responsible for overseeing each team.

Co-Chair Accountability

Co-Chair _____ is responsible for:

- 1) _____ Team
- 2) _____ Team
- 3) _____ Team
- 4) _____ Team

Co-Chair _____ is responsible for:

- 1) _____ Team
- 2) _____ Team
- 3) _____ Team
- 4) _____ Team

INSPIRE!

BRIGHT!

RACE!





Honing Your Time Management and Leadership Skills

If you want to arrive at your destination on schedule, you've got to keep an eye on the clock and on your speedometer! Effective use of time will enable you and your committee to be more productive, which makes meetings fun and encourages people to stay committed. As co-chair, it's your responsibility to set priorities and create tangible, achievable goals whenever you're asking people to give up their time. Just as importantly, make sure that people's voices and opinions are being heard, and that disagreements are worked out peacefully and productively. Below are several time-management and group coaching tips to keep your meetings and your committee on track.

Four Steps to Effective Time Management

- 1) **Decide what to focus on!** Often, time is wasted because people try to "stay busy" doing relatively unimportant tasks. Decide as a group which activities will bring the most value to your project. Team captains may have their own interests and agendas, (and that's fine!) but as Co-chair it's your job to clarify priorities and check up on the progress of important activities.
- 2) **Plan, plan, plan!** Planning is actually very simple, whether you're planning a committee meeting or a huge fundraiser. First, decide what it is that you want to achieve. Then, ask yourself about the who, why, when and how that can make your plan come to life. Remember to keep going back to the drawing table - refresh your planning by periodically brainstorming new people, resources and ideas.
- 3) **Set goals as part of your plan.** Tangible, achievable goals will focus your energy and give you a sense of satisfaction when completed - these small "wins" really add up, boosting your confidence and keeping you motivated. For each goal, ask the following questions:
 - What skill(s) do I need?
 - What information do I need?
 - What help or assistance will I need?
 - What resources do I need to achieve this?
 - Can I foresee any obstacles?
 - Am I making any assumptions?
- 4) **Create prioritized "to do" lists.** You probably already use "to do" lists in the form of Post-It notes, shopping lists or personal calendars. When properly prioritized, a "to do" list will ease your stress and maximize your productivity. To create one, follow these steps:
 - Write down all the tasks you must complete.
 - If they are large, break them down into smaller tasks. Keep breaking them down as many times as needed to make them seem manageable.
 - Assign priorities for each item on your list, from "A" (very important) to "F" (unimportant).
 - Try to even out your priorities. If all your tasks are high priority, go back and reconsider them; tasks that can be accomplished at a later date are less important right now.
 - Rewrite the final list in prioritized order.



Seven Steps to Effective Delegation

As a project leader, you simply can't do everything alone. That's why you have a Co-chair, and that is also why you appointed team captains. Often, delegating responsibility enhances a project because work is transferred to people who have a special skill in that area. Remember your asset-map of individual resources? Now is the time to make use of those talented individuals. Furthermore, delegation helps everyone grow by allowing them to take on more responsibility. This, in the end, will distribute ownership of the project, improve accountability and make for a truly "community-built" playspace. Share the satisfaction of a job well done with these seven easy steps:

- 1) **Decide what to delegate.** With this book in hand, you already have access to extensive lists of committee tasks and responsibilities - part of the work has been done for you!
- 2) **Delegate complete jobs rather than portioning out many small tasks.** In the KaBOOM! model, project duties have been carefully distributed so that each team captain owns a large chunk of responsibility for an entire facet of the playspace project. You'll get a more creative, complete response if you allow teams to pick up and run with entire ideas, and your team captains will feel a greater sense of accomplishment.
- 3) **Select capable people.** Having trust and confidence in your team is essential if you want to truly ease your work load and add value to your project. It's best to wait for the right people rather than filling up your committee to meet a set model or timeline. Since you already know how to choose team captains wisely, you're all set!
- 4) **Clarify the job (and set a deadline!) before delegating.** Make sure your team captains understand each of their tasks. It is your duty as Co-chair to make sure they also understand how their job fits into the bigger picture. Always emphasize the importance of a task, as well as its deadline, to ensure optimal results.
- 5) **Give help when requested.** Be supportive without being overbearing. As a leader, it is your job to be there in a pinch - always ready to suggest ideas, recommend solutions, and advise your team captains when they ask for help.
- 6) **Let go!** This is the hardest part of delegation. Once you have reviewed and prioritized tasks, you need to give each team captain the freedom to carry out those tasks in the manner that he or she chooses. It may be tempting to intervene and tell people what to do, but remember that this is an important learning experience for your committee members, and it will be much more rewarding if they achieve success on their own. It's also an opportunity for you to learn from others' leadership styles and abilities.
- 7) **Give appropriate credit and recognition.** Everyone likes a pat on the back. When a job has been successfully completed, it's important to reinforce and recognize the hard work of your team captain and his or her team members. This will boost your team captains' confidence and motivate them to keep up the good work. For really big tasks, make your appreciation public!



Listening and Asking “Open Questions”

Do you think of leaders as people who bark out orders and call the shots? In a collaborative project like this one, being a good leader means being a good communicator ... and communication is a two-way street. In order to get meaningful contributions from your team captains, you'll need to create an atmosphere in which people genuinely listen to one another. After all, many people are already uncomfortable with public speaking, even in front of a relatively small group. They'll be discouraged even further if they feel that they're not being heard. Lead by example! Here are a few quick tips on good listening:

- 1) **Pay attention to non-verbal behavior.** Someone's tone of voice, their posture and whether they make eye contact all communicate their attitude and emotions.
- 2) **Frequently summarize what you have heard (even if you feel like a parrot!)** This shows that you're paying close attention, and it also ensures that everyone is on the same page. With different personalities and assumptions being brought to the table, the message you hear may not always be what the person meant!
- 3) **Empathize.** Imagine yourself in the speaker's position. Why might this person be feeling or acting this way? What are his or her options for dealing with a given situation? What lessons might be learned?
- 4) **Try to ask "why?" without seeming confrontational.** Expressing doubt tends to ruffle feathers and undermine your committee's confidence, but digging deep to get a better understanding will improve everyone's work.

Good listening skills only work if you can get your committee members to talk, sometimes at length. When checking in with your team captains, avoid using "closed questions" that can be answered by one-word responses, such as "yes" or "no". These can put the brakes on an active discussion. An "open question" requires a more detailed, expressive answer that will give you a better picture of what's going on. For example, instead of asking your Fundraising Captain "Have you planned local fundraisers?," say "What kinds of local fundraisers have you planned?" It's that easy!

RALLY!





Group Dynamics and Coaching

One of the hardest things about leading a committee is managing the schedules, needs, egos and personalities of a diverse group of people. You can have extremely talented team captains with well thought-out, targeted agendas, but meetings that are marked by tardiness, arguments and confusion will sap your collective energy. In the beginning, your challenge will be to motivate and engage people in their tasks. Later on, as your team captains begin shouldering those individual responsibilities, the pressure on everyone will rise and meetings might start to get a little tense. All along, any disagreements or problems should always be thought of as learning experiences. Think of yourself as a coach - providing direction, leadership and vision. Here are some common problems and "coaching" solutions for dealing with difficult behaviors in a group setting.

People come in late, or have to leave early. People wander in and out of meetings several times.

Issues to Address: Members need to feel included and need to be brought up to speed, without making the meeting a drag for others. Members may have permanent scheduling conflicts. Meetings may run too long.

Prevention: Start a meeting when you intend to, and try to finish on time. (Tip: Schedule meetings to begin at an unusual time, like 7:04. The exactness will pique curiosity and encourage punctuality.) Agree upon a procedure for updating people on what they have missed, such as a designated committee secretary. Write meeting business on a flip chart or chalk board, so that anyone entering can see what has been accomplished. If your committee members have small children, arrange on-site child care during meetings.

Immediate Solution: Briefly summarize the important business the person has missed, or ask someone in the meeting to do that quietly.

People are doing distracting things, having a side conversation, not engaged.

Issues to Address: People aren't interested in the discussion; they don't identify with the issues; they don't feel important; they don't know or feel comfortable with the other group members.

Prevention: Get group agreement on the agenda to make sure everyone approves and has a chance to give input on the topics. Make a point to introduce people to each other. Always identify places where the tasks, problems or issues of one team overlap with another. Schedule breaks to revive people. And most importantly, keep the discussion moving! For sticky problems, encourage team captains to speak with you afterward, or to address the issue in a private team meeting.

Immediate Solution: Ask the people involved if they are interested in the discussion, or why they don't seem to be taking part. Take a break or play an ice-breaker game.



Group is having difficulty focusing and setting priorities.

Issues to Address: Meeting procedures and rules have not been clarified or agreed upon. Issue at hand is too complex.

Prevention: Establish "ground rules" and standard procedures. (Will each team captain get equal time to speak? Who will keep track of time? etc.) Before the meeting, have one or two members break down complex issues into manageable pieces. Make a list of decisions that need to be made, assign responsibility for those decisions, and set deadlines. Revisit your project vision, as well as your fundraising and build calendars. In the end, every task has priority, so make sure that each team captain has the tools and the freedom to accomplish his or her tasks independently. Use committee meetings to motivate, network and brainstorm solutions.

Immediate Solution: Make a list of the issues that you consider to be separate, important and pressing, and ask the group to contribute their ideas. Address each issue one at a time.

People are discussing many issues at once.

Issues to Address: An agenda has not been set and agreed upon. The meeting is unfocused. Everyone is caught up on team tasks, so nothing is particularly urgent.

Prevention: Set and distribute a clear agenda beforehand, so people know that the issues they are most concerned with will be covered. If other issues come up, record them on a flip chart for future reference. Make sure a facilitator is present and prepared. If everyone is caught up, ask each member what his or her biggest concern is in the coming weeks - or cut the meeting short and celebrate!

Immediate Solution: If you don't have a pre-set agenda, draft one together at the beginning of the meeting. Give each person the opportunity to summarize his or her current projects or concerns. If more than one team is experiencing certain problems, split the room into small issue-based discussion groups. Remind people that this is an opportunity to learn from one another.

Group is not able to make a decision.

Issues to Address: No one is taking on the role of summarizer and facilitator. Goals and outcomes may not be clear. Either the decision is highly important and it pits individual interests against each other, or it is relatively unimportant and no one has a strong opinion.

Prevention: Clarify long- and short-term project goals. Maintain a project calendar and set firm deadlines. Brainstorm new or compromise solutions, or designate an executive decision-maker. Discuss who might benefit from each possible solution. Do more research or get outside advice.





Immediate Solution: Summarize the discussion up to that point. Restate the issue or question. Take a break. Decide not to decide until the next meeting. If an issue is not contentious and no one has a strong opinion, consider taking a vote. Whatever you do, keep the discussion moving forward!

One person dominates the discussion.

Issues to Address: People often are not aware of their own behavior. Dominating people may feel that they make better contributions than others, or they may be experiencing more difficult roadblocks. Non-contributors may be unprepared, or they may have missed a relevant discussion. Sometimes people are just shy!

Prevention: All your committee members should agree on a meeting structure or procedures that facilitate the participation of all members. A time limit for contributions may be useful, as well as an agenda that designates speaking time for each team captain.

Immediate Solution: Ask for contributions from people who have not said anything; if people are confused or behind, review recent progress. Ask the person who is dominating to let others speak. Volunteer to meet with him or her in private. To promote group participation, sit in a circle.

Tension and personal conflicts disrupt the meeting.

Issues to Address: Any variety of poor group interactions: domination, non-participation, unresolved conflicts from earlier meetings, poor facilitation, etc.

Prevention: The facilitator should try to spot potential problems before they erupt, and speak with members individually about personal conflicts. Be impeccably professional; always separate personal issues from group goals and tasks.

Immediate Solution: Take a short break. Deal concretely with the most difficult cause of tension by raising it for discussion. Divide into groups (separating contentious people) and allow smaller groups to work on the problem at hand. Remind people of the project goals and outcomes - children's welfare is a great neutral ground that brings people together.

Strong opinions or feelings prevent constructive discussion.

Issues to Address: People may not be able to listen to "opponents" because they feel defensive. A dialogue can develop between opposing sides which excludes alternatives. People may be putting their own interests above the good of the project.

Prevention: Catch conflicts early on! Focus on areas of agreement. Introduce topics with humor. Break a difficult topic into "bite-size" pieces. Make active listening a part of your meeting rules and procedures. For especially difficult or technical issues, consider bringing in an expert "consultant" to advise the group and provide an unbiased opinion. Again, discuss who is most likely to benefit from a given solution.





Immediate Solution: Switch to a non-discussion format, where each person shares briefly his/her opinions or feelings. This helps people listen to each other and know that they are being heard. Break into pairs to brainstorm, release feelings and seek new ideas.

Low morale

Issues to Address: Group has no short-range goals or successes. Goals are too hard to achieve or results are not visible. People are tired.

Prevention: Set short, medium and long-term goals. Choose realistic goals. Determine ways of evaluating progress. Keep meetings short. Provide refreshments and child care during meetings. Take time to exercise or have fun together. Brainstorm ways to involve children in planning and fundraising, and revisit your project vision for inspiration.

Immediate Solution: List concrete achievements or positive aspects of the group. Encourage everyone to share two successes (however minor) for every challenge that they've encountered. Give volunteers a break - go outside!

SURPRISE!

CHEER!

To engage in conflict, one does not bring a knife that cuts - but a needle that sews.
- Bahumbu proverb, East Africa



Brainstorming

Stuck in a rut? Having trouble overcoming long delays or personal differences? Brainstorming is a creative, collaborative and extremely useful method of problem solving. Given a particular issue or problem on which to focus, participants come up with as many solutions or ideas as they can. Forget about practicalities - the idea is to be deliberately creative and to stretch the normal limits of your thinking. You'll be surprised by how many new ideas can come out of a brainstorming session, and those ideas are often more productive; spontaneity and group collaboration sometimes make people more receptive to ideas that are not their own.

While a brainstorming session should be relaxed and fun, here are a few rules that will make the process more successful:

- 1) Appoint a leader to explain the problem and facilitate the course of discussion. He/She needs to strike a balance between encouraging wild flights of imagination and keeping people on the topic.
- 2) Set a time limit, and ask the leader to make sure that no single idea is pursued for too long.
- 3) No criticism or evaluation of ideas is allowed during the brainstorming session. Shout it out - every thought counts!
- 4) Keep a record of the session so that you can come back later and examine the results.
- 5) HAVE FUN! The point of brainstorming is to be crazy, innovative and unconventional!

SPLASH! VOLUNTEER!

Having a good discussion is like having riches.
- Kenyan Proverb



Mile 3 Activity Checklist ✓

- Yes! My planning committee held a "PlaySpace Community Meeting" during which we recruited volunteers, discussed overall project goals, and let people know how they can get involved.
- Yes! We have begun taking action on every aspect of our fundraising strategy, and we're engaging members of the community as much as possible. We've practiced our "pitch" and our "talking points" with each other, and we're confident that we can do this!
- Yes! I've created a schedule for future committee meetings, and my awesome Team Captains are organizing individual meeting schedules of their own. Team tasks are all underway.
- Yes! We're communicating with individuals, organizations, and businesses from our community "asset map" to promote the idea of a new playspace and generate project support.
- Yes! I've honed my leadership skills and I feel prepared to keep meetings on track, motivate committee members, and solve problems collaboratively.

FAST!

BELIEVE!

LAUGHTER!



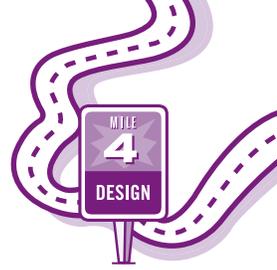
CAUTION: KIDS AT PLAY!



At this point, you've packed your car with everything you'll need for the miles ahead and you've got a caravan of other cars following you - your trusty planning committee! Your head may be swimming with to-do lists and deadlines, but people in your community are going to be focused on one thing: the big, bright, fun playspace! They'll be excited to have some input and learn what it's going to look like. Congratulations, you're at **Mile Marker 4: Design**. Time to stretch your legs! Design Day is a great chance for you to drum up excitement about your project and actively involve children or youth in the planning process. After all, they're the play experts! Relax and enjoy watching them dream up their ideal playspaces...this is truly going to change their world!

MILE 4: DESIGN

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Holding Design Day

Design Day is a signature community-build event, and it's bound to be one of your favorite aspects of the project. Imagine children drawing their perfect playground with bright colors and elements that only children could imagine (our favorite: a pool full of M&Ms!). Or imagine young skaters telling you exactly what they need to push their limits and still have flow of movement. Design Day will give you the chance to teach kids about the power of volunteerism and civic organizing, and it will give them a real sense of ownership toward their playspace. It also makes a great story for your local radio or newspaper - be sure to invite them to cover it!

In this chapter, you'll find the tools you need to maximize the success of your Design Day:

TIP!

Create "model" playspace ... literally! Although crayon drawings are the most popular method for getting input on Design Day, communities have also used molding clay, play-dough, popsicle sticks and pipe cleaners to create three-dimensional playspace visions.

Preparing for Design Day

Your Objective: Design Day has one main objective - to elicit design input from the kids who will actually use the new playspace. This is their time to dream beyond the horizon, flex their creativity, and have an immediate, tangible impact on the course of the project. But as long as you have those kids and their parents gathered together, take the opportunity to fast-forward your other project goals as well! Design Day is a great platform for recruiting new volunteers, raising visibility and awareness, revitalizing enthusiasm for your project, soliciting donations, discussing playspace safety, and launching greater youth involvement.

Logistics: There are dozens of ways to organize a fun and productive Design Day, from a formal community meeting to a week-long school festival with games and fundraisers. You'll need to choose a date, time and venue that fit your agenda, just as you did when you planned your PlaySpace Community Meeting. When it comes to getting children's design ideas, however, there is one tried-and-true method - set them loose with crayons and paper. Design Day logistics should include a comfortable place where children can have some time and space to themselves (with an adult moderator). Here are a few other factors to consider:

- How many children can we handle at one time?
- Will all the children be able to draw and present their playspace pictures?
- Will there be a discussion or a vote to choose the favorite designs?
- Will there be prizes for "most creative drawing," "most fun playspace," etc.?
- Can we get the schools involved in hosting the event and/or recruiting child designers?





- Can our play equipment representative come out for Design Day? If so, what role will he or she play?
- How can we involve local businesses, donors, and service organizations?
- What will our strategy be for actually choosing a final playspace design?

Your Committee: The following team captains should be able to help you with the following preparations for Design Day:

Children's Activities Team Captain

- Recruit 1-3 children's moderators (including the team captain him/herself) who are creative and work well with children.
- Secure crayons, paper and any other materials.



Food Team Captain

- Coordinate snacks and refreshments, particularly for the children.

Public Relations Team Captain

- Design flyers/posters for the event.
- Invite local media and have a camera available to take pictures of the event. (Find a sample flyer and press release in the Publicity section of your Toolkit Template CD)
- Plan to collect children's drawings for use in t-shirt designs, flyers, publicity, etc.

Recruitment Team Captain

- Set up a sign-in sheet for all attendants and recruit them to volunteer.

Safety Team Captain

- Prepare a brief safety presentation and/or a session on "Writing Our PlaySpace Rules" with the children.

Imagine All the People: How to Stimulate Creativity

Sometimes children, particularly young children, need more than just crayons and paper to get their creativity flowing. In order to get the best and brightest ideas from your playspace designers, it's important to provide the following pillars of support:





- **Comfort.** It's important to create an atmosphere in which children feel comfortable expressing themselves. This applies to the physical setting for Design Day as well as your choice of an event moderator - try to find a familiar face (perhaps a teacher) who is experienced in leading children's activities.
- **Independence.** If you let parents look over their children's shoulders as they draw, you'll get a lot of pictures of traditional playground structures - as practical adults, we tend to work within the confines of our own experience. This is your chance to find out what kids really want, however impossible it may seem - castles, jungles, rocket ships, race cars, and so on. For the same reason, don't show the children your play equipment catalogs before they begin drawing. It's also important to separate children from one another so that they produce individualized pictures. Make sure your moderator understands the importance of this.
- **Guidance.** You want each child's imagination to run free, but they'll also need a little help in filling out and articulating their playspace visions. Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine themselves playing. Then, as they pick up their crayons and begin to draw, ask them these guiding questions:
 - What colors do you see?
 - Are you alone? Who are you with?
 - How tall is your playspace?
 - What's around it and next to it?
 - What's on the ground?
 - What are you doing?
 - Are you playing games? Which ones?
- **Discussion & Incorporation.** Make sure you explain the general purpose of this activity: designing a new playspace! When the drawings are finished, lead a discussion session in which each child presents his or her work; this will make them feel important and it will help you decipher their deepest wishes. Just as importantly, make sure that their great ideas don't go to waste! Children who see their visions manifested in the playground design will feel a lasting sense of pride and ownership. Obviously, incorporating their wishes isn't always straightforward - if kids are truly allowed to be visionary and idealistic, they'll come up with a lot of seemingly impossible ideas. You'll need to explain that individual ideas may or may not be used, but that each child's input is important. This is where your play equipment company might come in; they can often find ways to translate the spirit of those playspace drawings into real playground design. For example:





If Kids Draw:

You Might Incorporate:

Trampolines	Play components that encourage bouncing or jumping.
80-foot Towers	Play components for climbing; high lookout towers.
Fantasy Themes: Castles, Pirate Ships, Cars, etc.	Components with turrets, cone-shaped roofs, steering wheels, or the prow of a ship; an enclosed playhouse for dramatic play.
Swimming Pools (remember our swimming pool filled with M & M's?)	Water tables, a water-mister, zero-depth stream/waterfall, water pump, shade structures (to create cooler temperatures).
Groups of Friends	Cooperative play components: see-saws, swings, double slides, talk tubes, sports equipment
Trees, Birds	Gardens, Birdbaths/feeders
Ocean Themes	Sandboxes, water tables, ocean-theme murals, ocean colors.
Candy Stores or Fast-Food Restuarants	Play storefronts, houses, miniature towns, tricycle paths.
Airplanes	Swings, spinners, gliding components.

Also, don't forget about the design contributions of parents, grandparents, teachers, neighbors and sponsors ... this is a community effort! When the children leave to complete their activities, you might pull out crayons and paper and have the adults draw their ideal playspaces too! This will tickle everyone's funny bone and help them see the playspace through a child's eyes. It might also give you some ideas for adult-friendly side projects!

People from diverse backgrounds often view play and recreation in radically different lights, and this is a great opportunity to discuss community expectations and concerns. Be sure to address site safety - should there be a fence or overhead lighting? What about crawl tubes where children might hide out of sight? How can your design encourage adult supervision? Having these discussions now will help you head off surprises and disagreements down the road.

To freely bloom - that is my definition of success
- Gerry Spence



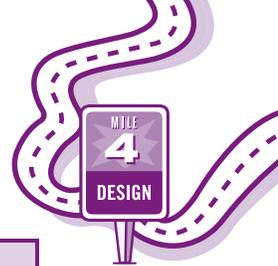
Now that you've mastered the ingredients for a successful Design Day, it's time to go out and plan it! Here are some additional materials to help you with Design Day execution and follow-up:



Sample Design Day Agenda

15 minutes	All	Welcome: Sign In & Refreshments
10 minutes	Co-chair(s)	Introduction to the PlaySpace Project
		The Importance of Design Day
		(Children proceed to library with Ms. Welsh, while adults remain in cafeteria.)
Children's Meeting		
45 minutes	Children's Captain	PlaySpace Game Drawing of Ideal PlaySpaces
		Discussion of PlaySpace Drawings
Adults' Meeting		
15 minutes	Co-chair(s)	Drawing of Ideal PlaySpaces Discussion of Supervision & Site Safety
10 minutes	Co-chair(s)	Question & Answer Session
10 minutes	Recruitment Captain	How to Get Involved as a Volunteer
10 minutes	Fundraising Captain	Fundraising Status Report
		<i>(Children return)</i>
10 minutes	Safety Captain	Discussion of Playground Safety Rules
15 minutes	Children's Captain	Presentation of Children's Drawings Awarding of Prizes
15 minutes	Play-Equipment Company Representative	Review of Children's Designs Overview of Design & Ordering Process
5 minutes	Co-chair(s)	Closing & Next Steps





FUN-tastic Design Day Games

Let's Build a Playground!

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Ages</u>	<u>Players</u>	<u>Materials</u>
None	3 to 7	3+	None

Playing the Game: Divide children into pairs or small groups (no more than four). Call out a well-known part of the playground (like a slide or monkey bars). Working together, each group has to form the part mentioned with their bodies.

Draw Me a Picture

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Ages</u>	<u>Players</u>	<u>Materials</u>
None	8 and up	Any Number	Paper, Pencils, Crayons

Playing the Game: Participants sit back to back. One person describes to his/her partner (who has the pencils and crayons) what he/she would like on the playground. The participant with the crayons has to draw what the other child describes. No looking! This activity makes playground drawing more fun and challenging for older kids (and even adults).

Lean On Me

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Ages</u>	<u>Players</u>	<u>Materials</u>
None	5 and up	2 or more	None

Playing the Game: Sit on the ground, back-to-back with your partner, knees bent and elbows linked. Now simply stand up together. With a bit of cooperation and a little practice, this shouldn't be too hard. You'll start with just one friend and end up with a whole crowd of struggling, stumbling, and giggling people!

A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Ages</u>	<u>Players</u>	<u>Materials</u>
None	All	20+	None

Playing the Game: Everyone keeps their eyes closed, and the "rainstorm" gets underway as the leader rubs his/her palms together, back and forth. Starting on the left side of the group, each person joins in as they hear the hands of the person next to them. Soon, everyone is rubbing palms and we can hear the drizzling rain building in intensity. Next, the leader starts snapping his or her fingers. One by one across the room, each person replaces palm rubbing with finger snapping and the sprinkling rain turns into a steady patter. When the snapping action has been picked up by everyone, the leader switches to light hand clapping. All follow in turn. We're hearing a hard rain now. The storm builds into a downpour as the leader begins slapping her/his thighs. Then the skies open and thunder crashes as the next round has us stomping our feet. And then the storm subsides, just as it grew:

- Foot stomping
- Hand clapping
- Palm rubbing
- Thigh slapping
- Finger snapping

For the last round, the leader places her hands on her lap. Silence spreads across the room. When everyone opens their eyes, perhaps the sun will have appeared.



Follow Up: Working With Your Play Equipment Company

As the excitement of Design Day dies down, you'll need to formulate a plan for choosing your final playspace design. Many communities hold another meeting in which children get to vote on specific designs and/or colors. Your play equipment company should provide a few proposed designs as well as a general timeline for ordering and payment. Placing an order is essentially the "point of no return" with your playspace company, so it's a good idea to review some of your expectations before jumping in - and whenever possible, get your discussions in writing.

Remember that your company representative is a salesperson, not a contractor; although labor and services may be provided, your agreement with the company will likely be in the form of a product invoice rather than a legal contract. Also remember that good service is part of their business model - making you happy spreads positive word of mouth! We'll provide more specific expectations for your playspace installer in Mile 6; for now, here are some basic issues to clarify with your play equipment manufacturer:

Official PlaySpace Design: How many different design options will we have? When will they arrive? How many copies of our final layout will we receive, and what happens if we want to make changes?

Product: When is the deadline for ordering? Is timely delivery guaranteed? What happens if pieces of equipment are missing or damaged?

Payment: When is payment due? Can we pay in installments?

Site Preparation: How far in advance of your Build Day(s) will products be delivered? Who will unload the equipment and carry it to the storage area? Who is responsible for securing tools, machinery and equipment? Does our site require any specialized machinery? Which days will the installer be available, and when will he or she arrive? How many hours will he or she work? Who will map out and mark the site for digging and border construction? Who will dig the post holes and/or lay the concrete slab/crushed stone (if applicable)?

Construction: What time will the installer arrive? Where will he/she be located during the Build? Whom will he/she supervise and/or report to? What happens in the case of rain or snow - will the installer commit to an alternate "rain date"? How long will the build take? Is there an insurance policy to cover volunteer injury?

Post-Build Duties: Will we receive a certificate of inspection? Who is responsible for clean up? What kind of maintenance plan, instructions and/or training will we receive? Will the installer return to the site, and if so, when? What happens if construction or safety issues arise days or weeks later?

Using Design Materials to Boost Fundraising



Design Day will get everyone in your community talking about the new playspace, and it's a great time to remind them that it can't happen without their financial support. Make laminated copies of the children's drawings, as well as the official design posters from your equipment manufacturer. Post them in prominent areas around town, and use them to decorate any information booths or volunteer sign-up tables that you erect. Incorporate your favorite sketches into your project brand, flyers, t-shirts and/or literature. Who can resist making a child's dreams come true?



Attracting Media Attention: Tricks of the Trade

Media coverage is the fastest, most effective way to spread the word about your project! You'll be surprised how many people will donate to your project simply because they read about it in the paper. It also lends instant prestige and credibility to your cause, opening the door to big business sponsors. For many community organizers, however, the idea of soliciting media coverage is mysterious and even intimidating. It doesn't have to be! Remember that all journalists need stories to tell, and you've got a great one. The trick is simply to frame your story in a way that's fresh and appealing. Your community-build playspace project already has several of the elements that newshounds look for: children's health and safety, the crunch on school and municipal budgets, businesses giving back to communities, and citizens pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. In short, you've got news! Follow these three easy steps to engage the press in your community:

Step 1: Understanding the Media

People have written volumes about the modern media, but KaBOOM! only cares about one thing ... getting them interested in your project! To do that you need to understand two simple realities: what the media decides to cover, and how they cover it.

What Kind of News Gets Covered? Today's news environment is dominated by one major force: competition. Think about the kinds of news stories that you see in your local paper and on TV broadcasts: house fires, crime, squabbles between elected officials ... what do these have in common? Drama. In a society where people have less and less time to spend reading or watching the news, media organizations need to grab people's attention, so they focus on stories that are simple and easy to relate to. Clear-cut events have priority over long-term trends or subtle issues.

What does that mean for your project? Basically, there are two types of playspace stories that you can "pitch" to reporters. First, there are unique events such as Design Day, big fundraisers, the build itself, and the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony. You can also stage "media events" with the sole purpose of bringing out news crews ... people do it all the time! One KaBOOM! partner in Vermont put together a "photo op" in which an insurance agency came out and presented a donation check to a group of schoolchildren. The story ran the next day. For events like this, reporters simply show up, conduct short interviews, and write the article.

The second kind of pitch you can make is for a feature story, which covers a broader community issue that relates back to the playspace build - such as playground safety, child obesity, the state of public park space, or school budget cuts. For a reporter this requires a little more digging, as well as an interesting perspective or news "angle." (See guide to media terms, on page 120.) A reporter may spend days or weeks researching a feature story, with its publication delayed until there's space for it.

WORK!



How Do They Cover It? Written words, spoken words and television images offer very different ways of telling news stories - and all three of them can serve your playspace project in different ways. Here are some important features of print, radio and television news, and how to work them to your advantage:

Print. In print journalism, timing is everything. Deadlines loom, dozens (if not hundreds) of stories vie for attention, resources are often limited, and at the end of the day the news has to be packaged into a single, final product. In this hectic world, it's important that you target the appropriate person within the organization, and always respect his or her schedule.

(Newspapers run on daily or weekly deadlines, while magazines often complete articles eight weeks before publication.) For your purposes, stories in print have three main advantages: One, they can be relatively long (up to several thousand words) and therefore more in-depth. Newspaper and magazine articles allow you to share your project vision while addressing broader community issues like obesity, school budgets and the importance of outdoor spaces. Newspapers typically assign one reporter to cover a particular topic (called a "beat") over long periods of time, which also contributes to more in-depth coverage. An education reporter, for example, is likely to have a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding your project. He or she is also more likely to conduct follow-up reporting, weeks or months down the road. Remember that newspaper reporters want to be published as often as possible; during slow news periods, they'll welcome the chance to write a local feature. Keep your project on their radar by sending periodic announcements and story ideas. Print has a second major advantage: it is the only medium that publishes opinion pieces and letters from the community. The opinion-editorial ("op-ed") page is essentially a free community message board, and it can be a powerful forum for promoting your project. Send a letter a week, and submit an editorial about the importance of play, the need for revitalized outdoor spaces, or the rise in child obesity - whatever the hot topic happens to be. Finally, with print articles you never have to go live! Although you should always be prepared, the newspaper cycle gives you the opportunity to clarify and/or correct your statements before they appear in print.

TIP!

Print reporters are often assigned to cover unfamiliar topics, and they don't have a lot of time to do research. Help them by providing clear background information on the importance of play, cutbacks in recess, children's health issues and other relevant topics. They'll be grateful, and the resulting coverage will be more complete.

SMASHING! ☺
CATCH! ☺



Radio. If you're talkative and energetic, radio is your medium! With its quick-thinking verbal volleyball, radio is well-suited to arguing your ideas and promoting your events. (Remember that kids give great interviews!) Most local stations produce little independent news coverage; instead, they simply read the day's newspaper headlines. Without that focus on "breaking news," radio hosts can devote more time to human voices, opinions and entertainment. They also tend to promote community involvement. Timing is very important: Just think how many people you could reach through a "drive-time" morning radio show! Always be aware of each station's audience and adjust your approach accordingly. FM radio, for example, lends itself to loud opinions, funny anecdotes and attention-getting stunts. Leave your serious points at the door! Popular music stations also might sponsor your playspace events and fundraisers, providing you with lots of free music and promotion. On the AM dial, news stations and talk shows can explore a playspace project in more depth; ask them if you can appear as a guest when they are discussing children's health, community development, public land use or related issues. Or just listen to the show and call in! In any format, radio reports are brief and to the point; always prepare your statements, stick to the important issues, and stay upbeat. AM and FM stations are also obligated to air free Public Service Announcements (PSAs), although they'll typically air in the wee hours of morning. Ask your stations about guidelines for submission.

Television. There are three things you need to get your story on television: visuals, visuals and more visuals! Television is considered to be the most powerful medium of the three, but you need to have something worth filming. Design Day and your playspace build are your best bets, but old, faulty play equipment can also prompt a story commission a safety audit to provide a factual background.) Keep in mind that TV news coverage changes by the minute - even if a camera crew shows up to film your Design Day, there's no guarantee that it will appear on the evening news. That's life in the media!

TIP!

If you phone into a radio show, stand up while talking! Smile, walk around and gesture with your hands. That energy will come through in your voice and you'll grab people's attention.

PASSION!



The Organizer's Guide to Media Terms

Angle: This is media lingo for whatever makes a story fresh, interesting and relevant for readers. For example, a story about children's play wouldn't normally make the front page, but if those children are ex-gang members playing together after months or years of violence, that's news. A news angle often highlights a particular point of view or segment of the community that has been overlooked. It might also place a local story within the context of regional or national trends.

To give your project a newsworthy angle, go back and think about the inspiration for your project. What problems will it solve? Who will benefit? Highlight the human side of your work. Make it relevant to readers' lives. Potential angles for a playspace feature story might be:

- State and local budgets don't provide enough money for children's play, so parents are taking matters into their own hands.
- Physical activity among children is on the decline, and obesity is on the rise; community leaders are taking a positive step to encourage daily exercise.
- The community is building a playspace in order to heal from and commemorate a local tragedy.
- City officials, police, business owners and local citizens often fight over how to run the city, but they are setting aside their differences to build a playspace and put children first.
- The surrounding neighborhood has been fragmented by crime and violence, but a new playspace represents fresh hope for the next generation.
- Children in your neighborhood have never had a safe place to play; without one, their physical, social and mental development is in jeopardy.
- The population of your town is aging, and a new playspace will help attract young families.
- Local businesses are investing in community infrastructure, and not just with their money - they're also lending the "sweat equity" of their employees. (Corporate philanthropy is a hot topic in business journalism these days!)

Talking Points: These are facts, sayings, or short sentences that sum up an organization's campaign or position on a particular issue. (When politicians go on television and repeat the same phrases over and over, they're using talking points.) They should communicate who you are, what you do, why you do it, and who your partners are. Reporters love to hear talking points (aka "sound bites") because they're memorable, easy to record, and they grab people's attention - all while making an important point. They are also a way for you to tie your project into larger issues and nationwide trends. Here are a few examples:

- "Most adults spend their entire lives wishing they were kids again. With the help of [XYZ Sponsor], we're making sure that our children have fun, safe childhoods that stay with them for a lifetime."
- "Did you know that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has called for the creation of more parks and playgrounds to help fight the epidemic of childhood obesity? Today we've demonstrated that we are a part of that fight, and we care about our children's health."
- "Play is the work of children. We know what happens when adults in this country are unemployed, and the same is true for children."





Step 2: Crafting Your Press Materials

Now you need to actually approach news organizations about attending a playspace event, writing a feature story or sending a film crew. Reporters and editors are accustomed to receiving their information in a set written format, so stick to the formula. Below is a summary of the different materials you'll need to get your foot in the door. You'll find samples of each in the Publicity Section of your Toolkit Template CD.

To Promote an Event:

- **Media Advisory:** This is a brief one-page summary of an upcoming event (such as Design Day), serving as a notice and reminder to reporters. Send a media advisory if you want newspapers or TV stations to come to your event and/or include the information in their calendar listing. (It is typically sent directly to TV assignment editors and news paper photo desks.) Media advisories answer Who, What, When, Where and Why. They can be written in paragraph form, or you can bullet major points for quick reading. Send them twice: 1-2 weeks out, and again 1-2 days before an event. For afternoon events, publicists in busy media markets sometimes fax advisories that morning. *(Find a sample Ribbon-Cutting media advisory on your Toolkit Template CD).*
- **Press Release:** This is a more in-depth explanation of an event or feature story, written in the same style as an actual news article. Generally no more than two pages in length, it provides the important information that a reporter or newspaper reader would want to know; it also typically includes a quote or two. The key to a successful press release is to present the information objectively, highlighting only what's relevant and keeping the most important facts up top. If the headline and first few sentences don't grab a reporter's attention, he/she won't keep reading. Reading news articles will help you get a hang of the style. You should send press releases to appropriate newspaper reporters two weeks before an event, and again immediately after (with updated quotes and information). We've included a sample Design Day press release in your Toolkit Template.
- **Public Service Announcement (PSA):** This is a short broadcast announcement offering a distinct public-service message. A PSA is aired free of charge by television or radio stations as part of a federal mandate. Since stations receive no pay for these, they are often run during the lowest ad-rate hours: overnight. (Find a sample Build Day PSA in your Toolkit Template.)

TIP!

The news media love famous people and colorful characters. Try your best to involve local celebrities or dignitaries, and you'll almost guarantee coverage.



FOCUS!



TIP!

Always include contact information, and always be available! Reporters will only try to reach you a few times before giving up and moving onto something else.

To Advocate Your Position:

- **Pitch Letter:** These letters urge a particular radio producer or op-ed columnist to address a specific issue. You can also recommend playspace-related guests for a talk show. Tell them why the issue is important, and why it would make for a dynamic, thought-provoking broadcast or column. (But never give orders ... don't tell them that they "must" cover something!) Time your pitch letter to coincide with a major news article on the subject, and the person will be more likely to bite.
- **Letter to the Editor:** Most letters to the editor are in direct response to a recent news story or opinion piece. Some papers have stricter guidelines than others; ask the editorial-page editor about submissions. Keep your letter short, level-headed and positive; expressing anger won't help your cause. Include your phone number so that the paper can verify the letter's authorship. (They won't print it.)
- **Opinion-Editorial Piece:** Newspapers often accept unsolicited opinion pieces from community members. Wait until the issue is particularly hot and you'll increase your chances of being published. You also might want to "pitch" the piece to an editor for tips on shaping your argument. Lay out your opinion in clear, reasonable terms, and focus on bringing potential skeptics to your side. Don't go over 750 words. Because you are expressing a biased opinion, you'll need to disclose to the paper any affiliation you have with groups or people that you mention in the piece.

To Provide More Information:

- **Fact Sheet:** This one- or two-page document gives reporters everything they need to know about your project, at a glance. Keep it opinion-free, and include bullet points with hard data that reporters can use, particularly statistics.
- **Press Kit:** This is a complete packet of information that you should give to reporters covering your events. Include your fact sheet, media advisory, press releases, a biography on important speakers, and background information on play and playspaces, including past news articles related to community-build playspaces. (These articles can be up to one year old. Make sure they're from reputable sources!) You can also include photos from past events and letters or drawings from children.



Step 3: Whom to Approach

Once you've written your extraordinary press materials, make sure they don't end up in the circular file! Getting your information to the correct person is half the battle. Here are three people you should get to know:

Assignment Editor (AE): At radio and television stations, this person routes incoming information and proposals to the appropriate editor or reporter. He or she largely decides which local events get coverage, so get on the AE's good side! Media advisories should be sent to his or her attention.

Beat Reporters: Staff reporters at a newspaper are typically assigned to a certain "beat" or area of coverage, such as crime, education, health, etc. Beat reporters have an in-depth knowledge of their subject area, and they are more likely to follow a particular story over several months. To find out who covers what in your local media, track relevant newspaper stories and radio reports. Most school districts also have a public information office, and they maintain working relationships with the local education reporters; they may be able to guide you in the right direction.

General Assignment Reporters: These are junior reporters who are not yet covering a particular beat, and they may be assigned to cover individual playspace events. General-assignment reporters often have little time to research new assignments, so you'll get better coverage if you hand out press kits with project background information, relevant statistics and press releases.

With all the media savvy you've just gained, reporters will be knocking down your door! When they do, you'll want to be sure to get your message across clearly and concisely. Here are a few things to keep in mind when speaking to members of the press:

Interviewing Tips

- **Plan Ahead.** Whether you have two weeks or two minutes to prepare, take out a pad and pencil and plan what you want to say. Rehearse your message with friends and team captains whenever possible. If you're put on the spot, remember to state the most important information first.
- **Compose a 'Short & Sweet' Message.** You should be able to express your basic message in 30 seconds, particularly for radio and television interviews. Focus on what's important - it's better to repeat yourself than to wander in several different directions.

TIP!

When reporters call to get more information, who will they speak with? Does your organization have a press office that normally deals with media inquiries? Before you contact reporters, agree upon standard operating procedures with your co-chair and team captains. You want reporters to get the information they need, right away, without getting the run-around.





- **Choose Three Major Points to Focus On.** When composing your message, think: What do people absolutely need to know about this project? Maybe you need to recognize a key sponsor, promote your organization, or highlight the long-term goals of the project. For example, you might include in every interview:
 - Why the playspace is important for children.
 - Why you or your organization got involved.
 - What you hope to see happen in the future: your community's next steps.
- **Be Positive!** Make sure that you stick with positive messages. Even if a reporter asks you a question that seems challenging, think positively! After all, you and the community are doing a great thing. Remember that reporters are trained to look for an opposing viewpoint to provide "balance" to the story. If they find a negative opinion, they'll go with it - no matter how unpopular or far-out it may be. That's their job, so be prepared to address your opponents' views with civility and optimism.
- **Be Honest.** Don't answer questions if you don't know the answer. Give reporters the name and contact information of someone who can respond knowledgeably.
- **Mention Important Sponsors by Name.** You may have promised to include corporate names as part of a sponsorship agreement. If not, it's still a good idea to reward important sponsors by putting them in the media spotlight.
- **Mention Your Organization or Your Partners.** Keep in mind that you will be speaking to people who may not be familiar with your organization or your non-profit partners. Here is a real opportunity to let them know briefly about your organization and its services.
- **Coordinate Your Message With Your Colleagues.** Remember that you represent many other people on your planning committee or at your organization. Check in with your colleagues to be sure that you deliver the right message.
- **Tell a Story.** If you have enough time, tell a funny or touching story from your planning process. People love stories because they personalize an event.
- **Use Fun Figures.** Talk about how many volunteer hours will be spent planning and building the playspace, or how many kids will enjoy it each year! Facts and figures like these are fun to share, and they help people understand the widespread community impact of your project.





Accelerating Youth Involvement

Getting the word out about your project is crucial, but real community mobilization takes more than that. Sometimes the biggest obstacle to involving people in your project is getting them to take that all-important first step - showing up for a meeting, responding to a phone call, etc. But you're in luck! Design Day should be a huge draw for young people, and it places them well on the way toward greater involvement. It's up to you to leverage that excitement and offer them concrete tasks and responsibilities.

After all, young people are more than simply the reason your community has come together to build a playspace. Their creativity, enthusiasm and energy are valuable community assets that can add to the success of your project. Either as individuals or as groups, young people can contribute in meaningful ways that build their investment and sense of ownership toward the community space. Participation in the planning process can also be combined with science, physical education, social studies, math, reading, writing, and art programs for an integrated learning experience. By managing tasks, young people develop important skills such as leadership, group facilitation, conflict resolution and sustainable community development. Empowering young people also helps them build lasting self esteem, confidence and pride. With all of these amazing outcomes, you can hardly afford not to get young people involved!

Project Roles for Youth

Youth Co-Chairs

Invite responsible young people to serve as co captains on any or all of your planning teams; they then lead groups of their peers in carrying out specific tasks. For example:

- **Children's Activities:** Develop and facilitate children's activities and games for the day(s) of the build.
- **Construction:** Help measure, map out and design the play environment; create murals and other art projects.
- **Food:** Help solicit in-kind donations for food; help prepare and serve food on Build Day(s).
- **Fundraising:** Sell raffle tickets; organize a car wash or bake sale; participate in a children's talent or fashion show; sing holiday carols for donations; write thank you notes to donors.

The opportunity to take part in a process like that is so rare ... Now they know that things like that exist and that you just work towards it, and that it can happen.

- Bridget Dickerson, Parkside Elementary,
Atlanta, GA



- **Public Relations:** Prepare a skit or song for the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony; create and update a build countdown banner; provide quotes for the media.
- **Safety:** Be part of the safety patrol for Build Day(s); pass out water to keep everyone hydrated.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Hang flyer all over the neighborhood; help set up and run a registration table at the build.



A Youth Council

Particularly ambitious young people might want to organize a sub-committee of their own. A youth council can be charged with various tasks and should report directly to you and your planning committee. For example, the youth council might be given a small budget to manage; they would then be empowered to distribute that money as "playspace environment grants" to other young people. The youth council would be responsible for selecting the best project proposals from their peers, awarding them mini-grants, and insuring that the winning projects are completed. Aside from a mini-grant program, the youth council could also add leadership to the initiatives below.

Our Playspace Rules

Nothing boosts excitement among children like receiving the official playspace designs from your equipment manufacturer. Once those designs are in, unveil them with great fanfare and use the opportunity to ... talk about safety! Ask young people to draw a part of the structure and write how they should play on it safely. Display these pictures throughout the school or community center to promote safe play. After a period of time, ask each child to write a rule for the playspace. Select representatives to tabulate the entries, and then select the top ten and order a custom safety sign for your new playspace.

Science Garden

This play-environment beautification project is also a great avenue for getting science classes involved. Plan and build an herb or vegetable garden complete with benches, writing boards, magnifiers and rulers built into raised beds. The beds can be arranged in a semi-circle to facilitate lessons, and children can decide what they want to plant. Apart from conducting science projects, children might decide to contribute vegetables to the school cafeteria or to a local shelter, grow flowers to bring to a nearby retirement home, or start a school business.

The Playspace Patrol

Keep children tuned in once the playspace is finished! They can take on important responsibilities for safety and maintenance checks by forming a playspace patrol. This group is responsible for enforcing safety rules and performing daily inspections; children of all ages can rotate through the position of "playspace patroller" on a daily or weekly basis. Lead a role-play in how to properly patrol the playground, and arm each patroller with a ruler for safety checks.





You can even give them field tests and award mock "PlaySpace Inspector" certificates! Children should look for things such as loose or broken parts, broken glass or other objects in the fall zones, compressed or displaced safety surfacing, head and foot entrapments, and other potential hazards. They can also check for dirt and graffiti on the equipment. The playspace patrol should always report any problems to an adult.

Top Ten Simple Ways to Involve Children in Planning

Ideas from Bridget Dickerson, former PTA president at Parkside Elementary School, Atlanta, GA

10. Tell children to get the word out about the playground project, particularly to their families and neighbors. If yours is the first safe outdoor facility of its kind, get them excited about the playground's social aspect - picnicking outdoors on weekends, hosting neighborhood parties, playing sports, etc. This may be a new concept!
9. Have classrooms collect money from their parents, their weekly allowance, their lemonade stands ... every penny counts! The classroom that collects the most money wins exclusive rights to play on the playground during its inaugural day.
8. When putting out a neighborhood or PTA newsletter, include photos of local children as well as quotes from them about the importance of the playspace.
7. Whenever sponsors, media, or special guests stop by the site, have children make welcome and thank-you banners. Add new pictures and signatures to them as the project progresses.
6. When you approach neighborhood associations or similar citizen organizations for donations, bring children along. Let them explain why they need a new playspace; you'll be amazed by how articulate they can be.
5. Have children design your public fundraising thermometer(s), and select classroom representatives to fill them in as you raise money.
4. If you're applying for a grant that requires photos, drawings, or background information, enlist children's help in gathering these materials.
3. Having trouble with low attendance at planning meetings? Bring children's dance troupes, bands and choruses to perform - at the very least, their parents will show up!
2. You'll need to know the exact dimensions of your playground site, so ask a school math teacher to bring his or her students out to make measurements. Incorporate it into their school curriculum for a double lesson in math and community organizing!
1. Set aside a special side project just for children, whether it's making birdhouses, planting a butterfly garden, or pressing their handprints into stepping stones. Make it special!



KaBOOM! Service-Learning Curriculum

Did you know that you can enhance children's academic experience while engaging them in the playspace project? Welcome to service learning! Service learning is a teaching method that combines academic instruction, meaningful service, and critical reflective thinking. It differs from simple community service or volunteerism in two major ways: 1) The service activity is integrated with academic curriculum and content, and 2) Students engage in structured reflection of their service experiences and apply their learning in real-life activities. Ultimately, participation in service-learning activities helps to foster civic responsibility among students. It will also lead to a more involved, exciting playspace project!

Not affiliated with a particular school? Feel free to pass this information along to local teachers or child care providers and get them involved! Many teachers will welcome the opportunity to engage their students in service. If your project is closely tied to a specific school or group of educators, consider developing a complete service-learning curriculum that will both mirror and interact with the activities of the adult project planning committee. Topics for individual service-learning sessions might include: playspace design; working with city/county government; promoting public health and safety; organizing build logistics; fundraising for the project; public relations; and volunteer coordination. As you navigate the project road map, you can share with local students the valuable skills and information that you're acquiring, as well as a lifelong commitment to service! Whatever affiliation your project has, the materials below offer a great place to start:

Four Components of Successful Service Learning

As we mentioned above, a community-build playspace project can inspire a number of student-led activities. Whether you complete one service activity or twenty, try to incorporate each of these components into your curriculum:



Preparation. It is important that students be actively involved in the selection and planning of each service activity. They'll also need background knowledge and/or skill training related to the topic at hand. In this stage, students should:

- Identify community needs that they'd like to address
- Select and plan specific service activities that accomplish learning objectives
- Help identify and enlist the assistance of community-based resources
- Receive instruction and/or training needed to conduct the service activity





Action. The service activities themselves must:

- Be meaningful
- Have academic integrity
- Be developmentally appropriate
- Provide student ownership
- Have adequate supervision



Reflection. Thinking critically about each service activity will help students apply their learning in a broader academic, social and personal context; it also provides additional opportunities to link academic subjects to the activity. Reflection may include:

- Discussion
- Reading
- Writing
- Artistic expression
- Class projects
- Presentations

Celebration. This stage is crucial, as it recognizes students' contributions and provides closure to the project. Celebrations are strengthened if they relate back to the service activity (such as a party in the park the students helped renovate.) They may include:

- School assemblies
- Special media coverage
- Joint celebrations with service partners
- Certificates
- Parties



TIP!

Student ownership is a key component of the service-learning model. When students feel that they are driving the planning process and the outcomes, they'll be more creative, more engaged, and more likely to internalize the lessons of service.

Adapted from Pocket Guide to Service Learning, National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University, and "Service Learning - Making a World of Difference for Students", Georgia Department of Education, February, 1997



Sample Service-Learning Session: Public Relations!

A service-learning lesson plan typically follows five basic steps: Objectives, Preparation, Action, Reflection and Celebration. During your first session, you may want to discuss the importance of public playspaces and the concept of community service.

Grade Level(s): Appropriate for 4th-12th grades; can also be adapted for younger students.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain the benefits of a playspace.
- Students will be able to explain the concept and importance of working for the common good.
- Students will be able to define advertising and public relations.
- Students will develop critical-thinking skills toward media and product marketing.
- Students will develop market-assessment skills in identifying locations to advertise their project.
- Students will be able to use basic marketing skills to communicate their recruitment needs verbally and graphically.
- Students will learn the basic information needed to promote a service project: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How.
- Students will utilize artistic skills in the design of project promotional materials.
- Students will utilize writing skills and be able to write a letter to a city official regarding the playspace project.
- Students will be able to list three types of interviews and practice their interviewing techniques.

Preparation:

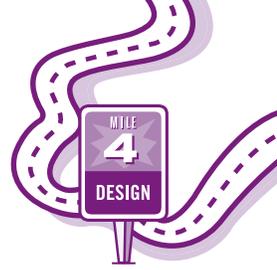
Discuss the importance of playspaces, and the role of advertising in a community project. Ask students:

- What is this project? Explain that the community is building a playspace, and record the names of people/ groups involved.
- Have you ever had to put aside your needs so that you could help someone else? Share personal stories, and discuss the concept of the "common good" (putting aside personal needs to think of the needs of others.) Make the connection between the playspace and the common good.

TIP!

Not a teacher? No problem! Introduce service-learning to a childcare, after-school, or evening program ... or copy these pages and give them to teachers in your area. Remember that you are a valuable resource - many schools don't see the link between a playspace project and in-school learning. This can also be a great way to reach out to schools who may not be involved in the project!





Have the students share ideas about how they can work for the common good by participating in the playspace project and initiating service activities.

- Why are playspaces a good thing? Include the ways that playspaces can benefit students, families, the school/organization, and the community. Make sure to touch on these benefits:
 - Physical fitness/exercise
 - Playing with friends
 - Playing with parents/grandparents/guardians
 - Being outside
 - Challenges
 - Fun place to play
 - Safe place to play
 - Community gathering place
 - Older students might investigate social and developmental benefits of play, property values surrounding parks, sense of community, etc.
- What is advertising? Take ideas from students, and give a definition: Advertising is the activity of attracting public attention to a product or business, as by paid announcements in the print, broadcast, or electronic media.
- Why is advertising important for the playspace project? Answers might include: lets other people know about what you are doing; gives important information about your event; creates interest; helps recruit volunteers.
- What is public relations (PR)? It is the art or science of establishing and promoting a favorable relationship with the public.
- Why is PR important for the playspace project? Answers may include: The community will be building the playspace, so there is a need to create a positive relationship; community will own and maintain the playspace, therefore it should be considered an asset to the community; sponsoring businesses and organizations want to create a positive image among community residents.

BRIGHT!





TIP!

Service learning can be integrated into math and science curriculums. Make scaled maps of the playspace site, and have students measure the use zone (area requiring safety surfacing) for each proposed component. Create charts for planning recruitment and/or fundraising goals, and track progress on different types of graphs.

- What are some types of advertising that you have seen or heard? Examples are TV/radio commercials, ads in newspapers/magazines/ other print materials, ads on buses, posters, flyers, product placement in movies and television and corporate sponsorship of sporting events.
- What types of public relations activities have you witnessed? Examples might include public interviews, press conferences, community meetings, corporations giving to charities, etc.
- Name celebrities whom you've seen promote products/programs. Focus on positive messages promoted by athletes, movie stars or musicians - reading, voting, medical research, aid to the developing world, etc.
- Why do you think companies and corporations use celebrities to help with advertising and public relations? Possible answer: People are more likely to buy or participate in something they are familiar with, and celebrities create a sense of familiarity and likeability.
- What types of advertising and public relations can we do to promote our playspace project? Answers may include: Create posters, create flyers, write letters to officials and local celebrities to ask for their support, and interview potential playspace users about their feelings toward a new facility.

HURDLES!
BOUNCE!

Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I'll remember. Involve me and I'll understand.

- Confucius



Activity 1: Creating PlaySpace Posters and Flyers

Skills Developed: Critical thinking; writing; artistic design.

1. Give students the basics of the playspace project: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.
2. Have students create posters and flyers about the project. Allow them to be as creative as they would like, but make sure that the basic information is included.
3. Once posters/flyers are created, brainstorm and discuss where in the community to place them. NOTE: Remember to tell students that they must ask permission to place information in businesses. Common locations are grocery stores, restaurants, community centers, schools, gas stations and beauty salons. Encourage kids to think outside of the box!
4. With an adult supervisor, have students go out in groups to place their advertisements.

GET TOGETHER!

Joy!



FRESH!





Activity 2: Writing Letters to Local Officials

Skills Developed: Writing skills; logic.

1. Discuss the importance of having community leaders participate in the playspace project.

Topics should include:

- a. Community leaders can help garner support for the project.
 - b. Leaders should be made aware of the opportunities that exist in their communities, such as the opportunity to create safe play environments for children.
 - c. Leaders should be made aware of positive resources that exist in their communities, and the potential for citizen-led action.
 - d. Community leaders may be aware of laws or ordinances that the planning committee needs to follow.
 - e. They care about the community, and want to see positive changes.
 - f. Community leaders may help with media attention.
2. Using the phone book, have students identify local community officials and their contact information. Some to consider: mayor, city council members, congresspersons, Sheriff, police chief.
 3. Ask each student to choose which city official he/she would like to write to.
 4. Have each student write a letter to their designated official. Make sure the following is included in each letter:
 - a. Basic information about the project.
 - b. Why there is a need for a playspace in the community.
 - c. How the project will impact the kids in the community, and specifically the writer of the letter.
 - d. Why the official should participate on the adult planning committee or how the official's presence at the build would benefit the project.





Note: In letters to officials, younger students may want to extend simple invitations to a planning meeting, Design Day, or the build; older students can learn how to articulate more complex arguments for a community-build playspace.

5. Proofread each letter for errors; have students re-write if necessary.
6. Have students stamp and address the envelopes, and send them to their designated officials.
7. Be sure to save copies of the letters for the playspace file!



ZOOM!



PLAYGROUND!



Activity 3: Interviewing the PlaySpace Users

Skills Developed: Critical thinking; public speaking; communication.

1. Talk to students about different types of interviews: print, radio and television.
2. (Optional for younger students.) Ask students if there is a difference in the way that an interviewee responds to questions based on the type of interview being conducted.
 - a. Print interviews: Statements can be longer and more complex, but quotes may be used out of context. How can the interview be captured fairly and accurately?
 - b. Radio interviews: May be done live, so statements should be made concisely and carefully. What playspace sounds might add to the story?
 - c. Television interviews: Viewers get to see what is going on at the interview site. What images should be portrayed?
3. As a group, have students brainstorm questions that can be used in an interview. Some to consider are:
 - a. Why do you want a new playspace?
 - b. How can a new playspace help you and your community?
 - c. How have you helped the playspace planning process?
 - d. What activities will you participate in during the build?
 - e. What do you have to say to the adults in your community who are making the playspace a reality?

CONSTRUCT!



4. Have the children break into pairs and take turns asking each other the interview questions in different interview formats.
5. Share the resulting interviews with the adult PR team for use in promoting the project.
Note: Older students are encouraged to use audio/video recording equipment to produce real public-relations materials. You may even talk to local media about getting the students' work published or broadcast!

Reflection:

Reiterate with the students the importance of playspaces and of working together for the common good. Discuss what specific skills and information they brought to the project or were able to acquire through service learning. Reflect on how public relations might impact the success of the playspace project, and how it can be used to promote positive causes. You may want to have students write personal narratives about their experiences, or give presentations in front of the class.

Celebration:

Finally, celebrate the students' achievement with completion certificates, a visit from project leaders, a visit from the elected officials who received letters, or another appropriate reward. Emphasize that the students have served their community by taking the time to create inspiring public relations materials for the playspace, and make sure that they feel connected and appreciated.

TIP!

Planning a whole series of service-learning activities? Feel free to postpone your celebration until the end of the playspace project, or celebrate each activity along the way ... it's your choice!

ROMP



KIDS!



Mile 4 Activity Checklist ✓

- Yes! We held a successful Design Day with the participation of the real "play experts" (children) and various members of the community. Our play equipment company is delivering unique designs based on their input.
- Yes! We are using the "ideal playspace" drawings from Design Day to boost fundraisers and excite community interest.
- Yes! Community children and/or youth are getting actively involved in planning activities and/or service learning for the project.

DEDICATION!



VOLUNTEERS!

A stylized illustration in shades of purple. In the upper left, a large, white wheel with a dashed center is partially visible. Below it, a rectangular road sign with a white border and a purple background is mounted on two posts. The sign features the text "HALF-WAY THERE!" in bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. Below the text are four black diagonal stripes. The background consists of various purple shapes, including a large, light purple shape on the right and several horizontal white dashes scattered across the lower half, suggesting a road surface.

HALF-WAY THERE!



Are we there yet? You're over half way to your goal now, and your planning committee should be making real progress. If you've held your Design Day, it's time to focus on completing team tasks as you cruise past **Mile 5: Coordinate**. In this stage, your early planning and organizing will begin to result in donations, successful fundraising events, volunteer coordination and collection of materials. Focus on motivating your team captains, keeping the community informed, thanking people for their support, and staying organized. Every mistake is a chance to learn and do better next time, so don't let setbacks drag you down. It's a bumpy road, but you've got the resources and the spirit to push on through. Rev your engine!

MILE 5: COORDINATE

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Driving Progress



Now is the time to be your project's cheerleader! As some of your teams begin kicking their planning into high gear, others will be entering their final stretch. Continue meeting with your team captains on a regular basis, but keep meetings short so that people can devote more time to team tasks. To keep spirits up, encourage everyone to share two successes for each challenge they've encountered. As co-chair, you should also review your copies of the Team Workbooks and make sure that major tasks are in progress. Here are your next two sets of team checklists:

ADVENTURE!



PLAYSPACE!

FUTURE!





Team Checklist #3

Children's Activities Team

- Children's planning activities and fundraisers underway.
- Created budget for Build Day children's activities and snacks; began soliciting in-kind donations of materials.
- Recruitment of Build Day children's volunteers underway.

Construction Team

- Tools and materials solicitation process underway.
- Brainstormed a list of potential build captains.
- Requested utility check.
- Confirmed source of site-prep machinery.
- Scheduled major site-prep tasks: removal of old/unsafe equipment, site grading and/or excavation. (if applicable)
- Recruited 6-10 site-prep volunteers.

Food Team

- Solicitation process underway for Build Day snacks, drinks, meals and utensils.
- Identified where Build Day food will be served.
- Brainstormed list of volunteers for food service and clean up.

Fundraising Team

- Staged successful local fundraising events.
- Completed follow-up calls for business sponsorship and grant solicitation process.
- Direct-request campaign winding down; follow-up calls underway.
- Have plan in place to balance the budget by raising additional funds or cutting costs.

Logistics Team

- Arranged for adequate tap water, electricity, restrooms, and parking at the build site.
- Finalized number of tables, chairs, tents needed (check with co-chair and other Team Captains).
- Approached potential sources of tables, chairs, tents, trash bins and microphones/speakers for Build Day(s).
- Created schedule of equipment and surfacing deliveries.

Public Relations Team

- Sent invitations for Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony to guests/speakers/entertainers.
- Pitched playspace feature stories to local media.
- Discussed donor recognition with all team captains responsible for fundraising and solicitation.



Safety Team

- Ordered permanent safety sign for playspace.
- Brainstormed places to solicit Build Day first-aid and safety materials.
- Brainstormed list of Build Day safety coordinators.
- Identified first-aid provider(s).
- Formulated skill-level tagging system for volunteers.
- Established site evacuation plan in case of emergency.

Volunteer Recruitment Team

- Continuing to recruit volunteers.
- Ordered volunteer t-shirts (coordinate with PR captain if applicable.)

TiP!

"Get volunteers who can stay all day. We had so many volunteers coming and going, our playground site looked like a train station. I guess it was our fault. We only had them commit to two hours. I realize now we should have had them sign up for a full day or the entire week!" - Tim, Recruitment Team, Chicago Playground Build

COOL!

VISION!

BELIEVE!



Team Checklist #4

Children's Activities Team

- Children's fundraisers completed.
- Solicitation of materials and food for Build Day children's activities completed; purchase of remaining materials underway.
- Finalized list of Build Day children's volunteers.
- Established emergency source of childcare volunteers.
- Organized a system for children's registration.
- Assigned responsibility for Build Day children's activities.
- Devised a plan for children's playspace safety program to be implemented just after the build.

Construction Team

- Tool solicitation completed; purchase of remaining tools underway.
- Established list of emergency sources for tools.
- Established system for tool distribution and collection during Build Day(s).
- Completed major site prep (e.g. grading/excavation, removal of old/unsafe play equipment).
- Obtained final clearance to dig from utility company. (Note: This must be completed within a specific time frame prior to digging, usually 2-4 weeks. It varies regionally, so check with your utility.)
- Recruited build captains.
- Confirmed installer for site prep and Build Day(s).
- Discussed a plan for training maintenance staff immediately after the build. (Coordinate with co-chairs and safety captain.)

Food Team

- Finalized list of food donors.
- Finalized schedule for meals and snacks.
- Arranged for food pick-up and deliveries.
- Food-service area planned and staffed.
- Established emergency sources and funds for unexpected food needs.
- Solicitation of supplies complete; purchase of remaining supplies underway.



Fundraising Team

- Finalized list of all donors/sponsors.
- Monitoring overall budget.
- Made arrangements for checks, cash, or purchase orders needed in case of an emergency on Build Day(s).
- Managing recognition of sponsors with public relations captain.



TIP!

Be sure to learn from experience. Now that you've got a few major events under your belt, it's a good idea to set aside some time for a group evaluation of your progress thus far. What went right? How could you have done better? Are you where you want to be in your planning?

Logistics Team

- Confirmed delivery date of play equipment and surfacing.
- Formulated a plan for unloading and storing play equipment.
- Made arrangements to receive, rent or purchase all tables, tents, trash bins, sound equipment, etc.

Public Relations Team

- Posted flyers to announce Build Day(s)/ Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony.
- Conducted follow-up on Ribbon-Cutting invitations.
- Submitted Build Day PSAs to local radio stations.
- Designed Ribbon-Cutting program.
- Ordered sponsorship banners for the build site.
- Prepared media advisory and press release.

Safety Team

- Solicitation/purchasing of Build Day first-aid and safety materials underway.
- Recruited safety coordinators.
- Reviewed final safety plan for Build Day(s).
- Created safety handout for Build Day volunteers.
- Secured a sufficient supply of drinking water (coordinate with logistics and food captains).

Volunteer Recruitment Team

- Compiled final list of volunteers (adjust plans if higher or lower than expected.)
- Assigned "Point People" to direct crews and run errands.
- Established emergency source of volunteers.
- Confirmed that enough t-shirts have been ordered and are being delivered on time.
- Have good supply of name and skill-level tags (coordinate with safety captain.)
- Created volunteer agreement form. (See Liability Forms.)

HARD

WORK!

Only he who does nothing makes a mistake.

- French Proverb



Creative Problem Solving

Things are going to get hectic as you approach Build Day(s), and it's your job to keep everyone calm ... particularly when your team captains get stuck or frustrated. Every project encounters roadblocks, but with a dedicated team of supporters at your side, you will overcome them! When committee members complain that something just isn't working, help them dissect the problem and try to identify the root cause. Poor organization, miscommunication, a flawed approach, unconvincing materials and targeting the wrong audience can all be easily mended. If you need to, begin again by mapping assets, brainstorming, setting goals, prioritizing tasks and reorganizing your strategy. Of course, there is one tried-and-true way to solve problems - prevent them from happening in the first place! Below is a worksheet to help each of your team captains peer down the road and head off potential problems. We've also given you a list of common "roadblocks" and sample solutions.

Critical Steps Worksheet

Step 1: Think of the ideal way things will go for your team on Build Day(s).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Step 2: List three steps you can take before then to make sure your ideal is met.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

STAMINA!





Step 3: List three things you can do on Build Day(s) to make sure your ideal is met:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Step 4: List three things that would create a roadblock to your ideal plan:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Step 5: List three realistic things you can do to minimize the effect of the things you listed in Step 4.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PLAY!

Step 6: Do you need any special items to achieve the steps you listed in Step 5? List them here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.





Potential Roadblocks & Quick Solutions

Children's Activities

Having difficulty getting children involved?

- Have the children of your community plan, design, and paint a mural in an area near the future playspace. It's another way of putting their unique stamp on the playspace, and it also builds team spirit. Bring in high school art students, an art teacher, or a local artist to supervise. The children can finish the mural while the adult volunteers are completing the playspace!

Construction

Not enough tools for the build?

- Have the recruitment captain request that all volunteers bring their own tools to the build. Make sure to label them!
- Get in touch with city agencies, park districts or local colleges to lend out tools for the build.
- Contact local construction companies to provide tools or materials instead of cash support. Don't forget to thank them publicly!

Public Relations

Need help generating media support before the build?

- Contact your local newspaper or radio station and set up a meeting with anyone who will listen. Remember that reporters are extremely busy and they don't devote much time to far-off events; therefore, make your appointment for the week before Build Day(s).

Safety

Having difficulty recruiting a first-aid provider for the build?

- Contact the local Red Cross Chapter or any school nurses in the community who might be willing to volunteer in shifts throughout the day.

Volunteer Recruitment

Don't have enough volunteers to build the playspace?

- Contact local high schools and recruit students who belong to service clubs, or who need to fulfill their community service hours. Some local businesses may be looking for a unique way to develop team-building programs while lending support to the local community; pitch the idea of a corporate playspace build. Their "active" sponsorship means just as much as a financial contribution! Church groups may consider sponsoring service projects outside their congregation, and labor unions can be another great source of volunteer work.

TIP!

If you're concerned about low volunteer turnout, consider pre-registering volunteers. People are far more likely to show up if they've already committed themselves to the slide, swings or mulch team . . . it makes it harder to roll over in bed that morning and say, "oh well, there are 60 other volunteers



Organizing Site Logistics

Let's imagine that all of those planning obstacles are already behind you. Whew! Pat yourself on the back, because it's time to turn your attention to the big event ... Build Day(s)! If your team captains have done their jobs well, your build site will be swarming with volunteers, sponsors, reporters, children, entertainers and certified playspace professionals. With all of that energy and commotion in one small space, pulling off a community build is kind of like directing a play with a huge cast of characters. To make it run smoothly, each "actor" needs to know exactly where to go, what to do, and when to arrive on stage. Visualizing your site's layout and planning each minute of the day will help you head off potential snags and successfully orchestrate the build.

Creating a Master Layout of Your Site

Once you have your play equipment design in hand, it's time to draw up a Build Day site map with a little help from your planning committee and your installer. A detailed site map will help you organize "people traffic" during the build; it shows a bird's-eye view of the entire playspace lot and the area surrounding it. Start with a big piece of paper and sketch the location of the following elements:

- The border of the actual play area
- Where each piece of equipment will go
- Location of any side projects being installed: benches, gardens, murals, etc.
- Volunteer registration table
- Children's activities area
- Media check-in
- First-aid station
- Tool storage van
- Tool check-in
- Safety-surfacing pile
- Unassembled equipment pile
- Portable toilets
- Food-service area

ENERGETIC!



- Area to pre-assemble the equipment and any side projects
- Area to mix concrete
- Closed-off area for the use of saws and power tools
- Parking, traffic patterns, driveways/access roads
- Location of water spouts and electrical outlets
- Smoking area
- Sponsorship banners, directional signs, etc.
- Trees and bushes (optional)



Your site map doesn't have to be perfectly drawn to scale, just accurate enough so that you can plan out the movement of people, machinery and equipment. Don't forget to have a back-up layout in case of rain (see below)! Make several copies for your team captains so that everyone knows where to show up, set up and put up the playspace.

Creating a Build Day Timetable

An official timetable will get all your team captains on the same page - literally! The timetable is a detailed schedule for your Build Day(s), a single document that puts all the teams' activities and information at your fingertips. Once your team captains have arranged their individual delivery, sign-in and task schedules, create a complete chronological list of everything that needs to happen on Build Day(s): the arrival of key people, deliveries, speeches, games, major construction tasks, meals, breaks, etc. You should also indicate who is responsible for managing each activity, and what tools and materials are involved.

The timetable can serve as a handy "crib sheet" for your project leaders, so you may want to include a reference page with the project name, site address, address for deliveries, your personal contact information, and contact information for your installer. It's also a good idea to attach a chart with information on each of the construction teams - the name of their build captain, which project they'll be working on, and the tools that they require. Look for a sample Build Day Timetable in the Logistics section of your Toolkit Template.

FUTURE! 



Making Contingency Plans

As you begin to prepare for the big day, it's important to expect the unexpected and plan for all contingencies. We recommend establishing plans around five major build concerns: rain, security, safety, communications and last-minute supply trips. All of these can be dealt with if you prepare in advance! Here are some plans we've devised over the years:

Rain, Rain GO Away!: How to Build in Any Weather!

With all the planning and coordination that go into a community build, you should avoid rescheduling at all costs - always tell your volunteers that the playspace will be built, rain or shine! In the case of foul weather, you can still have a great and successful build; your logistics just need to change and you may need to consider alternate plans for site preparation (e.g. no power tools). Special arrangements will also need to be made for indoor storage of tools, equipment, and materials - especially dry concrete mix! During the build itself, here are a few things to keep in mind when the weatherman delivers the bad news:

Rain

- Expect fewer volunteers. This means you will have to be ready to prioritize projects: Playspace construction comes first, then installation of safety surfacing, and then any side projects that don't require electrical machinery.
- Keep everyone and everything as safe and dry as possible. It's a good idea to provide disposable ponchos for volunteers - trash bags work just fine! Set up tents over the food and registration tables and the children's area, so that there's a place to get out of the rain. Remind volunteers to take extra caution; muddy ground and slippery surfaces can create slip-and-fall hazards. Rain can also ruin the paper instructions from your play equipment company; have them laminated or bring plastic page protectors. Make sure you stash an extra copy of the instructions inside somewhere. Once the rain lets up, remember to dry off all tools to prevent rusting.
- Reinforce the holes during site prep. If you're digging post holes in severe rain, the holes may start to "cave in" as you dig. The best remedy is to insert fiber tube forms (Sonotubes) of the same diameter as the post holes. These are available from hardware or home-improvement stores, and they will support the sides of the holes until you install your equipment. The tubes may be longer than you need, but they are easily cut with a saw. Cover the holes with plywood or another durable cover until Build Day(s). Additionally, a sump pump can be rented or purchased (electricity and hose required) to remove any water that may have collected since the site-prep day(s). If heavy rain is predicted for Build Day(s), you may want to consider having gravel laid down for the safety of the volunteers building. However, this needs to be coordinated a few weeks in advance.





- Practice your rainy-day build cheers! The hardest thing will be to keep volunteers motivated in the poor weather, but if you smile and set a positive attitude, people will follow. Hang in there, and make the best of it. Remember that the final product, a wonderful playspace for your community's children, stays put through rain, sleet, or shine!
- Just in case, do set a rain date with your installer. The final decision to postpone the build should always rest with you and your co-chair.

Extreme Temperatures

- Watch out for sun and heat! Rain is not the only weather that poses a hazard. When it becomes hot, volunteers should be reminded to drink lots of water (it's a good idea to have extra bottled water on hand), take frequent breaks and wear sunscreen. In case someone becomes over-heated, you should have a shady or indoor place for people to cool off and rest.
- If you step out of your car and your nose hairs freeze ... get back in, run to the store, and get enough coffee and hot chocolate for all your volunteers. Keep everyone moving with games, exercises and cheers, and provide as many mittens and gloves as you can. If possible, encourage people to head indoors to warm up in shifts.

Severe Weather

- In severe weather emergencies, evacuate the site. Although playspaces can be installed under most weather conditions, you must have an evacuation plan in place in case the build site does become dangerous. Make sure you identify an indoor location where you can take volunteers in case of lightning, tornado, etc ...

Better Safe than Sorry: Drafting a Safety Plan

The importance of keeping your volunteers safe cannot be overstated! Remember that your playspace build is a construction site, and you're responsible for keeping unskilled volunteers healthy and happy throughout the day. In addition to construction hazards, you need to be aware of the potential for heat stroke, dehydration, injuries from lifting, trip hazards, and run-of-the-mill concerns like scraped knees and bee stings. Don't worry - if you prepare properly, you will have a safe build! Make sure that your final safety plan covers the following bases:

TIP!

Regardless of the weather forecast, it's a good idea to purchase extra tarps for covering dry concrete mix overnight. You never know when a light rain or heavy dew might come along!

After the storm remember to play.
- Mattie Stepanek



First Base: Build safety measures into the layout and timing of your build.

- Recruit members of the safety team (or bring new volunteers on board) to be Build Day safety coordinators. There should be at least one Coordinator per 100 build volunteers, and they should be trained to patrol the site looking for hazards such as tool misuse, tools lying around dangerously, volunteers who are tired, volunteers who have had too much sun or need a break, and for volunteers who do not have a name tag or a skill level designation. One safety coordinator is also responsible for directing and staying with any heavy machinery while it is in motion. Make sure they're easily visible throughout the day ... you might want to put them in bright orange vests!
- Children **must not** participate in the construction of the playspace. The entire build site should be off-limits to those under the age of 15, and no one under 18 should handle power tools. Enforce these rules!
- Implement a system for labeling volunteers' name tags according to their skill level and ensuring that the appropriate name tags are distributed at registration. What skill-level tagging system is right for you? Most playspaces don't use many power tools, especially of the cutting variety. If this is the case, then you only need to have two levels: skilled and unskilled. Skilled volunteers will handle jobs such as mixing and pouring concrete, leveling posts and decks, and fastening hardware. The easiest tagging method is to assign a color to each skill level and place a colored dot on each volunteer's name tag as he/she arrives. If your playspace or side projects are more complex, you may want to expand the tagging system to three or four dots, designating skill levels such as "unskilled," "equipment builder," "power tools," and "professional experience." Remember, no matter how skilled they are, no one under the age of 18 may use power tools.
- Create a flyer to distribute to all volunteers before the build, informing them of what clothing and footwear to wear, the skill-level tagging system, and the importance of keeping children away from the build area during construction.
- Ensure that all arriving volunteers receive safety guidelines; you can do this by erecting a temporary fence or barrier with one entrance so that people are channeled directly to the registration table. The safety handout should indoctrinate new volunteers with the spirit of safety regarding lifting, power-tool safety, safety accessories, and the location of the first-aid table and drinking water. To reinforce a safe playspace build, create a safety pledge and have volunteers repeat it before they go out and begin their work!
- Designate an enclosed, clearly marked area within the build site where cutting and sawing operations will take place.
- Put up clear signs pointing volunteers toward the restrooms, exits, first-aid table and water stations.





- Mark or cover any holes, overhead hazards, and extension cords on the site before and during the build.
- In the event that an accident does happen, develop an emergency plan which includes: a first-aid station, a qualified first-aid provider, a phone, a fire extinguisher, a nearby source of drinking water, and directions to the nearest hospital. You should also make sure that a car and driver are available to drive to the hospital if necessary. Talk through how you will administer first aid, how you will find and correct the mechanism of the accident, and who will file the incident report form. Find a sample form in the Liability Forms section of your Toolkit Template.

Second Base: Make a list of the materials you'll need for a safe build. Try to estimate how many people will be doing dangerous work so that you can secure the appropriate number of accessories. Below are some common safety items; feel free to add to this list, and try to get as much as possible donated!

Safety Items

Caution tape or temporary fencing to go around the site
Safety glasses or goggles
Back braces
Hard hats
Work gloves
Dust masks
Plywood to cover holes
First-aid kit
Sun screen (SPF 15 or more)
Drinking water (2-4 liters per volunteer)
Fluorescent marking paint for tripping hazards
Ear plugs
Cell phone (coordinate with co-chairs)
Fire extinguisher

Third Base: Customize your safety plan. First, review your finished site layout and Build Day Timetable to determine if your project has any features that require additional safety considerations. Then discuss back-up plans in case of bad weather - how will safety be affected, and what can you do to prepare?

Home Base: You're safe! The final step is the implementation of your completed plan. Assign responsibility for carrying out each planning and Build Day task, and brief each Team Captain so that all the project leaders understand rules and safety procedures.

TIP!

Many people will probably offer to bring power tools, believing that they'll make playspace construction SO much easier. On one hand, they may be correct. But remember the essence of a community build - "many hands make light work"! In KaBOOM! experience, the presence of numerous power tools on a community-build project is dangerous and unnecessary.

That's a wise delay which makes the road safe.
- Spanish Proverb



Go Wireless: Communicating with you Team

When problems arise, who ya gonna call? Your team captains! Amid the hubbub of Build Day(s), you'll need a way to communicate quickly and effectively with each of your project leaders. It's a good idea to designate an area on your site map that will be used for emergency committee meetings - somewhere "out of the limelight" where you can consult privately and make decisions with your team captains. You also might consider borrowing or renting some heavy-duty walkie talkies ... or just blow whistles at each other!

TiP!

If you have enthusiastic volunteer "security guards," consider asking them to be on patrol the night after the build, to watch over the site and keep young people from playing on the new equipment. The concrete anchoring the posts needs plenty of time to set, but that brand new playspace can seem irresistible to neighborhood children! For this reason, we also recommend waiting to hang swings until the equipment is ready to be used.

During your Build Day(s), you will also need a way to communicate easily and reliably with off-site volunteers, errand runners, sponsors, reporters, Ribbon-Cutting guests and your playspace installer. We suggest that you purchase, borrow or rent a cellular phone to be used by key organizers in case of an emergency or to coordinate last-minute details. Make sure the phone stays at the registration table so that everyone knows where to find it at all times.

Keep the Tools in the Toolshed: Site Security

After all your hard work, make sure that you don't arrive on Build Day(s) to find your tools and equipment have been stolen or vandalized. It's up to you and your logistics captain to find the best way to secure your site - especially the tool and equipment storage area - during the night(s) leading up to the build. There are several ways of doing this, depending on your community:

- Have volunteers sign up for night watch. This is a great way to involve youth - encourage local high-school students, youth groups, or a Boy Scout troop to camp out next to the site.
- Contact your local police department to arrange for regular surveillance.
- If you have doubts about the security of the site, you may want to consider hiring (or having donated) an additional security guard.

Trust in God, but tie up your camel
- Arab proverb



Pinch Hitters: Lining Up "Point People"

"Point people" are those particularly resourceful and reliable volunteers that you can count on in a pinch. Point people help direct new volunteers to the registration table, make last-minute trips to the store for supplies, help you entertain sponsors or special guests, and just help out wherever needed. We recommend having three or four, and at least one point person should be the designated "runner," with a car parked in an easily accessible area for quick exits.

This is a great opportunity to recognize hard-working volunteers, give youth more responsibility, or bring people on board who don't want to get dirty on Build Day(s)! Consider giving your point people special t-shirts so that they're easy to spot - if the volunteer shirts are blue, for example, make theirs red or purple. You also should invite them to the walk through and the build captain training session (see Mile 6). They need to feel totally comfortable with the site and the day's schedule.

LAUGHTER!



EXPLORER!

GOALS!



Recruiting Build Captains

In order to stage a fast, busy, high-energy playspace build, you'll need to have several construction tasks going on simultaneously - equipment assembly, border assembly, concrete mixing, surfacing, bench making, mural painting, etc. Your construction captain and playspace installer can't possibly manage all of these projects at once ... they need lieutenants! Build captains are volunteer leaders who oversee a specific construction project on Build Day(s).

How many build captains you need will depend on the size of your playspace and the number of side projects you've planned. For a 50' by 50' playground build with two side projects, KaBOOM! might break the work load into the following assignments:

Sample Build Captain Team Assignment

Team	#of volunteers	Project
Decks and Posts*	6-8 (led by installers)	Assembling, installing and leveling decks and posts
Main Structure: Components "A Team"	8-10	Assembling accessible climber, glide slide and bells panel
Main Structure: Components "B Team"	8-10	Assembling sliding pole, peak roof, crawl tube and double slide
Main Structure: Components "C Team"	8-10	Assembling adventure bridge, balance beam and activity panel
Free-Standing Components Team	8-10	Assembling swings**, bounce buttons and drum sets
Safety Surfacing	15-25	Moving wood fiber onto the play area
Borders & Concrete Mixing	10	Installing border for surfacing containment, mixing concrete
Basketball Court	6-8	Repainting lines and backboards, hanging new nets, weeding edges
Planter Benches	8-10	Assembling benches from pre-cut wood pieces, planting flowers
*Note: This team's work involves significant lifting and long periods of standing. **Swings: The posts and hanging bar will be assembled and installed during the build, but the swings will not be hung until after concrete is set and dry		





Roles & Responsibilities of Build Captains

As you and your construction captain begin brainstorming a list of potential nominees, remember that the most important quality a build captain can have is leadership, not construction experience. Each build captain will be responsible for leading a group of volunteers during the build, so look for people who can motivate, inspire and facilitate groups of people. Remember that an installer will be present, and build captains can be trained in construction skills! On Build Day(s), they will act as:

- **Facilitators:** The operation runs more smoothly when the volunteers are closely managed. Build captains should become familiar with their construction tasks and remain with their teams throughout the build.
- **Team Builders:** Volunteers have a more rewarding Build Day experience when they work together, and when they feel that they're genuinely contributing. Build captains should encourage people to pool their efforts, and keep their eyes open for signs that one person is dominating the work and the team.
- **Communicators:** Volunteers need guidance and assurance, especially when assembling unfamiliar equipment. The build captain is the person they should turn to with any construction questions. Instruct your build captains to first check the installation instructions themselves - and to try to use their own good judgment! For questions that a build captain cannot answer, he or she should be the point of contact between volunteers and the construction Captain or professional playspace installer. They are welcome to approach the installer with a question, but remind them to be patient. Sometimes, an installer may need to remain in place, or may be unable to answer a question right away.
- **Tool Pros:** Build captains should be responsible for distributing tools among their team members, and for the tools' safe return at the end of the day. Make sure build captains can identify all of the tools they'll need. If you're concerned about security, you might establish a system whereby build captains are the only people "authorized" to approach the tool storage area.
- **Safety Monitors:** Educate your build captains on possible safety hazards - the more eyes, the better! Common safety hazards include improper use of machinery and tools, tools lying around, volunteers not taking rest/water breaks, improper installation, and children on the construction site.

TIP!

Try to choose build captains who are experienced but do not have a domineering personality. Sometimes the build captains insist on doing everything themselves, to the disappointment of volunteers.



Setting Up a Long-Term Maintenance Plan

Maintenance plan? But we haven't even built our playspace yet!

That's right! In the midst of your planning, we're going to ask you to pause for a moment and gaze further down the road ... toward building a long and happy life for your playspace. After all, building a new community playspace is a bit like becoming a parent for the first time. Although it's perfectly natural to spend lots of time planning for the pregnancy and childbirth, that's only the beginning! At some point, you need to begin laying plans for the long future ahead. New parents need to think about finances, health care, safety, and maximizing their child's potential over a period of 20 years. A playspace deserves the same thought and care! As your community plans to "give birth," it's important to think about how you'll keep that playspace safe and healthy for the first six months, one year, or twenty years. Who will care for it? Who will pay to maintain it? Who will make sure that it's a focal point for community activities? These are all important questions to address while excitement and involvement in the playspace are high. Remember, it takes a village to raise a child ... and a playspace!

Consider this: According to the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, 75% of the existing playspaces in the United States are dangerously unsafe, often because they are several years old and have fallen into disrepair. Safety surfacing gets compacted or displaced, equipment pieces break, and children eventually stop playing. Many parks are overtaken by drug dealers or covered in graffiti and litter. Don't let this happen in your community! Having a playspace that can be enjoyed by a whole generation of children often means planning and fighting for active, long-term maintenance.

You may have already taken the first step by designating a portion of your playspace budget for a maintenance fund. Now that you're in regular contact with donors, it's a good idea to think about ongoing fundraisers, clubs, or annual events that will provide a steady stream of support. A "Friends of the PlaySpace" Committee can be a great tool for spearheading new initiatives and creative programming. For more on this, glance ahead to Mile 8 or check out the **KaBOOM! PlaySpace Owner's Manual**.

Another ingredient for sound maintenance is regular, thorough safety inspections with a standard procedure for fixing problems. Start by discussing specific maintenance needs with your construction, safety and children's captains, as well as your play equipment representative. You'll also need to agree upon basic management procedures with the landowner, facilities staff, neighbors, parents and volunteers - *before* the playspace is installed. Involve everyone! You can also begin recruiting residents who may be interested in performing regular checks and clean-ups. In this section we'll address inspection scheduling, general management, and some community tricks of the trade.



PlaySpace Management: Questions to Address

In addition to creating customized inspection schedules and forms, a comprehensive maintenance plan should assign responsibility for the different aspects of playspace management. The following will be important factors in your overall maintenance planning:

- Who will be held accountable for timely cleaning and repairs?
- Who will be responsible for documentation and record-keeping?
- How should playspace damage be reported, and to whom?
- How should vandalism or illegal behavior on the playspace be reported, and to whom?
- What does the warranty cover?
- What role will the play equipment company and/or installers play in ongoing maintenance?
- If repairs are required, how will contractors be chosen?
- Will volunteers be engaged in repair work? If so, how? Who will be responsible for organizing volunteer efforts?
- How can we involve children and youth in the regular inspections, cleaning and maintenance of the playspace?
- What do the relevant insurance policies cover?
- What is the procedure for ordering equipment replacements through the original company?
- In whose name will the maintenance fund be kept? How many people will have access to it?
- Who will be responsible for playspace bookkeeping?
- Who will be responsible for spending decisions related to the playspace?





Training for Inspections

When creating a comprehensive maintenance plan, there are several different levels of inspections that you should plan for: daily/weekly inspections, periodic/bi-monthly inspections and annual inspections. It's best to rely on different people for each type of inspection. Please note that the guidelines provided below (and in Mile 8) are guidelines only. How frequently you perform playspace inspections will depend upon the type of equipment, usage, environment and weather conditions. Be sure to create an inspection schedule that will serve your needs!

TIP!

When developing long-term maintenance plans with your construction and safety teams, be sure to involve the landowner, soliciting their input and keeping them "in the loop." After all, maintenance is ultimately their responsibility.

Daily/ Weekly Inspections

Regular, informal maintenance checks are your playspace's first line of defense; they will locate immediate damage from weather, misuse or vandalism, as well as surfacing displacement and littering. (Find a sample weekly checklist in Mile 8.) Almost anyone can be trained to do daily and weekly inspections, so the best candidates are the teachers, staff and/or families who use and monitor the playspace. As the most frequent users, children and youth also make great playspace inspectors. Talk to your safety and children's captains about coordinating a post-build maintenance curriculum with local teachers or child care centers.

Periodic/Bi-Monthly Inspections

These comprehensive checks evaluate long-term wear and tear on the equipment. Your play equipment company should provide a kit with inspection forms specific to each component, as well as basic materials for cleanings and touch-ups. To maintain consistency, it is important that someone specifically is responsible for facilities maintenance. Add these checks to his or her roster of official duties. Candidates might include a facilities director, the professional maintenance staff of the school or park, or members of a volunteer maintenance group. Make sure that the people you designate are familiar with, and will have access to, the maintenance kit. (A sample bi-monthly checklist is included in Mile 8.)

Annual Inspections

Annual inspections, which evaluate the overall safety condition of the playspace, are best done by trained professionals. Your local Park and Recreation department, local insurance carriers, and the National Recreation and Park Association (www.nrpa.org) can generally provide a list of Certified Playground Safety Inspectors (CPSIs) in your area. Whenever a safety audit is performed, request a written report for your records.



DEDICATION!



Get It In Writing!

Thorough documentation is a crucial part of playspace maintenance. Think about it ... over the years, many different people will drift in and out of your playspace's life - new property owners, city officials, maintenance staff, neighbors, parents and others. They need as much information as possible to make good decisions about site safety, maintenance and usage. Therefore, make sure that all playspace-related documents are stored in a permanent, easily accessible file - starting now! Organize your equipment and surfacing brochures, purchase orders, and a list of who's been involved with the project. After the playspace is installed, assign someone to update the file regularly with inspection forms signed and dated by the appropriate person. Train maintenance staff on keeping a log with detailed notes describing any specific problem, the structure/component involved, what action was taken and by whom. Incident reports for accidents or vandalism should also be written up and kept on file. It's important to include as many details as possible: date, time of day, what happened, involved parties, any explanation about the cause of the accident, and follow-up actions taken. Twenty years from now, you'll have a complete history of your playspace!

TIP!

Although it may seem minor, keeping the playspace clean is the first and most important line of defense against misuse, vandalism and deterioration. Get as many people as you can involved in cleanings, and make it a habit. Remember - positive actions will drive out negative ones.

CONNECT!

DREAMS!



Preventative Maintenance: Vandalism & Arson

It's everyone's worst nightmare...waking up one morning to find that your new playspace has been destroyed by vandalism or arson. There are planning considerations that can minimize the potential for damage - such as installing non-flammable engineered wood fiber - but ultimately, all playspaces are vulnerable. The single best way to protect your playspace from vandals is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Install overhead lights to discourage after-hours loitering, and report any undesirable behavior to authorities immediately, before it becomes habitual. Keep the area clean and free of litter. Get the neighbors involved - set up volunteer patrols on weekend nights, particularly during warm months. Ask the local police department to include the area in their regular rounds, and consider reaching out to potential vandals through positive youth programming. A park in Encinitas, CA installed R.V. hookups so that a senior citizen couple could live there free of charge, monitoring the park and making families welcome.

Even with the best prevention program, bad things can still happen to good parks. Respond immediately by cleaning up, re-painting, or re-building. It's still your park, so never give up on it! Show vandals that your will to re-build is stronger than their will to destroy. Juanita Hatton of the Citizens' Congress of Nicetown (in Philadelphia) saw her playground destroyed three times, and each time she rebuilt. When people asked her why she kept on, she told them that she would outlast the vandals, because she believed in something. And she was right.

FUSION!



STRENGTH!



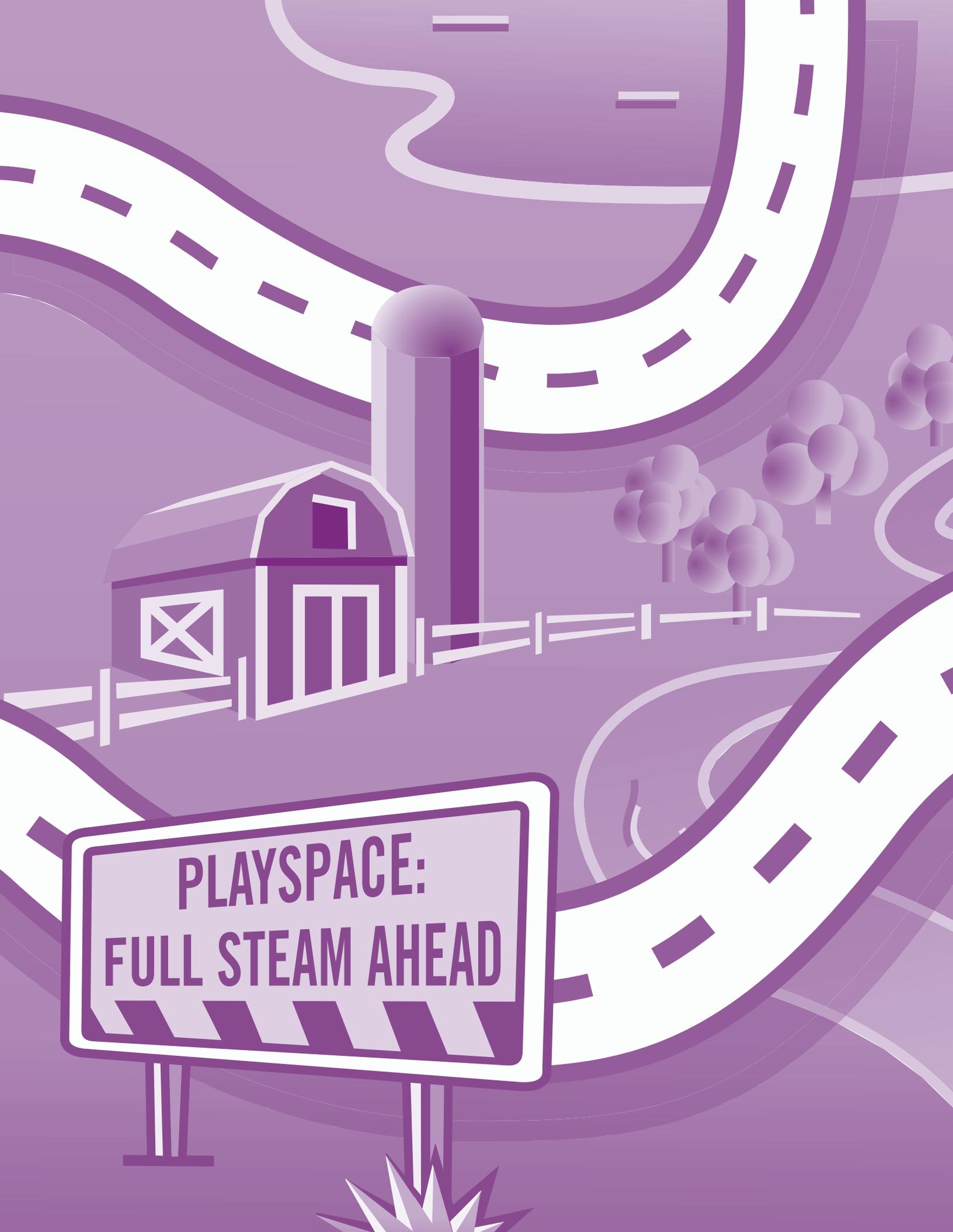


Mile 5 Activity Checklist ✓

- Yes! We have completed successful fundraisers and are well on our way toward achieving our fundraising goal. To balance our budget, we plan to solicit more funds or reduce our costs.
- Yes! Our team planning tasks are winding down. We have recruited build volunteers; identified build captains and point people; lined up Build Day food, water, tools and construction materials; scheduled children's and/or youth activities; and invited guests to the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony. We're almost ready!
- Yes! We have created back-up plans for bad weather, first-aid emergencies, team communications, pre-build site security and last-minute supply runs.
- Yes! We've decided where everything and everyone will be located during the build, and we've drawn a sketch of the construction site to share with team members.
- Yes! We've finalized the Build Day Timetable and reviewed everyone's roles and tasks.
- Yes! We have leveled the playspace site and removed any old equipment or natural objects that would interfere with the construction.
- Yes! We've drawn up a long-term maintenance plan with the landowner and staff at the site, our play equipment representative, and local residents. Several people will be involved in and responsible for regular clean-ups and maintenance.

This is a big step! Completing Mile 5 means that you've closed out major planning tasks and are getting ready to manage the fruits of your labor. Take a moment to celebrate!

FLIP!
EXCITEMENT!



**PLAYSPACE:
FULL STEAM AHEAD**



The hardest part is over ... don't run out of gas now! Your playspace build is just around the corner, and some important last-minute preparations will ensure a fun and successful event. If you've reached your fundraising goals, finished recruiting your volunteers, and secured necessary materials, you're at **Mile 6: Energize**. Yippee! This is your last chance to really nail down Build Day details and coach your team for the big day. We've got the energy you'll need to fill up your gas tank and come around the final bend!



MILE 6: ENERGIZE

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Making Final Preparations for Build Day

You should be working closely with your play equipment company and installer to prepare the playspace site, inventory the play equipment components, and schedule deliveries. Let your installer and construction captain worry about any technical details - your job is to support your team captains and help manage volunteers! Here is your final list of committee tasks:

GET TOGETHER!



FUSION!





One Week To Go: Final Team Checklist

PlaySpace Co-chairs

- Finalized master layout of site.
- Finalized and distributed Build Day Timetable.
- Reviewed site prep and Build Day expectations with installer and construction captain.
- Set aside petty cash.
- Secured cellular phones for build (if applicable).
- Scheduled site walk through.
- Rehearsed brief kick-off and Ribbon-Cutting speeches; chose Build Day games and cheers.

Children's Activities Team

- Completed confirmation calls to children's volunteers.
- Purchased remaining materials and food for children's activities.

Construction Team

- Purchased remaining tools/materials.
- Created "punch list" for recording post-build follow-up items.
- Completed confirmation calls to tool donors.
- Scheduled build captain training session.
- Reviewed installer agreement (with co-chair).

Food Team

- Completed confirmation calls to food donors.
- Purchased remaining food supplies.

Fundraising Team

- Balanced overall budget; managing petty cash and emergency funds.

Logistics Team

- Arranged site security for night(s) prior to build.
- Confirmed deliveries of tables, tents, sound equipment, portable toilets, trash bins, etc.
- Checked water and electricity at the build site.

Public Relations Team

- Completed confirmation calls to guests/speakers/entertainers.
- Received printed Ribbon-Cutting programs.
- Sent out Media Advisory (should be sent 1-2 weeks out, and again 1-2 days before the build.)
- Sent out Press Release (ideally, 2 weeks before and again 1-2 days after the build.)
- Follow-up calls to media underway (all reporters should be recontacted just before the build).

HORIZON!



Safety Team

- Secured necessary first-aid and safety supplies for the build.
- Photocopied Incident Report Forms.
- Completed confirmation calls to safety coordinators and first-aid provider(s).

Volunteer Recruitment Team

- Completed confirmation calls to build volunteers.
- Pre-assigned all volunteers to build crews (if applicable).



Working with Your Installer

Your installer is vital to the success of your build, so be sure to build a professional and friendly relationship. Although you may already be in regular contact, it's a good idea to set up a formal meeting or phone call 2-4 weeks before the build to be sure that you are both clear on expectations. Here are a few issues to consider during your conversation:

- **Role of the Project Co-chairs.** Installers are experts on play equipment, but they are not necessarily experts on managing large numbers of volunteers. Help your installer by assuming an assertive position and clarifying how the event will be run. Make sure that the installer knows that he/she is responsible for the installation of the play equipment, but that you (along with your co-chair and team captains) are responsible for managing the entire event.
- **Site Preparation/Tools.** Under most agreements, an installer will come out to the site before the build to help with site preparation. He/she should be responsible for laying out the site (measuring the distances and marking hole locations with pegs or marking paint). In addition, an installer is usually responsible for making sure that any specialized tools (such as a transit to measure the depths of the holes, or specific hardware for assembling the play equipment) is available for your build.
- **PlaySpace Construction.** On the day of the build, your installer should be a "hands-on" worker. It is the installer's job to direct volunteers toward specific tasks, instruct volunteers on how to assemble various pieces of play equipment, and make sure that all playspace safety guidelines and requirements are met. The installer is there not only to install the equipment, but also to answer any questions that arise during the installation process.
- **Safety Inspection/Maintenance.** Once construction is complete, the installer should inspect the structure to make sure that everything is in proper working order. You should request a signed letter or certificate in which the installer "signs off" on the job; in addition to giving you peace of mind, this is important for insurance and liability purposes. Depending on the terms of your agreement, the installer might also meet with your maintenance crew after the build to teach them how to maintain the new equipment. You should also ask if maintenance checklists are available for each piece of new equipment.



Once you have this conversation with your installer, it's a good idea to draw up a written agreement. Below is a form that KaBOOM! community partners have used:

Sample “Installer Expectations” Agreement

Name of Project: _____

Site Prep Days: _____

Build Days: _____

[Organization's name] is a non-profit with a mission to provide all children with a safe place to play. Our construction model is a volunteer-based community build. The model utilizes volunteers deployed in teams to build the component pieces, assist with component attachment, spread/install the surfacing materials (when applicable), and assist with concrete mixing and pouring. Throughout the process, we are interested in ensuring that the volunteers have fun, the day is organized, the structure is built to specifications and that all involved are safe and remain free from injuries. We rely heavily upon the installer to work with us to ensure that all participants are provided a meaningful opportunity to participate in the build process in a safe construction environment. In the case of heavy rain or inclement weather, a decision will be made by the project co-chairs to postpone the build until _____ (one week after the scheduled date). We expect that the play equipment company carries a current insurance policy to protect on-site volunteers during the construction of the playspace. Prior to Build Day(s), our organization will ensure that a local utility has cleared the site for digging, and that the soil is free of contaminants.

The expectations of a playspace installer on our playspace build are:

- 2-5 days before the Build Day(s), the installer will arrive on the playspace site to lead volunteers from the Construction Team in laying out all of the holes, flagging the border for the containment system, and drilling the holes. [Note: Site-prep timing is flexible; your site-prep tasks may take place one month, one week, or one day before Build Day(s)!]
- The installer will provide special tools and/or heavy machinery for site-prep tasks.
- The installer will arrive at the build site on _____ at 7:00 AM, ready to work and with a positive attitude about the playspace construction and working with volunteers.
- The installer and the co-chairs are essentially a team; it is important to the success of the Build Day(s) that there is good communication between us and the volunteers. It is also critical that the installer and the co-chairs be respectful and courteous in their interactions with the volunteers.
- The following are prohibited on the work site: smoking, chewing tobacco, and use of profanity (build site is defined as the immediate area where the playspace and side projects are being assembled).





- The installer will work with volunteer teams to install the playspace - providing guidance, being patient, essentially being a leader and a teacher.
- The installer will do a readiness check ensuring that he/she has the tools and equipment needed to begin working with the decks-and-post team.
- The installer will work with a volunteer team to install the posts, decks and component connectors while other teams are building the component pieces off to the side.
- The installer will assist volunteers in attaching components; he/she will also level the structure and facilitate concrete pouring.
- The installer is an expert on the equipment and is expected to ensure that it is installed to specifications. The project co-chairs will ask the installer questions about the playspace construction and installation and will rely upon the expertise of the installer (e.g. a team is having a difficult time putting together a component, the hardware package is short a bolt - do you have an extra?). It is important to remember that this is a community build and the co-chairs are leading the project; therefore, volunteer management is ultimately their responsibility.
- The installer will work with the project co-chairs to facilitate a safe and successful playspace construction in the allotted time frame (by 5 PM).
- The installer will complete an inspection of the playspace once construction is complete, and sign an Installation Certificate.
- If swings are installed, the swings will not be attached on Build Day; the installer will be asked to return two to three days later to attach them.
- If there are any issues or concerns related to installation, the play equipment representative or installer will return to the site to evaluate and follow up with work if deemed necessary.

SPIN!



MOVE!



Preparing for Emergencies

It's impossible to prepare for real emergencies ... that's what makes them emergencies! But you'll have playspace and health professionals on site, and you can create additional tools that will allow you and your teams to deal with the unexpected:

Petty Cash

Work with your fundraising captain to make sure that petty cash is available for last-minute emergencies on Build Day(s). We suggest having between \$150 and \$500 for emergency materials/food/safety purchases. Only you and your co-chair should have access to this fund.

Incident Report Forms

If anyone is hurt during your build, we urge you to fill out an Incident Report form immediately and completely; sometimes details are difficult to remember later. These forms are mainly used by lawyers and/or insurance companies to determine the nature of an accident after the fact. (Look for a sample in the Liability Forms section of your Toolkit Template.) Leave a stack at your first-aid station, and be sure to file any completed forms in a safe place. It's also a good idea to review the form beforehand with your safety captain and safety coordinators.

Leading a Walk Through

Go through the motions ... literally! A walk through is like a Build Day dress rehearsal, and it will get you ready for the big event. In the days leading up to your build, choose a time to meet your entire planning committee at the playspace site and review each Build Day activity in chronological order. (It's also a good idea to invite your point people, build captains, installer and landowner.) By "practicing" the actual build, you'll ensure that all the details have been taken care of and that all project leaders have a clear understanding of their duties. This is a great time for last-minute questions, and it provides one last opportunity to close gaps. Here are three tips for ensuring a productive walk through:

Check in With Your Captains. Is everyone ready? Give each captain a chance to explain their build activities to the group, and make sure that the following items are covered. You still have time to fix any last-minute slips in memory!

- **Children's Activities Captain:** Are all the supplies ready? Have the child care sign-in forms been copied?
- **Construction Captain:** Have all the tools been delivered/purchased? Have they been labeled with owners' names? Are they secure?
- **Food Captain:** Have all deliveries been confirmed? Is there plenty of water? Are all the utensils, plates, etc. in hand?
- **Fundraising Captain:** Will sponsors be getting the recognition that they expect? Are there any donors who wish to remain anonymous?





TIP!

During your walk through, take a few minutes to go over donor recognition with your fundraising and public relations captains. (It's a good idea for all of your team captains to be up to speed on this.) Make sure that names and logos will be displayed properly, and practice Build Day talking points. Remember, some sponsors may wish to remain anonymous! Make sure you're meeting donors' needs.

- **Logistics Captain:** Have arrangements been made for receiving, unloading, storing and securing the equipment and surfacing? Have the water and electricity sources been checked? Are all tables, chairs, tents, trash bins and sound equipment ready? Are the restrooms clean and in good working order?
- **Public Relations Captain:** Are the sponsorship banners ready? Have all advisories and press releases been followed up with phone calls? Have all special guests been confirmed? Are the press kits and programs ready?
- **Safety Captain:** Is the evacuation plan spelled out clearly? Are the emergency phone and first-aid kit ready? Have the incident forms been copied? Are all the safety supplies ready? Do we have signs to point people toward different areas of the build site?
- **Volunteer Recruitment Captain:** Have the sign-in sheets and waivers been copied? Are all the t-shirts and name tags ready?

Walk in Volunteers' Shoes. Remember that the build layout and schedule need to be clear to first-timers. Pretend that you are a new volunteer and go through the experience as they will: parking first, then registration, children's activities, the food table, restrooms, construction, safety, and ribbon cutting. This should help you spot any snags.

Clarify, Clarify, Clarify! To make sure that everyone is on the same page, pose the following questions as you discuss each build activity:

- **What** still needs to be done to prepare for this activity?
- **Who** is in charge of this activity?
- **What** tools and materials do we need?
- **Where** will this activity take place?
- **How** many people will participate?
- **How** long will this activity last?

GET READY!



Training Build Captains

Dozens of eager volunteers will be looking for direction on Build Day(s), so it's important to appoint build captains, or volunteer leaders. Effective leadership depends on being informed and prepared, so schedule a special training session during the week leading up to your build. In the training, be sure to cover:

- **Personal Introductions.** Your build captains may not know each other, so play a name game and start building team spirit!
- **Site Logistics/Safety Rules.** Point out the locations for playspace assembly, restrooms, first aid, food service, water, cutting/sawing operations and children's activities. Review basic safety rules, including age limits, safety accessories and proper lifting.
- **Build Captain Roles & Responsibilities.** Facilitators! Team Builders! Communicators! Tool Pros! Safety Monitors! Stress that it's their job to make sure that volunteers are participating and having a good time. (See Chapter 5 for a complete build captain job description.)
- **Team Assignments.** Make sure that each build captain understands his or her assignment, how many volunteers he or she will be managing, and how his or her job fits into the big picture. Some assignments may seem more exciting than others, so emphasize the importance of each and every team for the overall fun, safety, and long life of the playspace. The **Construction Team Workbook** contains sample build captain Information Sheets for assembling components, mixing concrete and installing surfacing.
- **Construction Basics.** Depending on your own comfort level, you may want to ask your installer to come out for a 15-20 minute installation overview. This might include a demonstration of key hardware (like hex/allen keys or different nuts and bolts), an explanation of clamps and attachment types, and a quick guide to deck mounting. This is also the time to give build captains any printed materials from your play equipment company (such as Installation Guidelines) that may help them.
- **Review of the Build Schedule.** Distribute your Build Day Timetable, and make sure that your build captains understand the scheduling of the day, especially the following build tasks:
 - 1) **Volunteer Deployment:** Explain where, when and how each build captain should identify and gather his or her volunteers.
 - 2) **Playground Construction:** This schedule varies from project to project, but it is always important to review the priorities and order of construction tasks.





TIP!

The more thorough your build captain training, the smoother your build will be. Set aside plenty of time, and make sure that every question gets answered.

- 3) **Surfacing and Concreting:** Make sure that build captains understand the basic surfacing requirements for safety and accessibility. Surfacing is usually a big job - if any volunteers seem bored or under-employed, tell build captains to direct them to the mulch pile!
- 4) **Play Environment Side Projects:** Remind everyone that in case of rain or a shortage of volunteers, side projects may be postponed. On the other hand, extra volunteers can be directed to spur-of-the-moment side projects!
- 5) **Clean Up:** Last but not least! Build captains should be responsible for tool inventory and remind their volunteers to pick up after meals.

JUMP!



BOUNCE!





Rallying the Troops

What's the name of Mile Marker 6? Energize! At the end of a long, sometimes difficult planning process, it's important to rejuvenate and get excited about play again. As the project leader, that process starts with you - it's important to attend to your own needs in the days ahead. Below we've gathered some stress busters that will help you unwind, and our playspace cheers will help you spread that energy and excitement to your planning committee and volunteers!

Stress Reducers

Pause and take a deep breath ... your build is just around the corner! You've thought everything through (twice!) but most playspace organizers really start to notice their stress level rising about a week before the build. This is normal, so here are some tips on reducing your stress level:

- **Continue to plan.** Being disorganized this close to the build will only increase your stress. You've made it this far, and you're obviously capable of good planning. This is the last week, so pay attention to details and keep up the great job!
- **Recognize and accept your limits.** Perfection is an admirable but unattainable goal. There are things that are simply beyond your control (especially this late in the game), so learn to accept that and move on. Focus on achievable goals this week! Remember that you've got great project leaders, and people will rise to the occasion.
- **Focus on the positive.** Think back to your initial project vision, and picture what the children's faces will look like as they rush onto the playspace that you built *just for them*. No matter what, you're going to walk away from this project with a brand new playspace that will benefit your community for years to come!
- **Talk to someone about your concerns and challenges.** It doesn't help to keep your stress all bottled up inside. In fact, by discussing a troublesome issue with someone else, you may hit upon a solution! Talk out your troubles with team captains, relatives and friends.
- **Practice breathing/relaxation techniques.** Breathing exercises are simple, and they are a proven method of fighting stress. Breathe in deeply through your nose and blow out gently through your mouth. Count to 10 as you take these deep breaths. Practice now, because you may need to rely on this skill during the build!
- **Don't forget to have fun and play!** That's what this is all about! Take the time to have fun. Go for a run. Sing in the shower. Tell a joke during your last playspace planning committee meeting, or take your team captains out for a fun evening. Remember: Laughter is the best medicine.

No plan can prevent a stupid person from doing the wrong thing in the wrong place at the wrong time - but a good plan should keep a concentration from forming.

- Charles E. Wilson, former president of General Motors



CHEER!

Favorite KaBOOM! Build Cheers

Lead these cheers at your build captain training, walk through, site prep and throughout the build!

I've Been Workin' on the Playground

(to the tune of I've Been Workin' on the Railroad)

I've been workin' on this playground,
all the live-long day.
I've been workin' on this playground,
To give kids a place to play.
Don't you hear the Captain shouting?
Rise up so early for some fun!
Can't you imagine all the kids playing?
Swing and slide today in the sun!
I've been workin' on this playground,
all the live-long day.
I'll keep workin' on this playground,
so more kids can play today!
Hooray!

Build, Build, Build a Playground!

(to the tune of Row, Row, Row your Boat)

Build, build, build a playground,
For the kids to play,
Playfully, playfully, playfully, playfully,
We'll build it all the way!
(repeat)

Take Me Out to the Playground

(to the tune of Take Me Out to the Ballgame)

Take me out to the playground,
Take me out with my friends!
Sliding and climbing and swinging,
We'll be wishing that recess won't end!
From a wish, a hope and a dream
A playground is now at hand!
So three cheers for all at (NAME OF SITE)
With our playground, life is grand!

Get on Your Feet and Cheer for Play!

Gimme a P!
Gimme an L!
Gimme an A!
Gimme a Y!
What's that spell?
PLAY!
What's that spell?
PLAY!
That's what we're here for, right?
RIGHT!

A Beginning Cheer to Get You On Your Way!

How about three big 'Hip Hip Let's Play!'
to start the day?
All: Hip Hip Let's Play! (repeat 3 times!)

PLAY!



Mile 6 Activity Checklist ✓

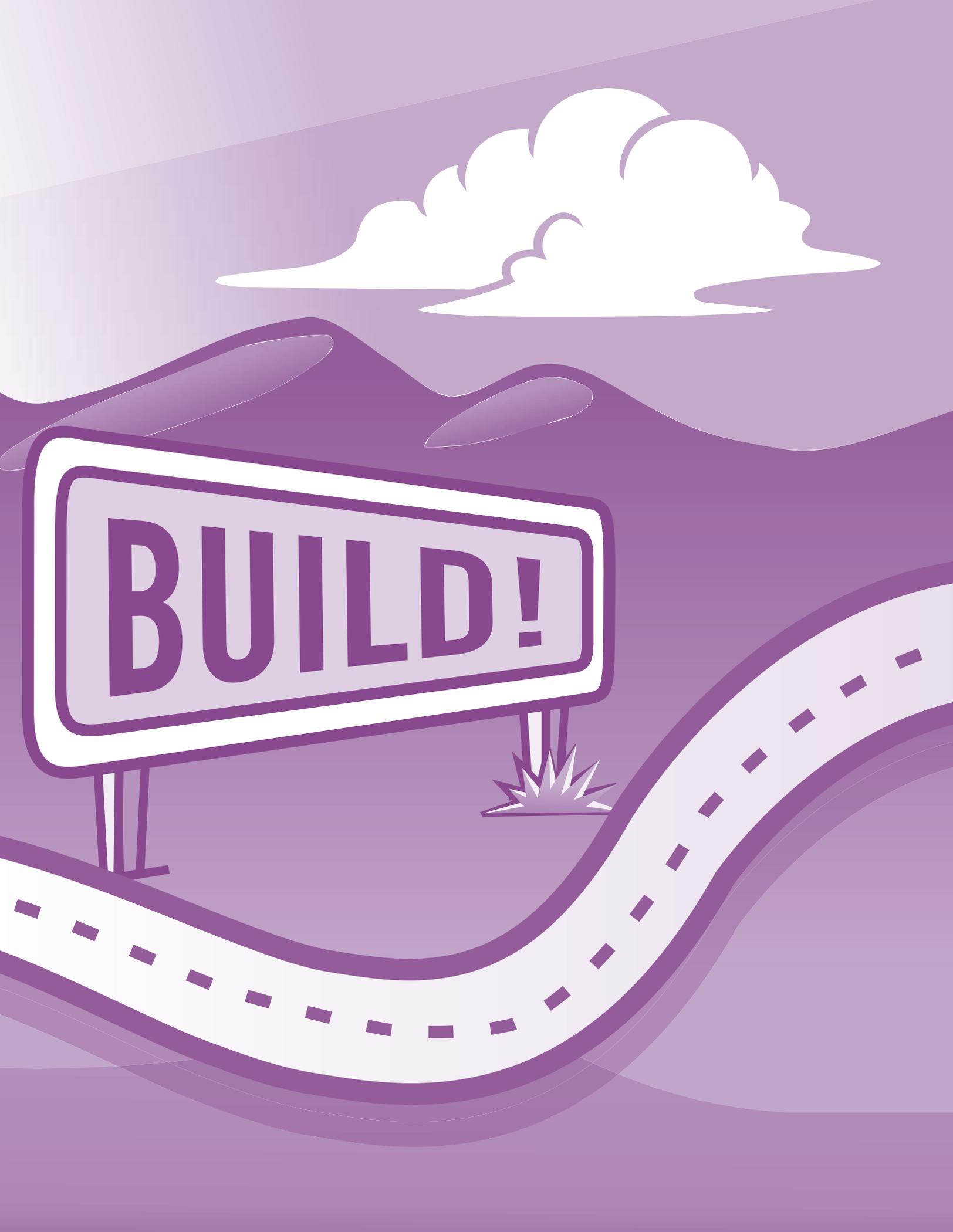
Ready or not, here it comes! You've done an incredible job of preparing, and we know that you'll have a spectacular build. Check off these activities and put on your play clothes!

- Yes! The final fundraising results are in. We've balanced our budget and we've compiled a list of donors to thank and congratulate.
- Yes! We've reconfirmed our list of construction volunteers, safety and children's activities volunteers, tool donors, food donors, and Ribbon-Cutting guests. Everyone is excited to participate!
- Yes! We've sent out a media advisory to notify local newspapers, radio and television of the big build.
- Yes! We have been in communication with our playspace installer, and he or she will supervise site prep as well as provide any specialized tools and hardware. Our installer also understands how the build has been organized, including the schedule, site layout and team captain/ build captain roles.
- Yes! We've prioritized Build Day side projects in case volunteer turnout is lower than we expect, and we've brainstormed extra activities in case of a huge turnout!
- Yes! We've confirmed a delivery schedule for the new equipment and surfacing.
- Yes! Our build captains are trained and ready to go!
- Yes! We've performed an official "walk through" to practice the build with our team captains and build captains. We also practiced our Build Day cheers!
- Yes! We are ready to build a new playspace and change a child's world!!**

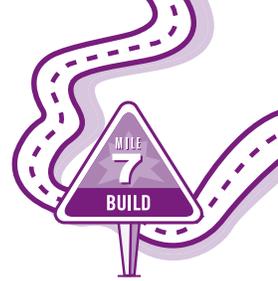


Your Build is Here!

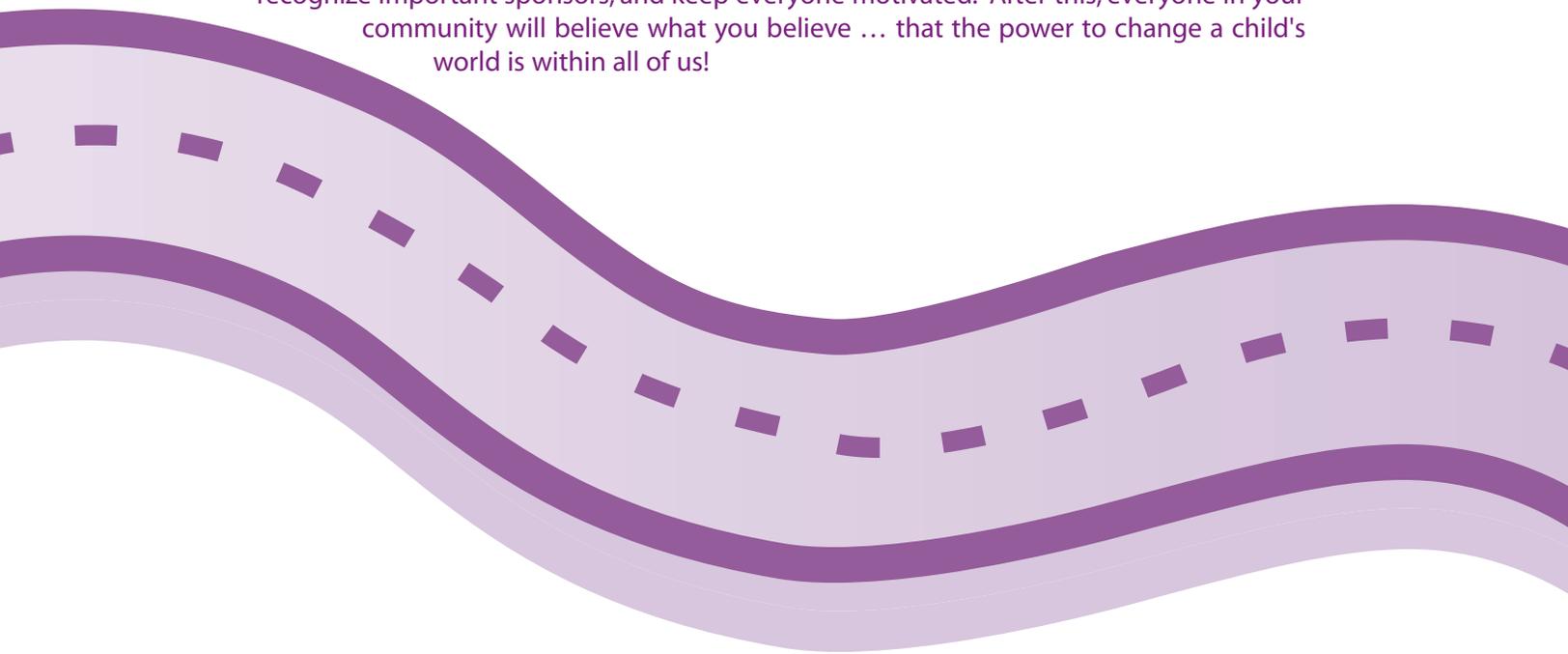
YEAH!



BUILD!

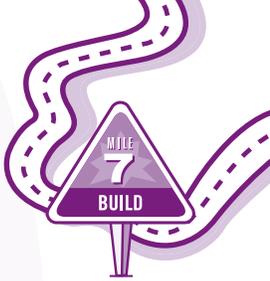


Your playspace build is finally here ... the culmination of your long journey! After weeks, months or years of planning, what began as just a spark of inspiration is about to become a reality for the children in your community. Hooray! You've reached **Mile 7: Build**. Even if you're an experienced organizer, we bet you'll be amazed to see the explosive power of your community at work. Your team captains will manage most of the details on Build Day, so your job is to oversee the build, head off problems as they arise, address the media, recognize important sponsors, and keep everyone motivated. After this, everyone in your community will believe what you believe ... that the power to change a child's world is within all of us!



MILE 7: BUILD

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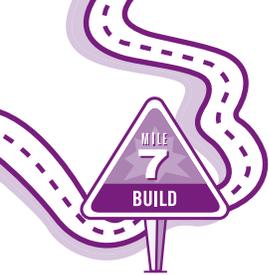
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Overseeing Your Build

You're on cruise control now! If you've planned well and your team leaders are informed and organized, overseeing the build will be fairly straightforward. As a project leader, the most important thing you can do on Build Day(s) is to **be calm, available and ready to help**. Arrive at the build site very early in the morning to help your team captains set up. Throughout the day, check in with each activity at least twice to make sure that things are running smoothly. Finally, don't hesitate to pick up a shovel or a trash bag! Pitch in whenever and wherever you're needed, from getting the registration table in order to serving burgers at lunch. Below, we've outlined some of the specifics of being a good project leader:

TiP!

Save your wheelbarrows for mixing and transporting concrete! The most efficient way to move loose-fill surfacing (e.g. mulch, sand, pea gravel) is to have teams of volunteers (2-4 people) shovel it onto plastic or canvas tarps and carry it onto the playspace by hand. Now that's people power!

Trouble-Shooting: Common Build Day Problems and Solutions

You are the official crisis manager and quick thinker of the playspace build. What do you do when problems arise on Build Day(s)? First, remain calm! If you are relaxed and professional in difficult situations, everyone else will react accordingly. In Miles 5 and 6, you established a plan for dealing with unexpected crises, and this should guide you around major bumps. However, no plan is perfect, and quick thinking, calmness, and on-site problem solving will greatly enhance your build.

Just so you can be prepared, here are some of the more common Build Day problems KaBOOM! partners have encountered in the past:

Low Volunteer Turnout

- *Preventative Solution:* Consider pre-registering at least some of the volunteers. People are more likely to show up if they have made the commitment of pre-registering. Make a prioritized list of all construction projects so that volunteers can be directed to key activities first. Remember although you may overestimate volunteer numbers to the media before the build, DO NOT exaggerate with your planning committee. Give them the real number so that they can prepare adequately.
- *Build Day Solution:* Building the playspace should be your first priority. Use all the volunteers that you can to install the play equipment, and then move on to other projects that will only be tackled if there are enough volunteers.

Extra Volunteers Show Up

- *Preventative Solution:* Again, pre-registering volunteers will help you get a more realistic number. If you get more volunteers than expected, try to add additional peripheral projects that are low-cost but high-volunteer value, like landscaping. Pre-registering also allows you the option to schedule volunteers in shifts, which will help to control turnout.

What we plan we build.
- Conte Vittorio Alfieri, Italian poet



- *Build Day Solution:* Will your build have teams of volunteers moving loose-fill surfacing (e.g. sand, mulch)? Assigning extra people to this labor-intensive task is the best way to utilize them. Are you keeping any existing play equipment? Buy some cleaning supplies and something like ArmorAll (to give extra uumpph to those slides!) and create a "playspace maintenance" crew. Finally, think fast! Look around the site and think of where you could spruce up the landscape or help volunteer traffic flow more smoothly.

Got Volunteers?

Congratulations! Tons of people want to participate in the excitement of your playspace build ... now you just need to put them to work! After sending as many people as possible to the mulch pile, assign extra volunteers to these easy jobs:

- Direct Traffic - Cars *and* People
- New Paint Jobs - Fences, Buildings, Old Play Equipment
- Landscaping - Pull Weeds, Trim Shrubbery, Rake Leaves, Edge Sidewalks
- Games - Paint Hopscotch/ Four-Square Markings
- Crafts - Make Wind Chimes or Sponsor Thank-You's
- Water Patrol - Keep Volunteers Hydrated, Collect Empty Cups & Bottles
- Clean Up - Collect Trash, Separate Recyclables, Clean Tools
- Lead Cheers - Hip, Hip, Let's Play!!

Rain

- *Preventative Solution:* Did we forget to tell you how to control the weather for your build?? (Just kidding). Look back to Mile 5 for a guide to foul-weather planning, and always advertise your build as a rain-or-shine event.
- *Build Day Solution:* Put on your raincoat and a smile, and get to work motivating everyone else!

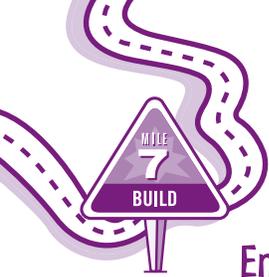


Tools are Missing at the End of the Build

- *Preventative Solution:* If you are working with donated tools, make sure that each tool is clearly marked with the name of its owner. Create a system for checking tools in and out, and put one person in charge of implementing that system. Remind your build captains to keep track of the tools being used by their teams.
- *Build Day Solution:* Volunteers often slip small hardware (like nuts and bolts) into their pockets to free up their hands ... and then forget about them! Announce pocket checks every couple of hours (lunch time and breaks are ideal) and ask volunteers to please turn out their pockets before leaving.

An Important Material (e.g. Concrete) Runs Out

- *Preventative Solution:* Ask your installer to help you to decide on quantities before ordering. Double-check your materials when they arrive ... you may not get exactly what you ordered! Finally, set aside emergency funds (e.g. petty cash) and appoint a designated errand runner.
- *Build Day Solution:* Send a runner to go to the nearest store to pick up what's needed.

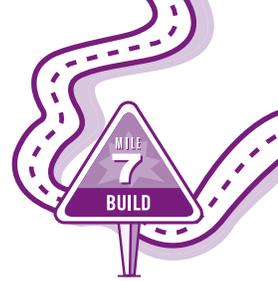


Enforcing Safety Rules

Safety is probably the most critical element of your build, so make sure that at least one certified first-aid provider will be on site at all times (it's best to have several people working in shifts). As you roam the site, check to see that all volunteers are adhering to safety standards, especially when heavy machinery is in use. Strictly enforce the rule that **no children are allowed on the construction site**. This is not a popular rule, but as the head of the project you are responsible if anything happens. Below are rules to follow for a safe Build Day:

Important Build Day Safety Rules

- Each volunteer must REGISTER and get a name tag.
- Skilled workers' name tags will have two colored stickers. Unskilled workers' name tags will have one colored sticker.
- Children must be registered and reported to the children's activities coordinators.
- No children under 15 are allowed on the construction site.
- Clothing: No open shoes or loose clothing are allowed on the construction site.
- Gloves, hard hats, ear plugs and safety glasses will be available for your protection. Please use them for your own SAFETY.
- Stand clear of any material while it is dumping.
- Protect your hands and eyes at ALL TIMES; use gloves and safety glasses.
- Report any injuries to the PlaySpace co-chairs.
- Be aware of moving machinery.
- Watch your footing on loose gravel.
- No smoking in the playspace construction zone. Please use the designated smoking area.
- Do not lay any tools down (especially rakes or shovels). When you are through, please return tools to the tools/materials table.
- Remember to use sun block, if necessary, or wear a hat.
- Remember to take breaks and DRINK WATER.
- When bending or lifting, please use your legs and make sure your knees are bent. WATCH YOUR BACK!
- Watch for children around the site.
- Do not operate machinery or tools (or do anything) that you don't understand. If you have questions, please ask a build captain.



Motivating Volunteers

Remember that if you're having fun, everyone else will have fun too! You'll have a lot on your mind during the build, but this is what you've been working toward for months, so enjoy it! To keep spirits high, we like to make sure that the three "F's" are always present at a community playspace build: Food, Facts and Fun.

Food

Hard-working volunteers get hungry quickly, and free food guarantees that they'll stay happy and energetic. Planning light meals also encourages everyone to take much-needed breaks and mingle with unfamiliar faces.

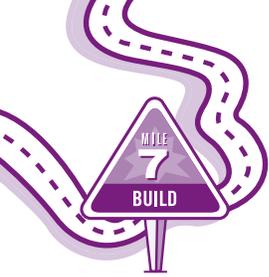
Facts

Volunteers will be more focused and productive if they have at least a general understanding of what's going on. Review the day's schedule during kick-off, and get on your microphone or bullhorn to give occasional progress reports. Be sure to tell volunteers what a great job they're doing!

Fun

Your planning process has been quite an adventure, and now it's time to make sure that *everyone* in your community has a piece of the amazing playspace-building experience ... the fun, the excitement, and the great sense of accomplishment. Do you see people hanging around on the sidelines? Pull them into a game or lead them to the crafts table. Think of wacky ways to spice up the day: Raffle off prizes, hide small tokens in the surfacing pile, hire a clown, or kick off the morning with group stretches and cheers. Play a "getting-to-know-you" game that requires volunteers to learn each other's names. Give awards for "most surfacing moved" or "most enthusiastic volunteer." This is a big day in your community, so show off your wild side and remind everyone that you're there because play is important - for kids and adults!

FOCUS!



Addressing the Media and Recognizing Sponsors

If your public relations captain has done his or her job well, you'll be talking to several reporters during your build. First and foremost, remember to treat members of the press like important guests - always give them your full attention! Reporters and camera crews have a busy and demanding job, so you'll want to make it as easy as possible to cover your event. Set up a media check-in table where they can speak with a committee member and pick up an information folder with the latest press release. Then give them a "tour" of the event, and explain all the different activities going on. If possible, coordinate media visits when children's activities will be going on, when volunteers will be carrying assembled equipment over to the playspace, or when they're tightening those last few bolts ... all of these make for great photo opportunities!

Remember that anything you say might appear in print or on television, so always stay "on message." To prepare for interviews, review your media skills from Mile 4, including:

- Plan a brief, concise message ahead of time.
- Choose three points to focus on.
- Be positive.
- Be honest.
- Mention important sponsors by name.
- Mention your organization or your partners.
- Coordinate your remarks with your colleagues.
- Tell a story.
- Use fun figures.

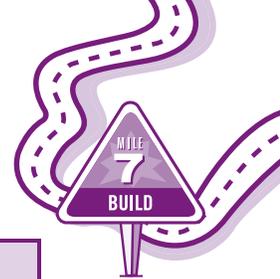
ENGAGE!

And finally, remember to relax! Have fun and enjoy the spotlight. If you're worried about stage fright, consider dressing up in a silly hat or costume ... like a giant slide or swingset! In fact, get your whole planning committee to dress up - you'll instantly feel bolder and more playful, and you'll be media darlings on Build Day(s)!

★ The State of Nebraska celebrated its first official Day of Play on July 29, 2004! As part of the PR strategy for a Home Depot playground build at Girls, Inc. in Omaha, Nebraska, the PR committee asked Governor Mike Johanns to make such a proclamation. Recognizing the importance of play for a child's development, Governor Johanns enthusiastically signed the Proclamation, and encouraged all Nebraskans to support a child's right to play by visiting a local playground.

When we do the best that we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another.

- Helen Keller



Sample Build Day Talking Points

- "This community could have just hired a contractor to build this playspace, but we decided to work together toward this incredible accomplishment. If we can do this today, imagine what we can do tomorrow!"
- "Today we saw the awesome power of ## volunteers from [XYZ Sponsors] and [Community Name] working together to create a society that cares for children."
- "Today, we're not just building a playspace - we're working with great partners like [Community Organization] and [XYZ Sponsors] to plant the seeds for ongoing positive change."
- "This playspace was designed by the playspace experts - kids - and built by [Community Name] in gracious partnership with [XYZ Sponsors]."

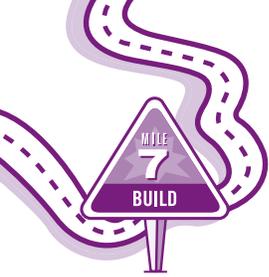
Preparing for Emergencies

After the last bolt is tightened and the last pile of surfacing is raked underneath your new playground, a huge flood of relief and fatigue will wash over you. YOU DID IT!! We know you're tired, but now is the time to finally **CELEBRATE** the achievement of your long-standing goal with all the people who supported your project. A festive post-build ceremony can distinguish a good build from a great and memorable one, because it magnifies the pride and emotion felt by all the playspace builders. We strongly recommend holding some type of brief ceremony immediately after the build, while all your volunteers are gathered together with fresh sweat and dirt on their brows. Volunteers will feel appreciated, sponsors will get high-profile recognition, and the media will have a focal point for a great story. Your ribbon-cutting ceremony is also a great time to invite the 'designers' of the playspace, the children, back onto the site for a photo opportunity! (Remember, the site may not be ready for play! If you used concrete to anchor the equipment, it will need at least 24 hours to set.)

Playspace "opening ceremonies" can take a variety of forms, and the style of your event will depend on the style of your community...play up your project's unique spirit! Some communities plan two or more ceremonies - the first immediately following the build, and another as soon as the concrete cures, the surface is in place, or in conjunction with an important community event. Work with your public relations captain to plan a fun, unique ceremony. You'll need to coordinate inviting significant guests, finalizing the program, serving as Master of Ceremonies, and keeping the show running on schedule. Here are a few of our favorite Ribbon-Cutting ideas from KaBOOM! builds:

- Participants in the M.D. Anderson YMCA build in Houston, Texas wrote and performed a playspace rap for their ceremony.
- After fashioning a chain-link "ribbon" that stretched around the entire playspace, all the participating volunteers at the Andrus Children's Center in Yonkers, NY stepped up to cut the ribbon simultaneously, giving everyone a small souvenir of the day's build.



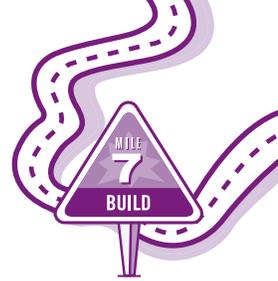


TiP!

Imagine this scenario: your PR captain has planned an awesome Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony. Special guests and entertainers are in place. Reporters' cameras are ready and turned toward you. There's just one problem . . . the playspace isn't finished! What do you do? Ultimately it's up to you and your committee, but we recommend carrying out the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony **on schedule** and completing build details later. Don't miss the opportunity to have an inspiring and well-attended ceremony!

- Colorful puppets took the stage in Kiowa, Colo., for a ribbon-cutting musical show written and performed by local children.
- Children from the Boys & Girls Clubs of Las Vegas made and decorated goodie bags for all the build volunteers, stuffed with prizes from local vendors, club merchandise, pencils, candy, and t-shirts.
- Volunteers at the Girls, Inc. build in Omaha, Neb. were treated to a personal poetry reading that honored their service. Ten girls also spelled out V-O-L-U-N-T-E-E-R-S, with each letter representing a quality shared by the community builders.
- An all-school assembly was the setting for the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony at C.O. Greenfield Elementary in Phoenix, Ariz., with entertainment provided by the school marching band and flag team.
- Every student at Immaculate Conception in Memphis, Tenn. colored a paper doll to look like him/her self. All of the dolls were cut out and strung together with yarn, making a special chain for their playspace's Ribbon-Cutting.
- The roster of guest speakers for a Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony in Little Rock, Ark. included a congressman, superintendent of schools, the president of the PTA, and a representative from CNA, the corporate sponsor. The person chosen to cut the ribbon, however, was the 8-year-old girl whose drawing had been chosen for the event's T-shirts.
- The Santa Monica, Calif. YWCA finished their Build Day with a simple milk-and brownie toast!

FRESH!



Ensuring Proper Installation

Can you believe it? **YOU DID IT.** The children and youth in your community have a brand new playspace that will serve their physical, social and developmental needs for years to come. Before you go home and get a great night's sleep, there's one last thing to do - make sure that the playspace has been properly installed.

Your installer should complete a playspace inspection form to certify that each component is in place and meets safety standards. (You'll find a sample form in the Liability Forms section of your Toolkit Template.) As we said before, this is important not only for your peace of mind but also for insurance and liability purposes.

Depending on the agreement you've made, your installer might also meet with your playspace maintenance crew to brief them on the new structure. **Anyone who will be responsible for ongoing maintenance checks should become familiar with the playspace components now, while they are in mint condition; take advantage of your installer's presence to ask questions.** You should also make sure that you've received inspection forms for each component, and a maintenance kit for the new equipment.

Finally, we recommend completing a Post-Build Punch List with your construction captain. This is basically a "to do" list of unfinished construction business - in the midst of a whirlwind build, it's easy to forget small but important details. Writing these items down will help you follow up!

CONNECTION!



SAFETY!





KaBOOM! Post-Build Punch List

Written By: _____

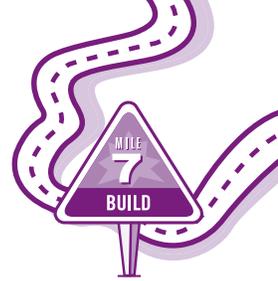
Date: _____

Item	Yes/No	Date Completed	Person Responsible
Was all the play equipment delivered?			
Have arrangements been made for a quick shipment of missing part(s)?			
Is there a plan for installing the new piece(s) upon delivery?			
Were all the rivets driven into the clamps?			
Was there an inspection to ensure that all bolts were tight and none were protruding?			
Did we receive a signed inspection certificate?			
Was enough safety surfacing installed? (Use zones and depth of surfacing were measured.)			
Do we have the tools, materials and skills to hang swings once the concrete has dried? (if applicable)			
Are all warning signs/stickers applied in the correct places?			
Have all construction materials and tools been removed from the site?			
Have we received our maintenance kit?			
Have all Build Day injuries, accidents, or damages to property been properly documented?			
The installer has agreed to follow-up by _____ to address the following issues:			
Notes: _____ _____ _____ _____			

Finally, once the concrete is dry, celebrate your new playspace the right way ... by playing on it!

"It's much needed and long overdue. It's a better place for our children and our adults. It's a win-win for the community. This is what you call community pride."

- Johnny Garcia, school-board president, El Monte, CA

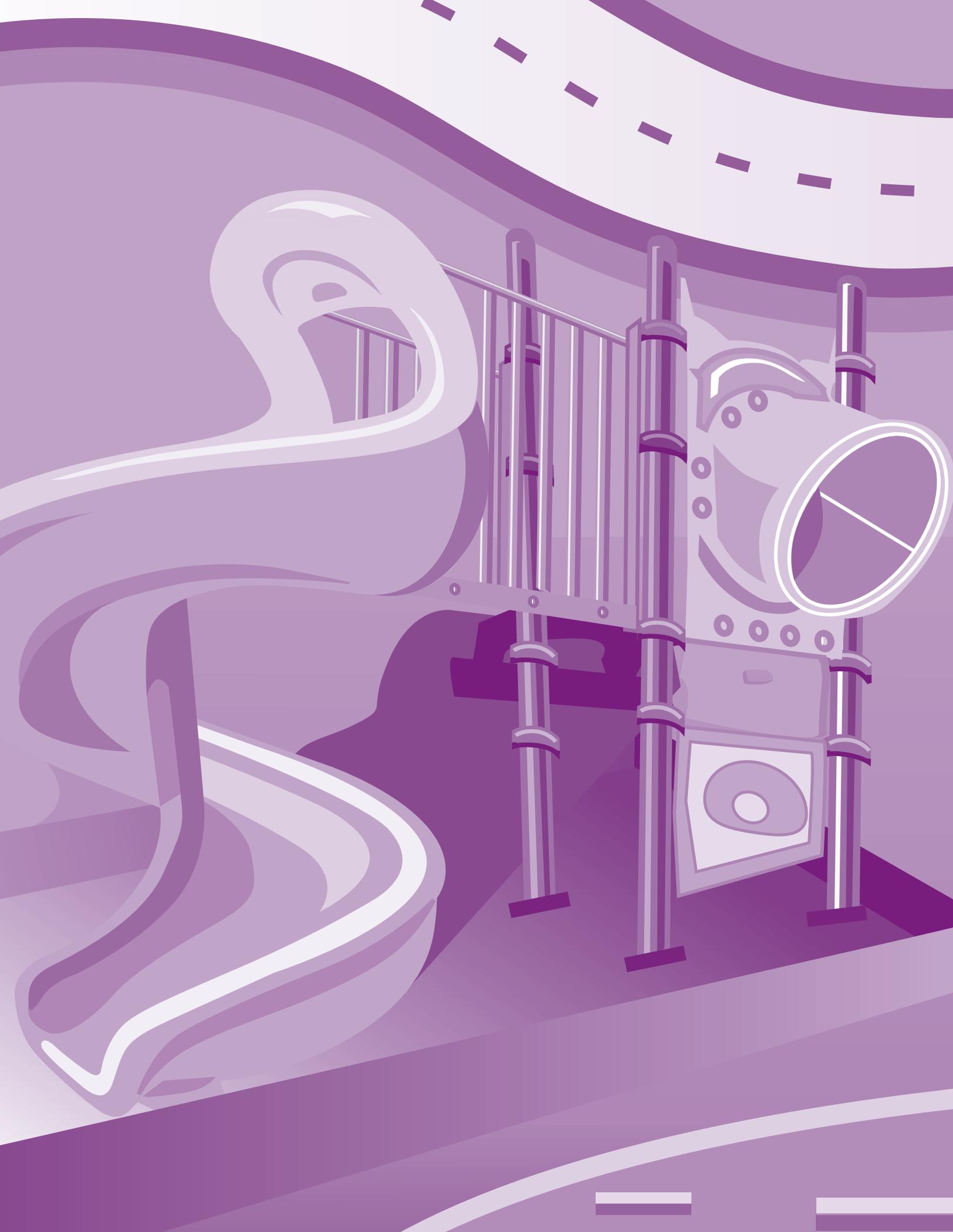


Mile 7 Activity Checklist ✓

What a difference a day makes - you've changed the world for hundreds of kids! After the whirlwind dies down, check your list and make sure that nothing was forgotten amidst all the build excitement:

- Yes! WE DID IT! We built our new playspace with the help of hard-working community volunteers.
- Yes! We installed a permanent and visible risk-management sign that informs users of playspace age-appropriateness and safety rules.
- Yes! We've hung caution tape and instructed all children to stay away from the play space until the concrete has dried. (if applicable)
- Yes! We held a festive Ribbon-Cutting celebration during which we thanked donors, recognized special volunteers, and involved children or youth.
- Yes! Our installer completed a certificate of playspace inspection following the build; he or she also provided maintenance information for the new equipment, and a maintenance kit.
- Yes! We completed a Punch List and are prepared to complete any remaining items.
- Yes! The story of our community build is set to appear (or has already appeared!) in local media.
- Yes! I have a list of everyone who has been involved with the playspace project from beginning to end; I've let them know that I might contact them in the future for community recreation programs, fun playspace events, or clean-up days.
- Yes! We are ready to play on our new playspace!!**

FINISH LINE!





We'll say it again ... YOU DID IT! Thanks to your vision and commitment, children and youth in your community have a safe place to release their energy and enjoy their childhood. Think you've reached the end? In fact, this is only the beginning of a great journey. This is **Mile 8 and Beyond: Maintain!** Your playspace equipment and surfacing aren't the only elements that require routine maintenance - by mobilizing a large number of people around a volunteer project, you've forged new community relationships and opened up new avenues for positive change. You've planted a seed that will continue to grow in your community, if you tend it carefully. This is the road to stronger communities!

MILE 8: MAINTAIN

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Introducing Children to Your PlaySpace

As the concrete cures on your new playspace, kids will be eagerly waiting to pounce on the new equipment. Swings, slides and climbers need no introduction! However, children may not understand the materials and/or the limits of their new playspace. Does the safety surfacing mean that we can't get hurt? How many people can play at a time? Will metal pieces get hot? How do we decide whose turn it is? What happens if we throw pieces of safety surfacing? You can bet that they won't voice these and other important questions, so be sure to address them up front!

We've encouraged you to give safety and maintenance lessons throughout the planning process, and this is your last chance to reinforce rules and procedures before unsafe habits get underway. Schedule a special playspace-orientation session that covers:

- **Affirmative Rules for the PlaySpace.** Focus on what kids *should* do on the playspace, rather than on what is forbidden. (Examples: Sit in the center of the swing! Hold on with both hands! Be patient and wait your turn!) Ask for the kids' input when making a definitive list of rules.
- **Emergency Procedures.** What should children do in case of an accident or an emergency? Head off potential confusion with clear guidelines.
- **Maintenance.** Children will be very impressed by how clean and shiny the new equipment is. Teach them how they can play a role in keeping it that way! (See page 209-210 for more information on regular maintenance checks.)

Now, enjoy watching them play! You've made an immediate, powerful impact on their lives and you deserve to be proud.

BLISS!



Hosting a Final “Planning” Meeting

Why meet with your team captains now that your project is “all over”? A final planning meeting serves two very important objectives: celebration and evaluation. After the craziness surrounding your build and post-build festivities, a final meeting is an opportunity to quietly celebrate your success with the people who were there from the beginning, and who worked hardest to make it all happen. Evaluation is also a critical part of wrapping up all that hard work. It will allow you to analyze problems, strengthen your personal bonds, and produce a useful blueprint for future community projects. And, if you still need a good reason, just think of how nice it will be to meet with your team captains when there are no deadlines, tasks or problems to troubleshoot!

Although there is no right or wrong way to conduct an honest evaluation, there are ways to make the product more useful to you and your partnering organizations. First, consider what your goals are. Will the evaluation be for your records only, or does one of your sponsors require a formal written report? Will you publish the results in a newsletter or on a website? What future community projects might use your evaluation, and who on your committee might benefit the most from a thorough reflection?

Next, choose a setting that reflects your committee's goals. You may want to have an informal pizza party, or perhaps you'll host a more structured meeting with a written agenda and flip charts. To maximize productivity, you might want to have each team captain complete his or her team evaluation form (located in the Team Workbooks) before coming to the meeting. Or, if your group is too busy to get together, simply collect these evaluations separately ... just be sure to give an incentive for sending them in! Regardless of the meeting style you choose, here are some topics to cover in your project evaluation:

Final Planning Meeting: Topics to Cover

Process

- How long did it take you to plan, organize and fundraise for your project?
- Was this longer or shorter than expected? If longer, what were the major obstacles that extended your time? If it was shorter ... why?
- Did the planning process unfold as you expected it to? Explain.
- What was the best part of the process and why?
- What was the most difficult part of the process and why?
- If you could go back and change anything about the process, what would you change? Why?
- What have you personally learned from being a part of the playspace planning process?

DEDICATION!



CONNECT!

- If you could give one piece of advice to a group like yours, what would it be?
- Did the community-build process bring together groups or organizations that normally wouldn't collaborate? Explain.
- Do you think that the community-build process will have any long-term impact on your community? If so, what?

Fundraising

- How much money did your committee raise for this project?
- How long did it take you?
- What were your most successful fundraising strategies? Least successful?
- What did you learn about fundraising, and how would you change your approach in the future? Explain.



Committee

- Did your committee achieve its planned goals and objectives? If not, why?
- Were the personal dynamics in your group helpful or harmful to the process? Explain.
- In what circumstances was your committee especially effective?
- In what circumstances was your committee not so effective?
- How much time would you guess an average committee member spent on playspace planning per week?
- What would you do differently next time around regarding your committee, and why?

Build Day(s)

- Was site preparation completed in advance of the build? Did you encounter any problems?
- How long did it take for you to complete the playspace installation?
- How many volunteers worked to build the playspace? Was this number adequate? Explain.
- Were you satisfied with the media's reception to your build? Explain.



- What was the highlight of Build Day(s)?
- What was the low point?
- If you could redo your build, what would you change? Is there anything that you think worked particularly well and would NOT change?

PlaySpace

- What play equipment company did your group select? How would you rate their services on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the absolute best? How about their product? Their staff and representatives?
- Is the playspace what you expected? Explain.
- Are you satisfied with the surfacing material? Explain.
- Are the kids enjoying the playspace? Do adults spend time there?
- What's the best thing about your new playspace? The worst?
- How could you improve your play environment?
- What long-term impact do you think the playspace will have on children and on your community?

CLIMB!
EXPLORE!



Thanking Sponsors & Volunteers

Showing your appreciation to sponsors and volunteers is more than just good manners - it's also a great way to foster continued interest and involvement in your playspace! Everyone who donated time, money, skills or materials to your project deserves a big thank you. Start by thanking yourself, your co-chair and your team captains ... you couldn't have done it without them! In fact, there are probably many people whom you think deserve special thanks for their hard work and support. A personal note from you and your co-chair should go to individuals or groups who went above and beyond the call of duty, those volunteers who put in particularly long hours, and to major sponsors. Each of your team captains should have his or her own list of people to thank; check in with them to coordinate your efforts and make sure that no one falls through the cracks.

People Deserving of Thank You's

Individual Donors	Sponsors
Your Business and Foundation Contacts	Build Volunteers
Staff, Teachers and Parents	Play-Equipment Representative/Installer
Team Captains	Property Owner
Members of Planning Sub-Committees	Children's Activities Volunteers
Build Captains	First-Aid Providers
Media	Safety Coordinators
Food Donors	Legal/Financial Advisors
Tool/Material Donors	Ribbon-Cutting Guests/Speakers

FANTASTIC!
SMASHING!



KaBOOM! Top Ten Ways to Say Thank You:

To make a lasting impression, think outside of the notecard! Use your creativity and playfulness to show your supporters how much they've meant to your project.

- 10) **Post-Build Barbecue!** After the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony, celebrate with everybody's favorite food and beverages. Tell everyone that it's okay to play with their food!
- 9) **T-shirts!** Put the names of all sponsors and donors on a colorful, creative t-shirt.
- 8) **Awards Ceremony!** Give out small trophies to people who truly earned them (the person who hauled the most mulch, the organization or committee member who recruited the most volunteers, the person who sweated the most, the organizer who stressed the most...) Is your town sports-crazed? Cue the Olympic theme song and give gold medals to volunteer winners and major sponsors. Have a local trophy company donate them - or better yet, have children make them!
- 7) **Banners, Banners, Banners!** Have a local business donate banners with the names of major sponsors and supporters. (Include the name of the business that donated the banner!) Hang them over the playspace, over a downtown street, or drag them behind a plane!
- 6) **Skywriting!** Try to get a company to do a skywriting message for the whole town to see. This one might be difficult to find, but think how charged your volunteers will be when "Thank You PlaySpace Builders" appears in the sky!
- 5) **Newspaper Ad!** Place a full page ad in the local paper during the week following the build. Just imagine: It's Sunday morning. You crawl out of bed, put on a pot of coffee and go fetch the morning paper from the end of the driveway. You open to page 3 and see a wonderful picture of children playing on the playspace that you just helped build, with a huge headline saying "Thanks to all who were a part of the build!" What a great way to start the day!
- 4) **Time Capsule of Play!** Let kids, donors and friends of the playspace choose objects that have a special relationship to the playspace build. Display and bury the time capsule during the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony, and choose a future date to unearth it (at least 10 years from now!). You might include drawings from Design Day, a dirty t-shirt from the build, a proclamation from the Mayor declaring the day Playspace Day, product donations from participating businesses, a broken clamp/bolt, or whatever else you can think of! Remind everyone that with proper maintenance, the playspace will still be around when the capsule is removed!





- 3) **Permanent Plaque or Marker!** This is another great way to say thank you - a permanent plaque or sign with an inscription dedicating the playspace to all who made it possible. Commission a special plaque, or add the inscription to permanent safety signs at the playspace. Officially unveil it at the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony!
- 2) **PlaySpace Photo Album!** Preserve that feeling of community spirit and pride by compiling your best photos from Design Day, fundraising events, children's activities and Build Day(s) into a simple but touching memento. Consider having children design the cover! If you race to a one-hour photo store, you can have these ready for the Ribbon-Cutting, or you can wait until the concrete is dry and include photos of children playing on the new playspace.

**And the #1 way to say
"thank you" to sponsors, donors, and
one another is...**

- 1) **Simply go up to individuals**, pat them on the back, shake their hands, give them a hug and say ...THANK YOU!!!

BRIGHT!

SMILES!

Life's most persistent and urgent question is:
What are we doing for others?
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Implementing Your Maintenance Plan

Next time you're out playing at your new playspace, take a moment to enjoy the feeling of pride. This space is a manifestation of your hard work, sweat, stress and commitment to children. Doesn't it feel great? Don't you want it to last forever? *Don't you want to save someone else the hassle of building a playspace??* That's where maintenance comes in! You've made play possible, and all that joyous activity will inflict a lot of wear and tear on your equipment. Without steady maintenance, even the sturdiest playspaces can deteriorate quickly.

The KaBOOM! community-build process is inspired by the belief that no child should ever have to grow up without a safe and fun place to play. You've acted on that belief for one very lucky group of kids, and with a little bit of planning you can extend that promise and that right to a whole generation. The other important piece of community building is *positive and broad-based community action*. Volunteers who work together to maintain playspace equipment will also be maintaining the friendships, spirit, confidence and common cause that you've unleashed in your community. Build a bridge to better, safer neighborhoods for everyone!

In Mile 5, we outlined a basic structure for long-term maintenance of your playspace: clean-ups, regular equipment inspections, management procedures, security and thorough documentation. Now it's time to organize your playspace stakeholders so that good maintenance habits are established quickly and firmly. Below are some training tips for the two main types of inspectors:

Citizen Inspectors

These are your foot soldiers - your playspace's first line of defense. We recommend recruiting a team of willing parents, teachers, staff or neighbors who plan to use the playspace on a regular basis. Inform them that they'll be responsible for finding and reporting any immediate damage from weather, misuse or vandalism (see Sample Daily/Weekly Checklist, below). To begin training, visit the playspace and take special note of how each component looks when correctly installed. That way, it will be easier to notice changes or breakages in the future. You may even want to put detailed photos of the new equipment on file. Next, most play equipment companies will provide detailed safety inspection forms for each piece of equipment; encourage your new "playspace inspectors" to review them. Be sure to discuss the inspection schedule as well as any management procedures for reporting, recording and addressing playspace problems.

Now is also an ideal time to educate children and youth on their role in playspace maintenance. Work with teachers and staff to dedicate a class period, an all-school activity, or an assembly to educate children on maintenance issues. Explain very basic tips on what to look for: broken equipment, glass or other litter, and loose or missing hardware. Older children can be responsible for raking loose-fill surfacing evenly, especially under high-use areas, and a 10-minute equipment check can be built into recess period once a week. Assign maintenance duties to a school council or other young leaders - you'll be surprised to see how a little responsibility builds confidence and drives initiative.



Finally, make sure that *all* children and their guardians know how to report breakages, loose parts, or equipment-related injuries that occur after hours. Map out a "playspace chain of command" so that all maintenance requests reach the correct authority.

Regular Maintenance Staff

Periodic, formal inspections by a facilities staff can evaluate long-term wear and tear on your play equipment and surfacing (see Sample Periodic/Bi-Monthly Checklist, below). After taking note of each component in its mint condition, those responsible for periodic inspections should formally review the maintenance kit provided by your play equipment company, and ask the representative about the use and function of its contents. In addition to inspection forms for each component, typical maintenance kits contain sandpaper, spare hardware, copies of the installation instructions, graffiti remover, touch-up paint and a blueprint of the playspace. Be sure to store the maintenance kit, along with all relevant documents, in a secure file that is accessible to maintenance personnel.

Periodic inspections will also be a great time to organize community playspace clean-up days! Approach local service organizations or youth groups in need of community-service hours; this hands-on project requires little time and offers great satisfaction.

TIP!

Be sure to incorporate the playspace's surrounding environment into your daily and weekly inspections; a well-maintained playground or skatepark in the midst of an unkempt and unsafe area loses its value and discourages play. Likewise, maintaining the larger play environment will contribute to the security of the playspace itself.

VOLUNTEER!



ROMP!



Sample Daily/Weekly Safety Inspection Checklist

- Are the components clean?
- Are the components secure?
- Are there any loose, missing or broken parts?
- Is there any vandal-induced damage (graffiti, glass, trash)?
- Is the safety surfacing free of foreign materials?
- Are the accessible pathways into and around the playspace free of all barriers?
- Are there any exposed concrete footings?
- Has loose-fill surfacing been raked evenly, especially under heavy-use areas like swings or slides?
- Is there any evidence of wood splitting?
- Is there any standing water from rainstorms?
- Is the underside of the equipment free of insect nests/hives?
- Is the surrounding area free of trash? Are trash receptacles empty?
- Is the landscaping of the surrounding area (particularly weeds and grass) being maintained?

TIP!

Have you set up your playspace file? All playspace-related documents—purchase orders, installation agreements, warranties, certificates of insurance, blueprints, inspection forms, incident reports, etc.—should be maintained in a permanent record.

LIVELY!



Sample Periodic/Monthly Safety Inspection Checklists

Date:

Person Responsible:

Signature:

Are any parts, including hardware, missing or broken?

Note: Be sure to check underside of structure.

- Is all hardware tight?
- Is the equipment secure with no loose parts or footings?
- Are all painted parts in good condition, with no chipping or peeling?
- Are all moving parts lubricated and free of wear?
- Are there any components that create a protrusion hazard?
- Are there any openings that might create an entrapment hazard?
- Are all "S" hooks fully closed?
- Are signs/warning labels visible?
- Is the loose-fill surfacing at least 12" deep throughout the playground area?
- Has the loose-fill surfacing become compacted?
- For unitary surfacing materials, are there any tears, separations, or elevation changes?
- Is surfacing material free of debris, glass, stones, or other foreign materials?
- Is vegetation trimmed back properly (seven feet away from all play equipment)?
- Are site amenities (water, restrooms, etc.) in good condition?
- Are there any trip hazards (protruding tree roots, exposed concrete footers, rocks, toys) present?

HARD WORK!



Maintaining Safety Surfacing

In a survey by the U.S. Public Interest Research group, 75% of existing playgrounds had insufficient surfacing, and this was identified as the **most critical safety factor** for playgrounds. When not maintained, your soft cushion of surfacing can quickly become displaced, compacted, broken down, or littered with debris and trip hazards. Don't let your children be among the nearly 200,000 who visit emergency rooms every year because of playground injuries! Here are a few pointers for keeping your surfacing in tip-top shape:

Loose-fill:

- Rake evenly on a daily or weekly basis, especially in high-use areas (e.g. at the bottom of slides, under swings.) Special mats are also available to reduce displacement in these areas.
- Remove all litter, debris and foreign objects (rocks, branches) during regular inspections.
- Check for proper drainage of rainwater. If standing water becomes a problem, drainage systems can be installed.
- Make sure that your containment system (which holds loose-fill surfacing inside the play area) is in good condition.
- Every few months, turn surfacing over to prevent compaction and water retention.
- During winter months, check to see that the surfacing (and/or water retained within the surfacing) has not frozen.
- In extremely arid climates with little rainfall, you may need to wet wood fiber periodically to replace its natural moisture; ask your vendor for advice.
- Check the depth of your surfacing frequently to ensure that it is maintained at or above the required level. Top off the entire play area with a fresh layer of surfacing as needed.

Unitary:

- During regular inspections, look for cuts, gouges, burns and loose areas. These are typically filled with patches or poured-rubber kits; ask your vendor for advice.
- Foreign objects that become lodged in the surfacing must be removed.
- Sweep or wash the surfacing periodically to remove sand, dirt, rocks and other loose materials that can pose a slipping hazard.
- Depending on usage and weather conditions, rubber surfacing may need to have a fresh layer poured or installed after several years.

TIP!

Did you install loose-fill surfacing? While your playground is new, make a few permanent hash marks on equipment posts or border timbers to show the current height of the safety surfacing. That way, you'll know when it compacts to an unsafe level.



Creating a “Friends of the PlaySpace” Committee

As you may have gathered by now, your playspace will need a steady stream of supporters throughout its lifetime - not only for maintenance and safety reasons, but also to ensure that it becomes a vibrant, active part of community life. Go back and think of your playspace vision for just a moment. Did you accomplish everything that you set out to do? Are you excited to use the space for community events? Have you envisioned elements for younger children, teenagers, adults or perhaps a dog park?

TiP!

"Friends of the PlaySpace" is just one suggestion for the name of this very important group. Be creative and come up with something that is unique and representative of your community!

Citizen groups that work to support a park or playground are cropping up all over the nation, and they are becoming quite influential. The primary responsibility of a "Friends of the PlaySpace" committee is to keep your playspace safe and fun. You can use it to spearhead activities and fundraisers for continued maintenance, clean-ups and repairs. It can also be a starting point for new community initiatives to raise awareness about safe play and the importance of recreation for healthy kids and communities. Finally, a playspace committee can take the lead in managing creative programming that brings the whole community into the life of the playspace. For detailed information on organizing a "Friends" committee, raising additional funds and implementing dynamite programming, order your very own KaBOOM! PlaySpace Owner's Manual today.

Recruiting Members & Getting Started

The first potential members of a "Friends" committee, of course, are your trusty team captains ... those individuals who are already invested in seeing the playspace flourish. You can also target your build volunteers, your landowner and the families who will benefit from the new playspace. You may be surprised to learn how many skeptics have become believers! Yet another group to approach is your business and/or foundation sponsors. After their fantastic community-build experience, they may welcome the opportunity for continued involvement. Finally, return to your community asset maps and extend an invitation to everyone who believes in healthy communities.

Once you've generated interest in an ongoing project, it's important to formalize your organization. Establish a structure that includes a mission statement, defined leadership, meeting times and places, and concrete goals. Sound familiar? Indeed, the experience of leading your playspace build is a valuable asset, but remember that in order to sustain a long-term "Friends" committee you're going to need a different set of goals, activities and organizational structures. Your playspace build was a visible, high-impact project that really jolted people into action, whereas the "Friends" committee works to provide continuous, lifestyle-changing programming that will gradually build a healthier and more tight-knit community.



PlaySpaces with a Purpose: Creative PlaySpace Programming

If proper maintenance is the key to your playspace's physical health, then good programming is the key to its soul! A true community park is more than just a set of monkey bars, a quarter-pipe, or a goalpost. You'll need creative, fun, and purposeful programs to bring people of all ages to your playspace. Give them a team to play on, a new skill or hobby, a new group of friends, or a fun family event. They'll enjoy the playspace, and they'll build the kind of collaborative, empowered network that is changing the world for children.

Programming doesn't need to be elaborate or expensive - the key is planning events that reflect your community's unique spirit. Dancing, kite-flying, chess, hair braiding, basket weaving, aerobics ... whatever your community's interests are, they can be expressed in and around the playspace!

When thinking about specific programs, you'll want to evaluate your budget, schedule, intended audience, and intended outcome. Be flexible - many programs can serve more than one purpose and more than one age group. Below we list seven basic types of community programs. Mix and match for a vibrant community space!

Types of Community Programs

- **Competitions** - Competitive events often include physical challenges like a basketball tournament, tricycle race or PlaySpace Olympics. You can also design cultural activities such as a playspace art competition, battle of the bands, or photography contest.
- **Special Events** - Special events come in all shapes and sizes, from an annual family fun day to a school classroom's lunch in the park. Keep in mind that large special events can be costly; approach past donors and sponsors for support.
- **Clubs** - Clubs are ongoing social groups organized around a shared interest or hobby. Your community may choose to create its own "family play club" or the playspace may become a gathering place for other clubs, such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the neighborhood chess club, or a gardening club. Remember that the playspace is the perfect place for your "Friends" committee to hold its meetings!
- **Instructional** - Instructional programs teach or develop a particular skill. These programs can be in the form of a class, clinic, seminar, or workshop. For example, children can gather for an ollie lesson given by an experienced skater, or learn how to throw a football at the local field. Invite local yoga, aerobics and martial-arts instructors to give lessons for all ages.

TIP!

Host annual fundraisers that your community will look forward to year after year. Ideas include: a PlaySpace Photo Calendar, Fun Run, Flea Market, Outdoor Summer Concert and PlaySpace Birthday Celebration.



- **Service Opportunities** - Create an event that specifically provides an engaging and meaningful opportunity for community service. For example, your community could be involved with national Make a Difference Day (the fourth Saturday of every October) to clean up the playspace, paint an instructional mural, or organize a food/clothing drive.
- **Holidays** - Make your playspace the focal point for holiday celebrations! Host fun family events like caroling, easter egg hunts, or a haunted playspace ... or take kids out to the playspace for theater, songs and lessons on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Presidents' Day.
- **Cultural** - What art, music, food, stories and traditions have people brought to your community? Celebrate your diversity with a cultural show or festival!

FUN! FLIP!

DANCE!



Mile 8 Activity Checklist

What a difference a day makes - you've changed the world for hundreds of kids! After the whirlwind dies down, check your list and make sure that nothing was forgotten amidst all the build excitement:

- Yes! We introduced many excited, giggling children to their new playspace. Our orientation covered safety rules, emergency procedures, and simple maintenance.
- Yes! Our planning committee evaluated the entire process and created a blueprint/recommendations for future community projects.
- Yes! We thanked everyone involved with the playspace planning and build. We're confident that they'll return to help out in the future!
- Yes! We've established a comprehensive maintenance plan for the playspace. Daily, weekly and bi-monthly inspectors have been trained in proper maintenance procedures, and we've created a permanent file for playspace documents.
- Yes! We've discussed the need to generate continued support, involvement and investment in the playspace. We've brainstormed potential programs to keep the space safe and fun for years to come.
- Yes! We are ready for our next community project!!**

As you look to the future, remember that the key to great community leadership is to build on the enthusiasm, good will and broad-based citizen networking that made your community-build playspace project so successful. You've come to the end of the KaBOOM! PlaySpace Road Map, but now that you've unleashed the power to change a child's world, there are many exciting trips ahead! We hope that your journey has been a rewarding one, and we hope that you will spread the word about playful communities to everyone you meet. Keep playing!


CONGRATS!




Community-Build Manual Online Resources

The Internet is an excellent source of information on just about anything, and playgrounds are no exception! **Be sure to visit www.kaboom.org for the latest updates, tips, and information from us here at KaBOOM!**

The following is not an exhaustive list of additional resources, but just a sampling of KaBOOM! favorites.

General Community Development

www.iyfnet.org/
www.serviceleader.org
www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/
www.commbuild.org
www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/

Active, Healthy Kids

www.connectforkids.org
www.kidshealth.org
www.keepkidshealthy.com
www.actionforhealthykids.org
www.momsteam.com

Community-Build Model for PlaySpaces

www.naturalplaygrounds.com
www.planeteearthplayscapes.com
www.communitybuilt.com
www.learningstructures.com
www.leathersassociates.com
www.boundlessplaygrounds.org
www.kidsaroundtheworld.org

Playground Safety

www.cpsc.gov
www.ipema.org
www.uni.edu/playground

Fundraising

www.grassrootsfundraising.org
www.ptotoday.com/fundraising.html
www.foundationcenter.org

Skatepark Planning

www.skateparkguide.com
www.skatepark.org
www.spausa.org

Parks & Public Spaces

www.nrpa.org
www.pps.org
www.nps.gov
www.tpl.org

Children's Advocacy

www.connectforkids.org
www.childrensdefense.org
www.stand.org
www.zerotothree.org
www.childadvocacy.org

