

MKE PLAYS

CREATING PLAY ENVIRONMENTS;
BUILDING COMMUNITIES; STRENGTHENING
NEIGHBORHOODS



OVERVIEW

WHAT?

- Transforming Play Space in the City of Milwaukee

WHY?

- Importance of Play
- Decreasing Financial Resources

HOW?

- Approaches to Play Innovation

WHEN?

- Operationalizing a Play Strategy

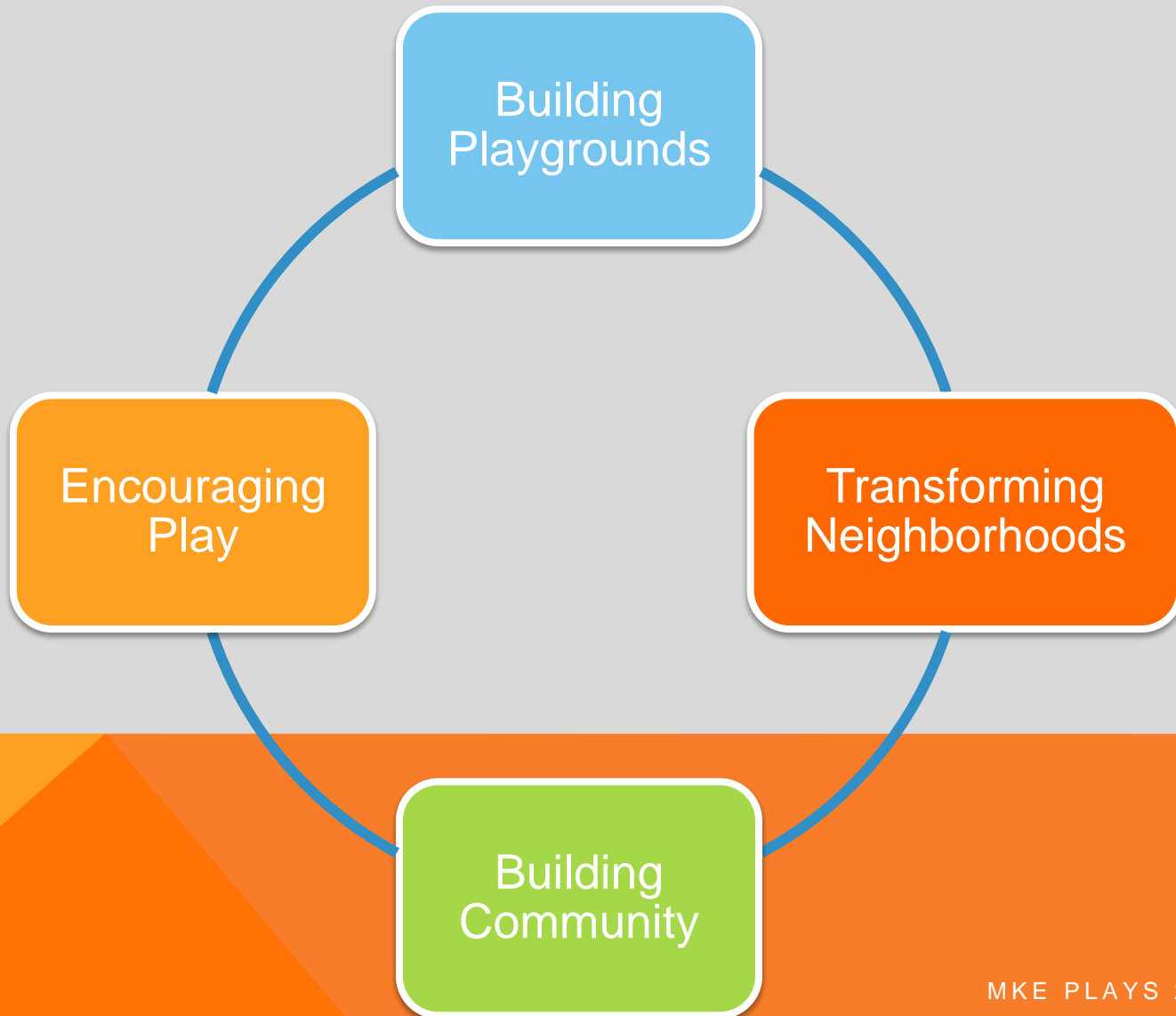
OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

EVALUATION

- Methodology and Design

CONCLUSION

GOAL



WHAT?

TRANSFORMING PLAY SPACE IN THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE

Creating opportunities for children to play and providing space where neighbors can connect is a civic responsibility.

But, financial restraints leading to deteriorating playground infrastructure.
City can't meet demand alone.

Solution: Reach out to private and non-profit partners to accelerate the reconstruction of 12 parks geographically dispersed throughout the city.

Without the financial support of our neighbors, reconstruction of these 12 parks will not be complete for many years.

WHY?

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY (CONTINUED)

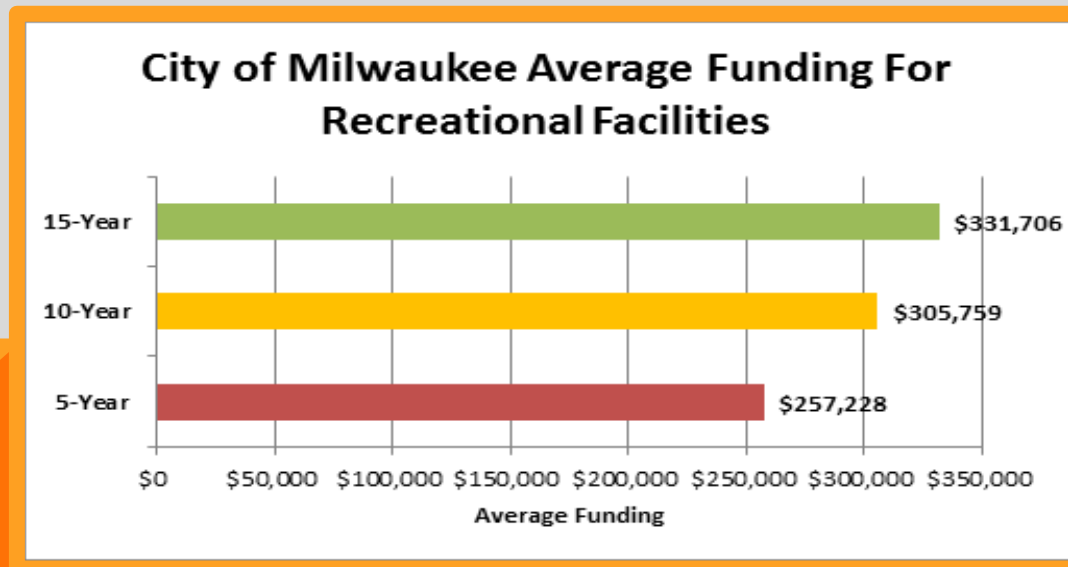
Research shows that play space is essential for children's physical, social, educational and emotional development.

Community Building:
Public play space also provides space for residents to interact and share experiences.

WHY?

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY (CONTINUED)

Decreasing Financial Resources:
Budgeted funding for recreational facilities has trended downward since at least 2000.



WHY?

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY (CONTINUED)

Material implications of decreasing financial resources for play:

- Decreasing quantity & quality of play

Impact Locations: Inner-City

- Decreasing play compounded by racial & socioeconomic health disparities in the inner city.



Foundation Park
In 2012 the play equipment at Foundation Park was burned by a fire and was a complete loss.



Vine St. Park
The Vine Street Park area is surrounded by much overgrowth and has play equipment that is badly deteriorated.

HOW?

APPROACHES TO PLAY INNOVATION

Traditional

- No community input
- DPW determines need and makes installation
- Only traditional design
- Capacity: 3-4 playgrounds/yr

KaBoom!

- Community approach – adults and children
- Community sets building priorities, maps assets, votes on design, fundraises and helps with installation
- Incorporate non-traditional designs

HOW?

APPROACHES TO PLAY INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

Beyond Traditional Design



Imagination Playgrounds

- Creates unstructured play space
- Children challenged to use sensory and motor skills, as well as cognitive abilities to play with loose materials
- Foam blocks and other loose parts come in storage box on wheels that is easily transported to other locations.
- In NY, IPs have been taken to every borough and incorporated with unique park themes.

Image from <http://www.imaginationplayground.com/>

HOW?

APPROACHES TO PLAY INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

Natural Playscapes

According to 2012 research completed by University of Tennessee, Knoxville, “Children who play on playgrounds that incorporate natural elements like logs and flowers tend to be more active than those who play on traditional playgrounds with metal and brightly colored equipment.”

Innovative approaches to natural playscapes are emerging which not only create enjoyable play areas for children, but which also address environmental issues.

HOW?

APPROACHES TO PLAY INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

Green Playgrounds: Natural Playgrounds Co.

BEFORE



AFTER



The Natural Playgrounds Company creates safe, sustainable play areas that encourage play and interaction with the environment while saving communities financial resources.

Image from naturalplaygrounds.com

HOW?

APPROACHES TO PLAY INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

Green Playgrounds: Addressing Environmental Issues



Image from <http://mommiesmagazine.com/12904/top-8-amazing-playgrounds-world/>

Playgrounds with positive environmental impacts:

In NY, some have rainwater capturing tools to address wastewater problems.

Outside the US, designs have emerged that recycle or repurpose materials. In the Netherlands, the Upcycled Wind Turbine Playground was designed from discarded rotor blades. In Japan, the Nishi Rokugo Park was almost wholly created from unwanted tires.

HOW?

APPROACHES TO PLAY INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

Freenotes Harmony Parks

Outdoor musical instruments for public spaces

Unique sensory element can be used by broad spectrum of ages

Can be purchased in a variety of packages



Images from <http://freenotesharmoniypark.com/>

MKE PLAYS 2014

HOW?

APPROACHES TO PLAY INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

Designing Beyond Traditional

KaBoom!

Imagination Playgrounds

Naturescapes

Harmony Parks

WHEN?

OPERATIONALIZING A PLAY STRATEGY

Facility Conditions and Expected Reconstruction Year

DPW Comprehensive Evaluation

- Scores facilities based on many factors, including: landscaping, surfaces, asphalt, infrastructure, ADA compliance, play equipment, etc.

WHEN?

OPERATIONALIZING A PLAY STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

DPW Evaluation Results: 12 LOWEST SCORING PARKS

Site	Years Since Rehab	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
5 th & Randolph Play Area	19			\$78,000		
17 th & Vine Play Area	20	\$75,000	\$75,000			
21 st & Keefe Play Area	19				\$95,000	
34 th & Mt. Vernon Play Area	19					\$95,000
Foundation Park	12	\$75,000	\$10,720	\$29,606		
67 th & Spokane Play Area	19	\$90,000	\$90,000			
Arlington Heights Park	19				\$90,000	
Buffum & Center Play Area	19			\$95,000		
DeBack Park	19		\$110,000			
Long Island & Custer Play Area	19		\$75,000			
Snail's Crossing Park	11				\$95,000	
Trowbridge Square	19			\$90,000		
Total Cost of Reconstruction		\$240,000	\$360,720	\$292,606	\$280,000	\$95,000

WHEN?

OPERATIONALIZING A PLAY STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

DPW Evaluation

Total Reconstruction Results

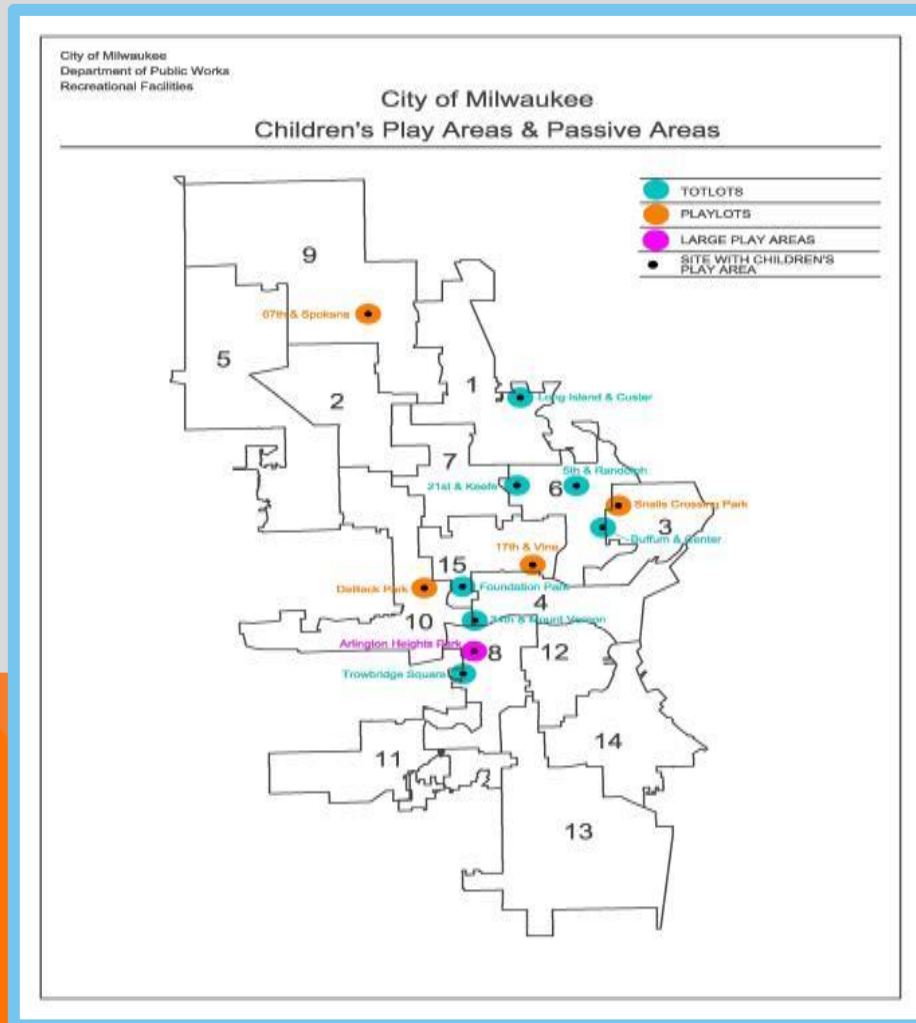
12 lowest scoring parks over a 5 year period =
\$1,268,566

*** Cost estimates **DO NOT** include equipment or design beyond traditional infrastructure ***

WHEN?

OPERATIONALIZING A PLAY STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

DPW Evaluation: Location of 12 Lowest Scoring Parks



WHEN?

OPERATIONALIZING A PLAY STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

Funding

Based on current budgetary trends, play space is likely to see no increase, and it's possible there could be decreases to recreational budget allocations.

The city must work with outside partners to create financial capacity for positive social impact.

Private Donation

Private donations can be made to the City of Milwaukee to invest in city parks. While this would not require a 1:1 match.

Playground Challenge Fund

The Playground Challenge Fund is an account within the City of Milwaukee which provides matching funds for privately raised funds

Milwaukee Civic Partnership Initiative

The MCPI is a new initiative to develop marketing partnerships. Its purpose is to generate non-tax revenue for City programs, departments and events to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships with private and non-profit sector partners.

WHEN?

OPERATIONALIZING A PLAY STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

Stakeholders

Traditionally only DPW

Current GOAL:

From Top-Down to Community-Centered

Pursue KaBoom!
community based
model

Collaborative
framework to be
developed with
partners

Formulate strategy
with clearly defined
actors, roles and
responsibilities

EVALUATION

Assessment critical to ensure responsiveness to needs of target population & to measure impacts of collective strategies.

Methodology: Key Information Interview (KII), both in form of individual interviews and focus groups.

Primary MKE Plays Goal: Increase play by enhancing play spaces and uplifting communities.

To measure if goal is achieved, qualitative data will be collected to measure the following objectives.

Improve Quantity/Quality of Play

- By reconstructing play space, we aim to increase the amount of time children spend playing and enhance their play experience.

Promote Neighborhood Collaboration

- By encouraging and supporting community-building activities which require neighborhood input and implementation, we aim to improve neighborhood collaboration and sustainability of park maintenance.

Enhance Public Space; Uplift Community Self-Perception

- By enhancing the physical/geographic space where children play and communities socialize, we aim to uplift how individuals and communities view themselves.

CONCLUSION

The City of Milwaukee & private and non-profit partners have a unique opportunity to transform play spaces.

Playgrounds have been neglected because of continuous budget constraints resulting in deterioration of play space.

Deterioration affects quantity and quality of child play.

Let's go beyond traditional place making and *create the opportunity where innovative play spaces can bloom.*