



# STAFF REPORT

## Agenda Item: 5

**Report To:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**Meeting Date:** April 6, 2021

**Staff Contact:** Nick Wentworth, Parks Projects Manager

**Agenda Title:** For Discussion Only: Discussion only regarding playgrounds within the Carson City parks system. ([nwentworth@carson.org](mailto:nwentworth@carson.org))

**Staff Summary:** This item will provide an overview of the playgrounds within the Carson City park system, including fiscal impact, potential liability to the City and potential plans for playgrounds in the future.

**Agenda Action:** Formal Action/Motion

**Time Requested:** 10 minutes

### **Proposed Motion**

For discussion only, no action is required.

### **Board's Strategic Goal**

Sustainable Infrastructure

### **Previous Action**

N/A

### **Background/Issues & Analysis**

Carson City currently has 18 public playgrounds maintained by the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department (Department). Playgrounds can be a potential liability due to their inherent risk, are expensive to replace and maintain, but also represent one of the most requested park amenities by citizens and visitors. In the past few years, the City has established a more comprehensive playground safety program, with two Certified Playground Safety Inspectors (CPSI) on staff within the Department and implementation of annual re-investment into playgrounds to ensure that the City's playgrounds meet all current safety guidelines.

Playgrounds typically have a life expectancy of approximately 20 years and many of the City's existing playgrounds are nearing that age. From a local population perspective, there were 54,773 people living in Carson City in 2019, about 3,043 people per playground. For comparison purposes, Douglas County currently has 8,166 residents per public playground. A reduction of 5 playgrounds for a total of 13 playgrounds in Carson City would provide around double the playgrounds as Douglas County per capita and would be a more fiscally responsible plan for the City. Currently, Carson City has more parks per capita than the national average. A new playground is planned for Lompa Ranch West, but a Homeowner's Association will fund 100% of that park and its maintenance.

Recent playground improvements at Schulz Ranch, Ross Gold, Ronald D. Wilson Memorial and John Mankins Parks now provide ADA accessibility and provide opportunities for users of all abilities. 13 of the 18

playgrounds still utilize engineered wood mulch for fall protection, which is not ADA accessible, requires continuous maintenance and replenishment and is not desirable by park users. Many of the City's playgrounds will require replacement in the next 10 years. The draft plan included for the Commission's consideration identifies the playgrounds staff believe are worth re-investing in and which ones should be removed due to the proximity of other nearby playgrounds that have received upgrades or have been replaced. The plan provides a geographic approach, to ensure neighborhoods have a playground within their vicinity, but reduces the number of playgrounds in the City's inventory to ensure fiscal responsibility and reduce potential liability.

**Applicable Statute, Code, Policy, Rule or Regulation**

N/A

**Financial Information**

Is there a fiscal impact?  Yes  No

If yes, account name/number:

Is it currently budgeted?  Yes  No

Explanation of Fiscal Impact: In the past 5 years, the City has invested funds through its Capital Improvement Program to ensure playgrounds were inspected, retrofitted to comply with current safety standards, and continue to get the most useful life out of the equipment possible. A diverse funding strategy and approach will need to be made to continue to implement in reinvestment, maintenance, and replacement of playgrounds throughout the parks system. Potential funding sources include Residential Construction Tax, grants, general fund, and Quality of Life funds.



**New/Best-** New or recently upgraded playgrounds that currently meet safety standards and have a life expectancy of 15+ years. Schulz Ranch and Ross Gold have new play structures with soft fall tile. Centennial is up to compliance and has newer soft fall tiles. Ronald D. Wilson and John Mankins are up to safety compliance and soft fall tiles were installed in late 2020.

**Desirable-** Most desirable existing playgrounds to continue making investments into or look towards full replacement when the current structure is beyond fiscally responsible repair. Sports Complex's playgrounds are highly used and provide an alternative activity for siblings of children involved in youth sports. Mills Park should be replaced with a larger centralized structure in the future. Carriage Square and Long Ranch Park are heavily used and we support ongoing improvements.

**Unsure-** The park may have other amenities or interests that don't include a playground. Park Terrace is the target of more vandalism than any other playground in our inventory. Sonoma Park has evolved into our premier dog park facility. Fuji Park's Master Plan is in the beginning phase and the long-term vision has not been established.

**Remove-** The playground receives very little use and/or it's near other playgrounds that are more desirable. Riley Circle is the least desirable location of any of our playgrounds. Sunland Vista is within walking distance of Mills Park and Blackwells Pond. Monte Vista is 3 blocks from Carriage Square and is used very little if at all. Sunset Park is one of our oldest structures and is strictly designed for the 2-5 years age group.

# Long-Term Plan Towards Better and Safer Playgrounds

# Draft

**1. Blackwells** -Contract out design of a new playground, soft fall tile system, shaded tables, additional concrete, turf reduction and xeriscape at the southeast corner of Blackwells Pond Park (**\$50,000 from \$75,000 20/21 CIP budget item**)



**2. Riley Circle** -Remove playground at Riley Circle and replace with a shaded table and low maintenance landscape (**\$15,000-\$20,000 estimated for total project in-house, from \$75,000 20/21 CIP budget**)



**3. Blackwells** -New construction project mentioned in item #1 including demo (**\$500,000-\$700,000**)

**4. Sunland Vista** - Remove playground and reimagine the long-term vision for the parcel.



**5. Long Ranch** -shrink footprint and replace wood mulch with soft fall tile surface (**\$300,000 with design**) or the structure could need replacement depending on time frame (**\$550,000 completely new**).



**6. Sunset** -Remove playground and replace with shaded tables and low maintenance landscape (**\$30,000**)



**7. Pete Livermore Sports Complex** -Replace play structures and surfacing with 2-5 and 5-12 age ranged structures (**\$700,000 w/ design**)



**8. Carriage Square** -shrink footprint and replace wood mulch with soft fall tile surface (**\$300,000 with design**)



**9. Monte Vista** -Remove playground and replace with shaded tables and low maintenance landscape (**\$30,000**)



**10. Mills Park** -Replace remaining playground with one centralized extra-large structure. Cost TBD with 2021/22 Mills Park Master Plan. (**\$1,000,000**)