

Appendix I: Suggested Playground Elements

Bainbridge Island is fortunate to have a number of different kinds of play structures and play areas, thanks to its wealth of parks and public open space. Due to the wide appeal of this special site, the Committee anticipates that any play structures or play areas developed in the park will be widely used and visited not just by neighbors, but by the Bainbridge community as a whole, much in the manner of the larger parks on the island, such as Battle Point Park and or Fay Bainbridge State Park.

One of the chief benefits of Pritchard Park is its bounty of wide open space for unstructured play. The waterfront portion of Pritchard Park lends itself to an entirely natural play zone, one with infinite opportunities for children and their guardians to explore, create, and experience. In a sense, the waterfront portion of the park offers the most exciting and unlimited play zone imaginable, one unencumbered by traditional play structures and entirely open to the imagination. The presence of sand, native plantings, tidal changes, wildlife, and the ongoing environmental clean-up, harbor and ferry activities already offer a dynamic environment that children and adults of all ages will find stimulating, inspiring, restful, and absorbing.

Future enhancements to the Park's existing geography suggest the incorporation of other, more structured play areas for children and their guardians.

Any play structures/play areas in Pritchard Park should be **subtly** incorporated into the setting, and they should optimally stress opportunities for sensory and physical activity, spontaneous play, a knowledge and awareness of nature, and an acquaintance with the history of this site.

Possible ideas explored during the course of Committee's information gathering/brainstorming:

- Play structures modeled after the old Creosote houses used by workers at the Wyckoff Plant (expanded and modified from the UW team's idea for "ghost houses")
- Play structures composed mainly of logs (to echo the former use of the site for the logging industry)
- Play areas that incorporate sand/water play (given the nature of the site's proximity to the shoreline)
- Play areas proximal to areas that people would naturally gravitate to in the course of their visit to the park (i.e. adjacent to the pocket beach cove planned as part of shoreline restoration on the east part of the site; adjacent to the picnic area on the highlands; not too far from parking areas, so visitors with children could come and go without having to venture too far into the park on foot, which might discourage frequent visits)
- Play areas located in cleared areas of the park so that they will benefit from natural light
- Play areas that enjoy some of the wonderful views of the city

- Play areas that enable chaperones to monitor children of multiple ages in one safe and enclosed place, but that have separate areas for children of different ages—possibly in the manner that Battle Point Park currently does with a distinct “toddler” area that is nearby the main play structure

Further Considerations

Natural playgrounds of the sort our committee endorses are becoming more popular around the country, and definitely deserve study for the future of Pritchard Park.

The Conservation Fund has recently launched The National Forum On Children and Nature, a group that offers financial support to groups around the country who help children experience nature in unstructured ways. The Forum recently identified “20 nationally significant demonstration projects in four key areas of health, education, the built environment, and media/culture that, individually and collectively... provide substantial steps toward improved children’s health and environmental stewardship and models for future action.”

http://www.conservationfund.org/children_nature

Given Pritchard Park’s rich industrial and social history involving the Creosote plant, the Suquamish tribe, and the Japanese-American internment; its ongoing environmental cleanup due to Wyckoff remediation; and the extensive efforts by the community to transform it into a public park, it seems that it may qualify for the kind of outside funding that would promote natural play and appreciation of the site’s natural environment.

One company that devotes itself to the construction of natural play areas is:

www.naturalplaygrounds.com

Their website offers wonderful ideas for incorporating play structures and natural play areas into sites of all kinds and sizes. Any future playground/play structure designed for Pritchard Park should have an acquaintance with the kinds of play alternatives explored by Natural Playgrounds.