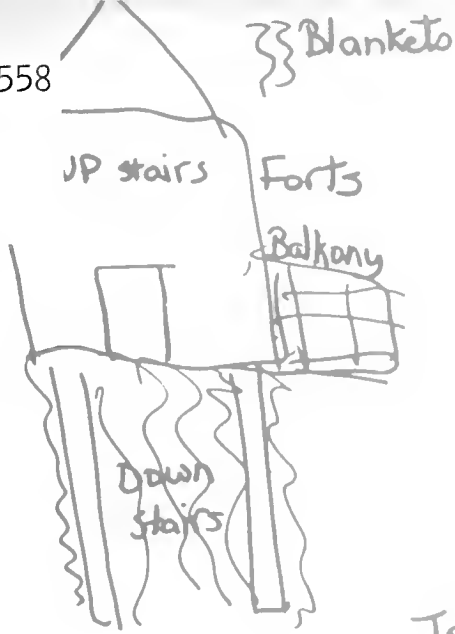


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nice Trees to climb



Tree Swing



Winding slide



Creek



# play areas

for low income housing

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This report is the result of the joint efforts of the Illinois Office of Housing and Buildings, Department of Local Government Affairs, and the Housing Research and Development Program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The work for this report was done as a part of the Social Services Delivery System Project funded by and for the three housing authorities of Decatur, East St. Louis, and LaSalle County, Illinois.

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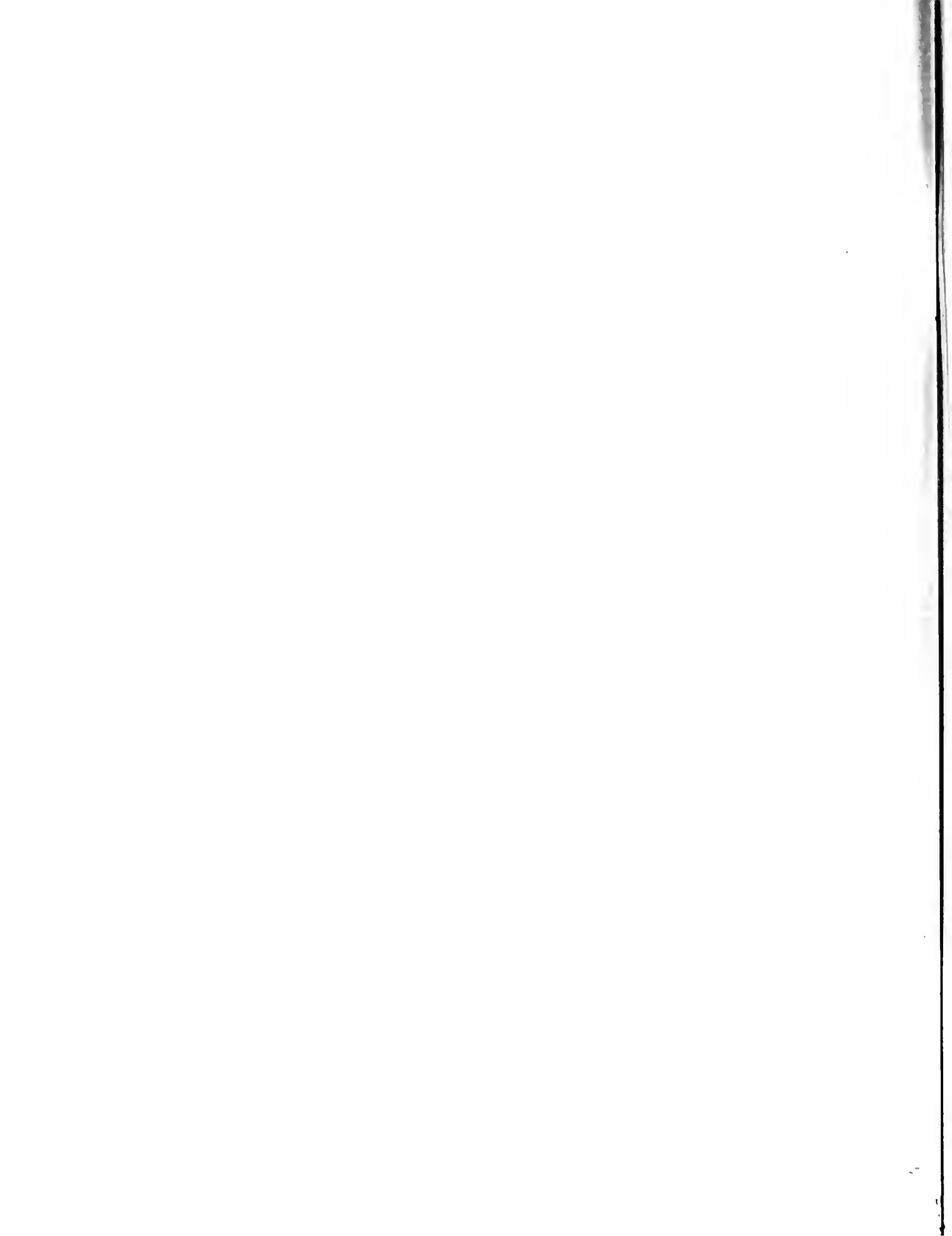
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# **play areas** **for low income housing**

**HOUSING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN**

**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF HOUSING AND BUILDINGS**



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## ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This publication concentrates on outdoor recreation in a free-play or loosely supervised situation. Organized group sports and facilities, structured recreation programs, and indoor recreation facilities and programs will not be dwelt upon in any detail. However, the report does outline the characteristics and recreational needs of the various segments of the tenant population. This has been done so that the planning staff has a brief idea of the needs of these groups and can plan for them accordingly.

Outdoor recreation components have been categorized under Location of Play Areas, Types of Play Equipment, Surfacing Materials, Landscaping Play Areas, and Maintenance. Each of these components must be considered and planned for in the implementation of play facilities.

The section on Development of Play Areas lists possible sources for funds and manpower in addition to discussing the need for an overall plan for recreational programs. A Checklist for Evaluating Existing Recreation Resources has been included in order to help the housing authority determine the gaps in present recreational programs and facilities. A Bibliography at the end of the report cites material for further information.





## INTRODUCTION

Play and leisure time activities are essential elements of our daily lives. They help promote physical and mental development and provide a controlled release of tensions and frustrations. Studies have shown that children deprived of play opportunities during their first four or five years seldom obtain full mental development. Older children have an incessant desire to "do," fantasize, explore, and create. If safe, wholesome environments are not provided to cater to those desires, the children will play anyway and anywhere--often creating conflict with others and abusing the environment. Teenagers and adults deprived of safe outlets for their tensions, anxieties, and frustrations often vent their emotions by violent actions against people or property--adding to many social problems we have today.

Recreational activities are critical to the social well-being of all people. Facilities for recreational activities become even more important when low income families are concentrated in housing developments. These families often do not have the time, money, and transportation necessary to participate in recreational endeavors outside the neighborhood; therefore, if the facilities are not nearby, the families will be deprived of them.

Unfortunately, provisions for recreation areas are often ignored or relegated to minor importance during the planning process in the development of housing projects. Even when play areas are provided, they are usually sterile and dull. A prominent landscape architect and playground designer, M. Paul Friedberg, explains:

". . . play facilities are uniformly dreary because of a combination of factors--apathy, misconception of children's needs, lack of reasonable alternatives as models, and an exaggerated emphasis on the management of facilities. . . . Obviously, playgrounds are not being designed for the child." (1970)

The goal of the Social Service Delivery System Project is to suggest methods for providing social services to tenants of low income housing projects. The SSDS staff recognizes that meaningful recreation programs and facilities are essential com-

ponents of an effective social service delivery system. Although all social ills will not be solved by a good recreation program, well planned recreation programs and facilities can alleviate many of the smaller problems which have the potential to develop into major crises.

The purpose of this publication is to provide housing authority directors and their staffs with guidelines which can be used as an aid in the planning and utilization of space, funds, equipment, and personnel to develop creative and meaningful recreation facilities in project areas. It must be emphasized that this report is not intended to be used as a manual on how to build a recreation area. Rather, it is hoped that insights into the critical components of recreation areas can be acquired which will in turn direct the planning and stir the imagination of housing authority directors and staffs.

The complexity of planning for play will be explored throughout the text. It is essential that directors and persons in a position of responsibility for recreation areas and programs understand that, in order to be effective, planning must be comprehensive and must provide the proper facilities for all users. This report explains which facilities and programs are best suited for specific age groups, and it offers the opportunity for a housing authority to evaluate its present facilities.

Any gaps between the facilities which currently exist and what should exist can best be filled by coordinated planning with the housing authority staff, tenants, and a professional recreation consultant. All three groups are necessary to the development of a master recreation plan which will provide the greatest benefit to the most people, within the range of the resources (money, manpower, and space) of the housing authority. Hopefully this publication will explain how and why this coordination is necessary.

## RECREATION CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF VARIOUS AGE GROUPS

Play and leisure activities satisfy an important need in people's lives. But everyone does not engage in the same activity. Before developing recreation programs for the tenants, one must realize the various categories of leisure activity that must be provided for. The simplest method of categorizing activity is by the ages of the participants. The tenant population can be divided into four major age groups:

### *age groups*

Children. For purposes of play and play requirements, this group can be divided into preschoolers (up to six years of age) and grade schoolers (six to twelve years of age).

Teenagers. This group consists of younger adolescents (thirteen to fifteen years of age) and older adolescents (sixteen to nineteen years of age).

Adults. This group includes young single adults, younger married couples, and middle-aged people in their forties and fifties.

Elderly. For recreation programs, these are people in their sixties and older.

Of course, there could be a variation in these age groups and their recreational needs, but for our purposes we can assume that the individuals in these age groups share common characteristics and recreational needs. The following is an outline of the needs of these four age groups.

### CHILDREN

### *need for children's recreation*

According to Ruth Strang, a distinguished authority on child guidance, "The play life of a child is an index of his social maturity and reveals his personality more clearly than any other activity." (1951) Similarly, the child psychologists Gesell and Ilg say, "Deeply absorbing play seems to be essential for full mental growth. Children who are capable of such intense play are most likely to give a good account of themselves when they grow up." (1946) Therefore play provides an important laboratory for growing up in the life of a child. Through varied recreational experiences, youngsters

gain physical growth and development, and are afforded the opportunity for emotional release, creative expression, and socialization. Thus play facilities for this group have to be challenging in addition to stimulating their curiosity and imagination.

*preschoolers'  
recreation  
characteristics  
and facilities*

Preschoolers should be looked at separately from the rest of the children. At this age, children have a very short attention span and have not developed their motor skills fully. A lot of their play centers around fantasy and imagination; they are not as active as grade schoolers. Also, preschool children are not socially oriented; they are more interested in themselves and in exploring their creative urges.

For these reasons, and for reasons of safety and possible injury from the play activity of older children, preschoolers need their own play areas. These play areas should be located within view of their homes so that the parents can keep an eye on their children. The play areas do not have to be large, but they should have equipment that satisfies the curiosity of this age group. A sand play area is very effective in accommodating such interests. A trickle of water also lets the children experience different sensations--the water could lead into part of the sand, providing building material. Preschoolers also need equipment that forms dark corners and open spaces and lets them climb in, around, under, and over--in short, equipment that develops their motor and sensory skills.

It is important that these play areas are shaded and provide shelter from the sun. A few benches or other seating allow parents to sit and watch their children and talk to other parents. The sidewalk system around the project provides a good play surface which can serve as a tricycle path that is integrated with the play area (see Figure 1).

*grade school  
children's  
recreation  
characteristics  
and facilities*

Grade school children engage in more activity on site than any other age group. Being the most active group, they will spend much of their time in play around the site. These children need a lot of room for running around as well as ball fields, game courts, and challenging play equipment. They should also have the opportunity to participate in group play in parks, play fields, swimming pools, and similar facilities.

TEENAGERS

*teenagers'  
recreation  
characteristics  
and facilities*

Although teenagers are the most difficult to plan for in recreation--and are usually neglected in recreation programs--they are the ones who know



Figure 1. Sidewalks are popular play areas.

what they want. It can be much easier if they are involved in planning their own programs and are given a large measure of responsibility in running these programs. Since the need for peer groups and associations is strong at this age, the programs must accommodate such activity and provide proper collective direction. If this is not done, a mis-directed group can become a "gang."

Younger teenagers want adventure and excitement in addition to game courts and ball parks. However, much of their activities are socially oriented, as are those of older teens. The need to develop and show off physical prowess must be satisfied. Group activities such as social dancing, parties, and similar co-recreational activities must also be accommodated through various programs.

#### ADULTS

*adults' recreation characteristics and facilities*

Although they retain an interest in sports and activities from the latter part of their youth, younger adults begin to develop an interest in other social and more passive activities that could involve the whole family. As they mature, they spend their leisure time in less vigorous activities and tend to center around the affairs of the family and social or civic groups.

Since adults use their homes for relaxation more than other leisure activities, the project should provide space for relaxing. Each living unit should have a private or at least semi-private area for sitting, cooking, and eating outdoors. Benches alongside play areas, if properly shaded, would also encourage adults to help supervise play. If there is no park within two blocks, the site should have a shaded area for family recreation with tables, benches, and outdoor grills. This is important because most low income families cannot get away to other places for recreation. The housing authority should also provide lawn and yard maintenance equipment on loan and allow tenants to develop gardens if they wish.



Figure 2. These patios are too small and open.



Figure 3. Fences or shrubs offer patio privacy.

The car is an important part of adult lives. Each project site should have a space where tenants can do mechanical work with facilities (a faucet will suffice) for washing and waxing their cars.

#### ELDERLY

*recreation  
characteristics  
and facilities  
for the elderly*

The elderly tend to stay indoors, and they socialize to a lesser degree than other age groups. They should be encouraged to get outdoors and walk around; it is important to provide wide, level, smooth walkways. Ramps are a better alternative than steps. These walkways should be connected to easily accessible shaded areas, with benches arranged for conversation. Flowering shrubs, selected to bloom at various times of the year, will enhance the visual impact of these areas.

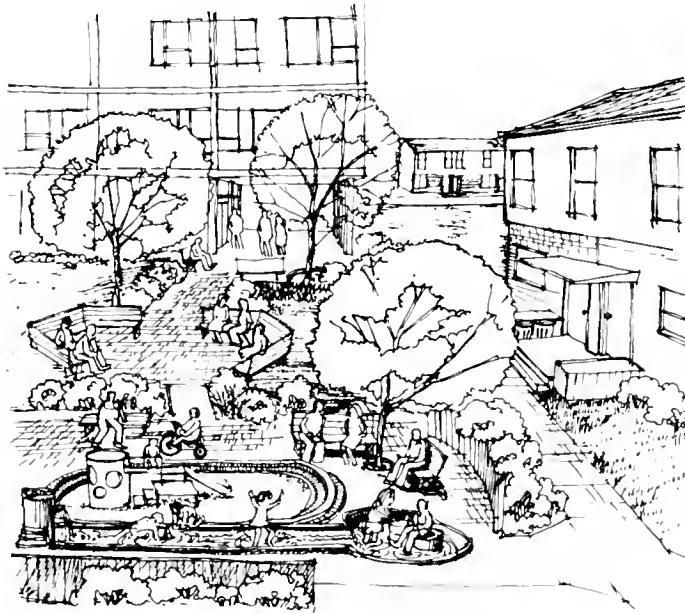


Figure 4. The elderly need pleasant, shaded areas that overlook other activities.

There should also be paths to play areas where the elderly could sit and watch children. However, these sitting areas should be separated from the play areas so that the children do not disturb them. Separation could be achieved visually by using different materials, colors, or textures, physically with a change in level or a row of planting, or any combination of similar elements. Above all, the facilities for the elderly must be

safe and yet be connected to the other areas, either visually or physically.

The staff should also organize various activities for this age group such as social events within the site and field trips for picnics, concerts, and other cultural events. If some of the elderly show an interest in flowers, they could be encouraged to try a bit of gardening, thus providing them with something to do.

#### SUMMARY

It is evident that each age group must be viewed as part of a comprehensive recreation program. One cannot view the needs of one age group without considering the needs of other groups. If any age group is neglected, the resulting apathy or resentment could affect the programs for other age groups. The staff should therefore be aware of what is needed in the community. If the proper social and recreation programs do not exist, the staff should take the initiative to get something going by finding out what the tenants need and helping the tenants satisfy these needs. This assistance includes the provision of:

recreation areas, building, and facilities, and the necessary leadership and technical skill to plan, organize, and maintain recreation programs.



## LOCATION OF PLAY AREAS

*recreation as  
social activity*

Play is one of the primary means for a child to satisfy his curiosity and creative urges; it also forms an important part of his education. As such, play areas provide more than a place for children's play--they serve as centers for social interaction among children. This point must be kept in mind when locating play areas and choosing play equipment. The opportunities provided must satisfy all the needs of play activity.

*variations in  
children's  
recreation*

Children's play and play requirements vary among age groups. In addition, children from the same age group can engage in different types of play. Most play is sporadic and not concentrated over time or towards a particular type of play equipment. Play can be divided into two broad categories: active and inactive. The latter is as important and involves as much time as the former. Observation of a play area will show that children gather around play equipment to talk to their friends or simply use it as a place to sit, thus converting the area into a center for social grouping. One must also look at where children usually play in order to understand play patterns. For instance, bicycles and other wheeled vehicles are used on paved areas all over the site; roads and parking lots are the most popular since they constitute the largest expanse of paved surface on any site.



Figure 5. Play areas are centers for socializing.



Figure 6. Children use parking lots for bicycling.

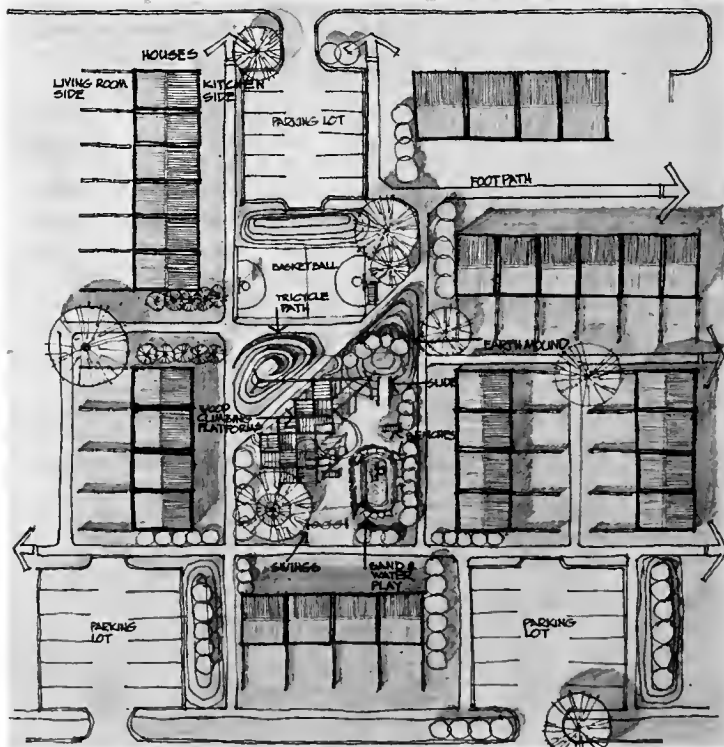


Figure 7. Location of play equipment on site.

In addition to active and inactive, play can also be labeled as incidental and organized--running and jumping, for example, as opposed to a game of baseball. Children engage in incidental play much more than organized play, and the former occurs all over the site. The areas of concentration are those that are most natural and accessible--on and alongside footpaths, roads, parking courts, etc. Figure 7 shows where incidental play is likely to occur in such a setting.

#### INCIDENTAL PLAY AND PLAY EQUIPMENT

*placement of  
recreation  
facilities*

Incidental play includes the use of play equipment, which means that such equipment should be easily accessible. It can be located near circulation paths or at circulation nodes. This accomplishes two objectives: it makes the play area easily accessible and provides casual supervision from passersby as well as neighbors. If these play areas are located away from supervision, they are very likely to be misused. It is also important to spread play areas throughout the site as much as possible so that children can play close to home if needs be and also to prevent a concentration of children--and noise, wear, and maintenance problems--in one area.

Play areas also need shade from the sun, so trees should be included in the design of these spaces. Seating should be provided beneath the trees and along footpaths since these areas also form foci for social groups.

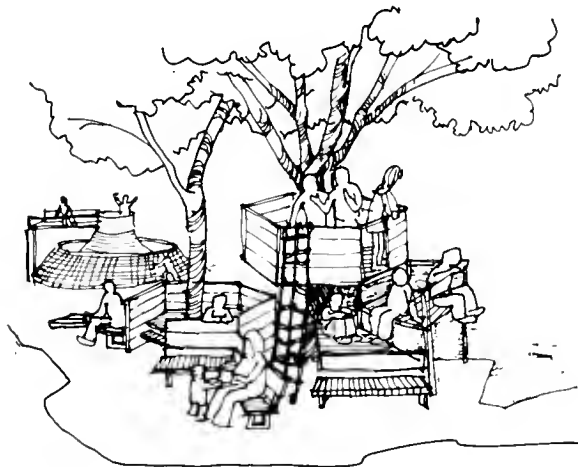


Figure 8. Play spaces should include shade and sitting areas.

Play areas can be formed by widening footpaths at various points or where footpaths cross. Alternatively, roads could be blocked off to generate play space.



Figure 9. Service road converted into play area.

#### ACTIVE PLAY

Another reason for widening footpaths is that they are used by bicyclists. The site should accommodate bicycling in the circulation network. Since roads will be used for cycling, they can be made safer by reducing the speed of cars. This can be done either by making the roads curved on new projects or by introducing bumps or washboarding on existing road surfaces. Ramps at curbs not only facilitate cycling activity but also help the physically handicapped and the elderly.

#### TODDLERS' PLAY

Preschool children tend to play adjacent to their homes because their mothers find supervision easier that way. Though they can play on either side of a house, more play has been observed outside the kitchen door--probably because the mother is in the kitchen more often than in the living room. Thus tot-lots should be close to the house so that the mother can work in the house and still keep an eye on her children. Benches and trees would draw the parents out to the play areas, providing supervision as well as an informal meeting place. This supervision would also insure the regular upkeep of the area.

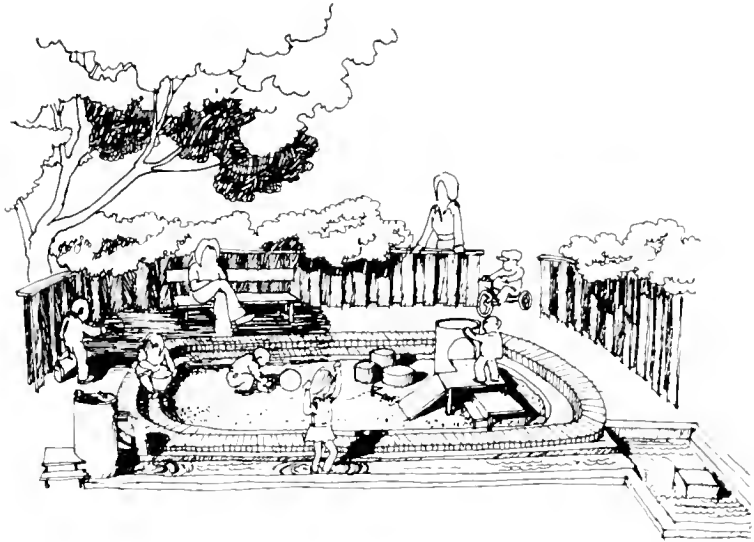


Figure 10. Pleasant facilities for tots and parents.

Toddlers should be provided with tricycle paths that are placed away from roads. A circuitous tricycle path integrated with the play area would keep the children there and provide a measure of safety to their play.

#### ORGANIZED PLAY

Organized play activities are usually located on the periphery of a site rather than the center because of space requirements. Smaller play lots (such as practice courts for basketball) can be formed by converting parking lots and other open spaces where the neighbors are not disturbed. Large play areas accommodate other activities as well, and play equipment located at the edge of the area diversifies the use of the field. If there are any large playgrounds close to the site, one can forego the provision of play fields on site. The facilities, however, must be within two or three blocks of the site and easily accessible to the children; otherwise they will play in the open spaces on site, disturbing the residents nearby.

It must be remembered that the site should have provisions for all types of play activity for children of all age groups. These facilities should be well sited; if they are not, the children will play wherever they want to, compounding the problems of noise, maintenance, and safety.

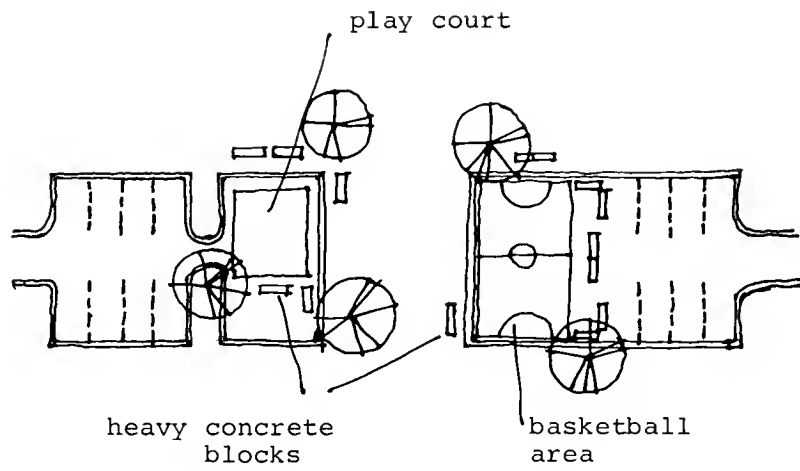


Figure 11. Parking lot converted to play area.

## PLAY EQUIPMENT

*natural areas  
vs.  
conventional  
playgrounds*

Few things are more enjoyable or engrossing to children than a vacant lot filled with "junk" or an unmown field with trees, holes, bugs, and snakes. Unfortunately most of our fields have been cleared, built on, or paved over, and our vacant lots have been cleared or placed off limits in the interest of public health and safety. Sometimes playgrounds have been built to substitute for the open fields and vacant-lot play areas. However, while children will often play for hours in fields and junkyards, recent studies have shown that on the average, children will play on conventional playgrounds no longer than fifteen minutes at a time.

The reasons for this disparity in interest are simple--but they must be understood before a successful playground can be built. Traditional equipment satisfies the need to exercise basic motor skills such as climbing, sliding, and swinging; but these skills are easily acquired and once acquired the equipment has been mastered. The same motor skills can be utilized in fields and vacant lots--but those areas cannot be easily mastered because they are too complex. They offer endless variety and challenge. It would be difficult to do the same thing twice.



Figure 12. Nature provides some of the best play areas.

Novelty, complexity, and challenge are the things that children thrive on and, therefore, are the elements which should be replicated in our play areas. But the true meaning and significance of these words must be understood before being applied to an analysis of equipment.

*novelty*

By definition, a novel piece of equipment is something new or unusual. Obviously then, any piece of play apparatus would be novel if a group of children has never played on it before; but it no longer is new or unusual after their first exposure. Novelties or gimmicks are excellent devices in remote parks or special areas where visitors come once in a while but not regularly. This surely is not the case in housing projects where the same children will be exposed to the same equipment every day. Novelty alone then should not be a criteria for choosing play equipment in housing projects.

*complexity*

Complexity is created by providing a number of elements in an apparatus each of which is different enough so a child can't respond to the apparatus as one simple object. For example, a traditional slide can be classified as a "simple object" even though a child must perform two separate motor operations (i.e., climb up and slide down) in order to complete a play sequence. It cannot be termed



Figure 13. Conventional slides offer little challenge.

complex because the equipment is designed so there is no other alternative than to perform those two operations. If, however, the apparatus has a standard metal ladder and a rope ladder to get to the top of the slide, a degree of complexity has been added, since the child now has an option of going upon the apparatus by the regular ladder or



the rope ladder. The apparatus becomes even more complex if the child has the option of doing something other than sliding down the slide once he gets to the top. For example, he may be able to walk across a beam to another piece of equipment, or maybe he can slide down a pole. Complexity can only be measured in terms of degree, but the highest degree should be strived for. As the possibilities for variation in play increase, there is a greater opportunity for the children to become engrossed in creative play for longer periods of time.



Figure 14. Slide as an integral part of a complex play structure.

*challenge*

Children seek challenge in everything they attempt. Inherent in challenge is the danger and excitement of attempting to do something they have never done before. As they master any task, it no longer represents a challenge and they discard that task for something more challenging. The complexity of equipment will determine to some extent the degree of challenge offered but that is not the sole determinant. Any piece of equipment should offer degrees of challenge so that a child will be encouraged to play on a piece of equipment to the extent of his abilities. As his abilities increase, his use of the equipment should become more varied and exciting. For example, the traditional metal climbing structure (jungle gym) has metal rungs evenly spaced throughout the entire structure. If a small child cannot reach a higher rung with his leg or pull himself up to a second rung, he cannot use the equipment at all, and thus becomes frustrated. The older child meanwhile has no problem reaching the second rung nor any other since they are all the same distance apart. Therefore, once



Figure 15. Traditional jungle gyms offer no variation of challenge.

the first stage has been mastered, the entire apparatus has been mastered. If, however, the climbing structure had the lowest rungs relatively close together and the higher rungs farther apart, all children would be able to use the apparatus to the extent of their abilities, with less frustration and more incentive to develop their ability to master the entire device.

*degrees of  
challenge*

Another factor involved in degrees of challenge is danger. Normally children realize their capabilities and go to the brink with a sense of accomplishment, but avoid the trauma of having to do something beyond them. If, for example, on a climbing structure, the child goes as high as he can, then he should have the choice of going across a balance beam or down a slide. If the child does not have the confidence to go across the beam, he will go down the slide and have accomplished something. If he had the sole alternative of going across the beam, he might retreat down the climber in frustration or attempt, fearfully, to cross the beam--thus facing possible injury and failure.

Using the concepts of novelty, complexity, and challenge as a basis, we will discuss various types of traditional and innovative play equipment commonly available today.

#### SWINGS

*disadvantages*

Swings are the most common and popular pieces of play equipment. It can be argued that they are the most popular because they are the most prevalent, but few can deny the inherent thrill of swinging high into the air. There are a number of disadvantages to swings, however. They take up a

lot of space yet serve few people. For example, a set of six swings requires at least 720 square feet of space. The act of swinging does little to develop motor skills or physical condition, and it encourages individual activity rather than group play. This latter element becomes apparent when all available swings are being used and other children want to use them. Those waiting to use the swings get impatient and harass those swinging by grabbing onto the swings or the chains, often causing the swingers to fall off or crash into an adjacent swing. Also, unless swings are located far apart from other apparatus or are separated by a fence or hedge, passersby (particularly toddlers) can unknowingly walk into the trajectory of a swing and be injured.

*alternatives*

Despite these shortcomings, swings could nevertheless be made an integral part of a playground. Several alternatives exist which can lessen their hazards. Instead of the traditional equipment, rope swings or tire swings can be utilized. These can be easily and safely integrated into other play structures and have the added advantage of encouraging group play. Merely having a lot of other equipment nearby will encourage play on other apparatus, thereby decreasing the demand for swings. If swings are to be used, the seats should be rubber straps and the superstructure should have no center supports.



Figure 16. Tire swings encourage cooperative play.



Figure 17. Pulley slides offer an exciting play experience combining sliding and swinging.

#### MERRY-GO-ROUNDS

*problems of  
maintenance  
and injury*

These very popular and thrilling devices encourage group activity, promote stamina, and challenge a child's ability not to become physically ill. The major disadvantage of this apparatus is the potential danger to smaller children who get on or near the equipment when older children are using it. A tumble from a fast moving merry-go-round can cause serious injury. The ground around the apparatus receives intensive abuse and soon becomes worn and eroded. The area should be surfaced with an impact-absorbing material, but no loose material will remain around the merry-go-round for any period of time. If this type of equipment is installed, it must be understood that the surface around it will be raked and refilled with impact-absorbing materials (such as pea gravel or bark mulch) quite regularly.

#### SLIDES

*disadvantages*

Slides provide the thrill of rapid movement and some of the new devices introduce bumps and curves which add to the excitement. But slides are strictly simple objects and are easily mastered. Once mastered they are ignored, used only in passing or in ways for which they were not designed (such as running up or sliding down backwards). Attempts to use slides in unorthodox ways have caused them to be one of the largest causes of playground injuries. The flat metal surface of slides also generates tremendous heat on sunny summer days, therefore they must be carefully oriented to the north or placed in shady locations. Fibreglass slides are now available and are a good alternative.

*alternatives*

Slides can be made a valuable part of playgrounds if they are integrated into complex play structures so they become an element of a play pattern, not a separate activity in itself (see Figure 13). Slides also can be made wider so that more than one child can use them at one time. This would permit running up and sliding down a slide at the same time without collisions--as so often occur on existing slides. Slides can be integrated into mounds so toddlers can't fall over the sides. Also, the slide should be a part of a complex structure so a child would have the choice of going down the slide or doing something else (see Figure 14). This can eliminate the trauma of the small child getting to the top of the slide and being reluctant to go down. On a standard slide, this would mean that the child would have to make the perilous backward climb down the ladder (often making other children get out of the way) or he might be pushed or otherwise forced down the slide against his will.



Figure 18. Complex wood climbing structure.

#### CLIMBING STRUCTURES

*disadvantages*

Jungle gyms or climbers have already been used as an example of how the design of a piece of apparatus can cause either frustration and boredom or challenge and achievement (see Figure 14). Most metal climbing structures are usually hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Climbing structures can be valuable components of a play area if they offer various levels with climbing rungs spaced close together at lower levels and farther apart at higher levels. These structures should be integrated with other apparatus to increase their complexity. Further, construction of wood rather than

*alternatives*

metal makes them more comfortable throughout the year.



Figure 19. Variety of experience in wood climbing structure.

#### DONATED SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

*disadvantages*

Donated equipment such as old fire engines and autos provides a novel experience but little else. This type of equipment does provide the children with an opportunity to emulate adults and it usually is made available at no cost. Under repeated use, however, the novelty wears off, and after that the real equipment actually inhibits creative and imaginative play. It also requires continual painting and maintenance. If these are not provided, the equipment rusts, deteriorates, and soon becomes an eyesore. This type of equipment generally does not belong in project areas, but rather in large public parks.

#### IMAGINATIVE APPARATUS

*disadvantages*

This type of apparatus usually is little more than very expensive climbing structures. Space ships, rockets, and trains, at best, are novelty items which have more appeal to adults than to children. This apparatus is really an insult to a child's

imagination and can inhibit rather than encourage creative play. To a child, a rocket ship is a rocket ship, but a cardboard box can be a rocket ship--as well as a train, a plane, and a stage-coach. Children do not need gimmicks, they need basic materials on which they can exercise their imagination.

#### CONCRETE OR FIBREGLASS ANIMALS

Concrete or fibreglass animals are novel and small children relate to them--but can and will they use the equipment after the novelty wears off? These pieces of equipment must be considered for their play value, not for their appearance.

#### PLAY SCULPTURE

Sculptured play devices can be aesthetically pleasing and, as such, enhance the visual appearance of a project. They can offer a variety of play experiences for smaller children and can be valuable, effective additions to tot play areas. Again, the most important criterion when considering play sculpture is not the appearance, but the actual opportunity for play it affords.



Figure 20. Play sculptures should offer many play opportunities.

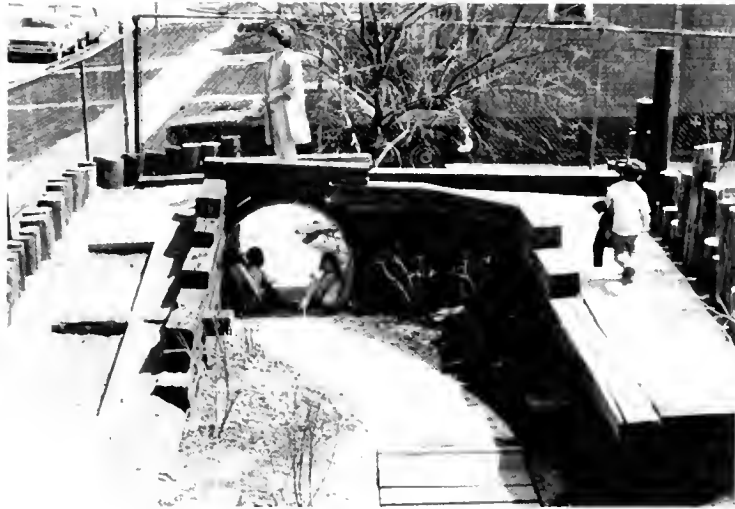


Figure 21. Sewer pipes should be integrated into other play structures.



Figure 22. Complex climbing structure constructed primarily from recycled materials.



## CONCRETE SEWER PIPE

Concrete sewer pipes have been extensively used as "creative" play equipment in recent years. They have an obvious advantage in that they can usually be obtained free of charge from local manufacturers. By themselves they offer little opportunity for play once the novelty wanes--they are quite unattractive (see Figure 15). They can, however, be used to advantage as components of complex play structures.

## NATURAL MATERIALS

Dead trees and wood rounds made from tree stumps are also materials which are easy to come by for little or no cost. But they too provide limited opportunities for creative play once their novelty wears off. Their chief value is as a supplement to other play equipment, to be used as components of a complex structure, or as transitional play pieces connecting other more complex pieces.

## RECYCLABLE MATERIALS

Reusable materials such as telephone poles, wire cable spools, railroad ties, and tires are often available at little or no cost from local utility companies, railroad yards, or city landfills. With a little imagination, all of these materials can be used to create exciting, low-cost play structures.

## SAND PLAY AREAS

*disadvantages*

Sand is capable of holding a small child's attention longer than any other play material or equipment. The use of sand does have some inherent problems, however. One common complaint is that sand is often used as a toilet facility by children and animals, therefore it is unsanitary. Another argument is that broken glass can easily be hidden in sand and injure a small child. A third complaint is that the children carry the sand with them in their clothing and soon all the sand is outside the sandbox.

*overcoming  
disadvantages*

All of these arguments against sand are justifiable; but if the potential problems are realized and planned for, most of them can be overcome. First of all, tenants and staff must realize that sand areas, as with all play equipment, need periodic maintenance. Sand areas in particular must be raked regularly (preferably each morning) to remove foreign objects and to help aerate the sand. If sand areas are incorporated into project areas as recommended in this report, raking could easily be done by parents on a rotational basis.

Sand will inevitably be lost over a period of time and should be replenished at least once each summer.

Sand areas must be well defined and constructed so they are at a different level than the surrounding area. It should require a step up and a step down before entering the sand pit itself (see Figure 10). These steps should be wide enough for children to sit on and use as tables. This discourages animals from entering the sand area and also provides a rough surface which will scrape some of the sand off the children's shoes as they leave the sand area.

The areas should be open and exposed to the morning sun to permit the sand to dry out and sanitize itself. A sand area should never be covered with a solid material since this shuts out any air or sun. If it is absolutely necessary to cover a sand pit, a wire-mesh screen should be used.

Sand areas must be constructed of sturdy materials, such as railroad ties, and must provide wide flat surfaces for the children to use as seats and tables.



Figure 23. Sand areas should be sturdily built and well defined.

#### WATER

Water play is essential for children during the hot summer months. There is no suitable substitute for a swimming pool but if a pool is not available, several alternatives are possible. Spray devices are available which can be attached to fire hydrants. The use of these devices requires that a city employee be present to turn the

*alternatives  
to swimming  
pools*

water on and off. Spray basins or pools can be constructed in project areas but these can be costly. One of the most inexpensive alternatives--and one which probably would be the most fun for the children--would be to simply provide a hose with a spray nozzle and let the children play with that. Obviously, this would have to be in an area where the water play activity would not be too disruptive to the adjacent areas.

For toddlers, a simple stream of water running from a fountain or faucet along a concrete channel through or next to a sand area is ideal (see Figure 10). This is a safe, inexpensive, and easy method of providing an opportunity for them to play with water.



Figure 24. Complex play equipment develops physical dexterity and offers challenge and excitement.

#### SUMMARY

Many types of playground equipment are available but none should be purchased or built until the resources and needs of each project area are known. A master development plan for recreation areas in each project should be made and followed in order to optimize the benefits to the tenants and minimize the costs to the housing authority. These benefits can be maximized by proper placement on the site of equipment which offer development of mental and physical dexterity, challenge, and variation in play opportunities and experience.

## SURFACING MATERIALS FOR PLAY AREAS

*grass*

It is obvious that types of grass or other plant materials will not survive under intensive use. Even the best maintained grounds can deteriorate into dirt and mud. Dirt is a good impact-absorbing surface and forms a quite suitable play surface, but it is messy, especially after rain.

*asphalt*

Often the first and final resort for an alternate play surface is asphalt. Though asphalt is a good, durable surface for game courts, it is totally inadequate in free play areas. It is hot in summer, very hard and thus leads to bruised limbs and broken bones, and ideal for breaking bottles. Unless asphalted areas are cleaned regularly, they become very dangerous for play.

*sand*

Unfortunately, very few alternative surfacing materials are available at reasonable cost. Sand is good for limited play and clearly defined play areas. It should not be used in impact areas (such as the bases of slides or next to swings) because small children might play there and get injured by the older children on swings and slides. Though impact-absorbing synthetic materials are available, they are too expensive and impractical for covering large areas.

*pea gravel*

The best compromise surfacing material is pea gravel. It is inexpensive, impact-absorbing, stays in place quite well, helps slow the children down, and needs little maintenance. Obviously children can and will throw it on occasion, but that is a minor problem. With proper supervision and maintenance, pea gravel can provide an effective surfacing material.



Figure 25. Pea gravel is an inexpensive, easy-to-maintain, impact-absorbing surfacing material for play areas.

## LANDSCAPING RECREATION AREAS

*weather  
and wind  
problems*

It has already been suggested that materials such as wood and fiberglass are not as affected by extreme heat or cold as are metal, asphalt, and concrete; therefore play equipment constructed of wood or fiberglass can be used more comfortably all year round. No one, however, will play very long on a hot, unshaded playground in the summer or stay out for an extended period of time when wintry winds blow across a play area. Proper landscaping can temper the bitter winds and cool areas during the summer months, thereby adding weeks and possibly months to the usefulness of a play area.

*landscaping  
prior to  
occupancy*

Obviously mature trees are needed to provide shade. Whenever possible, sites should be developed to retain all existing trees and to gain the maximum benefit from them. Unfortunately, this is either not done or many project sites have no trees to begin with. If there are no trees on site, they should be planted as soon as the site is developed and prior to occupancy. This is critical not only because this will permit the plant materials to become established and grow right from the start but, perhaps more importantly, trees and other plantings placed on the site at its inception can either encourage or inhibit certain activities. For example, if an interior court area is provided but left entirely open, it will encourage ball playing and other very active usage which might not be desirable in such a space. It is generally much more difficult to stop an activity already in progress than to prevent it from occurring in the first place through proper planning. In this case, the court area should be landscaped right from the start with trees, masses of shrubs, and possibly earthmounds to discourage ball playing (see Figure 26).

*wind  
protection*

Protection from wintry winds can be provided by fences, plantings massed as hedges or screens, or by earthmounds. In order to be effective, a wind screen must be dense enough to at least retard the force of the wind, high enough to direct the wind over the play area, and in the path of the prevailing winds so as to be effective most of the time. In order for fences to satisfy these requirements, they must be massive. Such a fence would become a dominant visual feature and would be quite expensive. And fences, by their very pres-

*fences*



Figure 26. Undesirable play activities in open court areas create problems of landscape maintenance.

ence invite climbing, battering, and other types of abuse. Therefore, a fence must be built solidly and maintained regularly. A fence in disrepair is a real eyesore in a project.

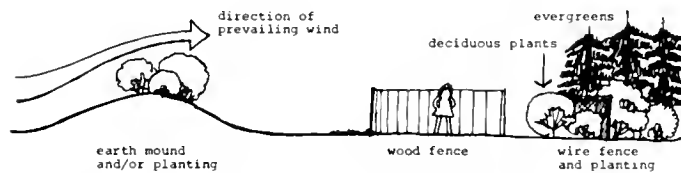


Figure 27. Types of windbreaks.

*plantings as  
windbreaks*

Shrubs and trees, on the other hand, can serve as excellent windbreaks and can enhance the appearance of the project site as well. Shrubs do have some disadvantages, however. Unlike a fence which provides instant protection, it takes some time for any plant material to mature and obtain its desired fullness and height. Unfortunately, when windbreaks are needed most (i.e., from late fall to early spring), many hedges have no leaves and therefore are less effective. Evergreen plants provide a solution to this problem but they have one major drawback in that they are quite slow growing. Although many deciduous shrubs such as tall hedge and privet grow several feet per season, the common evergreen shrubs may only grow a few inches each year. One way to provide a quickly established windbreak, as well as an effective year-round screen, is to plant a fast growing deciduous hedge with a low fence and to back this up with an evergreen planting. The

deciduous hedge can serve as a windbreak until the evergreens have matured and are effective.

#### EARTHMOUNDS

*advantages  
of earthmounds*

Earthmounds can be completely effective as windbreaks if properly placed. They also provide many other benefits to the site. Children love to climb, slide, and roll up and down hills no matter how large or small. Earthmounds not only shelter play areas, they screen them from view. Therefore the mounds can enhance the attractiveness of a site by adding changes in elevation while minimizing the visual impact of a play area.

Ideally mounds should be formed as the site is developed by using soil excavated from building foundations. This obviously saves the cost of transporting waste soil away from the site. On developed sites, good clean fill would have to be brought in, or open areas could be excavated and mounds formed from the excavated soil. If this is done, careful consideration would have to be given to potential drainage problems; but the concept is quite feasible and worthy of consideration if open areas exist on the site.

*making  
earthmounds  
effective*

For mounds to be effective as windbreaks, they should be at least as high as the people who will be using the play area. If the mounds are to be covered in turf, they should have no more than a three-to-one slope. On steeper slopes, retaining walls or terraces can be used to stabilize the soil. Terraces can be effectively used to provide seating areas on the sides of the mounds adjacent to the play area.



Figure 28. Earthmounds can serve many functions.

#### PLANTING

Several important considerations must be made when planting trees and shrubs in and around play areas. No plant can be guaranteed to survive the onslaught



*concepts  
for planting*

of groups of children, but chances for survival may be greater if the following concepts are followed:

Plant the most mature trees and shrubs your budget will permit. Whips will seldom survive abuse by children and will take far too long to become effective. Most assuredly, young plants cost less than larger ones, but it is wiser to spend the available funds for fewer plants which stand a good chance of surviving than to waste money on a large number of plants which have little chance of surviving and, even if they do, will not be effective for a number of years.

Plant trees and shrubs in masses rather than scattered singly all over the site. This will maximize their visual impact in the site and lessen the chance of their being trampled or abused.

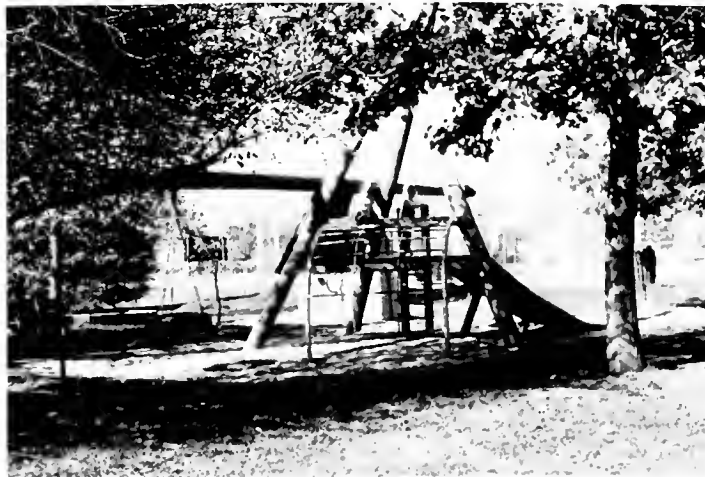


Figure 29. Trees provide beauty and comfort to play areas.

If plantings are to be placed across an obvious circulation route, don't try to make a shrub serve as a fence--it will certainly be trampled. Instead, provide an opening in the planting and lay a hard-surfaced pathway or walk through the area. Proper design of the planting scheme can accommodate circulation patterns without sacrificing the functional or aesthetic objectives of the planting.

The most important consideration is the use of plant materials which are native to the area or at least do best under the conditions to which they will be subjected. Climatic conditions, soil conditions, availability of water, amount of sun and wind, and air quality all are critical factors when choosing plant materials.

Many varieties of trees and shrubs which are hardy as far north as Champaign, Illinois will not survive the winters in the Chicago area only 120 miles further north. Similarly, some plants will thrive on the north side of a building, but will winter-kill on the south side. On page 37 is a list of trees and shrubs which do well under various extreme growing conditions. This list is not all-inclusive; consult a reputable nurseryman or horticulturist in your area before making the final selection of any nursery stock.

Trees and shrubs come in all sizes and shapes and there is at least one variety to suit every landscaping need. By choosing the plant materials which will mature to the desired height and size and which will grow best under existing environmental conditions, a great deal of pruning, thinning, clipping, fertilizing, and spraying can be eliminated, thus saving considerable time and money.

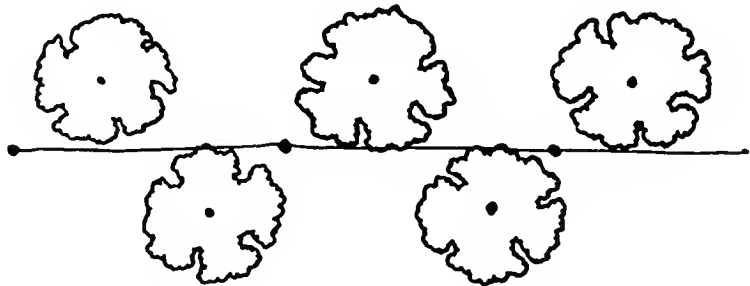
*insuring  
planting  
success*

The susceptibility of young plants to abuse can be minimized by following these planting procedures:

Use the most mature and fullest plantings your budget will permit.

Erect a simple but sturdy low (three to four feet) wire fence along the line of the desired windbreak.

Place the plant materials in staggered double rows along both sides of the fence.



Plant only in early spring and late fall, when the plants will have the best chance to take root and begin new growth quickly.

Prepare plant pits and condition soil for use in new planting in accordance with acceptable horticultural procedures.

## TREES

index to numbers in last column

- 1 withstands city conditions (poor soil, insufficient water, air pollution)  
 2 good as windbreak or screen  
 3 disease free or resistant  
 4 hardy throughout Illinois  
 5 evergreen  
 6 fast growing

<u>Botanical Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Height</u>	<u>Spread</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Abies concolor	White fir	50	20-30	1 4 5
Acer campestre	Hedge maple	30	20-25	1 2
A. negundo	Box elder	50	40-50	1 4 6
A. platanoides	Norway maple	40-50	75	1 2 3 4
A. pseudoplatanus	Sycamore maple	70	60-80	1 2
Aesculus species	Buckeye, horsechestnut	30-50	30-40	1 4
Catalpa species	Catalpa	40-50	25	1 4 6
Celtis occidentalis	Hackberry	60-70	50	1 4
Crataegus phaenopyrum	Washington hawthorn	20	15	1 2 4
C. oxyacantha	English hawthorn	20	12	1 4
Elaeagnus angusti- folia	Russian olive	40	30	1 2 3 4 6
Fraxinus americana	White ash	80	50-60	1 2 4
F. pennsylvanica lanceolata	Green ash	60	40-50	1 2 4 6
Ginkgo biloba	Ginkgo	60	40	1 3 4
Gleditsia tri- acanthus	Thornless honey- locust	75	40-50	1 4 6
Koelreuteria paniculata	Golden-rain tree	30	40	1 3
Magnolia grandiflora	Southern magnolia	80	40	1 5
M. soulangiana	Saucer magnolia	25	25	1 4
M. stellata	Star magnolia	8	10-15	1 3 4
Malus species	Crabapple	10-20	10-20	1 4
Morus alba	White mulberry	30	25	1 4 6
Phellodendron amurense	Amur corktree	30-40	30	1 3 4
Picea pungens glauca	Colorado blue spruce	40	20-25	1 2 4 5
Platanus species	Sycamore	80-100	50	1 4 6
Populus alba	White poplar	75-100	50-60	1 4 6
Quercus borealis	Northern red oak	70-80	50-60	1 4
Robinia pseudo- acacia	Black locust	30-40	20-30	1 4 6
Rhamnus davurica	Dahurian buckthorn	30	25	1 2 3 4 6
Sophora japonica	Japanese pagoda- tree	40-50	40-50	1 3 4 6
Taxus cuspidata	Japanese yew	15-20	6-8	1 3 4 5
Tilia species	Linden	75	50-60	1 2 3 4
Tsuga caroliniana	Carolina hemlock	40-50	20-25	1 2 4 5 6
Ulmus pumila	Siberian elm	65	40	1 2 4 6

SHRUBS

index to numbers in last column

- 1 withstands city conditions
- 2 good as windbreak or screen
- 3 good as hedge
- 4 hardy throughout Illinois
- 5 evergreen
- 6 thorns or barbs

<u>Botanical Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Height</u>	<u>Spread</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Acanthopanax sieboldianus	Five-leaf aralia	5-10	5	1 3 6
Acer ginnala	Amur maple	20	20	1 2 4
Amelanchier laevis	Allegheny serviceberry	25	12	1 4
Amorpha fruticosa	Indigobush amorpha	8-10	8	1 4
Aronia arbutifolia	Chokeberry	8	5	1 3 4
Berberis species	Barberry	4	2-3	1 3 4 6
Caragana arborescens	Siberian peashrub	12-15	8	1 2 3 4
Elaeagnus umbellatus	Autumn olive	12	10	1 2 3 4 6
Cornus alba	Siberian dogwood	8	6	1 3 4
C. sericea	Redtwig dogwood	10	6	1 4
Euonymus alatus	Winged euonymus	8	10	1 3 4
Forsythia species	Forsythia	8	6	1 4
Hamamelis species	Witchhazel	8-10	8	1 2 4
Hydrangea species	Hydrangea	4-10	4-8	1 3 4
Juniperus chinensis pfitzeriana	Pfitzer	3-4	5-6	1 3 4 5
Kerria japonica	Kerria	3	3	1 4
Ligustrum species	Privet	6-12	6-8	1 2 3 4
Lonicera species	Honeysuckle	4-12	4-8	1 2 3 4
Myrica pennsylvanica	Bayberry	5-10	5	1 4
Philadelphus coronarius	Mockorange	10-12	6	1 2 3 4
Physocarpus opulifolius	Common ninebark	8	8	1 2 3 4
Potentilla fruticosa	Bush cinquefoil	3	3	1
Rhamnus frangula columnaris	Tallhedge buckthorn	10	4	1 2 3 4
Rhodotypos scandens	Jetbead	5	4	1 4
Rhus species	Sumac	6-10	4-8	1 4
Ribes alpinum	Alpine currant	4	4	1 3 4
R. odoratum	Clove currant	6	5	1 4
Rosa multiflora	Multiflora rose	3-4	10-15	1 3 4 6
Spiraea species	Spirea	8-10	8	1 3 4
Symphoricarpos species	Coralberry	3-4	4	1 4
Syringa species	Lilac	8-12	7	1 2 3 4
Taxus species	Yew	6-10	4-10	1 3 4 5
Viburnum species	Viburnum	10-15	8-10	1 2 3 4

# MAINTENANCE

## PLAY AREAS

*need for  
regular  
maintenance*

A common misconception is that playgrounds are static--that one can install some play equipment and forget about it. Nothing can be further from the truth. Play areas, like any other piece of equipment (a car, for example), must be maintained regularly if they are expected to satisfy the demands made of them. In addition, these areas should be observed continually to see if more equipment should be added or if some should be changed. This will be obvious by merely noting the areas of wear as a result of play activities.

There are two major points that should be remembered:

Be happy and quick to replace equipment that is worn with use--and replace it with identical equipment.

Be quick to spot areas or equipment that are being abused. Something is wrong. Either the equipment is not satisfying the needs of the intended users, or another user group has not been provided with satisfactory play areas and equipment. Abuse is generally a sign of frustration.

*tenant  
involvement*

A major advantage of the new types of play equipment is that they can be added to or disassembled and moved to another location. Regular evaluation (see the checklist on page 47) and modification of play areas present an excellent opportunity for tenant involvement in both the planning and construction phases. It has been shown that user involvement in the design and construction of play areas inevitably leads to increased use, pride, and care of the facilities. The families in the various "neighborhoods" on site could be organized to give advice and assistance in the planning and construction of these areas and help with the upkeep of the equipment.

#### GENERAL SITE MAINTENANCE

*involving  
tenants in  
maintenance*

In order to encourage tenant involvement in site maintenance, the housing authority should provide lawn and garden equipment on loan to tenants who want to look after their yards or do a bit of gardening. In this way, residents could be encouraged to develop a proprietorial interest in the areas adjacent to their units and look after them. The housing authority will have to look after the public space on site because tenants may not identify with these spaces enough to look after them. Maintenance of these areas could be done by part-time personnel hired from the teenage population in the project.

It is essential that the housing authority arrange regular maintenance and prompt repair of all areas and equipment on site. The lack of regular maintenance will inevitably lead to the deterioration of areas and danger or frustration to those at play.

# DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATION AREAS

## FINANCE

It is fine to discuss grandiose schemes for developing recreation areas for all age groups in all projects, but sooner or later the questions must be asked, "How much is it going to cost?" and "Where do I get the money to pay for it?"

Several small playgrounds have been built in recent years by prominent landscape architects in New York City at costs well in excess of half a million dollars. Playgrounds containing a multitude of complex, challenging play equipment have been built in Champaign, Illinois by landscape architects for as little as eighteen hundred dollars. The New York City playgrounds were funded by charitable foundations, while the Champaign play areas were built largely with donated materials and labor. The obvious implication in these examples is that play areas can be very expensive or quite inexpensive, depending on how much money and labor is available. But the most important point is that good, meaningful playgrounds can be acquired regardless of budget--if the housing authority, staff, and tenants are willing to put out the effort.

*make a  
master plan*

Housing authority administrators should first evaluate their recreational facility needs by using the checklist on page 47. They should then call in a landscape architect or recreation resource planner to work with the housing authority staff and tenants to develop a master development plan.

*sources of  
funding*

Currently, one of the best potential sources of funding is through the HUD Modernization Program. Phase II of that program authorizes expenditures for redevelopment of recreation areas, community space, and site improvement through landscaping. Other potential sources for acquiring at least matching funds for recreation development would be through the Model Cities Program or the Open Space Program.\* These would involve working with the

\*For further information, contact:

HUD Area Office  
17 Dearborn Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

local community or park districts but could provide considerable benefits to both the project tenants and the community residents. For example, under the terms of the Open Space Program, a high priority is given to funding requests for acquisition of land for parks adjacent to low income housing projects.

*establishing  
priorities*

If funding is obtainable or the budget is adequate, then the master plan should be implemented in its entirety. However, if funds are limited or if the development is to be implemented over a period of time, then the play areas should be developed in accordance with the degree of need as established by the evaluation checklist. In other words, those with the lowest ratings should be built first.

*sources for  
play material*

Manufactured play apparatus is generally expensive but it is convenient and easy to acquire and install. A few companies are offering innovative equipment which provides more challenge than the traditional equipment, but most complex play structures must be custom designed and constructed on the site. Custom designed equipment can be very costly if outside labor and elaborate materials are used. It can be quite inexpensive, however, if staff carpenters and tenants do much of the work. Materials for creative playgrounds can often be acquired for little or no cost. Railroad ties, telephone cable spools, and telephone poles are used extensively in creative playgrounds. These materials are usually readily available from the phone company or a nearby railroad yard. Usually the only expense involved is the time necessary to go to the yards and pick up the materials.

*obtaining  
professional  
help*

Perhaps the most important point to consider before seeking funds or at least before spending funds on major development of recreation areas is to obtain the services of a playground designer or architect. This professional should be able to work with the staff and the tenants to provide the most for the tenants within the budget and resources available. If a qualified playground designer or landscape architect is not available locally, the following sources can provide the names of landscape architects who have done work in this field:

Department of Landscape Architecture  
University of Illinois  
Urbana, Illinois 61801

William Nelson, Jr.  
Extension Landscape Architect  
Agriculture Extension Service  
200 Floriculture Building  
University of Illinois  
Urbana, Illinois 61801



Joseph Bannon  
Department of Recreation and Park  
Administration  
312 Armory Building  
University of Illinois  
Champaign, Illinois 61820

#### MANPOWER

*user involvement*

The best source for manpower to carry out any program is the housing project itself. Tenant involvement in the construction and maintenance of play facilities accomplishes more than employing local people; it creates a sense of achievement among the people and develops a proprietorial interest toward the equipment. The tenants feel that the play areas are theirs because they helped build them. This attitude will also encourage them to provide casual supervision of these areas, decreasing the need for hired supervisors and maintenance men. If children--the immediate users--are also involved in building the play areas, they will develop a sense of responsibility toward the equipment and help in the upkeep of the areas.

*limits and  
capabilities  
of user  
involvement*

Obviously, there is a limit as to what tenant labor can do. They should not (and probably could not, because of local unions) be involved in jobs calling for special expertise such as laying out concrete or asphalt, building construction, or planting large trees. But they can, under the supervision of staff maintenance and technical employees, help clean up areas to be developed, help assemble or build play equipment, and plant small trees and shrubs. The tenants should also, under the supervision of staff painters, be permitted to paint and decorate their community space as they see fit. This is very critical in order for them to feel that this space is truly theirs. Such an attitude would be difficult to achieve if the housing authority does all the planning and equipping before turning it over to the tenants. Basically, this is the prime concept behind the HUD Modernization Program. In each project, the most important improvements should be those which the tenants request and in which they have a part in planning and implementing.

*sources for  
skilled help*

The tenant population is also a good source for leaders of recreation programs. This could be leadership of a casual type, such as helping to organize or supervise certain types of activity. It is not necessary for all the leaders to be well trained in recreation; the key staff people can handle that aspect of recreation. Tenant involvement in leadership, apart from creating a sense of responsibility, also helps in increasing the amount of contact and cooperation between the staff and the tenants. This can be very helpful in the case of teenagers; if they are given such responsibility they could become a very constructive force in the

recreation program since they have the time, ability, and energy. Of course, the key staff person should be well trained in his profession and be able to supervise all these factors of planning and implementing programs. If a specific skill is needed and cannot be provided by any of the tenants, a specialist could be hired on a part-time basis.

The following people are sources of technical assistance:

*technical  
assistance*

Dr. William G. Riordan  
Room 144 Lantz  
Physical Education and Recreation Building  
Eastern Illinois University  
Charleston, Illinois 61920  
Phone: 217 - 581-2021

Dr. Robert Kahler  
Men's Physical Education Department  
Northern Illinois University  
De Kalb, Illinois 60115  
Phone: 815 - 753-1924

Dr. William O'Brien, Chairman  
Recreation Department  
Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale, Illinois 62901  
Phone: 618 - 453-4331

Dr. Allen V. Sapora  
Department of Recreation and Park  
Administration  
Room 104 Huff Gymnasium  
University of Illinois  
Champaign, Illinois 61820  
Phone: 217 - 333-0105

Dr. Tony Mobley  
Room 103 Western Hall  
Western Illinois University  
Macomb, Illinois 61455  
Phone: 309 - 899-2453

Colleges with programs in recreation are also potential sources of assistance. In fact, these institutions could be persuaded to offer this assistance through a class project or through their fieldwork program. Students from these institutions could also be employed as part-time or summer help.

## RECREATION PROGRAMS

*need for  
tenant  
involvement*

Any recreation program, in order to be successful, must gear its activities to the users. This can be achieved only if the planner incorporates tenant participation into the planning process. Residents should be made part of all phases of recreation planning, either as advisors or preferably as full participants. The planner must use his professional skills and leadership abilities to satisfy the needs of both the tenants and the housing authority.

It is important that the program be varied enough to attract people of all ages. No age group should be overlooked in setting up recreation programs, as this could create apathy and even resentment towards other programs. This tenant participation should not be limited to adults only; children should be asked about the types of programs they would like. Another aspect of tenant participation which should be kept in mind is that tenants--both adults and children--should be involved not only in the planning, but also in the implementation of the programs and construction of facilities. This involvement helps the users to identify with the programs and feel that they have an investment in the facilities, thus providing them with more incentive to use and take care of the equipment.

### ELEMENTS OF GOOD RECREATION PROGRAMMING

Find out what each group is doing for recreation now.

Find out what they would like to be doing.

Plan with each group how to implement these programs.

Be careful not to plan only active or highly organized activities such as sports and games.

*qualifications  
of staff  
personnel*

It is obvious that tenant participation in all stages of the recreation program would require skillful leadership not only for generating and sustaining the interest of the users, but also as a measure of control. The various requirements make it necessary to consider a potential leader on more than his professional abilities. He must have skills in program planning and the ability to get

people involved, as well as possessing a personality that is attractive to all age groups.

# CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING EXISTING RECREATION RESOURCES

*how to use  
the checklist*

The following checklist has been devised to help evaluate the quality and adequacy of existing recreation facilities and programs for housing authority residents. This method assigns values to each of the criteria necessary for satisfaction of the recreational needs of the major age groups. To assess the recreational resources in a project area, simply follow the checklist and score each item according to the guidelines. When all the items on the checklist have been scored, add them up and compare the total score with the maximum score for each age group. An area that scores at least two-thirds of the total possible points for any group would receive a high rating. This indicates that the basic recreational needs of that age group are being satisfied. A moderate rating (between one-third and two-thirds of the total possible points) indicates that while some facilities are available in the area, there is considerable need for improvement. A low rating (less than one-third of the possible points) indicates that immediate action should be taken to upgrade the programs and facilities in that area.

This system will enable the housing authority staff to examine objectively existing recreational facilities and ascertain which needs are being met and which are not. This can assist the housing authorities in spending their time, money, and effort where they are most needed.

## PRESCHOOLERS

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
1. Play area free from vehicular traffic and accessible without having to cross streets. (Score 3 if both conditions are met, 1 if either, 0 if none are met.)	3	
2. Play area separate from play area for older children or from other areas which might be hazardous to small children. (Score 3 if both conditions are met, 2 if play areas are together but	3	

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
physically separated by fences or hedges, 1 if tot play area is located at one end of total play area, 0 if no special provisions have been made for tot play.)		
3. Play area sheltered and shaded. (Score 3 if both conditions are met, 1 if either, 0 if area is in the open.)	3	
4. Creative play equipment. (Score 3 if play equipment develops motor skills and stimulates the imagination, 2 if there is a variety of play equipment, 1 if there is any play apparatus, 0 if no apparatus is provided solely for preschoolers.)	3	
5. Sand and water play. (Score 3 if both are present, 1 if either exists.)	3	
6. Play areas centrally located within view of all units. (Score 3 if condition is met fully, 2 if more than 50% of units are within view of tot play area, 1 if less than 50%, 0 if tot play area does not exist.)	3	
7. Place near play area for parents to sit and supervise.	3	
8. Sidewalk system leading from dwelling units to play areas.	3	
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	Maximum Score	24
Rating:	16 points or more	High
	8 to 15 points	Moderate
	7 points or less	Low

GRADE SCHOOL CHILDREN

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
1. Play area separate from dwelling units and hazardous areas.	3	
2. Play equipment. (Score 3 if equipment is multi-dimensional, complex, and challenging, 2 if variety of creative and standard apparatus is available, 1 if equipment consists of standard swing set, slide, and one other piece of equipment, 0 if no equipment is available or equipment is not maintained in operable condition.)	3	
3. Play area sheltered and shaded. (Score 3 if both conditions are met, 1 if either, 0 if area is in the open or if no area exists.)	3	
4. Playground on site or park within two blocks with:		
ball field	1	
game courts	1	
no major streets or barriers	1	
water fountain	1	
toilets	1	
supervision	1	
5. Swimming pool available and accessible. (Score 3 if pool within walking distance and season passes are available at reasonable rates, 2 if transportation is available for project children, 1 if public pool is in area but children have to find means to get there, 0 if no pool is available.)	3	
6. Open space in or around site for free play. (Score 3 if area is in natural state with trees and unmown grass, 1 if area is mown field, 0 if no open space is accessible.)	3	
7. Indoor play area or game room. (Score 3 if fully equipped and supervised play facility is provided in project area, 2 if a facility is available in the neighborhood, 1 if undeveloped)	3	

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
space is available, 0 if no space or facilities are provided.)		
8. Recreation program. (Score 3 if year-round program is provided or is readily available to project residents, 1 if summer recreation program is provided, 0 if no recreation programs are offered.)	3	
	-----	-----
Maximum Score	27	
Rating: 18 points or more	High	
9 to 17 points	Moderate	
8 points or less	Low	

TEENAGERS

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
1. Outdoor recreation space within two blocks. (Score 3 if ball field and game courts, 1 if either.)	3	
2. Swimming pool available. (Score same as for grade school children.)	3	
3. Teen center (can be part of other facilities). (Score 3 if organized and supervised center is operated in neighborhood, 2 if game room is available to teens in project area, 1 if undeveloped space would be available, 0 if no facilities or program exist.)	3	
4. Recreation-social program. (Score 3 if year-round program is provided or is readily available to project residents, 1 if programs are available only during school year, 0 if none are available.)	3	
	-----	-----
Maximum Score	12	
Rating: 8 points or more	High	
4 to 7 points	Moderate	
3 points or less	Low	



ADULTS

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
1. Indoor space for meetings, social affairs. (Score 3 if space is available on site, 1 if space is available near project area.)	3	
2. Outdoor family space for each dwelling unit. (Score 3 if family can sit outside in privacy, 1 if level paved patio or terrace is available but without privacy.)	3	
3. Outdoor space for active recreation with two blocks. (Score same as for teenagers.)	3	
4. Outdoor space for passive recreation within two blocks with:		
shade and shelter	1	
tables and benches	1	
fireplace or grill	1	
5. Facilities to work on/wash cars. (Score 3 if space is shaded or covered and water is provided, 1 if either condition exists, 0 if no space is provided.)	3	
6. Organized social-recreation programs.	3	
Maximum Score	18	
Rating: 12 points or more	High	
6 to 11 points	Moderate	
5 points or less	Low	

ELDERLY

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
1. Indoor facility for games, social events with:		
lounge	1	
game tables	1	
meeting room	1	
piano and other instruments	1	
community cooking facilities	1	
craft and hobby shop	1	

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>	<u>Actual Score</u>
2. Outdoor facility with:		
shade and shelter	1	
level paved surface	1	
benches and porch swings	2	
3. Circuitous sidewalk system leading to building entrances and outdoor use areas.	3	
4. Area for lawn games.	2	
5. On-going social and recreation program.	3	
6. Professional social director.	3	
	<hr style="width: 50px; margin-left: auto; margin-right: 0;"/>	<hr style="width: 50px; margin-left: auto; margin-right: 0;"/>
Maximum Score	21	
Rating: 14 points or more	High	
7 to 13 points	Moderate	
6 points or less	Low	

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