

MEDIA RELEASE

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NPC Launches Initiative to Improve Worst Playgrounds

San Francisco, CA, (March 24), 2008- The Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) announced today that it has launched a citywide Playground Initiative to improve failed playgrounds in underserved neighborhoods. Failed playgrounds were identified through the 2006 Playground Assessment, in which 30 San Francisco playgrounds received a grade of D or F.

“When you take a look at where our children are supposed to play and develop, it is really quite shocking in some neighborhoods,” says Dr. Isabel Wade, Executive Director of NPC. “Years of under funding maintenance at our City’s playgrounds means that parents take chances each time they let their children play on a rusty or splintered piece of equipment.”

The goal of the Playground Initiative is to upgrade the city’s worst playgrounds and ensure that children can play and exercise safely outside, especially in neighborhoods where park space is often the only outdoor play space.

Leveraged fundraising

The Playground Initiative has raised a total of \$150,000 for neighborhood organizing around the failed playgrounds, with philanthropic support from the Miriam and Peter Haas Foundation, McKesson Corporation, Wells Fargo Foundation, Stulsaft Foundation and the Seed Fund among others. The collaborative effort with the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) aims to upgrade each of the failed sites from ‘D or F’ to at least ‘C’ with the sweat equity of neighbors. Neighborhood funds will be used for small repairs and community workdays at each selected playground. Volunteers will

assist with simple but important tasks identified by the Department such as painting over peeling structures that might contain old lead paint or replacing sand that might contain arsenic from leaching wood.

Additionally, NPC and the neighborhood groups have begun to leverage the neighborhood funds into much larger projects. They have attracted a total of \$3 million to date for site-specific capital improvements from private donors, associations, and the City.

"It is so thrilling to see the leveraging of community efforts into major capital funds to repair or replace a playground," Wade noted. "We hope others will step up to help also. The City's recent park bond only includes a few of the failed playgrounds, so community and corporate leadership is needed to help create safe and fun play spaces where children can exercise."

NPC offered Balboa Playground as an example. In April 2007, NPC and the Rec and Park Department kicked-off a pilot workday to resolve maintenance issues at Balboa Playground. This effort attracted subsequent capital funding, allowing for a full replacement of the playground sponsored by the American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons and KaBoom. The playground was built with community volunteers and the surgeons on March 4th.

The Playground Initiative has plans underway to improve ten additional playgrounds in 2008-09:

- Dolores Park: Plans underway, Funding secured (Mission/Castro)
- Franklin Square: Renovation underway (Mission/Potrero)
- Hamilton Rec Center: Renovation underway (Western Addition)
- Hunter's Point Rec Center (Hunter's Point/Bayview)
- James Rolph Playground (Mission/Bayview)
- Palega Playground: 2008 Park Bond Project (Portola/Silver Terrace)
- Precita Park (Bernal/Mission)
- South Park (South Park/Rincon)
- St. Mary's Square (Chinatown)
- West Sunset Playground (Sunset)

Once the work to upgrade these playgrounds to a 'useable and safe' level is complete, NPC encourages residents to help notify Rec and Park when maintenance concerns arise by using NPC's ParkScan.org web tool. In addition, many groups continue to work to identify capital funds for the replacement of playground features or the full playground. NPC hopes to continue its initiative in 2009-10 to complete upgrades to the remaining 11 worst playgrounds.

More information on the Playground Initiative available at www.sfnpc.org/playgrounds