



2023

Liberty Park's  
**Rotary Play Park**  
Phase One  
**Engagement Summary  
Report**



Public Lands

Parks | Trails & Natural Lands | Urban Forestry | Golf

# Acknowledgements

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## Special Thanks To:

Liberty Wells Community Council

Central City Neighborhood Council

East Liberty Park Community Organization (ELPCO)

Salt Lake City Residents

Salt Lake Arts Academy

Parks Natural Lands Urban Forestry and Trails (PNUT) Board Members

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SLC Mayors Office

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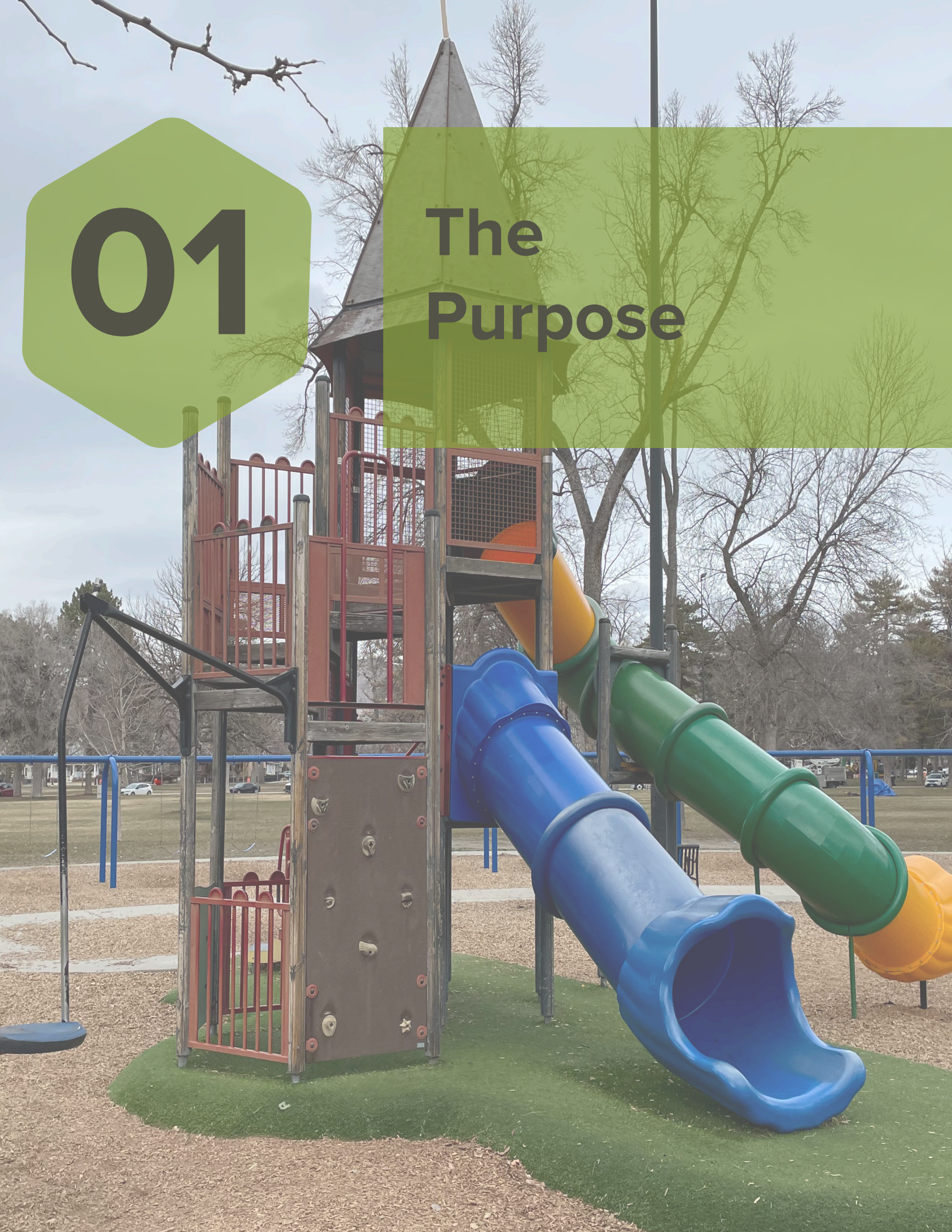
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# The Purpose

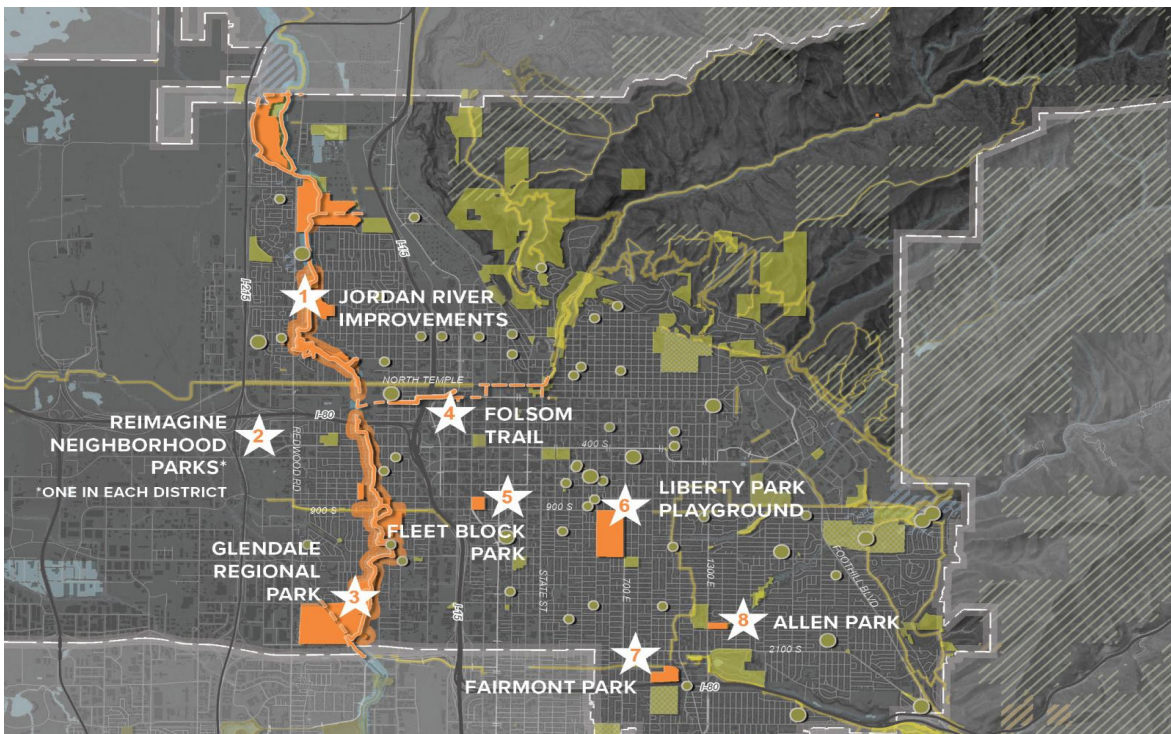


# The Purpose

In November 2022, Salt Lake City voters approved the Parks, Trails, and Open Space General Obligation (GO) Bond. \$2 million of the bond funding is dedicated to reimagining Liberty Park Rotary Play Park.

Additional details about the Parks, Trails, and Open Space General Obligation Bond, along with insights into what other parks were selected to be reimagined are available online.

The first phase of community engagement for Liberty Rotary Play Park began on June 14, 2023. The subject engagement phase closed on September 12, 2023. This report summarizes the community engagement findings and discusses the project's next steps.



Map above: Map of proposed GO Bond improvement locations.

Source: Design Workshop, Inc.

# 01 The Purpose



Picture above: The current portion of the playground suited for older children.



Picture above: The current portion of the playground suited for younger children.

# History of the Playground

Designed in 1881, Liberty Park is believed to be Salt Lake City's oldest and second-largest park. Liberty Park is home to the Rotary Play Park. The Play Park is in the central northwest portion of Liberty Park, which was dedicated on March 7, 2002. The Play Park was brought to life by partnering with many private donors, the Salt Lake City Government, and the Salt Lake City Rotary Club. It was built to become an all-age and abilities park and reflect the legacy of the 2002 Paralympic Winter Games hosted in Utah. The Play Park included state-of-the-art assets of its time to which honored the site's popularity and community preferences.

The three principal features of the Play Park included two play areas, one suited for younger children and another that offers age-appropriate play amenities for older children. In the middle of these two play areas is a three-featured splash pad. The splash pad has three simple yet adventurous water features: a fire hydrant, a fountain, and a tunnel.



The Rotary Play Park's Ribbon Cutting Day in 2002.

Shortly after the park's dedication, the Rotary Play Park received an American Society of Landscape Architect Award of Excellence in March 2005. The Play Park was also listed as one of the ten best parks and playgrounds in "The 10 Best of Everything Families: An Ultimate Guide for Travelers" By Susan Magsamen.

Given the Play Park's unique and high legacy, it has been a place for families to come. With more than 20 years of consistent and heavy use, the playground is now aging, out of date, and well-worn. A new Play Park and further site amenities should serve the community for years to come.



**02**

# **Community Engagement Timeline, Strategy, and Results**



# Community Engagement Strategy

Total impressions, engagements, surveys, and conversations during this engagement period:  
**9,080**

## Online General Engagement Survey

- Online Survey: Gather feedback on community preferences.
- Content: The survey asked questions to understand the current use of the park, users, desires for the space, and how to increase accessibility for all users.
- Open Dates: June 14, 2023, to September 12, 2023
- Stakeholders: Liberty Wells Community Council, Central City Community Council, East Liberty Park Community Organization (ELPCO), children, parents, Rotary International, residents citywide
- Participation: **449** surveys completed online
- Accessibility: Visual boards with character images of different playground features were presented at in-person engagement events to make it easier for children and adults to vote on their preference for desired equipment.

## Focus Groups with Salt Lake City Arts Academy

- Focus groups with students: Two focus groups with different groups of 9 to 13 year old students from Salt Lake City Arts Academy were held to understand their vision and priorities for the playground.
- Content: Students were asked what they enjoy most at playgrounds and what they wish to see at Liberty Park Play Park. One group of students was asked to build their ideal playground using Legos and other materials. The other group of students was asked to create a collage from magazine cut-outs of what they would like to see in the playground. Lastly, students visited Liberty Park and shared what they liked and did not like about the Play Park.
- Dates: June 14 and June 27, 2023
- Participation: 35 Students from Grades 4-6

# Community Engagement Strategy

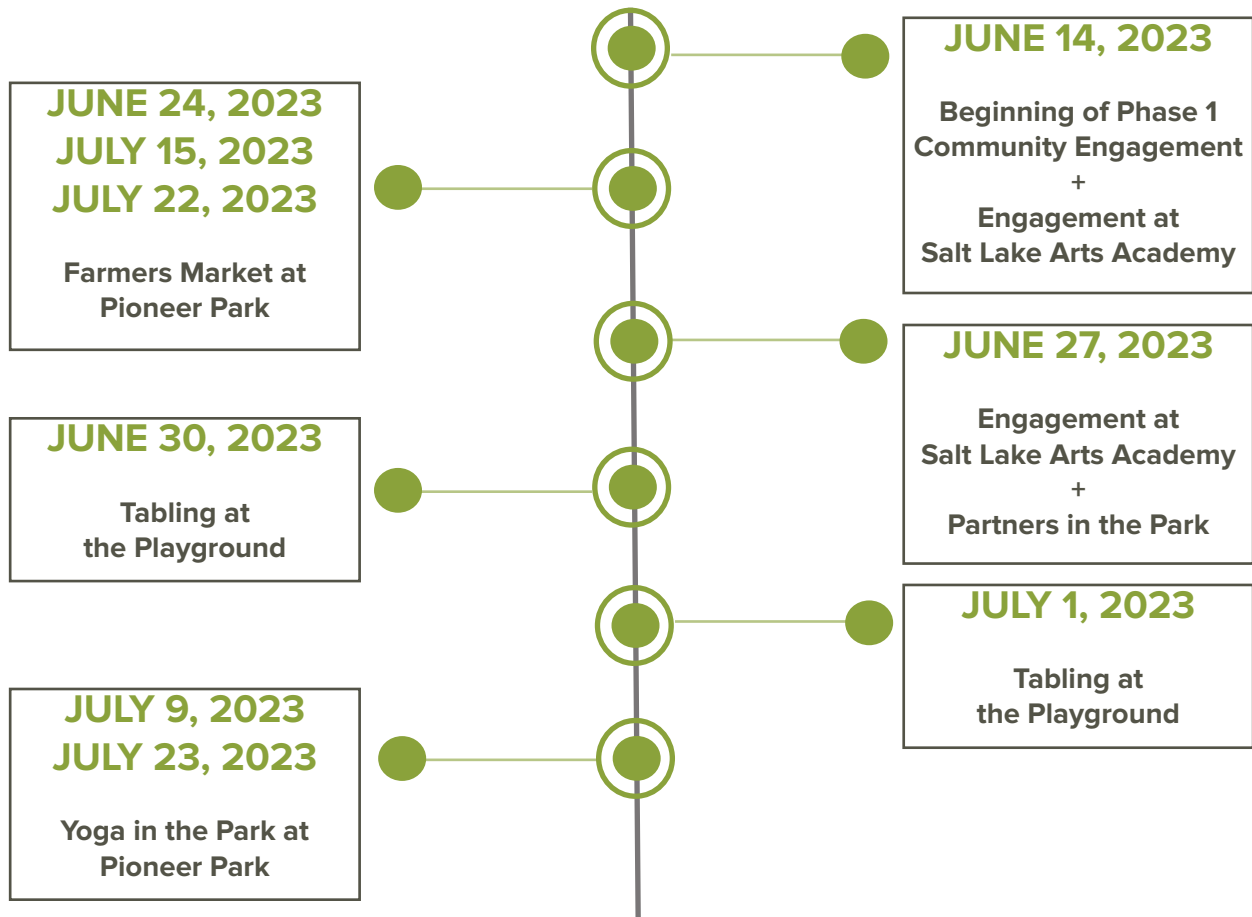
## Other Forms of Engagement

- Social media posts on Salt Lake City's Public Lands Instagram, Facebook, Twitter accounts.
- Social Media Reach: **2,776**
  - The number of unique users who were shown posts about this project.
- Social Media Engagement: **2,247**
  - Engagement includes likes, comments, shares, and saves.
- An online design competition on Facebook asked participants to draw their ideal playground and describe its unique features.
  - Social Media Reach: **117**
    - The number of unique users who were shown posts about this project.
  - Social Media Engagement: **3,056**
    - Engagement includes likes, comments, shares, and saves.
- **20** Yard signs with the QR code for the survey placed in the community.
- Walk and Chats: Conducted **three** events with local community councils to discuss the project and their desires for the playground.
- Information booth at nine events citywide using the Image Preference Board to engage approximately **319** individuals.
- Information Booth near Playground: **78** interviews were conducted to identify what improvements they would like to see. From these interviews, we identified interest in the following amenities:
  - More extensive water features at the playground
  - More shade structures and trees throughout the playground
  - The inclusion of new play features, such as zip lines, climbing walls, better swings, sensory play features (sandboxes), and music features.



Picture to the left: One Salt Lake Arts Academy Student's version of their ideal playground.

# Community Engagement Timeline



**Note:** The timeline continues on the next page.

## What is Tabling at the Playground?

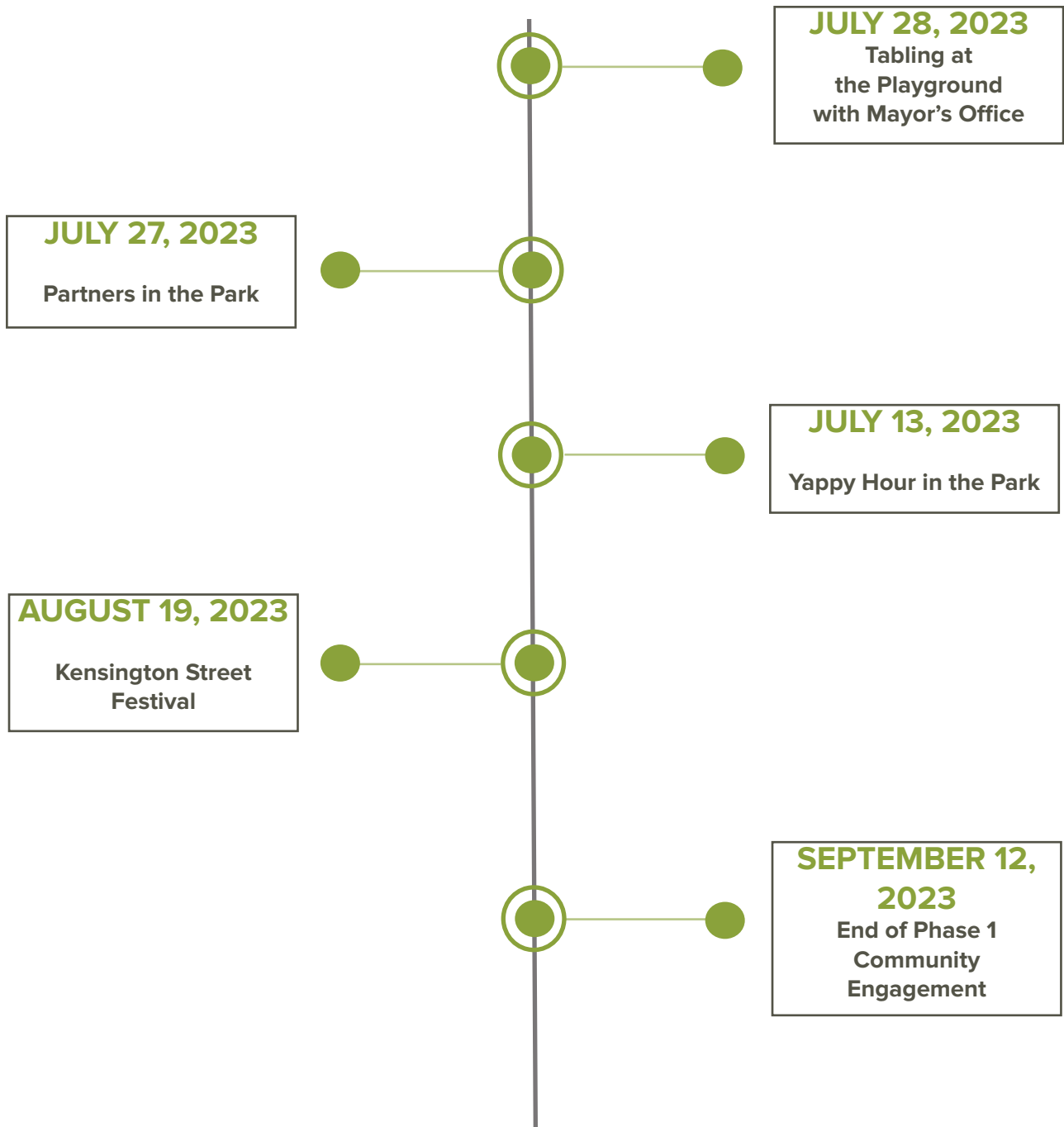


Tabling at the Park is an engagement opportunity where residents talk with the Public Lands Department’s Project Manager at the playground about any concerns, ideas, ask questions, and/or select preferred playground features with the image based visual preference board about the overall project timeline (to learn more about the image based visual preference board, refer to page 16). At Tabling at the Playground, 78 interview discussions were collected (refer to page 14 for more information).

Picture to the left: One of the playground’s chess picnic tables.

# 02 Community

## Engagement Timeline Continued



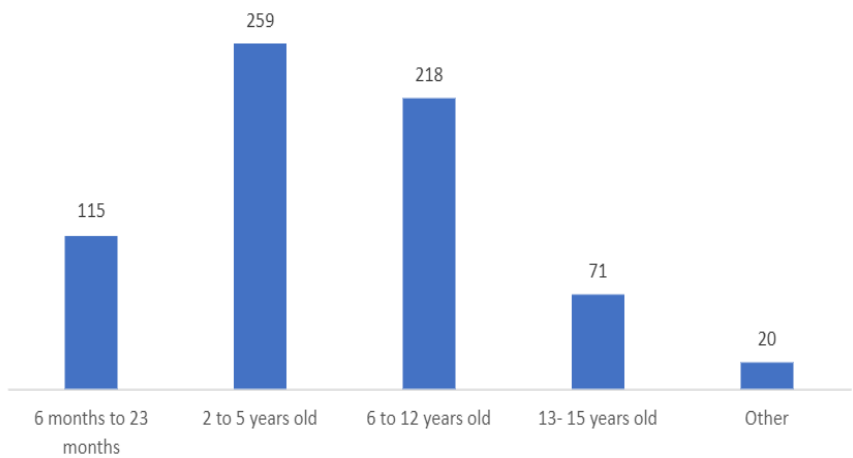
# Community Engagement Results

## Identifying the Current Use

As observed through the survey, more than half of playground visitors are children between the ages of 2-12 years. The next most common visitor group is comprised of adults/ caregivers. The Play Park is well loved from users near and far from the park. As observed through the survey, the Play Park survey participants live varying distances from the park. Most visitors get to the playground via automobile or walking/jogging and visit the playground at least twice a month. The main reason people do not visit the playground as often is split between lack of desirable playground equipment and "other."

Within the "other" category, many respondents indicated they did not visit the Play Park as often because they did not feel safe due to the homeless encampments around the park. The other reasons were poor sightlines and lack of shade throughout

What are the ages of the children who you will bring to the playground at Liberty Park?



Top Chart: Bar Chart displaying survey response to the question "What ages of the children who you will bring to the playground at liberty park?"

If you rarely or never visit the playground, what are the reasons?

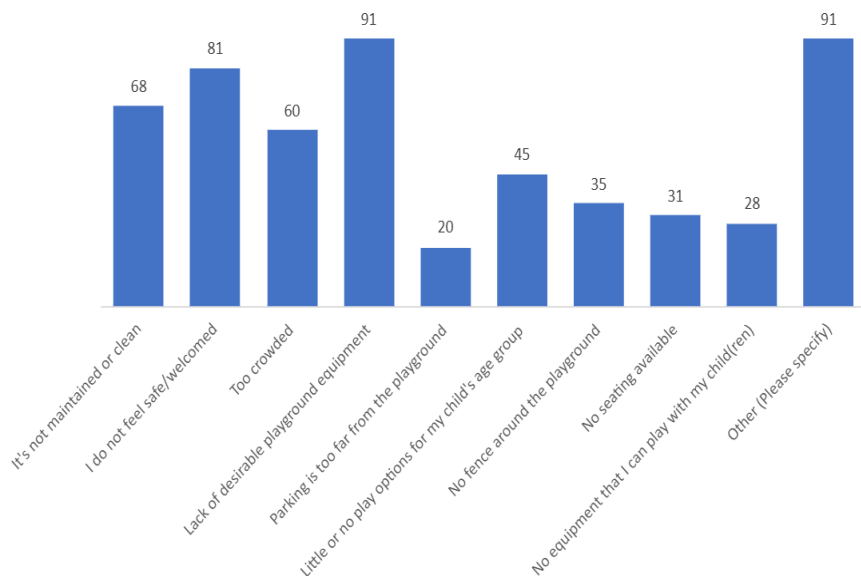


Chart to the right: Bar Chart displaying survey response to the question "If you rarely or never visit the playground, what are the reasons?"

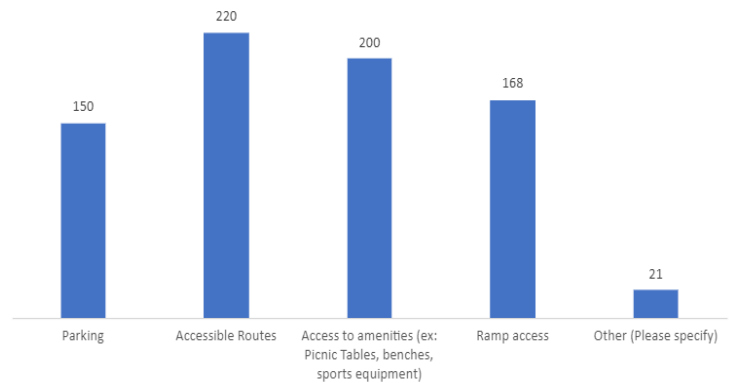
# Community Engagement Results Continued

## Accessibility

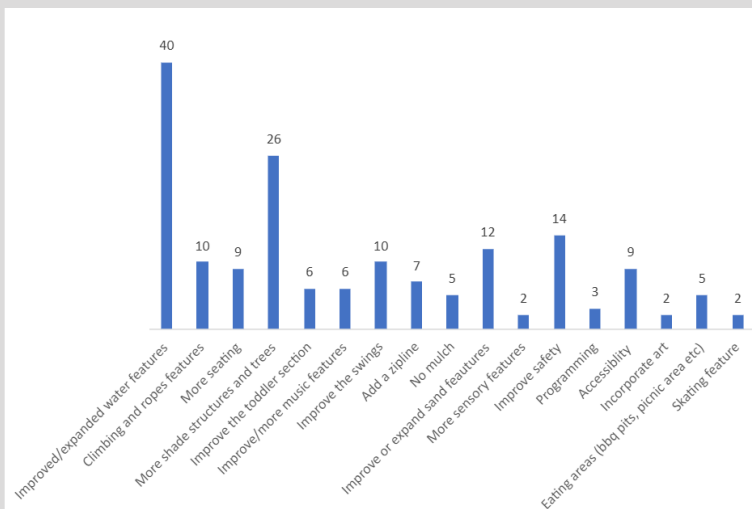
**Accessibility was identified as one of the values users resonated with the most.**

When respondents were asked what factors are most important to increase ADA accessibility in the playground, 220 survey respondents thought accessible routes were most important, followed by 200 respondents who believed access to amenities (i.e., picnic tables, benches, sports equipment, etc.) were most important to increase ADA accessibility.

What factors are most important to increase ADA accessibility in the playground?



## Intercept Interview Results



**78 intercept interviews were collected at Tabling at the Playground events.**

All resident interviewees were asked what kind of improvements they would like to see in the playground using the allocated bond funding. The top 3 responses were:

- Improved/expanded water features (40 people)
- More shade structures and trees in the playground (26 people)
- Improve safety (14 people)

# Community Engagement Results Continued

## Design Improvements

To understand the public's desire for the playground, a series of questions were asked to evaluate the priorities for the playground and improvements to make.

Survey respondents were asked to think about playgrounds they visit and to indicate what features make the playground appealing or unique. Participants predominantly expressed their kids most enjoy playgrounds that allow exploration through imaginative play and obstacle courses.

Most comments expressed how they prefer a playground with a natural, open space concept that uses logs and boulders for the design.

Survey respondents also mentioned that playgrounds that offer play for all ages and abilities are an essential feature. Some participants noted that adding fitness equipment and equipment that allows parents to play with their toddlers would be a great way to include features for all ages.

Multiple survey comments recommended shade structures that protect children and parents from the sun during their visit. Additionally, survey responses mentioned how safety features are critical in making a playground appealing to visit.

Some common recommendations that were noted to improve safety are:

- Improving sightlines.
- Addressing unsheltered encampments and crime at the park.
- Removing open drop-offs where kids can fall.
- Adding fencing.
- Removing tunnels.
- Adding an area where parents can be central in the playground to allow them to quickly view multiple parts of the Play Park.
- Adding soft rubber flooring to reduce injuries.

***“(Playgrounds with) Natural, wood, rope, and aesthetic materials More rope nets, climbing spaces, “problem-solving” style design are way better for kids brains than ladders and slides.”***

***-Local Resident #1***

***“Water play area, interesting (new) playground equipment (in particular they love the double person swing at the new little park on 5th East - Bickley), nature play area, shade from trees, lots of climbing options within the playground, ziplines.”***

***-Local Resident #2***

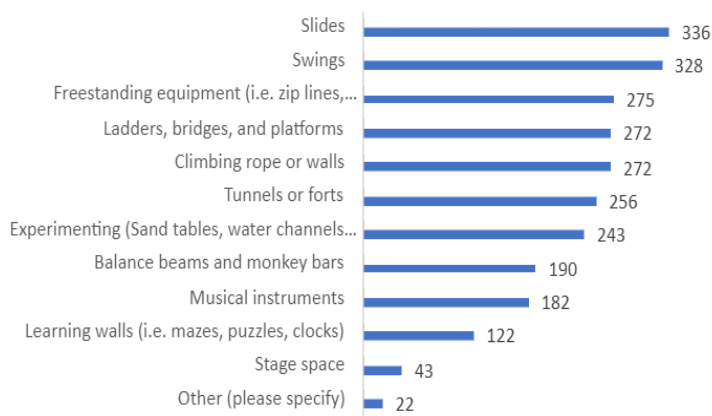
***“We love Wild West Jordan playground. The theme is fun, and it features playthings for various ages...We also love playgrounds with sun shades so kiddos can play on hot days and shady spots for us to wait as our kid plays.”***

***-Local Resident #3***

# Community Engagement Results Continued

## Design Improvements Continued

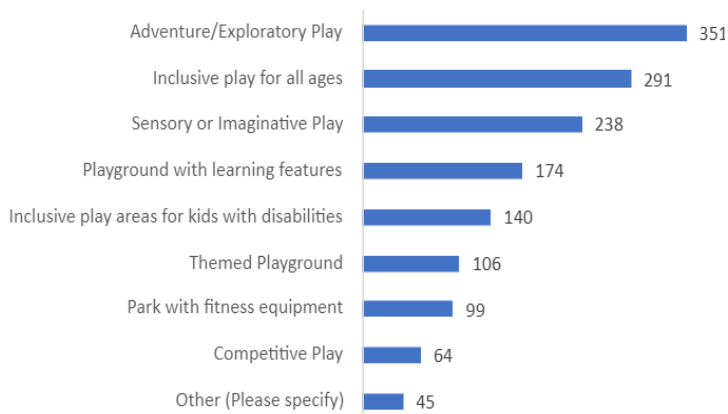
What type of play equipment do the child(ren) that you bring to the playground most enjoy?



Survey respondents were also asked to select the type of playground equipment children enjoy the most when they visit a playground. The following shows the top five options chosen:

- 75.28% of responses selected slides, the most popular option.
- 73.27% of responses selected swings.
- 61.25% of responses selected Freestanding equipment such as ziplines, seesaws, and spinners.
- 61.02% chose ladders, bridges, and platforms, which were closely ranked with Freestanding equipment.
- 60.8% selected climbing rope or walls.

What features do you look for when you choose a playground to visit?



Survey respondents consistently answered when they were asked, "What features do you look for when you choose a playground to visit?". The top three responses are listed below. To view all responses, refer the chart to the left of this description.

- Adventure/ Exploratory Play with 78.62%
- Inclusive play for all ages with 65.26%
- Sensory or imaginary play with 53.45%



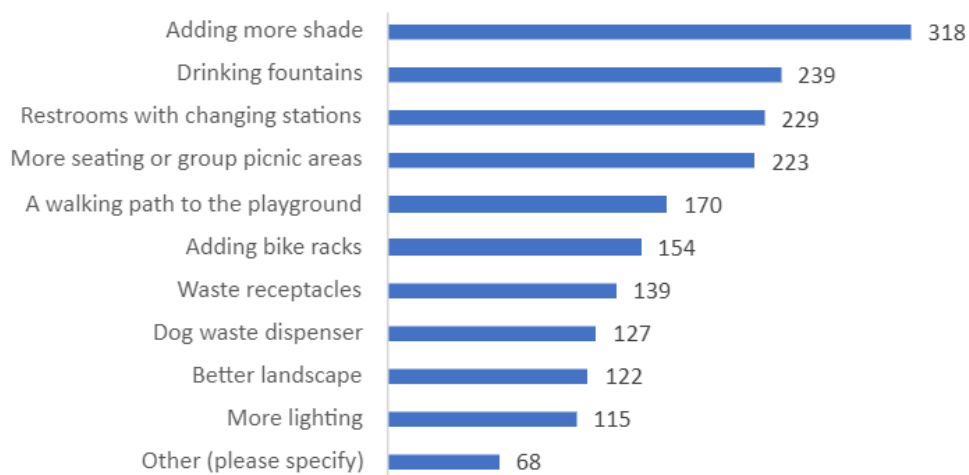
# Community Engagement

## Results Continued

02

### Design Improvements Continued

Besides updating the playground, what other features or amenities would improve your experience at Liberty Park Playground?



To further understand what improvements to make at Liberty Park Playground, survey respondents were asked what amenities or other features would enhance their experience at the park. Respondents selected the following amenities as the top four (in order of highest percentage):

1. 71.27% primarily selected adding more shade
2. 53.45% selected to add drinking fountains, the open comments indicated water bottle refill stations are preferred over drinking fountains
3. 51.22% chose restrooms with changing tables
4. 50.11% liked adding more seating or group picnic areas

Comments also noted that it is crucial to have restrooms accessible during park hours. Parents with toddlers especially expressed how difficult it is to take children to the park while potty training and restrooms are inaccessible. In addition, the existing restrooms, sinks, and other facilities are designed for able-bodied adults only.

Throughout the survey, in the open comments, other common suggestions for playground equipment were the following:

- Expanding the splash pad or including more water features.
- Including a bike or tricycle path.
- Zip lines were particularly requested in open comments.

# 02 Image-Based Preference Board Engagement

The Image-Based Preference Board is an active engagement strategy to gauge adolescents' and adults' preferences for various playground features. Participants provided their selection by placing a sticker on any playground feature image they would like to have reflected in the reimagined playground. The community interacted with the board at the two Salt Lake Arts Academy engagement events and all tabling events previously listed in the timeline.

The Image-Based Preference Board findings were consistent with the rest of the feedback from other engagement methods.

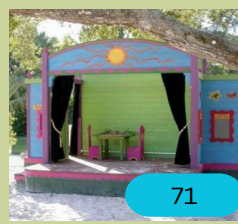
**The children's first preference is climbing features that have a natural appearance. The second preference is a variation of swing types and zip lines to accompany a broad audience of visitors (this includes infant and ADA-friendly swings). The third amenity preference is giant slides. Adults mostly expressed an appreciation for musical and sensory features reflected in the reimagined park if these two amenity types were adequately cleaned and maintained.**

### Background:

Liberty Park's Rotary Play Park has been selected to receive a portion of the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Bond funding to update the playground area. SLC Public Lands is conducting community engagement to identify how the public would like to see the playground improved, this information will be used to create the concept design.

### Total engagement Results

#### Imaginative Play



71

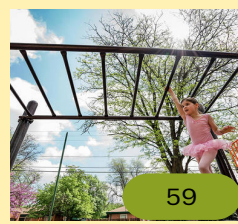


51



51

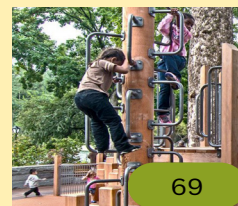
#### Standalone Features



59



120



69

#### Standalone Features



51



114



51

Image above: The Image Based Preference Board total results for each feature image. The red oval is the most voted on playground feature type. The blue is the second most preferred feature type. The green is the third most preferred feature type.

# Image-Based Preference Board Engagement Continued



Image above: The Image Based Preference Board total results for each feature image. The red oval is the most voted on playground feature type. The blue is the second most preferred feature type. The green is the third most preferred feature type.

- Considering all of the total impressions, engagement tabling, surveys, and concersation during this engagement phase, the top 10 most requested improvements are (not in order of importance):
- Make the Play Park more ADA accessible
  - Increase visiblity throughout the park
  - Expand the splash pad
  - Add shade structures
  - Add a variety of swing types
  - Add ziplines
  - Add more sensory or imaginative play features
  - Add climbing features
  - Add more seating and picnic tables
  - Add a variety of slides

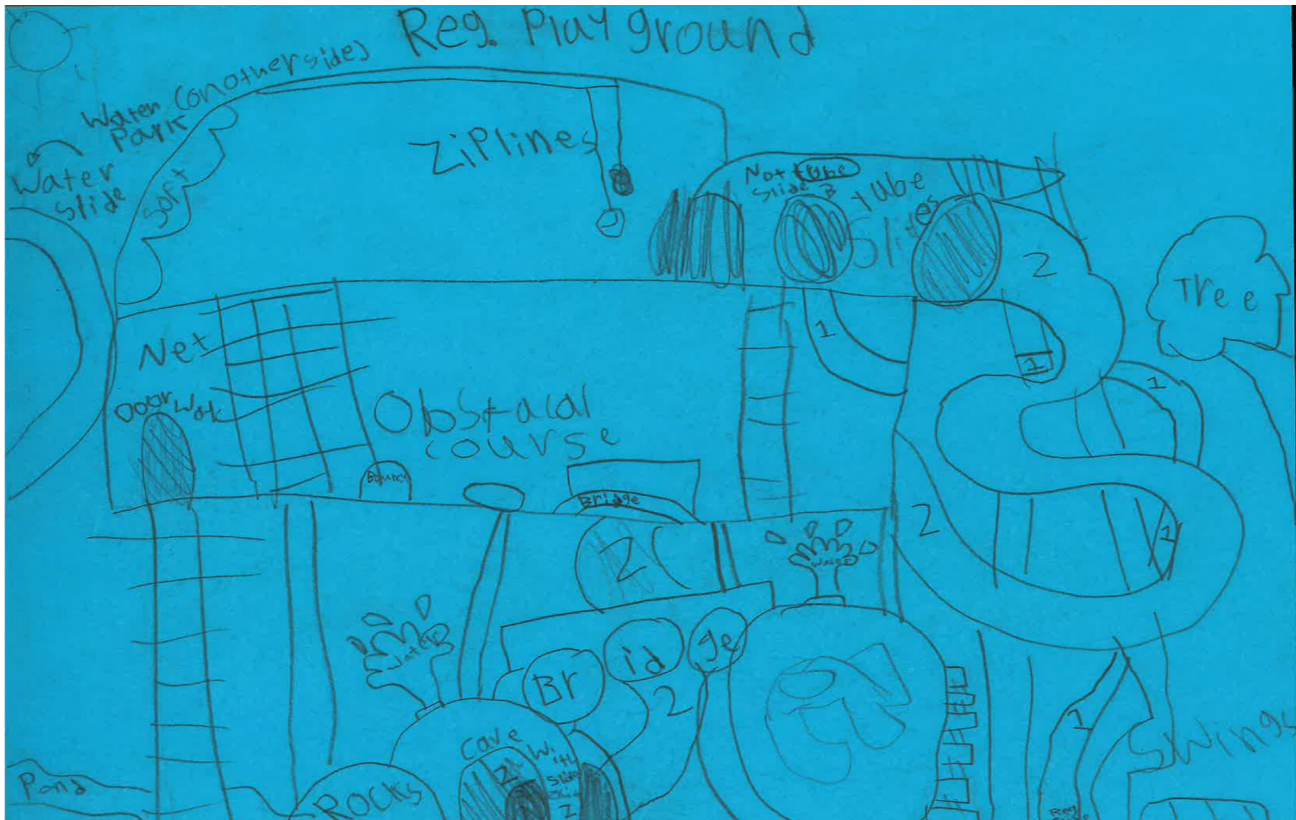
03

## Next Steps



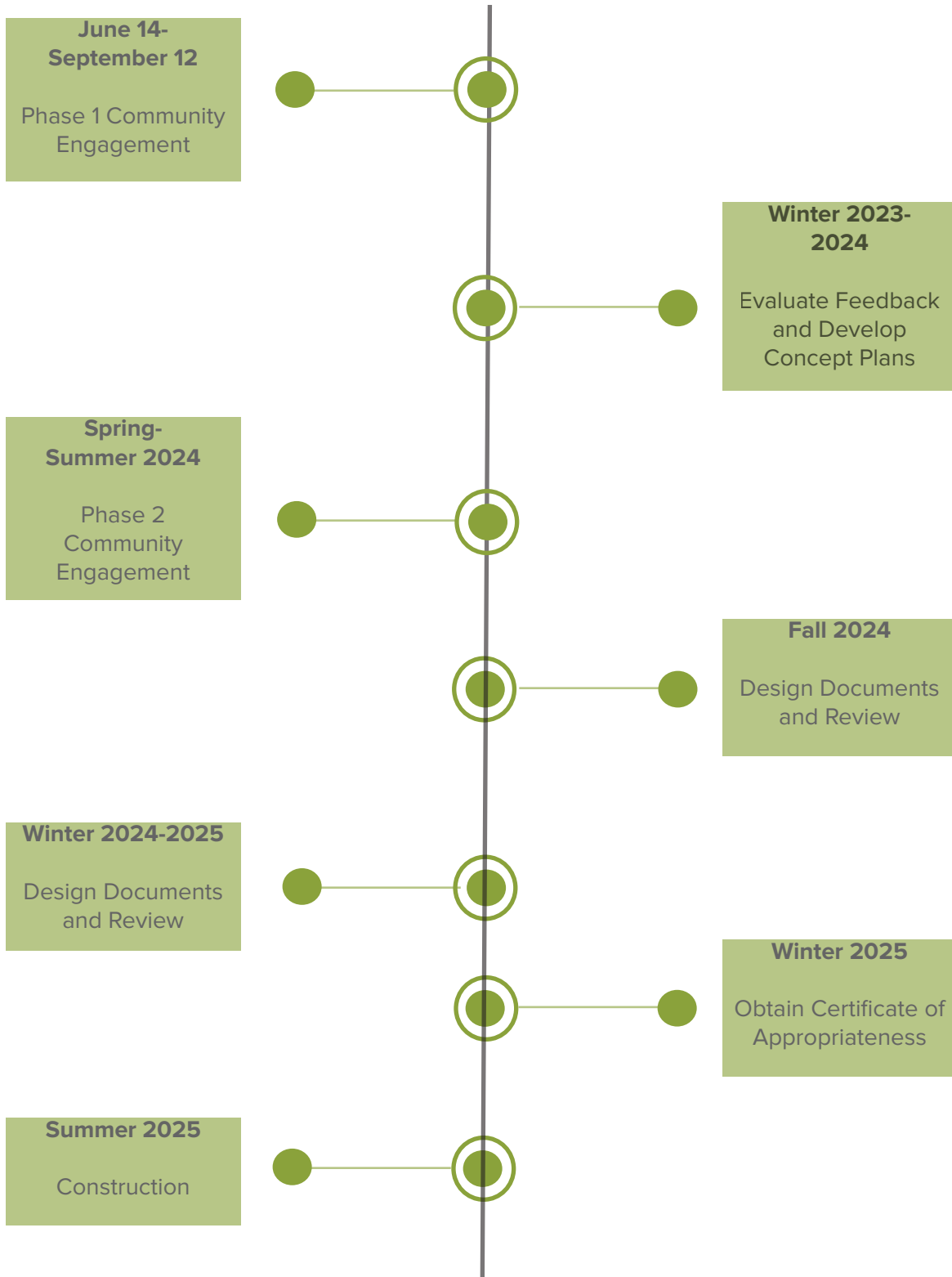
# What's Next?

These engagement findings will be used to produce multiple concept designs for the playground to meet the rapid deadlines required to spend the allocated GO Bond funding. Programming and future engagement will continue where all interested individuals can select and give feedback on their preferred designs. The playground is anticipated to begin construction as soon as summer 2025. Please note that this schedule may be subject to change, as this is the first phase of the process. The stated preferences mentioned in the report, in addition to future engagement, budgeting/finances, and site limitations, will guide the project's outcome.



One Salt Lake Arts Academy student's drawn version of their ideal playground.

# 03 Tentative\* Project Timeline



**\*Schedule is highly subject to change**

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## For Project Updates:

**Liberty Park's Rotary Play Park Project  
Website:**

[To view the website, click here!](#)

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-Ronnie Pessetto, Public Lands Planner



**Public Lands**  
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