

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council Members

From: Steve Parker
City Manager

Subject: Max Starcke East Playground Demolition

Date: February 14, 2023

As you are aware, City staff made the recommendation to demolish the existing wooden playground structure at Max Starcke East. While we know this was not a popular decision, we do feel that this was the right decision due to the liability this playground equipment placed on our community. Safety to our citizens, especially our children, is the utmost priority. The wooden playground equipment that was removed this week was over 28 years old and presented a true hazard to our citizens. In 2015, new playground equipment was installed in Starcke Park because we knew the useful life of the then 20-year-old wooden structure was coming to an end.

The recommendation to tear down the structure came from experts in their field and included the Parks Director, our Park Superintendent who is a Certified Playground Safety Inspector as well as our Risk Manager. They were all in unison that the City was exposing itself to an unwarranted liability if the structure remained in place. The ultimate decision to remove the structure lied with me and after listening to their concerns, I knew the decision had to be made. If you have ever walked on this structure, the whole structure was easily shakable, which is a major safety concern for any community asset. When structures are this easily shaken, this denotes a severe amount of wood rot. This ultimately left the City with no other choice. If there would have been any other viable options, those would have absolutely been presented to the City Council for further discussion.

The City has made a concerted effort to expand playground equipment and recreational opportunities across the City. In fact, the City has allocated almost \$4M in American Rescue Plan Act towards the improvements of recreational opportunities within our City. I hope this does show that we are dedicated to enhancing all recreational opportunities across our community. All the improvements listed below are being funded without a city property tax increase which is very exciting.

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

• Match for Outdoor Movie Screen	\$25,000
• Wave Pool Repairs	\$350,000
• Dedicated Pickleball Courts	\$950,000
• Bauer Park Improvements	\$700,000
• Adult Volleyball Complex Pole Replacement	\$45,000
• New Lighted Basketball Court	\$140,000
• Seguin Softball 4-Plex Improvements	\$336,786
• Starcke Park Golf Course (Plus \$4.5M-\$6.5M)	<u>\$1,500,000</u>
	\$4,046,786

I wanted to note that the additional \$4.5M-\$6.5M in golf course improvements are being paid for by the rates that the actual golf course users pay. We have over 30,000 rounds of golf at Starcke Park Golf Course, so this is a widely used asset. I also want the community to be aware that the recommended use of the \$4M in American Rescue Plan Act towards our park system was a fully vetted and transparent process with our community and the City Council.

To be as transparent as possible, I am also enclosing pictures of the play structure before demolition as well as the excerpt from our Certified Playscape Safety Inspector's report regarding the play structure which read:

Safety Inspection Report:

At the request of the Events Complex Superintendent, a safety assessment was completed.

As a Certified Playground Safety Inspector, my first recommendation is immediate closure due to the safety concerns bulleted below.

1. All wooden parts, pieces, sections of the structure are failing due to rot, thus creating sharp points, edges and snag points that could cause injury. All square fiberglass posts are weak and have wood inside that is rotting as well. Platform structures are not stable, substantial deflection is present when being used. All need replacing.
2. Due to rotting wood, many screws and screw heads are exposed and are a hazard to entanglement and/or injury of children. Screws and rotten wood need replacing.
3. All Plastic/composite overhead shade structure are failing due to sun/weather damage and time, causing curling and exposing sharp screws. All shade/roof structures need replacing.
4. All hardware that is fastening handrails, grab bars and overhead d-rings need to be replaced with hardware that has an anti-corrosion coating or is corrosion resistant. No rusty hardware.
5. All wooden containment of the impact attenuating surfacing (pea gravel) is rotting and does not contain the pea gravel adequately.

Basically, anything wood needs to be replaced.

I have scheduled an agenda item for tonight's agenda for public transparency. I would like the opportunity to discuss next steps and possible future projects to replace the recently demolished structure.