

Recreation Dept. - Turtle Park Playground Updates

Investing in Community Infrastructure: Strengthening Mackinac Island Through Thoughtful Equipment Investment

The Mackinac Island Community Foundation is mission-driven to advance wellbeing within the community. Guided by the Foundation's four pillars—**Capacity, Culture, Wellbeing, and Vibrant Island Life**—the City of Mackinac Island Recreation Department seeks support to replace aging playground equipment and add new, inclusive elements that better serve residents, seasonal workers, families, and visitors. This project represents a strategic investment in safe, accessible infrastructure that strengthens community connection, supports healthy lifestyles, and preserves Mackinac Island's unique character. We are looking for \$54,865.18 from the foundation to fund this project. \$24,925.30 would be due at the end of June for the equipment purchase and \$29,939.88 would come due at the end of October when the installation is completed. Playcore and mParks needs a decision for the Turtle Park Playground improvements by March 15th. You do not need to pay for the equipment at that time, but they would like a decision to move forward or not.

Capacity

Replacing outdated equipment and adding innovative new features builds the long-term capacity of island programs to meet evolving community needs. The plan includes the installation of a **Vista Treetop structure**, which incorporates spinning elements and upper-body strength activities, along with a **new see-saw** to promote cooperative play. Additionally, the project will replace an **ADA entrance path** and an **aging climber that is well past its prime**, addressing accessibility and safety concerns that currently limit use.

These improvements align with national best practices and will position the playground as part of a **network of national demonstration sites**, incorporating core play elements such as spinning, sliding, swinging, climbing, brachiating, and balancing. Participation in this network enhances organizational capacity by connecting the island to proven models, training resources, and standards for inclusive play. The project also leverages external funding; through GameTime and Sinclair Recreation, the City secured a **\$11,410.54 grant**, demonstrating strong planning, fiscal responsibility, and community buy-in.

Culture

Mackinac Island's playgrounds are more than recreational spaces—they are gathering places that reflect the island's history of shared responsibility and community stewardship. Upgrading equipment in a thoughtful, durable, and inclusive manner supports spaces where traditions are

passed down, relationships are formed, and island life is experienced across generations. Using local volunteers during construction honors the island's long-standing culture of volunteerism while reinforcing community ownership of shared spaces.

Wellbeing

Safe, accessible play equipment is directly tied to physical health, mental wellbeing, and social connection. The replacement of the ADA entrance path ensures equitable access for users of all abilities, while modern equipment reduces injury risk and encourages active play. Features that promote strength, balance, coordination, and cooperative interaction support holistic health for children, caregivers, and seasonal workers alike. These spaces also serve as informal hubs for engagement, helping reduce isolation and foster a sense of belonging.

Vibrant Island Life

A thriving, inclusive community depends on high-quality infrastructure that supports families and encourages year-round residency. Modernized playground equipment enhances opportunities for intergenerational interaction and youth development while signaling continued investment in livability on Mackinac Island. Construction is scheduled to **commence in fall 2026 and conclude in fall 2026**, balancing seasonal demands and minimizing disruption. While local volunteers will assist with construction, certain components will be completed by **certified installers** to meet safety and insurance requirements. Upon completion, the community will be invited to a **fall reopening celebration**, reinforcing social connection and shared pride in the project.

By supporting this investment in new and replacement equipment, the Mackinac Island Community Foundation will advance wellbeing, strengthen community capacity, and ensure that this beloved space continues to serve residents and visitors for generations to come—fully aligned with the Foundation's mission and four-pillar framework.