

Community-build playground projects have received a lot of attention over the past few years. According to the Community Built Association, the term refers to “the interactive process that involves the local community in the design, organization and creation of community projects.” The payoff, according to the Association, is a permanent transformation of the environment that becomes a “priceless symbol of the community spirit behind” each project.



“The community-built playground becomes a rallying point for community spirit”

Beyond the general definition provided by the Association, you may interpret what “community build” means to you. Here are some examples of what a community-build project can mean:

- Having your landscape architect get input from, or work with, committees made up of community members during the design phase of the project.
- Asking individuals, organizations and businesses to volunteer equipment, tools and labor when you’re ready to turn your approved design into reality.

A community-build project builds more than a playground

- When you choose to do a community-build project, the advantages are numerous. From financial savings to community spirit, a community-build playground project offers rewards, both in the short term and for years to come.
- Community involvement makes it easier to raise funds and build political support for a new (or updated) playground.



- A community-build playground project becomes a rallying point for community spirit. Citizens of varying ages, economic backgrounds, genders, races and cultures work in unison toward a common goal.
- A community-build playground project can serve as a team-building opportunity for employees of corporations, members of organizations, and school and church groups.
- When local citizens are involved in developing a new playground, the resulting pride of ownership tends to discourage vandalism and other destruction.
- When you make your playground a community-build project, you can often save up to 30 percent on the total cost of your playground!

Find the right partner to get started.

There are several key questions to ask your playground manufacturer when you are considering a community-build playground. You want to work with a company, like Landscape Structures, that has experience with community-builds, has an organized community-build program and has local service to assist you. Here are some questions to ask when you are choosing a manufacturer:

- Do you have a comprehensive community-build program?
- Do you have a kit that can help us get started?
- How many community-build projects have you been involved with?
- Do you provide on-site assistance or supervision? Is there a fee?
- Do you have 24-hour support, seven-days-a-week?
- How will you work with our community or organization?

Looking for more how to resources? KaBOOM! can help. This national nonprofit organization envisions a playground within walking distance of every child. They have an excellent website that can give you more information on community-build projects. Check out the KaBOOM! website at www.kaboom.org





A community-build playground requires plenty of time for planning, design, fundraising and installation. Your local Landscape Structures representative can work with you to prepare a schedule.

From the beginning

A community-build playground project can seem overwhelming. But, when you break it down into smaller tasks, it can be quite manageable. Here are the basic steps you will take on your journey to your new playground:

Before you can design and install a community-build playground, you need community support for your plans. This usually requires several steps:

- **Identify stakeholders.** These are the youth, parents, park or school personnel and childcare providers who will most directly benefit from the playground project.
- **Target potential supporters.** These could be PTOs, neighborhood associations, service clubs, local government agencies, religious groups, trade unions and local news media.
- **Invite participation.** Schedule meetings with stakeholders and potential stakeholders, approach community organizations, solicit help from local businesses and inform the news media of your plans.

The next step is to organize your efforts:

- **Create task groups:** Create groups to focus on site design, equipment layout and design, fundraising, site preparation and playground installation.
- **Appoint team leaders,** then have the team leaders elect an overall project leader.
- **Kickoff your project** with all team members together to build enthusiasm for the project.

A collective design process

A true community-build playground uses a collaborative design process that involves both children and adults. This process is usually divided into four steps:

- **Define your goals.** You'll need a very specific mission statement accompanied by realistic financial goals and timeframes.
- **Gather design input.** Schedule and publicize a "design day" where community members of all ages can suggest their ideas for playstructure themes, play events, site amenities, colors, site layout and landscaping.
- **Obtain a professional plan.** Using a landscape architect or other professional playground designer will save you money in the long run, by providing a design that's safe, low-maintenance and engaging for years to come.

- **Review your design with the community.** At your Design Review Day, you can recruit volunteers to help with fundraising, materials, installation and more.

Put the fun in fundraising

Fundraising is a necessary part of building your playground. One of the ways to get people excited and keep the community engaged is to try new types of fundraising activities. Bake sales, car washes and pancake breakfasts have run their course in many communities. Here are some ways to get your fundraising on track:

- **Try something unique.** Cut-a-thons at a local salon, silent auctions at a picnic, a wash-a-thon for pets instead of cars, sandcastle-building contests, allow people to "buy" a piece of the playground to honor a loved one, etc. Honor them with a custom sign at the site.
- **Don't forget grants.** There are many websites out there that can point you to grant sources.
- **Prepare a timetable.** Schedule activities over a number of months to keep cash flow constant.
- **Publicize your efforts.** Banners, signs, stories in the local media all help your cause.
- **Acknowledge your contributors** to show your appreciation.

Many hands make light work

When you are ready to install your playground, rally the community:

- Appoint committees to handle the tasks of volunteer recruitment, site preparation, food, childcare, security, public relations, tools and supervision for the installation.
- Create a calendar of events to plan the installation activities.
- Plan a grand opening celebration to which everyone can look forward.

Consult the experts and contact your local Landscape Structures representative. With more than 500 community-build events every year, Landscape Structures can provide everything you need for a successful community-build playground.



Landscape Structures has published a detailed manual titled **Community Built Playgrounds—From Inspiration to Celebration.** For information on this manual, see your local Landscape Structures representative.



Landscape Structures Inc. is a member of the Community Built Association



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