

# “A River Runs Through It”: Playscape Design

Liam R.

FAA High School Talent Competition

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# The Brief and Research

*Brief: Design a playscape appropriate and engaging for multiple age groups that 1) utilizes green space appropriate for its location; and 2) contains a water feature.*

I chose to design a playscape for the city of Plano, IL, where my mother teaches second grade. Plano is a rural location, situated on the Fox River, with farmland surrounding it. To begin my research, I spoke with a recess aide and surveyed 2nd graders to see what they would like to see/have/do with a playscape. I also sought inspiration from many places I've played as a young person. Based on that information, I created a unique area that provides play, learning, and fitness opportunities for all ages while promoting the ecology of the area.

## Key Design Elements

- Water feature: A shallow (12"-18") man-made creek surrounds the entire park area. This draws water from the Fox River and cycles it back out again. The creek has a track in it on which pedal boats or canoes can travel.
- Pollinator garden: To help increase the bee, hummingbird, and other pollinator populations, a garden featuring honeysuckle, blazing star, monarda, milkweed and other native plants will surround the outer edge of the water feature. Large orange barrels will collect food waste from visitors that can be composted for the garden. Large blue rain barrels collect water for the garden.
- Play Area: Corn husks and other agri-waste is chopped up and used for mulch. Deadfall wood, recycled tires and other recycled equipment make up the play structures. A zipline, slide, and net climbing area are some of the structures.
- Skate Park: Metal ramps and structures designed and built by local high school students in technical classes to teach skills with a real-world application.
- Grassy areas: One section is a child-sized soccer field and the other is open park space shaded by existing oak trees. Picnic tables and a shaded dock for getting on and off the pedal boats complete that area.

# My Inspiration:

- Phillips Park Zoo, Aurora, IL
- Unicoi Zipline Park, Helen, GA
- Cantigny Park, Winfield, IL
- Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL
- Kuipers Farm, Maple Park, IL
- Funtopia, Naperville, IL
- Kesling Park, Chesterton, IN
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago, IL
- Maggie Daley Park, Chicago, IL









