Art Commission Application

Highland Park Super Playground Mosaics
Final Review

Project Location:
Highland Park Super Playground, Reservoir Dr
Neighborhood: Squirrel Hil

Applicant(s):
Highland Park Community Council
Department of Public Works

Project Duration: Permanent
Has this project come before Art Commission before? Yes
If yes, when? May 2021, Conceptual Review with playground (approved)
RCO District: Yes
Development Activities Meeting: Yes, the DAM has been held
Letter of intent

The original Super Playground in Highland Park, built 30 years ago, was a community undertaking with local volunteers providing everything from funding to the actual construction labor. That hands-on effort created a real connection / community ownership of the playground. The playground is currently under renovation, slated to open in Summer 2022. For this renovation, community members have had numerous opportunities for input through surveys and 3 interactive workshops over the past 2 years, but will not be involved in the actual construction this time.

This art project, led by the Highland Park Community Council (HPCC), is designed as a hands-on community involvement component of the new playground. The HPCC is partnering with the Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC) to create mosaic art for the new playground. PGC has done a wide-variety of public art projects like this and is well-prepared to support community involvement in the creation of the mosaics. The HPCC is also working closely with Andrea Ketzel, Senior Landscape Architect for the City of Pittsburgh, who is leading the Super Playground renovation project.

This community art project has two main components: 1) Small “Hidden” mosaics embedded on surfaces in the playground, and 2) A larger Community Garden Mosaic Mural to be placed along the front planting bed of the playground.

The Hidden Mosaics are 12 small mosaics based on ideas submitted by local residents. They are being hand-crafted by Pittsburgh Glass Center artists. They will be mounted onto the actual playground surfaces. These unique pieces are intended to add moments of discovery and delight for children as they explore the playground. The 12 designs were selected from 70 entries submitted after a public call for ideas in fall of 2021 and were contributed by community residents, including eleven children ages 4 to 11 as well as an art teacher at Fulton Elementary, the Highland Park neighborhood elementary school.

The Community Garden Mosaic Mural will feature mosaic flowers made by community members and will serve as an identifier sign welcoming visitors to the Super Playground. The PGC is hosting multiple public mosaic-making events in Highland Park near the playground to allow local residents to make flowers, leaves, and letters to contribute to the mural. This hands-on effort is designed to encourage a real connection / community ownership of the new playground. Glass center artists will then embed these community-made pieces in a mural-like mosaic that will be mounted on the fence along the front landscape bed facing reservoir drive in front of the new playground. In this way, community members can contribute their own personal touch to the new playground. This mural will represent the creativity and collaborative spirit of the community that created the original Super Playground and continues to support it as the playground receives its renovation. It will also add a beautiful year-round splash of welcoming color to the front of the playground.

The community garden mosaic mural will be mounted to the fence running along the front of the playground, once that fence is installed and the major construction of the playground is complete. The exact locations of each of the hidden mosaics will be determined once the playground is largely completed, so that the actual surfaces can be evaluated for suitability.
Organizational statement

The Highland Park Community Council, in operation since 1947, is the oldest continually operating neighborhood organization in the City of Pittsburgh. The HPCC’s mission is “to take a leading role in the community activities that address issues of common interest and concern and that promote a safe and healthy neighborhood for the diverse residents of Highland Park.” The HPCC has been involved with the Super Playground from its original construction 30 years ago, including providing maintenance for the first 23 years of the playground’s life, as well as maintaining a maintenance fund that continued to pay for care of the playground as recently as 2020. The HPCC Parks & Playground Committee has been working closely with Andrea Ketzel, Senior Landscape Architect for the City of Pittsburgh, who is leading the Super Playground renovation project, to help engage the community in the playground rebuild. The HPCC Parks & Playground Committee is leading this public art project.
Mosaics @ the Super Playground

May 25, 2022
Project Location: New Highland Park Super Playground
Project Location: New Highland Park Super Playground
Project Background

• The original Super Playground in Highland Park was built 30 years ago by 90+ community volunteers

• The playground is presently being rebuilt by the city
  • Not able to have volunteers directly involved with the construction

• The Highland Park Community Council (HPCC) has been involved with the Super Playground from its inception, in recent years acting a steward for the playground’s maintenance fund

• The HPCC has been working closely with the city to engage the community in the redesign of the new playground

• The HPCC wanted a way for community members to get “hands on” with the new playground

• From this desire, the Mosaics @ the Super Playground project was born!
Project Proposal

Mosaics @ the Super Playground

Two Components:

1. Small “Hidden” Mosaics embedded in and around the playground
2. Larger Community Garden Mosaic Mural sign at the playground main entrance
“Hidden” Mosaics: Concept Process

- Made public call for ideas from October to December 2021
  - Announced via HPCC, MACC (Morningside Community) newsletters
  - Provided printed design sheets to Larimer Consensus Group
  - Made design sheets available at HPCC community events
  - Sent to neighborhood elementary school – Fulton
  - Announced at community meetings
  - Posted via City’s Engage community engagement site
  - Posted in various community groups on Facebook & on Next Door
  - Posted to Highland Park ListServe, email list with 2300+ neighborhood residents

- Received 70 entries from artists from ages 2 to 32
- HPCC Playground Committee chose 12 entries and coordinated with Pittsburgh Glass Center to make sure these could be rendered into mosaic form by their artists
“Hidden” Mosaics: Selected Designs

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

Caterpillar

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

It’s his first drawing of a creature.

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

This is a cheetah.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

Because the cheetah is the fastest animal and it would be amazing to have it somewhere.

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

It’s a red cardinal singing

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

1. People like to hear birds chirping
2. Because it’s a part of nature
3. There are a lot of red cardinals in my backyard
4. We need to protect red cardinals from having to lose their natural habitat.
“Hidden” Mosaics: Selected Designs

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

Fall leaves have bright colors and shapes that have no names.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

Because if you catch a leaf you can make a wish, and everyone should be able to make wishes all year long.

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

We can play together.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

Because everyone belongs at the Super Playground.

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

I wanted to make a unicorn.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

To make it look nice.
“Hidden” Mosaics: Selected Designs

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

My mosaic is a compass. Every adventurer could use a compass as they navigate and explore.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

I think a compass represents adventure and travel, and it could inspire the kids in the playground to explore new things.

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

It's for little kids.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

It looks colorful and it would be fun to play with.

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

I saw ghost crabs this summer, and they are my favorite.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

It's perfect for a hidden mosaic because ghost crabs are good at hiding.

Tell us about your mosaic idea:

Adolphin.

Why do you think this mosaic belongs at the Super Playground?

Because it's a cute dolphin.
“Hidden” Mosaics Process

Pittsburgh Glass Center artists will create a shaped backer for each of the 12 mosaics, then fill them in with colored glass. (The mosaics shown here are examples of similar works created by PGC in the past)
“Hidden” Mosaics: Placement

Because these mosaics will be mounted directly on playground surfaces, the exact locations of the 12 hidden mosaics will be determined once the playground pieces are installed this summer, so that exact surfaces can be evaluated.

Example of potential locations include:

- Flat ends of wooden log benches or balance beams
- Vertical boards of playground structures such as walls of buildings and boats
- Undersides of slides
- Surface of boulders on scramble hill
- Stone/Concrete walls framing playground entrances
Community Garden Mosaic Mural

- Mural to be mounted on fence at main entrance to new playground
- 12 ft long by 2.5 ft high
- Community members will make the individual flowers, PGC artists to combine them into one integrated mural, shown above
  - 150 flowers plus additional leaves and letters for community members to make
- HPCC and Pittsburgh Glass Center hosting public mosaic-making days
Mural In Situ
Mosaic Mural Creation Process

- Community members will create individual mosaic flowers
- PGC artists will integrate the community flowers into a complete mosaic mural

(Shown to the right above is an example of a prior PGC work – a free little lending library)
Mosaic Materials

The materials used for the mosaic are:

• Acrylic backer
• silicone (the glue that holds the glass on)
• Glass
• Grout
Conclusion / Other Info

• Expected lifespan of the mosaics is 20-25 years- about the same as the playground equipment itself. No regular maintenance is expected to be required.

• Between the two parts of this project, approximately 200 members of the community will be directly involved in the creation of mosaic art for the new playground

• We’ll be creating a mosaic guide so that community members can find their particular flower on the mural and see concept artist and PGC artist for the Hidden Mosaic
## Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost Per</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garden Mosaic Mural</td>
<td>approx. 150 flowers with lettering and leaves, mounted on front playground fence</td>
<td>$40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>Cost is per sq ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Mosaic</td>
<td>Approx. 5&quot;x5&quot; mosaic to be mounted on playground surfaces</td>
<td>$65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$780</td>
<td>Cost is per mosaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosaic-making Events</td>
<td>Public events for community members to make pieces for Garden Mosaic Mural</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Cost is per event; May add additional event if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$2,980</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Letters of support

Included:

☐ Andrea L. Ketzel, RLA, City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works
☐ Heather McElwee, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC)

Will be sent directly to pacd@pittsburghpa.gov:

☐ David Hance, President, Highland Park Community Development Corporation (HPCDC)
☐ Stephanie Walsh, President, Highland Park Community Council (HPCC)
May 3, 2022

Mr. Andrew Moss  
Vice Chair and Secretary  
City of Pittsburgh Art Commission  
c/o Department of City Planning  
200 Ross Street, 4th Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Mr. Moss:  
The Department of Public Works of the City Of Pittsburgh is in full support of the community mosaic project proposed by the Highland Park Community Council (HPCC) for the Highland Park Super Playground. This hands-on project aligns with the essence of the original Super Playground with an emphasis on community involvement. We believe the mosaic entrance sign and hidden mosaics throughout the playground will complement the character of the new playground. HPCC has taken an innovative approach to ensuring the community remains involved in the design and implementation of the new playground while navigating the pandemic. We hope that you will agree that this is a remarkable project and worthy of your support.

Thank you,

Andrea Ketzel, RLA  
Senior Landscape Architect  
Department of Public Works
May 3, 2022

Art Commission City of Pittsburgh

Re: Highland Park Super Playground

Please accept this enthusiastic letter of support from Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC) of the Highland Park Super Playground project.

The Highland Park Community Council Playground Committee reached out to PGC over a year ago to ask if we could help incorporate glass mosaic elements in the new playground. We were thrilled to have been asked to partner on this project and have really enjoyed the deep community engagement that has taken place over the last year.

We are excited to help the community’s ideas come to life in the “hidden” mosaics designed directly by community members – mostly kids with fantastic imaginations. The large glass mosaic mural will be a true community effort too with hundreds of members helping us to actually place the glass and design the flowers. Community members will be able to come back years into the future and see their mark on the project by finding the flowers and other elements that they designed.

We have seen this project be a true community effort with input from all groups in a truly collaborative process. I hope the art commission will enthusiastically support this project.

My best,

Heather McElwee
Randi & L. Van V. Dauler, Jr.
Executive Director
Pittsburgh Glass Center
Highland Park Super Playground Renovation presentation informed the group about the following:

- Project background (Partnership with HPCC. Renovation to be made to improve entry and access. Refresh structure. Remove and Replace Tree, Drinking Fountain, Swings, facilities and bike parking)
- Engagement (Site Visits, Online Survey Youth Design Activity, Public Workshops)
- [https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/highland-park-super-playground](https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/highland-park-super-playground)
- Design (the new design improves circulation, zoning of age specific equipment/Play Zones, Site Furniture, Public Art Integration)

Input and Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and Comments from Attendees</th>
<th>Responses from Applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is going to happen to the pedestrian tunnel?</td>
<td>It is a separate project from the renovation to the park and the reopening of the tunnel may go out to bid in the fall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Comments from Attendees</td>
<td>Responses from Applicants</td>
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<tr>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will there be any fencing?</td>
<td>Fencing will be on/near Reservoir Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thumbs up! The mosaics are great and thank you Andrea and Mark for all your hard work on this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Super Playground was built by volunteers. Will this be the case with renovations?</td>
<td>No. DPW wasn’t really sure about where we were going to be with COVID and we are seeking a construction group to build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long do you anticipate construction to take?</td>
<td>Late winter early spring 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the schedule for the playground?</td>
<td>Contingent upon the Arts Commissions date, we are hoping to have a bid go out this July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking forward to partner with PGH + PGH Glass Center and volunteers to build large scale mosaics and scavenger hunt.</td>
<td></td>
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**Other Notes**

Attached is the PDF presented.

**Planner completing report:** Christopher Corbett
AGENDA

• Project background
• Engagement
• Design
PROJECT BACKGROUND
- Improve Access
- Regrade slopes
- Replace edging
- Replace and relocate swings
- Improve entry
- Refresh structure
- Replace and redesign wooden play structure
- Remove and replace tree
- Remove and replace tree
- Replace drinking fountain
- Relocate porta-potty + bike rack
- Remove and replace tree
- Replace and relocate swings
- Scope + Schedule
- Reservoir Drive Walk
### SCOPE + SCHEDULE

#### 3 PHASE APPROACH

**Phase 1: Look + Listen**
- Existing materials review
- Field research (site visits, survey, tree inventory)

**Phase 2: Design + Engage**
- Design development
- Design refinement
- Public workshop #1
- Public workshop #2

**Phase 3: Document + Construct**
- Schematic Design Documentation
- Public workshop #3
- Construction
- Permitting
- Contractor bidding + selection
- Playground opening!

**Dates:**
- **July - August:**
- **September - January:**
- **February - August/September:**
ENGAGEMENT

Site Visits
Online Survey
Youth Design Activity
Public Workshops
What do you love about the playground today?

- all ages and very popular, so many kids!
- complexity, looks interesting, so many kids
- meeting new friends, interacting
- nooks and crannies, social gathering
- giant slide, giant thing, hiding and surprising parents
- a lot to do! obstacle course, towers, slides, many options, fits together nicely

What would you like to see in the future?

- adults can play
- tunnel for hiding
- tire swing
- jumping things before swings, bridge with black rubber
- behind swings, with tree, building tree fort
- throwback, unique,

- tetter totter swing
- sculptural, tells a story behind it
- zoo theme, close to zoo, big part of neighborhood, kids love animals
Spread out playground with multiple levels

~90% preferred a spread out playground
~95% preferred a playground with multiple levels
~50% preferred a relocated entrance
Desire for better connections and access to the Maple Grove Pavilion
Wooden castle structures reminiscent of existing Super Playground

~65% preferred an architectural/castle structure
Strong preference for wood play structures
EXISTING SUPER PLAYGROUND
ROBINIA SYSTEM
SUPER PLAYGROUND CUSTOMIZATION

Robinia Castle - Traditional

Robinia Castle - Customized
Custom Large Castle

Custom Small Castle
Would you like all natural wood or color accents on the structures?
STYLIZE THE SURFACING!

Do you prefer an earth tone gradient or a colorful gradient?

Earth tone gradient

Gradient is created with different percentage blends of two earth tones

Tan  Brown

Colorful gradient

Green  Light Green  Light Blue  Teal  Blue
CUSTOMIZE THE CASTLES!

Pick your top 5 accessories.

- Double slide
- Banister
- Single slide
- Curly climber
- Climbing net 1
- Climbing net 2
- Climbing net 3
- Ladder
- Rock wall
- Window wall
- Rope wall

*shown as examples
HIGHLAND PARK SUPER PLAYGROUND
CONCEPT DESIGN

Maple Grove Shelter

Reservoir Drive

Memorial trail
Wood fence

Reclaimed wood benches

Reclaimed wood tables

Drinking fountain + litter receptacles

Bike racks

Litter receptacles

Reclaimed wood benches

Reclaimed wood tables

Reclaimed wood steppers

Maple Grove Shelter

Litter receptacles

Reclaimed wood benches

Wood fence

Drinking fountain + litter receptacles

Reservoir Drive

Memorial trail
“Hidden” Mosaics

Inspired by similar mosaics at the Pittsburgh Zoo, and the idea of hidden elements like the tiny figures throughout The Playground at Riverfront Park in Aspinwall, these 10 hidden mosaics will be small pieces, assembled by local glass artists that will be embedded into the actual playground. These pieces will be tucked onto the reclaimed wood and natural stone pieces that are being incorporated as nature-play and seating areas within the new playground footprint.

The goal is for the pieces to feel like a surprise scavenger hunt for children to discover as they play and explore the area.

Reference Images:

Example small mosaics made by Pittsburgh Glass Center artists

Mosaics embedded at the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium
THANK YOU!

Any additional questions? Don’t hesitate to reach out.

Andrea Ketzel - andrea.ketzel@pittsburghpa.gov