Idea 11
MERGING GREEN AND PLAY SPACES

Park design that integrates play or playground design based on natural elements fosters better development for young children.

It increases their motor skills, but also their creativity and contact with nature. Exposure to nature on a regular basis has a positive impact on mental health, self-regulation and physical development.

Rolling hills in a park can provide play opportunities without integrating any specific play elements, while integrating 1-metre-tall ferns in a playground can lead to endless hide-and-seek fun. It also provides a pleasant experience to caregivers who can receive mental health benefits from a heightened connection to nature.

At a glance...

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GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT
- Social Services
- Education
- Health
- Parks
- Planning
- Transport

MINIMUM SCALE
A few square meters

EXISTING IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
Tested and implemented

Photo: Courtesy of Think Playgrounds
OUTCOME AREAS

- Increased time spent outdoors together by caregivers and children
- Increased exposure to nature
- Reduced caregiver stress and isolation
- Increased exercise
- Increased frequency and efficiency of public space usage
- Improved air quality
- Increased tree coverage

REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

- The Tumbling Bay playground in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, UK, has been designed entirely in natural elements, both in terms of materials and the play features themselves. Apart from traditional climbing nets and swings, it includes water flowing through a landscape, sand, tall ferns, hills and shrubs, all providing opportunities for play.

- Bhubaneshwar, India, is building a child-friendly smart park. Located in a central part of the city with a large concentration of schools, the park will incorporate accessible, creative, and interactive spaces, including play areas, community gardens, butterfly gardens, seating areas for parents, social spaces for individuals and groups, pop-up theatres, and splash parks.

- The Simón Bolívar park in Bogotá, Colombia, has an area designed with small hills, suitable for families with young children to gather and children to play. The park has been conceived for intergenerational use. Older children can play soccer on the flat part while the younger ones explore the hills. The terrain prevents this part of the park being taken over by soccer play, ensuring a diversity of use.

- In Ghana, the MAP (Markets, Mothers & Parks) initiative seeks to improve literacy and cognitive outcomes for small children by linking important urban community sites: the marketplace and the park. The park is one of the few places where children from different backgrounds play together. It calls for careful design of the park for playful learning through plant selection and minor design interventions.

RELATED IDEAS

- Opening public facilities out of hours
- Design for play
- Nature takeover
- A tree for every baby

LEARN MORE

- London Study of Playgrounds by Studio Ludo