



BBS Architects completes \$1.25 million fully accessible playground

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BBS Architects, Landscape Architects and Engineers (www.bbsarch.com) completed the Let All The Children Play playground at Eisenhower Park. The two-acre facility is the first fully accessible playground in Nassau County and one of the first in the U.S. BBS served as architect, landscape architect, site engineer and construction administrator for the project.

Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation and Museums developed the playground in a private/public partnership with Let All The Children Play Foundation (LATCP), a Long Island not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives and dignity of all children by developing accessible playgrounds and inclusive recreation programs.

Funding sources included \$820,000 raised through the Nassau County 2006 Environmental Bond Act, the New York State CCAP Grant of \$250,000, the \$200,000 New York State EPF Grant sponsored by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, Nassau County funds, LATCP funds, and private donations.

According to BBS principal Roger Smith, AIA, LEED AP, "The new, \$1.25 million playground is designed to promote interaction among children both with and without disabilities. It is a place where children can discover, learn and socialize, while developing understanding and sensitivity towards each other. BBS' design allows children of different physical and mental abilities, including those in wheelchairs, to play together and share every area and each piece of equipment on the playground."

"You will have to look long and hard to find a better example of a successful public-private partnership that works for the greater good of the community," said Nassau County executive Edward Mangano. "Together, we have dedicated ourselves to breaking down barriers and improving the lives of children with disabilities."

BBS assisted Nassau County and the LATCP Foundation with site selection, topographic survey coordination, conceptual and schematic planning, complete design, cost estimating, development of construction documents, coordination between the public and private funding parties, and development of fundraising materials and visuals.

"During the design process, we were guided by the idea of complete accessibility to all play areas and all equipment by children with even severe physical and mental disabilities," said BBS vice president and co-head of site planning and design group Curt Coronato, RLA, ASLA, CPSI. "This included the physical access for children in wheelchairs, safety and ease of use by children with reduced abilities, design that allowed all children to play next to each other regardless of disability, increased sound and sensory play opportunities, and easy access to all areas by parents of children in need of assistance during play. The design also accommodates disabled adults."

"One of the design challenges - and opportunities - was locating the playground within an existing

park with mature trees," said Coronato. "Our team developed the playground's layout in a manner that preserved the mature trees. It required several creative landscaping and site engineering solutions, but the final result was a comfortable, pleasant playground with extensive shading and the feel of connection with nature."

In order to protect the tree root systems, BBS left areas of up to 15 feet in diameter around the trunks undisturbed and provided natural irrigation by directing rainwater runoff towards the trees and landscaped areas. The designers also utilized porous materials as the base for safety surfacing, which allows rainwater to infiltrate into the ground and around the roots.

The programming for the park follows LATCP Foundation's guidelines, based on the organization's experience in integrating disabled children into play areas. The park exceeds ADA accessibility requirements for play areas and all equipment meets or exceeds safety and accessibility standards set by ASTM, CPSC and ADA.

The playground is divided into two areas, intended for children ages 0 to 5 and 5 to 12. BBS designed wide pathways and spaced the equipment sufficiently to allow easy wheelchair travel around the park. The playground incorporates a high number of seating benches, which allows parents and guardians to closely observe children playing in all sections of the playground. The park features four picnic areas and in the future will incorporate a nature exploration section, also designed by BBS.

Some of the swing seats are equipped with amusement park ride-like harnesses for children with balancing problems. The slides are gently sloped for increased safety and ease of use. The climbing structures feature wheelchair ramps. The seesaws also are adapted for children who lack balance, with one of the seats equipped with a back.

The surface materials include multi-colored, poured-in-place recycled rubber; artificial grass; pavers; natural grass; as well as a decorative pavers showcasing names of donors. The surfaces feature cheerful colors and patterns, color-indicated pathways and games custom designed by BBS. The variety of surface textures and materials increases the children's sensory experiences.

"The project incorporates numerous sustainable features," explained BBS' Josef Kapsa, LEED AP. "The surface materials and play equipment feature a high recycled content and pathways include pervious pavers dissipating the storm water into the ground. The water runoff control system features under-drain piping and gravel that slowly discharge the rainwater into the ground without utilizing the municipal storm sewers, except for situations with extremely high amounts of water from heavy storms."

The entrance pathway leads to the centrally located, polygonal "Welcome Center" shelter, custom designed by BBS. The park's most prominent feature is the 51-foot-long play bridge manufactured by Dynamo Playgrounds based on the Trail Bridge DX-701-C product. It features a foundation comprised of 11 concrete footings; 3'11"-wide walking surface constructed of recycled plastic composite planks; 20mm and 22mm diameter polyamide (nylon) rope cable with UV protection and fire retardant solution; and 5 1/2" OD galvanized steel tubing finished with polyester powder coating.

Other equipment includes Kompan's custom ADA transfer station; Ocean/Jungle, Story Makers, Sierra and two custom, Galaxy-type climbing structures; Ocean spring seesaws; Cat slide; Coupe

Deluxe car; Mermaid's Fountain water play feature; Starfish and rotating tables; Shark spring toys; Spica and Junior Spica spinners; spinner bowl; Supernova ring spinner; Rock-it rocker; Billy Goat play patch; Argo balancing tube, and Little Elephant and Little Hen rockers.

The playground features several Goric brand equipment pieces, including the innovative Integration carousel, which accommodates riders in wheelchairs. Goric also provided Euroflex surface Mushroom features and Dance chimes. In addition, the park includes a tire swing and two multi-bay metal swings with Zero-G disability adapted harness chair seats, belts seats and enclosed tot seats by GameTime.

The newly opened playground has proven very popular with parents and children. LATCP Foundation continues its involvement and frequently organizes all-inclusive activities and events at the playground.

BBS Architects, Landscape Architects and Engineers

Headquartered in Patchogue, NY and established in 1975, BBS Architects, Landscape Architects and Engineers is a leading Long Island and NY/NJ/CT Tri-state area designer of sustainable educational, commercial, institutional, public and athletic facilities. The firm designed the first LEED-certified public school in New York State -- the Hampton Bays Middle School in Hampton Bays, NY - which received LEED Silver certification as well as the 2012 Green Ribbon School designation from the White House as one of the most environmentally responsible schools in the nation. Over the last decade, BBS has designed educational facilities valued at \$1.6 billion. The firm's services include architecture, interior design and landscape architecture as well as civil, mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineering.

BBS' current and recent work includes the new 60,000-square-foot Life Sciences Building at the Suffolk County Community College Ammerman Campus in Selden, NY, which aims at LEED Gold certification; the 100-room Hyatt Place East End hotel in Riverhead, NY; Long Island University's \$1.6-million Mullarkey Hall renovation in Brookville, NY; the new, three-story, 25,500-square-foot addition at the Southampton Elementary School in Southampton, NY; the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery Administrative Building in Coram, NY; and the new Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in North Merrick, NY.

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