

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**CONTACT:**

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Playground Initiative Upgrades Seven Failed Playgrounds in 2008**San Francisco, CA, December 29, 2008:**

Seven of San Francisco's twenty-six playgrounds that received a 'D' or 'F' in the spring 2008 report card of the Neighborhood Parks Council, a local park advocacy organization, have been upgraded to at least a 'C' grade thanks to hundreds of hours of volunteer labor.

"The City's playgrounds should be safe for our children," said Meredith Thomas, Deputy Director of the Neighborhood Parks Council. "Unfortunately, our bond funds from 2000 and this year will replace only a few of the city's 144 playgrounds, so we have to struggle to keep the others safe until other sources of funding can be identified," she added.

The spring 2008 survey of San Francisco's playgrounds by the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) found that 26 of the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) playgrounds did not meet established playground standards. Each received a failing grade of 'D' or 'F', signaling the presence of serious health and safety hazards. "Although failed playgrounds still have value as recreational play spaces, they require increased adult supervision and maintenance attention because they are not nearly as safe as we would like them to be," commented Thomas.

To address these concerns, NPC secured funding from local donors and foundations to organize community members to make improvements at 10 playgrounds in 2008 and fund materials such as sand. The 10 targeted playgrounds included: Sunset Playground, Crocker Amazon Playground (Geneva), Crocker Amazon Playground (Italy), Herz Playground, Joe DiMaggio North Beach Playground, Lincoln Park Playground, Merced Heights Playground, Silver Terrace Playground, West Sunset Playground, and Cayuga Playground.

Workday volunteers completed trash pickup, sand sifting, beautification projects, plantings, weeding, sand addition, and equipment painting. In total, approximately 90 tons of new playground sand were gifted to failing playgrounds thanks to Playground Initiative funding provided by the Miriam and Peter Haas Fund and San Francisco Beautiful.

"The workday at our playground really motivated us to come together and now we've started a campaign to raise funds for a new playground at West Sunset," said Art Tom of Friends of West Sunset Playground. "I'd really like to see the playground renovated before my child goes off to college," he added.

By December of 2008, all 10 playgrounds where workdays were completed were reassessed and re-graded. Seven of the 10 had improved to a grade of C or higher; the

only problematic playgrounds remaining are Cayuga, Herz, and Silver Terrace playgrounds which all require more than sand and paint. Nonetheless, according to Thomas of NPC, "The reassessment demonstrated how small and relatively inexpensive improvements can often upgrade the overall safety of a playground area. For example, sand sifting is one of the cheapest and simplest ways to eliminate serious hazards to children such as broken glass and feces left in playground sand."

NPC plans to work with RPD and community volunteers to improve conditions at the remaining 16 failed sites during 2009. NPC will also continue to partner with the City and community groups to identify additional funding sources for basic playground improvements.

For more information on the Playground Initiative visit www.sfnpc.org/playgrounds or contact, NPC Deputy Director, Meredith Thomas at (415) 621-3260 or mthomas@sfnpc.org.

The Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) advocates for a superior, equitable and sustainable park and recreation system. NPC provides leadership and support to park users through community-driven stewardship, education, planning and research.

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