



Gardner Park Restoration

SPLASH & PLAY

PROJECT



Community-built projects inspire everyone who participates with a sense of ownership, so much that the projects become a focus of community life. When finished, people look back and describe them as a momentous occasion; the experience of a lifetime.

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HISTORY

Gardner Park was the brainchild of Newport's second mayor, James T. Gardner who held office from 1919-1921. Gardner's greatest ambition or "Jim's Folly"¹ as the townspeople called it, was to transform the swampy tract of land along the Causeway into a beautiful park. By the 1930's, the swamp was on its way to being cleared and filled through the WPA (Works Progress Administration), a program established by the United States government to address unemployment during the Great Depression. It took five years and thousands of loads of gravel before grades and elevation could support recreational development. In 1941, four years after James Gardner's death, the new park, complete with tennis courts, baseball field and restrooms, was dedicated and named in his memory as Gardner Memorial Park. Today the 20-acre parcel has evolved into a multi-sport complex complete with fields for baseball, softball, little league, football and soccer, an ice skating rink, playground, skate park, basketball and pickleball courts.

¹Folly, *noun*: lack of good sense; foolishness.

Scenically framed by the Clyde River and Lake Memphremagog, Gardner Memorial Park has been a popular destination for generations of families who visit for fishing, boating, picnicking or just to walk and appreciate the breathtaking views of Newport.



OUR SHARED VISION

Centrally located, Gardner Park is one of Newport City's most heavily used recreation facilities. Annually, over 40,000 people visit the park for community events, sports leagues and unstructured recreational use. While the park is regularly enjoyed by many, the facility is challenged by aging infrastructure in need of restoration to meet the contemporary needs of our community. The proposed Splash & Play project is the first step of a larger, multi-phase restoration project at Gardner Park aimed at improving one of our City's most prominent public recreation assets. Initial improvements scheduled for 2020 will focus on playground and restroom facility renovations guided by three key objectives:

1 Making Free-Play Fun and SAFE

In 2017 The Vermont League of Cities and Towns submitted a report to the municipality identifying numerous "high priority" recommendations for the "immediate replacement or removal" of several play elements in the Gardner Park playground. Some structures aged thirty years or more, are presenting exposed hardware, sharp plastics cracked from weathering, and inadequate fall protection. The Splash & Play project includes removal of hazardous conditions as the first priority, and replacement with new, age-appropriate, durable equipment and surfacing to meet or exceed current playground safety standards.

2 Focusing on Inclusive & Multi-Generational Play

The Splash & Play project aims to bridge the generation gap by creating a central location for holistic family engagement. The plan includes unique playground features like Generation Swing Seats and expansion of shaded and open green-space for family picnicking. The six medium play structures that currently occupy the play area will be replaced with one grand structure suitable for ages 5-12, and another large structure designed for children ages 2-4. The new sail-shade pavilion will provide a comfortable location for children, adults and seniors to relax while enjoying the park or monitoring playground and splashpad activity. Nearby restrooms will be re-designed and enlarged to comfortably accommodate multiple family members and baby changing stations.

Playing together is vital to the healthy development of all children, with or without disabilities. With an eye on accessibility, playground structures will be chosen for easy grades, adaptive play options and engineered features suitable for wheelchair mobility. A splashpad has been incorporated to compliment playground structures and to meet the demand for free, multi-generational outdoor water activities on the lake. The pad's motion sensors and simple ground features purposefully eliminate the potential for safety risk, mobility challenges and the high maintenance expense associated with other water options (like a public swimming pool). Contiguous sidewalks, a central resting area, new cross walks and ramp accessible restrooms will also make the visiting experience more welcoming for all.

3 Strengthening Newport's Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

In Newport, recreation opportunities help define the quality of life for our local families. Gardner Park's central location and close proximity to the shoreline helps highlight the City's integral connection to Lake Memphremagog. In our community surrounded mostly by water, there are surprisingly few public access points to enjoy the lake. Making enhancements to this important gathering place will encourage more visitors to experience Gardner Park, and enjoy all the diverse recreation opportunities found in Newport and Lake Memphremagog.

Beyond the benefits of health and well-being for families in our area, the Splash & Play project also represents a significant opportunity for local commerce through increased visitation to our City. This facility is conveniently located off the Newport Bike Path and within walking distance to Newport's designated Downtown District. Developing recreation assets in Gardner Park could play a big role in our community's economic future by attracting visitors to Main Street, helping boost the prosperity of existing local businesses, and hopefully attracting new ones.

START THE JOURNEY

The Splash & Play project is a gift to all members of our community and a gesture of encouragement for the children who will lead our future. With fundraising, community support and assistance from donors, we can inspire the next generations and shape the outlook for Newport City. Driven by a shared vision, we can make a difference!

The Splash & Play project makes it a priority to ensure that everyone, including those with special needs, have an opportunity to access play spaces at Gardner Memorial Park.





IMPACT

Newport City is in Orleans County, one of three counties that make up the Northeast Kingdom, a beautiful and rural region of northern Vermont. The Northeast Kingdom is the most economically distressed region of the State, consistently posting one of the highest unemployment rates at 4.4% compared to the State average of 2.8%. Over 26% of our children live below the poverty line compared to the State average of 14.4%. Not surprisingly, Orleans County also consistently ranks last in the state for health outcomes with high rates for obesity, diabetes, and tobacco use.

In 2015, the North Country Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment identified high rates of obesity and low rates of physical activity as one of six key health concerns to address by 2020, setting a goal to “increase use of community resources for physical activity from 42% to 58% by 2019.”

Newport City Elementary School Principal Elaine Collins believes that nearly 400 students in Newport’s Pre-K through 6th grade school would benefit directly from this project through increased opportunities for no-cost physical exercise and positive social interactions. She says “many of our students don’t access play outside on a regular basis. As a result, we see them interfacing with technology too much and not exercising enough.”

Gardner Memorial Park is centrally located in the largest community in Orleans County and conveniently accessible by vehicle, bike or on foot. The Splash & Play project is an initiative that will provide opportunities for physical activity to all segments of our population. While many Gardner Park visitors come directly from local neighborhoods, hundreds per year also come from neighboring communities who engage in organized athletic activities or family events hosted in the City. On average, about 40% of park users come from the broader Northeast Kingdom. Investments at Gardner Park will directly benefit families from nearby communities like Charleston, Coventry, Derby, Irasburg, Newport Town, Orleans, Troy and beyond. Newport’s proximity to the Canadian Border invites visiting Canadian citizens to enjoy the recreational benefits as well.

“The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital.”
— Mark Hyman



PROJECT ELEMENTS

Playground Area

- Redesign of play area to consolidate structures and open more multi-use green space.
- Replace nearly all existing playground equipment with new ADA and age-appropriate features.
- Rehabilitate turf to plush grass in green areas and engineered wood chips around play structures.
- Replace chain-link parameter fence with a low Morgan-rail style fence and landscaping.
- Relocate and rehabilitate existing swings, professionally powder-coat and outfit with standard, handicap and multi-generational swings.
- Construct a new concrete sidewalk stretching through the playground, North to the entrance of Gardner Park Road for improvements to pedestrian safety and easier access to the Newport Bike Path.
- Install a 40'x40' splash pad with ground features to encourage safe, multi-generational, inclusive play.
- Install an L-shaped colorful sail shade structure to wrap around the North and East side of the splashpad with quick release system for seasonal disbandment.

Recreation Building/Restroom Facility

- Redesign floorplan to include slightly larger gathering space, improved ice-skate storage and family friendly restrooms with changing stations.
- Add two exits in the gathering space for compliance with fire safety code.
- Upgrade all toilets and plumbing fixtures to commercial grade.
- Install energy efficient hot water system.
- Replace aged oil heating system with new energy efficient propane furnace.
- Construct 10' addition on rear of building for expanded utility room and concession area.

FUNDRAISING PLAN

State & Federal Grants	\$300,000
Corporate Sponsors/Partnerships	\$200,000
In-Kind Labor, Service & Goods Contributions	\$50,000
Recreation Committee Fundraising	\$24,000
Individual & Community Gifts	\$10,000
Component Sales — Donor Bricks	\$14,000
Total:	\$598,000



PROJECT BUDGET

PLAY AREA	Mega Tower Play Structure: Age 5-12	\$120,000
	Kid's Choice Play Structure: Age 2-4	\$60,000
	Free Standing Playground Elements	\$20,000
	Playground Surfacing	\$5,000
	Multi-Generation & Inclusive Swings	\$5,000
SHADE & LANDSCAPING	40x40 Splash Pad with Recirculation System	\$185,000
	Sail Shade L-Shaped Pavilion	\$30,000
	Morgan Rail Fence & Landscaping	\$35,000
SAFETY	Benches & Picnic Tables	\$5,000
	Pedestrian Safety, Sidewalk Extension & Crosswalks	\$10,000
FACILITY	Facility Gate System	\$5,000
	Multi-Purpose Room Safety Code Renovations	\$30,000
	Bathroom Fixture & Accessibility Upgrades	\$36,000
	10' Concession Area Addition	\$32,000
	Heating System Upgrade — Propane	\$12,000
Total:	\$598,000	



SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION

News of this play facility has spread throughout the Northeast Kingdom and State as a project that has been awarded multiple grants and been highlighted as one of the first public parks in Vermont with access to a free splashpad. Support from corporate partners is crucial to achieve fundraising goals and make this dream a reality for the families in our community.

We take every opportunity to thank our major contributors through radio and television interviews, events and print materials. Depending on the sponsorship level, contributors will receive the following benefits:

- Prominent Logo and Message Placement
- Media Coverage Recognition
- Visibility of Representatives at Major Events

Donations of all sizes are appreciated! Commitment Forms can be downloaded online at NewportRecreation.org/SPLASHPLAY or by contacting the Newport Parks & Recreation office:

Jessica Booth, Director of Parks & Recreation
 JBooth@NewportRecreation.org
 (802)334-6345



PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS

	Platinum \$40,000+	Gold \$20,000	Silver \$10,000	Bronze \$5,000	Friend \$1,000
Name and logo on www.NewportRecreation.org , hyper-linked to your homepage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Acknowledgement on our "Newport Parks & Recreation" Facebook page (5,600+ followers)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Name on Donor Brick in playground central gathering area	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Press release and check presentation photo opportunity	✓	✓	✓		
Invitation to all newsworthy events	✓	✓	✓		
Invitation to groundbreaking and ribbon cutting ceremonies with preferred recognition	✓	✓			
3'x3' Thank You banner hung in Gardner Park throughout construction	✓	✓			
Permanent recognition in the playground on a 3'-5' engraved landscaping boulder	✓				
Exclusive tour before park opens and photo book capturing major moments and milestones	✓				

This book was created using photos of local children enjoying the playground at Gardner Park. Our sincere thanks to the parents who shared these bright and smiling faces . . . This work is for them.

Gardner Park Restoration Splash & Play Project COMMITMENT FORM

Company/Organization:	
Contact Name (and title if applicable):	
Email:	Phone:
Mailing Address:	

Pledge Amount:	Payment Date:
Payment Terms:	
Authorized Signature:	Date:

The funds committed above will be used solely for Gardner Park Restoration Projects. Donations can be made payable to "Newport Parks & Recreation Splash & Play Project". All contributions are tax deductible with reference to Newport City's Federal Tax ID#03-6000595. Thank you for your generous support!

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Name and logo on www.NewportRecreation.org , hyper-linked to your homepage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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Please return this form to: Newport Parks & Recreation, c/o J. Booth, 222 Main Street, Newport VT 05855.