

The Franklin Square Neighborhood Park project, led by Friends of Corvallis Parks and Recreation in collaboration with Job's Addition Neighborhood Association, is a neighborhood-led effort to replace the play structure at Franklin Square, the oldest city park in Corvallis, Oregon. In April 2014, the small wooden play structure was declared unsafe and removed by Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department. The 30-year-old structure had rotted out at the footings, and although it had been repaired in the past, it did not meet today's safety codes. Friends of Corvallis Parks and Recreation is requesting \$10,000 toward the cost of a modest, modern replacement play structure suitable for children ages 2-12. In this older neighborhood with small lots, it is important to develop and preserve nearby parks in which all children can play any time of the day and year.

Before its removal, the play structure at Franklin Square was a popular gathering place for young families. It was the only appropriate play structure for children ages 2-4 within a reasonable and safe walking distance from Job's Addition, the neighborhood surrounding the park. Other, similar play structures exist within a mile in each direction, but reaching these other parks requires crossing major roads with traffic that can be very heavy. The only other neighborhood play structure available for school children up to age 12 is at nearby Franklin School.

Active living and preventing childhood obesity are of high value to the Corvallis community, and Corvallis Parks and Recreation has demonstrated its commitment to address these issues through their Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities Program. The program, in partnership with Benton County, aims to provide policies, systems, and places to promote active living, improve access to healthy food, and reduce health problems associated with an increasingly sedentary lifestyle among our youth. This partnership has raised awareness about the number of children in our own backyards who do not have adequate access or impetus to use their local parks for exercise and healthy living.

Within the Corvallis Park System, neighborhood parks play a vital role in providing opportunities for healthy living by providing playground equipment coupled with open turf areas to encourage and increase exercise for both youth and adults. Tackling the issue of healthy living and childhood obesity is an important part of Corvallis Parks and Recreation's mission. The goals of this project are as follows:

- Provide new playground equipment specifically designed to encourage body movement and the use of diverse muscle groups;
- Provide safe play structures within a 1/2 mile of all residential neighborhoods;
- Provide equipment that suits the historic character of the park and neighborhood;
- Provide a place for neighbors to gather and build community based relationships while their children play;
- Provide an outdoor alternative to indoor screen time.

Friends of Corvallis Parks and Recreation supports the work of Corvallis Parks and Recreation and its Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities Program. From rejuvenating Arnold Park to preserving Sunnyside School, Friends of Corvallis Parks and Recreation has successfully built partnerships between the City of Corvallis, other community organizations, local businesses and users of parks facilities and programs to preserve and maintain Corvallis parks. For the Franklin Square Neighborhood Park project, Friends of Corvallis Parks and Recreation is leading a community partnership with Job's Addition Neighborhood Association (JANA) and City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department.

The neighborhood surrounding Franklin Square, Job's Addition, has a strong history of caring for its neighborhood park. Franklin Square is a 1.4 acre parcel of land donated to the city by Beniah and Addie Job in 1889 to be used "for all time as a park and was to revert back to his heirs if used otherwise." Beautification of the community was their priority, and planting of trees and shrubs commenced at once. Volunteers cared for these early plantings and the park in general, by hand and with horse-drawn implements; in fact, Oregon State College professor Margaret Snell hand-watered the saplings herself. The trees now standing are large and magnificent specimens chosen for their longevity, approximately 200-250 years.

What began as a beautification project grew into a central, neighborhood gathering place. From the annual Franklin Square Turkey Bowl where teams of children challenged teams of adults to a soccer tournament on Thanksgiving Day, to baseball games at the now-gone diamond, to a busy swing-set donated by a university sorority, Franklin Square has been a center of neighborhood activity. Since at least 1961, there has been a play structure for children in the park.

In 2003, Job's Addition organized a formal neighborhood association (JANA) in an effort to actively address ongoing issues within the neighborhood. JANA routinely organizes park cleanup sessions and leads neighborhood preservation and education projects. JANA hosts two annual walking tours: one for notable trees and another for historic homes, both of which were awarded funds by local grantors. As college students return to the neighborhood every fall, JANA volunteers go door-to-door to distribute good-neighbor, welcome information. JANA is led by a highly motivated and experienced group of volunteers determined to finish the play structure project in Franklin Square.

In February 2010, JANA and Corvallis Parks and Recreation organized a joint work session to replace rotting boards on the existing wooden play structure in Franklin Square. The work done that winter by neighborhood volunteers and City staff was intended to extend the life of the play structure. At the time, both the City and the neighborhood were unaware of the extent of the underground damage to the wooden structure.

Franklin Park has been identified as in need of rehabilitation and has been in the City's Capital Improvement Project plan (CIP) for many years. The cost to provide new play equipment that meets the City's required safety standards and serves diverse age groups is budgeted at \$125,000. All funds for the project will be used for playground equipment, installation, and safety surface materials that will provide fall protection as well as ADA accessibility.

Lack of funding has caused this project to be delayed several times. The project is in CIP for FY 14/15 with identified funds coming from a 50% between grant funds 50% and donations, both cash and in-kind. Through the CIP process, the Park, Natural Areas and Recreation Board has acknowledged this park was in need of rehabilitation due to its aging and unsafe equipment. It was unfortunate that the equipment had to be removed prior to having funds available for replacement.

Friends of Corvallis Parks and Recreation is working closely with the neighborhood and Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department staff to raise funds for this project, which is adopted into the City's Capital Improvement Project plan, and is a priority project for this fiscal year. City staff will apply for a 50%

match grant in the spring. If the City is successful, funds from MDU Foundation will be used toward the required 50% match funds. If the City is not successful, fundraising efforts will continue, and funds from MDU Foundation will be used to leverage community or other funding sources.