

Catholic School Master Plan & Playground: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Purpose:

Located in Tulsa Oklahoma, the school is a traditional Catholic school that focuses its efforts on outstanding instruction of reading, writing, math and the sciences. The school's classes rank between the 98th and 99th percentile when compared to all schools across the United States. The programs serve students from three years to eighth grade and encourage social and moral development within a strong community. In addition to the academic, community, and social connections that the students develop, a myriad of opportunities exist for foreign language instruction, fine arts, innovative and applied sciences, and individualized approaches for gifted and talented learners. The school's leadership felt it was important to echo the same high standards within the built environment. A revised campus master plan included healing and teaching gardens, plazas, an outdoor classroom and playgrounds. The first built phase is a playground located just east of the monastery. The existing playground contained typical post and platform equipment with loose fill rubber mulch enclosed by plastic borders. Due to the high maintenance of the rubber mulch and lack of interesting play features the Building and Grounds Committee felt the need to hire a professional Landscape Architect to meet the standards of this institution.

Role of the Landscape Architect:

The LA was hired to provide a master plan and playground that embodied the ethics and standards in its design equal to the school's educational principles by creating uniformity in the campus design, constructing areas for each age group that would be more appropriate for varying age needs, and creating spaces that are "out of the ordinary". The LA was responsible for meeting with the Building and Grounds Committee, teachers, and the Sisters that reside at the adjoining facility to understand their needs and to create designs that would foster innovation and imagination for the users. The LA worked with the school's budget and fundraising efforts to develop presentation graphics for use at fundraising events to demonstrate what would be accomplished with the funds raised. The LA helped the client select a construction manager and visited the site on a weekly basis during construction to see that the design intent was fully implemented.

Special Factors and Significance:

The existing playground site dropped ten feet in grade from the sidewalk to the property line. The design utilized the challenging grade to make multiple levels of play that would stimulate the imagination and heighten play value. Leveling the site would have required large volumes of fill and massive retaining walls. However, by using existing grades, there was much less impact to the site. Maintaining the existing grades also allowed two large, thriving trees to remain, protected during construction, these trees provided immediate shade to the southern exposure of the completed playground.

A "Solar System" theme was carried out in every aspect of the playground. Kids enter the playground at the sun platform and are greeted by a graphic of the sun smiling in the poured-in-place rubber surfacing. Brightly colored shade sails cover this area providing an elevated viewing point for teachers to watch the activities below. From the sun platform the students can run over the clatter bridge to the earth platform and then spiral down the slide to the lower level. A winding ADA accessible ramp weaves through the site providing access to all levels. Deep synthetic turf covered slopes cover the hill around the earth platform for the children to run or roll down. On the highest level, children can be found playing basketball and four square among orbit rings of stained concrete with concrete "planet" spheres for seating. West of the sun platform is the second level of the playground with hopscotch and a rock slab climbing wall which enables kids to climb to a lower level. Large colored concrete spheres are placed throughout the play areas to represent the planets. Arches within the rubber play surface are designed to emulate orbital rings. As part of the low impact design an existing large oak tree was saved and pruned to provide shade to the lower playground. The drainage from the playground surfacing flows through the surface to built in weep holes and out through openings in the retaining wall that drain to the large oak tree below.

Impact: The playground improvements have become a recruiting tool for prospective students and a means of retaining current students. The playground is drastically different from the typical playground with multiple levels to explore the inspiring solar system theme.

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General Design (Constructed Projects)

Project Name: Catholic School Master Plan & Playground

Master Plan



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PLANET SPHERES

GREENHOUSE

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN FOR SISTER'S GARDEN

CONCRETE PLAYGROUND SURFACE

SOFT PLAYGROUND SURFACE

ROCK CLIMBING WALL

SHADE SAILS

COR3500 ROPE BRIDGE

COR3500 MINI SPACENET

ELE400024 SPINNER BOY

ELE5900243 EDGE CUSTOM

122033A-D SPYROSLIDE

144114A CLOUDBURST SLIDE

GX1944 STELLA NOVA

GX1944 ROCKIT

General Design (Constructed Projects)

Playground Rendering



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Construction Photos



- Initial site work
- Installation of retaining wall
- Multi-level playground can be accessed via steps or ADA ramp (not shown in picture)

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Construction Photos



- Local boulders used for retaining walls and seating
- Installation of Edge Tower
- Installation of Stella nova spinner
- ADA concrete ramp / walkway

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Construction Photos



- Installation of triple slide
- Progress on ADA ramp
- Retaining wall / observation deck
- Installation of spiral slide and clatter bridge

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Construction Photos



- Pouring of concrete ramps and slab
- Installation of space net and spinner bowl
- Installing base coat of rubber pour-in-place safety surfacing



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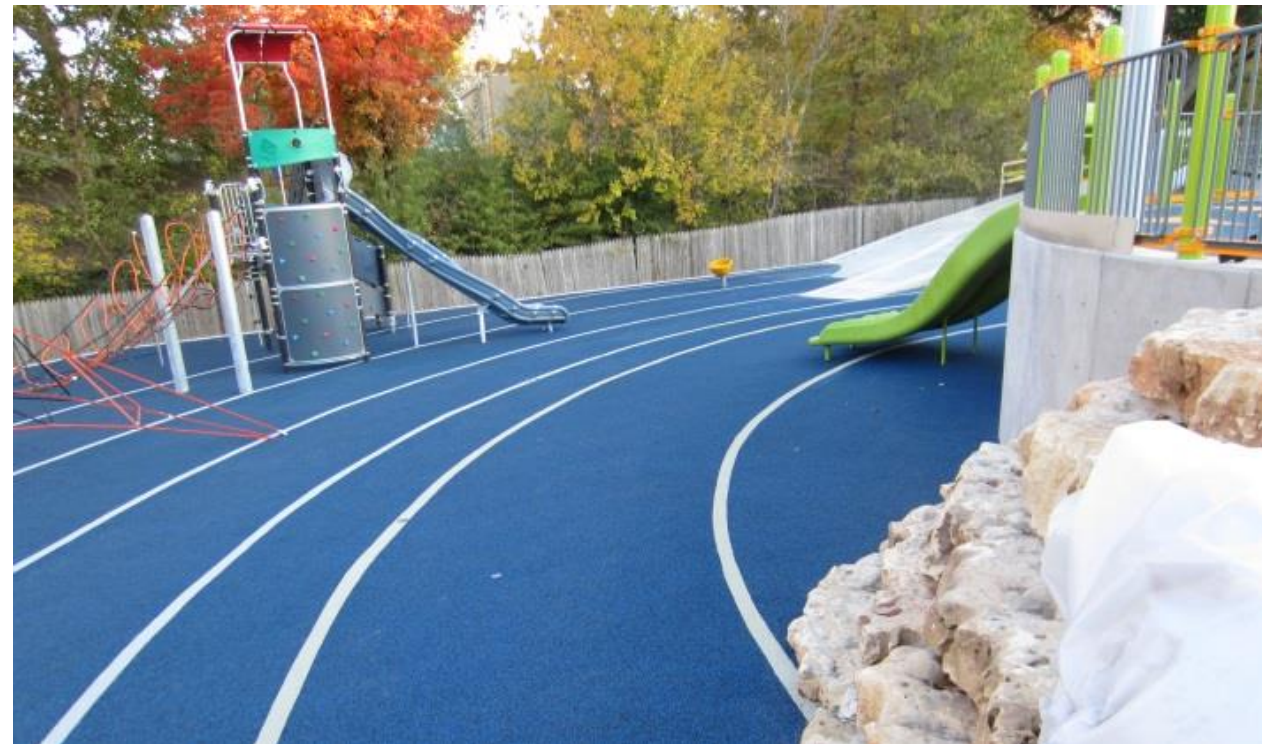
General Design (Constructed Projects)

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Construction Photos



- Sun of the solar system created in safety surface
- Earth created in safety surface
- Orbital rings created in safety surface



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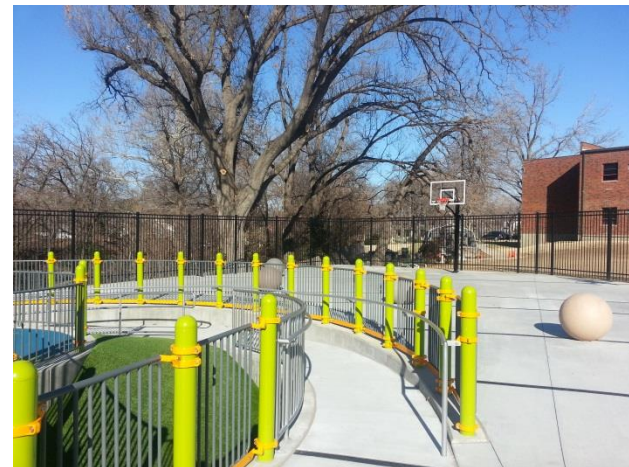
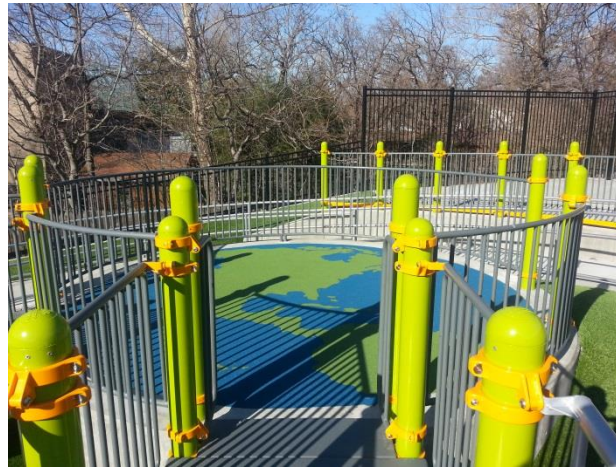
• Placement of orbital concrete spheres

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General Design (Constructed Projects)

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Completed Playground



- Concrete spheres found throughout the playground symbolize celestial bodies found throughout the solar system.
- Completion of upper viewing deck with shade sails and drinking fountain.
- Celestial rings in play surface throughout the playground. Slides can be found throughout the playground.
- Completed Earth safety surfacing and beginning of ramp from upper to lower deck.

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Completed Playground



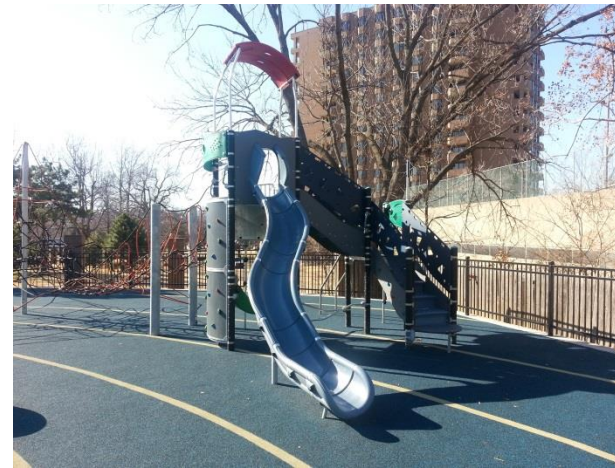
- One of the many slides connecting upper to lower play surfaces
- ADA ramp connecting upper and lower play surfaces
- Spiral slide connecting upper and lower decks with decorative railing and ladder
- Overview of slide and ramp area

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Completed Playground



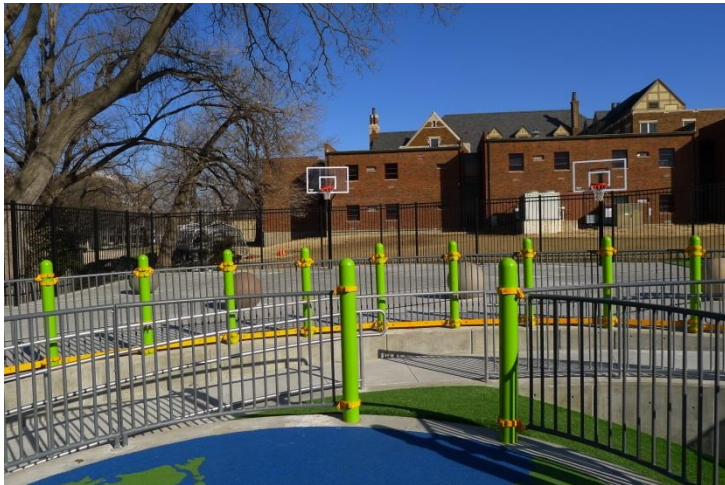
- Triple slide and cargo space net and net bridge
- Perimeter view of celestial striping found throughout the safety surface
- Edge Tower found in the center of the playground can be accessed for viewing of the solar system playground
- Spherical concrete orbs illustrating the planets found in the solar system

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Completed Playground



- A closer look at spherical concrete bodies throughout the playgrounds solar system
- Basketball and hopscotch area on upper level
- Space net play system



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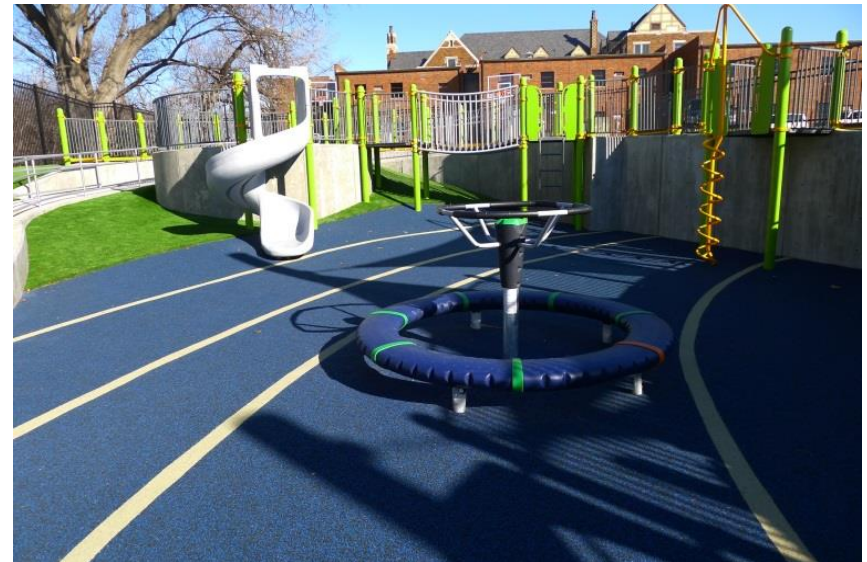
General Design (Constructed Projects)

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Completed Playground



- Orbital rings poured into concrete continue from layout in safety surface
- Shade sail on upper observation deck and the stone climbing wall
- Stella nova spinner



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