

INTRODUCING

Magical Bridge Playground at The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore




MAGICAL BRIDGE[®]
FOUNDATION

MARYLAND ZOO

ALL ABILITIES. ALL AGES. ALL WELCOME.™

Let's Play, Maryland!

As a natural extension of The Maryland Zoo's commitment to inclusion and empathy for all living things, Magical Bridge Playground will welcome visitors of all ages and abilities with unique opportunities to play, connect, learn, reflect, and build relationships — with nature, wildlife, and each other.

A WILD OPPORTUNITY

A day at the Maryland Zoo is full of discovery, surprises, observations, and learning. Enhancing the zoo's already enriching experience, Magical Bridge Playground will delight visitors with a fun, relaxing, and accessible playspace where they get to move, gather, imagine, and explore, just like the animals.

Intentionally designed to be physically and socially inclusive for all ages and abilities, Magical Bridge Playground at the Maryland Zoo will provide endless new opportunities for everyone in the community to play together — including the 1-in-4 of us living with physical and cognitive disabilities, autism, sensory challenges, the medically fragile, and our aging population.

JOIN THE FUN

Help bring Magical Bridge Playground to The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore by donating to this important project. To learn more about the project, including naming opportunities that will leave a lasting legacy in the community, please visit marylandzoo.org and magicalbridge.org.



“As a parent of a child with autism, I see the importance of acceptance through my son’s eyes. An inclusive playground would greatly enhance the special experience the Zoo already provides to all animal lovers.”

— Audra Jones,
Maryland Zoo Board of Trustees

“A universal playground will further support the Zoo’s goal of being a physically and socially inclusive place to connect, learn, and play.”

— Kirby Fowler,
CEO/President, Maryland Zoo

“

Magical Bridge Playground is a place where everyone belongs. It’s the one place where a disability does not mean a limitation on fun.

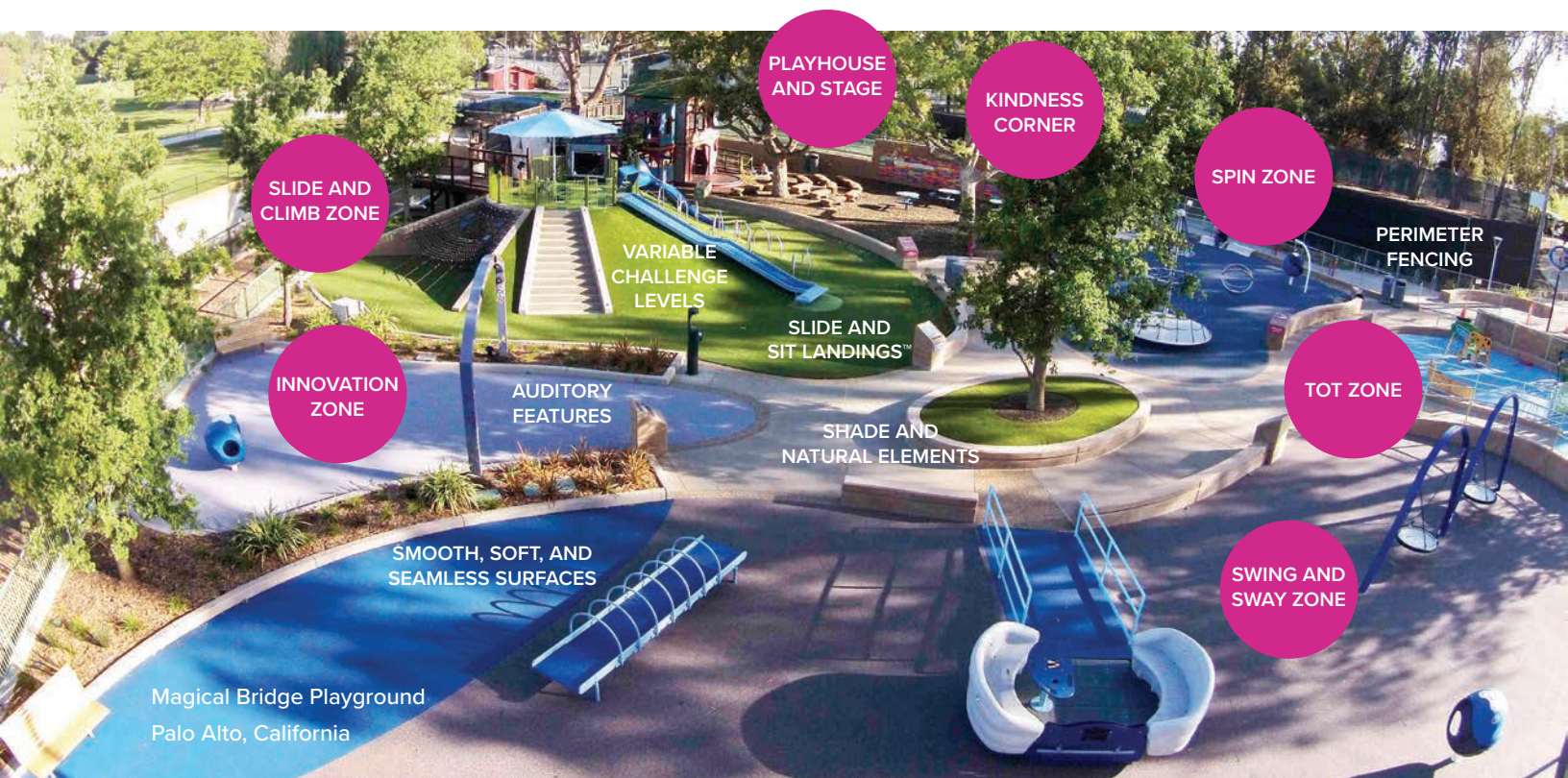
— Nary Sun, Healthcare Professional, Sunnyvale, CA

Magical Bridge Playground
Palo Alto, California



MAGICAL BRIDGE PLAYGROUND

Beyond Inclusion, There's Magic



Award-winning Magical Bridge Playgrounds are internationally recognized for inclusive and innovative features:

DISTINCT PLAY ZONES™

Grouped play experiences, such as swinging and spinning, provide predictable navigation and expectations throughout the playground.

Ample space gives visitors wide areas for open play, real decision-making, and transitional space between zones.

Smooth and seamless soft-fall surfaces are used throughout — with no tan bark, sand, or loose gravel that may obstruct breathing tubes or impede access for those using wheelchairs or mobility devices.

Secure, perimeter fencing increases parents and caregivers peace of mind as their children explore the many play opportunities within the playground.

UNIQUE PLAY EXPERIENCES

Quality equipment, carefully selected for maximum accessibility and play value, includes elevated slide and climb zone, ground-level carousel, adult-sized swings, and ramp-accessible sway boat.

Variable challenge levels engage all ages and abilities and help build skills and confidence.

Magical Bridge-patented Slide and Sit Landings™ provide an extended bench area at the end of a slide for those needing extra time to wait for a mobility device or assistance from a friend.

Hideaway Huts™ with tactile sensory walls give visitors, such as people with autism, a quiet retreat from play a safe place to observe the action.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Gathering places with ample shade and comfort ignites multi-generational connections with space for games, celebrations, and performances.

The Kindness Corner™ with messaging that promotes acceptance, good will, and friendship encourages reflection and thoughtful conversations.

Adult fitness equipment keeps everyone active and healthy.

Programming provides fun and educational activities, events, and performances for all ages.

Kindness Ambassador™ volunteers promote kind behavior on and off the playground.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

Outdoor play improves the physical and mental health and well-being of everyone. With an underlying message of kindness, a Magical Bridge Playground serves as a joyful incubator for a more tolerant and inclusive society.



PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- Increases physical activity and time outside
- Builds flexibility, coordination, and strength
- Improves gross motor skills and body awareness
- Swinging, sliding, and spinning activates vestibular stimulation critical to balance, equilibrium, and spatial orientation
- Increases blood flow to the brain leading to cognitive development
- Improves cardiovascular health and endurance
- Develops a stronger immune system
- Helps control obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure



COGNITIVE BENEFITS

- Improves spatial awareness and concentration
- Nurtures self-discipline and problem solving skills
- Boosts self-esteem, confidence and resilience
- Reduces anxiety and improves mood
- Enhances imagination and creativity
- Reduces feelings of isolation and depression
- Increases attention span and ability to focus



SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Teaches how to lead, compromise, cope, and share
- Encourages compassion and acceptance
- Builds and reinforces important social skills
- Encourages kindness and making friends
- Ignites community connections and multigenerational friendships
- Inspires kind and inclusive behavior on and off the playground



1 in 4

PEOPLE ARE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY

10% OF DISABILITIES LOOK LIKE THIS



90% OF DISABILITIES LOOK LIKE THIS



10% of disabilities are physical or “visible” while 90% are “invisible” including autism, cognitive and developmental issues, sensory challenges and other differences.

ADA REQUIRES
PLAYGROUNDS GIVE ACCESS TO
PEOPLE USING A WHEELCHAIR.



MAGICAL BRIDGE PLAYGROUND
IS DESIGNED FOR EVERYONE:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| ✓ Autism | ✓ Physical Challenges |
| ✓ Visual Challenges | ✓ Older Adults |
| ✓ Auditory Challenges | ✓ Medically Fragile |
| ✓ Sensory Challenges | ✓ Mobility Device Users |
| ✓ Cognitive Disabilities | ✓ And Everyone Else! |

THE DESTINATION (PRELIMINARY RENDERING)

Magical Bridge Playground at The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

THE RENDERING BELOW IS A TEMPORARY VISUAL REPRESENTATION AND DOES NOT REFLECT THE FINAL DESIGN. THE PLAYGROUND LAYOUT AND FEATURES WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS AND TOPOGRAPHICAL STUDIES.



Customizable Play Zones™

Equipment and Features



Spin Zone



Tot Zone



Innovation Zone



Swing and Sway Zone



Kindness Corner



Slide and Climb Zone



HABITAT HOUSE

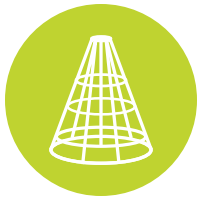


PICNIC GARDENS

NEW FOR THE ZOO

Initial ideas and thoughts on ways to connect the play experiences with the Zoo.





SPIN ZONE

BENEFITS: Helps develop both sides of the brain, improves attention span and focus.

EQUIPMENT: Disc spinner, net spinner, nest spinner, and wheelchair accessible ground carousel.

FEATURES: Each spinning experience is chosen for maximum play benefit and accessibility including coordinated group play at multiple challenge levels and individual therapeutic spinning in various positions.



NEW FOR THE ZOO

Zone signage can be used to educate visitors about animal behavior and movements with linkages to human movement. For example:

Spin like a spider! Much like figure skaters, who take advantage of rotational inertia when they draw their arms in for a faster spin, the flattie spider pulls its remaining legs off the ground and close to their body, ratcheting up their speed by up to 40 percent.





TOT ZONE

BENEFITS: Develops fine and gross motor skills, offers challenges for risk-taking, encourages imagination.

EQUIPMENT: Fun characters for moving and climbing, mini Slide Mound, tactile mural, and infant swings.

FEATURES: Designed for younger visitors, the Tot Zone mimics the other play areas in a scaled down version so smaller bodies can challenge themselves appropriately.



NEW FOR THE ZOO

Tot Zone could feature “baby” animal equipment and illustrations that educate how baby animals learn to move.



INNOVATION ZONE

BENEFITS: Motivates interaction, stimulates brain activity, encourages creativity and collaboration.

EQUIPMENT: Utilizing technology and music, the Magical Bridge Laser Harp creates orchestral sounds as you move beneath its arch while drum pads provide percussion as you walk or roll through the space.

FEATURES: Technology, touch, symbols, and sound facilitates non-verbal expression. Magical Bridge continues to innovate in this area with more options to come, including an AI-driven Musical Bridge that creates original music.



NEW FOR THE ZOO

An interactive auditory harp or other mechanism that allows visitors to create a symphony of (pleasant) animal sounds, based on natural animal habitat, such as a Safari with lions, hyenas, elephants or a Rainforest with monkeys, frogs, and birds.





SWING AND SWAY ZONE

BENEFITS: Develops and restores balance, increases concentration, soothes and relaxes.

EQUIPMENT: Bucket swings for all sizes, disc swings, dual swings, sway boat, and bench swings.

FEATURES: Selected for all ages and abilities, bucket swings accommodate all body sizes and disc swings enable multiple people to swing together or in different positions, such as laying down.



KINDNESS CORNER™

BENEFITS: Inspires conversations and reflection about kindness, acceptance, friendship, and diversity.

EQUIPMENT: Kindness messaging on walls or kiosks, seating, gaming tables, artwork, and natural shade.

FEATURES: This gathering space encourages multi-generational connections and activities.



NEW FOR THE ZOO

Animal characters can promote kindness to each other and also to the earth and animals. Kindness Wall (or Garden) can acknowledge the Zoo's sustainability achievements, commitments, and goals. Learning kiosks can present idea to inspire personal commitment to the conservation of wildlife and wild places.



SLIDE AND CLIMB ZONE

BENEFITS: Strengthens and develops muscle tone, skills, coordination, and sense of balance.

EQUIPMENT: Roller slide, group slides in multiple grades, climbing loops, rails, ropes, and nets.

FEATURES: Ramps and bridges lead to the top of a mound or berm. Slides feature Slide and Sit Landings™ that provide a safe place for those needing extra time for their mobility device or help from a friend.



NEW FOR THE ZOO

Connect sliding, climbing, and resting activities with animal behavior with prompts such as: Slide like a Snake, Climb like a Cheetah, Lay like a Lion, Fly like a Butterfly (swings). Signage can explain the importance of this movement to humans and animals.





PLAYHOUSE/HABITAT AND STAGE

BENEFITS: Encourages imaginative play with a full range of senses and feelings, motivates social collaboration.

EQUIPMENT: Custom-designed playhouse with whimsical touches and a stage for concerts, plays, storytime, and impromptu creative fun. An adjacent treehouse further connects visitors with nature.

FEATURES: A colorful and thematic centerpiece of the playground with natural amphitheater seating offers gathering space for school or community field trips, presentations and performances.



NEW FOR THE ZOO

Design the playhouse to reflect Baltimore's heritage using an architectural style and materials from the area (bricks, columns, Romanesque arches, etc.) — or use a celebrated animal habitat theme to connect the structure with a Zoo exhibit. Utilize local artists as much as possible.



IDEA BOARD

ADDITIONAL FEATURES TO EXPLORE

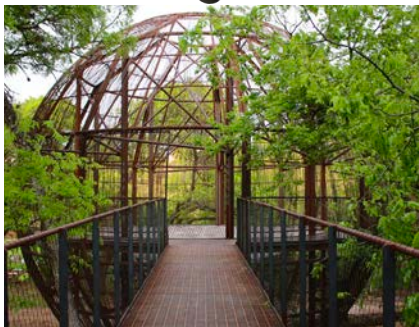
MARYLAND ZOO



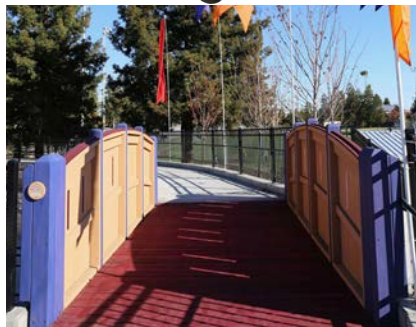
HIDEAWAY HUTS, shaped like animal habitats (nest, den) with tactile sensory walls, to offer a quiet retreat for those with autism.



PICNIC GROVE offers natural, shady areas with tables and games to gather for family picnics and parties.



TREE PODS that utilize the established tree grove will enable visitors to explore nature in an exciting new way.



AVA'S BRIDGE, named after Ava Villarreal, the inspiration behind Magical Bridge, reflects the growing mission of inclusion.



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE including tactile 3D maps and Braille visitors navigate the playground.



COMMUNICATION BOARD provides non-verbal visitors a way to communicate their needs and feelings.



COMMUNITY EVENT BOARD showcases upcoming events and activities to encourage future visits.



ADULT FITNESS EQUIPMENT promotes Zoo as a destination for older adults with fitness and recreation options in one.



INTERACTIVE MURAL — either chalkboard or stick-on landscape and animal shape to inspire artists to collaborate and create.



ANIMAL INSPIRED SCULPTURE (either decorative or for climbing), including relocation of famed lions to a shady spot.



REFRESHMENT CART in "Welcome Circle" expands food/retail offerings; possible partnership with social impact organizations.

ACTIVATING THE PLAYGROUND

Building a More Inclusive Community

Through innovative design and companion programs, Magical Bridge Playground at The Maryland Zoo will promote kindness and multi-generational connections for an even more welcoming experience for guests of all ages and abilities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Magical Bridge Foundation's Kindness Ambassador™ program engages local volunteers to activate and inspire kind and positive behavior on and off the playground. Kindness Ambassadors can include everyone from local youth to older adults, including those with disabilities who partner with a helper. Kindness Ambassadors host craft tables, educational activities, concerts, and events for all ages and abilities.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Magical Bridge Playground at The Maryland Zoo will extend the learning and exploratory environment established at the Zoo. The Kindness Corner, Innovation Zone, and Playhouse and Stage can transform into learning laboratory spaces with hands-on programming, interactive activities, and educational presentations. Inclusively designed programs will be a welcome asset for community members living with a disability.



MAGICAL BRIDGE FOUNDATION

Innovating Multigenerational Playgrounds, Parks, and Programs for More Inclusive Communities

Founded in Palo Alto, California, Magical Bridge Foundation designs and builds playgrounds, parks, and programs that improve the physical, social, emotional, and mental health of everyone in the community. Drawing from over a decade of research and development in collaboration with community leaders, landscape architects, educators, therapists, developers, artists, and families living with disabilities, the first Magical Bridge Playground opened to the public in 2015. Its universal design and equipment standards remove the physical and social barriers of typical playgrounds to create a welcoming space for all. With seven custom playgrounds now open to the public, and many more in development around the world, Magical Bridge Foundation is passionate about bringing the joy of play, kindness, and community connection to the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.

Magical Bridge Foundation has been featured for its innovation in inclusive playground design at:



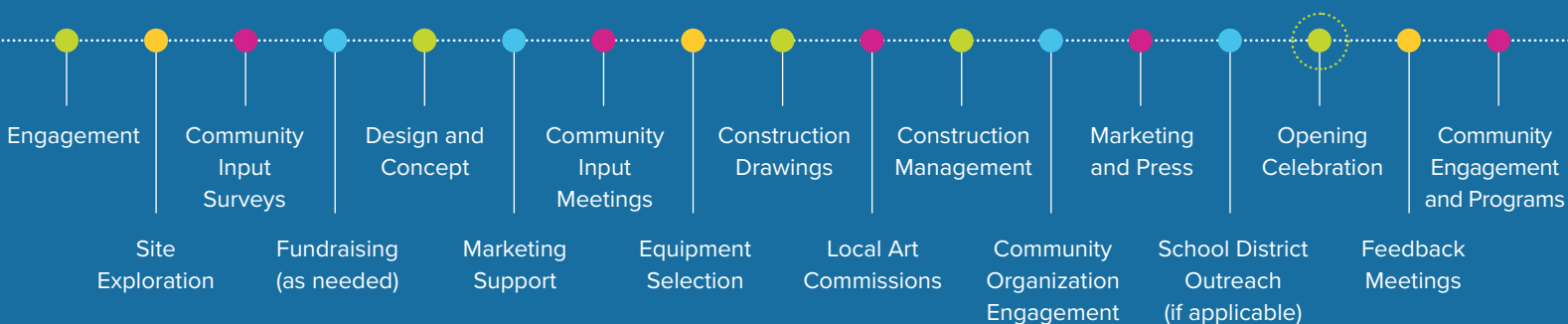
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We dream that one day soon we will no longer need to specify ‘inclusive’ or ‘accessible’ when creating something as vital as a playground.”

– Olenka Villarreal, CEO and Founder, Magical Bridge Foundation

A MAGICAL PARTNERSHIP

The Magical Bridge and Maryland Zoo project is a truly collaborative experience between the Zoo, community members, local organizations, as appropriate, and the Magical Bridge team. From initial engagement meetings to ribbon cutting celebrations and beyond, we strive to exceed your expectations to create a lasting magical legacy. Below is a typical project outline.






MAGICAL BRIDGE®
FOUNDATION

MAGICAL BRIDGE FOUNDATION
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Magical Bridge Foundation is a registered
501(c)3 non-profit organization. Tax ID# 81-2377796

MARYLAND ZOO

THE MARYLAND ZOO IN BALTIMORE
One Safari Place, Baltimore, MD 21217
marylandzoo.org

The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is a registered
501(c)3 non-profit organization. Tax ID# 52-0996352