



## Kirchhoff Park FAQ

### What age range is the playground designed for? What elements/features will be included in the new playground?

The current playground, at 5,474 square feet, offers four swings, six slides, and four climbers, with its tallest slide reaching 6'5".

In contrast, the new 5,782 square foot playground will feature a significantly enhanced play experience, including five swings, three slides (with the tallest soaring to 19 feet), two climbers (one being a climbing rock), three spinners, four balance elements, three sensory components, and two musical instruments.

Both designs are safely engineered for children aged 2-12.

|                      | Current Playground    | New Playground        |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Size                 | 5,474 ft <sup>2</sup> | 5,782 ft <sup>2</sup> |
| Swings               | 4                     | 5                     |
| Slides               | 6                     | 3                     |
| Climbers             | 4                     | 2                     |
| Spinners             | 0                     | 3                     |
| Balance              | 0                     | 4                     |
| Sensory              | 0                     | 3                     |
| Musical Instruments  | 0                     | 2                     |
| Tallest Slide Height | 6' 5"                 | 19'                   |

### Why are the tennis court, pickleball courts, and hard surface basketball area going away?

Valpo Parks and Valparaiso Community Schools work together to deliver diverse recreational opportunities for residents.

- **Tennis:** Valparaiso High School has ten competitive tennis courts, fully lit and open to the public.
- **Pickleball:** On July 14, Valpo Parks will open the PicklePlex, a new pickleball complex with six courts at ValPlayso Park. This relocation and expansion provide a superior playing environment, featuring more courts in one convenient location and far greater parking capacity.



## Kirchhoff Park FAQ

- **Basketball:** Our decision regarding the hard-surface court area, including the basketball hoop, was made to avoid duplicating services already well-provided nearby. With four publicly accessible basketball hoops already available at Parkview School, we prioritized investing in amenities that complement, rather than duplicate, existing community offerings.

These strategic partnerships with other public entities is crucial for effective resource management and ensures the community receives the best possible recreational experience.

### Why wasn't a splash pad considered at Kirchhoff Park?

Valpo Parks understands that a splash pad larger than the one at Central Park Plaza would generate significant community and visitor engagement. However, due to parking limitations and nearby residential properties, a splash pad was not incorporated into this renovation. Valpo Parks remains committed to exploring all viable options for a future splash pad, however, we have recognized that Kirchhoff Park is not the ideal location for such an attractive feature.

### Why are so many trees being removed?

We acknowledge that the rendering may not have accurately represented the extent of tree removal. For transparency, 32 trees will be removed during this renovation. The trees slated for removal are a combination of invasive species, those damaged or diseased, or those situated in locations that pose challenges for the upcoming construction. Tree removal is a considerable expense, and our decisions are driven by necessity, not preference. Recent incidents, such as the destruction of the old swing set and a ballfield dugout by falling dead trees last year, underscore the critical importance of proactive tree management for safety and to prevent costly infrastructure damage. As part of this project, the removal of these specific trees is essential for long-term park health and safety. We are also eager to remind residents that Valpo Parks has planted 31 trees at Kirchhoff Park since 2020 and we will be planting an additional 35 trees as part of this renovation. Our commitment to a healthy, vibrant tree canopy is unwavering.



## Kirchhoff Park FAQ

### Why does the parks department think adding more green space is important?

Kirchhoff Park's redesign strategically reintroduces 0.75 acres of vital green space, bringing significant advantages to the park and its neighbors. The new green space allows for varied, self-directed recreation and offers crucial environmental benefits, including enhanced air quality, natural cooling, improved water management, and noise reduction. We understand that over-programming a park with amenities can lead to excessive development and unwanted parking demands. Mindful of this, and by leveraging the existing hard surface court space at nearby Parkview School, we chose to create more open, natural areas within the park, striking a better balance for community enjoyment.

### What other aspects of the project should the public be excited about?

Everything is changing for the better at Kirchhoff Park! As Valparaiso's oldest park (dating back to 1912), it's been long overdue for a refresh, with very little investment in the last quarter-century. This renovation represents the largest single park investment in our rePLAY initiative, bringing an estimated \$3,000,000 in improvements. Beyond the exciting new amenities, neighbors will benefit from significantly better stormwater management and a newly paved Institute Street. We're also thrilled to dedicate 1.5 acres in the park's northeast corner to a no-mow wildflower area with grass trails, further enhancing its natural charm and supporting local ecology, while providing educational opportunities. From active play areas and a ballfield to peaceful open spaces, wooded retreats, and now a flourishing native prairie, Kirchhoff Park will truly be a treasure with diverse opportunities for enjoyment.

- **Enhanced Handicap Accessibility:** The park's new design and amenities will ensure full accessibility for individuals with physical disabilities, making it a welcoming space for everyone.
- **Youth Ballfield Transformation:** The renovated youth baseball/softball field will mirror the quality of the new Fairgrounds Park ballfields, featuring brand-new LED sports lighting. This upgrade promises a superior playing experience while significantly reducing light pollution for nearby neighbors.
- **Spectacular New Playground:** The "Giant XL" structure will be the tallest in our entire park system, with its highest slide reaching an impressive 19 feet. Community input assisted with selecting the additional features that will make the playground a must-visit attraction.



## Kirchhoff Park FAQ

- **Expanded Walking Paths:** New walking paths around the park, connecting Roosevelt Street, Beech Street and Parkview School to Wood Street, will add an additional 0.50 miles of walkways. This creates exciting opportunities for inter-park walking loops, enhancing connectivity and exercise options.
- **Improved Accessibility on Institute Street:** A new hammerhead turnaround is being added to the eastern end of Institute Street. This will greatly improve accessibility for first responders and larger vehicles needing to access the school, park, or nearby residences.
- **Modern Shelters and Restrooms:** Visitors will enjoy a dramatic upgrade with three new park shelters and two modern restroom facilities, replacing the outdated options currently available in the park.

### What type of public engagement and feedback did you receive on the project?

This exciting transformation of Kirchhoff Park is the result of a four-year journey, driven by continuous community feedback on our Legacy Parks. Our current five-year Master Plan laid the groundwork for significant reinvestment, and a public survey in late 2024 ensured that the new playground features reflect what people enjoy. Our dedicated team of staff, park professionals, and designers has brought this vision to life with a world-class design that we are confident the community will embrace.

### Final Thought from The Director:

We understand that it's impossible to satisfy every individual preference. However, we sincerely hope the residents of Valparaiso recognize that every decision made for our parks is rooted in a commitment to inclusivity and to crafting the most enriching experience possible within our available space and funding. The rePLAY initiative, including this Kirchhoff Park project, is the culmination of thousands of hours of thoughtful discussion and careful planning. While countless approaches to park design and investment exist, I have immense confidence in the feedback we received and the dedicated team that developed this plan. We cannot wait to see you enjoy the park once it's completed!