

Winona Lake Splash Pad and Limitless Playground

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Presented By:

Jennifer Orr – Lake City Bank

Melanie Stephens – Medtronic

Abby Weiss – ABC Industries



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Listen. Can you hear the true delight of children's laughter in the distance? The sound of splashing water and screech of the swings as a family reaps the benefits of the hot summer sun? The scene described is not at a far away beach. In fact, it is going to be right in Kosciusko County's backyard.

The Winona Lake Parks Department, members of KLA, and citizens with a special interest in ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant recreational activities are working in conjunction to bring a splash pad and limitless playground to Winona Lake Park. The project is wide in scope and ambitious in nature, but it is a key component to the revitalization of Winona Lake and the surrounding neighborhoods. It also provides much needed recreation opportunities for members of the ADA community and improves the overall image of the Kosciusko County community as an attractive locale to raise a family.

You may be asking yourself, "What is a splash pad?" Splash pads originated as simple slabs of concrete with spray features shooting out of the pavement. In recent years, the complexity and creativity of splash pads have made them attractions for families throughout the country. Essentially, a splash pad or "aquatic playground" is a large slab of textured, non-slip concrete with several water features and interactive water elements stationed across the area (Stutzman et al. 3). Unlike a swimming or wading pool, splash pads have no standing water (Fountain People, Inc. 4). The likelihood of drowning is virtually eliminated, so lifeguards are not required.

The water features available for splash pads vary in size and function from simple sprayers shooting from the ground to elaborately themed structures with

overhead spray and dump stations. Areas of the splash pad can be designed specifically for different age groups and developmental levels. As an added safety feature, there are no pinch points or exposed bolts as found in traditional playground equipment (Stutzman et al. 3).

There are two primary systems for generating water for the splash pad, recirculating and flow through (Heiden). A recirculating system features a large reservoir tank that is either buried underground or housed above ground (Fountain People, Inc. 75). The water is treated, circulated through the splash pad, and returned to the holding tank for re-treatment. Although there is a higher up front cost, the life cycle expense of the recirculating system is far less expensive (Heiden). The water bill is significantly lower than a flow through system, as the same water is continually used. The water also tends to be warmer, because it is not being taken straight from the water main (Heiden). Maintenance is more labor intensive, because there are more components to the system (Heiden).

A flow through system utilizes water from the city. The water is chlorinated, sent directly through the splash pad, de-chlorinated, and emptied into the city's wastewater or a water source. Maintenance to the system is relatively easy, but monthly water fees to operate the splash pad are higher than the recirculating system. The water also tends to be cooler than in a recirculating system. In order to empty dechlorinated water into a lake or stream, special permits from the DNR are required (Green).

BENEFITS OF A SPLASH PAD

Although Kosciusko County is dotted with attractive lakes that offer water recreation, physically and mentally challenged children are not able to enjoy them, because of the dangers they present. Splash pads are ADA compliant, and may offer children with special needs additional physical psychological, social, and cognitive benefits. According to Therapeutic Recreation, water activities have been shown to have a calming effect on children with autism who experience sensory challenges (Stutzman et al. 4). For children with physical challenges, the flat surface concrete splash pad is ideal for wheel chairs. Specially designed water friendly wheel chairs are available and can be made available by the parks department. Buttons to activate the water features are built low to the ground for accessibility to all children.

Splash pads also address a health concern that is plaguing the country, childhood obesity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 17% of children ages 2-19 nationwide are obese (CDC). The percentage has tripled since 1980 (CDC). In Kosciusko County, 15-20% of children are obese (CDC). Clearly, communities need to offer more entertainment that encourages physical activity.

In addition to its health benefits, splash pads offer low or no cost entertainment for families. In the age of the “staycation,” it is vital for communities to offer their citizens entertainment options that reduce the overall expense of family activities. A splash pad will keep money within the community, rather than funnel it to nearby communities, such as Columbia City, Fort Wayne, or Bourbon, that all showcase splash

pads. Families that visit the Winona Lake splash pad, especially from out of town, will likely visit the Village of Winona shops and other local attractions.

Since Warsaw has emerged as “The Orthopedic Capital of the World,” the county has worked to provide the facilities and services necessary to attract and retain top talent for the healthcare community. When high level recruits are evaluating potential communities to establish themselves and raise a family, amenities such as a splash pad enhance the overall image of the Kosciusko County community. Photos of children laughing and playing at the splashpad and limitless playground can be used for travel and tourism literature and real estate brochures. Adding the splash pad and limitless playground will aid in achieving the Kosciusko community objective of providing healthy, entertaining activities for families.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2009, the original splash pad project was pursued with the City of Warsaw Parks Department. A series of meetings were held with the Warsaw Park Board to evaluate potential sites and examine the water table of each (“Park Board Continues Proposed Splash Pad Discussion”). Funding for the project was to be completely funded through grants, and the City of Warsaw was not to be responsible for additional capital. The KLA group estimated that a splash pad would cost approximately \$125,000 installed (“CCAC Hears Splash Pad Proposal From KLA Grads”).

After careful consideration, the Park Board did not reach a consensus as to a proper location. The most likely site was Hire Park on the South End of Pike Lake (“Park

Board Continues Proposed Splash Pad Discussion”). The proposal was met with objection from the neighboring condominium association and later dropped.

The CCAC sports complex was proposed as an alternative location by the KLA group members (“CCAC Hears Splash Pad Proposal From KLA Grads”). The KLA team formally requested an area of ground to designate at the CCAC for a future splash pad. Although support for the project was expressed to the Times-Union, the project fell through.

Since the 2009 KLA splash pad project, the Warsaw Park Board has drafted a master plan for the Warsaw Parks & Recreation Department. A splash pad has been tentatively planned for 2015 with an estimated cost of \$100,000. The location is still listed as “undefined.” Funding sources are listed as being 50% from the parks department budget/city funds and 50% from grants/donations (Warsaw Parks & Recreation).

Based on the history of the splash pad project, it was clear to the 2011-2012 KLA splash pad team that an alternative locale be sought for the splash pad. Using connections within the community, it was discovered that the Town of Winona Lake Parks Department was in the process of evaluating the feasibility for the splash pad at Winona Lake Park. KLA splash pad group member Jennifer Orr contacted Holly Hummich, Winona Lake Parks Director, and Kelly Hicks, Winona Lake Park Board President, to discuss where the town was at with the splash pad and how the KLA group could be of assistance. In the meantime, Abby Weiss, KLA splash pad group member, was in contact with Mark Green, Columbia City Parks Department Director, to discover

how the City of Columbia City pursued its splash pad project. It was decided to bring the Winona Lake and Columbia City parks officials together for a brainstorming session to get the Winona Lake splash pad off the ground.

Mrs. Hummich and Ms. Hicks had previously met with a group of citizens interested in the special needs of handicapped children. Their primary objective was also to revamp Winona Lake Park with a splash pad and limitless playground. The primary ADA supporters, Erin Porter and Mary Pat Wallen, were very interested in pooling the knowledge of the KLA group with their pursuits.

After discussing the additional resources needed to jumpstart the Winona Lake splash pad and limitless playground, other members of the community were brought in to add their expertise. Tim Ellis, Warsaw resident and sales representative for Reese Recreation Products, is the group's contact for all play equipment. Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Wallen had also secured the help of Mary Ellen Rudisel and Thomas Burnworth with Scarce Rudisel Architects of Warsaw to design the layout of the splash pad and limitless playground.

The first meeting of the entire group took place on December 20th, 2011. After introductions and each member's brief synopsis of why they are interested in the project, the group moved forward in its discussion of the vision. Members of the KLA group, Mrs. Porter, and Mrs. Wallen all expressed the importance of truly creating an environment where children of all physical and cognitive ability levels could enjoy the park. Logistics of the Winona Lake Park location were also discussed. Particularly, the low water table of the entire park requires that pilings be anchored underground to

support the weight of the splash pad concrete. As action items, Mrs. Hummich and Ms. Hicks were to contact the town engineer regarding water sources and DNR regulations. Mr. Burnworth and Mr. Ellis were to meet and discuss equipment options and location challenges.

After several meetings between group members and an additional group meeting on January 4th, 2012, the entire group reconvened on February 1st, 2012 to review the progress made by Mr. Ellis and Mr. Burnworth. The two worked together to review surveys of Winona Lake Park and take measurements of the splash pad and limitless playground areas. Each noted that special consideration must be given to the fire pit and lodge areas, as both are Winona Lake historic sites. Mr. Ellis provided a “ballpark” estimate of the limitless playground. He also gave the group formal quotes for recirculating and flow through system splash pads, based on the same equipment package. The group reviewed options of how the limitless playground could be configured using new and existing equipment. The next step for the project was defined as meeting with Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Wallen, Mr. Ellis, and Mr. Burnworth to discuss the specific needs of handicapped children in the limitless playground and evaluate equipment choices. Mrs. Hummich and Ms. Hicks would meet with Mr. Burnworth and Mr. Ellis separately to evaluate Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Wallen’s suggestions and ultimately decide on the final equipment for the splash pad and limitless playground.

The group’s most recent meeting was held on March 14, 2012 to review the specific equipment choices for the limitless playground. It was agreed by the group that further evaluation of the playground layout and equipment was needed before a

general consensus could be reached. Potential landscaping and excavating contractors were also discussed for Mrs. Hummich and Ms. Hicks to contact.

A sidebar meeting of the KLA Group, KLA moderator Allyn Decker, Mrs. Hummich and Ms. Hicks on March 21, 2012 was called to plan the group's next steps. As of March 21st, the progress of each major element to the Winona Lake splash pad and limitless playground project is as follows:

- Splash Pad Design - Approved by the Winona Lake Park Board
- Limitless Playground Design – Still in design phases
- Landscaping – Mrs. Hummich and Ms. Hicks are to contact the Winona Lake Street Department and Parks Department to designate what can be accomplished “in house” and what will need to be outsourced to a landscaping company.
- Insurance – Mrs. Hummich is reviewing the insurance with the town of Winona Lake.
- Excavating – A quote for the splash pad pilings from Camden Technologies has been accepted by the Winona Lake Park Board.
- DNR – The Winona Lake Town Manager is still waiting for a response from the DNR regarding disposing of the retreated water into Winona Lake. Per a discussion with Ms. Hicks, the town manager stated that new regulations were coming in to effect in 2013 that would make the flow through system into Winona Lake unlikely. Therefore, the group will probably have to implement the recirculating system.

PROJECT SPECIFICS (Figure 1)

The first phase of the park renovation is construction of the splash pad. The low ground near the lake necessitates that concrete pilings be poured into the ground to support the weight of the concrete slab. Underground plumbing will be concurrently run to service the storage tank and sprayers. An 80' diameter concrete surface with a non-slip coating will be laid over the pilings. The splash pad spray features will be added

as a final step. Elements have been selected that are geared toward a number of age groups and fit the aesthetic feel of the park. At its March meeting, the Winona Lake Park Board approved the splash pad design as shown (Figure 2).

Two new structures will be constructed to accommodate the splash pad operation and park patrons. To service the splash pad area, a changing facility will be added to the Southeast corner of the park near the parking lot. The location of the existing bathrooms is not convenient to the proposed splash pad, therefore a new structure is necessary. This will also help control crowds in and out of the bathroom facility. In addition to the changing rooms, a pump room will be built to house the splash pad operating system.

Landscaping will be installed around the splash pad and changing room areas. A system of rubberized mats will create a pathway around the splashpad, past the fire pit, to the limitless playground. Existing bushes and landscaping surrounding the historic fire pit will be removed and replaced with new foliage.

The existing playground will be transformed into a “limitless” playground, meaning that the entire area will be wheelchair accessible and equipment will be installed to specially serve the handicapped community. To begin the limitless playground phase, the current jungle gym will be replaced by a state-of-the-art, multi-functional playground structure (Figure 3). One set of swings, the swirl slide, spinners, and Hercules climber will be removed, refurbished, and repositioned at the locations shown on the Figure 1. A new sway swing that accommodates the wheelchair-bound

will be added as a special handicap-accessible piece. The final selection of equipment and location of the mats will take place in the next 30-45 days.

The same rubberized mat system will create a number of trails through the playground equipment system. A new, raised landscape area will be added to create a natural barrier between the beach and playground. The retaining wall for the raised landscape area will serve as a sitting area of parents. New plants, mulch, stone, and other landscape improvements will be added to create a clean, attractive play environment.

As the group finalizes materials, the scope of work is beginning to come into focus. There are many details that remain to be worked out, specifically the division of work between town employees and contractors. The only specific quotes at this time are for the splash pad and playground equipment. The other numbers are budgetary figures that should not be regarded as final estimates.

Splash Pad:

Materials	\$180,482
Installation	TBD
Excavation	\$ 6,000
Plumbing	TBD
Landscaping	TBD
TOTAL	\$186.482+

Limitless Playground:

Materials	\$144,500
Installation	TBD
Excavation	TBD
Landscaping	TBD
TOTAL	\$144,500+

RAISING CAPITAL

Realizing the importance of local buy-in and the capital resources available in Kosciusko County, the Winona Lake splash pad and limitless playground group will commence grant solicitation with the help of the Kosciusko County Community Foundation and the K21Health Foundation in fall 2012. The group will apply for grants from numerous private and public charitable funds, focusing on the ADA and health benefits of the splash pad and limitless playground. Given the unique corporate resources available in Kosciusko County, many local businesses will be contacted for corporate charitable donations.

As a way to build excitement for the splash pad and limitless playground in the Kosciusko County community, the group has discussed a street fair in the Village of Winona that would extend from The Boathouse restaurant to Winona Lake Park. In conjunction with the street fair would be a “Touch-a-Truck” activity for families. “Touch-a-Truck” is an event where kids are free to explore large equipment, such as a helicopter, fire truck, ambulance, airplane, etc. The apparatus would be parked on Park Avenue when families can move freely between the shops, park, and touch-a-truck.

In order to recognize the Winona Lake splash pad and limitless playground project donors. An idea that has been discussed is engraving the landscape block between the playground and beach. Given that the area is designed for adult relaxation, it will communicate positive public relations to the companies’ target audience.

Besides recognizing the importance of donors to the splash pad and limitless playground, it is vital to stir interest among the public early on in the process. If the group receives the Northern Award, the \$1,000 will be used to help defray the cost of erecting a sign in Winona Lake Park that builds enthusiasm for the project. It would read, "Future Site of Winona Lake Park Splash Pad and Limitless Playground." The signage would give details on what it will look like, the construction timeline, and how to donate.

NEXT STEPS

Within the next month, members of the splash pad and limitless playground team will work to finalize the playground design and equipment selection. Upon completion, Mrs. Hummich and Ms. Hicks will issue requests for proposals for playground materials, installation, excavating, plumbing, and landscaping. In the next 30-60 days, Ms. Hicks and Mrs. Hummich will make a presentation to the Winona Lake Town Council outlining the project and to gain the council's initial thoughts on construction and funding. Over the summer, the splash pad and limitless playground group will devise a fundraising action plan. It is the group's goal that fundraising will begin in fall 2012. Pending a successful fundraising effort, construction will begin in spring 2013.

The embodiment and vision of Winona Lake has always been to offer people healthy, positive entertainment with an emphasis on family, community, and faith. Embrace the spirit of the past by make a contribution toward Winona Lake and Kosciusko County's future. The Winona Lake splash pad and limitless playground

project is an ambitious undertaking, but it is the character of our community to relish a challenge and advance its possibilities.

Works Cited

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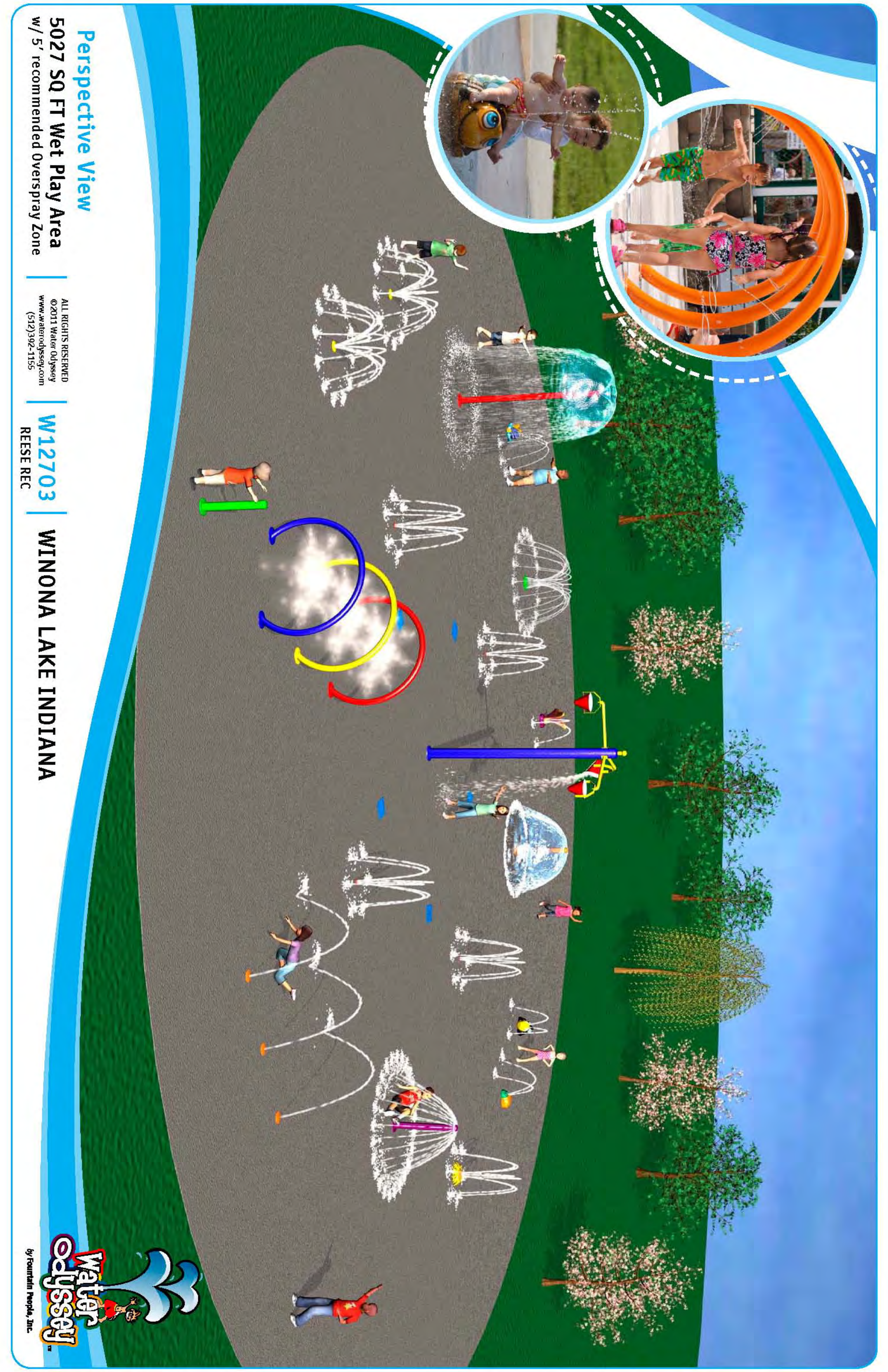
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- ① EXISTING RESTROOM FACILITY
- ② NEW RUBBER MATTS(S) FOR NEW PATHS - ALTERNATE CONCRETE SIDEWALK PATHS
- ③ RELOCATE EXISTING SPINNERS - SOLID SURFACE AREA
- ④ NATURAL PLAY AREA (ROCKS TREES TEXTURES) - SOLID SURFACE AREA
- ⑤ NEW SWING (OR RELOCATE EXISTING SWING)
- ⑥ EXISTING HERCULES CLIMBER VI
- ⑦ EXISTING SWING SET
- ⑧ NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT "Bigtoys BT-BB3990M Small ADA Accessible" (SEE TIM ELLIS)
- ⑨ RELOCATE & REFURBISH EXISTING SLIDE
- ⑩ HISTORIC FIRE PIT
- ⑪ RELOCATE EXISTING PARK BENCH
- ⑫ NEW RESTROOM FACILITY FOR SPLASH PAD
- ⑬ PUMP ROOM STRUCTURE FOR SPLASH PAD
- ⑭ NEW SPLASH PAD (SEE TIM ELLIS)
- ⑮ NEW FENCE AROUND SPLASH PAD
- ⑯ NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT "Bigtoys Custom QB8998M ADA Accessible Large" (SEE TIM ELLIS)
- ⑰ RAISED LANDSCAPE AREA
- ⑱ LANDSCAPE WALL BENCH SEATING
- ⑲ EXISTING SAND BEACH
- ⑳ WINONA LAKE
- ㉑ SENIOR CENTER
- ㉒ SENSOR PLAY STATIONS (SEE TIM ELLIS)



S C E ✓ R C E
 R U D I S E L
 A R C H I T E C T S

WINONA LAKE PARK SPLASH PAD AND LIMITLESS PLAYGROUND



Perspective View

5027 SQ FT Wet Play Area
w/ 5' recommended Overspray Zone

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