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Recreation

City funds will help rebuild of Napa's Playground Fantástico

Howard Yune
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This structure for children ages 5 to 12 is one of two planned for Playground Fantástico in south Napa, with construction expected in the spring. The playground's original wooden structures were removed starting in October after 16 years of service.

Submitted graphic

Funds originally set aside for the upkeep of youth sports fields in Napa will be steered toward Playground Fantástico, the elaborate community-built children's play area poised for its most extensive overhaul since it opened in 2002.

The move, approved Tuesday night by the City Council, shifts \$195,000 into the rebuilt Fantástico from a joint program between the city and the Napa Valley Unified School District. The original wooden structures will be replaced with a pair of custom-designed climbing and

sliding apparatuses to be built from more durable steel – including a structure for young children whose profile will spell out the word “NAPA” – starting this spring.

With the added funds, Fantástico's rebuilding budget rises to \$485,973, including more than \$50,000 in private donations, according to parks director John Coates.

The funds headed into the rebuilt playground are covered by a 25-year-old agreement between Napa and the public school system to develop facilities that benefit both schoolchildren and the public. Such facilities are open for use by both schools and city recreation programs.

Playground Fantástico's birth was the result of a community-driven effort that saw Napans contribute \$400,000 toward the facility, which teams of volunteers raised in just six days. Time and age, however, eventually took their toll on the wooden fixtures, which the city dismantled in October after 16 years of use.

Taking their place will be a pair of installations by Daniel Wodarczyk, a Napa-based designer who owns the firm S2 Associates Inc. and was a member of the original playground planning team more than a decade and a half.

Drawings shared with the city last fall depict one new structure for older children up to age 12, featuring two platforms styled like peaked-roof towers along with tube-style enclosed slides. Youngsters ages 2 to 5 would use a second, lower-slung structure patterned after the four letters of Napa's name, with a small slide integrated into the N and the P holding a crawl-through tube.

The revived Fantástico will carry over elements of the original such as swings, sunshades, mosaics and an outdoor sculpture.

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Howard Yune covers public safety for the Napa Valley Register. He has been a reporter and photographer for the Register since 2011, and previously wrote for the Marysville Appeal-Democrat, Anaheim Bulletin and Coos Bay (Oregon) World.

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