

Cooper Playground Community Meeting

11/2/2023

Greetings and Introductions by Elected Officials:

- School Board Director Lori Norvell (represents [election district 5](#), which includes Cooper)
- Interim Superintendent Rochelle Cox
- Park and Recreation Board Commissioner Becky Alper (represents [election district 3](#), which includes Cooper)
- City Council Member Andrew Johnson (represents [ward 12](#), which includes Cooper)
- State Representative Samantha Sencer Mura (represents state house [district 63A](#), which includes Cooper)

Audience questions:

Question	Response Summary
<i>What makes the playground unsafe? What makes it necessary to tear it down?</i>	The primary reasons the playground structure is slated for removal are 1) it doesn't meet MPS or industry safety standards; 2) it doesn't meet MPS accessibility standards; and 3) its current age and condition represent a liability for the District. While there are specific repairs identified in the report, generally the playground is beyond its useful life and should be replaced.
<i>What is happening to the broader property?</i>	Unused as a school since 2005, there is neither a plan yet for the broader Cooper School property, nor has it yet been declared by the School Board as a "surplus property", meaning that it could be available for sale or lease. There are several other MPS vacant properties now currently being processed as surplus properties. Surplus properties include Willard, Gordon and Tuttle schools. Learn more at: https://facilities.mpls.k12.mn.us/surplus_property .
<i>What are the options with the playground?</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continue with planned removal2. MPS is willing to consider the option of leasing the playground area to an entity.

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	<p>This may include a new playground structure, green space or a combination.</p> <p>3. MPS is willing to partner on seeking a grant to fund new equipment. This could be a phased approach to allow for several grants.</p>
<i>Why would the community need to lease the land/playground in order to access it?</i>	A lease agreement wouldn't be necessary for access, but rather it would be a means to allow for a third party to improve the playground area and accept liability.
<i>What is the amount that the district is willing to spend to make repairs?</i>	Because the school is not active, and because the amount of money necessary to replace the playground for alignment with District safety and accessibility standards is so significant, the District is not planning to spend any funds on the playground. Notably, the funds we typically would use to make repairs and/or replace playgrounds are not available because the school is unused.
<i>Could this be a pilot as a way to save playgrounds in similar condition across the district?</i>	Yes. The District is willing to use this as a chance to learn about what's possible. Although it's not a perfect comparison, the District does have a process for community members and organizations to create and maintain gardens on MPS property. We believe Cooper could serve as a test project to see if we can co-create something similar for playgrounds.

Audience comments/requests for follow-up:

Comment/request	Next steps
What was the funding for the initial playground structure?	This is being researched now and will be shared when determined.
Contact the Seward Redesign	We will reach out to Seward Redesign to see if they are interested in engaging.

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What is the central resource for all of the materials	MPS will share resources with Plaympls.org (email: info@plaympls.org) for the time being until an MPS resource is available and ready.
Timeline for next steps	No timeline is yet determined, but as a next step MPS will contact and convene a meeting with representatives from the several entities that have expressed an interest in partnering to process possible options. MPS will also be placing signs on the playground to alert users of the risks.
Share inspection report	The inspection report is available on the Plaympls.org website here .