

Marc Stewart breaks down new McEuen (5.5.2014):

I've been anxious to check out McEuen Park for a while. I took the family to visit the park twice over the weekend. The park was packed both days. There was an exciting mix of low income families and upper income families.

There are some real positives with this park and some missed opportunities.

The Good

The playground equipment: It's the most elaborate playground of all of the city's parks. (For my money, the Fort Sherman at the city park is still the coolest playground in town). Still, McEuen is very nice. There are a good number of slides and climbing devices for rambunctious children. My youngest son loved the xylophones and drums. Adding music to the playground equipment was a brilliant move. My oldest was into all the climbing features and the monkey bars.

The Brady Bunch Astro Turf: I've been to most our parks and the Astro Turf is so much better than wood chips. It looks good, feels good and is a major improvement over chips. I hope this turf can take North Idaho winters and retain its color and softness.

The layout: The city did a great job of laying out the basketball courts, tennis courts, playground and splash pad. It all made sense. The sidewalks are laid out nicely and you can move from one area to the next with ease.

The splash pad is very spacious and there are nice touches like the concrete seats for parents.

The benches are great. These might be the most comfortable benches the city has ever used.

The dog park. What a great addition for dog lover's. It's tucked neatly against Tubbs Hill. Nice.

The Bad

The benches! There aren't enough benches for parents to sit and watch their kids play. Hopefully, more benches can be added around the playground. Most people stood for hours and watched their kids play.

The color scheme of the playground equipment is a bit much. Maybe this will grow on me, but the orange is obnoxious. It feels like a trendy choice that will be out of date soon. I would have preferred they stuck with similar color schemes that we already have in place.

The sand box is a mistake. They have a sand box at the Bluegrass Park and I've been there when a little girl said, "Mommy, I found poop." This will be used by cats to go to the bathroom. Yuck.

The splash pad equipment looks and feels cheap. I am not a fan of hard plastic. I am not sure many of these pieces are going to survive long term. Mark it down, the SS Kiwanis bow stem is going to be snapped off at some point.

I am glad I am not a boat owner. The boat trailer parking is a long, long way from the boat launch. Heaven forbid you forget anything. You'll be walking a lot.

The ugly

The concrete, in spots, looks shoddy. I get the feeling it was a rushed job. You can see cracks in between the water spouts on the splash pad, and cracks in other key areas of the park.

One drinking fountain? It seems like a major oversight to have only one drinking fountain near the basketball courts. Kids playing hard get thirsty.

The smell of urine was in the air as you walked down the stairs off of Front Street. I am told that the homeless like to pee in the corner between the stairs and library building. You can smell it if the wind is blowing. Yuck. The city has to do something about this situation. I saw a woman who appeared to be homeless looking very confused by all of the joyous children as she strolled through the park on Sunday.

Trash and litter. The city hasn't installed permanent garbage cans in the park. The shiny aluminum ones were full on Saturday. It looks like they need more trash cans too. Already, I saw a lot of discarded paper cups and cans.

Overall

The upgrades to McEuen Park are very nice for a \$20 million makeover. I am anxious to see how the rest of it shapes up, especially the space in front of the pavilion. I hope its going to be green grass.