

Fancy Children's Parks Designed for the Public

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Background

The intention of the creation of fancy children's parks as part of the park & landscape policy projects during the term of the 4th Mayor elected by popular vote was to rebuild the old children's parks to become new 'Fancy Children's Parks.' Residents and children were encouraged to participate in the processes of planning, construction, and management of the parks. Eco-friendly materials were used in consideration of children's safety.

Children's Parks in Narrow Areas & Sluggish Remodeling Projects

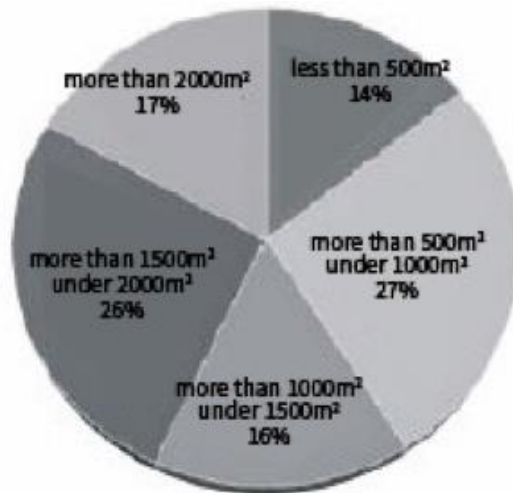
There are 2,119 city parks in Seoul, of which 1,297 are children's parks for children aged 2 to 12, with disposition distance of less than 250m. While the total area of city parks is 115.94km², the area of children's parks is 2.22km², comprising only 1.91% of the entire park area. The size of children's parks in Seoul varies, from a minimum of 11m² to 20,820m². Small parks for children (less than 1,500m²) make up the majority of children's parks (around 57%).

<Table > Status of Parks in Seoul

Type of Park	Total	City Parks	Living Area Parks	Theme Parks	Natural Parks	Other Parks
		Total				

			Urban Natural Parks	Neighborhood Parks	Children's Parks	Small Parks	Sports Park s	Cemetery Parks	Cultural Parks	Historic al Parks	Historic al Parks	Historic al Parks		
No. of Parks (locations)	2,714	2,119	20	392	1297	346	4	4	39	11	5	1	1	594
Area (km ²)	169.12	115.94	65.56	44.06	2.22	0.46	0.13	2.42	0.59	0.44	0.04	0.05	39.35	15.84

<Figure 1> Area Developed for Children's Parks



Many of the children's parks were unable to attract children because they were extremely run down and boring. In addition, a significant portion of children's parks were converted to senior citizens' community centers, daycare centers, physical training facilities, etc., making it difficult for the parks to fulfill their original purpose for children.

In order to improve the situation of children's parks, Seoul has since 1994 facilitated children's park renewal projects

including ‘Creation of Resident Participation Children’s Parks,’ ‘Children’s Park Improvement Tailored to the Living Area,’ etc., based on its ‘Modernizing Plan for Children’s Parks’. In the beginning stages the park remodeling projects had focused on the appearance of facilities, with projects such as replacement of existing facilities with modern ones and introduction of unusual shapes to playing facilities. As a result, the usage rate of children’s parks remained low because substantial improvements had not been made and the management was inadequate.

<Table 1 > Timeline of the Children’s Park Remodeling Project of Seoul

Period	Description
Before 1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of 22 parks using examples based on the ‘Modernizing Plan for Children’s Parks’ → Currently implemented by the autonomous <i>gu</i>-district. • Change of project names to “Children’s Parks Filled with Green,” “Reorganization of Resident Participation Children’s Parks”, etc.
1995~2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility upgrades for around 520 parks was planned, but not implemented. • Remodeling projects are in the process of implementation, with changes in the project names to “Creation of Children’s Parks Tailored to the Living Area,” “Creation of Fancy Children’s Parks,” etc.
After 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility upgrades for around 520 parks was planned, but not implemented. • Remodeling projects are in the process of implementation, with changes in the project names to “Creation of Children’s Parks Tailored to the Living Area,” “Creation of Fancy Children’s Parks,” etc.

Main Age Groups & Use of Children’s Parks

Of the people who used the children’s parks, the 8–13 year-olds made up 38%, 23% were 14–20, while 16% were aged 31–40. According to the analysis, children and adolescents primarily used the playing facilities in the parks, child caregivers and elderly people used the bench facilities, and middle-aged people used the physical training facilities. Of the people using the parks, students made up 64%; park users that were not children made up the majority, which means that the children’s parks functioned as rest areas similar to neighborhood parks for local residents, rather than just for children.

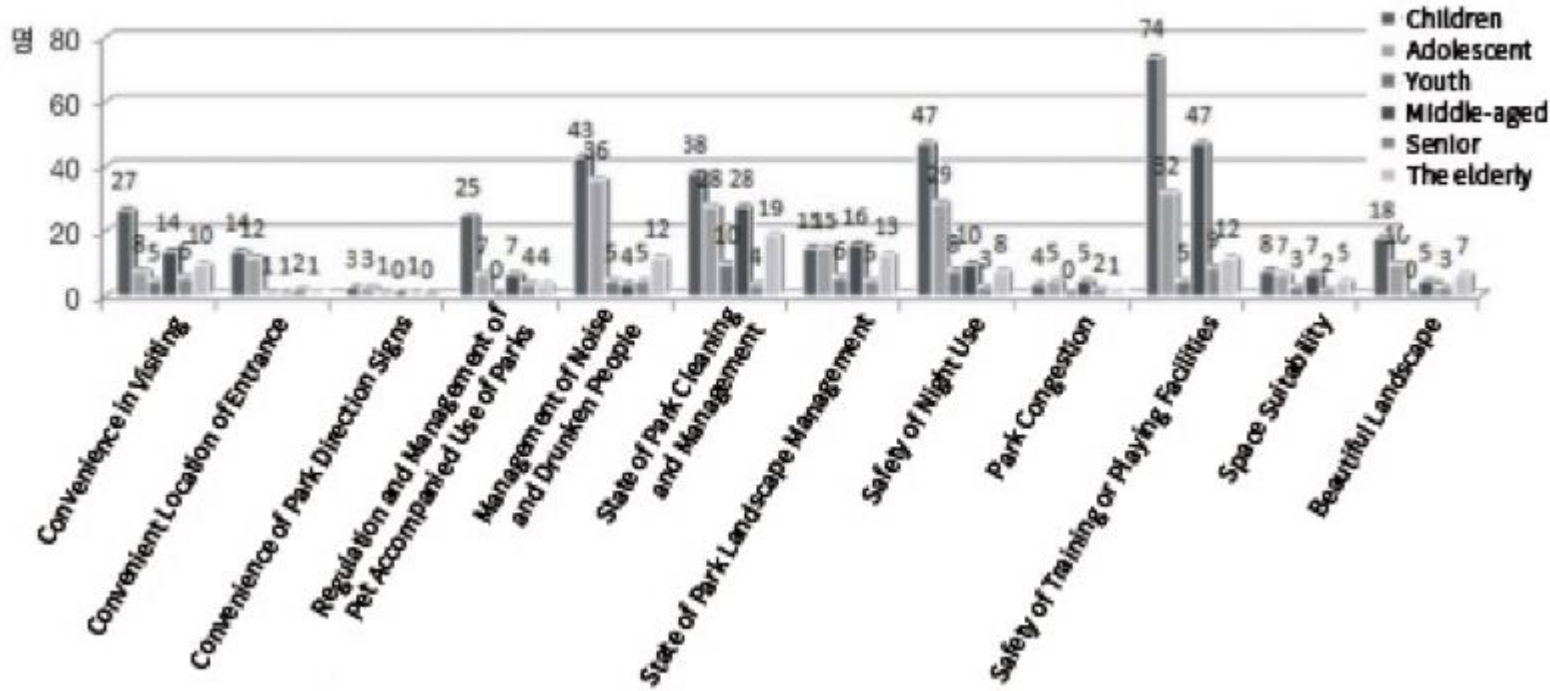
Low Satisfaction with & Safety at Children's Parks

The number of personnel allocated to the management of children's parks was from 2 to 10 people, a small group who could not properly manage a relatively large number of parks. In most cases, there was no assigned manpower for parks of less than 1000m² in size.

The number of child safety accidents increased from 146 in 2004 to 307 in 2006 (Korea Consumer Agency, 2008). The main causes were broken pieces of timber or rust on the playing facilities. This implied that there were problems regarding facility safety. Users were more exposed to incidents because guidance facilities necessary for safety management were not installed in the parks, or the regulations for safety prevention were not adequate. In addition, fewer than half of the parks (49.6%) had signs or posts containing information about the managing entities and only 24% of such notices had contact information. This led to less safety in the parks.

According to the surveys, not only safety, but also user satisfaction of the children's parks was low. The main causes of low user satisfaction were the boring playing facilities and insufficient subsidiary facilities. The users wanted subsidiary facilities such as toilets (which showed the lowest satisfaction rate), drinking fountains and trash cans to be improved, as well as facilities for the disabled, the elderly, the infirm and children. Children wanted sufficient playing facilities and floor pavement for safety. In addition to improving the facilities, users wanted prevention of noise in the parks, no admittance of drunken people, and pet management, to ensure the safety of the parks at night.

<Figure 2> Importance Suggested by Park Users, by Age Group



Progress

Expansion of the Concept of Fancy Children's Parks

According to the existing children's park system, parks were separated into children's parks and children's playgrounds. The users of both children's parks and children's playgrounds were unspecified local residents, but the children's parks were managed by the park service department under the autonomous *gu*-districts, under the Act on Urban Parks and Green Space. The children's playgrounds were managed by private management firms under the regulation on housing construction standards.

In order to enable children to conveniently use the playing facilities in safety, and to establish an effective safety management system based on the Act on Safety Management of Playing Facilities, Seoul integrated the previously-separated management of children's parks and children's playgrounds. Seoul planned to redevelop the existing children's parks, but expanded the concept of 'fancy children's park' to include children's playgrounds, considering that 56% of Seoul's population lived in apartments and used playgrounds in their own apartment complexes.

Selection of Project Places for Fancy Children's Parks

Locations for the fancy children's parks were selected from the 1,063 children's parks in Seoul, giving priority to areas with poor living conditions, residential areas with dense child populations, parks whose redevelopment had been completed more than 10 years ago, and areas that did not conflict with various urban development projects or were not planned areas.

The project to create fancy children's parks in 304 children's parks in 25 autonomous *gu*-districts has been commenced. Based on the project plans, Seoul began to develop the existing simple and older children's parks into "Theme Playing Parks" and "Regional Community Spaces" better able to foster children's dreams, creativity, and imagination. In the process of park development, children and residents directly participated in the projects.

Development Strategy

Seoul established the following development strategy for the creation of fancy children's parks:

Seoul develops pilot models by type in a new paradigm first, and then expands the models to other places in the future. To this end, Seoul forms an advisory committee, prepares the design ideas and concrete plans through an idea contest for college students, a design contest for experts, etc. and has consultations with the Seoul Design Center, the Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture, etc.

As a part of this strategy, Seoul plans to have discussions with children through special programs in the schools and to invite parents, to collect their opinions.

For design, Seoul holds design workshops and expands the possibilities for civil participation via the introduction of a citizen and consumer supervising system.

With an aim of creating pleasant and safe parks, Seoul must use eco-friendly materials. When installing sand playgrounds, safety from dog ascaris (roundworms) and heavy metal pollution will be considered.

Themes shall be assigned to the park designs and the park designs shall be made in accordance with these themes.

Budget for the Fancy Children's Park Project

During the project period of 2008 to 2010, Seoul redeveloped 304 locations (one-quarter of the 1,278 places in total) by investing KRW 147.2 billion (KRW 100.1 billion from the Seoul Metropolitan Government and KRW 47.1 billion from the autonomous *gu*-districts).

Implementation of Fancy Children's Park Project

The old children’s parks were redeveloped to become fancy children’s parks over a period of about 3 years from March 2008 to May 2011. According to the “Child Playground Facilities Safety Supervision Law” enacted on January 27th, 2008, the parks were redeveloped to put top priority on the safety of children.

<Figure 3> Process of the Fancy Children’s Park Redevelopment Project

Idea contests for citizens, consumers, and college students	è	Design Contest for the pilot models	è	Selection of best designs (design companies)	è
Basic plans (drafts)	è	First presentation to residents	è	Adjustment of plans (drafts) after the first presentation to residents	è
Second design workshop	è	Plans (drafts) made via the resident participation design process	è	Review and deliberation with the autonomous <i>gu</i> -districts	è
Reflection of deliberation results to the plans (drafts)	è	Order	è	Implementation of construction	

Establishment of Plan for Children’s Park Improvement Project

On September 12th, 2007, in order to address users’ increasing complaints about children’s parks, low usage rates by children and above all, the necessity to improve the safety of the old playing facilities which did not meet safety management standards, Seoul announced by the Mayor’s Instruction No. 179 the children’s park project plan, which had been facilitated to review the integrated methods to improve children’s parks and to implement the remodeling of entire playgrounds in all autonomous *gu*-districts.

Project Name and Status Investigation of the Target Locations

In October 2007, Seoul held an investment assessment for the fancy children's park project, established the general improvement plan for the children's parks and decided the project name would be "Fancy Children's Parks Tailored for the Public". It also investigated the target locations for the project in the 25 autonomous *gu*-districts.

Formation of Advisory Committee

In February 2008, Seoul formed an advisory committee for the implementation of the fancy children's park project and investigated if the project was contradictory to the urban development project, in order to select target locations.

Idea Contest for College Students & the General Public

On March 5th, 2008, Seoul held an idea contest for the general public and college students, based on the basic concepts of the "Development Plan of the Fancy Children's Park Tailored for the Public". Its purpose was to collect citizens' ideas and opinions on the concerns they had while using the children's parks, and on the facilities that citizens wanted to introduce. The ideas of college students regarding space organization, design and playing facilities, park character, etc. were used in planning and producing guides for the pilot model contest.

Prize Contest for the Pilot Model

Seoul selected 10 representative locations for the contest through advisory committee meetings for site selection.

Selection of Excellent Designs (Design Companies)

The best designs for the 10 pilot model locations were selected. The prize winner for each pilot model location was to be granted the opportunity to design 9 more locations, so that a prize winner for a location would take responsibility for planning and designing 10 locations in total. Five design companies were awarded the best of the pilot models for 2 locations each, so each company was responsible for planning and designing 20 places.

Basic Plan (Draft)

Based on the pilot models, the design companies established their basic plans for 20 locations.

First Presentation to Residents

Seoul held presentation sessions for local residents. Events were held in primary schools for children in grades 4 to 6 as part of inquiry instructions in social studies. The children presented their opinions in the form of pictures and texts using the titles “The playground that I want to make” and “Please make our parks like this”. The experts announced the basic plans (drafts) to children and residents to determine their responses and opinions.

<Figure 4> First Presentation for Residents and Children’s Opinions



Second Design Workshop

The adjusted plans (drafts), based on the opinions raised in the presentation sessions were explained during design workshops held in the children's parks.

<Figure 5> Second Design Workshop



Plans (Drafts) Made via the Resident Participation Design Process

The plans (drafts) were adjusted again in consideration of the opinions that were suggested by participating children and residents.

Review & Deliberation with the Autonomous *GU*-Districts

The autonomous *GU*-districts reviewed the plans (drafts) established through the resident participation design process to create an agenda and calculate the necessary budget. The expert advisory committee, the Urban Public Park committee and the Korea Community Safety Testing Institute deliberated on the creativity of facilities, space construction, and relevant regulations.

Results

The final designs (drafts) were decided after consideration of the opinions suggested through review and deliberation with the autonomous *GU*-districts.

Orders & Implementation of Construction

Orders were placed for construction. Representative residents, supervisors from the Seoul Metropolitan Facilities Management Corporation and construction advisory committee members participated in the enforcement of construction.

Effects

Results of the Fancy Children's Park Project

The total area of the redeveloped 304 locations was 425,436 m², which is almost twice the area of Yeouido Park (229,539 m²). Because preferential selection was applied in regions with poor living environments, the fancy children's park project was able to contribute to the improvement of regional green spaces, playgrounds, rest areas, supply of community spaces, etc.

<Table 3> Redevelopment Status of Fancy Children's Parks

Name of Autonomous <i>Gu</i> -District	No. of Children's Parks	Fancy Children's Parks	Name of Autonomous <i>Gu</i> -District	No. of Children's Parks	Fancy Children's Parks
Jongno	24	3	Mapo	55	13
Jung	22	1	Yangcheon	71	12
Yongsan	32	3	Gangseo	125	20
Seongdong	33	8	Guro	25	11
Gwangjin	35	15	Geumcheon	41	13
Dongdaemun	52	4	Yeongdeungpo	32	4
Jungnang	44	21	Dongjak	34	8
Seongbuk	36	6	Gwanak	70	25

Gangbuk	40	9	Seochon	84	4
Dobong	39	24	Gangnam	61	6
Nowon	92	36	Songpa	82	13
Eunpyeong	47	16	Gangdong	64	19
Seodaemun	44	10	Total	1,284	304

The fancy children's parks, created with various new-concept themes, were favorably received because the features of the parks were expected to increase children's interest and develop creativity and imagination. In the case of Wau Fancy Children's Park, the pictures painted by the children from Hongik Elementary School's fifth grade were made into tiles and installed in the park, which provided much pride and affection for the children themselves. The children's works from Seogang Elementary School were also installed in the Changjeon Fancy Children's Park.

<Figure 6> Kkachi Fancy Children's Park – Exciting Space Travel



<Figure 7> Seockchon Fancy Children's Park – Adventures of Robinson Crusoe



<Figure 8> Boram Fancy Children's Park



<Figure 9> Hagye Fancy Children's Park – Fairy in the Forest



Playground

<Figure 10> Siny Fancy Children's Park – Smurf Village



<Figure 11> Hodori Fancy Children's Park – Concentric Circles



Evaluation

The fancy children's park project passed the preliminaries in the area of "Promotion of Civil Participation to Policy Decisions" for the UN Public Administration Prize, 2010. That means the project was recognized as an administrative activity which established a new system to encourage citizenry participation.

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관련 자료

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Changes in Park & Green Space Policies in Seoul