

Fancy Children's Parks Tailored for Citizen Customers

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Background of Creation of Fancy Children's Parks Tailored for Citizen Customers

The creation of fancy children's parks as a part of 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.' The 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 Park in Narrow Areas and Sluggish Remodeling Projects

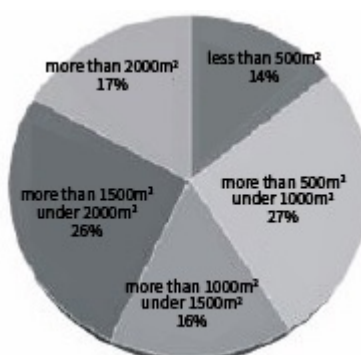
There are 2,119 city parks in Seoul of which 1,297 are children's parks for children ages 2 to 12 with disposition distance of less than 250m. While the total area of city parks is 115.94km², the area of children's parks is 2.22km², making up only 1.91% of the entire park area. The size of children's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

<Table > Status of Parks in Seoul

Type of Park	Total	City Park											Natural Park	Other Park
		Sum	Urban Natural Park	Living Area Park			Theme Park							
				Neighborhood Park	Children's Park	Small Park	Sports Park	Cemetery Park	Culture Park	History Park	History Park	History Park		
No. of Parks (Places)	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

Source: The Seoul Metropolitan Government, Status of Parks, 2013 (reorganized)

<Figure 1> Area Developed for Children's Parks



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

In order to improve the situation of the children's parks, Seoul has facilitated children's park renewal projects including 'Creation of Resident Participation Children's Parks,' 'Children's Park Improvement Tailored to the Living Area,' etc. since 1994 based on its 'Modernizing Plan for the Children's Parks.' But the park remodeling projects in the beginning stage had focused on the appearance of facilities such as replacement of existing old facilities with modern ones and introduction of unusual shapes of playing facilities. As a result, the usage rate of children's parks was still low because substantial improvement had not made and the management had been insufficient.

<Table > 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 the example based on the 'Modernizing Plan for the Children's Parks' → Currently implemented by the autonomous district.
1995~2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change of project names to 'Children's Parks Filled with Green,' 'Reorganization of Resident Participation Children's Park,' etc. Facility upgrade for around 520 parks was planned but was not implemented.
After 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remodeling projects are in the process of implementation and changing the project names to 'Creation of Children's Parks Tailored to the Living Area,' 'Creation of Fancy Children's Parks', etc.

Main Age Groups and Use Types of the Children's Park

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

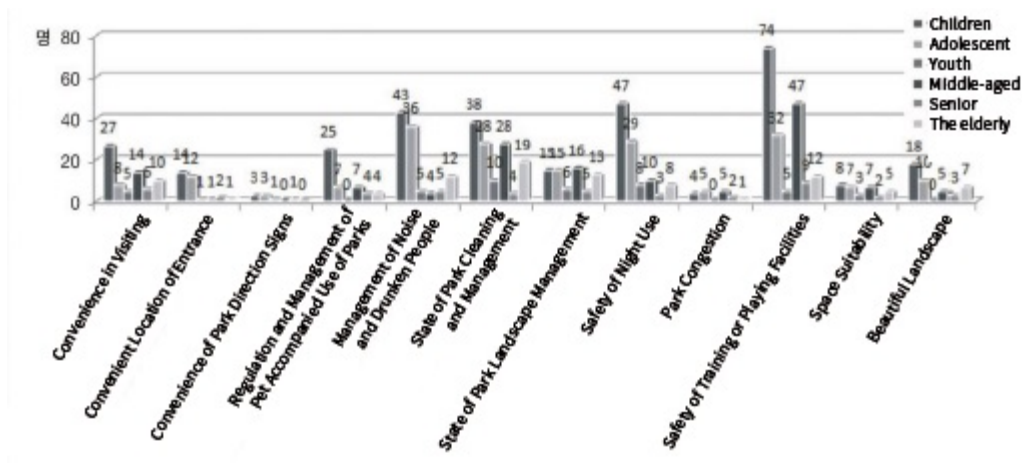
Low Satisfaction and Safety of Children's Park Users

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

The number of child safety accidents increased from 146 in 2004 to 307 in 2006 (Korea Consumer Agency, 2008). The main causes were broken parts of timber or rust spots in the playing facilities. It implied that there were problems regarding facility safety. The 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 enough. In addition, less than half of the parks (49.6%) had signs or posts which contained information about the managing entities and only 24% of such notices had the contact information for the managing departments. It led to lower safety of the children's 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 monotonous playing facilities and the insufficient subsidiary facilities. The users wished that the subsidiary facilities such as toilets, which showed the lowest satisfaction, drinking fountains and trash cans would be improved, and facilities for the disabled, the elderly, the infirm and children would be improved. Children wished that there would be sufficient playing facilities and floor pavement for safety. In addition to improving the facilities, the users wanted prevention of noise in the parks, no admittance of drunken people and pet management to ensure the safety of parks in the night time.

<Figure 2> Importance Suggested by the Park Users by Age



Main Content and Progress of Creation of Fancy Children's Park

Expansion of the Concept of Fancy Children's Park

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 districts on the basis of the Act on the Urban Parks and Green Space. The children's playgrounds were managed by private management offices on the basis of the regulation on housing construction standards.

In order to help the children use the playing facilities in safe and convenient ways and to establish an effective safety management system based on the act on safety management of playing facilities, Seoul integrated separated management of the children's parks and the children's playgrounds. Seoul planned to redevelop the existing children's parks, but expanded the concept of fancy children's park to cover the children's playgrounds considering that 56% of Seoul's population lived in the apartments and they used the playgrounds in the apartment complexes.

Selection of Project Places for Fancy Children's Parks

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

The project to create fancy children's parks for 304 children's parks in 25 autonomous districts has been commenced. Based on the project plans, Seoul started to develop the existing simple and old children's parks into "Theme Playing Parks" and "Regional Community Spaces" to be able to foster children's dreams, creativity, and imaginations. 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, in particular, Seoul plans to have discussions with children through special classes in the schools and to invite parents to collect their opinions.

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

With an aim to create pleasant and safe parks, Seoul has to use eco-friendly materials. When installing sand playgrounds, safety from dog ascaris 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 unified themes.

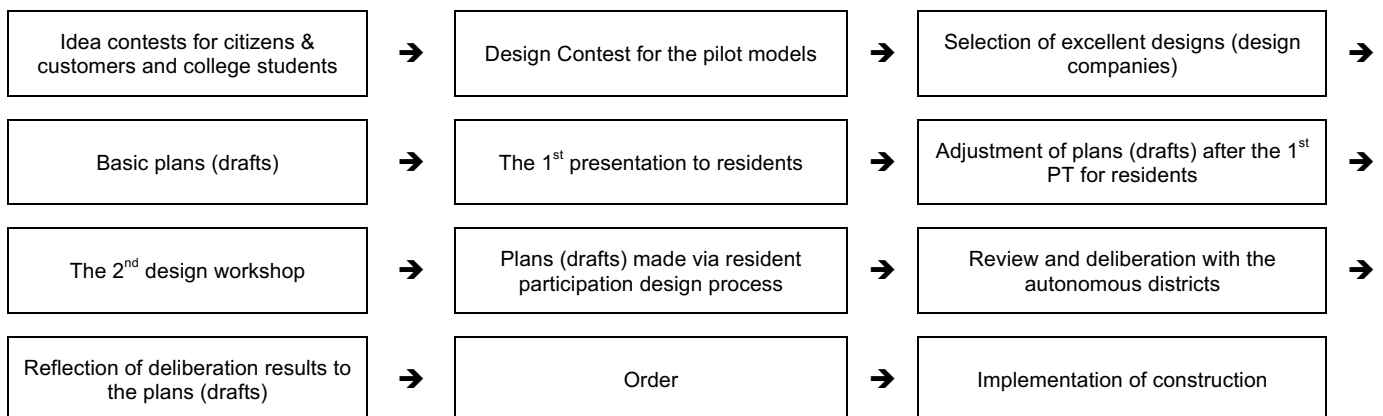
Budget for the Fancy Children’s Park Project

During the project period from 2008 to 2010, Seoul redeveloped 304 places, a fourth 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 districts).

Implementation of Fancy Children’s Park Project

The old children’s parks were redeveloped to become fancy children’s parks during 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



- Establishment of Plan for Children’s Park Improvement Project

On September 12th, 2007, in order to address the users’ increasing complaints about the children’s parks, low usage rate by children and above all, the necessity to improve the safety of the old playing facilities unsuitable for 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 the children’s parks and to implement the remodeling of entire playgrounds in all autonomous districts.

- Decision of Names and Status Investigation of the Target Places

In October 2007, Seoul held the investment assessment for the fancy children’s park project, established the general improvement plan for the children’s parks and decided the project name to be “Fancy Children’s Parks Tailored for Citizen Customers”. It also investigated the target locations for the project in the 25 autonomous districts.

- Formation of Advisory Committee

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

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- Idea Contest for Citizen Customers and College Students

On March 5th, 2008, Seoul held an idea contest for citizen customers and college students based on the basic directions according to the "Development Plan of the Fancy Children's Park Tailored for Citizen Customers." It was planned to collect the citizens' ideas and opinions on the problems and complaints they felt while using the children's parks and on the facilities that citizens wanted to introduce. The ideas of college students on space organization, design and playing facilities, park character, etc. were used in planning and making guides for the pilot model contest.

- Prize Contest for the Pilot Model

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

- Selection of Excellent Designs (Design Companies)

The best works 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 model 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.

- 1st Presentation to Residents

Seoul held presentation sessions for the local residents. The events were held for children in grades 4 to 6 in primary schools as a part of inquiry instructions in social studies. The children presented their opinions in the forms of pictures and texts using the titles "Playground that I want to make" and "Please make our parks in this way," The experts announced the basic plans (drafts) to children and residents to collect their responses and opinions on the experts' plans.

<Figure 4> The 1st Presentation for Residents and Children's Opinions



- The 2nd Design Workshop

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

<Figure 5> The 2nd Design Workshop



- Plans (Drafts) Made via Resident Participation Design Process

The plans (drafts) were adjusted again in consideration of the acceptable opinions among the ones that were suggested by children and residents through their participation.

- Review and Deliberation with the Autonomous Districts

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

- Reflection of the Deliberation Results to the Plans (Drafts)

The final designs (drafts) were decided by considering the opinions suggested through the review and deliberation with the autonomous districts.

- Order and Implementation of Construction

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

Effects of the Fancy Children's Park Project

Results of the Fancy Children's Park Project

The total area of the redeveloped 304 places was 425,436m², that was almost twice the area of Yeouido Park (229,539m²). Because regions in poor living environments were preferentially selected, 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 the Fancy Children's Parks

Name of Autonomous District	No. of Children's Parks	Fancy Children's Parks	Name of Autonomous District	No. of Children's Parks	Fancy Children's Parks
Jongno	24	3	Mapo	55	13
Jung-gu	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
Junngang	44	21	Dongjak	34	8
Seongbuk	36	6	Gwanak	70	25
Gangbuk	40	9	Seocho	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 themes in new concepts were favorably received because the features of the parks were expected to increase children's interests and develop creativity and imagination. In the case of Wau Fancy Children's Park, the pictures painted by the children in fifth grade from Hongik Elementary School attached to Hongik University were made into tiles and installed in the park, which made the children feel pride and affection. The children's works from Seogang Elementary School were also installed in the Changeon 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



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<Figure 8> Boram Fancy Children's Park



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



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



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



Prizes Awarded to the Fancy Children's Park Project

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

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