

# Palmer Park SuperSlide

Port Huron, MI

## SETTING



Suburban

## COST



\$45,000

## SIZE



Two 150 FT  
long ramps

## OPEN SINCE

June  
2019

## GRANTEE

Local  
Parks  
Department



# A destination space in a playable city

## Project Overview

The SuperSlide is the brainchild of a dedicated local advocate, Nancy Winzer, who has been advancing play space investment in Port Huron, Michigan for years. The oversized slide adds character and a sense of thrill to Palmer Park, a recreational destination where the Port Huron Parks & Recreation Department (PHREC) is also headquartered. SuperSlide’s popularity has boosted visitorship to the park as a whole.

Similar to a sledding hill, the slide cleverly makes a fun activity out of climbing up the hill to slide down again, embedding physical exercise into play.



PHOTO: PORT HURON PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT



It really has been the **catalyst to do other things; the park used to be a very passive park, not a lot going on even though the Rec Center is there, but now you can’t even find a parking spot.**

NANCY WINZER  
PHREC Director & Project Lead



1

↑ The park that the Super Slide sits in, Palmer Park, has a **variety of play spaces** – *Sprout City*, which encourages imaginative play, a Quantis climbing structure, basketball courts, and an indoor recreation center.



2

↑ Thanks to its location next to the indoor recreation center, there are **bathrooms, water fountains, and other amenities close by**, which support longer stays at and drive foot traffic to the site.

PHOTO: PORT HURON PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT



3

A regional destination people travel to from out of town

↑ Integrated into the site topography, the **site draws attention thanks to its innovative and one-of-a-kind slide**, letting kids slide during the summer and sled (or even snowboard) during colder winter months.



# Origin story

## THE SPARK – KEEPING PLAY RELEVANT DURING HARD TIMES

Budget cuts in 2010 put Port Huron’s recreational facilities in peril. Nancy Winzer of the Port Huron Parks & Recreation Department saw opportunities like the Play Everywhere grant as a way to make play relevant and demonstrate its value.



## DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION – TYING TOGETHER A RECREATIONAL HUB

The SuperSlide works in conjunction with other elements in Palmer Park, like the imaginative play area (“Sprout City”), basketball courts, a climbing play structure, and an indoor recreation center. Integrated into the site topography, the play feature involves elements of risk and thrill.



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION – KEEPING AN EAR TO LOCAL NEEDS

As someone who works closely with her community, Winzer is familiar with local needs. Inspired by the simple idea of a snow slide that could also be used in the summer, she proposed the SuperSlide as a fun way to get kids active and bring new life to Palmer Park.



TOP & BOTTOM LEFT: PORT HURON PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT



# Lessons learned



OUTCOME

**THE BUZZ BOOSTED FOOT TRAFFIC TO THE CITY'S RECREATIONAL CORE.**



Thanks to the popularity of SuperSlide and other innovative play amenities co-located at Palmer Park, project leads are looking to **expand the parking area to meet demand.**

LESSON

**Embrace bold design.**

Create visibly striking and exciting invitations for people to participate in play. SuperSlide is unique in being the only slide play feature of its kind, and stands out for bringing an element of challenge and risk to play in the park.



OUTCOME

**AN EXCITING PLAY FEATURE GOT KIDS ACTIVE IN AN ACCESSIBLE WAY.**



"Our belief here is that with the age of phones and all that kind of stuff, kids have recreation pretty much at their fingertips – so **we have to be more creative than the phones to make them come out to play**"

– Nancy Winzer

LESSON

**Make physical exercise seamless and fun.**

Consider opportunities to design physical activity into engaging play elements. Leveraging site topography might be a good place to start.



OUTCOME

**THE SUCCESS OF SUPERSLIDE AND OTHER PLAY SPACES CATALYZED PLAY SPACE INVESTMENT.**



"[SuperSlide] has definitely spurred other projects... I've [now] got **people like the city manager and the mayor, saying words like 'free play'**... without their support, which we didn't have before, these things wouldn't happen"

– Nancy Winzer

LESSON

**Create a play network.**

One stellar play space is not enough – think beyond the site to create complementary play opportunities in concert with each other. Gain support of local decision-makers by demonstrating the demand for fun, innovative play opportunities among residents.