



City Council
Steve Mitchell
Mayor
Bob Townsend
Mayor Pro Tem
Rhea Allison
John Murphy
Gary A. Slagel
Pris Hayes
Dennis Stewart

Bill Keffler
City Manager

July 15, 2008

RE: Heights Park Playground

My family moved to Richardson in 1965, and I have many great memories of playing on the rocket ship and other playground equipment in Heights Park throughout my childhood. I know that many others have the same fond memories. The playground at Heights Park has become a part of our community identity, and we take the current changes to the playground very seriously.

As a community, we have examined this issue for many months, and even brought together a task force, comprised of interested residents, to examine the preservation of the rocket ship and other playground pieces, exhausting all possibilities and probabilities. The task force examined the playground from many different angles, including safety, playability, accessibility, and the historical and cultural aspects. A national playground expert identified numerous safety and federal ADA (Americans with Disability Act) non-compliance issues at the playground. The City simply can't put children at risk by ignoring these findings. Details about the issues at the playground and other research conducted by the task force are available on the City's website at www.cor.net.

So our history, culture, and our identity can remain in the park, the rocket ship and other playground pieces need to be preserved and repurposed. The recently completed master plan for Heights Park includes, among numerous improvements, the reintroduction of the rocket ship and other playground equipment as pieces of art or icons in the park. The playground pieces are currently being safely stored, so that when we make large scale improvements in Heights Park, they can be reintroduced.

We know that kids are interested in a unique place to play, and the City is in the process of designing the replacement Heights Park playground with the goal of exceeding the current play value found at Heights Park. To accomplish this, we have hired one of the leading playground designers in the United States. The installation of the new playground, once it is designed, will be expedited.

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Our goal is that we move forward for the safety of our kids, while we preserve and celebrate our past. While we would have preferred to keep the rocket ship and other playground pieces in active use, the City has an obligation to every visitor in the park to present the safest environment possible, complying with all federal standards. The new playground, currently under design, will provide an outstanding venue for children to play. We look forward to many other improvements to Heights Park through the implementation of the master plan.

Thank you for your consideration and patience as we move forward on this issue. I invite you to visit our website at www.cor.net to learn more about the Heights Park playground and to keep informed about the latest developments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Steve Mitchell
Mayor