

Case Study:

Boones Ferry Park



From Grassy Hillside to Grand Opening:

How Buell Recreation
Brought a Regional Playspace
to Life in Wilsonville

Client Profile:

Client:

City of Wilsonville Parks & Recreation

Location:

Wilsonville, Oregon

Project Scope:

Custom playground with connected towers and slides, turf surfacing with custom river surfacing design, retaining wall, perimeter fencing, separate 2-to-5 structure, swings, inclusive spinner, MOVMT®, custom animal rockers, installation

Project Timeline:

Grant-funded; construction completed June through September 2025 with a grand opening deadline

The Starting Point

When the City of Wilsonville's parks supervisor reached out to Buell Recreation, Boones Ferry Park was underperforming. The park sits at the end of a dead-end road where the Willamette River comes into view, with a small building used for events like weddings and an aging playground that had seen better days. Despite its riverfront location, the park wasn't drawing the kind of use the city expected.

The city had a vision for the space: a regional destination playground that paid tribute to the Willamette River and the history of Boones Ferry, the crossing that once connected Wilsonville to Aurora. They'd already received designs from other companies, but the proposals didn't match the ambition. To increase the play value in every element, they needed a fresh perspective.



Rethinking the Site

Kati Radziwon, General Manager at Buell Recreation, met the city's parks supervisor on-site to walk the space and brainstorm. The earlier designs had placed the playground near the parking lot, which would have disrupted the adjacent wedding venue and its garden.

Kati saw a different option on an unused grassy hillside on the far side of the park. Buell's recommendation: **dig out the hill, build a retaining wall** using stacked concrete eco blocks, **set fencing on top of the wall** and **create a level, fully fenced play area** that didn't exist before.

It was a bigger undertaking than the original concept, but it solved multiple problems at once. The playground would be separated from the event space. Parents would get the fenced-in park they wanted. And the **elevated structures would give kids a view of the river**, tying the whole design back to the site's history. The city was on board.

Awarding the Grant

Buell Recreation provided multiple design options with detailed 3D renderings from BCI Burke[®], giving the city strong visuals to support its grant application. The designs captured the river theme the city wanted while maximizing play value within the budget.

The city received the grant funding and awarded the project to Buell Recreation.





Building It

The design centered on connected towers with up to five slides, built high enough that kids standing at the top can look out over the Willamette River. A custom turf river pattern runs through the center of the play area, paying tribute to the waterway that gave the park its name. At the time, this was one of the first creative turf designs Buell Recreation had done. It's since become one of their most-requested features.

The play area also includes MOVMT (a multigenerational interactive play piece), a separate 2-to-5 structure, swings and custom animal rockers shaped like a duck, a fish and a beaver, all chosen to reflect Oregon's river wildlife.



The Sprint to Finish

The city set a grand opening date in September, and Buell had to hit it. The team worked a few seven day weeks in 100-degree heat, but everything was ready on time for opening day.

“In two years, we did two projects back to back. There's a reason we went with Buell.”

Zack Morse, Parks Supervisor





The Result



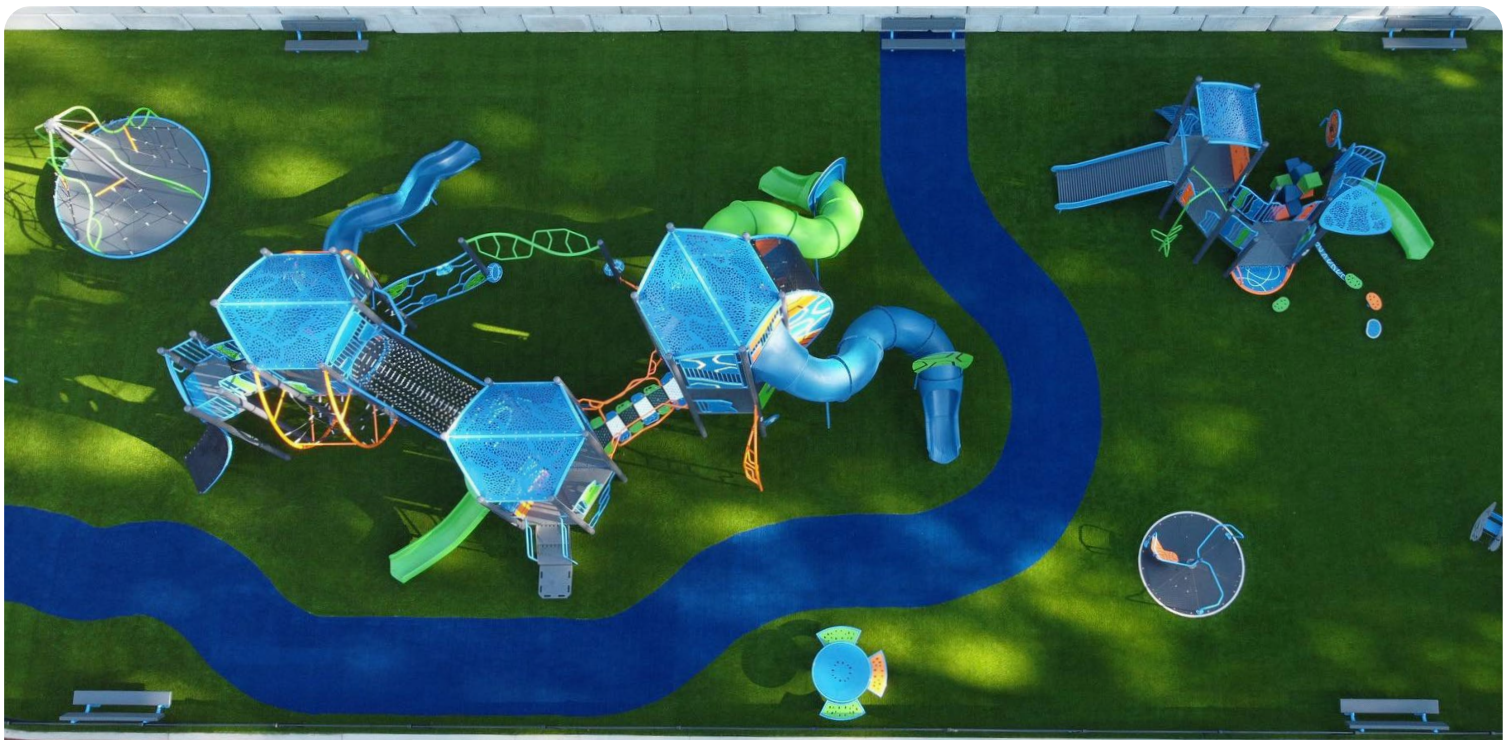
Within its first year, Boones Ferry Park saw a significant increase in visitor traffic. The city reported a sharp uptick in park use, with families visiting from well outside Wilsonville. The park went from a spot people passed by to one they posted about online. Parents in local groups recommend it to other families as a must-visit.

The playground brought the park back to life. Families started showing up. For a park that had dealt with vandalism from a lack of activity, the turnaround was significant.

The project also became a springboard. The city's parks supervisor went on to secure grant funding for another project, choosing to work with Kati from the Buell Recreation team.

“What began as a simple hillside became an amazing playground for the community. Seeing children continue to enjoy the park years later is the most rewarding part of what we do. Knowing these spaces will serve families for the next 20 or 30 years makes the work incredibly meaningful.”

**Kati Radziwon, General Manager,
Buell Recreation**





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A good playground partner meets you wherever you are in the process. Buell was involved from the first site walk, helping the city rethink the layout, providing the renderings that supported their grant application and staying engaged through construction, and schedule pressure. The result is a regional destination that draws visitors from outside Wilsonville, gives families a reason to choose this park over others and has sparked plans for additional investment in the site.

Interested in bringing a playspace like this to your community?
Contact Buell Recreation to start a conversation.



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