

Everything you wanted to know about the Big Toy

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Of the Keizertimes

In case you haven't heard, a big playground is coming to Keizer soon.

If things go according to plan, the Big Toy will be built in June.

The project has had some issues, such as a nine-month delay and a controversy over the location that lasted most of 2014.

The *Keizertimes* has covered every step of the project. To check on our past coverage, visit www.keizertimes.com and search for Big Toy. We have put together a set of answers to questions we've frequently heard in regards to the Big Toy.

Where is the Big Toy being built?

The playground is being built at Keizer Rapids Park. More specifically, the Big Toy is being built in the orchards area off of Chemawa Road, not far from the dog park.

That was not the original location. The original site was between the boat ramp and the amphitheater. For months that was the assumed location, but in January 2014 then-mayor Lore Christopher opined a move was necessary. By the end of the year, following an in-depth Urban Growth Boundary process, the orchards became part of city property and the site was selected. Nearly 200 trees were recently cleared.

When is it being built?

The project is scheduled to be built in a five-day period, from June 10 to 14.

How much will this cost?

The project budget is about \$319,000. Until recently, the budget was \$105,000 more as a poured-in rubber surface was going to be used. Earlier this year, the decision was made to go with engineered wood fibers, hence the cut in the budget. However, Keizer officials will be applying for grants to pay for the more ex-

pensive surface. If that funding happens, the wood fibers will be moved to other parks in Keizer.

How much of that money has been raised?

For a number of months, the figure hovered around the 50 percent mark. With the budget cut, the number jumped to 70 percent. Even without that, fundraising efforts have been picking up in recent weeks. The largest contributor in the money raised so far is still the city, as \$100,000 in System Development Charges (SDC) helped to kick-start things.

What if the money isn't raised?

The project will still go on. Bill Lawyer, Public Works director for Keizer, has emphasized the city is committed to making sure the Big Toy gets built. If needed, the city will put in more SDC funds to cover any shortcoming.

Janet Carlson, the Marion County commissioner who is co-chairing the Big Toy's fundraising committee, has said fundraising won't end in June. She feels once people see the project done, they will be more willing to contribute financially.

How did the design come about, and is it finalized?

A designer from New York-based consultant Leathers and Associates came to Keizer in November 2013 for Design Day. She suggested using the site between the amphitheater and the boat ramp, then led efforts to get design feedback from 3,000 elementary aged students in Keizer. Design ideas from youth were collected and turned into the design shown to community members in a packed meeting at the Keizer Civic Center.

For the most part, the design has been finalized. One recent change has been the addition of a volcano slide in light of Salem-Keizer Volcanoes owner Jerry Walker

pledging funds to pay for the feature.

Wasn't this project delayed?

Technically speaking, it was delayed twice. While a playground was part of the master planning process for KRP in 2008, a specific project didn't get going until Will Stitt brought up the idea at a Parks Board meeting in late 2012. The initial idea was to do the playground the following year, but it got pushed back to 2014 to allow for more time, especially in terms of fundraising and design.

Funding issues and the on-going debate over location, however, pushed the build date from September 2014 to this June.

What makes this a community build project?

Community members will be doing the actual building over the five-day span in June. Think of an old-fashioned barn raising, swapping out the barn for a large playground. In addition, volunteers have been putting in many hours at meetings to work on details for the project.

It's important to note that while volunteers will be doing the labor, trained people will be overseeing the construction. More details about how the build days will work should be known after an organizational day on April 7.

What if I want to get involved in any way?

No help is being turned away. Plenty of time slots for the build days are still available; those interested can check out the project's website at www.keizerbigtoy.org and fill out a form to volunteer. The website has plenty of information about the project, including how to provide financial support.

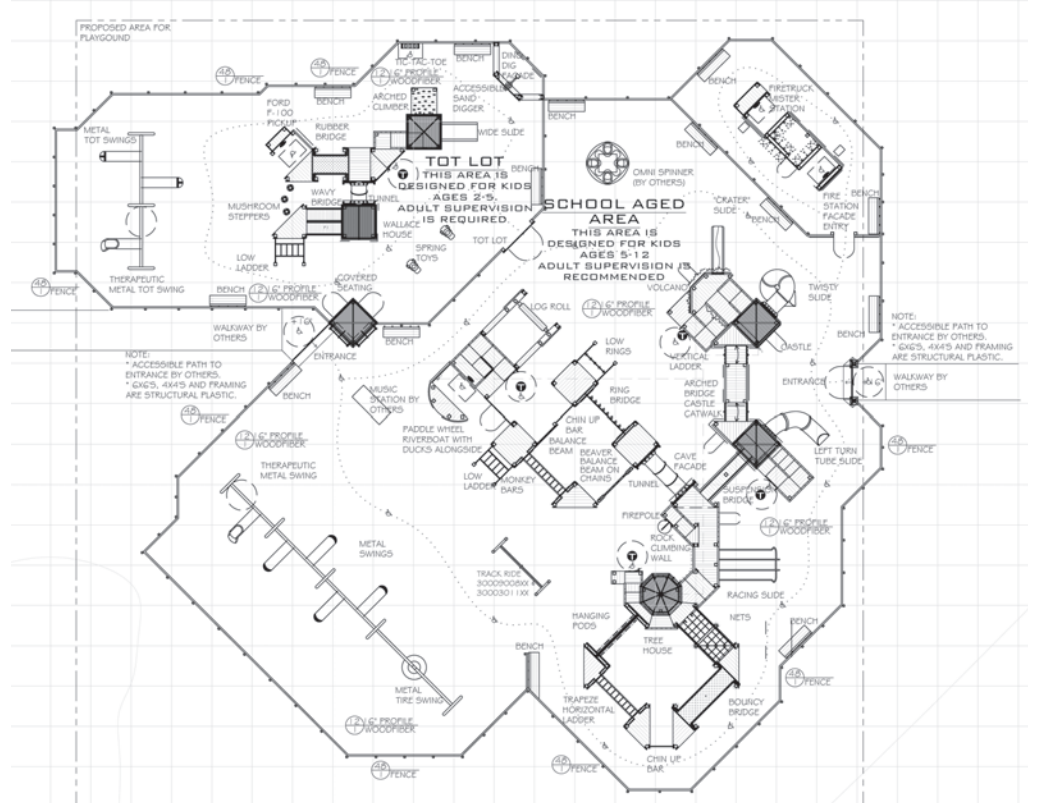
How long has this been planned?

Since November 2012. A Community Build Task Force was formed shortly after and



Submitted

The site in the orchards at Keizer Rapids Park where the Big Toy playground structure will be going was recently cleared with nearly 200 trees total being taken out.



Submitted

A look at the latest rendering of the Big Toy playground structure, incorporating the recent addition of a volcano slide.

has been meeting monthly.

Will this for sure be done?

Project leaders have expressed complete confidence it will be done and bristle at the notion it might be delayed again or might not happen at all. As mentioned above, city leaders have pledged to make sure it will be done.

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