

PROJECT SUMMARY

DISTRICT 1 (SUPERVISOR PINE) AND DISTRICT 2 (SUPERVISOR SLOCUM) FY 2016-17 MEASURE K REQUEST

One-Time Grant Request of \$75,000 to the Magical Bridge Foundation for Playground Equipment

This is a request to authorize a grant to the Magical Bridge Foundation, and resulting grant agreement in an amount not to exceed \$75,000, for the purchase of playground equipment (three retreat huts and two spinners) at a new playground designed to meet the diverse needs of community members regardless of ability, disability, age, or size. The County Manager's Office will administer and manage the proposed grant agreement.

Overview of Magical Bridge Foundation and the Magical Bridge Playground at Red Morton Park

The Magical Bridge Playground, to be located at Red Morton Park in Redwood City, will be the second Magical Bridge effort in the Bay Area and the first in San Mateo County. The innovative playground is designed to address the play needs of children and adults living with autism, physical and cognitive differences, hearing and visual impairments and even the aging population. Both "typical" and "special needs" kids and adults from all over San Mateo County will be able to play side by side.

The vision for innovative and inclusive playgrounds was born when founder Olenka Villarreal discovered her younger daughter, Ava, had developmental challenges. She learned that vestibular movement, such as swinging, would benefit Ava, but her limited upper body strength made holding the swing chains impossible. It wasn't long before Olenka discovered the parks in her hometown could not provide the most basic aspects of play for her daughter. She wondered where all of the other kids with similar needs were playing. After extensive outreach and research, she discovered none of the parks in her area were truly accessible.

With persistent advocacy, encouragement and local support from community leaders, Olenka created the first Magical Bridge playground in Palo Alto where everyone can play. Magical Bridge is not a "special needs" playground, but a welcoming place for all.

Experts, such as the American Occupational Therapy Association, advocate that children and youth of all ability levels have access to quality play experiences in community settings to promote social participation. The Magical Bridge Playground offers an ideal setting for that kind of interaction.

This proposal would provide specific infrastructure elements that help expand the accessibility of the playground to diverse San Mateo County residents.

Goals of the Infrastructure Improvements for Which Funding is Requested

This proposal focuses on two critical infrastructural elements of the Magical Bridge Playground design. The County grant will be \$75,000 as set below. The Sequoia Union Healthcare District will provide an additional \$75,000, contingent on the County grant, to the Magical Bridge Foundation, for a project total of \$150,000 for the playground.

Retreat Huts: \$25,000 towards the development of at least three huts (Funded by Supervisor Pine)

The Magical Bridge Playground retreat huts are cozy safe spaces that allow visitors, such as children with autism, to retreat from the frenetic, sensory whirlwinds of the playground, and empowers them to re-emerge when and if they choose. Magical Bridge retreat huts provide havens for those who need breaks, as well as anyone who needs time to adjust to the environment before participating in the wider playground experience. These retreat huts will be the only known playground spaces in San Mateo County that specifically address the needs of children and adults with autism and sensory challenges.

The incorporation of retreat huts in the Magical Bridge playground in San Mateo County is especially timely because autism rates have significantly increased. According to a recent study, the number of public school students in California enrolled in special education due to autism rose six fold, from 13,276 to 90,794 between 2002 and 2015. San Mateo County autism rates increased from 219 in 2002 to 1,196 students in 2015.

Spinners: \$50,000 (Funded by Supervisor Slocum)

Apollo Rotating Climber

The special bearing system of this spinner controls the rotation speed so that the children can safely enjoy an exhilarating experience while in an enclosed space. The steel-reinforced soft nylon ropes provide lots of places for the children to hang onto. These games help bring movement, balance, and exercise back into the playground.

Goric Dish

The dish-shaped spinner can challenge even the most physically adept to maintain their balance while allowing visitors to sit, lie down, and even stand upright. The Dish often induces social interactions and encourages cooperation as small groups work together to spin the Dish faster and faster.

Performance Measures

The following performance measure will be used to track progress on the impact of these grant funds:

- Purchase of 3 retreat huts
- Purchase of 2 spinners

Benefits to our Community

The purchase of the specified items will benefit the residents of San Mateo County by providing playground equipment that is accessible to community members of many abilities. It will be a place for children and families, regardless of ability, to play together in an inclusive environment thus strengthening community relationships.

Total Measure K Request: Not to exceed \$75,000.

The release of funds will be contingent on the execution of an agreement providing for the County's confirmation of the expenditure of funds before December 31, 2017 for the purposes stated herein.