



### **Advantage #1: Support local businesses and local jobs**

A community-built playground is built primarily with locally obtained materials that keep dollars in your local economy. In practice, this means that rather than making purchases from a catalog provided by a distribution firm from out-of-town (sometimes even out-of-state) you make purchases from local businesses. Economic research shows that for every \$100 spent at a locally-owned business, \$45 stays in the local economy. [1] This works to create local jobs and support the community tax base. [2] Purchases made out of the community are like depositing your money in a big vacuum. Phoosh – it's gone.

### **Advantage #2: Celebrate what makes your community unique**

The process of designing and building a community-built playground creates lots of opportunities to celebrate what makes your community special. Replicas of historic buildings, famous bridges, or other local icons exist on many community-built playgrounds. Symbols of faith or of cultural importance are developed on many others. No two communities are exactly alike, and neither are any two community-built playgrounds. The process, from start to finish, is designed to unite us, and create social capital. The development of social networks and the benefits of a successful large group project will foster trust and a spirit of "can do" in your community – both critical components of making progress with community economic development.

### **Advantage #3: Support community involvement**

Opportunities for participation in community-built projects are wide ranging and all-inclusive. The process involves children, parents, community officials, civic leaders, and business owners. Galvanizing your community resources in one project can work to break down invisible barriers between groups in your community and create opportunities for future endeavors. The best corporations in the world are now using collaboration and partnerships with the broadest platforms to stimulate innovation and economic growth.

### **Advantage #4: Create an attraction that can help bring people to your community.**

Many communities have worked with Learning Structures to develop playgrounds that are integrated into the community's plan for civic events and festivals. Some previous clients have told us that neighboring town recreation departments were busing children and families to their community-built playground! Creating a playground that is deeply satisfying to all users of all abilities and ages will attract visitors to your community. These guests will patronize your local businesses – a win for everyone.

[1] Institute for Local Self-Reliance and Friends of Midcoast Maine, "The Economic Impact of Locally Owned Businesses vs. Chains: A Case Study in Midcoast Maine," Sept. 2003.

[2] Civic Economics, "The Andersonville Study of Retail Economics," October 2004; Civic Economics, "Economic Impact Analysis: A Case Study," December 2002; David Neumark, Junfu Zhang, and Stephen Ciccarella, "The Effects of Wal-Mart on Local Labor Markets," Public Policy Institute of California, April 2006; Arindrajit Dube, Barry Eidlin, and Bill Lester, "Impact of Wal-Mart Growth on Earnings throughout the Retail Sector in Urban and Rural Counties," Institute of Industrial Relations Working Paper Series, 2005.

