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This summer, mobile playgrounds bring play to kids who need it most | KaBOOM!

Tagged: baton rouge greenville playful city usa programming summer thornton



Summer vacation is supposed to be all about outdoor play. But for the four out of five children who don't live within a half-mile of a park or playground, playing outside isn't always a viable option.

Clearly, the long-term solution is to ensure that every child has access to a playground within walking distance. Yet as we work toward this ambitious vision, millions of children are missing out on the childhood they deserve. What can we do *right now*?

Three of our Playful City USA communities who asked this vital question arrived at a similar solution—that is, creating a mobile playground that brings play to children in need. For decades, mobile ice cream shops (aka "ice cream trucks") have brought the joy of frozen creamy goodness to children everywhere. Who is to say that trucks can't bring children playgrounds, too?

In **Baton Rouge, La.** a new mobile playground will work to fill in the gaps that the city's large network of parks still misses. "We have several areas throughout the parish... where there are kids who are in apartment complexes or... some places where you have to cross major thoroughfares to get to a park," [BREC Superintendent Carolyn McKnight says](#). "We want to make sure that we are able to impact kids in those zones." McKnight says she hopes to eventually link BREC on the Geaux with a mobile farmers market launched on Wednesday and the library system's Bookmobile.

Thornton, Co.'s [Portable Playground Program](#) offers free recreational activities for children who don't have the opportunity to attend summer camp because of lack of income or transportation options. The program focuses on areas with high-density housing, like apartment complexes and mobile home communities. Serving about 1,200 kids each summer, the program aims to reduce screen time, drug use, and crime by teaching children healthy alternatives for their down time.

In **Greenville, S.C.** a team from Furman University's Diversity Leaders Initiative, a.k.a. [The Mobilizers](#), are creating a "mobile recreation vehicle" in partnership with the City of Greenville Parks and Recreation. This summer, staff from Parks and Recreation will engage children in play sessions, mobile day camps, special programming and city events, taking the vehicle to areas where play opportunities are less accessible. The Mobilizers hope that "when the children see the mobile recreation vehicle coming, they run to it like the ice cream truck, excited for the play to begin!"

The food truck craze is already sweeping the nation—will mobile playgrounds be the next big thing?

Photo via [Play on Wheels](#). Learn more about this UK-based mobile play service.



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