

## **INCLUSIVE PLAY SPACES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

NM2017-09 (Accessible Playgrounds) was adopted by Council on 2017 May 08. The Notice of Motion gave direction to explore criteria, mechanisms, and options for incorporating some accessible playground equipment and surfaces into new playgrounds as well as opportunities for retrofitting high priority existing playgrounds with multi-age and multi-ability features.

Administration undertook a review of existing accessible playground assets, and worked with key stakeholders including The City's Advisory Committee on Accessibility and the Rick Hansen Foundation. Criteria were then developed with the goal of identifying opportunities for inclusive play at both existing sites and new sites in the future. Inclusion is more than just access; the term 'Inclusive Play Space' indicates not only physical access but a goal to accommodate all users. A high level overview of proposed Inclusive Play Spaces Initiatives is included as Attachment 1, and the full Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) is included as Attachment 2. Going beyond accessible playgrounds, the Implementation Plan considers age, ability and demographics, and will be used as a strategic guide for inclusive play space retrofit and development in the future.

### **ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the SPC on Community and Protective Services recommend that Council:

1. Receive the Inclusive Play Spaces Overview and Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan for information (Attachments 1 and 2);
2. Direct Administration to put forward inclusive play initiatives as part of the 2019-2022 budget cycle in both capital and operating programs where feasible;
3. Support Administration in their efforts to pilot an adult mobile fitness program in the summer of 2018 with appropriate evaluation; and
4. Direct Administration to implement a life-cycling process where underutilized play structures at the end of their lifecycle are removed and replaced with more inclusive play spaces.

### **RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES, DATED 2018 JANUARY 17:**

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That the Administration Recommendation contained in Report CPS2018-0051 be approved.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY**

On 2017 May 08, Council adopted NM2017-09 (Accessible Playgrounds) directing Administration, in conjunction with the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and the development industry, to "explore criteria, mechanisms, and options for incorporating some accessible playground equipment and surfaces into new playgrounds, and report back to Council the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services with an implementation plan in Q1 2018". Council further directed Administration to "explore

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opportunities with other stakeholders to retrofit high priority existing playgrounds with multi-age and multi-ability features”.

### **BACKGROUND**

Calgary Parks stewards over 1,100 playgrounds in Calgary, and these provide play value to many children. However, for children with disabilities, parents with disabilities accompanying their children, or adults with disabilities using outdoor fitness equipment, many of these play spaces only satisfy a narrow scope of play. In addition, they may cater only to one demographic and therefore lack multi-generational appeal.

Over the past several years, Calgary Parks has incorporated more inclusive elements into play spaces including the following:

- 30 playgrounds have accessible equipment or ramps, or an accessible rubber surface;
- The availability of aquatic wheelchairs in spray parks;
- The mobile adventure playground program, in concert with Calgary Recreation, has provided more sensory components than traditional playgrounds; and
- New parks, such as Mills Park in Inglewood, have incorporated diverse components for a wide range of ages including playgrounds for children, active components for adults, or shaded, comfortable places to relax.

Inclusion is more than just access. The term ‘Inclusive Play Space’ indicates not only physical access but indicates a goal to accommodate all users. For children, an ‘Inclusive Playground’ means play opportunities exist for all abilities. Poor playground design can result in accessible elements that are perceived as boring, which can result in social exclusion for children with disabilities. For adults, an ‘Inclusive Play Space’ can mean a variety of accessible amenities such as outdoor fitness, skate parks, court sports, community gardens, and pathways. This can apply to adults who want to play, or to parents or care-givers with a disability, accompanying their child.

### **INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS**

Working closely with The City of Calgary Advisory Committee on Accessibility, as well as the Rick Hansen Foundation, Calgary Parks has developed a number of initiatives contained in Attachment 1: Overview of Inclusive Play Spaces Initiatives. More detailed information is included in Attachment 2: Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan.

Key highlights of these initiatives include:

- Sixteen sites have been identified for playground development that would provide equitable geographic coverage across the city as a starting point;
- A pilot mobile adult fitness program will be explored to encourage multi-age infrastructure sites;
- A proposed modification of the Calgary Parks Landscape Specification Guidelines in new local parks, within a net neutral financial framework for both developers and The City. These modifications will give developers the ability to customize local amenities with a suite of infrastructure options that could vary from adventure playgrounds, gazebo, court sports, pickle ball and more;

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- Intermittently staffing select play space locations to promote integrated play and monitor results; and
- Implementing a life-cycling process that ensures play spaces have the right components to reflect the needs of the community, potentially trading quantity of play spaces for more inclusive, higher quality play spaces.

### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

Since the Notice of Motion was adopted by Council in May, Calgary Parks has worked closely with The City of Calgary Advisory Committee on Accessibility, as well as the Rick Hansen Foundation. A letter from the Rick Hansen Foundation in support of the Inclusive Playground Implementation Plan is included as Attachment 3. Calgary Recreation has also provided input and discussions with the development industry have been initiated. They have indicated support in principle however negotiations with the development industry will continue in 2018. In addition, further engagement is required with communities where future inclusive play spaces are proposed.

### **Strategic Alignment**

The Implementation Plan aligns with a number of City of Calgary plans, including the Corporate Accessibility Policy, ImagineParks, the Calgary Recreation Master Plan, Action Plan (2015-2018), as well as external initiatives and standards from the Canadian Standards Authority (CSA), United Nations, and the recently adopted Calgary Play Charter.

### **Social, Environmental, Economic (External)**

#### **Social**

Inclusive playgrounds ensure play, which is vital to human development, is available to all Calgary children. These play spaces also provide a community gathering place where all family members and neighbours are able to participate, and enjoy parks and open spaces.

#### **Environmental**

No major environmental implications.

#### **Economic (External)**

Inclusive playgrounds can contribute to vibrant gathering places which support local businesses, and create communities where businesses want to locate.

### **Financial Capacity**

#### **Current and Future Operating Budget:**

Initiatives contained in Attachment 1 will be started in 2018 within existing budgets, or by accessing corporate sponsorships and grants. Longer term recommendations on budget changes will be outlined in the 2019-2022 budget cycle as required.

#### **Current and Future Capital Budget:**

Specific play space budgets will vary greatly depending on the features chosen after engagement, and the specific site development that would need to occur. However, recent

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large, complex playground developments have resulted in final costs of approximately \$500,000. Further, site specific play projects will be costed and tracked in order to inform future business cases.

### **Risk Assessment**

Play spaces with multi-age components require special attention to align with CSA guidelines, which recommend a distance is maintained between adult and child components. Calgary Parks continues to look at creative solutions, and undertake careful planning and design, to help mitigate this challenge. This will include ongoing discussions with CSA.

A revised life-cycling process may require that multiple underutilized playgrounds be replaced with a single, multipurpose play space that is more relevant to the community. Proper engagement will be required to ensure residents appreciate the benefits this approach can offer, and that new plans are endorsed by the community.

For inclusive play spaces in new community parks, modification of the Parks Landscape Specification Guidelines is required in coordination with the development industry. Working with developers, a suite of amenities that can be completed within a net neutral financial framework, will need to be determined.

### **REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):**

In response to NM2017-09 (Accessible Playgrounds), Administration created a strategic and comprehensive approach that can be applied to both existing and future playgrounds to ensure that play spaces in Calgary are inclusive to all children and their families.

### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Overview of Inclusive Play Spaces Initiatives
2. Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan
3. Letter of Support – Rick Hansen Foundation