

Overview of Inclusive Play Spaces Initiatives

Calgary Parks and Calgary Recreation is committed to making play spaces that are accessible and inclusive to everyone. All amenities—from playgrounds, outdoor fitness and court sports, to skate parks and pathways—should be developed with a lens of inclusivity for all ages and demographics. The Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) explores multi-age and multi-ability play opportunities with a goal of providing more inclusive play options in parks. Going beyond accessible playgrounds, the plan considers all ages, abilities and demographics.



The Implementation Plan provides current state analysis and recommendations and criteria for ideal future state. Some key highlights of the plan are as follows:

Playgrounds with Inclusive Elements

In addition to the 30 existing playgrounds with accessible elements and surfaces, Calgary Parks identified another thirteen potential locations within a 5km radius catchment area, that covers almost the entire city. Consideration of access via car, or transit was a criteria and will be further reviewed as locations are refined.

Mobile Outdoor Fitness Program

There are a number of sites that host outdoor fitness equipment throughout the city. However, initial observation indicates many of the sites are not well-used. Modelling after the successful mobile skate parks and adventure playgrounds, and based on past learnings from other Calgary Recreation programs, Calgary Parks and Calgary Recreation intends to pilot a mobile fitness program to serve adults and seniors primarily. Moving into different areas over the summer months, temporary equipment would be installed and staff would be on hand to lead users through the different types of fitness activities. If a mobile fitness park is particularly successful in one community, we would consider a permanent installation in that location.

Lifecycle Existing Playgrounds

As playgrounds near the end of their lifespan it may not be appropriate to replace them with another playground. Instead a more inclusive play structure can be incorporated that reflects the needs of the community. Depending on the chosen features, this may mean an overall reduction in the number of playgrounds per community. For example, in a community with two playgrounds, one may be removed to create a site with a gazebo and community garden. This holistic approach will be applied as opportunities arise to ensure play spaces are more relevant to the community.

Multi-Generational Play

Ideally, Calgary Parks will strive to offer sites that meet the needs of many generations. While children are enjoying play on a playground, their adult caregivers are partaking in fitness. And with plenty of benches, and gazebos, all members of the family can enjoy the park at the same time. Calgary Parks has started to incorporate this vision into some sites, such as the new Mills Park in Inglewood which hosts a children's playground as well as adult features such as slack lining poles, and adult swings.

Overall Initiatives

Play Space Development

- Conduct an accessibility audit in conjunction with relevant stakeholders of the 30 Calgary Parks playgrounds with existing accessibility components, to determine the necessary retrofit upgrades to increase inclusivity. Use an accredited auditing tool such as one developed by The Rick Hansen Foundation, or the Accessibility Course through the Canadian Playground Safety Institute (CPSI)
- Work with community partners and developers to further consider preliminary locations for future inclusive playground development, using the Inclusive Playground Evaluation Criteria included in the Implementation Plan
- Ensure appropriate site development is considered (for example: pave missing links) and ensure proximity to major transit lines
- Train appropriate City staff on inclusive playground design, inspection and maintenance

Multi-Age Infrastructure

- Continually examine how inclusivity and access can be improved for all park users including fitness equipment, pathways, skate parks, court sports, community gardens and more
- Based on past learnings, investigate new methods to encourage use of outdoor fitness equipment including a mobile fitness program
- Where possible, develop sites with multi-generational components

Policy Development

- In partnership with the development industry, modify the Parks Landscape Specification Guidelines to encourage a broader range of park amenity possibilities for new local park, within a net neutral financial framework for both developers and The City
- Promote a spectrum of play experiences available for children through to seniors which provide social, creative

Education and Programming

- Pilot staffing at select play space locations with trained facilitators that can promote integrated play, and evaluate if this staffing reduces barriers
- Educate children, youth, families, adults, communities & developers about the importance of inclusive outdoor play for all children
- Work with the Parks Foundation to incorporate inclusive play into the annual Playground Fair
- Explore and foster partnerships with non-profit groups, developers and sponsors to further inclusive play

Operations

- Explore a lifecycling process that ensures diverse well used play spaces which incorporate multi-generational components. While this may reduce the overall quantity of play spaces, it would ensure the play spaces that exist are well used and reflect the needs of the community
- Develop a business case for inclusive play for use in future capital budget cycles
- Incorporate inclusive play opportunities in the City Shaping layer of the Green Line program