



Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan

Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan - January 2018

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Introduction

Playgrounds should be inclusive places for all children, however, numerous studies have identified playgrounds as being places of exclusion, showing that children with disabilities do not have equal access to public play areas. In addition, adults with disabilities also experience challenges, either on their own, or when accompanying their children or grandchildren.

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) provides a current state analysis as well as recommendations for proposed future plans. It explores multi-age and multi-ability play opportunities with a goal of providing more inclusive play options in parks. Going beyond accessible playgrounds, the Implementation Plan considers all ages, abilities and demographics.

Inclusive Play Spaces

The term ‘inclusive play spaces’ is used to indicate play space which accommodate all users, challenging them at their own developmental level, on age appropriate play equipment. The term also refers to adults accompanying children, in the capacity of a parent or care-giver, who have limited mobility and/or abilities.

Definitions and key considerations related to inclusive play are as follows:

Definitions

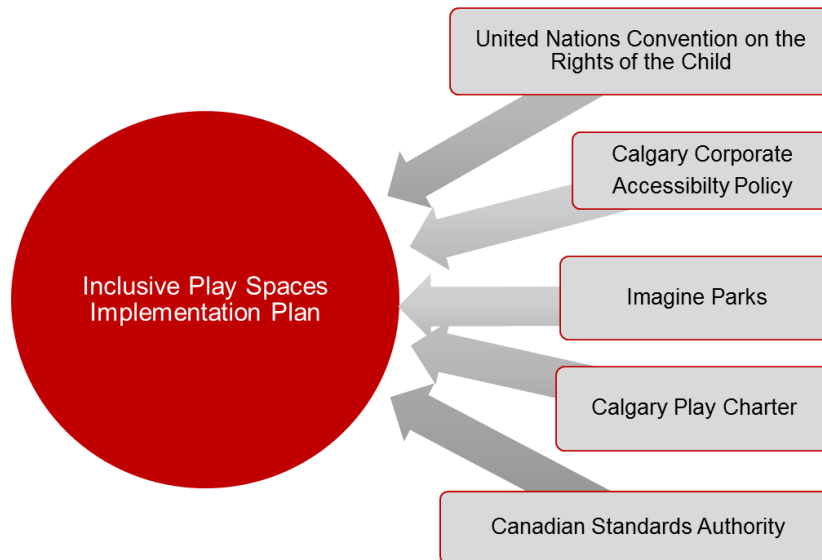
Accessibility	Accessibility refers to the ability to be reached or entered so that individuals may participate. Playgrounds shall be reached in a smooth, uninterrupted manner through the provision of suitable surfaces for purpose of engaging in ‘play’.
Inclusive	Inclusive is not to exclude any section of society or any party involved in something. An ‘Inclusive Play Space’ indicates playgrounds which accommodate all users, challenging them at their own development level on age appropriate play equipment. The term also includes adults accompanying children, in the capacity of a parent or care-giver, who have limited mobility and/or abilities.
Universal Design	Universal Design is meant to produce environments that are inherently accessible and inclusive. It is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.
People with Disabilities	The United Nations uses the term ‘people with disabilities’ to apply to all people with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” (United Nations, 2007)

Strategic Alignment

City of Calgary	
Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy	The purpose of the Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy (CSPS003) is to ensure the greatest level of access, which is the right or opportunity to reach, use or participate for people with physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities.
Imagine Parks	Goal 1.1 Responsive to Citizens Parks enables and responds to changing citizen needs with diverse and equitable programs, events and amenities Goal 1.2 Individual and Community Well-being Parks and programs support healthy lifestyle choices
City of Calgary Action Plan	Inclusive play spaces aligns with Action Plan Goals: • A City of Inspiring Neighbourhoods • A Healthy and Green City
Calgary Recreation Master Plan	Inclusive play spaces promote recreation which strengthens social connections. Participating in recreation activities creates opportunities to connect families, neighbours and individuals with shared interests. Developing stronger social connections builds a sense of belonging, understanding, respect and trust.

Play in Calgary	
Calgary Play Charter	This Charter commits The City of Calgary and partners to promoting play, providing play opportunities, and educating all Calgarians of the importance of play to our community.

Canadian Standards Authority (CSA)	
Children's Playspaces and Equipment Guidelines	CSA guidelines govern the development of play spaces and represent 'best-practice' in terms of health and safety in play space environments. Annex 'H' [5] of this document specifically addresses the issue of 'accessible playgrounds and provides recommendations for the minimum requirements that are best applied to new play spaces.



United Nations

The Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan allows Calgary to strive for the following Conventions, of which Canada is a signatory’:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 31	Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Inclusive Play Considerations

Inclusive Play Spaces

The term 'Inclusive Play Spaces' is used to indicate play spaces that accommodate all users, challenging them at their own developmental level on age appropriate play equipment. The term also refers to adults, and adults accompanying children, in the capacity of a parent or care-giver, who have limited mobility and/or abilities.

Accessible	The playground shall be reached in a smooth, uninterrupted manner through the provision of suitable surfaces for purpose of engaging in 'play'.
Inclusive	The playground shall, wherever reasonably possible, provide opportunities for play that promotes integration of everyone with varying age and abilities.
Usable	The equipment shall be 'usable' in terms of engaging in 'play'

Play Spaces for Children

Playgrounds that are purpose-designed and built for children act as a venue to engage in physical and social activities, develop motor skills and problem solving skills, challenge themselves, learn social norms and explore their environment. Play can and should happen beyond the confines of a playground and extend into a variety of open spaces.

Play Spaces for Adults

Adult play can include leisure and recreation, hobbies and pastimes, and even digital gaming. Individuals with varying degrees of disability must also be accommodated wherever reasonably possible. The Inclusive Playground Implementation Plan addresses leisure and recreational adult play, typically located in public parks. This could include outdoor fitness equipment, gaming tables (eg. chess), sports courts (eg. tennis), seating, and shelters. A challenge in adult play equipment, particularly outdoor fitness equipment, is that it lacks guidelines from the Canadian Standards Authority which only encompasses Children's Play Spaces and Equipment.

People with Disabilities

Although "people with disabilities" sometimes refers to a single population, this is actually a diverse group of people with a wide range of needs. Two people with the same type of disability can be affected in very different ways. Some disabilities may be hidden or not easy to see.

-Centre for Disease Control

According to the World Health Organization, disability has three dimensions including:

1. **Impairment** (for example: loss of a limb or memory loss)
2. **Activity limitation** (for example: difficulty seeing or walking)
3. **Participation restrictions** (for example: location or parking challenges)

Typical Barriers to Access and Inclusion

Physical and social barriers can hinder many people with disabilities including children, adults wanting to participate in their child's play experience, and adults using outdoor fitness equipment. Examples of such barriers are:

Physical Environment	• Inaccessible route or inappropriate fall surfaces • Lack of ramps; ground level equipment has limited play value • Undesirable location including insufficient space, difficult to get to, or high vehicle and/or pedestrian traffic • Absence of signage that illustrates ways the equipment can be used • Cost of equipment inhibits inclusive play elements • Lack of enabling infrastructure including parking shade, washrooms, seating, shelter
Social Environment	• Poor design with a tendency to segregate accessible play elements, resulting in social exclusion • Play equipment is accessible but has poor play value • Play equipment caters only to physical disabilities • Parental concern for injury prevention results in decreased play value • Fear that children with disabilities will be teased may prevent play • Parents do not understand the value of play, or that inclusive opportunities exist • Community is not inclusive resulting in segregated play • Insufficient accessibility and inclusion standards create a perception that inclusive playgrounds are not a priority

Universal Design

Universal design has seven principles that ensure play spaces are usable for everyone:

1. **Equitable:** The design accommodates people with diverse abilities
2. **Flexibility:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences
3. **Simple and Intuitive Use:** Use of play space is easy to understand
4. **Perceptible Information:** Accommodates diverse sensory abilities or conditions
5. **Tolerance for Error:** The play space minimizes hazards
6. **Low Physical Effort:** The play space is efficient and comfortable
7. **Size and Space:** Appropriate size and space exists regardless of user

Current State

Calgary has over 1,100 playgrounds, the majority of which are well used and enjoyed by all. Of these there are some sites that have specific accessibility elements:

- 30 have at least one piece of accessible equipment including ramps that enable access to higher levels of a multi-play structure and/or ground level play panels. Of these 30 playgrounds, 14 also have accessible rubber safety surface (called 'pour in place')
- There are an additional 56 playgrounds with rubber safety surface only.

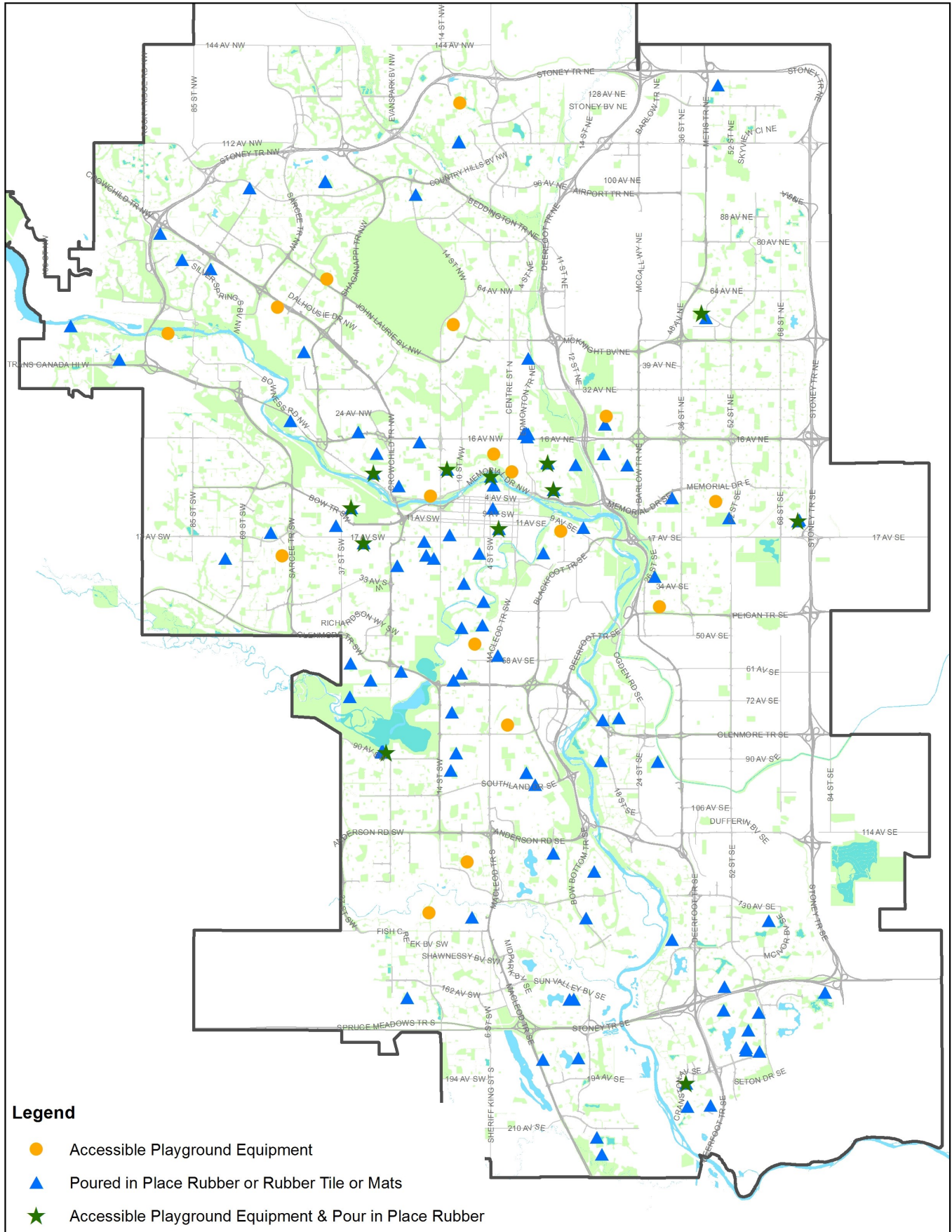
In addition, recent Calgary Parks initiatives such as mobile adventure playgrounds, and provision of wheelchairs at spray parks, have made playgrounds and play spaces more inclusive.

Currently, the provision of accessible equipment is ad hoc, however new and lifecycled playgrounds are incorporating some of the following universal design features:

- Accessible playground surfaces, such as 'pour in place' rubber and 'Engineered Wood Fibre' (EWF) safety surfaces are being introduced in new playgrounds by developers
- Playgrounds due for lifecycle replacement are incorporating accessible elements in partnership with Calgary Parks, Calgary Parks Foundation and the relevant community associations
- Access ramps from ground level to higher platforms, typically on multi-play structures, allow for connectivity between two play components
- Transfer stations facilitate access to some sections of a multi-play structure
- Ground level activities allow for universal access to play components, providing an appropriate fall surface is in place
- Swings equipped with harnesses have been installed at some locations
- Nature-inspired playgrounds that offer sensory activities, such as auditory, olfactory, visual and tactile experiences
- Loose parts play such as adventure playground and community loose parts bins, has been piloted over the past two years and proven to provide social, creative and sensory benefits

Going forward this Implementation Plan aims to set out a comprehensive approach to building inclusive playgrounds either as existing playgrounds are lifecycled or as new play spaces are built.





Proposed Future Plans (2019-2022)

Play Spaces with Inclusive Elements

In addition to the existing playgrounds with accessible elements and surfaces, Calgary Parks identified sixteen potential locations based on the following criteria:

- Existing playground on site allows for easier development
- Site is large enough and appropriate to accommodate a large playground footprint
- Adjacent to a parking lot, or major transit route, and route to site is accessible
- Proximity to a publicly accessible building with appropriate services (eg washrooms)
- New or future regional park locations with good catchment

Potential new locations are mapped with a 5km radius catchment area, as shown on the next page. It is important to note that this list is preliminary and will need to be refined after consultation with relevant stakeholders including community associations, interested non-profit groups, schools, foundations, and others. The anticipated costs of these proposed playgrounds is potentially high, therefore the installation of these playgrounds will extend beyond the initial 2019-2022 budget cycle.

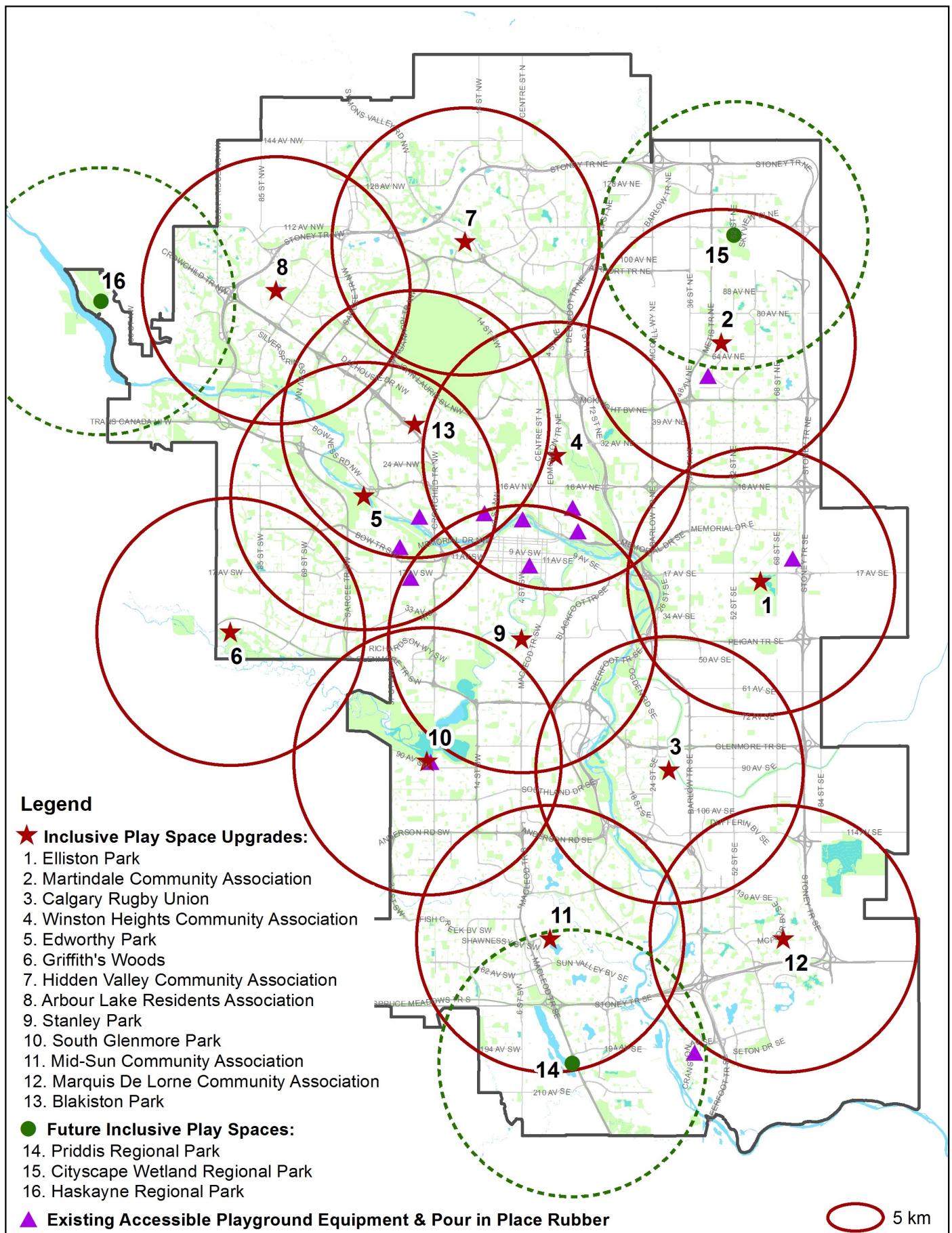
This proposed list of thirteen upgrades gives generally equitable coverage across much of the city, but it is recognized that a 5km radius is not appropriate for local use. More modest play space upgrades will be executed where the opportunity and finance allow.

Inclusive Playground Evaluation Criteria

Whether it be development of a new play space, or retro-fitting a play space due for lifecycle replacement, there are 13 main areas to consider during design. While these areas are considered in all playground design, a special focus on inclusivity is now introduced as indicated below:

Element	Example
Who will the play space serve?	Children with cognitive disabilities
Location	Community support for an inclusive playground
Size and topography of site	Are grades less than 5% for barrier free access?
Design conflicts	Is sufficient capital budget assigned for inclusive elements?
Entrance to the play space	Proximity to transit route or parking
Pathways and sidewalks	Firm surface approaching the site
Play equipment	Elements for physical, sensory and social experiences
Play space surface	Appropriate fall surface
Play space layout	Space for multi-generation elements; opportunity for shade
Complimentary amenities	Benches, signage, washrooms are accessible
Social and natural amenities	Incorporation of natural feature or loose part play
Inspections, maintenance, repairs	Staff are trained to inspect accessible elements
Operational budget	Are additional operating costs required?

As each park is unique, there is no fixed number of inclusive elements to be included in each play space.



Proposed Future Plans (2019-2022)

New Community Development

The development industry is keen to work with Calgary Parks to modify the Calgary Parks Landscape Specification Guidelines to incorporate inclusive play spaces for new local parks, within a net neutral financial framework for both developers and The City. Ideally, a suite of infrastructure options will be developed to encourage a variety of play spaces to allow developers to customize local amenities. This could potentially include adventure playgrounds, gazebos, community gardens, court sports, pickle ball, adult fitness, and more.

Adults and Seniors—Outdoor Fitness Equipment

There are a number of sites that host outdoor fitness equipment throughout the city. These are typically used by adults, but equipment has been installed at Forest Lawn 55+ Society specifically for use by seniors. Initial observation indicates many of the fitness sites across the city are not well-used; however these sites will continue to be evaluated.

Mobile Outdoor Fitness Program

Fitness equipment of any kind, indoor or outdoor, can be intimidating. Having staff on site to demonstrate proper use of equipment and motivate users may encourage greater use. Modelling after the successful mobile skate parks and mobile adventure playgrounds, Calgary Parks, in collaboration with Calgary Recreation, intends to pilot a mobile fitness program to primarily serve adults and seniors. Moving into different areas over the summer months, temporary equipment would be installed and qualified staff would be on hand to demonstrate equipment and assist users through different types of fitness activities. If a mobile fitness park is particularly successful in one community, Calgary Parks could examine more permanent installations in that location.

Multi-Generational Sites

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

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 ensure play spaces that are more relevant, and improve the community as opportunities arise.

Overall Recommendations

Play Space Development

- In conjunction with relevant stakeholders, conduct an accessibility audit 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 that 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 (eg 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 parks, 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 and sensory benefits

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, and developers about the importance of inclusive outdoor play for all children
- Work with the Calgary 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 spaces

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 consideration in future capital budget cycles
- Incorporate inclusive play opportunities in the City Shaping layer of the Green Line program

Additional Resources

Rick Hansen Foundation	www.rickhansen.com
Sport for Life	www.physicalliteracy.ca/inclusion
Outside Play	www.outsideplay.ca
Canadian Assoc. Playground Practitioners	www.capp—online.ca
Intl Playground Manufacturers Association	www.ipema.com
Center for Universal Design	www.ncsu.edu/project/design-projects/udi
IDEA Center at Buffalo	www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea
The Play & Playground Encyclopedia	www.pgpedia.com
Accessible Playgrounds Director	www.accessibleplayground.net

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