



Legislation Text

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TAMRMS#: B06

11.1

Accessible and Inclusive Playground Strategy

Notice given by: Councillor Brodhead

PROPOSED MOTION(S):

That the City of St. Albert complete a “Accessible and Inclusive Playground Strategy” funded from the Stabilization Reserve in the amount \$120,000 with the work to be completed and reported back to City Council by Q2 2025.

ADMINISTRATION’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTENT OF THE MOTION

Administration is to develop an Inclusive and Accessible Playground Strategy that will address standards and planning for the development of inclusive and accessible playgrounds. This report is to be delivered at a cost of no more than \$120,000 and presented to Council by end of Q2, 2025.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present a motion for which Councillor Brodhead gave notice on May 30, 2024.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

As shared in IR-24-006, the City has 65 City-owned playgrounds. The playgrounds vary in size (generally related to classification of the park they are in) and provide a variety of play experiences primarily for children 18 months to 12 years of age.

Of the 65 City-owned playgrounds, one is fully inclusive (Fountain Park), with a second (Lodgepole playground in Lacombe Lake Park) to be completed later in 2024. Many of the remaining playgrounds have some elements of inclusivity and/or accessibility, including partial or fully accessible play surfacing.

There are also 19 playgrounds on school lands. These playgrounds fall under the authority of their respective school division and are built and maintained in partnership with the City through the reciprocal use agreement. While none of these playgrounds are fully accessible, many of them also contain accessible and/or inclusive features.

Planning Principles

Administration believes that each playground should be designed as part of a City-wide network of playgrounds, which, together, meet the needs of our community. This same approach is applied when considering principles of **inclusion** which acknowledge a diversity of physical, social, sensory, and cognitive needs as well as physical **accessibility**. This means that, while not every playground is fully inclusive and accessible, a lens of inclusion and accessibility should be applied to all

playgrounds, and fully accessible playgrounds should be available in appropriate places throughout the community.

The City has strategic documents (e.g., St. Albert Universal Accessibility Plan, Park and Open Spaces Standards and Guidelines) and best practices (e.g., Canadian Standards Association Playground Safety Standards: Annex H, City of Burlington Accessible Design Standards) that speak to inclusion and accessibility and provide guidance on playground design.

These foundational documents position accessibility as a component of the physical, social, sensory, and cognitive needs that should be considered in creating inclusive spaces. While they provide guidance for making site-specific inclusion and accessibility decisions, they do not, in and of themselves, provide a systematic framework for applying these benchmarks across a network of municipal playgrounds.

If developed, a network-based strategy would consider how playgrounds can work together to provide a wide range of play experiences for all children in our community. It would also support the development of more accurate budgeting requirements to build, replace, and maintain an inventory of more inclusive and accessible playgrounds. Recreation & Parks currently has an accessible and inclusive playground strategy shortlisted on its 3-year work plan, subject to available resources and emergent priorities.

Process

Through this project, Administration would engage a consultant to assist in the development of the Accessible and Inclusive Playground Strategy. At minimum, the consultant will:

- Complete a regional, provincial, and national scan of best practices;
- Engage with experts in the field of inclusive play;
- Engage with the public;
- Provide a set of recommendations for standards and guidelines; and
- Provide costing associated with recommendations.

The strategy would set accessibility and inclusion targets for play spaces and could be tied to geospatial considerations (e.g., neighbourhoods), population, parks classification, or capital costs. The strategy would seek to complement existing policy or standards (as noted above) and would be integrated into long-range planning and City-wide strategies, including the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) project that is in development.

2026 Repair, Maintain, Replace (RMR) Budget

It is unlikely that the strategy work would be completed in time to be incorporated into the 2026 RMR budgeting process. This means that full implementation of the strategy as part of the 2026 construction season would require either reprioritization of work within the approved budget or Council support for one-off budget adjustments.

IMPACTS OF MOTION

Financial:

A change to playground standards is expected to increase the cost of playground development and replacement. This expense could be managed by adjusting lifecycle reserves, increasing annual playground budgets, reprioritizing work within existing budget parameters, or a combination of these

options. Financial impacts are projected for consideration as part of the 2027 budget deliberations.

Compliance & Legal:

None at this time. Recommendations from the strategy will be assessed to ensure they comply with all relevant legislation.

Program or Service:

None at this time. Recommendations from this strategy may have impacts to service levels related to playgrounds which will be brought forward to Council once the strategy is completed.

Organizational:

The budget identified in this proposed motion would allow the scope of work to be completed in the stated timeframe without a reallocation of existing resources or priorities.

Risks:

None at this time.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Council Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Strategic Priority 3: Community Well Being

Strategy: Foster a cohesive community that supports the physical and psychological well-being of all residents.

Corporate Business Plan 2022-2025

Strategic Priority 3: Community Well Being

Initiative: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Strategy

Develop the City's overall strategy, identify tactics and implementation plan for diversity, equity and inclusion.

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

A.1.5 Recreation and Sport Amenities

Description: Ensure the provision of scheduled and spontaneous use of recreation amenities for community users in a safe and comfortable environment.

A.1.5.f Playgrounds

Description: Provide recreational play structures for public use.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

N/A

Report Date: July 2, 2024

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