



City of Kingston
Report to Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee
Report Number MAAC-23-011

To: Chair and Members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

From: Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services

Resource Staff: Luke Follwell, Director, Engineering Services

Date of Meeting: September 7, 2023

Subject: Proposed Community Led Accessible Playground Project

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 3. Build an Active and Connected Community

Goal: 3.1 Expand parks and recreation opportunities and participation.

Executive Summary:

In the spring of 2023, a community member approached staff to discuss the feasibility of a community led project to build a highly inclusive playground in a City-owned park. A number of meetings have since occurred to support this initiative. The proponent is seeking community partnerships and intends to fundraise for the project. The location is proposed to be in Shannon Park. Council support for the project, in principle, is required, in addition to consultation with stakeholder groups and the local community. The timeline for the project is not yet determined.

Recommendation:

That the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) recommend to Council:

That Council direct staff to continue working with community partners to support the building of a highly inclusive playground in a City-owned park and report back to Council as required on the matter.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Brad Joyce, Commissioner,
Infrastructure, Transportation &
Emergency Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

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| Jenna Morley, Acting Commissioner, Growth & Development Services | Not required |
| Jennifer Campbell, Acting Commissioner, Community Services | Not required |
| Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services | Not required |
| David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston | Not required |
| Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Major Projects & Strategic Initiatives | Not required |
| Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer | Not required |

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Options/Discussion:

Community Proposal

In April 2023, a community member met with staff to discuss the logistics and feasibility of developing a community led, highly inclusive playground for children with disabilities in a City-owned park. The proposed project is a large-scale playground with many purpose-designed features providing a high amount of play experience that would serve a broad number of users. The proponent has indicated that she would partner with community groups to access the volunteer resources needed to plan and raise funding for the project and would also seek contributions and donations in-kind from businesses to advance the project. The project budget is not yet confirmed but initial concept plans are estimated to cost approximately \$1M.

Existing Plans

The City has over 100 playgrounds and older play structures are regularly replaced as part of asset management. When those projects occur, the replacement projects are designed to meet local and provincial accessibility regulations to improve inclusivity. Typical play equipment replacement project budgets are \$150K to \$250K per site. New parks with playgrounds built to modern standards are also added to inventory as land development occurs. While many of the City's playgrounds are newer and meet the required guidelines, a significant number do not.

In addition to considering local and provincial accessibility requirements, some parks have an enhanced level of inclusivity in their playgrounds with more features providing additional play experience such as those at Rotary Park, Lake Ontario Park, City Park, and Welborne Park. Staff will be conducting an audit of the accessibility of all playgrounds in the city during this term of Council as one of the strategic priorities. If approved, this proposed project would be factored into the study and any resulting recommendations.

Site Considerations

Best practices for planning the location of a destination scaled highly inclusive playground such as the one proposed, should consider a number of criteria not limited to geographic distribution and supporting services. The Shannon Park site has been recently renovated and includes a number of new and unique inclusive play structures. This site is large enough to add more features and benefits from its central location and close proximity to services in the new Rideau Heights Community Centre. Additional sites in the east and west end of the city could be considered for other highly inclusive playground projects in the future to provide a more equitable distribution to residents.

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City staff would continue to support the project and report back to Council in the future with confirmation of the required fundraising and stakeholder and community consultation. No timeline has been set by the proponent at this time.

Playgrounds with enhanced inclusive features exist in a number of municipalities in Ontario. Springbank Park in London, for example, has a playground with many enhanced inclusive play elements which was partly fundraised by the community. A notable highly inclusive playground is Nick's Dragonfly Playground in Guelph's South End Community Park developed a number of years ago. Newer destination scaled highly inclusive playgrounds were recently built in Toronto's Earls Bale Park and in Thunder Bay in partnership with the Canadian Tire Jumpstart charity. A smaller but highly inclusive playground was implemented in Quinte West this year in partnership with the local Lion's Club.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

None

Notice Provisions:

None

Accessibility Considerations:

The project would be developed to City Facility Accessibility Design Standards.

Financial Considerations:

At this time, no City budget implications are known to staff. The proponent is expecting to raise adequate funding to largely or completely support the project.

Contacts:

Luke Follwell, Director, Engineering Services, 613-546-4291 extension 3139

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Karen Santucci, Director Public Works & Solid Waste

Neal Unsworth, Manager, Parks & Shoreline, Engineering Services

Troy Stubinski, Manager, Public Works

Exhibits Attached:

None