

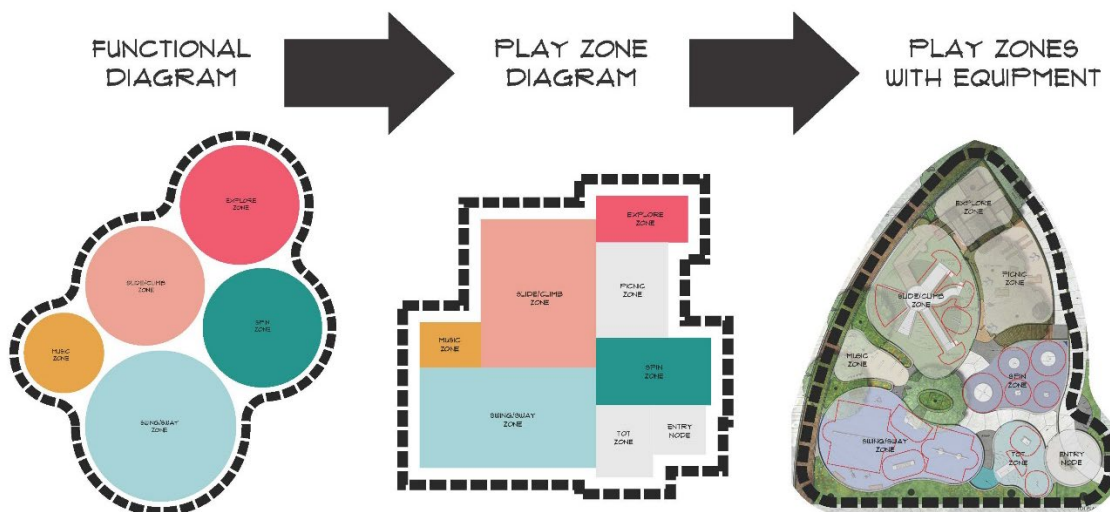
Strategy for Integrating Inclusive Play in Parks in Lincoln, NE

Final Draft: February 7, 2022

Background

Inclusive playgrounds are thoughtfully designed to provide a safe place where people of all abilities can play together. They go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act which requires access but not necessarily play experiences that meet the needs or abilities of the users. Inclusive playgrounds include physical accommodations providing access and specialized equipment to meet certain needs, but they also provide a number of opportunities for children to explore and to be able to play side by side with children and adults who may have different levels of ability. These opportunities are integrated as part of a cohesive design, not provided on separate equipment set off to the side. It is important to consider the space required for those with mobility equipment to be able to access play experiences as well as equipment that will accommodate these mobility devices. An inclusive playground should provide opportunities for users to enjoy play throughout their life – from childhood to old age.

Specifically, an inclusive design provides a range of play activities to stimulate and help development in 9 areas: vestibular, proprioceptive, interoceptive, physical, tactile, auditory, visual, imaginative/social, and risk awareness. Typical environmental features in inclusive design include a perimeter boundary with a single point of entry, a transition area for warming up and cooling down, an orientation pathway and good line of site to all points, accessible paths with visual cues, variations in the color or texture of surfaces to help with wayfinding and in organizing play areas, cozy spaces for retreat and observation, low level intricate play, undulating play and sensory plantings. It is important to also provide supportive facilities such as accessible parking, family restrooms, shaded areas, benches and picnic tables, drinking fountains and other features to support families and caregivers. Well-designed signage can provide information of the impact of design on the various developmental needs of visitors.

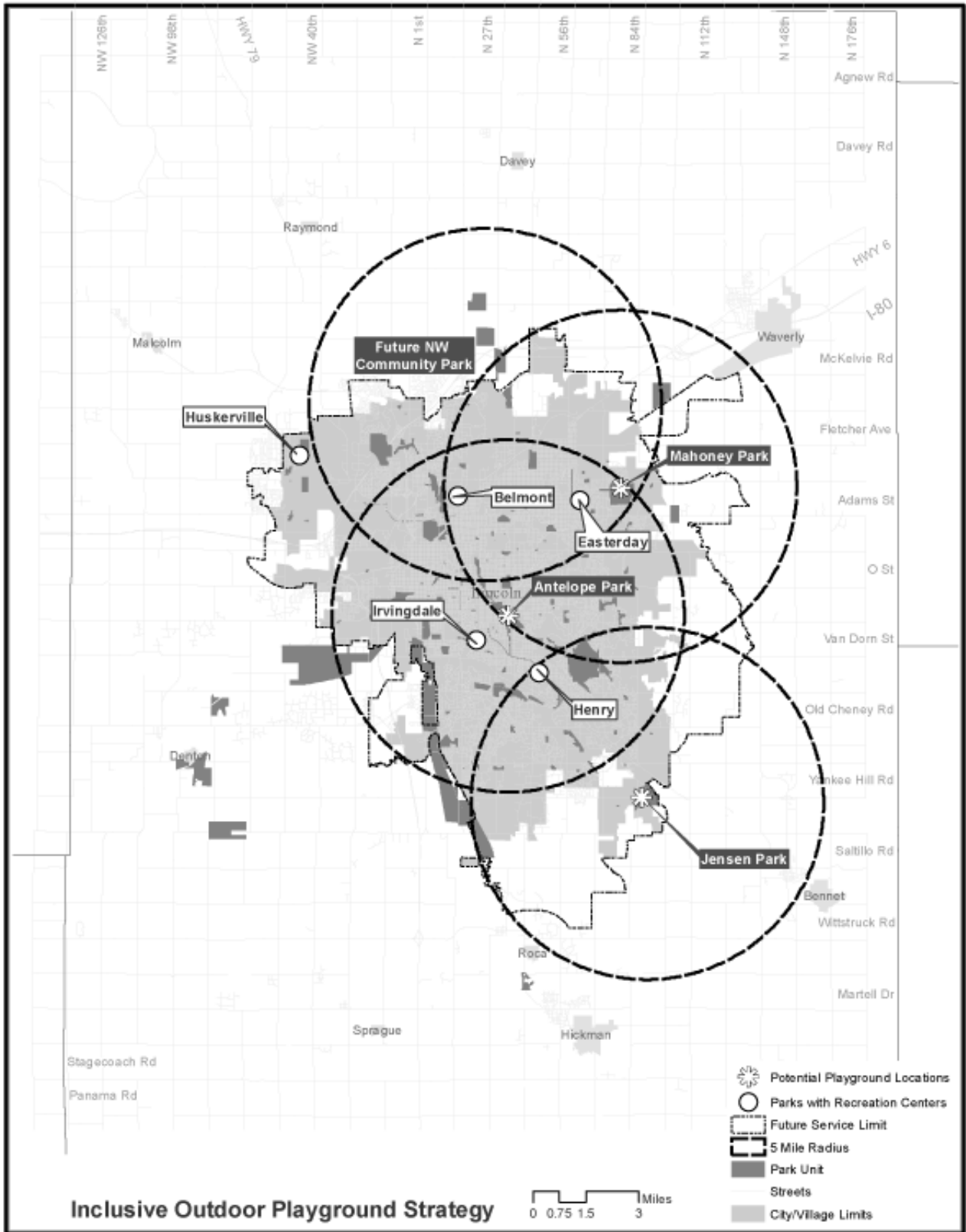


A word on Spraygrounds. Spraygrounds are aquatic facilities that have little or no standing water. This eliminates the need for lifeguards or other supervision because there is little risk of drowning. However, since sprayground users can fully enter into the water stream, the water must either be continuously

pumped and drained (single pass system) or treated to standards set by State and Local Health Departments. A system that treats and recycles water requires access control in the form of a 6-foot fence with self-latching gate. The number of bathers allowed is determined by the size of the sprayground and would need to be monitored. Additional sanitary facilities, determined by the number of users allowed, are also required. A system that does not treat the water but continually dumps it can be used without these requirements, but as a result uses a large volume of potable water that is both costly and environmentally unfriendly. For this reason, water play tables, which would pump and drain water (single pass system) and use considerably less water are recommended for use in playgrounds.

Currently two public spraygrounds are available in Lincoln: Trago Park and Woods Park Pool. Both of these facilities are accessible, and the intention is that future spraygrounds will be as well. The Lincoln and Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan includes a goal to develop spraygrounds in a community park in each quadrant of the City.

Ideally, every playground would be designed as a fully inclusive playground. The Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department has been and will continue to include play equipment designed for inclusive play in each new/renovated park playground as it is made available by playground equipment manufacturers. However, it will take time and considerable resources to make all playgrounds fully inclusive. In order to provide meaningful inclusive play in the community, the following 12-year strategy is being implemented.



1. Four New Inclusive Playgrounds

Level of Service: Outdoor Inclusive Play opportunities within 5 miles of every dwelling in Lincoln

Over the next 6 years, develop two large inclusive playgrounds within the community. Develop two additional large inclusive playgrounds in north and south Lincoln to meet community growth. The construction date shown is the best estimate based on assumed annual CIP funding and anticipated private donations. The timeline for actual construction may vary according to the success of a private funding campaign and the availability of construction materials/equipment and labor.

- a. Mahoney Park Playground: proposed construction 2024
 - i. Utilize the existing playground surface in Mahoney Park, expanding it to provide for at least 15,000 square feet of attenuated surface and providing an enclosed space of about 1 acre.
 - ii. Remove existing play structure and relocate to an alternate park in the northeast quadrant.
 - iii. Include new play elements to provide a full range of play experiences, undulating play, low level intricate play and cozy spaces.
 - iv. Incorporate a water play feature into the playground design, along with orientation pathway, transition areas, shade, benches, drinking fountain and sensory plantings.
 - v. Retrofit existing restrooms to provide two family restrooms with adult changing facilities and condition them for year-round use (underway).
 - vi. Provide a looped walking path that is independent from the commuter and recreational trail system.
 - vii. Connect playground via accessible routes to three surrounding parking areas.
 - viii. Encourage use of the Shanda Dixon Trail loop as an opportunity for a bicycle loop that is separate from the commuter/recreation trail system.
- b. Antelope Park Playground: proposed construction in 2026
 - i. Utilize existing playground surface in Antelope Park and provide an enclosed space of about 1 acre.
 - ii. Assess existing equipment and reuse any elements that are in good working order, repositioning them according to the new design.
 - iii. Include new play elements to provide a full range of play experiences, undulating play, low level intricate play and cozy spaces.
 - iv. Incorporate orientation pathway, transition areas, shade, benches, drinking fountains and sensory plantings.
 - v. Retrofit or replace existing restrooms to provide two family restrooms with adult changing facilities and condition them for year-round use.
 - vi. Provide a looped walking path that is independent from the commuter and recreational trail system.
 - vii. Connect playground via accessible route to parking on south and east sides.
- c. Jensen Park Playground: proposed construction to coincide with community growth
 - i. Develop attenuated playground surface of about 15,000 square feet and enclosed space of about 1 acre.

- ii. Install appropriate play elements to provide a full range of play experiences, undulating play, low level intricate play and cozy spaces.
- iii. Incorporate orientation pathway, transition areas, shade, benches, drinking fountains, and sensory plantings.
- iv. Include family restrooms with adult changing facilities and condition them for year-round use.
- v. Provide looped walking/riding path that is independent from the commuter and recreational trail system.
- vi. Connect playground via accessible route to all nearby parking.
- d. Northwest Community Park Playground: proposed construction to coincide with community growth
 - i. Develop attenuated playground surface of about 15,000 square feet and enclosed space of about 1 acre.
 - ii. Install appropriate play elements to provide a full range of play experiences, undulating play, low level intricate play and cozy spaces.
 - iii. Incorporate orientation pathway, transition areas, shade, benches, drinking fountains, and sensory plantings.
 - iv. Include family restrooms with adult changing facilities and condition them for year-round use.
 - v. Provide looped walking/riding path that is independent from the commuter and recreational trail system.
 - vi. Connect playground via accessible route to all nearby parking.

2. Five Enhanced Playgrounds with Inclusive Play Opportunities in Parks where City Recreation Centers are Located

Over the next 3 - 5 years, renovate or construct five enhanced neighborhood park playgrounds in parks where City recreation centers are located. These would be located in neighborhood parks and will be larger than typical neighborhood park playgrounds and have inclusive features that are specific to the particular location. These neighborhood+ parks are located adjacent to the City's Recreation Centers and have nearby parking and facilities, including accessible restrooms available during Rec. Center hours. Construction timeline is based on the renovation schedule for playground replacement established in LPR's 10-Year Facilities Plan and funding identified in the CIP.

- a. Easterday Park Playground: proposed construction 2023
 - i. Replace sand playground surfacing with attenuated surface.
 - ii. Add picnic shelter, half basketball court, drinking fountain and complete walking/biking loop as available funding permits.
 - iii. Include adaptive and inclusive play features focused on supporting the therapeutic recreation programming at the Easterday Recreation Center.
- b. Belmont Park Playground: proposed construction 2024
 - i. Replace sand playground surfacing with attenuated surface.
 - ii. Add drinking fountain and incorporate existing walking/biking loop as available funding permits.

- iii. Capitalize on adjacent playground features at Belmont Elementary and add additional complimentary play features to provide a fuller range of play experiences.
 - iv. Design play features to take advantage of the sloping topography with slides, swings and climbing features.
 - c. Huskerville Park playground: proposed construction 2023
 - i. Construct attenuated surfacing playground area.
 - ii. Include half basketball, picnic shelter, shade structure, drinking fountain as available funding permits.
 - iii. Capitalize on adjacent playground features at Arnold Elementary and add complimentary play features to provide a fuller range of play experiences.
 - d. Henry Park playground: proposed construction in 2025
 - i. Replace sand portion of existing playground with attenuated surfacing
 - ii. Add inclusive and adaptive features to play structure
 - e. Irvingdale Park: proposed construction 2022
 - i. Replace sand portion of existing playground with attenuated surface
 - ii. Add inclusive and adaptive play features
- 3. Continue to include Inclusive Play Opportunities in New and Renovated Playgrounds
 - a. New construction and regular renovation of playgrounds (20-to-25-year cycle) will continue to include attenuated surface under play structures. Swings will continue to be on sand but where inclusive or adaptive swings are installed an accessible route will be provided. Inclusive play features will be part of the design of all playgrounds.
 - b. Parks and Recreation Staff are committed to remaining up to date on the latest industry best practices, materials and equipment available to advance inclusivity in the City's outdoor play opportunities.
- 4. Continue to receive advice and guidance from the Inclusive Outdoor Play Working Committee
 - a. Include interested members in a subcommittee to focus on a fundraising campaign.
 - b. Meet periodically with interested members as new playground designs are developed.

Funding

Four New Inclusive Playgrounds

The preliminary cost estimate for the four large playgrounds is approximately \$800,000 each. The costs at Jensen Park and Northwest Community Park sites will likely increase assuming material and labor cost increases and the fact that they are currently undeveloped park sites and will require the installation of park infrastructure such as utilities, access and parking. The Department's proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) envisions the cost for these four playgrounds to be funded by a combination of general revenue in the amount of \$100,000 per year, and privately raised funding (grants and donations) in the amount of approximately \$500,000 per park.

Total CIP funding: \$1,200,000

Total Private Donations: \$2,000,000

Timing of construction will be based upon the success of the fundraising campaign. Both the Mahoney and Antelope Park playgrounds could be constructed earlier if private donations are available. Because Jensen Park and the future NW Community Park are currently undeveloped, construction may be impacted by larger park development plans.

Enhanced Playgrounds in Parks where Recreation Centers are Located

Playground renovations are currently programmed in the CIP at approximately \$70,000 each. The cost to enhance playgrounds in parks where City recreation centers are located to improve the inclusivity of these parks could potentially double that cost. Some of the park playgrounds listed are already included in the current CIP for funding while others have not yet reached the anticipated life span but have been included in the proposed CIP for future funding.

The Easterday Park playground renovation is currently funded in the CIP at the \$70,000 level. Existing park improvements do not include a shelter, play court, or looped pathway. Additional funding for inclusive play features will be requested in the proposed 2022/23 CIP.

The Huskerville Park playground is being planned for construction in conjunction with development of the new Air Park Recreation Center and Williams Branch Library (scheduled to open in 2023). This playground will be funded by Neighborhood Park & Trail Impact fees. at \$70,000. Additional funding for inclusive play features will be requested in the proposed 2024/24 CIP.

The Irvingdale Park playground will be renovated as part of a federal grant to make improvements to both Irvingdale and Rudge Parks. Additional funding for inclusive play features will be requested in the proposed 2022/23 CIP.

The Belmont Park playground (located adjacent to the Belmont Recreation Center) is proposed for renovation in the 2022/2023 CIP. The renovation will require replacement of a majority of the existing playground features; however, the park already has a shelter and walkways in favorable condition. Additional funding for inclusive play features will be requested in the proposed 2023/24 CIP.

The Henry Park playground (located adjacent to the Calver Recreation Center) is proposed for renovation in the 2024/2025 CIP. Like the Belmont Park playground, renovation will require replacement of a majority of the existing playground features; however, other existing park features are in favorable condition. Additional funding for inclusive play features will be requested in the proposed 2024/25 CIP.

Total CIP funding for standard playground renovation: \$350,000

In order to make the enhancements proposed, an additional \$350,000 will be needed. The Parks and Recreation Department proposed CIP will include a new funding category to provide for the enhancement of these parks with inclusive play features.