

Howard Park

Accessible & Inclusive Playground

May 2025



**WHAT
WE
LEARNED**

Background

An accessible & inclusive community hub

Howard Park is in a great central location, with easy access to paved pathways that connect to the regional trail network, nearby facilities like the Viking Rentals Centre (Events Hall and Arena), and Foothills Composite High School. The playground is also right next to a ball diamond and various sports fields.

The current playground at Howard Park isn't accessible—it has pea gravel for surfacing and doesn't include any accessible or inclusive play features, which makes it tough for all kids to enjoy.

The Town of Okotoks received a \$100,000 Federal Enabling Accessibility Grant to update Howard Park's playground and build an accessible and inclusive structure for all to enjoy.

Howard Park Design Workshop

The Town hosted a design workshop where local parents, caregivers and residents who have a special interest in accessibility and inclusivity were invited to share their input on the proposed design for a new accessible and inclusive playground at Howard Park.

Our Goal

To create an accessible and inclusive playground to further enhance Howard Park's role as a gathering place for all residents, creating a safe space where children of all abilities can play, connect and thrive.

2025 TIMELINE

MAY

6

Gather input from parents and caregivers, especially those interested in accessible and inclusive play.

AUG

OCT

TO

Construction scheduled to start in August 2025 and be completed by October 2025.

2025

Q4

Grand opening to follow once construction is wrapped up.

Community Engagement

Through our Community Engagement Policy, we're committed to making sure residents and businesses have a chance to share their thoughts on decisions that matter to them.

Who did we engage?

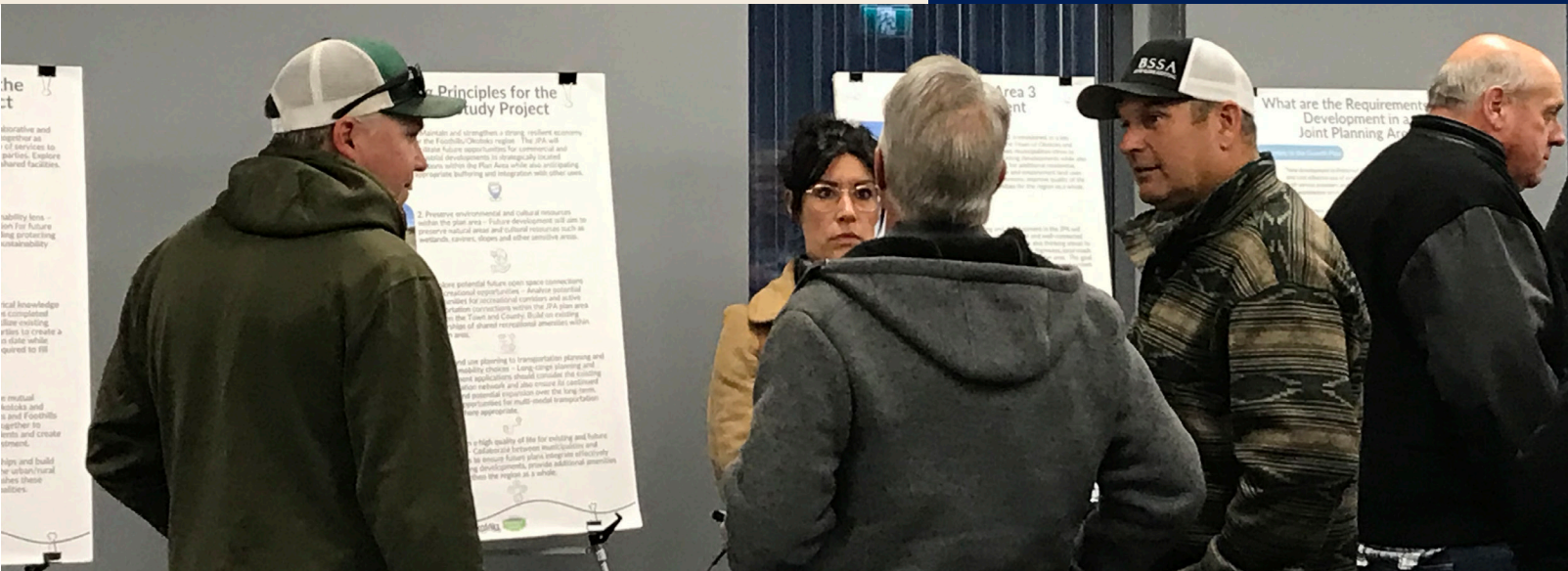
Members of the community, including parents and caregivers with a special interest in accessible and inclusive playgrounds.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This project falls within the **CONSULT** level.



13 Community members attended the in-person design workshop.



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
GOAL	To provide balanced and objective information to assist the public in understanding the problem, alternatives and/ or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives, and decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to make sure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE	"We will keep you informed."	"We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision."	"We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision."	"We will look to you for advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible."	"We will implement what you decide."
	INPUT ZONE		ENGAGEMENT ZONE		

Howard Park Classifications



District Park

Howard Park is a designated district park, as established by the Town of Okotoks Recreation, Parks and Leisure Master Plan, as well as the Town of Okotoks Landscape Design and Construction Specifications. The guidelines for a district park include:

- Park supports major indoor and outdoor recreation infrastructure and is conveniently located near a school.
- It serves Town residents and the surrounding regional community.
- Parking is available on-site.
- The park is easily accessible from major arterial roadways.
- There is strong connectivity to the Town's pathway system, enhancing access for pedestrians and cyclists.



Play Equipment for District Parks

The Town of Okotoks Landscape Design and Construction Specifications provides high level guidance for playground equipment:

- All play equipment must meet or exceed current CSA Standard CAN/CASE-Z614
- Playground must be fenced
- Amenity is to have an inclusive and accessible ramped structure with roller slide
- Playgrounds must include: play panels, climbing components, minimum 4 double swing bays, group play component, accessible surfacing, one unique challenging component
- Accommodate both age groups 2-5 years old and 5-12 year olds.



Accessible & Inclusive Play

Play equipment should support the full development of children's motor, sensory, and social skills. It shall provide opportunities for excitement, challenge, and discovery. Playgrounds are encouraged to offer a full range of play activities, including:

- Quiet and passive play
- Active and physical play
- Social interaction
- Imaginative play
- Opportunities for solitary and group activities

Additionally, playgrounds should be designed to ensure good flow and offer alternative routes of circulation among the various play components, enhancing both accessibility and engagement.



Howard Park Initial Design Concept

Physical

- Pathways, natural elements, freestanding activities encourage higher levels of physical activity.
- Play activities that promote fine and gross motor skills, varied operating force and choices for how to play.
- Beginning, intermediate, and advanced level of play help children develop appropriate continuum of skills.

Social-Emotional

- Under deck activities and dramatic play elements encourage creativity and imagination.
- Seating areas around, under, and on play structures offer a place to socialize, rest, or observe.
- Signage and unique play elements can create an atmosphere of acceptance and respect and promote cultural/disability awareness.

Sensory

- Consistent multisensory cues, using contrasting colours, landscaping, and textures for orientation and organization.
- Crawl tubes and under deck activities provide spaces for sensory relief, while motion activities provide sensory input.
- Offers sensory-rich experiences such as sand, water, plants, and other activities with tactile features.

Cognitive

- Activities that appeal to a variety of interests give children the opportunity to demonstrate what they know.
- Auditory, visual, or tactile feedback reinforces and develops the understanding of cause and effect.
- Creative opportunities to bring learning to reinforce development of skills.

Communication

- Talk tubes and interactive games encourage children to communicate, cooperate, and/or vocalize.
- Music activities provide children a way to contribute to the sounds of the play environment.
- Creative play elements enable children to demonstrate understanding and develop vocabulary.



Proposed Playground Components

Climbing Options

Q1

Would you prefer climbing option 1 or climbing option 2?

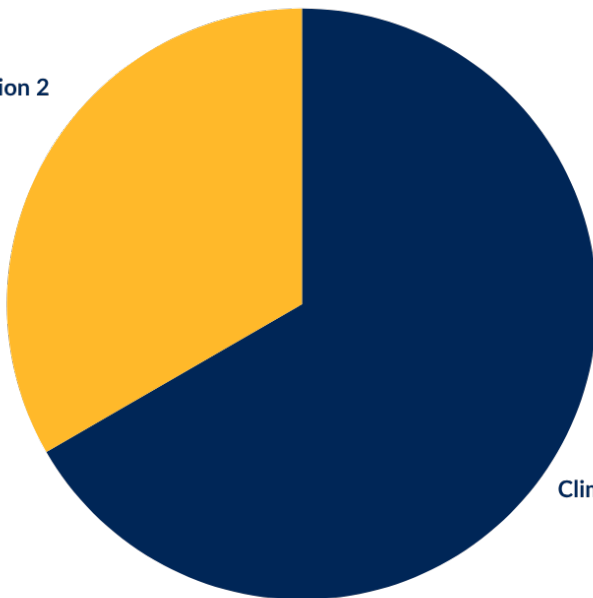
Climbing Option 1



Climbing Option 2



Climbing Option 2
33.3%



Climbing Option 1
66.7%



**Climbing
Option 1**

Workshop participants
selected this option as their
top choice.

Proposed Playground Components

Communication Options

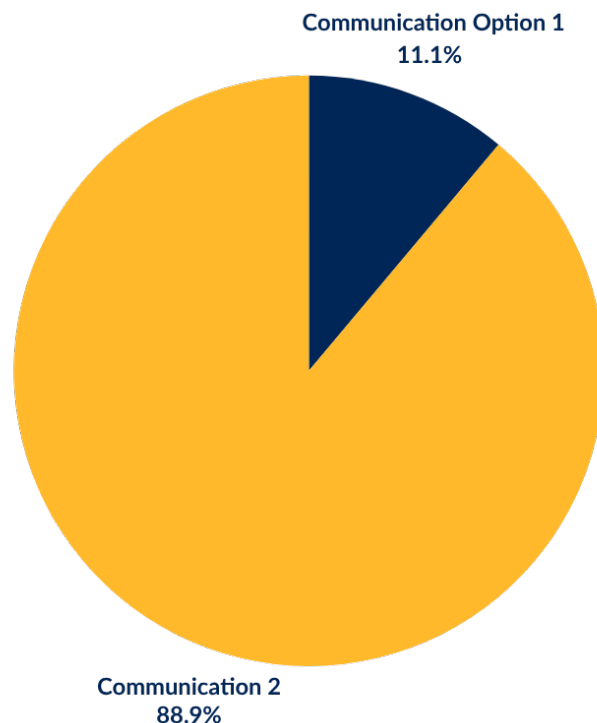
Q2

Would you prefer communications option 1 or communication option 2?

Communication Option 1



Communication Option 2



**Communication
Option 2**

Workshop participants selected this option as their top choice.

Proposed Playground Components

Motion (large) Options

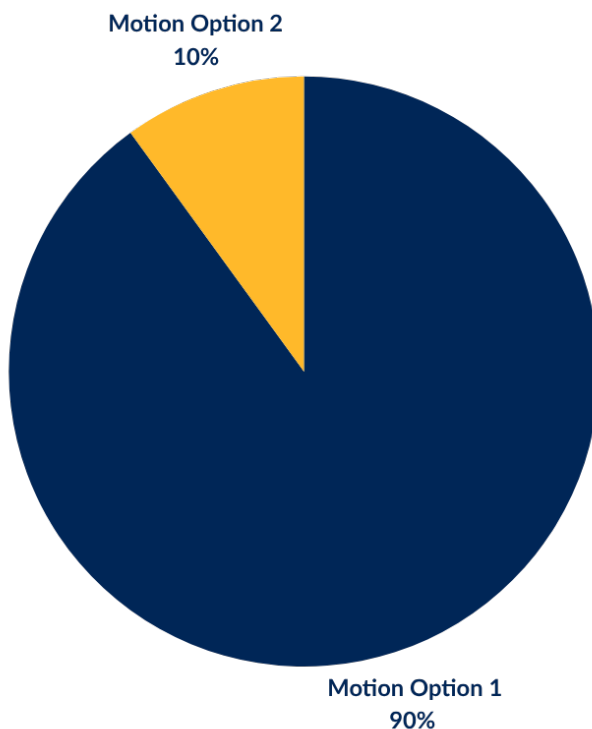
Q3

Would you prefer motion option 1 or motion option 2?

Motion Option 1



Motion Option 2



**Motion
Option 1**

Workshop participants
selected this option as their
top choice.

Proposed Playground Components

Spinning Options

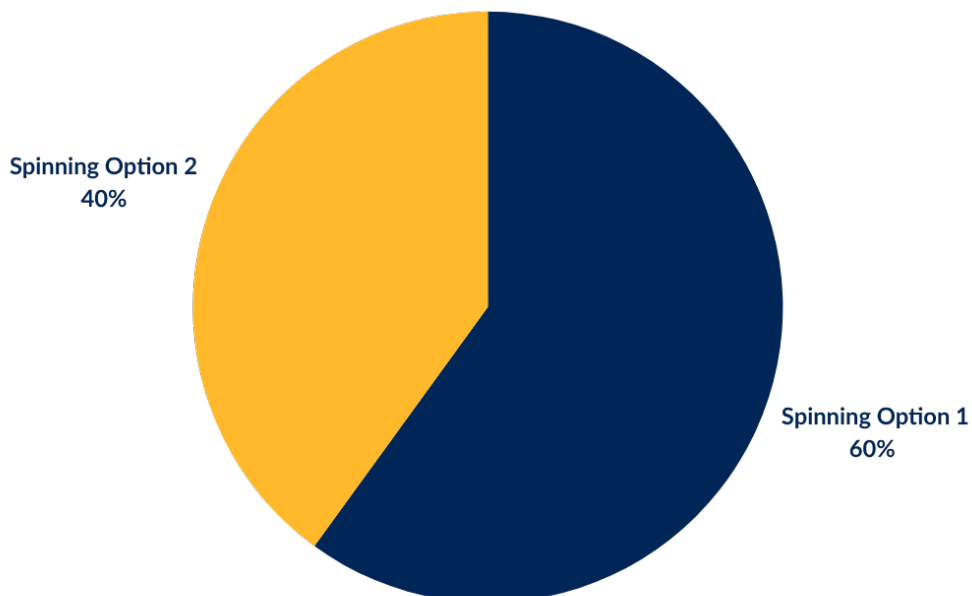
Q4

Would you prefer spinning option 1 or spinning option 2?

Spinning Option 1



Spinning Option 2



Spinning Option 1

Workshop participants selected this option as their top choice.

Proposed Playground Components

Sliding Options

Q5

Would you prefer sliding option 1 or sliding option 2?

Sliding Option 1



Sliding Option 2



Sliding Option 2

Workshop participants selected this option as their top choice.

Proposed Playground Components See-Saw/Rocking Options

Q6

Would you prefer see-saw/rocking option 1 or see-saw/rocking option 2?

Rocking Option 1



Rocking Option 2



Rocking Option 2

Workshop participants selected this option as their top choice.

Proposed Playground Components

Ramping Options

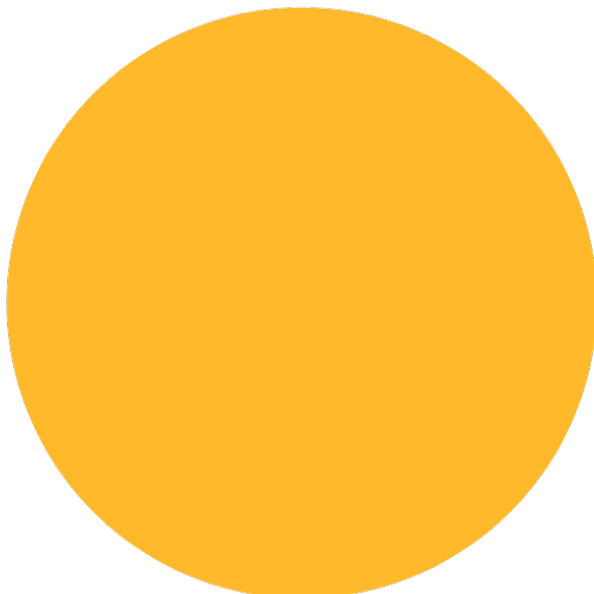
Q7

Would you prefer ramping option 1 or ramping option 2?

Ramping Option 1



Ramping Option 2



Ramp Option 2
100%



**Ramping
Option 2**

Workshop participants
selected this option as their
top choice.

Recommendations

Based on the input from the Howard Park Design Workshop, the initial design concept will be updated to incorporate:

- ✓ Climbing option 1
- ✓ Communication option 2
- ✓ Motion option 1
- ✓ Spinning option 2
- ✓ Sliding option 2
- ✓ Rocking option 2
- ✓ Ramping option 2



Next Steps

2025**Q2**

Initial design concept will be updated to include the feedback from the Howard Park Design Workshop.

2025**Q3**

Construction will begin on Howard Park's inclusive and accessible playground. Construction is scheduled to be complete by October 2025. **Pending weather and final design approval. Dates subject to change.*

2025**Q4**

Grand opening of Howard Park inclusive and accessible Playground. Stay tuned for a grand opening celebration.

