



## Creating Vancouver's First Inclusive and Accessible Sensory Park for Children

*Excerpted from Minutes January 23 & 23, 2024*

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MOVED by Commissioner Viridi  
SECONDED by Commissioner Howard

*Amendments (strike and replace)* MOVED by Commissioner Christensen  
*Amendment (adding D)* MOVED by Commissioner Bastyovanszky

*Final motion as amended:*

WHEREAS:

1. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation is dedicated to creating recreational spaces that are inclusive, safe, and accessible to all residents, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds;
2. On June 20, 2018, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-81, An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada (the Accessible Canada Act) in Parliament. The Accessible Canada Act received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019, and came into force on July 11, 2019;
3. The purpose of the Accessible Canada Act is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. This involves identifying, removing and preventing barriers in federal jurisdiction in a number of priority areas including the built environment (buildings and public spaces) and the design and delivery of public programs and services;
4. In June 2021, the province's Accessible British Columbia Act became law. It provides a framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility and represents an important step toward making B.C. a more accessible and inclusive province that supports people with disabilities to meaningfully participate in their communities;
5. The Park Board is subject to the requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act and the Accessible Canada Act and fully embraces the obligations outlined in legislation and remains resolute in its efforts to achieve inclusivity and accessibility in all aspects of Park Board jurisdiction;
6. With the exception of the Kitsilano Beach Park playground, which was designed for access and inclusion in 2010-2011, and included accommodations to address the needs of neurodiverse children (consistent with the understanding of these needs at the time), and the Douglas Park Playground, which was designed for children with neurodiverse needs (2018-19), there are no parks in Vancouver that meet the standard of a fully inclusive and accessible sensory park for children;
7. Children with mobility and other challenges deserve equal opportunities to enjoy sensory-rich recreational activities in Vancouver parks and recreation facilities and to connect with their peers in an accessible environment;
8. Children who are neurodiverse, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, often require specialize sensory-friendly environments where they can comfortably engage their senses, explore, and interact, thereby fostering their social, cognitive,



and emotional development. There is a known deficiency of these specialized spaces within Vancouver parks and recreation facilities;

9. An Inclusive and Accessible Sensory Park for Children requires specific elements and accommodations such as:
  - i. sensory-rich play zones that stimulate various senses, including touch, sight, sound, and smell, while ensuring comfort and sensory-friendly experiences for neurodiverse children, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - ii. inclusive and accessible sensory equipment designed to be usable by children of all abilities, including those in wheelchairs.
  - iii. accessible pathways, ramps, and surfacing to ensure safe and easy mobility for children with mobility challenges.
10. Given the growing demand and recognition of the need for inclusive and accessible spaces in our city, an urgent need therefore exists to create recreational environments that can cater to the diverse needs of our community, notably the needs of neurodiverse children, children with autism, and those who use wheelchairs;
11. The creation of a flagship accessible and inclusive sensory park in Vancouver, one that would uniquely cater to the needs of neurodiverse children, children with autism, and those who use wheelchairs, would represent a monumental step toward providing the kind of equitable recreational spaces for all residents in alignment with important legislative steps taken by the federal and provincial governments and reflective of the Park Board's goal to accomplish various inclusivity and accessibility objectives; and
12. The establishment of Vancouver's first fully accessible and inclusive sensory park would send a strong signal of the Park Board's unwavering commitment to creating a better, more accessible and more inclusive future for all residents.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

- A. THAT the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation direct staff to report back on:
  - i. The progress of the July 4, 2022 motion, "Accessible and Inclusive Design Guidelines for Playgrounds", which directed staff to develop and implement accessible and inclusive design for new and renewed playgrounds for people with mobility, auditory, visual and sensory needs;
  - ii. The progress of VanPlay initiatives P.1.2 (audit the physical accessibility of all park amenities) and P.1.3 (design and build five additional fully-accessible destination play areas);
  - iii. The status of other current initiatives, policy, previous member motions and staff recommendations on the topic of inclusive and accessible parks; and,
  - iv. Capital and operating funding estimates to implement the motions and initiatives listed in items i & ii;



- B. THAT a fundraising envelope be opened at the Vancouver Parks Foundation for private donations towards sensory park equipment, and if sufficient, a dedicated sensory park;
- C. THAT staff update the Vancouver ParkFinder website to include accessible and sensory features currently available at each Park Board playground. The Parks and Recreation website should be, ideally, updated to include a tool to search by playground feature.
- D. THAT the Board directs the Chair to write a letter, on behalf of the Park Board, to Mayor and Council requesting up to \$5 million, subject to cost estimates provided in the report back from staff, in funding for capital and ongoing operating costs related to the implementation of the motions and initiatives listed in items A.i and A.ii.

CARRIED

(Commissioners Haer, Howard & Viridi opposed)