



***RPT 20-455***

**TITLE:** State of the Playgrounds Update Report

**DATE:** November 23, 2020

**TO:** Executive Committee

**PUBLIC:** X

**INCAMERA:**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the report be forwarded to the 2021 Budget Committee deliberations for consideration.

**TOPIC & PURPOSE:**

This report is to provide the Budget Committee with an update into the State of the Playgrounds Report and the accomplishments to date within the 2020 year. As well for the Budget Committee to review a proposed funding level increase in the 2021 budget year for playground/amenity replacement.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Prince Albert owns and maintains 29 playground structures and these playground structures come in all types throughout the neighborhood parks.

While some playgrounds tend to be elaborate with fully themed playground units, climbers, spring toys and multi-level play houses other, playgrounds are age appropriate, designed and enjoyed by smaller children.

The report to Council is to outline the current state of playgrounds and current investments within the city and continues to look at the ongoing maintenance and possibilities of refurbishment/replacement. Community Services over the past 3 years began this journey by providing Council with a comprehensive State of the Playgrounds Report in 2019 outlining objectives to refurbishment/replacement. Prioritizing those objectives through a systematic inspection process continues to identify priority locations and those that have the ability to wait. The Parks Department tasked in 2018 with maintaining all twenty nine-playground structures

with an annual operational budget investment of \$20,000 or \$645 per playground and no capital investment. This changed in the 2019 budgeting process when Council approved an additional \$50,000 in operational support and an additional \$100,000 in capital investment. Funding levels thru the 2020 budgeting season remained at total operational dollars of \$70,000 and capital investment of \$100,000 helping us to achieve a brand new playground installation within Lions Park and safety improvements to 25 of our 29 playgrounds.

### **PROPOSED APPROACH AND RATIONALE:**

What has happened since this report was developed helps to provide a window into what is possible when planning is thoughtful and steps taken to see it through to inception.

In 2019, we saw the following take place within our playgrounds:

1. A total of \$219,782 reinvested into 19 playgrounds in the form of surfacing material improvements, edging/border, bench(s), picnic table(s), bike rack(s) and garbage can(s).
2. Southwood Playground has seen a total investment of \$49,000 in the way of a new swing set, surfacing and trees.
3. Muzzy Drive saw a total investment \$128,969 into a new playground and fence.
4. Alfred Jenkins Field House saw a total investment of just over a \$1,000,000 dollars into the new inclusive playground through the partnership of Canadian Tire (Malcolm Jenkins), Jumpstart and the City.
5. For a total investment of \$1,348,751 dollars.

In 2020, we saw the following take place within our playgrounds:

1. A total investment of \$17,205 reinvested into 25 of 29 playgrounds to improve upon safety measures on playground equipment.
2. Lions Park Playground saw a total investment of \$140,884.69 in the way of a brand new structure, surfacing material, new park pathway, lighting and security camera installation.

3. Lions Park also saw an additional investment of \$166,280 in the way of a brand new Water Spray Park structure, completed in partnership with Canadian Tire (Malcolm Jenkins) and the City.
4. For a total investment in 2020 of \$1,024,370 dollars.

With the additional operational and capital dollars provided during the 2019 budget, the department was able to experience a healthy increase in the expenditure per capita from \$.55 in 2018 to \$4.72 in 2019. This was an 85% increase in spending on playgrounds from one year to the next and the results speak for themselves.

In the early days, of the report we had noted that 75% of our playgrounds; were identified as being obsolete, what did that actually mean? Other than the playground supplier was no longer in business it also meant that parts for the playgrounds would be difficult but not impossible to obtain. Over the past three years, we have been able to continually review and assess our playground situation and have seen just over \$2,373,120 reinvested through important partnerships and increased funding provided through council. We continue to recognize that playground replacement priorities do change and will change from year to year and have identified three potential playgrounds that fall into the lowest levels for replacement and ranked at a level 1 moving into 2021. Those playgrounds//amenities are as follows:

- A.C. Howard – Priority for 2021 replacement
- James Isbister – Priority for replacement and working to seek partnership to bring some change to this area.
- Little Red River Park – Priority for 2021 with a committed partnership between the Rotary Club and City to build a Little Red Adventure Park.

Being able to thoughtfully budget moving forward will allow the Community Services to plan for a functional, well maintained playground system that offers something for everyone. Public parks are an important place for formal and informal play. Especially amongst children, play is a foundational method for developing a number of skills that are necessary for later life. Through play, children develop skills associated with socialization, coordination, imagination, and cognition.

If we want to have a playground environment, we are proud of, that offers children, families, users the opportunity to experience play in a fun, unique and safe environments we believe

steps have been, taken, ensuring that the City playgrounds are around for the long term by investing in today and reaping the benefits of that investment tomorrow.

### **CONSULTATIONS:**

The City is committed to ongoing engagement, with the community in decisions about parks and playgrounds. Documents like the Community Services Master Plan and tools such as 'Let's Talk Prince Albert' can be used to help guide and direct the City on how and when we engage the public for their feedback as well as how we can encourage users to take an active role in planning the future of our parks.

The Community Services Advisory Committee can also provide feedback and direction and be that voice for the community throughout this process.

### **COMMUNICATION AND/OR ANNOUNCEMENT PLAN:**

Decisions based on future playground development and funding will flow through our Communication Department.

### **FINACIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Community Services would like to make the following options available to the Budget Committee for consideration in the 2021 budgeting process.

1. That the current source of funding of \$100,000 in Capital and \$70,000 in Operating as provided in the 2020 budget be maintained in the 2021 budget. This would provide a new single play structure only; or,
2. The current source of Capital increase to \$130,000 which reflects the true cost of a single playground structure, lighting improvements, furniture (garbage can, bench, bike rack, picnic table), and a security camera; or,
3. That the current source of Capital increase to \$260,000 which reflects the true cost of two playground structures, lighting improvements, furniture (garbage can, bench, bike rack, picnic table) and a security camera.

The buildout of two playgrounds would be ideal to remain on track with playground replacement and ensuring that we have equipment that is safe noting that we have identified three playgrounds in 2020 that fall within that Level 1 category, which require immediate replacement.

One playground already identified and earmarked for capital funds in 2021, one that is a priority for replacement but no current funding or partnership and a third where there is partnership with a commitment from the Service Club to help partially fund the playground/adventure park.

Community services would continue to look for opportunities through external funding opportunities to assist with future playground opportunities whether that be refurbishment or replacement strategies.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS:**

There is no policy, privacy implications, or other considerations.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This report supports the ability to be accountable and transparent while working to ensure all facets of City operations and projects are sustainable, operating with efficiency, mitigating risk, and utilizing transparent and realistic costing.

**OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN:**

This report supports the Community Services Master Plan initiatives and addresses the goal of contributing to infrastructure and sustainability efforts through proper planning which can help preserve and maintain natural and built environments. Our connection to the natural world is important and must be, considered in the delivery of community services.

**PUBLIC NOTICE:**

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Bylaw No. 24 of 2015 is not required.

**PRESENTATION:**

Verbal Presentation – Timothy Yeaman, Parks Manager

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Parks Report Fully Merged
2. Playground Overview 2020

Written by: Timothy Yeaman, Parks Manager

Approved by: Director of Community Services and City Manager