

**Municipality of Chatham-Kent**  
**Infrastructure and Engineering Services**  
**Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Jeff Bray  
Director, Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries  
**Date:** March 23, 2021  
**Subject:** 2021 Playground Lifecycle Projects

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**Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

1. The list of 2021 Playground Equipment Lifecycle projects valued at \$711,500 be approved and funded through the Playground Equipment Lifecycle Reserve.

**Background**

During the 2000 budget deliberations, Council approved the establishment of a lifecycle reserve for playground equipment replacement. For a 15-year replacement cycle for all playground equipment, it was determined that approximately \$160,000 (plus inflation) was required on an annual basis. Based on Canadian Safety Authority (CSA) standards, Chatham-Kent usage patterns, equipment age and condition, a Playground Equipment Replacement Priority List was created to guide the 15-year replacements timeframe.

Since 2000, approximately 98% of Chatham-Kent parks have received new playground equipment. There are only a few remaining units that require replacement within the initial 15-year cycle. Due to lower usage and good maintenance protocols, the remaining original playground units do not require replacement.

As of January 2016, the province mandated that all new units must be Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliant, where applicable. Complying with the AODA has major financial impacts on playground unit costs. In 2019, a typical accessible unit cost is \$100,000 that includes the unit, signage, access ramps, accessible play safety surface material, and bench.

## **New AODA Accessibility Standards - Design of Public Spaces in the Built Environment**

The Ministry of Community and Social Services amended the Ontario Regulation 191/11, the Integrated Accessibility Standards (IAS) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), to include new standards governing the design of public spaces in the built environment.

Starting in 2016, the Standards outline new requirements that municipalities must incorporate into the design of specified public spaces, including Outdoor Play Spaces, e.g. playgrounds.

### **Outdoor play spaces, accessibility in design**

When constructing new or redeveloping existing play spaces that will be maintained, municipalities and organizations other than small organizations, shall;

- (a) Incorporate accessibility features, such as sensory and active play components, for children and caregivers with various disabilities into the design of outdoor play spaces
- (b) Ensure that outdoor play spaces have a ground surface that is firm, stable, and has impact attenuating properties for injury prevention and sufficient clearance to provide children and caregivers with various disabilities, the ability to move through, in, and around the outdoor play space. O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6

Accessible play equipment is more expensive than what municipalities have historically purchased. Chair-like swings that support children with limited leg use, for example, or low-and-wide playground platforms can cost up to 50 per cent more than older-model equipment with comparable play value. The softer rubberized or wood chip playground surfaces will be required to replace the more economical sand surface material, which is impassible by a wheelchair.

Some of the accessible initiatives that have been progressively incorporated into Chatham-Kent Playground designs, since early 2000, include the following:

- i. **Accessible Playground Surfacing:**  
Accessible playground surfaces are currently being installed. When a new unit is replaced the surfacing is being changed to engineered wood fiber. In a few larger regional-type installations, rubberized surface material has been installed. Engineered Wood Fibre and rubberized surfaces ensure safe and easy wheelchair access to play equipment.
- ii. **Transfer Stations:**  
Transfer stations allow wheelchair or walker users with enough strength and mobility to leave their assistive device to climb onto appropriately designed sections of a play structure.

- iii. **Inclusive Components/Activities at Ground Level:**  
Interactive playground features are installed at ground level and surrounded by an accessible surface that permits access for all users regardless of age or ability.
- iv. **Accessible Swings:**  
Swing seats equipped with special harnesses are available that allow children with disabilities and/or requiring additional caregiver support to enjoy this popular activity.
- v. **Sensory Activities:**  
Sensory, e.g. auditory, visual, kinesthetic, smell and tactile activities that encourage exploration and discovery are a necessary part of development for all children, especially those with autism or sensory processing impairments. Examples of sensory stimulating activities include the use of bright colours, spinning elements, labyrinth and kaleidoscope panels, the use of different textures, music panels, drums and other sound generating devices.
- vi. **Accessible Ramps:**  
Ramps have not been a major part of the overall design of the play structures within the Municipality. However, over the last few years, transfer stations were included to provide access to units. To improve accessibility for those with mobility concerns, the installation of ramps from the ground into the play structure or adjoining two play areas is valuable. All users can access the entire structure instead of being confined to ground level activities.

The Chatham-Kent Accessibility Advisory Committee will be providing consultation on all proposed designs.

### **Comments**

An on-site evaluation of all playground equipment scheduled for replacement in 2021 has been completed. Existing units that are still CSA compliant will be reviewed in 2022.

Playground equipment projects were reviewed in context with the following priorities:

- Safety
- Mandated/legislated design requirements, e.g. CSA, AODA
- Cost avoidance

Administration has identified priority projects to be completed in 2021. A contingency has been included in the total estimated cost for quote overages, emergency repairs or replacements.

**The estimates of each individual project have been removed to ensure a competitive bid process.**

Community	Project	Comment	Estimated Cost
Blenheim, Erieau, Dealtown and North Buxton Parks	Baby and regular swing replacements.	Annual maintenance.	
Chatham: Taylor, Steele Meadowbrooke, Midwood Parks	Remove sand safety base and install Engineered Wood Fibre.	Safety upgrade.	
Chatham: Tecumseh, Midwood-Oxley Parks	New accessible swing seats.	AODA upgrade.	
Chatham: Kingston Park	Rubber surface repairs.	Maintenance.	
Chatham: Moose Park	Play unit replacements.	Existing equipment is over 25 years old and requires replacement.	
Thamesville: Ferguson Park	New play structure.	Existing equipment is over 21 years old and requires replacement.	
Tilbury: Memorial Park	Replacement of two existing units with a single unit.	Existing equipment is 18 years old and requires replacement.	
Wheatley: Park Crescent	Replacement of two existing units with a single unit.	Existing equipment is 18 years old and requires replacement.	
Wallaceburg: Jaycee Park	Existing unit is for 18 month to 5 year old users. New play structure will be an inclusive unit for a broader range of users.	Existing equipment is 19 years old and requires replacement.	
Various	Emergency repairs	Contingency for Emergency Repairs or Replacements	
Total			\$711,500

- **Safety Surface Top-Up** – Municipality-wide  
Project: Supply and place Engineered Wood Fibre

Playground equipment throughout the municipality require a semi-annual top up with Engineered Wood Fibre. Safety surfacing upgrades are required as part of an ongoing maintenance program to adhere to fall height protection as required in the CSA Playground Guidelines.

### **Areas of Strategic Focus and Critical Success Factors**

The recommendation in this report supports the following areas of strategic focus:

Economic Prosperity:

Chatham-Kent is an innovative and thriving community with a diversified economy

A Healthy and Safe Community:

Chatham-Kent is a healthy and safe community with sustainable population growth

People and Culture:

Chatham-Kent is recognized as a culturally vibrant, dynamic, and creative community

Environmental Sustainability:

Chatham-Kent is a community that is environmentally sustainable and promotes stewardship of our natural resources

The recommendation in this report supports the following critical success factors:

Financial Sustainability:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is financially sustainable

Open, Transparent and Effective Governance:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is open, transparent and effectively governed with efficient and bold, visionary leadership

Has the potential to support all areas of strategic focus & critical success factors

Neutral issues (does not support negatively or positively)

### **Consultation**

Financial Services has verified the current balance in the Playground Equipment Lifecycle Reserve for the 2020 year-end.

All Facility Supervisors were consulted for their priorities and any outstanding projects yet to complete.

During the procurement process, replacement play structure designs will be submitted to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for review and comments.

### **Financial Implications**

The following is the status of the Playground Equipment Lifecycle Reserve:

<b>2021 Playground Equipment Lifecycle Reserve</b>	
2020 Balance Forward	\$631,605
2021 Lifecycle Allotment	\$243,418
<b>Total Funding Available for 2021 Projects</b>	<b>\$875,023</b>
2021 Proposed Lifecycle Projects <sup>A</sup>	-\$711,500
<b>Balance Remaining in Reserve</b>	<b>\$163,523</b>

**Note A:** Contingency of \$60,000 for project overages is accounted for in the estimate.

The balance remaining in the Playground Equipment Lifecycle Reserve at the end of 2021 will be used for future lifecycle projects.

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