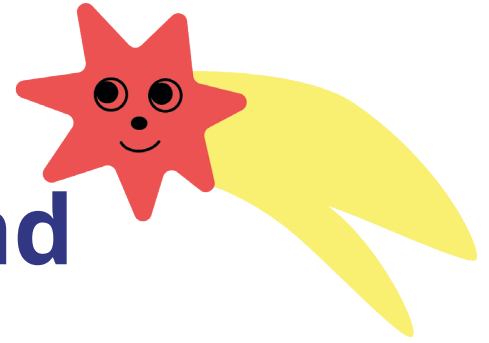
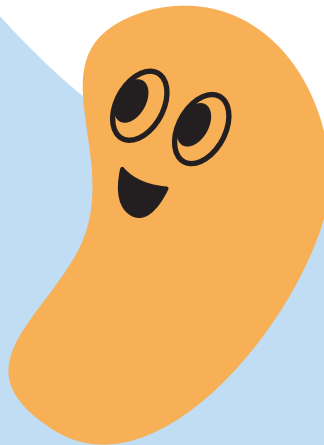
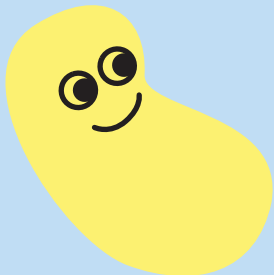
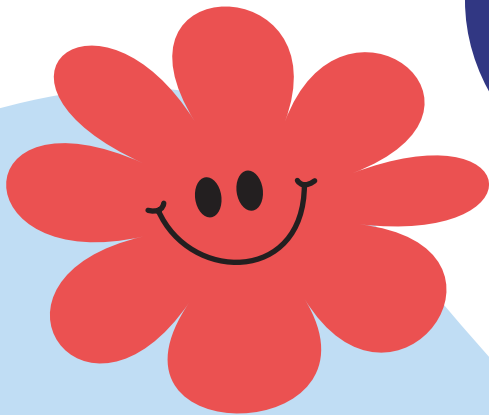


Inclusive Playground Design Project



Engagement Summary
Spring 2026

What we
heard



Contents

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- How we engaged
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- What play experiences do people want?
- Key themes from participant comments
- Next steps

This engagement was completed on the unceded, traditional, and ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh Nation), who have lived on these lands since time immemorial.

What's it all about?

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation is beginning an initiative to make playgrounds more inclusive.

We are creating new **Inclusive Play Design Guidelines** to support the design of playgrounds in Vancouver parks. Input from the community, accessibility and play experts, and people with lived experience is helping shape the guidelines.

Memorial South Park will be the first inclusive destination playground in Vancouver. It will be the first place where we put the new guidelines into practice. The project is part of the Park Board's goal to create five inclusive destination playgrounds across the city by 2040.

Inclusive play:

- Means people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds can play together
- Goes beyond basic accessibility requirements
- Looks at physical access, sensory experiences, social connection, and cultural inclusion
- All children, caregivers, and community members should feel comfortable and able to join in

Project timeline



Spring 2026: getting started
Project planning and initiation



Late spring 2026: public engagement
Designing inclusive playgrounds



WE ARE HERE

Summer-fall 2026: concept design development
Develop guidelines and draft Memorial South playground concept plan



Late 2026-early 2027: report back
Share draft concept design with public and elected Park Board for decision



2027-2028: implementation
Detailed design and playground construction

How we engaged

In spring 2026, we invited **Vancouver residents, organizations, and accessibility advocates to help shape inclusive playground design**. More than 375 survey responses and community interactions contributed to this engagement. Project promotion and outreach reached thousands more across the city.

Through this engagement, we learned about people's experiences using playgrounds and what helps create welcoming, enjoyable spaces for people of all ages and abilities.

How people participated



Survey - 237 people completed an online survey available through Shape Your City from May 5-31, 2026



Pop-up event - 140+ visitors came to our booth at the Memorial South Park Centennial Celebration on May 24th

How we promoted engagement

During the engagement period, we reached people through a variety of methods:



Signage - 73 posters in **7 languages** in community centres and libraries citywide



Social media posts - we posted on the Vancouver Park Board Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, and Instagram accounts to inform people about the engagement and resulted in **19,000+ social media views**



Website - all project content was made available on shapeyourcity.ca (**1,000+ website visits**)



Interest holder outreach - 97 interest holders and community representatives connected to inclusive play and Memorial South Park were informed about the project and invited to participate

What we heard - Pop-up

On May 24, 2026 we joined South Vancouver Neighbourhood House's Centennial Celebration at Memorial South Park. Over 140 participants visited our pop-up booth to learn about the project, share their thoughts, and add their ideas to our interactive boards.



Visitors expressed nostalgia for the park, including memories of using the playground and wading pool with their children in their own childhood. They also recognized that the aging playground needs improvements.

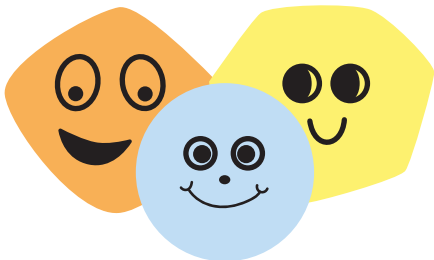
Participants were curious about inclusive play and interested in learning more. We discussed how playgrounds can better support children and caregivers with different needs and abilities. Common themes from conversations and 11 sticky notes left on the boards included improving shade and weather protection, enhancing safety and accessibility, and creating play opportunities that work for a wider range of users.



Visitors to our pop-up booth at the Memorial South Park Centennial Celebration share their feedback on inclusive playground design using engagement boards.

Who we heard from

Most survey participants were adults living in households with children, and respondents came from neighbourhoods across Vancouver. The survey also reflected a range of cultural backgrounds and languages.

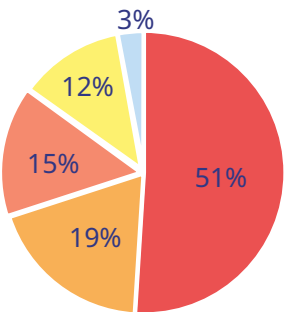


Most feedback came from parents and caregivers

Nearly 8 in 10 respondents (79%) had children under 18 living at home, and most (84%) were between 25 and 54 years old. About half (51%) were 35 to 44 years old.

Age of survey respondents:

- Under 24 (3%)
- 25 - 34 (15%)
- 35 - 44 (51%)
- 45 - 54 (19%)
- over 55 (12%)



Most participants were women

Almost 8 in 10 respondents (79%) identified as women.

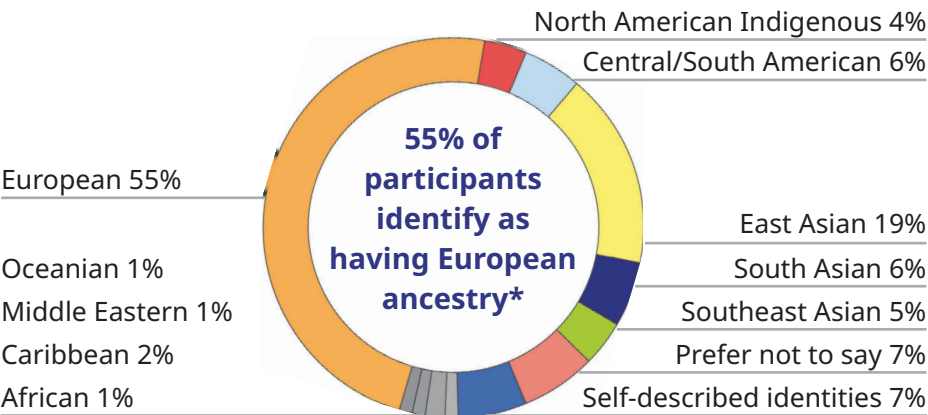
Participant snapshot

- 79% have children under 18 living at home
- 84% live in households with 3 or more people
- 79% identify as women
- 20% speak a language other than English most often at home

Feedback came from all over Vancouver

We heard from residents across Vancouver, with survey participants representing **all 22 Vancouver neighbourhoods**.

Ethnic background

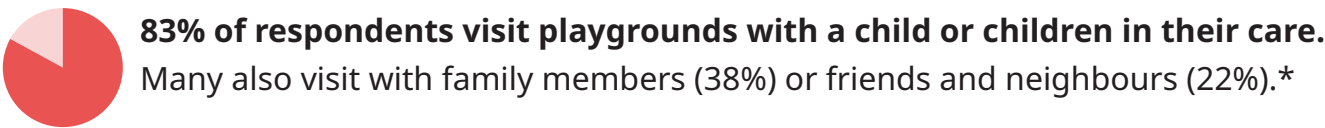


**To better understand the diversity of respondents, we asked them to identify their ethnic backgrounds or ancestry.*

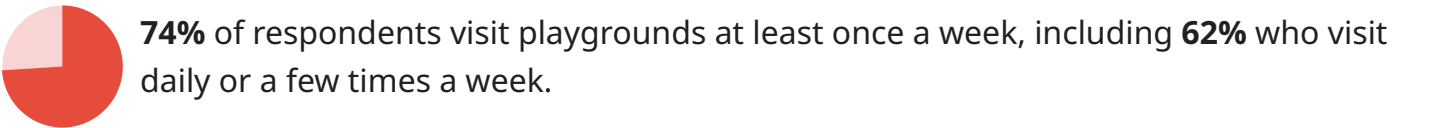
How survey respondents use and visit playgrounds

Most participants visit playgrounds regularly and often visit with children in their care. Their feedback reflects the experiences of people who use playgrounds frequently for play and recreation.

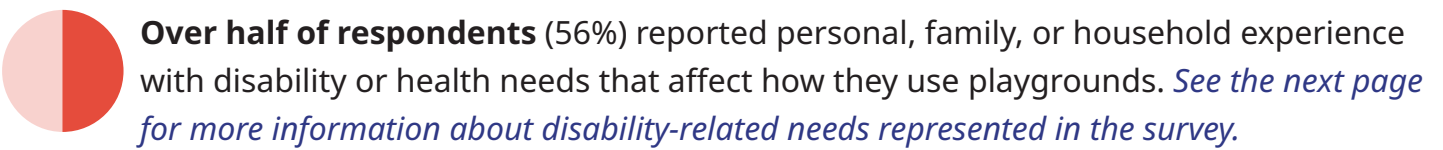
Participants visit playgrounds with children in their care



Frequent playground visitors



Experience with disability

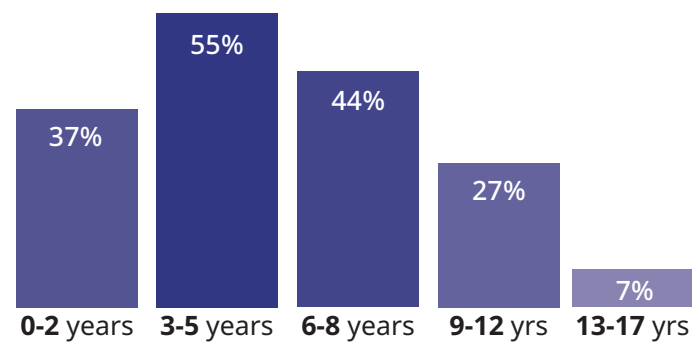


Children of different ages

Respondents visited playgrounds with children of different ages, with the strongest representation from preschool- and elementary-aged children.

**Note: for some survey questions, we asked participants to choose multiple answers, meaning some of the percentages in this section add up to over 100.*

Ages of children respondents visit playgrounds with:

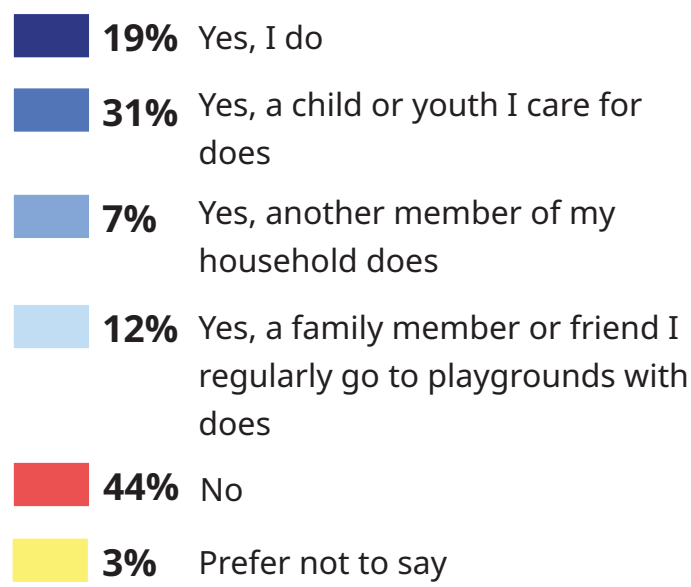


Disabilities and playground use

Many respondents who participated in this engagement had experience with disability. Understanding the experiences of people with disabilities helps inform playground design and supports opportunities for more people to participate, play, and feel a sense of belonging.

Playground users and disability

We asked whether respondents or the people they visit playgrounds with have a disability or health condition that affects how they use playgrounds.



Nearly one in five respondents (19%) identified as having a disability or health condition that affects playground use, while **almost one-third** (31%) care for a child or youth with such needs.

10% of participants said that **two or more** playground visitors in their circle have disabilities.

Types of needs

We asked people what kinds of needs affect how they or someone they visit playgrounds with use playgrounds.

Most commonly reported needs:	Other reported needs:	
Mobility (40% of all survey respondents)	Communication (25%)	Seeing (12%)
Sensory (37%)	Understanding or learning (21%)	Hearing (8%)
Attention or behaviour regulation (35%)	Chronic illness, pain, or fatigue (17%)	Mental health (7%)

Throughout this report, “people who reported disabilities” refers to respondents who reported having a disability or regularly visiting playgrounds with someone who has a disability. We reported on data for these two groups separately when there was a significant difference in how they answered the question.

What we heard about inclusive play

The survey was designed to understand how people define inclusive play, what barriers they experience when using playgrounds, and what features help create welcoming and enjoyable play spaces.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Three key themes emerged from the survey and will be explored in more detail on the following pages:

1 Inclusive play is about more than play equipment

People identified challenges related to access, amenities, and play opportunities. These challenges can make playgrounds harder to use and less welcoming.

★ **Key finding:** *Nearly 8 in 10 survey participants had visited a playground that was difficult or uncomfortable to use, often because of barriers beyond the play equipment itself.*

2 Inclusive playgrounds combine access, comfort, and opportunities to play

Amenities, accessibility features, and opportunities for different ages contributed to positive experiences and helped people feel welcome and able to participate.

★ **Key finding:** *People highlighted amenities, accessibility features, and opportunities for different ages as important contributors to positive playground experiences.*

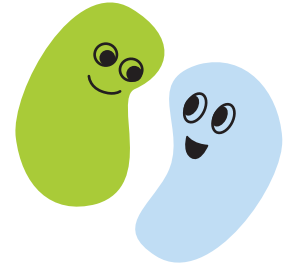
3 People want a variety of play experiences that support different interests and needs

No single type of play stood out on its own. Respondents valued a mix of nature, physical, challenging, sensory, creative, and social play opportunities.

★ **Key finding:** *Respondents valued a mix of nature, physical, challenging, sensory, creative, and social play opportunities rather than a single type of play experience.*

What makes playgrounds inclusive?

Many people described inclusive playgrounds as places where they feel welcome and able to participate. Only 6 in 10 people who completed the survey (61%) said they had visited a playground they considered inclusive.



Features people identified in inclusive playgrounds

People who had visited a playground they considered inclusive identified several features that supported access, comfort, safety, and participation.

The most commonly reported features were:

- ✓ There was shade and seating
- ✓ It had things for multiple age groups to do
- ✓ The washroom was easy to get to and use
- ✓ The play equipment was easy to use

Other commonly reported features:

- ✓ It was easy to get there
- ✓ The ground was smooth and easy to move on
- ✓ There was room for wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- ✓ Caregivers could see children well

KEY TAKE-AWAY

Inclusive playgrounds combine access, comfort, and opportunities to play.

Amenities, accessibility features, and opportunities for different ages contributed to positive experiences and helped people feel welcome and able to participate.

How people felt at inclusive playgrounds

People also shared how they felt when visiting these playgrounds. They commonly shared they felt:

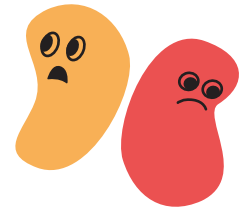
- 😊 Like this place was for me and my family
- 😊 Like I could stay for a long time
- 😊 Excited to be there
- 😊 Safe and comfortable in my body
- 😊 Like I could play in my own way
- 😊 Calm
- 😊 Included



Why ask about feelings?

This project uses a feelings-based approach to help understand inclusion. Looking at the reasons behind people's experiences and how those experiences made them feel helps designers see playgrounds through the eyes of their users.

What makes playgrounds difficult to use?



Many people said playgrounds can be difficult or uncomfortable to use.

Nearly 8 in 10 people (78%) who completed the survey said they had visited a playground that was difficult or uncomfortable to use.

Challenges people experienced at playgrounds

People who had visited a playground that was difficult or uncomfortable to use identified a range of challenges related to access, amenities, comfort, and play opportunities.

The most commonly reported challenges were:

- X There was no washroom**
- X There was not enough seating or shade**
- X The playground equipment was hard to use**
- X It did not work for all age groups I was with**

Other common challenges people reported included:

- X The paths or ground made it difficult to get around**
- X It did not feel safe**
- X The washroom was hard to get to or hard to use**
- X It was too noisy, busy or overwhelming**
- X It was hard to get there**

KEY TAKE-AWAY

Inclusive playgrounds are about more than play equipment. People identified challenges related to access, amenities, and play opportunities. These challenges can make playgrounds harder to use and less welcoming.

How people felt at difficult playgrounds

People also shared how they felt when visiting these playgrounds. They commonly shared they:

- ☹ Did not feel physically safe or comfortable**
- ☹ Felt anxious or overwhelmed**
- ☹ Felt bored**
- ☹ Did not feel free to play my own way**
- ☹ Felt left out or not welcome**

What play experiences do people want?

Understanding the types of play people value can help create playgrounds that support different interests and needs. We asked people in the online survey and at the Memorial South Park pop-up event what play experiences they would most like to see in Vancouver playgrounds.

Play experiences people would like to see

People identified a variety of play experiences that support different interests, abilities, and ways of playing.

The top play experiences across all respondents were:



Nature Play: Play that happens in natural spaces or uses natural materials like sand, water, plants, sticks, rocks, or mud.



Physical (movement): Play that uses active body movement, such as running, jumping, climbing, dancing, swinging, or throwing.



Challenging (risky play): Play that feels exciting and involves testing limits, such as climbing high, moving fast, balancing, or trying something uncertain.

Other commonly selected play experiences included:

- **Constructive play** (building or creating)
- **Exploratory play** (understanding or solving)
- **Sensory play*** (touching, hearing, etc.)
- **Imaginative play** (pretending)
- **Cooperative play** (groups games or equipment)

***Note:** Sensory play was selected more often by respondents who reported disabilities (37%) than those who did not (14%), suggesting it may support a wider range of play needs

KEY TAKE-AWAY

People want a variety of play experiences that support different interests and needs.

No single type of play stood out on its own. Respondents valued a mix of nature, physical, challenging, sensory, creative, and social play opportunities.

Pop-up Event

This question was also asked at the Memorial South Park pop-up event. Results were similar, with physical play and challenging play ranking highest.

Key themes from participant comments

We asked people if there was anything else related to inclusive playgrounds they'd like us to consider. Participants shared 106 comments filled with ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Five common themes emerged, shown below. The comments supported many of the themes seen throughout the survey.

Accessible amenities

Inclusivity includes paths, surfaces, parking, washrooms, and overall site access.

"Having an adult size changing table in the washroom... would encourage more people like us to go out more often"

More ways to play

Provide a range of play opportunities so children of different abilities can participate.

"Disabled children and adults are often limited to one or at maximum, a few pieces of playground equipment"

Shade and weather protection

Playgrounds should be cooler, greener, and comfortable in heat and rain.

"Please shade playgrounds not just the seating area."

"Leafy naturally shaded areas for summer. Coverage for winter rain."

Design for all ages

Include not only young children but also older children, teens, adults, and seniors in playgrounds and supporting features.

"Often physically accessible playgrounds are only designed for very young kids [and] don't have same level of cognitive interest that older kids with physical disabilities need."

Safety, containment and comfort

Fencing, cleaning and maintenance, and enforcement would improve safety.

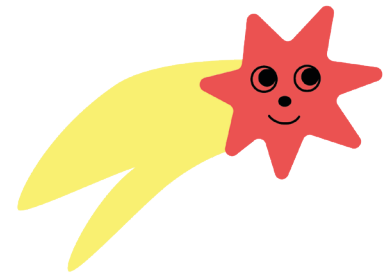
"Many children with autism have a tendency to elope... Please try to incorporate more fencing around playgrounds."

"More upkeep and respect for parks that already exist would go a long way."

Next steps

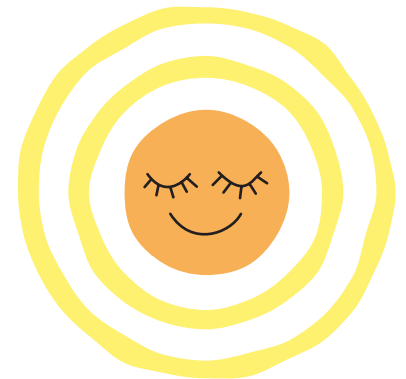
How your input will be used

What we heard during spring 2026 engagement will help inform the Inclusive Play Design Guidelines and the draft concept design for the new inclusive playground at Memorial South Park. Feedback from participants will be considered alongside input from local Nations, City staff, and other experts.



What happens next?

We are now developing the Inclusive Play Design Guidelines and draft concept design for the Memorial South Park Inclusive Destination Playground. We expect to share these with the public in late 2026 or early 2027.



The concept plan will then be presented to the elected Park Board for consideration.

Subject to approval, the Memorial South project will move into detailed design, with playground construction currently targeted for 2027-2028.

We'd love to stay in touch!

Email us at: InclusivePlaygroundDesign@vancouver.ca

Sign up for project updates on Shape your City:
shapeyourcity.ca/inclusive-playground-design