



TITLE: State of the Playgrounds 2025/2026

DATE: September 17, 2025

TO: Budget Committee

PUBLIC: X

INCAMERA:

RECOMMENDATION:

That capital funding in the amount of \$150,000 and operating funding in the amount of \$70,000 be maintained in the 2026 Budget to make the necessary maintenance and repair improvements to existing playgrounds and spray parks as outlined in the State of the Playgrounds 2025/2026 Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Prince Albert owns and maintains 29 playground structures, 1 paddling pool and 7 Spray Parks, these structures come in all types throughout the neighborhood parks.

The State of the Playgrounds Report outlines the accomplishments within the 2025 budget year and a review of the proposed funding level for the 2026 budget.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Prince Albert owns and maintains **29** playground structures, 1 paddling pool and 7 Spray Parks, these structures come in all types throughout the neighborhood parks.

Some playgrounds tend to be elaborate with fully themed units, climbers, spring toys, multi-level playhouses, while others designed and enjoyed by smaller children.

Our Spray parks are unique in nature specifically to the area they were built, allowing for a different experience at each location you visit.

The report to Council provides the current state of playgrounds and investments within the city and outlines ongoing maintenance and possibilities for refurbishment/replacement. Over the past 5-years the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department began the process by providing Council with a comprehensive State of the Playgrounds Report outlining objectives to refurbishment/replacement. Prioritizing those objectives through a systematic inspection process we continue to identify priority locations and those that could wait. Funding levels in the 2025 budget provided for \$70,000 in operating used to enhance, maintain and improve upon current play spaces and capital investment dollars of \$150,000 towards the concept and future development of an identified playground project.

Partnerships and funding opportunities have and continue to be very important to the city in achieving milestones in playground and spray park development. The 'City of Parks' is a positive endorsement noting the quality of legacy projects that have been completed over the past 7-years.

PROPOSED APPROACH AND RATIONALE:

Through Capital funding and partnership, the following had been accomplished in the 2025 budget season.

Midtown Community Centre Spray and Play

The playground constructed in 2024 had met with some devastating news in 2025 with 2 significant fires that fully engulfed the main play structure, garbage bin and did damage to the shade sail. As part of the department's efforts due to the fire, we worked quickly with our insurance provider and received full approval through SGI to have the main structure replaced. The garbage bin and shade sail involved in the secondary fire have been replaced through operational funding. As a result of both fires the department is working with a local supplier to install a 360-degree security camera before the end of the season as a measure needed to help protect the structure and detect those involved in such criminal activity.

The replacement playground structure, garbage bin and shade sail have been ordered and are expected to arrive at the City Yards in October 2025. We received confirmation from the installing contractor that replacement will take place early spring of 2026.

Additional items to be completed in relation to the Midtown development is the surfacing concrete work and landscaping, to be completed by the end of October 2025, and the repair to the exterior fencing to the development.

The department continually reviews and assesses playground improvement opportunities, prioritizing that work, the funding needed for reinvestment through important partnerships, grants, capital and operational funding. Through this process the community has been the recipient of amazing investments in spray parks and playgrounds. The department acknowledges that playground replacement priorities do change and will change from year-to-year based on many factors. We continue to work hard in identifying those priorities and, reporting them back to members of council so that we can identify where funding should be prioritized.

With the unprecedented growth we continue to see an overwhelming response in use of these newly developed spaces from the public as well as some of our more seasoned play spaces. This has resulted in the department prioritizing use of capital and operational funding in 2025 and into 2026 for repair and replacement of components and surfacing within these spaces sooner than expected. The need to pivot in our planning and response to maintenance needs and refocus our efforts on maintenance of newer spaces (built within the last 7-years) while reinvesting in some of our older spaces is strategic and ensures the longevity and legacy of these spaces well into the future. The pivot to a maintenance focused strategy ensures we put the city in a position to protect the investments and to reduce/mitigate increased costs for repair and replacement before pushing ahead with consideration on additional construction projects.

For this reason, the department continues its work to re-evaluate spaces within our State of the Playgrounds document to know how best to plan for the responsible use of funds from both capital and operational to help assist in achieving priorities.

CONSULTATIONS:

The department stays 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 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.

COMMUNICATION AND/OR ANNOUNCEMENT PLAN:

Decisions based on future playground investment and funding will flow through our Communication Department and through Neighbourhood meetings.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Parks, Recreation and Culture would like to make the following options available for consideration in the 2026 budgeting process.

- That the current source of Capital funding of \$150,000 be maintained in 2026 and that the capital funding be considered for use in our efforts in making the necessary maintenance and repair improvements to existing playground and spray parks. This will continue to provide for focus to bring play/spray structures and surfacing that have fallen into disrepair back into compliance with playground CSA and ASTM regulations while enhancing safe environments for play.
 - **ASTM F2075:**

This standard specifies the physical and chemical requirements for engineered wood fiber, ensuring it's free from contaminants like metal particles, tramp metal, lead, arsenic, and cadmium that could pose a hazard to children.
 - **ASTM F1951:**

This standard establishes accessibility requirements, ensuring that the surface allows for easy use by people with disabilities, such as those in wheelchairs.
 - **ASTM F1292:**

This standard specifies the testing methods and requirements for impact attenuation (critical fall height). Playgrounds must have enough loose-fill material to meet the required critical fall height, which is the maximum height from which a child could fall without a serious head injury.
- That the current source of Operational funding of \$70,000 be maintained in 2026 and continue to be used for playground maintenance in conjunction with the \$150,000 in capital funding.

Parks, Recreation and Culture is committed to its work in seeking out external funding opportunities to assist with future playground and spray park opportunities whether that be refurbishment or replacement strategies as we continue to build on positive meaningful legacy-built projects that reflect our commitment to play here in the city.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

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

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Investing in Infrastructure through 'Nature Area Planning' with continued prioritization and support of recommendations identified through the annual reporting of the State of the Parks & Playgrounds Improvement Plan, Little Red River Park Master Plan, and the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

And,

Delivery Professional Governance through 'Engaged Government' by 'Identifying' sensitive issues in advance and implement thorough quality communication as well as 'Strengthen' relationships with external organizations to share information and collaborate on projects and services.

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN:

The report aligns with Section 9.2 of the Official Community Plan.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

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

ATTACHMENTS:

1. State of the Playgrounds 2025/2026

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Approved by: Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture & City Manager