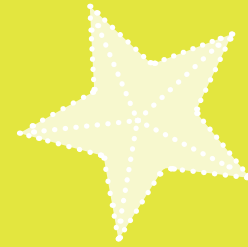


BEYOND BOUNDARIES



El Paso's All-Abilities Playground Planning Report

Community Engagement | Programming | Theming | Site Identification

Spring 2024



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Beyond Boundaries: El Paso’s All-Abilities Playground Planning Report represents the efforts dedicated by multiple leaders in El Paso, local disability experts and practitioners, and a consultant team aimed at reflecting the communities’ desires as it relates to an inclusive playground. This project supports the City of El Paso’s **mission to deliver exceptional services to support a high quality of life and place for our community**, by furthering a commitment to create an all-abilities playground that caters to diverse needs, prioritizing an environment of inclusion where children of multiple abilities can come together and play. The project will be designed to foster inclusivity, equity, accessibility, and engagement for all users, providing safe and enjoyable recreational space. The team learned much from our dedicated stakeholders and wanted to extend a **heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who participated in this effort**.



Capital Improvement Department

Daniela Quesada, AIA
City Architect

Alex Hoffman, AICP
Assistant Director, CID Planning

Appolonia Roldan, LEED AP ND
Urban Design Manager



Parks & Recreation Department

Benjamin E. Fyffe
Managing Director Museums & Cultural Affairs

Pablo Caballero
Director of Parks & Recreation

Karla Chavez
Parks Planning & Development Manager



Mend Collaborative

Sandy Meulners-Comstock, PLA
Co-founder and Principal-in-Charge (PIC)

Michelle Bright, SITES
Co-founder and Project Manager (PM)



Consor

Martin Bartlett
Public Involvement Manager, Local Engagement Lead

Jessica McBain
SPC Specialist, Local Engagement Lead



BioGeoCreations

Michael Scisco
Owner, Geospatial Data Lead

THANK YOU to the 30+ organizations our team reached out to and the dedicated stakeholders that found time to participate in this effort!

This is the group of organizations the team contacted during the six month planning process, from October 2023 to March 2024.

- ADAPT
- Angel’s Mission
- The Arc of El Paso
- Autism Hope - El Paso
- Autism Society Texas El Paso
- Autism Society of Texas
- Beautiful Minds MALI
- B.R.A.C.E. (Build Respect Advocate Connect Empower)
- Children’s Disabilities Information
- City of El Paso Neighborhood Committees and Associations
- CISD ASD Strategist
- CISD Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- COEP Accessibility Advisory Committee
- COEP Park Advisory Board
- Down Syndrome Coalition El Paso
- Education Service Center - Region 19
- El Paso PTA Leaders
- EPISD ASD Specialist
- Gigi’s Playhouse
- Homeschool Association
- Mike Dee’s Big Adventure
- Moms on Board
- Paso Del Norte Children’s Development
- PEN Project
- Project Amistad
- Rio Grande chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association
- SISD ASD Specialist
- Tu Mundo Es Mi Mundo
- UTEP Rehab Science
- UTEP - PT Program
- Vision for EP
- Volar
- YISD Special Education Social Worker
- Youth Leadership Forum



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARYi

PURPOSE & PROCESS 1

UNDERSTAND15

RECOMMENDATIONS23

CITATIONS45

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

El Paso is the 6th largest city in Texas, the 22nd in the nation, and is home to a population of 678,000 people. As the region grows the need to add more parks and playgrounds increases to serve the community’s needs and expectations, especially regional facilities that provide diverse amenities to serve many different abilities. Reflecting this need, in **November 2022**, El Paso voters approved the **Community Progress Bond Proposition B: Parks & Recreation Facilities**, which included a regional, community All-Abilities Playground.

All-Abilities playgrounds provide equitable access to play for all children and are specially designed to be accessible and welcoming to children with disabilities. These inclusive spaces address the needs for all people, including those who may have intellectual disabilities, autism, hearing or visual impairments, and physical impairments. A properly designed inclusive playground accommodates everyone and engages them at their personal level while providing opportunities to grow.

The Beyond Boundaries: El Paso’s All Abilities Playground Planning Report is a comprehensive document outlining the community engagement process and site selection efforts for the development of an inclusive playground in our city. This report reflects the collective input gathered from the public, stakeholders, and experts to shape the **vision, theme, programming, and caregiver amenities** of the playground. Additionally, the report addresses the crucial aspect of determining the location for this transformative project.

The All Abilities Playground Planning Report is the critical first step in planning for the City’s next inclusive playground. Our process included engaging with over 1,000 people through 15 engagement events and two surveys. Reflecting the community’s desires, this is the guiding document for the next phases of the playground project. Building off the recommendations outlined in this document, the next steps include the design of the playground.

This Executive Summary provides a snapshot of the purpose and process of the project, the site selection process, community engagement, and provides the overall recommendations developed in collaboration with the community.

Snapshot of Purpose & Process

Beyond Boundaries: El Paso’s All-Abilities Playground Planning effort was a six month process from October 2023 - March 2024 and included 4 main phases of work. These phases included:

- Phase 1 - ORGANIZE:** Engagement Strategy and Team Meetings
- Phase 2 - UNDERSTAND:** Project Understanding and Siting Criteria
- Phase 3 - ENGAGE:** Community Engagement
- Phase 4 - REPORT:** Feedback Analysis and Reporting

This Executive Summary compliments and distills the main take-aways of the full report for the All-Abilities Playground. The report is organized into 4 main sections:

Section 1 | Purpose & Process discusses the need and support for an all-abilities playground for El Paso and walks through the planning process outlined in this report

Section 2 | Understand describes and maps the existing parks with inclusive play features in El Paso and highlights two precedent all-abilities playground projects in other cities

Section 3 | Recommendations combines the results and best practices research on inclusive play and summarizes these into clear recommendations for the future playground

Section 4 | Citations includes the references from the research used in the report

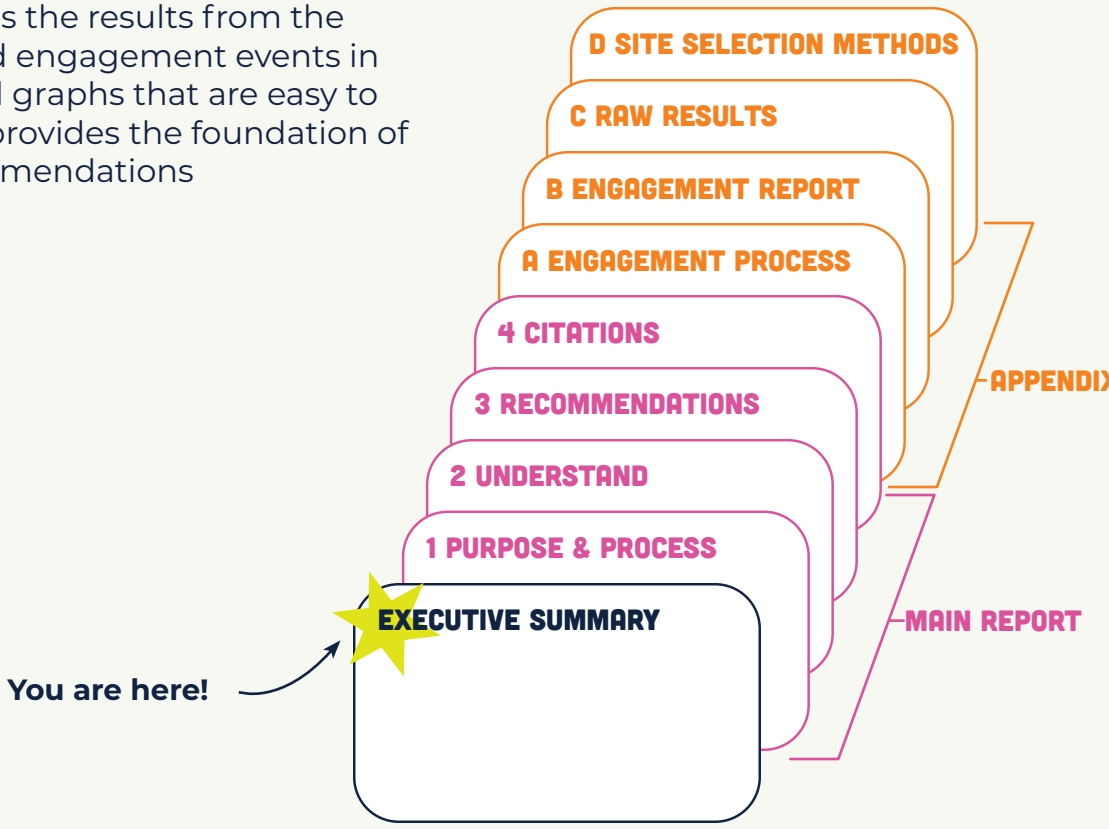
Accompanying this report is an appendix that provides further detail on the process:

Appendix A | Engagement Process documents the details of the engagement process undergone as part of the planning effort including the number of participants, marketing for the various events, and key takeaways

Appendix B | Engagement Report synthesizes the results from the survey and engagement events in charts and graphs that are easy to read and provides the foundation of our recommendations

Appendix C | Raw Results shows our engagement spreadsheet and the raw results from the survey hosted on the Elev8ep.com website

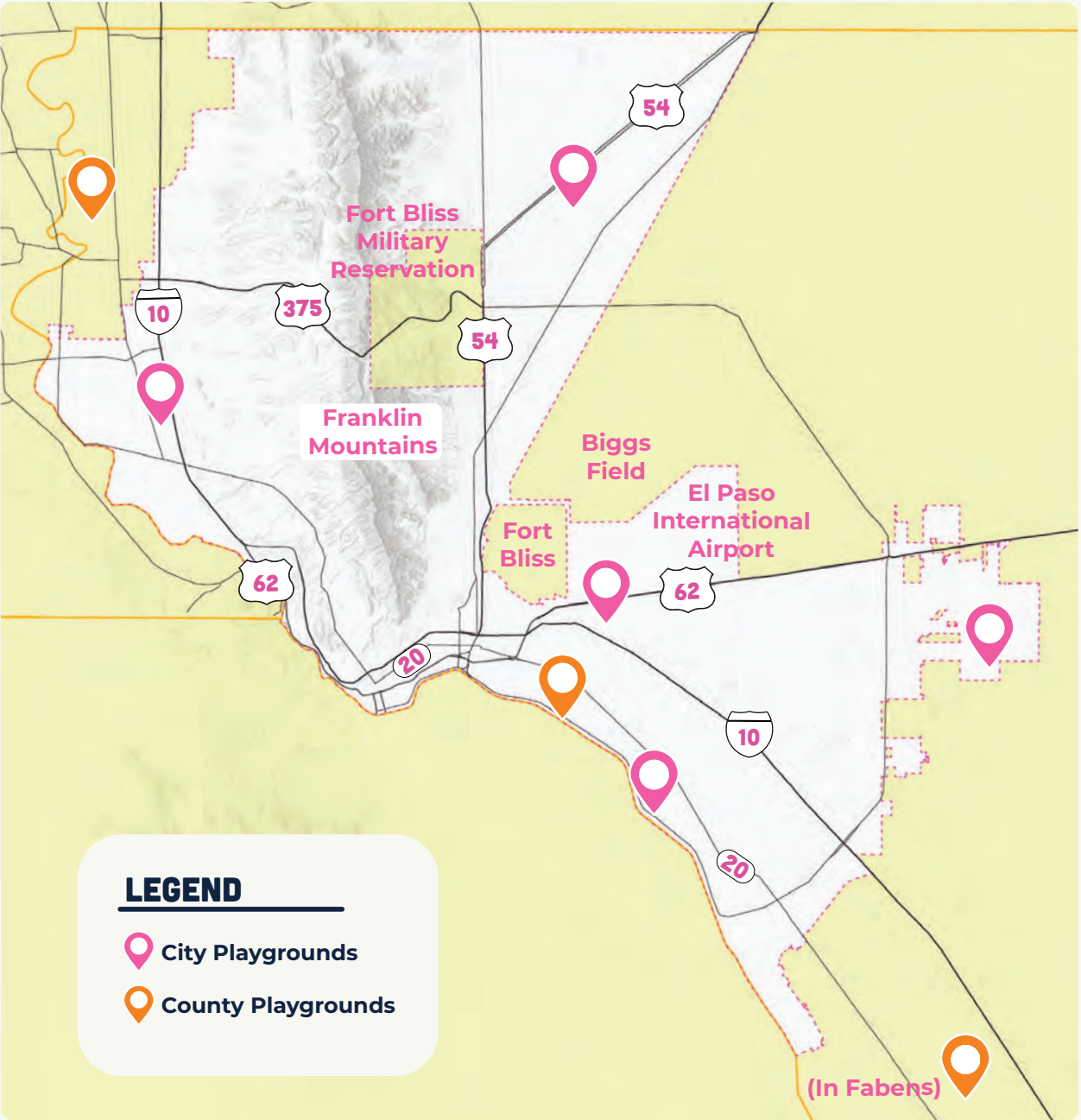
Appendix D | Site Selection Methodology & Process provides the details behind the data used for the site selection process on the recommended locations for the all-abilities playground.



Snapshot of our Understanding

The City of El Paso is committed to promoting all-abilities play within its park system, with eight parks currently dedicated to all-abilities play features and environments. This map illustrates the locations of these playgrounds in and around El Paso, operated by both the City and the County. In addition, the planning team took inspiration from successful precedent projects outside of the region including Thunder Junction park in St. George, Utah, and the James Driver All-Inclusive Park in Houston, Texas. By examining these existing parks and playgrounds, our planning effort identified best practices, areas for improvement, and opportunities for innovation in designing and implementing future all-abilities playgrounds.

Refer to **Section 2 | Understand** of the full report to learn more about all-abilities parks in El Paso and the precedent projects studied for this planning effort.



Snapshot of the Site Selection Process

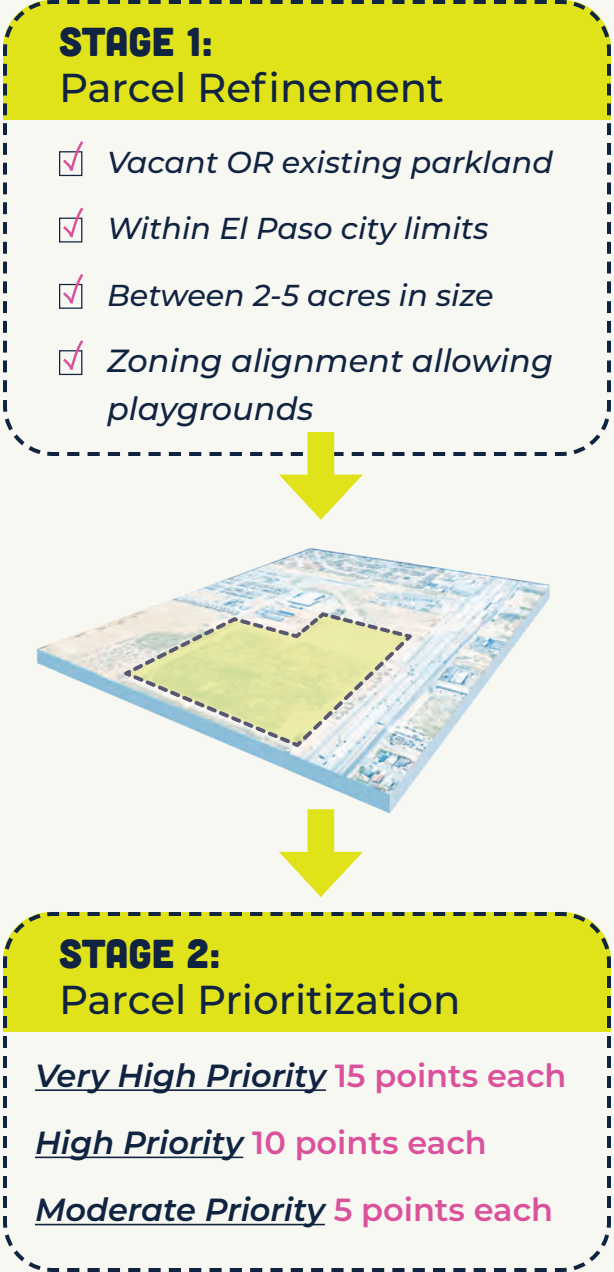
The City of El Paso is large, spanning over 255 square miles across eight council districts. The planning team was tasked with the opportunity to identify potential locations for the regional all-abilities playground amidst its diverse terrain. Utilizing geospatial parcel data and prioritization categories representing eleven parameters, the site selection process unfolded in two main stages.

The first stage involved refining potential land parcels, while the second stage assigned prioritization scores based on key parameters essential for an all-abilities playground. Community input highlighted crucial site selection elements such as proximity to natural spaces, expansion potential, central location, ADA sidewalk access, and public transportation accessibility that were incorporated into our process.

After narrowing the search down to 423 parcels, the top 10 scoring parcels underwent a further qualitative evaluation which factored in on-the-ground considerations like maintenance, utilities, service area efficiencies, and cost. Ultimately, five city-owned parcels emerged as recommended sites for the all-abilities playground. The final chosen location will ultimately need to meet community needs while considering existing site conditions and environmental realities.

Refer to **Section 1 | Purpose & Process** of the full report for a more detailed description of the site selection process.

Section 3 | Recommendations provides detail on the five parcels suggested for the all-abilities playground.



Snapshot of Engagement

The main focus of the All Abilities Playground planning process was to **prioritize community engagement** with various outreach efforts aimed at gathering input from diverse stakeholders. Through surveys, public meetings, workshops, focus groups, and online platforms, feedback was received on key aspects of the playground, such as desired features, accessibility requirements, and preferred themes. The active participation of residents, caregivers, disability advocates, and experts enriched the planning process and ensured that the playground recommendations reflect the needs and aspirations of our community.

1000+ Individual Participants

Over 1,000 people were reached through surveys and 15 different engagement events, and the planning team spent over 30 hours working and engaging with the public. The Elev8EP website received 2,352 views, and engagement materials were available in English and Spanish for language inclusivity. Our team also reached out to 30+ organizations representing children and disability advocacy to enrich stakeholder participation and ensure the project aligns with community aspirations. This page illustrates a snapshot of the engagement efforts. Refer to **Section 1 | Purpose & Process** of the full report and the **Appendix** for more detail on the engagement approach, process, and results.

15 Engagement Events

2 Bilingual Surveys

30+ Hours engaging with the community

500+ Survey Responses

6 Months

The results of the community engagement effort, site selection process, and best practices research for inclusive play were used to develop the following overall recommendations for the All-Abilities Playground for El Paso. It is important to note that when it comes to play features at the playground, there may be opportunities to include all suggested features at the future playground, however, this planning process helped to set the **priority features** and set a **clear vision for moving the project forward**. Refer to **Section 3 | Recommendations** of the full report for a more detailed description of the recommendations that were developed through this planning process.

1.0 OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 All-Abilities Playground - Branding

Creating inclusive communications and branding for the future planning and design process for the playground will be important to keep people engaged and to provide a welcoming environment for participating in the process.

- » Maximize inclusivity in branding and marketing for the all-abilities playground, incorporating easy-to-read fonts and color palettes with legible contrast for those with color blindness.
- » Develop public-facing materials for engagement events in both English and Spanish.
- » Coordinate engagement meetings with local disability organizations to prioritize participant needs and align with existing events, optimizing participation.

1.2 All-Abilities Playground - Vision

A community supported vision for the playground acts as a guiding statement, and helps build and maintain support for the project.

- » Regularly revisit the vision statement to maintain project alignment and guide future development phases.

THE ALL-ABILITIES PLAYGROUND IN EL PASO IS A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE IN OUR COMMUNITY CAN PLAY REGARDLESS OF THEIR ABILITIES AND WITHOUT BARRIERS!!!

1.0 OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1.3 Playground Themes

Thematic elements in playgrounds can create imaginative and exciting experiences for children. Themes can also help organize and provide wayfinding opportunities within the playground.

- » Integrate multiple themes throughout the playground.
- » Include these top themes: dinosaurs, nature and trains, based on engagement results.

1.4 Playground Site Location & Adjacencies

In order for all-abilities playgrounds to best serve children and caregivers and be successful at bringing the community together, they need to be located at sites that are safe, connected, and can be developed in an inclusive manner.

- » The top five site location priorities selected from the survey included adjacency to natural or open spaces, having enough area to expand, and being centrally located in El Paso.
- » Community needs were prioritized in the parcel selection criteria for this planning process.

1.5 Playground Age Groups & Play Spaces

By providing a combination of areas for all ages and areas for specific age groups within the all-abilities playground, children can explore spaces with their peers and also learn from older children or family members with multigenerational play zones.

- » Include areas for specific age groups (1 - 4, 5-10, 11-15) and areas for all ages in the playground.
- » Provide multi-generational zones (areas within the playground that are meant for people from all ages and generations) in the playground.

2.0 PLAYGROUND OPPORTUNITIES & FEATURES

2.1 Physical Activity Types & Physical Play Features

By providing opportunities for active and unstructured play, parents, caregivers, and educators can support children in developing essential skills and abilities that will serve them well throughout their lives.

- » Include a diverse range of physical play features.
- » Offer accessible variations of play features where possible, such as accessible swings and slides.
- » Integrate many types of swings as a key feature at the playground.
- » Prioritize climbing features and slides at the playground.

2.0 PLAYGROUND OPPORTUNITIES & FEATURES

2.2 Social & Group Play Features

Playgrounds provide opportunities to make friends and participate in social and group activities; this builds children's confidence and social skills that can support them throughout their lives.

- » Incorporate inclusive play features that encourage social interaction opportunities at various scales in the playground.
- » Integrate play towers, inclusive sport courts, and group wheelchair swings into the future playground.

2.3 Cognitive & Imaginative Play Features

Incorporating learning opportunities and imaginative play into the all-abilities playground will not only provide fun and engagement, but also support cognitive development and creativity. These features can offer a stimulating environment that encourages exploration and learning in an inclusive setting.

- » Incorporate features that support cognitive development and creativity at the playground.
- » Integrate learning walls, mazes, symbols, and bright colors into the future playground.

2.4 Sensory Play Type & Sensory Play Features

The all-abilities playground should be designed with all senses in mind, especially as it relates to touching water and hearing pleasant sounds. These elements not only encourage sensory exploration and development but also enhance the overall enjoyment of the playground.

- » Ensure the playground includes play features that encourage sensory exploration.
- » Incorporate water play, a popular feature among the community, into the final playground design.
- » Integrate sensory tables, musical instruments, and splash pads into the future playground.

2.5 Calm Spaces & Solo Play

The all-abilities playground should include a combination of smaller, enclosed spaces and family calm spaces to enhance the enjoyment of the playground and to get away from the stimulating communal areas. In addition, solo play zones can allow children the ability to play and learn, but in a more calm area and at their own pace.

- » Integrate calm spaces throughout the playground.
- » Allocate calm spaces for individuals to play and explore.
- » Integrate nature play with tunnels, cozy domes, and nests into the future playground.

3.0 PLAYGROUND SUPPORTIVE FEATURES

3.1 All-Abilities Playground - Features & Amenities

Overall, supportive features and amenities are essential components of all-abilities playgrounds, ensuring accessibility, safety, inclusivity, and comfort. Incorporate the basics for comfort at the all-abilities playground including:

- » Plenty of shade
- » Comfortable seating
- » Inclusive family restrooms
- » Trash receptacles
- » Adult and child-size changing tables

3.2 All-Ability Playground - Caregiver Needs

The all-abilities playground should cater to both the play participants and their caregivers; by incorporating these features into the playground, it can be a safer, more convenient, and more comfortable space to be in and return to day after day.

Incorporate amenities that support caregivers at the playground including:

- » Clear, accessible signage
- » Play zones with ability levels communicated
- » ADA picnic areas
- » Seating with a view to play areas

4.0 PLAYGROUND SITE SELECTION

The site selection process resulted in five recommended city owned parcels in El Paso suitable for the all-abilities playground. By going through this geospatial site selection process, the location of the all-abilities playground in El Paso can meet the needs of the community while being grounded in the realities of existing site conditions.

The five sites recommended for the all-abilities playground include:

- » **Logan Park Site**
3501 McConnell Ave, El Paso, TX 79904
- » **Maxwell Avenue Site (Nolan Richardson)**
4435 Maxwell Ave, El Paso, TX 79907
- » **Kenneth Street Site (Wellington Chew Park)**
8937 Kenneth St, El Paso, TX 79904
- » **Lomita Drive Site (Lomaland Park)**
715 Lomita Dr, El Paso, TX 79907
- » **Cohen Avenue Site (Camp Cohen Water Park)**
9700 Gateway N Blvd, El Paso, TX 79924

Recommendations Summary

The recommendations presented herein are the culmination of a comprehensive 6-month planning endeavor dedicated to the All-Abilities Playground for El Paso, which placed significant emphasis on community outreach. Throughout the process, the project team actively solicited input from community members, drawing on their lived experiences, as well as the invaluable insights of disability experts and advocates. This collaborative approach, coupled with thorough research into best practices, enabled the project to establish clear priorities and a trajectory for the playground's design. Furthermore, the rigorous site identification and prioritization analysis, leveraging geospatial data and eleven distinct scoring parameters, yielded a curated selection of potential parcels for the regional, all-abilities playground. With this comprehensive information at hand, the City of El Paso is well-equipped to make informed decisions regarding the ongoing planning, design, and development of this transformative project.



Child plays with musical equipment at Joey Barraza Park.



Children play at Joey Barraza Park.

SECTION
1



Image taken at Chalk the Block, a fun, downtown-wide event that took place in October 2023 that is a chalk art celebration where sidewalks, walls, and any chalk-able surface are decorated downtown. Children were encouraged to draw their favorite park features. Our team spoke to children and families about what they would like to see at the playground, and were encouraged to fill out the online survey.

1 | PURPOSE & PROCESS

PURPOSE

What is All-Abilities Play? 3

Why an All-Abilities Playground for El Paso?..... 4

PROCESS

Project Team 5

Project Scope..... 6

Project Timeline..... 7

Project Report 8

ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement Process 9

Key Takeaways10

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Site Selection Process.....11

Parcel Refinement..... 12

Site Prioritization Process 13

Map Viewer.....14

PURPOSE

What is All-Abilities Play?

All-Abilities Play, also known as inclusive play, refers to play environments that offer equal and equitable opportunities for play to all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Traditional playgrounds can present physical barriers to play. These barriers can lead to feelings of exclusion and marginalization among children with disabilities, impacting their overall playground experience. In some cases, children with disabilities are excluded entirely - e.g., when the playground surfacing does not support wheelchair access and general mobility. However, inclusive play goes beyond “accessible design,” which typically only ensures some elements of physical access and does not consider other types of disabilities. All-abilities play ensures that playgrounds offer engaging play opportunities that meet the physical, social, and cognitive needs of all children.

By providing opportunities for inclusive play, these playgrounds promote not only physical health, such as boosting coordination and motor skills, but also social skills development and emotional health.

Foundational Characteristics of All-Abilities Playgrounds

The foundation of an All-Abilities Playground is the understanding that it is important to *offer equal and equitable play opportunities for all children*, regardless of:



Age



Gender



Cognitive Ability



Physical Ability



Emotional Ability

All-Abilities focuses on acceptance and inclusion regardless of an individual's abilities and foster and active lifestyle for all.

For adults, participating in all-abilities play as a caregiver creates an inclusive community where everyone feels valued and respected. It encourages intergenerational bonding, fostering connections between caregivers, parents, and their children. Through shared experiences and interactions on the playground, caregivers can form friendships, support networks, and social connections that enhance their sense of belonging and mutual support. All-abilities play environments also serve as spaces for adults to model inclusive behaviors, reinforcing the importance of empathy, patience, and cooperation. Ultimately, inclusive play transcends age, abilities, and backgrounds, creating a shared platform for joy, learning, and building a more compassionate and united community. It exemplifies the belief that everyone, regardless of differences, has the right to engage, participate, and thrive together.

***Intergenerational:** Involving multiple generations, such as people represented in a family from grandchildren, children, parents, and grandparents.

Why an All-Abilities Playground for El Paso?

El Paso is the 6th largest city in Texas, the 22nd in the nation, and is home to a population of 678,000 people according to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau. Going beyond the City, the Borderplex Region (parts of west Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico) hosts approximately 2.5 million people, and El Paso acts as the epicenter for this diverse region. As the region grows, the need to add more parks, and playgrounds increases to serve the community’s needs, especially a regional facility that provides diverse amenities to serve many different abilities. Reflecting this need in November 2022 El Paso voters approved the Community Progress Bond Proposition B: Parks & Recreation Facilities, which included a regional, community All-Abilities Playground. An All-Abilities Playground is a place where children of all abilities can come together to play, learn, and grow in a safe and fun atmosphere without barriers.



Children play and explore at the build a park activity as part of the Playshop event at Sylvia Carreon Community Center in fall 2023.

To ensure that this vision becomes a reality, the City of El Paso initiated a planning effort, engaging with disability experts, practitioners, and the community at large. Through this collaborative process, the project team gathered insights and perspectives to inform the design and development of the future All-Abilities Playground.

Beyond Boundaries: El Paso’s All-Abilities Playground Planning Report gathers public input on the vision, theme, programming, and caregiver amenities of the playground. In addition, the location of this playground has not been determined. This planning effort used available data to prioritize the most suitable site for the project. More about the scope and details about this planning effort are included in the following sections.

PROCESS

Project Team

Working closely with the City of El Paso’s Capital Improvement and Parks & Recreation Departments, a consulting team assisted the City with the planning effort, including engagement, document development, and data analysis. The consultant team is introduced below.

Mend Collaborative is a woman-owned landscape architecture and planning firm based in Austin and Minneapolis. The partners at Mend Collaborative value the empowerment of communities to participate in decision-making about investments that impact them, create actionable plans and designs that measurably improve a community’s quality of life and access to resources while improving environmental quality. We believe in building up the connections between people and the environment.

Based in El Paso, Consor’s public involvement team is well-versed in creating strategies that recognize the bilingual nature of engagement necessary to be successful in the Borderplex Region. Consor was the local engagement specialist on the team and attended all the in-person meetings, in addition to providing support on virtual engagement events.

BioGeoCreations (BGC) is a unique geospatial analysis firm based in New Mexico with the goal to give their clients the tools and knowledge required to be successful in managing projects and promoting their organization. BGC served as the geospatial data lead for the site prioritization and selection model.



Project Scope

The Beyond Boundaries: El Paso’s All-Abilities Playground Planning effort was a focused and extensive six-month process, spanning from October 2023 to March 2024. To effectively manage the project and meet its objectives, the project work was structured into four main phases, each designed to address specific aspects of the planning process. These phases are outlined below:

PHASE 1 ORGANIZE:

Engagement Strategy and Team Meetings

Throughout the Entire Project

The Organize Phase laid the groundwork for the success of the project through establishment of the project standards, developing an engagement plan, and leading consistent team check-in meetings. This work was undertaken throughout the duration of the project.

PHASE 2 UNDERSTAND:

Project Understanding and Siting Criteria

Months 1-2

In the Understand Phase, the project team reviewed geospatial data and set up the parcel refinement strategy and the scoring rubric for the parcels within the city. More about this process is outlined in the Site Selection Process section. This phase also included an understanding of other all-ability playgrounds in the City and County including what features they have to offer and where they are located. Precedent projects were explored from areas outside of El Paso, to get a better sense of what other cities and towns are providing for inclusive play.

PHASE 3 ENGAGE:

Community Engagement

Months 2-5

In the Engage Phase the project team initiated the Engagement Strategy Plan and conducted community engagement. The team provided diverse ways of engaging with people including an online survey, in-person activities, stakeholder meetings, virtual activities, and creative workshop events, such as the children’s playshop.

PHASE 4 REPORT:

Feedback Analysis and Reporting

Months 4-6

In the Report Phase the project team took the findings from the previous phases and created a final report outlining the process, the engagement events, the results, and the main recommendations for the all-abilities playground. In addition, final site recommendations for the all-abilities playground were refined and developed.

Project Timeline

The timeline for the early planning of the all-abilities playground started in October 2023 and continued until March 2024. Engagement started at the beginning of the project with a round of stakeholder focus group meetings to help shape the community survey. The City and consultant team participated in Chalk the Block on October 14, 2023, coinciding with the launch of the online public survey on Elev8EP.com. The team then launched into a series of workshops, including a Children’s Playshop at the beginning of November. The District Hybrid meetings, which occurred in person and on a virtual platform lasted for 3 weeks starting in November and ending in December. Finally, our team facilitated focus group meetings with the purpose of debriefing on the results of the online survey and what we heard regarding the all-abilities playground for El Paso.



Live results from the online survey and more information about the project can be found on elev8ep.com/abilities-playground

Project Report

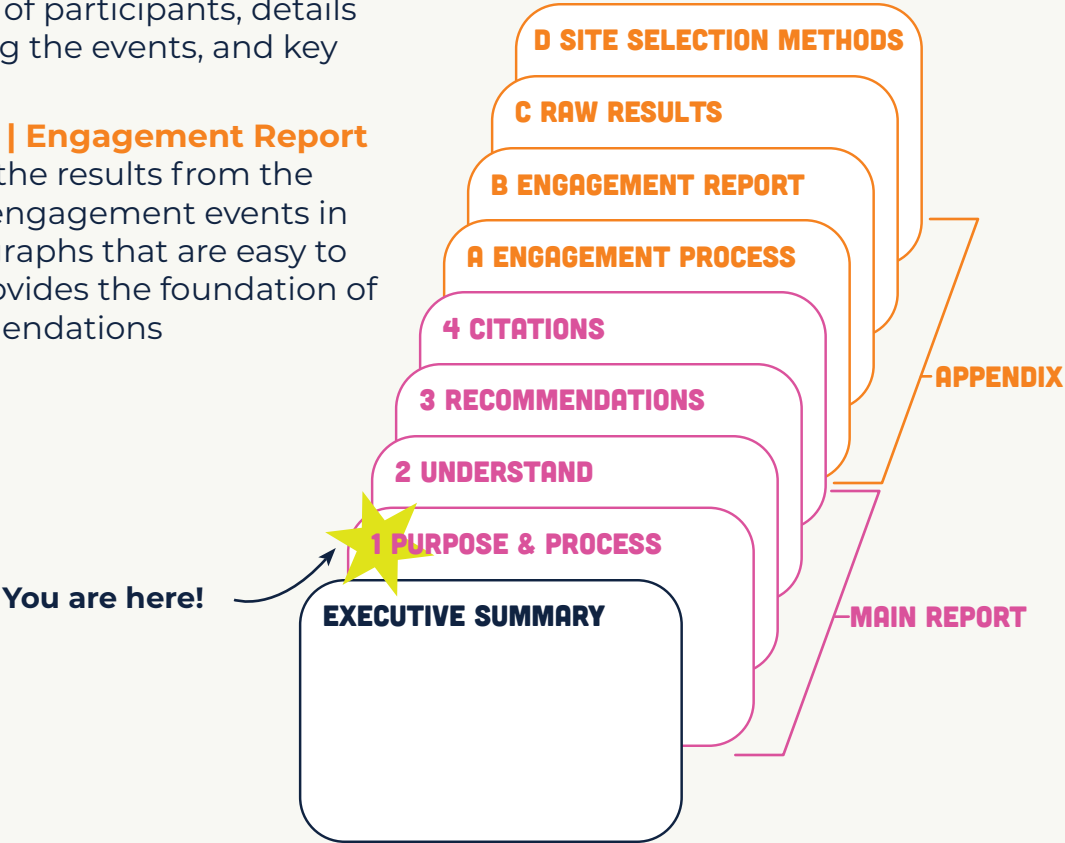
The Beyond Boundaries: El Paso’s All-Abilities Playground Planning Report provides a comprehensive overview of the planning process undertaken to develop an inclusive and accessible playground for the community. This report outlines the key findings, recommendations, and next steps for the vision, theming, programming, and caregiver amenities of the playground. The report is set-up in these primary sections:

- Section 1 | Purpose & Process** discusses the need and support for an all-ability playground for El Paso and walks through the planning process outlined in this report
- Section 2 | Understand** describes and maps the parks with inclusive play features in El Paso and highlights two precedent all-abilities playground projects in other cities
- Section 3 | Recommendations** combines the results and best practices research on inclusive play and summarizes these into clear recommendations for the future playground
- Section 4 | Citations** includes the references from the research used in the report

Accompanying this report is an appendix that provides further detail on the process. The Appendix includes the Engagement Process, Engagement Report, Raw Results, and the Site Selection Methodology & Process.

- Appendix A | Engagement Process** documents the details of the engagement process undergone as part of the planning effort including the number of participants, details on marketing the events, and key takeaways
- Appendix B | Engagement Report** synthesizes the results from the survey and engagement events in charts and graphs that are easy to read and provides the foundation of our recommendations

- Appendix C | Raw Results** shows our engagement spreadsheet and the raw results from the survey
- Appendix D | Site Selection Methodology & Process** provides the details behind the data used and site selection process on the recommended locations for the all-abilities playground hosted on Elev8ep website



ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement Process

Throughout the planning process for the All-Abilities Playground, there was an intentional focus on robust community engagement to ensure that the playground resonated with the needs and desires of those who will use it most. The Engagement Team, composed of City staff from the Capital Improvements and the Parks & Recreation Department, local engagement experts from Consor, and design and planning experts from Mend Collaborative organized various events and activities to gather input from diverse stakeholders. Our team was able to reach over 1,000 people during the course of the 6 month process. Our engagement methods included online surveys, in-person activities, stakeholder meetings, virtual events, and creative workshops such as our children’s playshop. The team hosted 15 different engagement events and spent over 30 hours working and engaging with the public. The All-Abilities web page on the Elev8EP website received 2,352 views, indicating strong community interest.



Children draw on chalkboards during the chalk the block event in 2023.

To ensure language inclusivity, the two surveys developed - the community all-abilities playground survey and the caregiver survey - were available in both English and Spanish, and all engagement materials for virtual and in-person events were also available in English and Spanish.

All these engagement efforts gathered feedback on key aspects of the project such as desired features, supportive amenities, caregiver needs, and preferred themes for the playground. To build out stakeholder participation, our team reached out to over 30 organizations that



Children engage with boards during the Joey Barraza park event.

represent children and/or disabilities advocacy throughout El Paso. The active participation from residents, caregivers, disability advocates, and experts enriched the planning process and ensured that the playground recommendations truly reflected our community’s needs and aspirations. The engagement process is covered in more detail in Appendix A | Engagement Process. Appendix B | Engagement Report synthesizes the results from the survey and engagement events in charts and graphs that are easy to read and provides the foundation of our recommendations.

Key Takeaways

Community engagement and outreach was an important part of the planning process for the All-Abilities Playground. The City and planning team emphasized engagement based on these key reasons/takeaways:

- » Ensures Multiple Voices Are Heard: Community engagement ensures that diverse perspectives and voices are considered in the planning process, leading to more inclusive and representative outcomes.
- » Fosters Empowerment, and Ownership: By involving the community in decision-making, engagement fosters a sense of empowerment and ownership among residents, who feel invested in the outcomes of the project.
- » Builds Trust with the Community: Engaging with the community builds trust and credibility, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and collaboration in the planning process.
- » Addresses Community Needs and Equity: Community engagement allows planners to identify and address community needs and disparities, promoting equity and social justice in the development of public spaces and services.

- » Working with Young People and Children: Involving children in the planning process ensures that their perspectives, needs, and preferences are considered, leading to the creation of spaces that are welcoming and enjoyable for all age groups.
- » Collaborating with Disability Advocates and Experts: Collaborating with disability advocates and experts ensures that the planning process prioritizes accessibility and inclusivity, leading to the creation of spaces that accommodate diverse abilities and promotes universal design principles.

Engagement Timeline



SITE IDENTIFICATION

Site Selection Process

The City of El Paso is over 255 square miles with eight council districts. It is a large city with networks of freeways and highways that connect its various neighborhoods and areas. Discovering an ideal location for a regional all-abilities playground was a critical part of the early planning process. The process utilized geospatial parcel data and thematic prioritization data representing eleven different parameters. The site selection process was completed in two stages:

- » The first stage included an initial parcel refinement to narrow down what land parcels would best suit an all-abilities playground, and
- » The second stage used the refined parcel data sets and gave them a score or prioritization number based on eleven key parameters that relate to site suitability for an all-abilities playground.

The site selection process and parameters are illustrated in more detail in the supporting diagram (as shown on the following page).

Some of the parameters for prioritizing the parcels were developed with community input which included an online survey where we asked community members which site selection elements were important to them.

Common input from the community included:

- » adjacent natural or open spaces
- » enough area to expand
- » centrally located within the city
- » access to ADA sidewalks
- » access to public transportation

These results from the online survey question are reflected in the scoring of the different parameters that prioritized a recommended location of the all-abilities playground.



Children play at the Joey Barraza Park Event.



Project collaborators spoke with the community at Joey Barraza Park.

Parcel Refinement

STAGE 1: Parcel Refinement

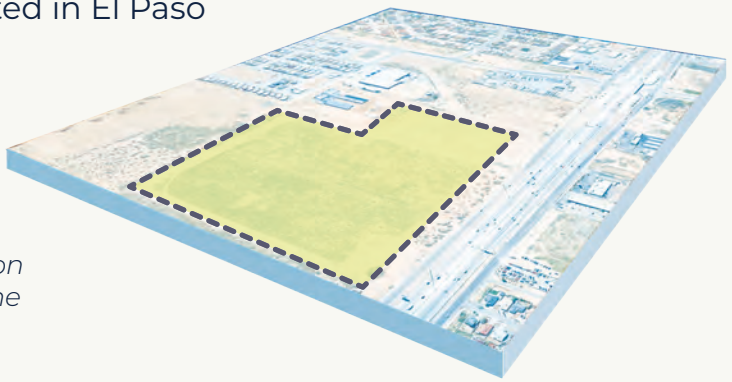


- ✓ Vacant OR existing parkland
- ✓ Within El Paso city limits
- ✓ Between 2-5 acres in size
- ✓ Zoning alignment allowing playgrounds

In Stage 1, the initial parcel refinement, suitability for the all-abilities playground was determined from the City of El Paso’s parcel stock. Focusing on city-owned properties of two-five acres, 519 parcels were identified. After eliminating incompatible uses and locations, 310 parcels remained. Further refinement by zoning (vacant or park land) yielded 107 parcels, which were advanced to the Stage 2 scoring process.

The top three site location priorities selected from the community survey included:

- » adjacency to natural or open spaces
- » having enough area to expand
- » being centrally located in El Paso



Note: Parcel example shown here is not a potential location and is only used to explain the site identification process.

STAGE 2: Parcel Prioritization

The parcels that have higher scores will be considered for the all-abilities playground.

Very High Priority 15 points each

- » Outside a One-mile Buffer From Existing All-Abilities Playgrounds
- » Located in Census Tracts with Higher Percentages of Disabled Persons
- » Located Adjacent to Existing Park/Open Space

High Priority 10 points each

- » Located in Census Tracts with Higher Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)
- » Not Adjacent to Roadways with High Risk Factors
- » Centrally Located in El Paso

Moderate Priority 5 points each

- » Outside of High Environmental Risk Factors (Environmental Vulnerability)
- » Terrain Less than 7% Slope
- » Located Outside of Wetlands & Floodplains
- » Located Near Existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity
- » Located Near Bus Stops

Site Prioritization Process

After Stage 1 of the site selection process was completed, a total of 107 city owner parcels and 316 privately owned parcels were identified. In Stage 2 the parcels were prioritized and the top 10 scoring parcels were reviewed and evaluated further for suitability for the all-abilities playground. An ArcGIS Map Viewer was developed and used as a tool for the team to evaluate each parcel. The viewer included all the parcels generated from Stage 1 of the process, 11 data layers that were used in for Stage 2, parcel prioritization, and a quick link to the top 10 scoring city owned and privately owned parcels. The score for each parcel could be clearly reviewed by the site selection team for further detail and inspection. The top scoring parcels ranged from 80-70 points with no one parcel receiving a full 100 point score.

A qualitative analysis of each of the top scoring parcels was undertaken picking up nuances and detail to further refine the selection taking into account on-the-ground realities not detected by the tool such as, maintenance considerations,

presence of utilities, efficiencies in service area, and cost to aquire the parcel, if not already owned by the City. The site selection process resulted in **five recommended city owned parcels in El Paso** suitable for the all-abilities playground. The suggested parcels are described in more detail in Section 3 | Recommendations. By going through this geospatial site selection process, the location of the all-abilities playground in El Paso can meet the needs of the community while being grounded in the realities of existing site conditions.

The **site selection team** was made up of representatives from the City of El Paso and members of the consultant team. The purpose of this group was to provide a qualitative analysis of each of the top scoring parcels. This included taking into account on-the-ground realities not detected by the tool to further refine the recommended parcels.



Central Area



Trail Connectivity



Bus Stop Locations

The Map Viewer

The ArcGIS Map Viewer, developed as a tool for the team, provided a comprehensive platform to evaluate each parcel effectively. This intuitive tool facilitated the assessment process by incorporating all parcels generated from the site selection process's Stage 1 and eleven essential data layers used in Stage 2.

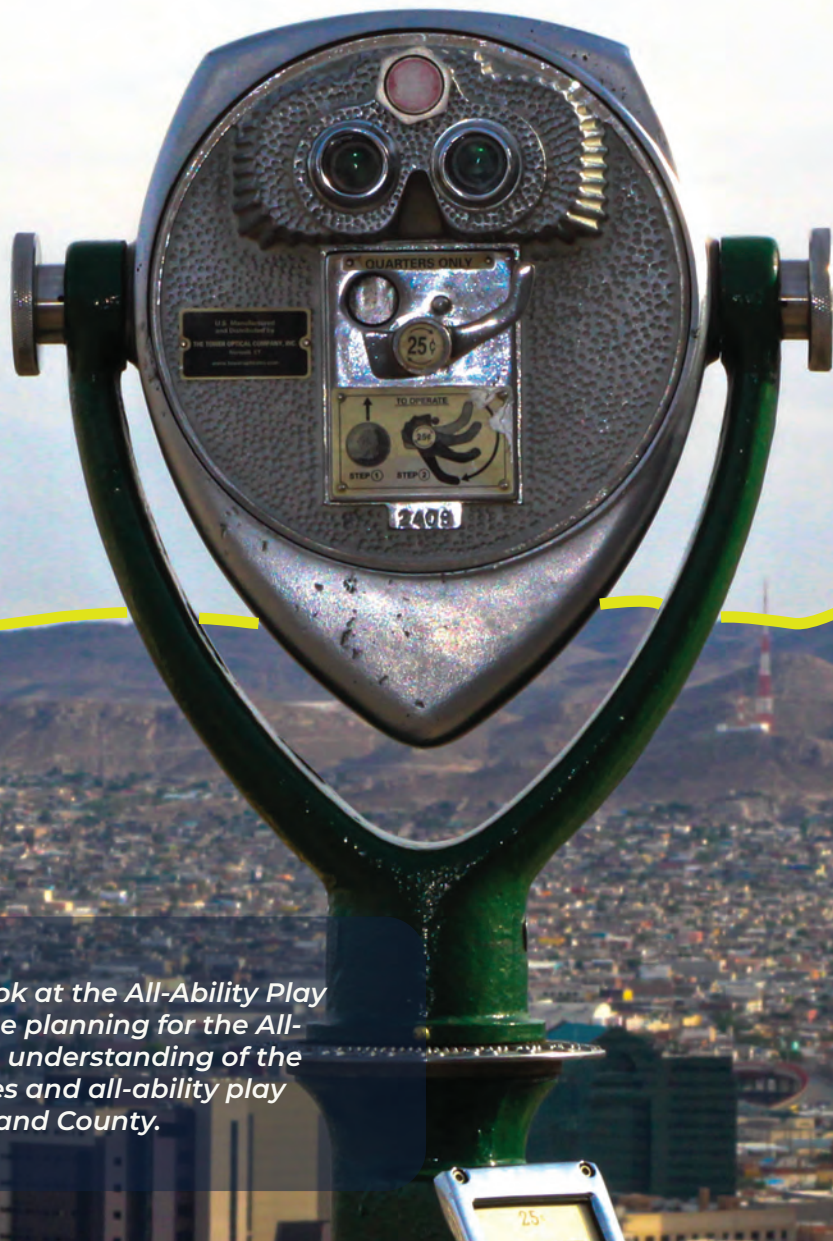
The map viewer had a main screen with a map of El Paso; different basemaps could be toggled on for ease of viewing including hybrid aerials with place names. The map layers included the city boundary, district boundaries, and all eleven data layers used in the Stage 2 Parcel Prioritization process. The legend

showed a table of symbols and colors used for the different map layers. Finally, the top scoring parcels were highlighted in the map viewer and could be clicked on to read the specific scoring. With this user-friendly interface, the team could review parcel scores with clarity, enabling thorough evaluation and decision-making.



This Map Viewer was developed as a website for the team to evaluate the various parcels after the initial prioritization process. The page has a layers tab, and a bookmark tab to jump quickly to the top parcels.

SECTION
2



The planning team took a closer look at the All-Ability Play environments offered in El Paso. The planning for the All-Abilities Playground is based on an understanding of the current parks with inclusive features and all-ability play environments run by both the City and County.

2 | UNDERSTAND

ALL-ABILITIES PARKS IN EL PASO

Existing Parks in the City of El Paso18

Existing Parks in El Paso County20

PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

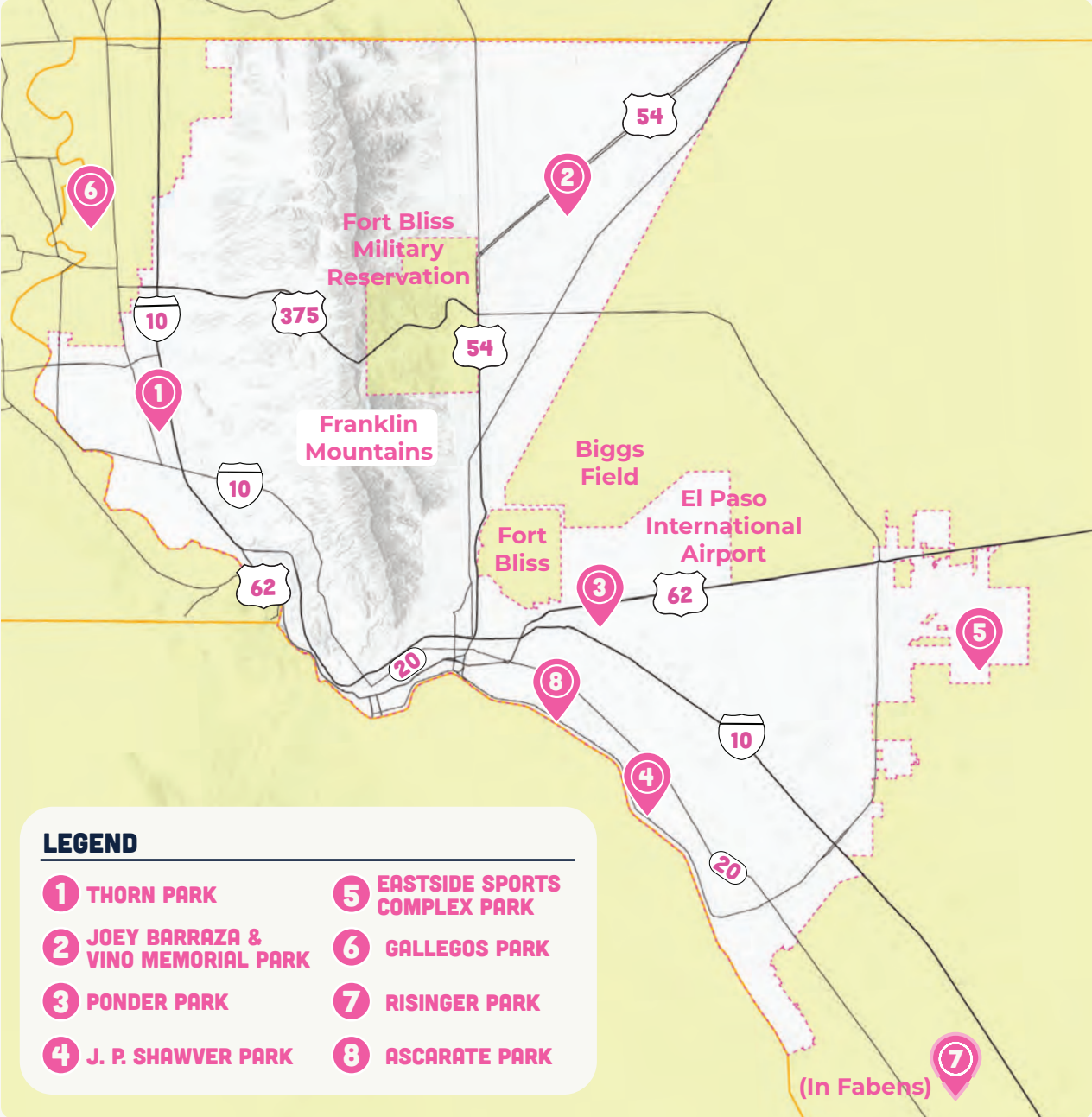
Thunder Junction All-Abilities Park..... 21

James Driver All-Inclusive Park..... 22

ALL-ABILITIES PARKS IN EL PASO

The City of El Paso has already taken steps to ensure that all-abilities play is incorporated into the park system. Currently, there are a total of eight (8) parks in the El Paso region that are open with all-abilities play features.

This map shows the location of these all-abilities playgrounds in and around El Paso, some operated by the City, and some by the County.



Existing Parks in the City of El Paso

The City of El Paso Parks and Recreation maintains a total of five (5) all-abilities playgrounds.

THORN PARK



The playground at Thorn Park, located at 5300 Mace Street in El Paso, was the second all-abilities playground built in the city. This playground is fully shaded and has resilient rubberized surfacing throughout the play area. Some of the inclusive features are ramps to various levels of a play tower, an all-abilities group play teeter, and sensory instruments.

JOEY BARRAZA & VINO MEMORIAL PARK



The playground at Joey Barraza & Vino Memorial Park, located at 11270 McCombs Street in El Paso, was part of a park expansion project for a grand re-opening and re-naming of the park in 2023. This new playground features some shaded areas, a mix of shredded mulch, sand, and rubberized surfacing, and has a fence/wall surrounding the play area for security. There are numerous inclusive features, including a bucket swing and bucket zip-line, a co-swing, and group teeter.

PONDER PARK



The playground at Ponder Park, located at 7500 W H Burges Drive in El Paso, is a fully shaded play area with resilient rubberized surfacing throughout. This playground also features ramped tower play, and has a nice forested nature theme to it with color, shapes, and play elements reflecting logs, woods, and trees.

J.P. SHAWVER PARK



The playground at J. P. Shawver Park, located at 8100 Independence Drive in El Paso features a shaded play area, ramped tower play, and a combination of rubberized surfacing and wood mulch.

EASTSIDE SPORTS COMPLEX



The Eastside Sports Complex playground, located at 14380 Montwood, is the next phase of improvements for the sports park. This playground features bucket swings, a shaded play area, and more inclusive play features for the community on the eastside.

Learning from Existing Parks



By studying existing parks and playgrounds, this planning effort aims to identify best practices, areas for improvement, and opportunities for innovation in the design and implementation of the future all-abilities playground. The future all-abilities playground will build off of these existing playgrounds, learning from what is succeeding and what could be better for future accessible playgrounds.

Existing Parks in El Paso County

El Paso County has three (3) all-abilities playgrounds, two (2) are completed and one (1) is in the planning stages.

GALLEGOS PARK



The playground at Gallegos Park, located at 6209, 7361 Bosque Road in El Paso, was the first all-abilities playground built by the County. This playground features a bucket zip-line, a co-swing, an accessible merry-go-round, and other inclusive features.

RISINGER PARK



The playground at Risinger Park, located at 301 Grace Street in Fabens, is the third all-abilities playground that the County has built and opened in August of 2023.

ASCARATE PARK



The future all-abilities playground at Ascarate Park, located at 6900 Delta Drive in El Paso, plans include shaded areas of play, a dino dig, a sensory garden, maze, and sensory tunnels, among other play elements.

PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

Thunder Junction All-Abilities Park

Location: St. George, Utah

Opening Date: Oct 8, 2016

Cost: \$9.5 Million (in 2024 dollars)

Playground Size: 3 acres

Park description:

This All-Abilities park is dinosaur themed, with fully accessible play equipment, splash pads, a 1/4 scale train, sensory gardens, walking loops and a central volcano.

Program Elements:



interactive waterfall



volcano shade structure



sensory garden



play sculptures and art



1/4 scale accessible train



splash pads



Source: ASLA Utah



Source: St. George News Archives



Source: St. George News Archives

James Driver All-Inclusive Park

Location: Houston, TX

Opening Date: Dec 11, 2021

Cost: \$10.3 Million (in 2024 dollars)

Playground Size: 5 acres

Park description:

Some of the features at the James Driver All Inclusive Park include outdoor games, hillside play, community gardens, and a water play areas.

Program Elements:



ping pong & chess



topographic play



water play



gardens



exercise equipment



music play



Source: Spec Specified Play Equipment Co.



Source: Lone Star Recreation



Source: Lone Star Recreation



Image taken at one of the Hybrid District Meetings, a series of meetings hosted for each City district that were open to the community to join either in person or virtually. Build a park drawing activities were available for children to participate alongside their families to provide input on the future playground.

SECTION 3

3 | RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

How To Read the Recommendations: 26

1.0 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Branding 27

Vision 28

Themes 29

Site Location and Adjacencies 29

Age Groups and Play Spaces 30

2.0 OPPORTUNITIES & FEATURES

Physical Activity Types & Physical Play
Features 31

Social and Group Play Features 32

Cognitive and Imaginative Play Features 33

Sensory Play Type and Sensory Play
Features 34

Calm Spaces and Solo Spaces 35

3.0 SUPPORTIVE FEATURES

Features and Amenities 36

Caregiver Needs 37

4.0 SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

Site Selection 38

Logan Park Site 39

Maxwell Avenue Site 40

Kenneth Street Site 41

Lomita Drive Site 42

Cohen Avenue Site 43

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

The results of the community engagement effort and best practices research for inclusive play were used to develop the following recommendations for the All-Abilities Playground for El Paso. It is important to note, that when it comes to play features at the playground, there may be opportunities to include all suggested features at the future

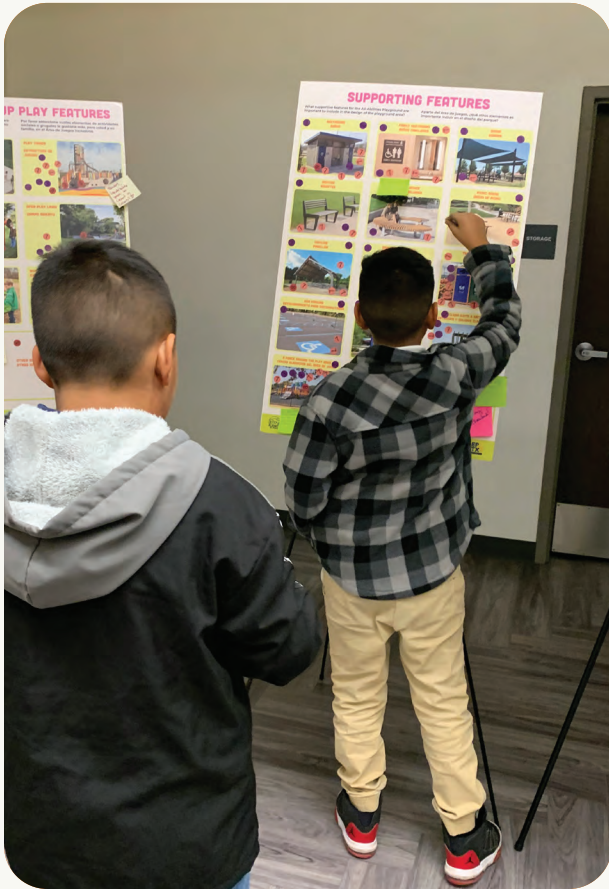
playground. However, this planning process helped to set the **priority features** and set a clear direction for moving the project forward. By following these recommendations, the All-Abilities Playground in El Paso can become a vibrant and inclusive space where individuals of all abilities can play, learn, and thrive together.

The recommendations for the all-abilities playground are organized into four primary categories:

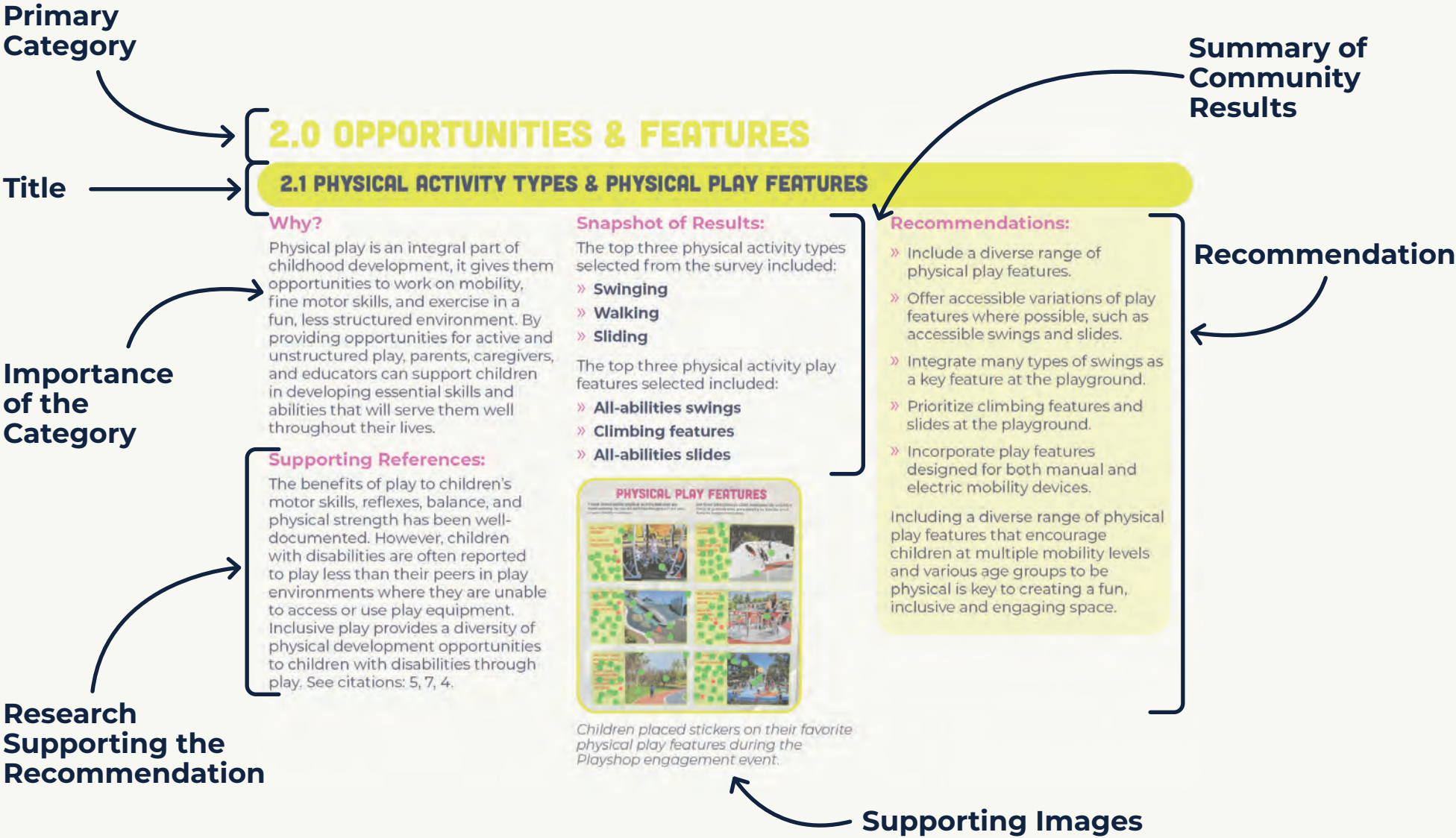
- » 1.0 Overall Recommendations
- » 2.0 Playground Opportunities & Features
- » 3.0 Supportive Features
- » 4.0 Site Recommendations

Each recommendation includes why the category is important and the research that supports it, a snapshot of the results from the community engagement effort, and the specific recommendation for that particular element of the all-abilities playground. All the recommendations are outlined in the following pages.

Children’s voices were present at the District Hybrid Meetings. They reviewed boards (left) and placed stickers and added comments to boards (right).



HOW TO READ THE RECOMMENDATIONS



1.0 OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 PLAYGROUND BRANDING

Why?

Creating inclusive communications and branding for the all-abilities playground for the future planning and design process will be important to keep people engaged and to provide a welcoming environment for participating in the process. In addition, offering different forms of communication at engagement events, such as Spanish translation or American Sign Language (ASL), allows people with other ways of communicating to stay involved with the process.

Supporting References:

OFF-WHITE	NAVY	PINK	ORANGE	LIME
Typical				
Deuteranopia				
Protanopia				

This shows the results from the Color Blindness Test from the color palette used in this report.

Snapshot of Work:

- » The branding for this All-Abilities Playground Planning Report includes fonts that are bold, legible, large, and sans serif, which are easier to read for those with vision impairments.
- » A color palette was developed that was tested for two of the most common types of colorblindness, Deuteranopia and Protanopia to ensure adequate contrast between the colors.
- » Community engagement materials were provided in English and in Spanish. The local engagement team and the City offered both Spanish translation and ASL at in-person events.

Recommendations:

- » Maximize inclusivity in branding and marketing for the all-abilities playground, incorporating **easy-to-read fonts** and **color palettes with legible contrast** for those with color blindness.
- » Develop public-facing materials for engagement events in both **English** and **Spanish**.
- » **Coordinate engagement meetings with local disability organizations** to prioritize participant needs and align with existing events, optimizing participation.

***El Paso Identity:** Collaborating with local artists not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the all-abilities playground but also fosters a sense of ownership and belonging among residents. By integrating local art into the project, the playground can become more than just a recreational space, it becomes a vibrant reflection of the community's spirit and creativity.

1.2 PLAYGROUND VISION

Why?

A community supported vision for the playground acts as a guiding statement, and helps build and maintain support for the project and the community for which this project is designed. Moreover, a welcoming and inclusive vision statement sets the groundwork and tone for the design, development, and messaging for the all-abilities playground.

Snapshot of Results:

There were three vision statements developed during the first focus group meeting. Out of those three options, one statement was the clear winner, receiving **56%** of the total votes through the online survey, see vision statement below.

Recommendations:

- » Establish a clear vision statement for the all-abilities playground, ensuring community support.
- » Regularly revisit the vision statement to maintain project alignment and guide future development phases.

This aspirational vision statement should be **used throughout the process as a guidepost for making decisions** about the playground and for measuring the overall success of the space. Paying close attention to removing as many real and perceived barriers as possible should be a critical step to furthering the design of the playground.



1.3 PLAYGROUND THEMES

Why?
Thematic elements in playgrounds can create imaginative and exciting experiences for children. Applying themes in certain areas also can help organize and provide wayfinding opportunities within the playground.

Supporting References:
Play components in recognizable designs have been found to foster creative and imaginative play. See citations: 4, 2

Snapshot of Results:
The top three themes selected from the [survey](#) included:

- » **Multiple themes**
- » **Nature & desert landscape**
- » **Animals**

The top three themes observed during the [children's playshop](#) included:

- » **Dinosaurs**
- » **Trains**
- » **Sky, space & universe**

Recommendations:

- » Integrate multiple themes throughout the playground.
- » Include these top themes: dinosaurs, nature, and trains, based on engagement results.

By integrating multiple themes, especially ones that relate to nature, animals, and paleontology, the all-abilities playground can provide diverse spaces that are imaginative, encourage learning, help in organizing space, and provide vibrant play opportunities.

1.4 SITE LOCATION AND ADJACENCIES

Why?
In order for all-abilities playgrounds to serve children and caregivers, they need to be located at sites that are safe, connected, and can be developed in an inclusive manner.

Snapshot of Results:
The top three site location priorities selected from the survey included:

- » **Adjacency to natural or open spaces**
- » **Having enough area to expand**
- » **Being centrally located in El Paso**

These results were incorporated in the site selection parcel prioritization process to reflect community desires.

Recommendations:

- » Prioritize the community's adjacent needs to optimize the location of the all-abilities playground to provide a comfortable, convenient, and inclusive environment for all family members, caregivers, and visitors.

1.5 AGE GROUPS AND PLAY SPACES

Why?
Playgrounds are often organized by age groups to reduce injury risk and provide features that meet children where they are physically and developmentally. Recently playgrounds have been integrating ages in play areas, providing for more multigenerational play for learning and enrichment.

Supporting References:
Studies have recognized the importance of having a variety of play components that provide challenges to a range of ages in close proximity. This diversity allows children to self-select play activities that match their interests while promoting development and sociability. See citations: 3, 5.

Snapshot of Results:

- » Survey participants responded that they care for children primarily between the **ages of 1 to 15**.
- » In addition, survey participants responded that they would like to see a **combination of areas for all ages** and **areas for specific age groups** within the all-abilities playground.

Recommendations:

- » Cater the playground to children aged 1 to 15.
- » Include areas for specific age groups and areas for all ages in the playground.

By providing a combination of areas for all ages and areas for specific age groups within the all-abilities playground, children can explore spaces with their peers and also learn from older children or family members within multigenerational play zones.

*Multigenerational zones refers to areas within the playground that are meant for all age groups.



Source: pealcenter.org

In addition to play areas for specific ages, there should also be features that encourage different types of play. See [recommendations 2.0](#) on the following pages for more information.

2.0 OPPORTUNITIES & FEATURES

2.1 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TYPES & PHYSICAL PLAY FEATURES

Why?

Physical play is an integral part of childhood development, it gives them opportunities to work on mobility, fine motor skills, and exercise in a fun, less structured environment. By providing opportunities for active and unstructured play, parents, caregivers, and educators can support children in developing essential skills and abilities that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Supporting References:

The benefits of play to children’s motor skills, reflexes, balance, and physical strength has been well-documented. However, children with disabilities are often reported to play less than their peers in play environments where they are unable to access or use play equipment. Inclusive play provides a diversity of physical development opportunities to children with disabilities through play. See citations: 5, 7, 4.

Snapshot of Results:

The top three physical activity types selected from the survey included:

- » **Swinging**
- » **Walking**
- » **Sliding**

The top three physical activity play features selected included:

- » **All-abilities swings**
- » **Climbing features**
- » **All-abilities slides**



Children placed stickers on their favorite physical play features during the Playshop engagement event.

Recommendations:

- » Include a diverse range of physical play features.
- » Offer accessible variations of play features where possible, such as accessible swings and slides.
- » Integrate many types of swings as a key feature at the playground.
- » Prioritize climbing features and slides at the playground.
- » Incorporate play features designed for both manual and electric mobility devices.

Including a diverse range of physical play features that encourage children at multiple mobility levels and various age groups to be physical is key to creating a fun, inclusive and engaging space.

2.2 SOCIAL & GROUP PLAY FEATURES

Why?

Playgrounds provide opportunities to make friends and participate in group activities. This allows children to build confidence and develop social skills, empathy, and understanding that can support them throughout their lives. Incorporating group play features into the all-abilities playground creates an engaging, inclusive environment that encourages cooperation and social interaction among children of all abilities and their families.

It was especially noted by caregivers engaged in this project that children experiencing Autism benefit from the social nature of playgrounds.

Supporting References:

Studies show that children with disabilities experience social participation barriers, and often miss out on the emotional, cognitive, and social development that play provides. Inclusive playgrounds allow children to play together, thus providing all children with the social benefits of play. See Citation: 5

Snapshot of Results:

The top three social and group play features selected included:

- » **Play towers**
- » **Inclusive basketball hoops**
- » **Group wheelchair swings**

Recommendations:

- » Incorporate inclusive play features that encourage social interaction opportunities at various scales in the playground.
- » Integrate play towers, inclusive sport courts, and group wheelchair swings into the future playground.



Common play features like play towers can be made inclusive using ramps.. This example of West Fenwick Park in Kent, WA, shows a colorful ADA path that connects to all the play features. Source: Berger Partnership

2.3 COGNITIVE AND IMAGINATIVE PLAY FEATURES

Why?
Learning through play is essential for children’s cognitive development because it provides them with opportunities to explore, experiment, and engage with their environment in a fun and interactive way.

Educational playground activities can benefit children with school curriculum and life skills development in an environment where a child can approach learning at their own pace and level of interest.

Incorporating learning opportunities and imaginative play into the all-abilities playground will not only provide fun and engagement, but also support cognitive development and creativity. These features can offer a stimulating environment that encourages exploration and learning in an inclusive setting.

Supporting References:
Research has shown that creative play helps develop children’s imagination, cognitive, physical, and emotional strength and is critical for healthy brain development. See citation: 1.

- Snapshot of Results:**
The top three cognitive and imaginative play features selected included:
- » **Learning walls**
 - » **Using symbols and colors in playground features**
 - » **Mazes**



Learning walls can feature different shapes, colors, textures, or even games to stimulate cognitive development (right). Learning walls can be combined to create stimulating experiences like mazes (left).
Source: Miracle Recreation

- Recommendations:**
- » Incorporate features that support cognitive development and creativity at the playground.
 - » Integrate learning walls, mazes, symbols, and bright colors into the future playground.



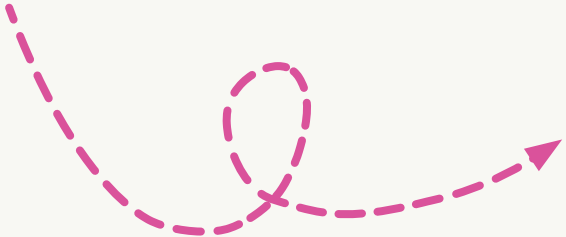
2.4 SENSORY PLAY TYPE & SENSORY PLAY FEATURES

Why?
Everyone engages with the world in unique ways using multiple senses. Providing sensory play opportunities is essential because it recognizes and accommodates the diverse ways in which individuals engage with the world around them. Additionally, some children prefer to experience play using their senses rather than physical exertion.

Supporting References:
The use of a variety of sounds, smells, colors, and textures enhance sensory development and provide a feeling of stimulated calm. See Citations: 2, 4.

- Snapshot of Results:**
The top three sensory play types selected from the survey included:
- » **Touching water**
 - » **Seeing bright colors**
 - » **Hearing musical instruments**
- The top three sensory play features selected included:
- » **Sensory tables**
 - » **Musical instruments**
 - » **Splash pads**
- *In the survey sand tables were used as a suggested feature, but after further engagement and research it was found that feeling and being in sand is a polarizing activity for children. A sensory table is recommended over a sand table to allow for more participation.

- Recommendations:**
- » Ensure the playground includes play features that encourage sensory exploration.
 - » Incorporate water play, a popular feature among the community, into the final playground design.
 - » Integrate sensory tables, musical instruments, and splash pads into the future playground.
- The all-abilities playground should be designed with all senses in mind, especially as it relates to touching water and hearing pleasant sounds. These elements not only encourage sensory exploration and development but also enhance the overall enjoyment of the playground. Water play was a popular element that survey respondents supported and should be considered with waterproof chairs that wheelchair users can transfer over to.



2.5 CALM SPACES & SOLO SPACES

Why?

Playgrounds can be exciting and stimulating places, which may become overwhelming to some users. Quiet or low-stimulation zones offer children a place to take a break, catch their breath, or replenish their energy before returning to more active play activities.

Providing restful, calm spaces within playgrounds encourages children to listen to their bodies and take care of their physical and emotional well-being.

Supporting References:

Research conducted through interviews have found that solo play features offer escapes from overstimulation to find a sense of security and calm in playgrounds. These calm, solo places should also provide a place to relax away from adults (while maintaining appropriate supervision). See citations: 4, 3.

Snapshot of Results:

Survey participants were asked if calm areas were important for the playground, the majority of respondents said it was extremely important. The top three calming features selected included:

- » Nature play areas with tunnels
- » Cozy domes
- » Nests



Nest feature at Winterthur in Delaware. Source: thervatlas.com

Recommendations:

- » Integrate calm spaces throughout the playground.
- » Allocate calm spaces for individuals to play and explore.
- » Integrate nature play with tunnels, cozy domes, and nests into the future playground.

The all-abilities playground should include a combination of smaller, enclosed spaces and family calm spaces to enhance the enjoyment of the playground and to get away from the stimulating communal areas. In addition, solo play zones can allow children the ability to play and learn, but in a more calm area and at their own pace.

Upon further conversation with stakeholders, though popular and effective, features such as cozy domes should be included in the future design in multiples so children don't have to share a calming space.

3.0 SUPPORTIVE FEATURES

3.1 FEATURES & AMENITIES

Why?

Overall, supportive features and amenities are essential components of all-abilities playgrounds, ensuring accessibility, safety, inclusivity, and comfort. By prioritizing the needs of all users and providing a welcoming and inclusive environment, playgrounds become vibrant community spaces where children and families can play, connect, and thrive together.



Fences around the play areas provide caretakers ease and reduce the chances children might run away. Source: City of Madison, Warner Park

Snapshot of Results:

The top five supportive features and playground amenities selected included:

- » Shade
- » Family restrooms
- » Regular restrooms
- » Seating
- » Trash receptacles

Other important features mentioned in the open-ended results included:

- » A fence around the play area
- » Lawn for service animals
- » Parallel parking for vans
- » Emergency phone and First Aid
- » Child and Adult Changing Tables

Recommendations:

Incorporate the basics for comfort at the all-abilities playground including:

- » Plenty of shade
- » Comfortable seating
- » Inclusive restrooms
- » Trash receptacles

By integrating these features, the playground can effectively cater to the diverse needs of its users, ensuring a safe, comfortable, and inclusive environment for everyone.

3.2 CAREGIVER NEEDS

Why?

By creating welcoming and inclusive environments that address the needs of caregivers, playground facilities become valued community resources that enrich the lives of children and families. The playground’s convenience, safety measures, and caregiver-friendly features will ensure that groups continue to use the facility for years to come.

Snapshot of Results:

Survey participants supported many of the different caregiver elements and ranked them as important. The categories that had the highest consensus on being important and that were not already reflected in recommendation 3.1, included:

- » **Clear, accessible signage**
- » **Play zones with ability levels communicated**
- » **ADA picnic areas**
- » **Seating with a view to play areas**

Caregiver survey feedback:

“Most ADA children need close supervision, so seating can be limited”

Incorporate braille, QR codes, picture exchange communication (PEC)

“A fence is important for kids that wander around”

Parallel Parking for Vans

Make sure that the playground has “easy access away from traffic”

See more results and feedback in Appendix B, the engagement report.

Recommendations:

Incorporate amenities that support caregivers at the playground including:

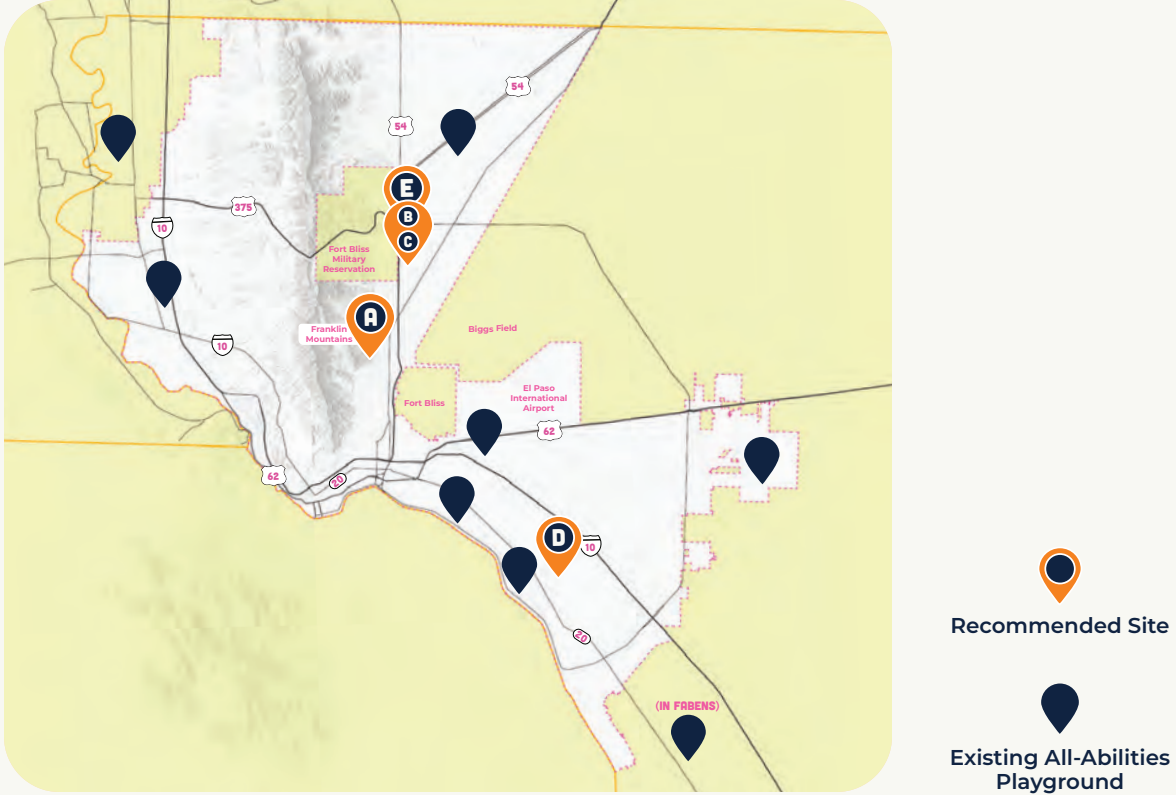
- » Clear, accessible signage
- » Play zones with ability levels communicated
- » ADA picnic areas
- » Centralized seating with a view of play areas

The all-abilities playground should cater to both the play participants and their caregivers; by incorporating these features into the playground, it can be a safer, more convenient, and more comfortable space to be in and return to day after day.

4.0 SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 SITE SELECTION

The site selection process resulted in **five recommended city owned parcels** in El Paso suitable for the all-abilities playground shown in the adjacent map. Utilizing geospatial parcel data and thematic prioritization data sets representing eleven parameters, the site selection process unfolded in two main stages. Stage 1 involved refining potential land parcels based on if the parcel is vacant or existing parkland, within the city limits, between 2-5 acres, and has zoning that aligns with playground development. Stage 2 assigned prioritization scores based on key parameters essential for an all-abilities playground. The following site recommendations provide detail on the five parcels including an aerial map, detailed description and parcel score for the locations.



A Logan Park Site 3501 McConnell Ave El Paso, TX 79904	B Maxwell Ave Site 4435 Maxwell Ave El Paso, TX 79907	C Kenneth Street Site 8937 Kenneth St El Paso, TX 79904	D Lomita Drive Site 715 Lomita Dr El Paso, TX 79904	E Cohen Avenue Site 9700 Gateway N Blvd El Paso, TX 79904
The Logan Park Site received a score of 80 out of 100 pts, receiving full points for 9 out of the 11 data parameters.	The Maxwell Ave. Site received a score of 80 out of 100 pts, receiving full points for 8 out of the 11 data parameters.	The Kenneth Street Site received a score of 75 out of 100 pts, receiving full points for 7 out of the 11 data parameters.	The Lomita Drive Site received a score of 70 out of 100 pts, receiving full points for 8 out of the 11 data parameters.	The Cohen Ave. Site received a score of 70 out of 100 pts, receiving full points for 8 out of the 11 data parameters.

4.1 LOGAN PARK SITE



Parcel Details:
The Logan Park site is located in northern El Paso at the foothills of the Franklin Mountains. The location is well integrated into the neighborhood, as it is already a park with amenities. This site is limited on space and does not have much space for expansion.

Parcel Score Card

Very High Priority (15 pts each)

- 15 Outside a one-mile buffer from existing all-abilities playgrounds
- 0 Located in census tracts with higher percentages of disabled persons
- 15 Located adjacent to existing parks/open space

High Priority (10 pts each)

- 10 Located in census tracts with higher social vulnerability index (SVI)
- 10 Not adjacent to roadways with high risk factors
- 10 Centrally-located in El Paso

Moderate Priority (5 pts each)

- 0 Outside of high environmental risk factors based on the EJScreen (Environmental Vulnerability)
- 5 Terrain with less than a 7% slope
- 5 Located outside of wetlands & floodplains
- 5 Located near existing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- 5 Located near bus stops

Total Score
80 / 100 total points

4.2 MAXWELL AVENUE SITE | NOLAN RICHARDSON RECREATION CENTER



Parcel Details:
The Maxwell Avenue site is located near an existing rec center and senior center allowing for shared staffing and efficiencies in service. The location is easily accessed by multiple roadways, there are existing undeveloped parcels, and opportunities to expand.

Parcel Score Card

Very High Priority (15 pts each)

- 15 Outside a one-mile buffer from existing all-abilities playgrounds
- 15 Located in census tracts with higher percentages of disabled persons
- 15 Located adjacent to existing parks/open space

High Priority (10 pts each)

- 10 Located in census tracts with higher social vulnerability index (SVI)
- 10 Not adjacent to roadways with high risk factors
- 0 Centrally-located in El Paso

Moderate Priority (5 pts each)

- 0 Outside of high environmental risk factors based on the EJScreen (Environmental Vulnerability)
- 5 Terrain with less than a 7% slope
- 0 Located outside of wetlands & floodplains
- 5 Located near existing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- 5 Located near bus stops

Total Score
80 / 100 total points

4.3 KENNETH STREET SITE | WELLINGTON CHEW PARK



Parcel Details:
The Kenneth Street Site is located near an existing rec center and senior center allowing for oversight and efficiencies in service. The location is easily accessed by multiple roadways, and there are existing undeveloped parcels and opportunities to expand.

Parcel Score Card

Very High Priority (15 pts each)

- 15 Outside a one-mile buffer from existing all-abilities playgrounds
- 15 Located in census tracts with higher percentages of disabled persons
- 15 Located adjacent to existing parks/open space

High Priority (10 pts each)

- 10 Located in census tracts with higher social vulnerability index (SVI)
- 10 Not adjacent to roadways with high risk factors
- 0 Centrally-located in El Paso

Moderate Priority (5 pts each)

- 0 Outside of high environmental risk factors based on the EJScreen (Environmental Vulnerability)
- 0 Terrain with less than a 7% slope
- 0 Located outside of wetlands & floodplains
- 5 Located near existing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- 5 Located near bus stops

Total Score

75 / 100 total points

4.4 LOMITA DRIVE SITE | LOMALAND PARK



Parcel Details:
The Lomita Drive Site is located near an existing community center allowing for shared staffing and efficiencies in service. The location is well integrated into the neighborhood, there are existing undeveloped parcels, and opportunities to expand.

Parcel Score Card

Very High Priority (15 pts each)

- 15 Outside a one-mile buffer from existing all-abilities playgrounds
- 0 Located in census tracts with higher percentages of disabled persons
- 15 Located adjacent to existing parks/open space

High Priority (10 pts each)

- 10 Located in census tracts with higher social vulnerability index (SVI)
- 10 Not adjacent to roadways with high risk factors
- 0 Centrally-located in El Paso

Moderate Priority (5 pts each)

- 0 Outside of high environmental risk factors based on the EJScreen (Environmental Vulnerability)
- 5 Terrain with less than a 7% slope
- 5 Located outside of wetlands & floodplains
- 5 Located near existing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- 5 Located near bus stops

Total Score

70 / 100 total points

4.5 COHEN AVENUE SITE | CAMP COHEN WATER PARK



Parcel Details:
The Cohen Avenue Site is easily accessed from multiple roadways, there is ample space to expand, it is near natural areas, and the parcel is relatively flat to accommodate many different ability types.

Parcel Score Card

- Very High Priority** (15 pts each)
- 15 Outside a one-mile buffer from existing all-abilities playgrounds
 - 0 Located in census tracts with higher percentages of disabled persons
 - 15 Located adjacent to existing parks/open space

- High Priority** (10 pts each)
- 10 Located in census tracts with higher social vulnerability index (SVI)
 - 10 Not adjacent to roadways with high risk factors
 - 0 Centrally-located in El Paso

- Moderate Priority** (5 pts each)
- 0 Outside of high environmental risk factors based on the EJScreen (Environmental Vulnerability)
 - 5 Terrain with less than a 7% slope
 - 5 Located outside of wetlands & floodplains
 - 5 Located near existing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
 - 5 Located near bus stops

Total Score
70 / 100 total points

Recommendations Summary

The recommendations presented here are the outcome of a 6-month planning process for the All-Abilities Playground for El Paso that emphasized community outreach. The cumulative results of the public engagement effort and best practices research helped to set the priorities and a clear direction for the playground moving forward into design. In addition, the robust site identification and prioritization analysis, which utilized geospatial data and eleven different scoring parameters, resulted in a set of potential parcels to consider for the regional, all-abilities playground. The City of El Paso will use this information to make decisions on the continued planning, design, and development of the project.



Children drew on chalkboards during the Chalk the Block event in 2023.

There will be more opportunities to provide feedback, stay involved, and lend support for this exciting, signature project for El Paso.
Thank you for your support and stay-tuned!

SECTION

4



Image captured from the community-wide workshop held at the recently opened accessible playground at Joey Barraza & Vino Memorial Park. Community members were encouraged to drop-in as their schedule allowed them to provide input and have discussions about the future all-abilities playground. Local vendors provided ice cream, children enjoyed the park, and we talked to multiple family members and caregivers!

4 | CITATIONS

- 1 Ginsburg, K. R., & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. (2007). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bonds. *Pediatrics*, 119(1), 182-191.
- 2 Kodjebacheva, G., Sabo, T., Brennan, M., & Suzuki, R. (2015). Boundless playgrounds in southeast michigan: safety, accessibility, and sensory elements. *Children, youth and environments*, 25(1), 132-146.
- 3 Perry, M. A., Devan, H., Fitzgerald, H., Han, K., Liu, L. T., & Rouse, J. (2018). Accessibility and usability of parks and playgrounds. *Disability and health journal*, 11(2), 221-229.
- 4 Prellwitz, M., & Skär, L. (2007). Usability of playgrounds for children with different abilities. *Occupational therapy international*, 14(3), 144-155.
- 5 Ripat, J., & Becker, P. (2012). Playground usability: what do playground users say? *Occupational therapy international*, 19(3), 144-153.
- 6 Tamm, Maria Prellwitz, Maare. "Attitudes of key persons to accessibility problems in playgrounds for children with restricted mobility: a study in a medium-sized municipality in northern Sweden." *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 6.4 (1999): 166-173.
- 7 Wenger, I., Schulze, C., Lundström, U., & Prellwitz, M. (2021). Children's perceptions of playing on inclusive playgrounds: A qualitative study. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 28(2), 136-146.
- 8 Brown, Denver MY, et al. "A scoping review of evidence-informed recommendations for designing inclusive playgrounds." *Frontiers in rehabilitation sciences* 2 (2021): 66459