City of St. Albert

Inclusive Playground Strategy

2025

PREPARED FOR THE CITY BY INVISTEC CONSULTING, LTD.

The City would like to respectfully acknowledge that this work took place on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples. As treaty *People*, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, we share the responsibility for stewardship of this beautiful land and aspire to create places that are truly inclusive of all.

Executive Summary

The importance of play in the quality of life and development of children, youth, and young adults cannot be overstated. With a growing population (72,316 residents as of the 2024 Census, approximately one third of whom range in age from infants to young adults), high quality public play spaces are increasingly vital assets in supporting the health, development, and well-being of St. Albert communities. The City of St. Albert (the City) prides itself on prioritizing this public service, caring for 67 City-maintained outdoor playgrounds to service this.

For community members with disabilities, quality play experiences can be a challenge to access, and there remains a need for more inclusive play options. In response to this need, the City has committed to improving inclusivity and accessibility in its playgrounds, with the Inclusive Playground Strategy (the Strategy) set to be an important tool in delivering on that commitment.

To guide its recommendations, this Strategy considers existing applicable policy (**Introduction**) and known inclusive play best practices (**Background**) against the backdrop of City demographics and playground inventory (**Analysis**). Supporting the recommendations, a new system for categorizing playgrounds by their level of inclusive play is proposed, and select existing playgrounds are named as candidates for inclusive redevelopment (**Implementation**); proposed changes to data tracking and approximate costs and timelines are provided in support of their development.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Language used throughout this document prioritizes a person-first approach to addressing people with disabilities, rather than an identity-first approach, in keeping with both the *Accessible Canada Act* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. This approach centres shared personhood and uses language such as “people with disabilities” or “persons with limited mobility.” We acknowledge, however, that there are many perspectives on how to refer to individuals with disabilities, including within disability-related communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City would like to thank and acknowledge everyone who contributed to the development of the Strategy, including consultants, subject matter experts, public engagement participants, and everyone who supported this work and to the community it serves. This work could not have been possible without their dedication, insight, and support.

The City would also like to specifically recognize the Inclusive Playgrounds Playbook prepared by Ross, Arbour-Nicitopoulos, Kanics, & Leo (2022) who's key questions were adapted in structuring this strategy.

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Introduction

STRATEGY GOALS

The Strategy is intended as a road map toward providing greater inclusivity in City-owned playgrounds. It is understood that not all playgrounds are suitable for all users; however, improvements across the City's playground network offer opportunities to serve everyone better. To aid in decision-making for playground development and redevelopment, and to update municipal standards for inclusive play, the City selected Invistec Consulting Ltd. to develop this Inclusive Playground Strategy to:

- Provide an overview report on regional, provincial, and national best practices as they relate to inclusive play
- Provide recommendations (including relevant targets, standards, and guidelines) for City-lead provision of inclusive play in outdoor playgrounds
- Provide recommendations for supportive infrastructure required for the successful implementation of inclusive play in outdoors playgrounds
- Provide a prioritized list of playgrounds to develop or redevelop with greater inclusivity in mind, alongside timeframes for implementation

Taken together, these goals aim to improve the provision of inclusive play spaces throughout the City, providing a diverse range of play experiences for all abilities and ages.

POLICY CONTEXT

The following are important policies and regulations that apply to the City and have directly informed the work of the Strategy. A wide range of policies, guidelines, and documents from other jurisdictions were also considered in the development of the Strategy. Please refer to Appendix B for a complete list of resources.

Table 1: Municipal Policy Context

Standards and Guidelines	Relevant Sections and Sources
Flourish: Growing to 100k (City of St. Albert Municipal Development Plan)	11.2 Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails 11.3 Community Facilities 12.4 Accessibility and Comfort *Goals, policies, and strategic directions for the ongoing growth and prosperity of the City of St. Albert*
City of St. Albert Municipal Engineering Standards (2021)	Appendix F – Recreation Amenity Standards *Standards of development for physical infrastructure*
City of St. Albert Parks and Open Space Standards and Guidelines	Principle 3: Diversity & Inclusivity *Park classifications, amenity restrictions, etc.*
Various Area Structure Plans and Parks Master Plans	*Directives for the siting and development of new public spaces in their respective neighbourhoods*
City of St. Albert Bylaws	Land Use Bylaw 18/2024 Parks Bylaw 07/2022

Standards and Guidelines	Relevant Sections and Sources
City of St. Albert Universal Access Plan	3.3.3 Universal Access Plan for Exterior Pedestrian Routes (E) 4.10 Recreation *Guidance for the implementation of universal access in all aspects of City operations*
City of Burlington Accessibility Design Standards (2016) *(Adopted by the City)*	4.6 Outdoor Public Spaces 4.6.3 Outdoor Play Spaces *Standards for implementation of accessibility in public infrastructure*

Table 2: Provincial Policy Context

Standards and Guidelines	Relevant Sections and Sources
The Alberta Human Rights Act	*Basis for the legal protection of the dignity, rights, and responsibilities of all peoples within Alberta, including rights of access to services and facilities*
Accessibility Design Guide 2024	7.1 Wayfinding 7.5 Outdoor Spaces Design Considerations 7.6 Inclusive Play Space Design Considerations *Recommended best practices and design considerations for accessible built environments*

Table 3: Federal Policy Context

Standards and Guidelines	Relevant Sections and Sources
Children's Playground Equipment and Surfacing CAN/CSA Z614:20	Annex H: Children's playgrounds and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities *National Standard*
Accessible Design for the Built Environment CSA/ASC B651:23	Annex E: References for accessible outdoor recreational environments *National Standard*

SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This Strategy is an implementation document, intended to provide recommendations for the development of City-owned inclusive public playgrounds. This includes specific recommendations for how to build playgrounds more inclusively, as well as where to build them, and to what extent, based on a critical review of available best practices, City practices and policies, and public engagement. The Strategy will inform the design of new City-developed playgrounds in growing neighbourhoods, the re-design of select existing playgrounds to a more inclusive standard, and may be used as a reference for others who provide play opportunities within the City (e.g. school boards, private daycare centres, private developments). It does not replace individual site design, and its recommendations should be reviewed every four to five years to confirm their continued alignment with City plans and goals.

Key Definitions

The following are some key definitions worth noting before reading through the Strategy. As descriptions and definitions of inclusive play and playground design are not universal, other terms not listed here may be used throughout this document as well. Refer to the Appendix A for more definitions.

Is it 'Accessible' or 'accessible'?

Throughout this strategy there may be terms that are at times capitalized and other times not. When the lower case is used, this word is meant to be descriptive, using the definition provided here (e.g. accessible play). When the upper case is used, the term may be referring to something with a more specific definition (e.g. Accessible Playground). When in doubt, refer to the Glossary.

Inclusivity | Inclusion | Inclusive

In the City of St. Albert, inclusion is defined as creating a culture that embraces, respects, accepts, and values diversity.

In the context of playground development, it means spaces are designed to welcome people of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of ability, and that users can play on their own terms, with a variety of opportunities for physical, sensory, and social play, and at different levels of challenge. Inclusivity extends further to those accompanying users, such as family members, friends, or caregivers.

Accessibility | Access | Accessible

Accessibility, generally, is the design of environments that allow for the equitable use, participation, and inclusion of people of varying abilities and ages.

In the context of playground development, accessibility refers to the settings, initiatives, and services designed to support navigation of the physical environment.

PLAY TERMINOLOGY

Play and the design of playgrounds can be understood through many lenses, and the language used to describe them often revolves around skills development, sensory stimulation, and play experiences. To better understand how inclusion applies to play, it can be helpful to first understand the language of play.

SENSES, DEVELOPMENT, AND TYPES OF PLAY

Play is understood by the Canadian Public Health Association as an integral part of healthy development, supporting physical, mental, and social health, and improving motor skills, social behaviour, independence, and conflict resolution. It is a tool for self-guided learning, providing opportunities for challenge and exploring boundaries. Equipment is designed to support these outcomes, with specific sensory and skills development in mind. According to the Taylor-Trott Pyramid of Learning, stimulation of the sensory systems supports motor and cognitive development, and so play types are often broadly grouped according to the specific system targeted for development. In line with *Creating Inclusive Playgrounds (Ross et al.)*, these groupings can be divided into Physical Play, Sensory Play, and Social-Emotional Play types.

Physical Play is any play which engages both the external senses (typically auditory, tactile, and/or visual) and the internal senses (i.e. the proprioceptive and vestibular systems) in service of motor development and movement. Physical play is the type of play most commonly associated with traditional playgrounds.

Sensory Play is any play which engages the external senses in service of sensory system development. It is common practice to include only three of the "big 5" senses in playground design: hearing (auditory), touch (tactile), and sight (visual). For some, Sensory Play may be as or more important than other types of play due to differences in sensory processing.

Social-Emotional Play is any play which engages the mind in cognitive development. Social-Emotional Play is concerned with navigating social situations, engaging the imagination, and challenging the mind. This may include participation in games with rules, role play, parallel play, observation, creative play, story telling, or any number of other activities.

It should be noted that there is no one way to differentiate types of play. For example, Bob Hughes' A Playworkers Taxonomy of Play Types lists 16 play types based on activity, while the World Playground Research Institute's Designing Schoolyards for Different Play Types lists 5 types, based on higher level patterns or styles of play. The City's use of Social-Emotional Play as a type is sometimes broken out by others into Social Play and Cognitive Play. The variable ways of discussing play are not mutually exclusive and can often be related to each other in terms of the individual experiences and skills that are engaged by any type of play.

PLAY COMPONENT TYPES

Playground equipment can be categorized by Component Type, where each type refers to a specific kind of play. There are many ways to distinguish between Play Components. For the purposes of this Strategy, Component Types are categorized as sub-groups of the three Play Type groupings. Components can take many forms, and any one component may combine multiple Play Types.

Components supporting **Physical Play** are grouped by the style of physical activity or movement they support. **Sensory Play** Components support specific tactile, auditory, or visual stimulation. Components supporting **Social-Emotional Play** are designed for cognitive stimulation. The following lists detail key sub-groups commonly used to refer to Play Components, and examples.

Physical Play Components

Balancing, supporting vestibular development, as well as bodily coordination and risk perception, often using narrow or unstable surfaces with a range of supports to mediate challenge level, such as hand holds; examples include balance beams, disc challenges, and tight rope walks

Brachiating (or Overhead), supporting movement patterns that primarily target the use of the upper body, including the arms and trunk; examples include overhead ladders and rings, sliding tracks, and nets

Climbing, supporting movement over elevated surfaces and structures, in vertical and horizontal directions, and often with a wide range of possible challenge; examples include ladders, boulder walls, rope bridges, and nets

Rocking and Gliding, supporting linear motion and swaying, whether single-use or social; examples include spring riders, platform rockers, and flying foxes

Sliding, supporting gravitational motion, in linear, wave-like, and spiraling directions; examples include open, tube, roller, and hill slides

Spinning and Rotating, supporting movement about an axis, with rotation positioning the user some distance from the axis, and spinning has the user located on the axis; examples include dish spinners, carousels, and spinning climbers

Swinging, supporting gravitational movement in a wide variety of directions from linear to rotational to spinning, and often in a pendulum-like fashion; examples include belt, bucket, saucer, and social swings

Sensory Play Components

Auditory, engaging the exploration and processing of acoustic information, such as through producing and locating sounds by a range of means; examples include talking tubes, noisemakers, and musical instruments

Tactile, engaging experiences of touch, such as through differences in texture, pressure, temperature, vibration, and material; examples include contrasting surfaces (i.e. smooth versus rough, soft versus hard), a range of materials such as metal, plastic, stone, and wood, and dynamic fluids (i.e. sand or water tables)

Visual, engaging sight and supporting visual processing, such as through reading, distinguishing objects, motion tracking, and focusing; examples include mazes, matching games, kaleidoscopes, telescopes, and language boards

Social-Emotional Play Components

Social-Emotional Play Components support the use of imaginative and creative activities to explore and express emotions and navigate social situations. Examples include playhouses or components with interactive features like games.

PLAYGROUND SURFACES

Surface selection has a significant impact on playground access and navigation. Play surfaces can be made from a variety of materials, each differently affecting the experience of walking, running, crawling, or rolling through a play area, but generally they may be grouped into two broad categories: Unitary or Loose-Fill.

Loose-Fill Surfaces are surfaces composed of a dynamic, movable material, and are typically not considered accessible to mobility aids or wheeled implements without additional interventions such as regular maintenance or material binding; examples include engineered wood fibre (EWF), rubber mulch, pea gravel, and sand

Unitary Surfaces are surfaces which are fixed, continuous, and stable, offering a uniform surface suitable for all modes of mobility, whether walking, running, or rolling; examples include pour-in-place (PIP) rubber, rubber tile, and artificial turf

SUPPORTIVE AMENITIES AND PLAY AREA DESIGN FEATURES

Supportive Amenities are the infrastructure used to support a more enjoyable, comfortable playground experience. These amenities may support playground visits by providing rest and observation points for users and caregivers, or by allowing them to attend to certain personal needs without needing to interrupt their stay. Examples include seating, shade, washrooms, wayfinding, fencing, and more.

Play Area Design Features are elements that enrich the experience of the playground or better facilitate safety. These include things like creating a safe sense of enclosure to the overall play area (via structures, landforms, or other barriers), providing adequate lighting, ensuring accessible walkways between park entries and playgrounds, and providing access to nature.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE TERMINOLOGY

City-owned outdoor playgrounds are located within the City's parks, and are subject to certain considerations connected to the classification of those parks (i.e. as City Parks, Community Parks, Neighbourhood Parks, etc.). Differences in park classification include but not limited to differences in size, location, and intended use, providing context for the playgrounds they contain.

Background

Foundational to the Strategy, the Background consists of a review of best practices, collected from multiple jurisdictions and guided by the principles detailed bellow. These practices are summarized in the following sections—along with notes relating them to core attributes of inclusive playgrounds and relevant local context—and form the foundation for the Strategy's later Analysis and Implementation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City believes in the advancement of a fair and equitable society that promotes respect for all citizens, strengthens the community, reduces causes of disadvantage and inequality and ensures that all citizens in St. Albert thrive and enjoy the best quality of life possible. Toward this end, this Strategy aims to align its values toward **Diverse**, **Accessible**, and **Inclusive** play for all.

These guiding principles are in line with the goals of the City's Municipal Development Plan (*Flourish*), *Universal Access Plan* (UAP), and *Parks and Open Spaces Standards and Guidelines*, among other City guiding documents. *Flourish's* Community Wellbeing goal aims to support the physical, mental, and social well being of residents through community services and neighbourhoods that foster healthy lifestyles, while its Accessibility and Comfort principle seeks a St. Albert that is accessible and inviting to everyone, in all seasons. The UAP holds the principles of equity, difference, and the dignity of risk, choice, and access for all, while the City's *Parks and Open Spaces Standards and Guidelines* champion the principles of diversity and inclusivity.

Taken together, the Strategy looks to support the development of inclusive play infrastructure that responds to the needs of the widest population range possible, enabling people of varying ages and abilities to play.

> *"We are a friendly and inclusive community of passionate equals, where everyone feels a sense of belonging. We believe that community starts with the person next door." – Cultivating Our Future, St. Albert's Community Vision*

BEST PRACTICES

WHAT MAKES A BEST PRACTICE?

The design of a playground may be as unique as the site it is located in, and the best practices that apply to inclusive play are wide ranging in scope, so what is it that makes a practice "the best?" To better understand what these practices build to, the popular framework from *Creating Inclusive Playgrounds* suggests that successful inclusive playgrounds answer the following questions:

"Can I get there?" | ***"Can I play?"*** | ***"Can I stay?"***

"Can I get there?" asks first if it is possible to navigate to and through the playground and is answered by accommodating ***Access***.

> Access is supported by ensuring accessible walkways, surfaces, and equipment are provided, including paths between the playground itself and the means of travel used to reach it (i.e. accessible parking, transit stops, and the active transportation network). It is also supported by ensuring that equipment is adequately sized and spaced such that users of all sizes can move through the site, and by providing accessible information about playground services for visitors to plan their trip.

"Can I play?" asks next whether there are opportunities for people to use the playground in the way that best suits them and is answered by accommodating by ***Diversity***.

> Diversity is supported through the provision of a rich variety of play components, sensory stimulation, and levels of challenge. It is also supported by providing opportunities to meet and play with others, regardless of age, ability, or background.

"Can I stay?" asks finally whether the playground's features and surroundings support the user's visit—particularly by eliminating barriers that would cut their visit short—and is answered by accommodating ***Comfort***.

> Comfort is supported by allowing playground users to stay as long as they would like, ensure features are present that allow for things like rest, personal care, and protection from the elements (e.g. seating, washrooms, and shade, respectively).

To identify design elements that contribute to ***Access***, ***Diversity***, and ***Comfort***, the Strategy summarizes best practices from various jurisdictions according to key elements: Play Surfaces, Play Components, Supportive Amenities, Play Area Design, and Provision and Placement. These elements are presented separately, but successful implementation of each benefit from thoughtful consideration of the others.

While many of these best practices may benefit any playground, not every practice will be well suited to every situation, nor does incorporating every practice guarantee that all visitors will feel included. As diverse needs require diverse supports, the City aims to provide a variety of experiences throughout its public playgrounds.

PLAY SURFACE BEST PRACTICES

Many surface varieties exist for playgrounds, differing in play value, safety, maintenance needs and accessibility; however, no one play surface is best in every situation. The choice of surface can depend on things like budget, desired play experience practice, and extent of maintenance. Using unitary surfaces throughout is considered best practice for wheeled accessibility, while mixed surfaces support diversity of play. When mixing surface materials, special consideration must be given to ensuring entry and exit points to accessible play components are located on Accessible Routes. Care must be taken to ensure that non-accessible surfaces like sand do not contribute to the segregation of "specialized" accessible areas away from the rest of the playground. Table 4 discusses the relative advantages and disadvantages of commonly used play surfaces.

Table 4: Playground surface type advantages and disadvantages

SURFACE	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
Artificial Turf	Low maintenance Soft feel Easy to install Durable / withstands high traffic use UV resistant / colourfast	Expensive install Cushioned underlay required for play Low to medium shock absorption / not recommended for fall zones Can be uneven without careful subgrade preparation
Pour-in-Place (PIP) Rubber	Withstands high traffic use Consistent impact absorption / opportunities for areas of greater absorption as needed Highly flexible for surface design UV resistant / colourfast Accommodates landforms in play area Repairable	Expensive to install Professional design and installation required Repair work will not be seamless
Rubber Tiles	Improved impact absorption with proper subgrade Individual tiles are long lasting and can withstand high traffic Multiple colours and designs available UV resistant / colourfast If damaged, can be replaced in pieces	Expensive to install Regular maintenance is needed to maintain cleanliness and quality at joints Professional design and installation required Can be uneven without careful subgrade preparation

SURFACE	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
Engineered Wood Fibre (EWF)	Good shock absorption Least expensive of the accessible surfaces Durable and self-knitting Natural material	Requires frequent maintenance to keep tidy and level Requires deep volume to achieve high fall protection May decompose, requiring topping up and providing hiding places for insects / pests Requires curb cut / ramp entries and re-levelling to ensure accessibility
Pea Gravel	Inexpensive Good impact absorption with sufficient depth Easy to install	Requires regular maintenance to keep tidy Risk of ingestion / children may place in nose or ears, etc. Requires occasional screening for buried hazards Inaccessible if made deep enough for fall protection / poor shock absorption is compacted enough for accessibility
Rubber Mulch	Affordable Excellent shock absorption Easy to install Does not attract insects or decompose Available in a range of colours	Not considered accessible unless bound Requires extensive maintenance to keep tidy Raw rubber may stain clothing and skin Risk of ingestion Very light / may scatter in strong wind
Sand	Inexpensive Easy to install Good impact absorption Minimal microbial growth potential	Requires extensive maintenance to keep tidy Risk of ingestion Requires occasional screening for buried hazards Completely inaccessible to most mobility devices Difficulty of movement may contribute to user fatigue

Access

Accessible surfaces are crucial for ensuring play components are accessible to those with mobility challenges, and the use of unitary surfacing in particular supports the ease of movement of users with mobility aids. Accessible Loose-Fill Surfaces require accessible points of entry, such as curb ramps.

Diversity

Loose-fill surfacing provides textural interest and opportunities for constructive and creative play, while unitary surfacing allows for play-focused surface designs such as painted games (e.g. hopscotch) or raised features (for dynamic movement). Colour, tonal, or textural contrast on surfaces may provide opportunities for user-led games and imaginative play.

Comfort

Colour, tonal, or textural contrast enables those with visual impairments the means of more easily navigating the playground and may provide a sense of organization and predictability to those with neurodivergence or cognitive disabilities. Care must be taken when using contrasting features to account for differences in vision or sensory processing, such as colour-blindness or sensitivity to overstimulation.

Local Context

Municipal

The City's *Municipal Engineering Standards* (Engineering Standards) currently include sand, engineered wood fibre, and rubber surfacing as acceptable surfaces, though the City may explore the use of artificial turf in the future. The City's Engineering Standards do not support the use of pea gravel or rubber mulch, and these materials are not under consideration for future development.

The City has also adopted the *City of Burlington Accessibility Design Standards*, which requires the following regarding surfacing:

- surfaces are to be firm, stable, level, non-abrasive, and drain rapidly, and
- transition curbs are used where surfacing is engineered wood fibre.

Provincial

The *Alberta Accessibility Design Guide* recommends outdoor play spaces to have ground surfaces that are firm and stable, with impact-attenuating properties for injury prevention. This indicates a clear preference for unitary surfacing, though the guide does list both EWF and rubber mulch as suitably accessible surfaces, if installed and maintained properly.

PLAY COMPONENT BEST PRACTICES

Play is essential to the development of physical, social, and emotional skills, and play components are the tools for that development. Best practices for inclusive play refer to the selection and qualities of play components for the ways they support different types of play. Factors impacting Play Component selection are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5: Decision points regarding Play Component selection impacting inclusive play

Selected Components...	Support
are accessible	Independent access with minimal transfer support fosters independence Space is required for manoeuvring mobility aids or allowing others to aid in transfers, whether between components while on them
are diverse	Greater diversity means greater opportunity to self-select activities matching user abilities and interests Diverse component types provide more opportunities to support healthy skills development across Physical, Sensory, and Social-Emotional Play Types Providing equipment that is appropriately challenging for those without mobility related impairments can be an important factor supporting groups with varying abilities enjoying the playground together
include sensory play	Sensory play and sensory design considerations are important factors in supporting users with sensory processing disorders, visual impairments, and mental disabilities Attention to component spacing—particularly between auditory play components—can help prevent overstimulation from crowding and noise
include solitary play	Solitary play components / spaces provide safe escapes from more active areas for those who need it and offer the chance to relax independent of caregivers Solitary play can serve as observation points, allowing users to take in others playing before deciding if they would like to join in

Selected Components...	Support
are recognizable	Recognizable shapes, objects, and creatures used in playground design fosters creativity, using the familiar to provide opportunities for users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to relate to one another, spurring imaginative play While playgrounds with strong themes can be exciting, recognizable design should avoid being overly stylized where possible; for example, a highly stylized castle offers less versatility than a less stylized enclosed structure with windows and doors, which may by turns be a castle, a cabin, a storefront, etc.
are organized in a circuit	Circular design (or organizing equipment in a circuit, not necessarily a circle) creates connections between exit and entry points of different pieces of equipment, supporting "looping" patterns and intuitive use of equipment

Access

In Canada physical accessibility of play components (among other things) is standardized through the *Children's playground equipment and surfacing* standard, or CSA Z614:20 (CSA Z614).

Diversity

Individual components may be categorized by their Component Type, the Play Type they support, and other features, such as single-user vs. multi-user, ground-level vs. elevated, or by intended age group, addressing different levels of sociability or challenge. As playgrounds can vary in size and purpose, classifying components in these ways provides a means of quantifying diversity, and is a common tool for qualifying inclusivity.

There are benefits to using play structures that support a range of Play Types. For example, one structure may accommodate climbing, brachiating, and sliding components for Physical Play, as well as tactile and visual components for Sensory Play. Components designed in familiar shapes supports Social-Emotional Play, and may benefit either social or solitary play opportunities, depending on placement.

It is typical for components to be grouped together in pods or play areas by age group, reflecting shared levels of challenge. When designing play pods for different age groups, it is beneficial to consider the diversity of play equipment for each pod separately.

Comfort

To support user comfort through experiences of integration, components specifically adapted for accessibility (e.g. specialized swings, rockers, spinners, etc.) are best spread throughout the playground, rather than isolated together. The use of colours and textures as safety markers—at elevation changes, for example—can support a more intuitive understanding of space and risk for all users, but especially for those with visual impairments. Including solitary play components and quiet areas can greatly improve user comfort for those needing breaks from high-stimulus environments.

Local Context

Municipal

According to the City's Engineering Standards, all play equipment must be installed in compliance with CSA Z614 in its most current edition. Annex H of this standard is specific to the development of inclusive play but does not specifically guide play component selection. Where accessibility is the desired outcome, the City is directed by the City of Burlington Accessible Design Guideline.

Provincial

The Government of Alberta's Accessibility Design Guide notes that both sensory and active (physical) play components should be incorporated into the design of outdoor play spaces to best accommodate users and caregivers with various disabilities, reinforcing the preference for inclusive playground design to consider needs beyond physical access and mobility.

SUPPORTIVE AMENITIES BEST PRACTICES

Successful playground visits are supported by key amenities that make the stay more comfortable, eliminating barriers that might otherwise cut a visit short. The presence of some amenities may be determining factors in whether or not some people will choose to visit a playground. Due to the limitations of park size, serviceability, and surroundings, however, not every playground is able to accommodate every amenity. The following amenities are commonly suggested to ensure a comfortable, well-supported stay.

Table 6: Amenities supporting inclusivity in play

Supportive Amenities include...	Support
accessible transportation	Accessible parking stalls, transit stops, and walkways connecting to the play area allow access for those with mobility needs.
accessible washrooms	Washrooms benefit all visitors to play areas, but accessible washrooms are necessary for those requiring assistance in toileting, space to change clothing, and those using mobility aids
a variety of seating	Benches and tables located around a playground perimeter can facilitate improved surveillance of playground users by caregivers Extending firm, stable surfaces adjacent to seating options allows for mobility device parking without obstructing connecting pathways
a source of shade	Shade structures offer reprieve from the sun—of particular importance for those who struggle with thermal regulation or who have light sensitivities—as well as protection from precipitation In lieu of permanent structures, shade may be provided by high canopied tree planting collocated with accessible seating and set some distance away from the playground edge to minimize leaf litter in the play area
fencing	Fencing around the perimeter of a play area lowers risk of wandering Fencing benefits from being as visually permeable as possible, ensuring sightlines through the playground are maintained
informational features	Wayfinding maps support navigation of the play area, including available supportive amenities Informational features benefit from taking many forms, including the use of braille, written language, and images to ensure information is available to people of all abilities
satellite play features	Additional off-playground features such as loose parts play, sports fields, or outdoor fitness can greatly enhance the overall play experience, particularly for multi-generational group visits

Supportive Amenities include...	Support
waste receptacles	Promotes responsible stewardship of playgrounds by reducing littering Receptacle function benefits from being usable with only one hand and located a reasonable distance away from seating, near play area entries
water fountains / bottle-fill stations	Staying hydrated can impact how long visitors are able to play, and may be used to support service animals as well as playground users

Access

As with surfaces and components, all supportive amenities benefit from being made accessible, located on firm, flat surfacing, and connected to walkways without obstructing them. Access to parking and transit may be provided onsite in the form of a parking lot with accessible stalls or by street frontage, and benefits from being located as close to the playground as possible. Where playgrounds are located close to roadways, separation fencing may be used for safety and to minimize risk of wandering.

Additional accessible considerations may include ensuring seating has backrests, fountains are located at wheelchair height, and wayfinding is extended to guide visitors to the playground from park entrances. Where fencing is used, it benefits from the inclusion of accessible gates or open entries to allow playground users to navigate the space independently.

In situations where including a given amenity is not feasible, it is commonly suggested that playgrounds instead be located as close to them as possible; however, set distances are not usually specified.

Diversity

Play opportunities provided by satellite amenities such as sports courts and outdoor fitness can engage the whole family in a playground visit.

Comfort

Supportive amenities are at the heart of providing for comfort during a playground visit, both for playground users and for caregivers. Seating, washrooms, shade, waste receptacles, and more allow users to attend to personal needs during their visit with minimal interruption to play. A minimum number of amenities to be provided is not typically specified and depends on both site conditions and community needs.

Fencing or other site features that provide a sense of enclosure can prevent sudden wandering and can add separation between playgrounds and nearby safety risks (e.g. roads), supporting caregiver peace of mind. Critics, however, argue that it can make play spaces feel restrictive, and can diminish the quality and freedom of play as a result. As such, the use of fencing benefits from balancing the needs and comfort of both playground users and caregivers.

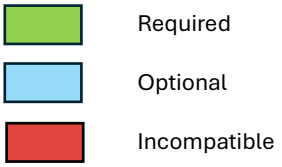
Local Context

Municipal

Outdoor City-owned playgrounds are located within the City's parks network, which has specific amenity guidelines based on park classification according to the *Parks and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* with playgrounds permitted in all park classifications except Connector Parks. As most existing playgrounds are located within City, Community, and Neighbourhood Parks, these three classes and the relevant amenity guidelines are summarized below. Note that there are no specific amenity guidelines detailing proximity to playgrounds.

Table 7: Amenity requirements and restrictions by Park Classification

Park Classification	Informational Feature	Accessible Washroom	Parking Lot	Water Fountains	Bench Seating	Waste Receptacles
City						
Community						
Neighbourhood						



The City's Engineering Standards require that all benches have concrete "wings" to facilitate accessibility. Other supportive amenities (such as shade structures or satellite play facilities) may be permitted but are not specifically required.

PLAY AREA DESIGN BEST PRACTICES

In addition to decisions on surfacing materials, component selection, and supportive amenities, inclusive playgrounds benefit from their thoughtful coordination and the design of their surroundings. Smart component layout, the use of landmarking, and making nature accessible can provide benefits for a wide range of play types and user needs. The following general design considerations are commonly suggested to support inclusive play.

Table 8: Inclusive considerations for general play area design

Play Area features include...	Support
visual / textural contrast	Surface printed information supports those with visual and cognitive impairments in navigating the playground; examples include: • colour contrasting play surfaces and/or equipment, • marking pathways between key playground elements (e.g. play pods and washrooms), and • high contrast used to warn of drop offs or other sudden changes Other considerations in design include adjusting for areas of high and low stimulation (i.e. less contrast in quiet areas) or avoiding colour mixes common in colour blindness
access to nature	Natural features have proven benefits for nervous system regulation and supporting immune system function (e.g. sensory plantings offer unique opportunities to stimulate sense of smell) Canopies of larger trees can provide shade, help to block wind, and regulate temperature and air quality for the surrounding site; fruit trees are typically not recommended Changes in landforms and topography, such as berms and hills, offer additional ways to explore and add challenge to movement
open sightlines	Play components and playground structures can minimize impacts to sight lines by making use of transparent materials or ensuring frequent openings in and between playground elements Uninterrupted sightlines facilitate easier supervision, and enable cross-playground communication for those with hearing disabilities

Play Area features include...	Support
comfortable spaces	As with a diversity of component types, a diversity of spatial formats allows users to access the spaces that are most comfortable for them: • wide open spaces benefit ease of movement for those with visual impairments, for whom cramped spaces can require being on high alert for risk of injury • confined or enclosed spaces (e.g. equipment enclosed on multiple sides) has been shown to promote the highest levels of social, motor, and language behaviours across playground users

As a design decision, appropriately sizing playgrounds has implications for the number and variety of play components that can be included and may be limited by other factors such as park size and available budget. While there are no explicit best practices for tying playground size to inclusive play, there are examples of how it may be linked to park size, intended audience, and catchment, as well as which supportive amenities may be included. These factors can then be used to link playground size to a level of inclusive play service a given size may best support.

Access

Ensuring natural features are accessible to all supports engagement with the natural environment, something of particular value to people with disabilities which may normally prevent them from having access to nature. Using wayfinding techniques can also be an important support in allowing users with certain visual or cognitive disabilities the freedom to navigate the play area independently.

Diversity

Access to nature play opportunities may supplement the more conventional play opportunities provided by playground equipment both in terms of sensory play (e.g. access to planting) and physical play (e.g. elevation changes and uneven terrain supporting tumbling, etc.).

Comfort

Designing for ease of navigation, supervision, and use of the space minimizes discomfort and confusion for play participants and caregivers alike. Adequate spacing between elements facilitates this ease by allowing for greater freedom of movement and improving sightlines. Locating amenities in areas that better support supervision is another strategy.

Local Context

Municipal

The City does not currently track design features as listed in the above table in relation to playgrounds.

The adopted City of Burlington Accessibility Design Standards require playground elements and potential obstacles to be identified by colour or tonal contrast, where an "element" in this case may refer to any playground component, supportive amenity, or architectural feature.

Provincial

The Alberta Accessibility Design Guide lists four kinds of wayfinding: orientation, direction, identification, and general information. The guide points to the benefits of using wayfinding to make spaces logical and intuitive, using textural and tactile cues, acoustics, and colour and brightness contrast.

PROVISION AND PLACEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Inclusive playgrounds benefit from being sited in densely populated areas or areas of major activity, both to provide access to inclusive play to the largest population possible and support the creation of a central community destination. Few resources identify a minimum number of inclusive or accessible playgrounds play based on population, service area, or proximity, and approaches vary widely for those that do.

For example, the City of Calgary seeks to provide one inclusive play space or recreational opportunity within a 5 km radius of every Calgarian, while the City of Medicine Hat seeks to provide 2 accessible playgrounds per service zone, with each zone serving approximately 15,000 citizens. For examples further away, MidCoast, Australia's *Playspace Strategy* requires inclusive play only of regional playground development. The United Kingdom's *Developing Accessible Play Space Guide* recommends general play provision targets based on distance from residents but says nothing of specific inclusive play targets.

This lack of consensus on how much inclusive play is enough is reflective of the general lack of inclusive playgrounds provided worldwide. As best practices for playground design are adopted more broadly, similar practices for minimum service levels may develop.

Select examples from other jurisdictions (e.g. US, UK) use proximity measures for playgrounds more generally, identifying local play areas as within a 5-minute walk and neighbourhood-level play areas as within a 10- to 15-minute walk. This indicates that the distances between residences and playgrounds typically relate to the level of service provided by that playground, providing context for the placement and expected service levels of inclusive and accessible play.

Access

Playgrounds are best located near accessible parking, transit connections, and an active transportation network, allowing for users to arrive at the playground in the mode of their choosing.

Diversity

Consider proximity to other playgrounds, such as those available at school sites, when determining the extent of playground development; keeping in mind that school playgrounds will vary in how inclusive their designs are and may not always be publicly accessible (i.e. during school hours).

Comfort

Playgrounds are well served by being close to public services and amenities to minimize impacts from trip times and visit interruptions.

Local Context

Municipal

The City requires every residence to be no further than 400 m unobstructed walk (or an estimated 5-minute walk) from a park or open space, with almost all residential areas of the City exceeding this standard. There are currently no specifications for distance to playgrounds.

The City transit system includes both a standard service and a handibus service, accessible to those who cannot use the standard transit system for reasons related to their disability. The transit system is not designed around parks and playgrounds, however where larger parks are placed, there is a relationship between transit availability and access to those parks.

Analysis

STATE OF PLAY

With 67 public playgrounds dotting the City (not including those provided by school boards) there is a wide range of playgrounds available to St. Albert residents. The state of existing City-owned inventory and the level of service it provides is compared to census data to understand how well positioned inventory may be to support redevelopment for inclusive play. Each of these playgrounds varies in size, age, and condition, and each is equipped with different surfacing types, equipment, and amenities. These factors and more are explored here to provide a snapshot of the state of play in the City and determine how well current play provision aligns with best practices.

DEMOGRAPHICS

St. Albert is a predominantly residential city, with a population of over 70,000. According to the 2024 Census, youth aged 0 to 14 make up approximately 16%, with the largest populations located—in descending order—in Lacombe Park, North Ridge, The Gardens, Deer Ridge, Erin Ridge, Erin Ridge North, and Akinsdale. Approximately 4,700 residents of St. Albert identified themselves as having a disability in the 2024 Census, accounting for around 7% of the total population. Of those identified, approximately 540 were children aged 0 to 14.

Population numbers, both by total and by specific age group, have been used by various jurisdictions to determine a minimum number of playgrounds required to serve communities. This typically works out to about 1 playground per 1,000 residents, or 5 per 1,000 children. While these ratios have not historically been used for the development of inclusive or accessible play, they can indicate how well existing inventory matches up with meeting needs for play, and these can put potential targets for the provision of inclusive playgrounds in context.

It is worth reinforcing that while the intended age groups of playground users are typically for children and young adults, people of all ages access playgrounds, both as users and as caregivers. Wherever population is a factor in decision making for inclusive play, residents of all ages should be considered.

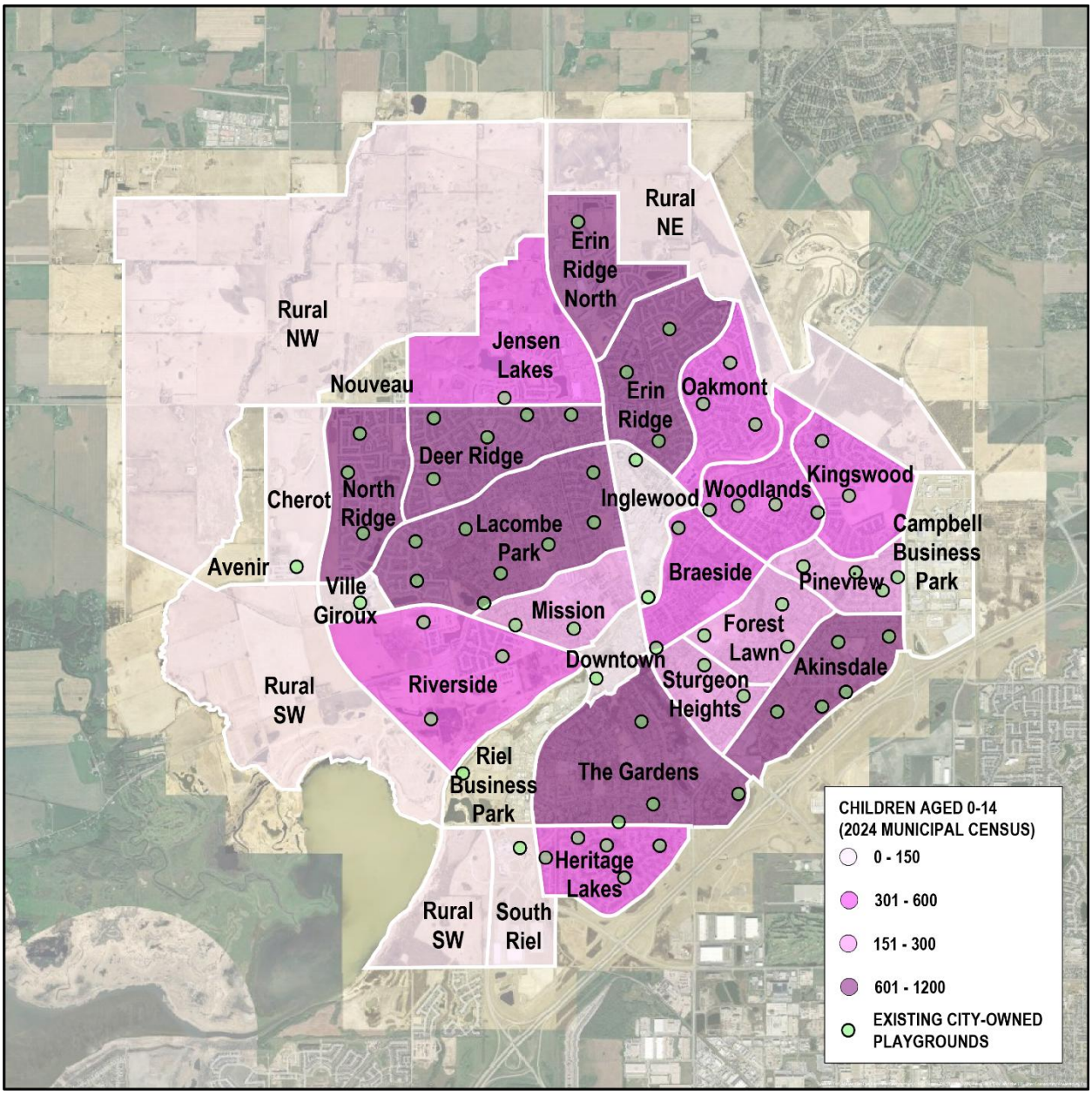


Figure 1: Population Aged 0-14 by Neighbourhood

In terms of population growth, the largest growth changes between the 2018 and 2024 census' in specific neighbourhoods have been in Jensen Lakes and Riverside, each of which have some of the youngest populations in the City. Erin Ridge North saw substantial growth as well, and Cherot may expect the same, both of which also have low average ages. This indicates that the northwest of the City is currently experiencing growth in the number of young families living there, suggesting it should be a priority area for future development. While populations remained stable in The Gardens and Lacombe Park neighbourhoods, their significant population (approximately 20%, taken together) and known density of youth also suggest higher priority for play provision.

Table 9: Summary 2024 Census Data

Neighbourhood	No. of Residents	% Change (2018-24)	No. of Children	Children % of Total	Average Age	% 2024 Population
Akinsdale	4,794	-1.0%	725	15%	43.05	6.6%
Braeside	2,803	0.4%	380	14%	42.32	3.9%
Cherot	64	-	10	16%	29.74	0.1%
Deer Ridge	5,833	-2.8%	950	16%	40.80	8.1%
Downtown	708	22.1%	15	2%	64.05	1.0%
Erin Ridge	5,531	-6.4%	850	15%	43.15	7.6%
Erin Ridge North	3,384	62.3%	730	22%	36.34	4.7%
Forest Lawn	2,597	-4.0%	295	11%	44.72	3.6%
The Gardens	7,450	2.3%	1080	14%	43.63	10.3%
Heritage Lakes	3,713	-1.0%	540	15%	42.37	5.1%
Inglewood	1,433	1.4%	150	10%	48.77	2.0%
Jensen Lakes	1,855	724.4%	500	27%	28.54	2.6%
Kingswood	2,504	-0.6%	315	13%	45.24	3.5%
Lacombe Park	7,905	4.7%	1110	14%	44.29	10.9%
Mission	2,465	4.3%	230	9%	55.73	3.4%
North Ridge	5,647	0.7%	1110	20%	35.61	7.8%
Oakmont	3,860	10.4%	445	12%	46.85	5.3%
Pineview	1,749	0.2%	300	17%	44.83	2.4%
Riverside	2,713	418.7%	530	20%	33.39	3.8%
Rural	130	-	30	23%	35.88	0.2%
South Riel	253	-	10	4%	39.94	0.3%
Sturgeon Heights	1,787	-0.7%	255	14%	41.71	2.5%
Ville Giroux	637	99.7%	30	5%	49.16	0.9%
Woodlands	2,501	-2.8%	400	16%	42.94	3.5%
Totals	***72,316***	***9%***	***10,990***	***15%***	***42.63***	***100%***

How Much Inclusive Play is 'Enough'?

While "how many playgrounds is enough" has been considered by many, the question of "how many playgrounds should be inclusive" is both recent and unanswered. In an ideal world, there would be a balance of play experiences available offering options to play to all people, regardless of ability or background, and all playgrounds would have inclusive and accessible elements. Still, the study and development of inclusive play practices across the globe is somewhat recent, with previous efforts having mostly focused on accessible play without consideration for disabilities other than those impacting mobility. As such, inclusive play is not universally defined, and its provision is minimal. The following table provides a snapshot of inclusive and accessible play across the province as a comparator for existing City inventory.

Table 10: Inclusive playground statistics, top 10 Albertan cities by population

Name	Population	No. of Outdoor Playgrounds	Accessible	Inclusive
St. Albert	**72,316**	**67**	**2 (3%)**	**2 (3%)**
Calgary	1,569,133	1,137	30 (3%)	20 (2%)
Edmonton	1,190,458	668	114 (17%)	4 (1%)
Red Deer	112,917	168	3 (2%)	1 (1%)
Lethbridge	111,400	21	6 (29%)	1 (5%)
Strathcona County	105,218	114	20 (18%)	1 (1%)
Airdrie	88,471	84	8 (10%)	1 (1%)
Wood Buffalo	80,598	108	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
Grande Prairie	69,377	152	1 (1%)	3 (2%)
Medicine Hat	67,909	101	6 (6%)	1 (1%)

Table 10 shows Calgary leading the way in providing inclusive play by total count, Lethbridge by percent, while most other municipalities indicate approximately 1% of their infrastructure as being inclusive. In keeping with the longer history of study and standards development for accessible play, the provision of accessible playgrounds around the province is typically higher.

It is worth noting that 'accessible' and 'inclusive' used in this table are according to local definitions used by each municipality, and do not necessarily align with the Strategy or with each other. The City's current provision of "accessible" and "inclusive" play is most similar to Airdrie and refer to "fully accessible surfacing" and "inclusive features present," respectively.

EXISTING INVENTORY

ACCESS: Can I Get There?

Providing equitable access to playgrounds is a multifaceted effort. It requires consideration for multiple modes of transportation, for accessible pathway connections between playgrounds and other infrastructure, for proximity of playgrounds to prospective users, and even for access to information about what playground services are available. Is there adequate and accessible parking nearby? Can I get there by walking, wheeling or rolling? Upon arriving, can I get to the equipment?

Access by Active Transportation

As discussed in best practices for provision and placement, inclusive playgrounds benefit from being located where the action is and are best considered as destinations. Typically, destinations serve larger areas than local playgrounds, often requiring a vehicle to access. Still, connections to active transportation networks are vital supports for those seeking independent access by walking, rolling, or taking transit.

When considering playground walkability, proximity is usually the determining factor for whether a resident will make the trip. While the City promises access to park space within a 400 m or 5-minute unobstructed walk from every residence, there is currently no proximity requirement for playgrounds.

Generally, beyond distances of 1 to 1.5 km or (10 to 15 minutes), people begin to favour driving over choosing active transportation. Figure 2 shows a 1 km radius for City-owned playgrounds in Community and City Parks (chosen for their intended higher intensity of use and reduced restrictions on supportive amenities). Most City residents are within a 10- to 15-minute walk of these sites, in line with recommendations for playgrounds expected to serve wider neighbourhoods. Areas with minimal coverage include the central portion of The Gardens, where playgrounds are well provided for by school sites, and those areas still to be developed (e.g. northern Jensen Lakes and western Riverside).

Beyond their typical walkable coverage, transit connections bridge distant portions of the City's active transportation system, allowing some playgrounds to serve more of the City's residents. Nearly one third of City-owned playgrounds currently have strong transit connections, rising to one half if considering only playgrounds in Community and City Parks. These connections position certain playgrounds as better candidates for inclusive and accessible play.

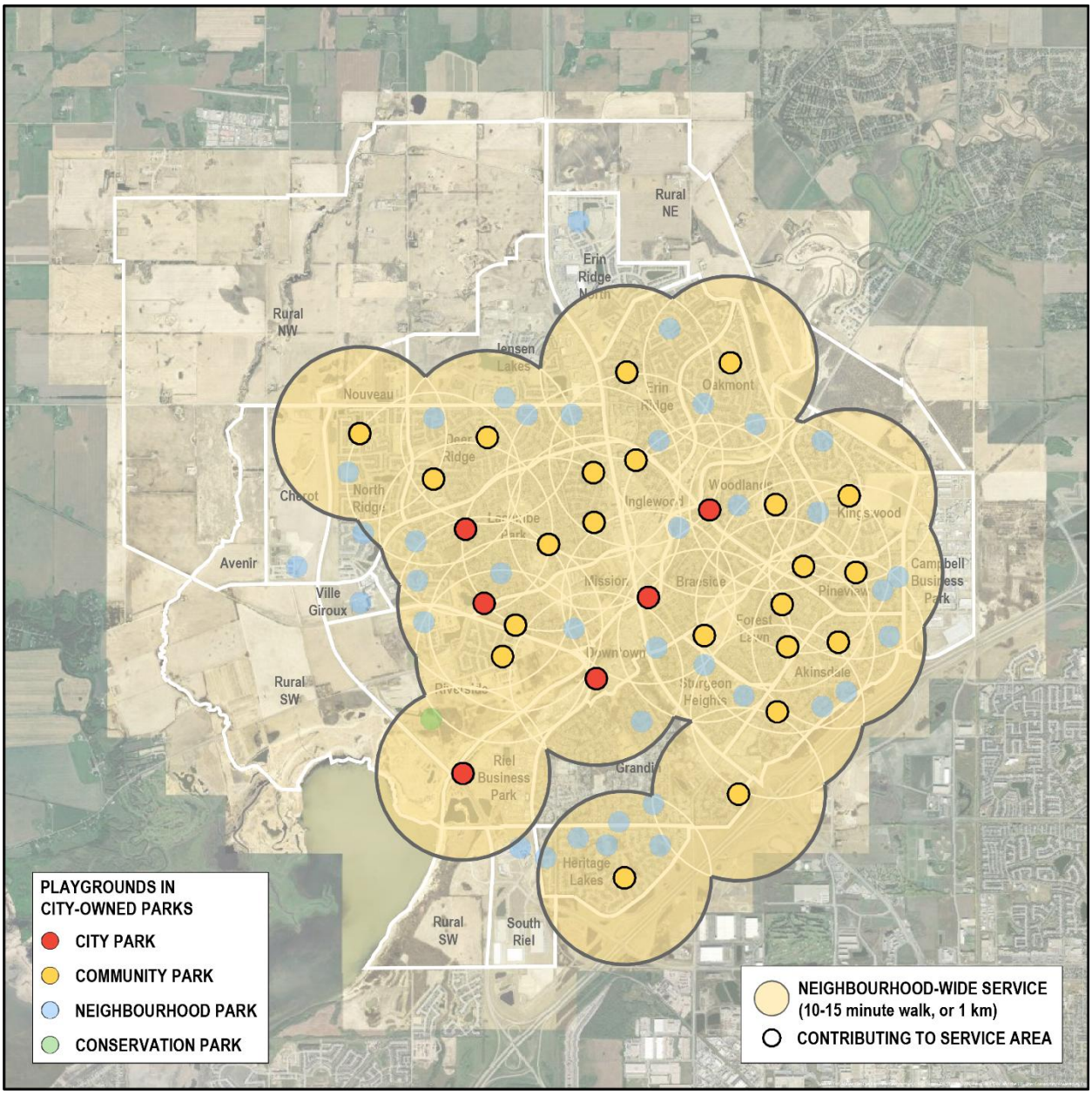


Figure 2: Neighbourhood-wide service coverage, City and Community Parks

Accessible Parking

Public parking is available at four (4) playgrounds in City Parks (Lacombe, Lions, Rotary, and Woodlands), and at eight (8) playgrounds in Community Parks (Alpine, Attwood, Deer Ridge, Fountain, Gloucester, Liberton, Natalia, and Willoughby). Notably, parking at Deer Ridge, Gloucester, Lacombe and Liberton is located some distance away from the playground (indicated by small red dots on Figure 3), and the remaining playgrounds may have street parking, but no space for permanent accessible stalls.

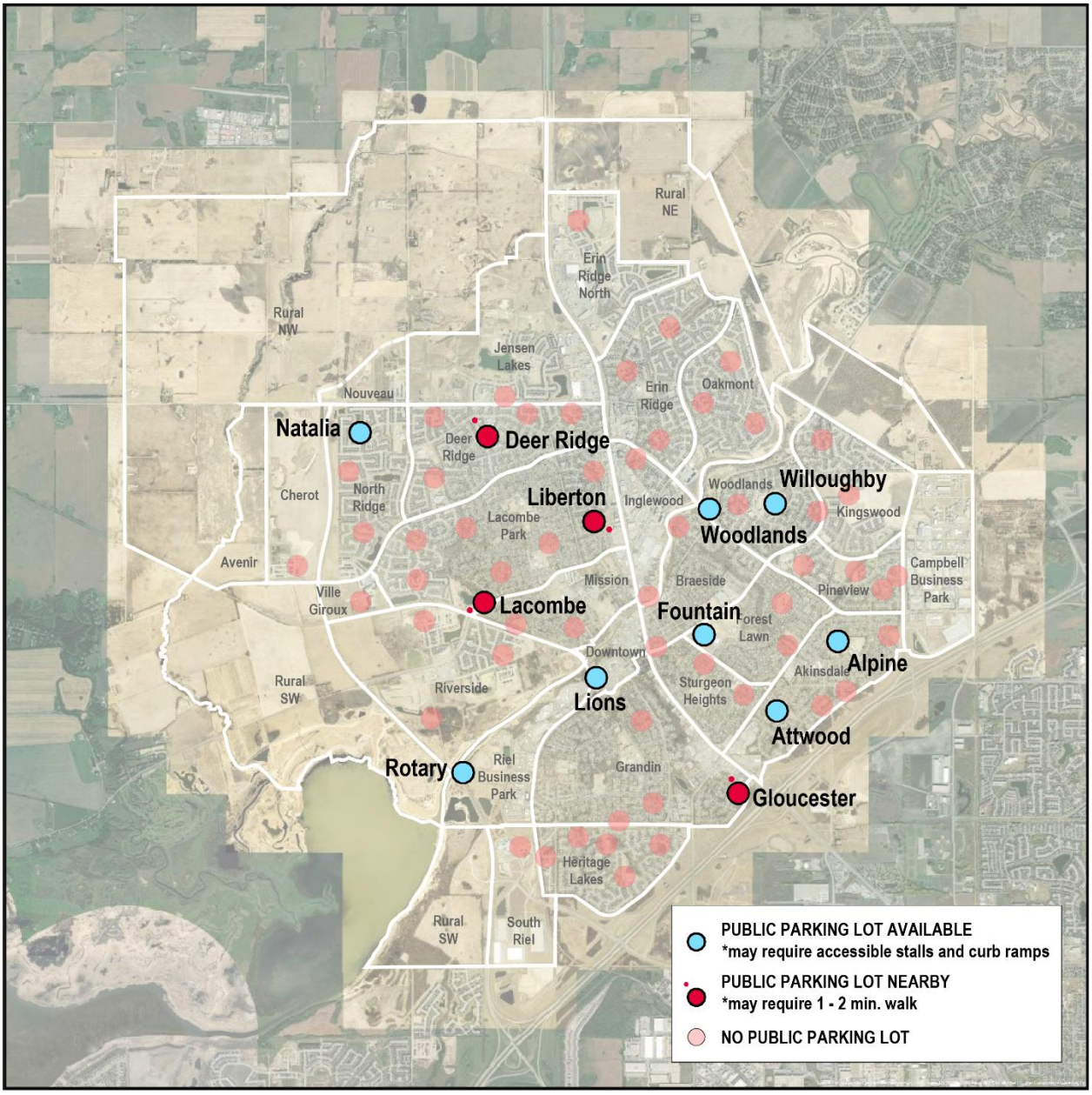


Figure 3: Playground proximity to parking

Accessible Surfaces

The majority of City playgrounds currently use sand as a surfacing material. It is important to consider that while sand has some play benefit, this surfacing poses a major obstacle for children who use wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids, or who may otherwise have mobility challenges or difficulty with unstable or shifting surfaces. This may be sufficient for some playgrounds but may not be acceptable for playgrounds expected to serve a diverse range of users.

Table 11: Surface types of existing inventory

Surface	PIP	EWF	Mixed (PIP/Sand)	Sand
# of Playgrounds *(names)*	**4** *(Fountain, Lodgepole, Versailles, and Woodlands)*	**6** *(Chelles, Element, Grey Nuns White Spruce, Raspberry, Rondeau, and Rotary)*	**3** *(Kingsmeade, Lafleur, and Lions)*	**54** *(all others)*

There are no existing examples of mixed PIP and EWF. Opportunities to replace sand with EWF may supplement access in these playgrounds while still using a loose-fill material.

While EWF is frequently cited as accessible with proper maintenance, the City preference is for PIP to be in use where accessibility is a high priority. As City-owned playgrounds currently have limited accessible surfacing in use, most playgrounds proposed for inclusive development will require surfacing replacement with PIP or mixed materials. As many playgrounds with sand also use timber curbing, their boundaries may need reconfiguration and/or replacement with concrete curbing to accommodate any required unitary surfacing.

Although beyond the scope of this strategy, it should be noted that many school board-owned playgrounds offer a variety of surfacing, including several with partial PIP and EWF options. These factors may be considered when determining the order of development of City-owned infrastructure but are considered supplementary to City-provided play areas recommended through this strategy.

Accessible Components

City asset data does not track the accessibility of individual components or the number of ground-level or elevated accessible components in each playground. These data are necessary for determining whether a playground adheres to Annex H of the CSA Z614 standard, and so either they or overall compliance with the standard should be tracked on a site-by-site basis.

Planning for a Playground Visit

The City currently has limited public information available about City playgrounds, creating an opportunity to address this information gap while including data relevant to inclusive play. New additions to publicly available information may include playground status (i.e. as 'inclusive' or 'accessible') or what inclusive features users can expect (e.g. types and/or number of accessible and inclusive play components, available supportive amenities, and site features).

DIVERSITY: Can I Play?

Accounting for access, a diversity of play opportunities at a range of challenge levels is essential for allowing all playground users to select the play that is best for them. Providing diversity is a multifaceted challenge and requires special attention to accommodate factors like age-grouping, differences in physical ability, and sensory and cognitive needs.

Age Grouping

Regarding age-grouping, Annex H of the CSA's Children's playground equipment and surfacing standard encourages the grouping of playground into two broad categories: 18 months to 5 years (toddler), and 5 years to 12 years (child). It is worth noting that these categories are functional classifications for play elements and rely on estimations of challenge and body size that are consistent with neurotypical development in the 95th percentile.

Approximately half of City playgrounds are currently providing play experiences suitable for a range of age groups, with another quarter each of the playgrounds favouring either younger or older users. Geographically, the spread of playgrounds across all age groups is even, leaving no major gaps. Regardless, all future playground developments should aim to provide suitable play experiences for both CSA-designated age groups where possible. Specialized play areas such as natural playgrounds or outdoor fitness areas are not the subject of playgrounds in Annex H and are considered separately.

Table 12: Playground counts by age group served

Age Group Ranges	Number of Playgrounds
18 months to 5 years	14
5 years to 12 years	17
18 months to 12 years	33
Specialized	6 (3 Outdoor Fitness Areas*, 3 Natural Playgrounds)

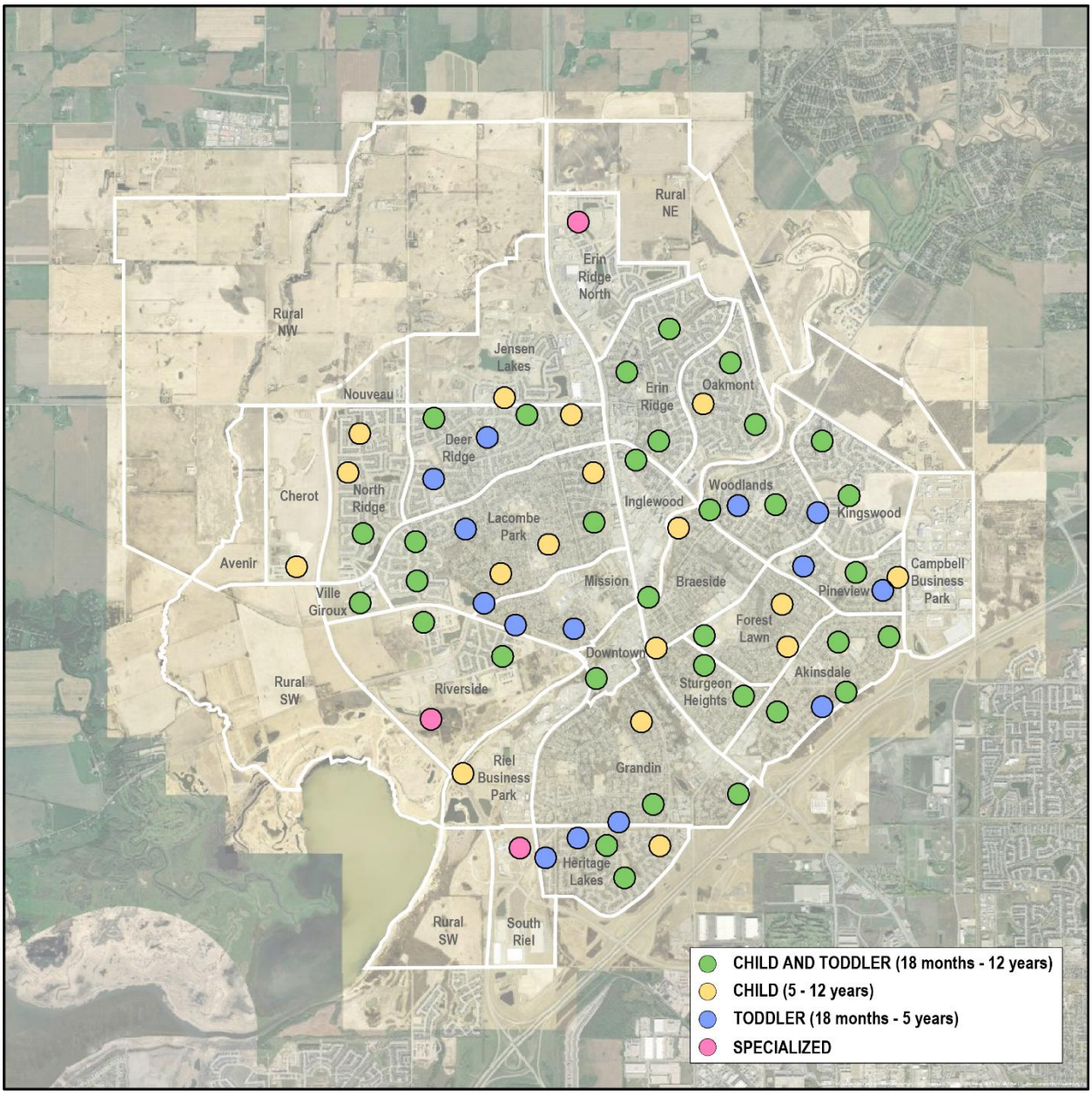


Figure 4: Playgrounds by CSA age grouping

Surface Diversity

While select sites have mixed materials used for playground surfacing, supporting different experiences of play, the majority exclusively use loose-fill surfacing. Only unitary surfacing, however, allows for certain play-based design strategies, such as surface patterning providing support for child-led games and imaginative play. Playground surfaces in the City's current inventory do not generally allow for the use of these strategies.

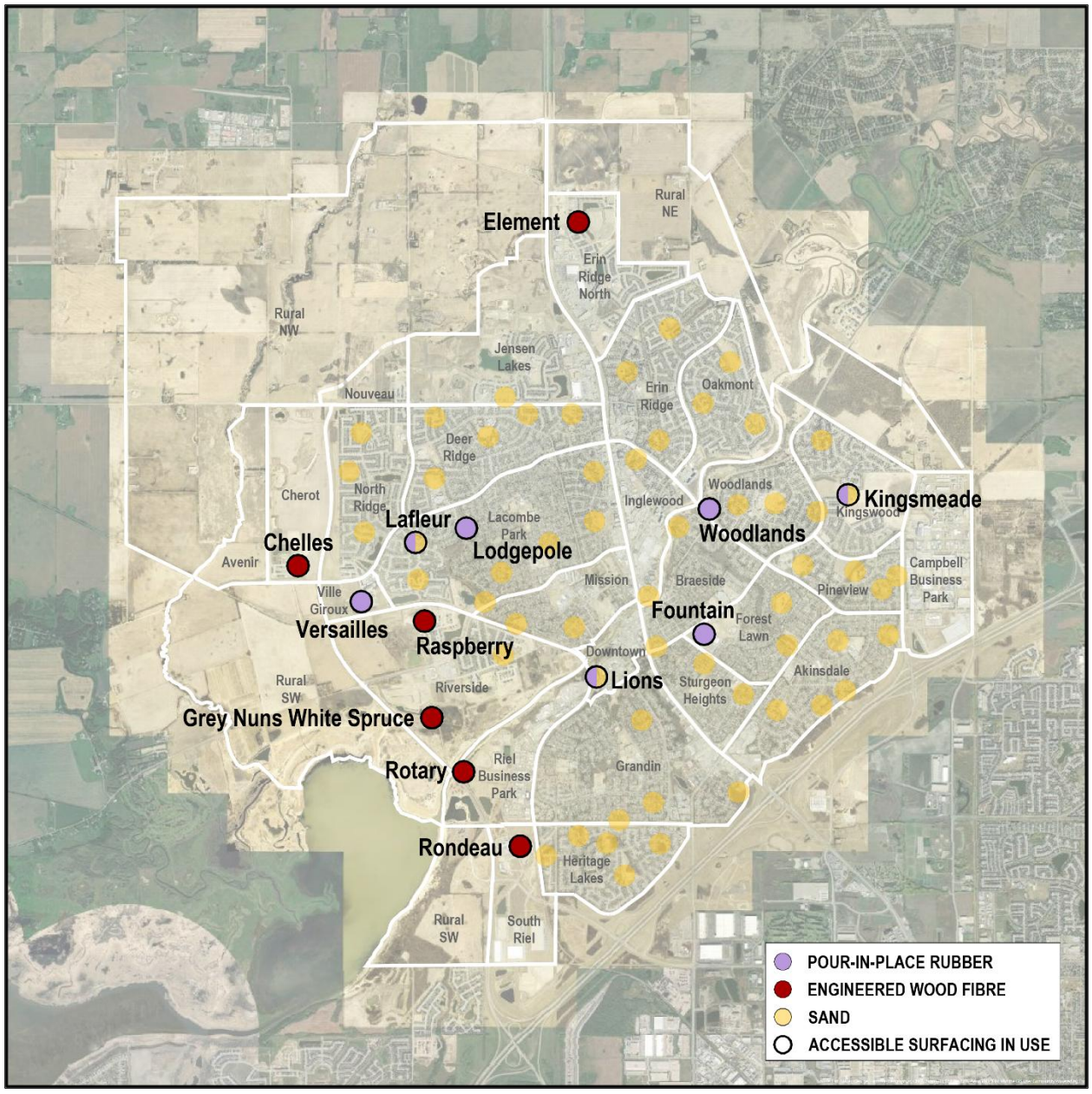


Figure 5: Playground surfaces

While these strategies are to be encouraged in future development, the City recognizes that they should not contribute to minimum requirements for high-quality inclusive play overall, as they explicitly rely on unitary surfacing and larger playground footprints to make use of open space as a kind of play component, and space and budget restriction may make these strategies cost prohibitive.

Unitary surfacing is absent from the north and south of the City, and—with the exception of Element—EWF is used exclusively in the west. It is worth noting that Element, Grey Nuns White Spruce, and Rondeau playgrounds are all Natural Playgrounds.

Component Diversity

Regarding play diversity, City inventory data currently captures 6 of the 7 Physical Play Components (rockers are not represented) and indicates whether there are Social-Emotional Play Components included onsite. It does not indicate specifically whether sensory components are present (previously captured as part of Social-Emotional Play data), or whether there are dedicated solitary play opportunities.

Inventory data does not contain information on the quantity of any component type on a given site, nor how many of them are accessible (whether at ground level, by ramp, or by transfer platform). Recommendations regarding the expansion of future inventory tracking are provided in Implementation.

COMFORT: Can I Stay?

Once barriers to accessing playgrounds are removed and diverse play opportunities are provided, playground users may still have their visits cut short if certain supportive features are not present. Are there accessible washrooms available nearby? Is seating provided for caregivers where there are open sightlines to facilitate supervision? Is there shade onsite, or even in the playground itself?

While all best-practice amenities would benefit any playground, choosing which amenities to implement—and how many—depends on factors including expected intensity of use, site size, fiscal feasibility and neighbourhood considerations. The suitability of certain amenities also depends to some extent on the Parks Classification system. As Neighbourhood Parks are intended to support local users and shorter duration visits, a complete host of supportive amenities would not be well aligned with their intended use. More amenities may be reasonable for inclusion in Community Parks, and more still in City Parks, in keeping with the relative size of their service areas and their intent.

City inventory currently tracks many of the identified supportive amenities, including public washrooms, bench and picnic seating, waste receptacles, and shade shelters. There are no public water fountains provided in the City's parks, though potable water is available at permanent washroom facilities. Whether any of these amenities are accessible is not currently reflected in the inventory, although as sites are upgraded over time, these amenities are required to meet accessibility standards according to the Universal Access Plan. Fencing is currently used in only two playgrounds: Woodlands, as an extension of the spray park, and Lacombe, though only between the roadway and the park space. Continued use of fencing should be considered on a case-by-case basis, preferentially for larger playgrounds with the potential for longer-duration visits.

PLAYGROUND REPLACEMENT PRIORITY INDEX

The City currently tracks the condition of public playgrounds in a tool called the Playground Replacement Prioritization Index (PRPI). The PRPI is one tool among many used by the City to track playground assets and identify which playgrounds are prioritized for redevelopment, much of which was used for the prior analysis. **This tool is not intended to measure inclusivity and accessibility; however, it may be adapted to serve this purpose in the future (see Recommendations).** Considering its use in playground planning, the PRPI has been analyzed to determine how this data and its application can benefit the development of inclusive playgrounds.

The total PRPI score is made up of four criteria: Lifecycle (age of the equipment), Condition (wear and tear), Play Value (diversity of equipment), and Subjective Factors (community context). Currently, over half of the PRPI score comes from Lifecycle and Condition criteria, which are tightly correlated to each other. Notable exceptions include Lions, Rotary, and Alpine Park playgrounds, whose condition factors have outpaced their lifecycle, possibly indicating their popularity (i.e. increased wear likely stems from heightened use).

Play Value, which largely measures play component diversity, is the metric that comes closest to assessing inclusive play. In its current form, however, it has limitations. The absence of data about select play components and amenities, and the exclusion of surface types as a consideration, make the current metric inadequate for measuring the level of inclusivity of a playground. PRPI data also does not currently track the number of play components of a given type, so there is no way of differentiating between the diversity of play provided by playgrounds of different sizes. It may be generally assumed, however, that larger playgrounds provide a greater diversity of components.

Subjective factors, the last PRPI metric, are intended to balance the replacement of any given playground against community needs, including public feedback, distribution of recent playground replacements, and overall provision of play within a neighbourhood. While this value may have some utility in ensuring the public voice—including those with specific needs related to play—can be assessed within the overall context of the playground network, there is little opportunity to use this criterion to reflect specific and systematic development of inclusive play.

For these reasons, age and overall condition may be the best determinants of whether a given playground should be replaced, while **what it should be replaced with** may be better addressed by a separate system, making use of expanded inventory tracking, as previously discussed in the State of Play and explored in Implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below represent key directives supporting improved opportunities for users of all abilities, interests, and backgrounds to play. Overall, they focus on improving Access, Diversity and Comfort and reflect an approach that treats the provision of playgrounds as a network of play opportunities distributed across the City. This network is intended to provide a diversity of play opportunities that, taken together, ensure all residents have access to play that meets their individual needs while recognizing that it is not feasible to have every site meet every need. More specifically, and in alignment with cross jurisdictional scanning, best practice research, engagement with experts and playground users and the City's current playground approach, the focus is on providing meaningful inclusive and accessible play opportunities, in spaces that can best answer the questions of "can I get there," "can I play," and "can I stay?"

IMPROVING ACCESS

When comparing population density of youth, priority growth areas, and existing playground locations, it is recommended that the City target playgrounds for redevelopment that have the highest likelihood of serving the greatest number of users. The City should also prioritize those playgrounds with accessible parking or access through active modes of transportation (e.g. transit, trail systems, etc.).

When planning a trip to a public playground, accessible and well-organized public information is key. Online information should be accessible to all users and should indicate the availability of key inclusive play features, including surfacing types and high-demand play components (e.g. accessible swings, ground level play, ramps or transfer systems for larger structures, sensory play, etc). Surfacing should prioritize unitary surfaces wherever access is required.

In addition to existing information regarding playground locations, online playground information should include information on supportive amenities, including parking, washroom access, shade, and other key features. Onsite information can be made more inclusive through the addition of an overall site map to help orient users on arrival, and this should be included in all sites with playgrounds categorized as Inclusive.

IMPROVING DIVERSITY

Improving equipment diversity should be a priority of inclusive playgrounds, supporting a greater range of play types for people of all abilities. To ensure the City has the tools to better understand its equipment diversity, existing inventory data tracking should be expanded to include the following:

- Presence of rocking, auditory, tactile, and visual play components
- Accessibility of inclusive elements (by ground, ramp, or transfer system) and number of each accessible play component type
- Presence of solitary play or quiet areas

Tracking these diverse elements may also support City-led-efforts to provide public information, as previously recommended, helping community members understand the different inclusive play opportunities the City offers. Expanded information will also support decision-making on the design of new playgrounds, as well as prioritizing replacements (e.g. playgrounds with lower play diversity may be prioritized over similar condition or aged playgrounds with higher play value).

IMPROVING COMFORT

It is recommended that a minimum provision of supportive amenities and site features be included as criteria for the Playground Type system to be adopted, with washrooms and parking being features of Inclusive playgrounds.

Existing public asset data track information for many supportive amenities and other site features, including seating, picnic tables, shade structures, waste receptacles, washrooms, fencing, and nearby parking. This data is not yet connected to Playground Type, and decisions around these amenities are not currently aligned to the provision of inclusive or accessible play. It is recommended that—at a minimum—playgrounds with accessible washrooms and parking are clearly identified in future playground inventory data and provided as public information.

Implementation

As the City looks to future growth and the redevelopment of its outdoor playgrounds, the question is not "should we build inclusive play," but "where, when, and to what extent?" The City recognizes that not every playground can be made fully inclusive or accessible, due to the typically higher costs and sizes required compared to conventional playgrounds, the large number of existing playgrounds in City inventory, and the intended outcomes for the park spaces that host them. Making decisions about what should be developed is an exercise in balancing known best practices against budgets, site constraints, and community needs.

The following steps (detailed in the subsequent sections) are to be undertaken to support Diverse, Accessible, and Inclusive play opportunities for the greatest number of people possible:

1. Create formal **Playground Types**, detailing the minimum level of accessible or inclusive service provided by a playground of that type
    a. Establish a relationship between new Playground Types and existing Parks and Open Space Classifications such that **New Development** is consistent with the goals of this Strategy
    b. Determine how **Existing Playgrounds** are to be categorized by Playground Type such that their service area provides broad coverage for a range of play opportunities across the City
2. Develop a Prioritization List for the implementation of Playground Types, applied across both existing playgrounds and future growth areas, detailing an order of development that considers the current state of existing playgrounds alongside the goals of the Strategy for the provision of inclusive play.
3. Update City Data (i.e. GIS, PRPI, asset inventories, and other playground data sources) to track information relevant to the minimum criteria for each Playground Type
4. Develop accessible Public Data detailing playgrounds according to Playground Type, key features and inclusive infrastructure, helping community members locate the play that best suits their needs

PLAYGROUND TYPES

The following Playground Types detail differences in intended service, minimum criteria required per type, and—for planning purposes—recommended service area and playground size. From Local through to Inclusive, these playground types increase in their minimum required support for accessible or inclusive play, as well as their intended service area. A fourth type, the Specialized Playground, is additionally proposed to account for playgrounds providing specialized play experiences and may coincide with other Playground Types as conditions allow.

Generally speaking, Accessible Playgrounds ensure the core attributes of Access and Diversity are accounted for, while Inclusive Playgrounds provide for these as well as the core attribute of Comfort. It is important to note that in the implementation of these Playground Types, best practices related to inclusive and accessible play will be considered in all playgrounds, from Local to Inclusive and Specialized, wherever feasible.

- Serving immediate area or single neighbourhood
- No inclusive or accessible features required

- Serving multiple neighbourhoods
- Minimum diversity of accessible play
- Minimum surface requirement

- City-wide destination
- Minimum provision of supportive amenities
- All Accessible criteria

Local Playground

Local Playgrounds are intended to support the day-to-day play needs of nearby residents, with shorter duration recreation and independent social gathering for families and youth living nearby. No minimum criteria for accessibility or inclusivity is applied, though these features may be present as budget, park size, and local needs allow. Local Playground sizes may be highly variable, reflecting the specific needs of the neighbourhoods they serve, with no minimum recommended size in recognition of their smaller service area, although generally these playgrounds should be anticipated to have a smaller footprint than other, more inclusive-focused play areas. Planning for local playgrounds is out of scope for this Strategy.

Specialized Playgrounds: An additional Playground Type is proposed, accommodating those playgrounds that provide valuable, specialized play experiences that may not have an inclusive focus. Existing examples include Natural Playgrounds and Outdoor Fitness, with others possible in future development. This Playground Type is intended only to identify playgrounds that provide these unique services and may be applied in conjunction with any other Playground Type as conditions support.

Accessible Playground

Recommended service area: 1.5 km

Recommended minimum size: 400 m^2

Accessible Playgrounds are intended to provide a range of accessible play options to a large service area than Local Playgrounds. These playgrounds may have a mix of ***accessible surface types*** and play components at varying elevations. In addition to the requirements of the CSA's *Children's Playground Equipment and Surfacing Standard* (required of every playground in the City), ***Annex H: Children's Playspaces and Equipment that are Accessible to Persons with Disabilities*** shall also apply. While Annex H can be applied to playgrounds of any size, a minimum size of 400 m^2 is recommended for new developments to ensure a reasonable ***diversity of equipment*** can be provided.

Minimum Accessible Criteria:

- A minimum of 50% of playground surfacing is to be unitary
- Annex H of CSA Z614:20 (or its most recent edition) shall apply, including all rules and recommendations for the number and diversity of Ground-Level and Elevated Play Components, their number to be located on Accessible Routes, as summarized by the following (see Appendix D for more details):
    - One of Each Type: At least one (1) of each Play Component Type provided at ground level must be on an Accessible Route.
    - A minimum number of Ground-Level Play Components are required relative to the number of Elevated Play Components provided, as per Table 13

Table 13: Ground-Level Play Component count requirements

Number of elevated play components provided	*Minimum number of ground-level play components required to be on accessible route*	*Minimum number of different types of ground-level play components required to be on accessible route*
1	Not applicable	Not applicable
2 to 4	1	1
5 to 7	2	2
8 to 10	3	3
11 to 13	4	3
14 to 16	5	3
17 to 19	6	3
20 to 22	7	4
23 to 25	8	4
More than 25	8 plus 1 for each additional 3 over 25, or fraction thereof	5

- If ramps provide access to at least 50% of Elevated Play Components—which must include at least three (3) different Play Component Types—then additional Ground-Level Play Components are not required
- At least half of all Elevated Play Components (50%) must be on an Accessible Route, either by ramp or by transfer system, as per Table 14

Table 14: Elevated Play Component ramp requirements for Accessible Playgrounds

No. of Elevated Play Components	No. of Elevated Play Components Accessible by Ramp
Less than 20	Optional
20 or more	Min. 25%

Supplementing to the requirements of Annex H, the following will be provided at a minimum, in all cases:

- One (1) each of the following Physical Play Component Types:
  - Balancing, Brachiating, Climbing, Rocking/Gliding, Sliding, Spinning/Rotating, and Swinging
- One (1) each of the following Sensory Play Component Types, per playground age group:
  - Auditory, Tactile, and Visual, provided on an Accessible Route
- One (1) each of the following, provided on an Accessible Route:
  - A Solitary Play Component or Low Stimulus Play Area
  - A Social-Emotional Play Component
  - A Communication Board

Consideration will additionally be given to the following, with rationale provided if deemed not feasible or appropriate:

- An accessible permanent shade structure, or shade provided by tree canopy on accessible surfacing

Inclusive Playground

Recommended service area: Citywide

Recommended minimum size: 600 m^2

Inclusive Playgrounds are meant to provide a high level of inclusive play, with opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to play together, alongside supportive amenities that encourage a high degree of Access and Comfort. In addition to the minimum criteria for Accessible Playgrounds, Inclusive Playgrounds require that ***all Play Components are accessible***, that additional ***informational features***, ***accessible parking***, **and** ***accessible washrooms are provided***, and that ***additional playground design strategies and site features*** are considered. In light of the need for additional infrastructure, it is recommended that the minimum size of Destination Inclusive Playgrounds be larger.

Minimum Inclusive Criteria:

- All Minimum Accessible Criteria are met
- All Elevated Play Components (100%) must be located on an Accessible Route, either by ramp or by transfer system, as per Table 15

Note that not all components are required to have the same level of accessibility; for example, a slide at a higher elevation must be accessible by transfer system but may still require extended effort for some.

Table 15: Elevated Play Component ramp requirements for Inclusive Playgrounds

No. of Elevated Play Components	No. of Elevated Play Components Accessible by Ramp
Less than 20	Min. 25%
20 or more	Min. 50%

- Accessible parking is provided and connected via an Accessible Route
- An accessible permanent washroom is available within the park site
- An onsite map is installed identifying supportive infrastructure

Consideration will additionally be given to the following, with rationale provided if not feasible or appropriate:

- An accessible permanent shade structure, or shade provided by tree canopy on accessible surfacing
- A surface design for navigation, on-ground games, themed patterning, etc.
- Colour and/or textural contrast for visual landmarking, avoiding common colour combinations associated with colour-blindness

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Inclusive Playgrounds are best suited for City Parks, where necessary supportive amenities can be provided with the space to pride them. Accessible Playgrounds are preferred in Community Parks, though other playground types may be considered under the right circumstances.

Table 16: Playground Types and associated Park Classifications

Playground Type	Associated Park Classifications
Inclusive	New playgrounds in ***City Parks*** are preferably to be developed to the Inclusive Playground standard. If an Inclusive Playground already exists within the park, no following playgrounds are required to be Inclusive. Playgrounds in Community Parks may also be considered for Inclusive development under the right conditions.
Accessible	New playgrounds located in ***Community Parks*** are generally to be developed to the Accessible Playground standard, such that a 1.5 km service area centered on the playground provides reasonable coverage for those areas not yet served by existing or otherwise planned Accessible Playgrounds. Where coverage is provided by another Inclusive or Accessible Playground within 1.5 km, another Playground Type may be selected, at the City's discretion.
Local	New playgrounds located in ***Neighbourhood Parks*** are to be categorized as Local Playgrounds as a default, with the option to include accessible or inclusive elements or to be developed to a higher standard if there are site- or neighbourhood-specific considerations, such as Accessible Playground service area coverage.
Specialized	Specialized Playgrounds may be associated with any Park Classification except Connector Parks and are generally chosen to support a specific and defined outcome. They may also meet criteria for any other Playground Type and have a City-wide service area unless otherwise specified. Specialized Playgrounds alone do not impact service area considerations for other Playground Types.

Known future growth areas, such as in Cherot and Jensen Lakes (Phase 2), will contribute to overall service coverage provided by Accessible Playgrounds, as per Figure 6. To round out this coverage, at least one more Accessible or Inclusive Playground will be required in each of the Rural NW and the NE Area Structure Plan future growth areas, with additional playground development supporting the recommended service area coverage detailed for Accessible Playgrounds.

EXISTING PLAYGROUNDS

The following table details the existing City-owned playgrounds to be designated as either Accessible or Inclusive. All other playgrounds are to be designated Local or Specialized, at the City's discretion.

Table 17: Proposed Playground Types for Existing Playgrounds

Playground Type	Park Classification	Playgrounds Impacted	No.	Cost* per Playground
Accessible *service area: 1.5 km*	City	Lodgepole, Rotary	2	Unit Rate: $440k **assuming 400 m^2 surface area* Anticipated Range: $355k - $530k
	Community	Attwood, Erin Ridge, Fountain, Kingsmeade, Natalia, Versailles	6	
	Neighbourhood	Havenwood	1	
Inclusive *service area: Citywide*	City	Lacombe, Lions, Woodlands	3	Unit Rate: $750k **assuming 600 m^2 surface area* Anticipated Range: $605k - $870k

Costs are provided using a unit rate based on playground size, as this measure has the largest impact on number of components and play surfacing costs, which together make up the majority of playground development costs. This unit rate is estimated at ***$1,100.00 per square meter for Accessible Playgrounds***, and ***$1,250 per square meter for Inclusive Playgrounds***, including supply and installation of components, surfacing, curbing, drainage, and a base level of supportive amenities (i.e. seating, waste receptacles, and communication board). These costs are expected to be highly conservative, as they presume supply of all components for all age groups (a 10% reduction may be used to remove this from consideration). Individual site constraints, current supply conditions, and other factors will impact material costs as well.

Costs listed for redevelopment of existing playgrounds are estimates only to inform future planning, and do not reflect true costs associated with site-specific design of individual playgrounds, which will vary by size, complexity, and number of components, amenities, and features included, as well as type and condition of existing playground infrastructure (e.g. sub-drainage, curbing, etc.).

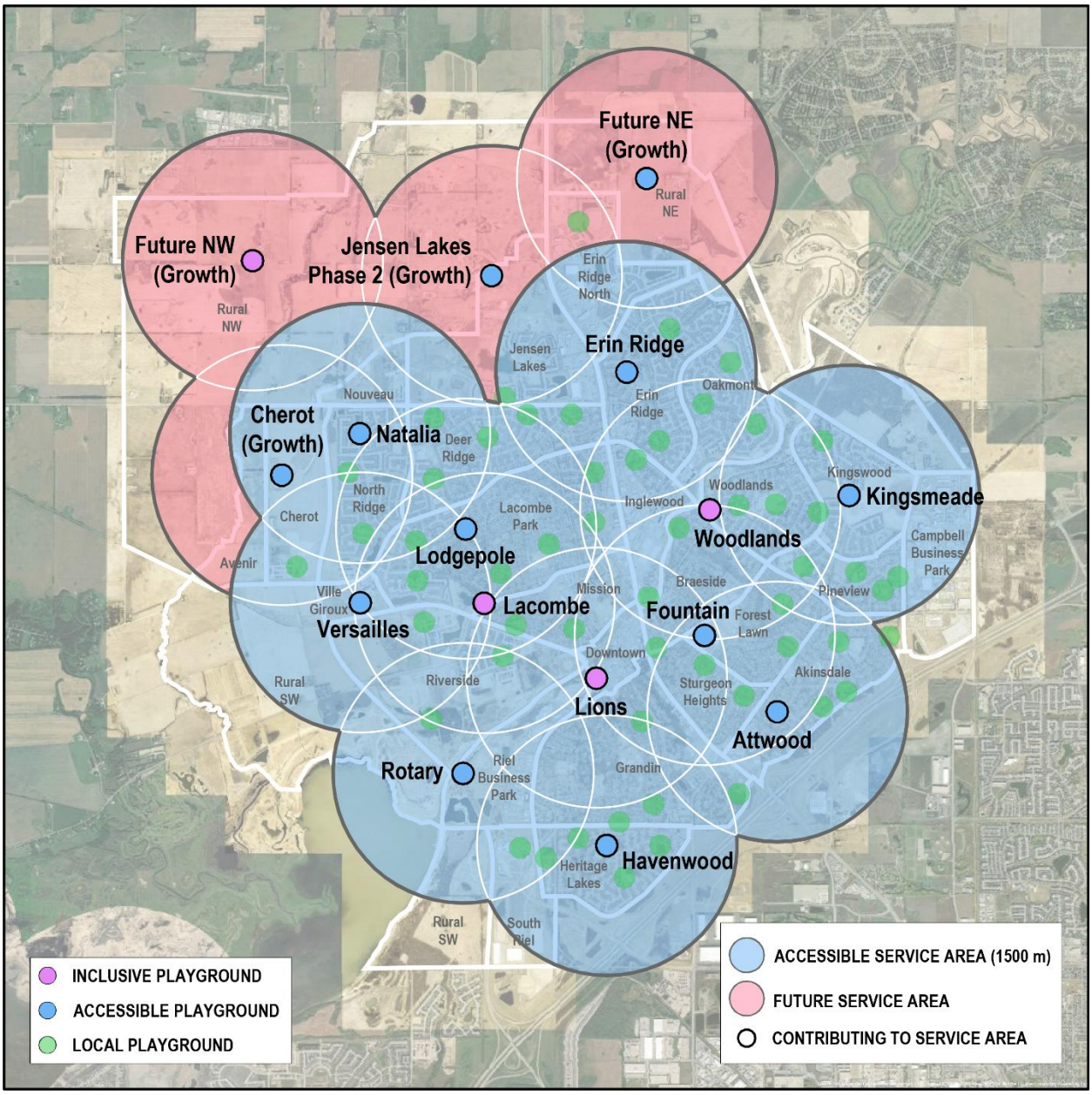


Figure 6: Accessible and Inclusive Playgrounds showing Accessible-level service area

City of St. Albert Inclusive Playground Strategy Prioritization Index

Priority Order	Playground	Nbhd.	Park Class	Size (sq.m.)	City Replacement Value (2023)	Date of Install	Age (years)	Condition Rating (maximum 5)	Estimated Replacement Cost (Unit Rate @ Current Size)	Estimated Standardized Cost (Unit Rate @ Standard Size)	Timeline (years)	Playground Type (A = Accessible, I = Inclusive)
1	Havenwood	Heritage Lakes	NBHD	1220	$ 370,000	2000	25	5	$ 1,342,000	$ 440,000	1 to 5	A
2	Lions	Mission	CITY	590	$ 370,000	2011	14	5	$ 737,500	$ 750,000	1 to 5	I
3	Rotary	Riel	CITY	230	$ 270,000	2013	12	4	$ 253,000	$ 440,000	1 to 5	A
4	Lacombe	Lacombe Park	CITY	240	$ 190,000	2002	23	2	$ 300,000	$ 750,000	5 to 10	I
5	Woodlands	Woodlands	CITY	285	$ 315,000	2011	14	4	$ 356,250	$ 750,000	5 to 10	I
6	Erin Ridge	Erin Ridge	COMM	580	$ 320,000	2016	9	1	$ 638,000	$ 440,000	10 to 15	A
7	Natalia	North Ridge	COMM	150	$ 190,000	2016	9	2	$ 165,000	$ 440,000	10 to 15	A
8	Attwood	Akinsdale	COMM	430	$ 265,000	2020	5	1	$ 473,000	$ 440,000	10 to 15	A
9	Kingsmeade	Kingswood	COMM	750	$ 370,000	2021	4	1	$ 825,000	$ 440,000	10 to 15	A
10	Fountain	Forest Lawn	COMM	470	$ 370,000	2022	3	1	$ 517,000	$ 440,000	15 to 20	A
11	Versailles	Ville Giroux	NBHD	730	$ 265,000	2022	3	2	$ 803,000	$ 440,000	15 to 20	A
12	Lodgepole	Lacombe Park	CITY	180	$ 265,000	2024	1	1	$ 198,000	$ 440,000	15 to 20	A
13	Cherot (Growth)	Cherot	COMM	-	$ -	N/A	N/A	-	$ -	$ 440,000	20 to 30	A
14	Future NW (Growth)	Rural NW	CITY	-	$ -	N/A	N/A	-	$ -	$ 750,000	20 to 30	I
15	Future NE (Growth)	Rural NE	COMM	-	$ -	N/A	N/A	-	$ -	$ 440,000	20 to 30	A
16	Jensen Lakes (Growth)	Jensen Lakes	COMM	-	$ -	N/A	N/A	-	$ -	$ 440,000	20 to 30	A

Note:

This priority index is a tool reflecting a period in time, and should be revisited every 4-5 years to confirm alignment with City goals and policies, and updated as needed.

Playground Sizes: *Large* / *Medium*

CITY DATA

To aid administration in ensuring different playgrounds meet the criteria for their Playground Type, this Strategy recommends that the City track criteria-relevant data points in connection to playgrounds. While certain data is already tracked, the following is recommended in addition:

- Number of accessible Ground-Level Play Components
- Number of Elevated Play Components accessible by ramp
- Number of Elevated Play Components accessible by transfer system
- Presence of the following Physical Play Component Type:
    - Rocking/Gliding
- Presence of each of the following Sensory Play Component Types:
    - Auditory, Tactile, and Visual
- Presence of Solitary Play Component(s) or Low-Stimulus Play Area(s)
- Accessible parking
- Accessible permanent washrooms
- Communication board

Data already tracked by the City:

- Surface types in use
- Age group served
- Presence of the following Physical Play Component Types:
    - Balancing, Brachiating (Overhead), Climbing, Sliding, Spinning/Rotating, and Swinging
- Presence of Social-Emotional Play Type Component(s)
- Accessible benches
- Accessible tables
- Accessible shade structures
- Fencing

Currently asset inventory data is tracked in a range of formats and locations. To ensure this data is both centralized for ease of tracking and broadly available for a range of uses, it is recommended that it be compiled as part of a comprehensive asset inventory and management system.

PUBLIC DATA

Key playground characteristics and services are to be detailed on the City's website, aiding community members in identifying the inclusive play opportunities and supportive amenities available to them. For each playground in the City's inventory, the following information is to be made publicly accessible:

- Playground Type
- Surface Type(s)
- Age Group Served
- Inclusive Elements
- Accessible Supportive Amenities
- Fencing

Appendix A: Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
Access *(core attribute)*	A core playground attribute that ensures playground users can navigate both to and through the play area; it answers the question, "can I get there?" by accounting for accessible surfaces, equipment, spacing, and information.
accessible	Accessibility, generally, is the design of environments that allow for the equitable use, participation, and inclusion of people of varying abilities and ages. In the context of playground development, accessibility refers to the settings, initiatives, and services designed to support navigation of the physical environment.
Accessible Playground *(Playground Type)*	A playground type which aims to provide a range of accessible play options to a neighbourhood-wide service area, with a focus on supporting the **core attributes** of Access and Diversity.
Accessible Route *(Annex H)*	A continuous unobstructed pathway from the perimeter of the use zone to the equipment, as defined in Annex H, and can be either elevated (i.e. by ramp) or at ground level (i.e. by surface); accessible routes between play areas and supportive amenities are defined by the **CSA** standard B651
Accessible Surface *(Annex H)*	Able to be navigated by children who uses wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids without any obstacles.
active transportation	Any form of transportation that is powered by human energy such as walking, cycling or wheeling (skateboard, scooter), and may include public transit as an extension of these modes.
Age Group *(Annex H)*	The recommended age range to be served by a playground, typically in the ranges of 18 months to 5 years and 5 years to 12 years.
Annex H	The accessible addendum to the **CSA**'s **Z614**, "Children's playgrounds and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities."

Auditory *(Sensory Play, Component Type)*	A play component that engages the **sense** of hearing through exploring and processing acoustic information, such as by producing and locating sounds using a range of means; examples include talking tubes, noisemakers, and musical instruments.
Balancing *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports vestibular development, as well as bodily coordination and risk perception, often using narrow or unstable surfaces with a range of supports to mediate challenge level, such as hand holds; examples include balance beams, disc challenges, and tight rope walks.
barrier	Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in an aspect of society because of their disability.
berm	Raised hilly landform, offering variation in elevation and angle of surfaces for a range of movement-related challenges; often located in grassy areas, but may also be accommodated in areas using **unitary** surfacing.
Best Practice	Known inclusive practices across industry, advocate, and academic literature supporting experiences of inclusive play; often understood through a framework of questions: “can I get there,” can I play,” and “can I stay?”
Brachiating *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports movement patterns that primarily target the use of the upper body, including the arms and trunk; examples include overhead ladders and rings, sliding tracks, and nets.
braille	A tactile language, enabling some with visual impairments to read.
City	The City of St. Albert.
City Park *(Park Classification)*	A classification of St. Albert Parks and Open Spaces, providing unique recreation opportunities and containing features that are not found in community or neighbourhood parks.
Climbing *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports the movement over elevated surfaces and structures, in vertical and horizontal directions, and often with a wide range of possible challenge; examples include ladders, boulder walls, rope bridges, and nets.

Comfort *(core attribute)*	A core playground attribute that supports playground users and caregivers by eliminating barriers that would otherwise cut a playground visit short; it answers the question, “can I stay?” by supporting rest, personal care needs, and protection from the elements
Communication Board	A board with icons, images, and words, providing support for nonverbal individuals or those with speaking difficulty to communicate with others.
Community Park *(Park Classification)*	A classification of St. Albert Parks and Open Spaces, providing structured recreation amenities such as ball diamonds, outdoor rinks, sport fields, tennis courts etc.
Component Type	A way of categorization components according to the specific style of play they aim to support, e.g. spinning, tactile, imaginative, etc.
composite play structure	Two or more **Play Components** that are connected or functionally linked to form one integrated unit, offering multiple play activities.
Conservation Park *(Park Classification)*	A classification of St. Albert Parks and Open Spaces, to conserve environmentally sensitive areas and natural areas; may provide appropriate low-impact and low-density outdoor reaction opportunities.
contrast	The way one element exists in relation/oppositions to another, usually by texture, colour, tone, etc.; higher contrast means greater difference in element qualities and lower contrast means element qualities are more similar.
core attribute	The three main attributes (**Access**, **Diversity**, and **Comfort**) embodied by successful inclusive playgrounds, affirmatively answering the questions: “can I get there,” “can I play,” and “can I stay?”
CSA	The Canadian Standards Association, a not-for-profit organization that produces national standard frameworks for a variety of industries, governments, and consumers in Canada and internationally.
development *(senses)*	The process of change or growth in the physical, sensory and cognitive skills of humans.

disability	An umbrella term, covering **impairments** arising from interactions between a person's body or mind and the society and environment in which they live; disability can be congenital or acquired, permanent or temporary, and may worsen, stay the same, or improve over time.
Diversity *(core attribute)*	A core playground attribute that supports a wide range of play experiences, allowing playground visitors to use the playground in the way that suits them best; it answers the question, "can I play?" by providing a diversity of options across play types, surfaces, and levels of challenge.
Elevated Play Component	A **Play Component** that can be reached from above or below the ground and is part of a larger play structure with multiple connected parts, offering different play activities together.
Engineering Standards	The City of St. Albert Municipal Engineering Standards.
EWF	Engineered Wood Fibre surfacing.
fencing	A separation used for safety and to minimize risk of **wandering**; may have open **sightlines**, facilitating easier caregiver supervision and thereby supporting peace of mind.
Gliding *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports linear motion and swaying, whether single-use or social; examples include spring riders, platform rockers, and flying foxes.
Ground Level Play Component	A **Play Component** that can be accessed and exited at ground level.
impairment	A difficulty created by a difference in body function or structure, or a challenge in executing or participating in a task, action, or situation as a result of a physical or cognitive difference.
inclusive	In the City of St. Albert, inclusion is defined as creating a culture that embraces, respects, accepts, and values diversity. In the context of playground development, it means spaces are designed to welcome people of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of ability, and that users can play on their own terms, with a variety of opportunities for physical, sensory, and social play, and at different levels of challenge; inclusivity extends to those accompanying users, such as family members, friends, or caregivers.

Inclusive Playground *(Playground Type)*	A playground type which aims to provide a high level of inclusive play to a citywide service area, embodying all three inclusive **core attributes** by providing access to diverse opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to play together, alongside supportive amenities that support a high degree of comfort.
informational features	A **Supportive Amenity** providing details and/or navigation support; may include site information, programming, or wayfinding, and may employ braille, icons, images, written language, etc.
landmarking	A visual or textural difference in the environment, often used to detail transitions between uses of a space or mark edges for safety; may provides benefits for a wide range of play types and user needs, supporting those with visual and cognitive **impairments** in navigating the playground.
Local Playground *(Playground Type)*	A playground type which aims to provide shorter duration recreation and independent social gathering for families and youth living nearby, with a focus on hyper-local service and no minimum accessible or inclusive criteria.
loose-fill *(Surface Type)*	A surface type composed of a dynamic, movable material, and typically not considered accessible to mobility aids or wheeled implements without additional intervention, such as regular maintenance or material binding; examples include **EWF**, rubber mulch, pea gravel, and sand.
low-stimulus	A state of reduced activity, brightness, contrast, sound, or any other sensory input; low-stimulus areas (**quiet areas)** or equipment are considered restful in comparison to their high-stimulus (e.g. active, bright, jarring, loud) environments
mobility aids / devices	A term that refers to various assistive devices for people with mobility challenges or physical disabilities, such as wheelchairs, scooters, canes, and crutches.
natural playground	A playground using natural or nature-like elements as a core theme; natural playgrounds are typically not developed in a way that prioritizes accessibility, due to the nature of the components used, which is not to say that they can't be made accessible with care.
Neighbourhood Park *(Park Classification)*	A classification of St. Albert Parks and Open Spaces, providing unstructured active and passive recreation opportunities for a variety of ages that aim to meet the interests of residents in the neighbourhood.

Outdoor Fitness	An outdoor feature supporting the physical wellbeing of users by providing public equipment for exercise; may enhance the experience of visiting a playground as a satellite feature, particularly for friends, family, and caregivers not directly participating in play.
Overhead *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	See **Brachiating**.
park	Land developed for various recreational uses, offering amenities like playgrounds, paths, and picnic areas to serve the community leisure needs.
Park Classification	Classifications used to categorize greenspaces according to the City of St. Albert Parks and Open Space Standards and Guidelines; classifications detail differences in park size, location, and intended use, among other features, requirements, and restrictions.
Physical Play *(Play Type)*	A type of play which engages both the external senses and the internal senses in service of motor development and movement.
PIP	Pour-in-Place rubber surfacing.
play	The recreational process of engaging the senses in the development of physical, mental, and social health, and improving motor skills, social behaviour, independence, and conflict resolution through games, imagination, and challenging activity.
play area / space	An outside area or space designed for children to play in; may include playground infrastructure and surfacing, as well as surrounding areas such as natural features and supportive amenities.
Play Component	A piece of infrastructure intended to encourage play, socializing, and/or learning; it can be man-made or natural and can either be a standalone feature or part of a bigger play structure.
Play Type	A category of play, supported by various **Play Components** grouped by style of movement or sensory development they support, such as **Physical Play** (internal and external senses, motor skills), **Sensory Play** (external senses, sensory processing), and **Social-Emotional Play** (imaginative, social, and cognitive skills).
Playground Type	A defined playground status resultant from the **Strategy**, detailing the level of service provided by that playground. Includes **Accessible**, **Inclusive**, **Local** and **Specialized**.

proprioceptive system *(sense)*	One of the body's internal senses, the proprioceptive system is responsible for providing information about the body's position and movement relative to itself, and is associated with muscle awareness, articulation, and motor planning.
PRPI	The City of St. Albert's Playground Replacement Priority Index.
quiet area	Areas of low-stimulus, offering a safe escape from high-stimulus areas, of particular importance for those with sensory processing disorders; see also **solitary play**.
ramp	A walking surface that has a running slope no greater than 1:20 (an incline of 5% or less).
Rocking *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports linear motion and swaying, whether single-use or social; examples include spring riders, platform rockers, and flying foxes.
Rotating *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports the movement about an axis, with rotation positioning the user some distance from the axis (see also, **Spinning**); examples include dish spinners, carousels, and spinning climbers.
senses	The body's systems responsible for relaying information about the body and its environment to the brain, allowing it to perceive the world and use that information for cognitive and motor planning (thinking, responding, imagining, moving, etc.); the body uses seven (7) core senses to perceive the world, though only five (5) systems are typically supported by playground activities: • auditory / hearing, • proprioceptive / body awareness, • tactile / touch, • vestibular / spatial awareness, and • visual / sight
Sensory Play *(Play Type)*	A play type which engages the external senses in service of sensory system development.
service area	The theoretical maximum geographic area a playground is expected to serve.
shade structure	A permanent piece of infrastructure, inside or adjacent to a playground, providing shade for users.

sightline	The uninterrupted line of sight between a person and the subject of their view; open sightlines are required for effective supervision of playground users by caregivers and foster a greater sense of security.
site	A well-defined area or piece of land marked by a property line or known boundary.
Sliding *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports gravitational motion, in linear, wave-like, and spiraling directions; examples include open, tube, roller, and hill slides.
Social-Emotional Play *(Play Type)*	A type of play which is concerned with navigating social situations, engaging the imagination, and challenging the mind; this may include participation in games with rules, role play, parallel play, observation, creative play, story telling, or any number of other activities.
solitary play	A type of play that provide safe escapes from more active areas, for those who need a break from high-stimulus activity and/or the chance to relax independent of caregivers.
Specialized Playground *(Playground Type)*	A playground type which aims to provide specialized play experiences and may coincide with other playground types as conditions allow.
Spinning *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component type that supports movement about an axis, with spinning positioning the user on the axis (see also, **Rotating**); examples include dish spinners, carousels, and spinning climbers
Strategy	The City of St. Albert Inclusive Play Strategy.
Supportive Amenity	The infrastructure used to support a more enjoyable, comfortable playground experience by providing rest and observation points for users and caregivers, or by allowing them to attend to certain personal needs without needing to interrupt their stay; examples include seating, shade, washrooms, wayfinding, fencing, etc.
Surface Type	A way of differentiating surfaces by material (e.g. **EWF**, **PIP**, sand) and/or quality (i.e. **unitary** or **loose-fill**).
Swinging *(Physical Play, Component Type)*	A play component that supports gravitational movement in a wide variety of directions from linear to rotational to spinning, and often in a pendulum-like fashion; examples include belt, bucket, saucer, and social swings.

Tactile Play *(Sensory Play, Component Type)*	A play component that engages the **sense** of touch, such as through differences in texture, pressure, temperature, vibration, and material; examples include contrasting surfaces (i.e. smooth versus rough, soft versus hard), a range of materials such as metal, plastic, stone, and wood, and dynamic fluids (i.e. sand or water tables)
transfer system	Platforms, handles, and other equipment that helps individuals transfer from a wheelchair or mobility aid to play components or composite play structures.
UAP	The City of St. Albert's Universal Access Plan.
unitary *(Surface Type)*	Surfaces that are uniform, continuous, and stable; typically, though not always, flat and/or level.
vestibular system *(sense)*	One of the body's internal senses, the vestibular system provides information about the body's position and movement in space and is associated balance and spatial awareness.
Visual Play *(Sensory Play, Component Type)*	A play component that engages the **sense** of sight and supports visual processing, such as through reading, distinguishing objects, motion tracking, and focusing; examples include mazes, matching games, kaleidoscopes, telescopes, and language boards
wandering	Sometimes referred to as "elopement," it is the sudden user departure from the playground; wandering poses safety risks when playgrounds are nearby unsafe features such as roads, drop-offs, bodies of water, etc., and is typically mitigated with **fencing**.
wayfinding	The infrastructure supporting (or process of using) sensory cues to understand one's location, identify a destination, and/or navigate to or from these places.
Z614	The CSA standard for playgrounds, "Children's Playground Equipment and Surfacing."

Appendix B: Resources

LOCAL JURISDICTION

Municipal

Flourish - Growing to 100k: City of St. Albert Municipal Development Plan, 2021

Parks Bylaw 7/2022, 2022

Land Use Bylaw 18/2024, 2024

Municipal Engineering Standards - Appendix F: Recreation Amenity Standards, 2021

City of St. Albert Parks and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, 2023

City of St. Albert Universal Access Plan, 2018

St. Albert Census: 2024 In-Depth Analysis, 2024

Playground Asset Inventory & Replacement Prioritization Index, ND

Playground Lifecycle Photo Inventory, 2020

Annual Playground Inspection Report, 2024

Cherot East: Parks Master Plan, 2024

Erin Ridge North Phase 2: Parks Master Plan, 2021

North Ridge Phase II: Parks Master Plan, 2023

Ville Giroux: Parks Master Plan, 2021

Riverside Park: Master Plan Update, 2021

Jensen Lakes: Parks Master Plan, 2021

Provincial

Government of Alberta, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Accessibility Design Guide 2024, AB, Canada, 2024

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Appendix C: What We Heard Report

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Playgrounds serve as essential public spaces where children can come together, interact, and foster meaningful relationships while learning from one another. Inclusive playgrounds are thoughtfully designed to be engaging and enjoyable environments that accommodate children of all abilities. These spaces offer stimulating challenges for active children while also featuring areas and equipment designed for quiet and creative play. Notable features may include braille signage to assist individuals who are blind or partially sighted, as well as accessible swings and sway rides. The equipment is carefully crafted to be accessible for children and caregivers using mobility devices, and communication boards can be integrated to support non-verbal individuals or those with hearing impairments in connecting with friends and family.

This document serves as a comprehensive compilation of the findings gathered from a series of meetings and surveys conducted with the stakeholders and citizens of St. Albert. The purpose of these efforts was to gain a deeper understanding of the community's needs, desires, and expectations regarding the development of inclusive and accessible playgrounds within the city. Currently, there are only two park playgrounds that meet the criteria for accessibility (as defined prior to the Strategy), highlighting the importance of expanding such spaces to better serve all members of the community. Through this report, we aim to present the key insights that will guide future planning and design, ensuring that new playgrounds reflect the diverse needs of St. Albert's residents.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Two forms of engagement were done via the Public Engagement Plan: direct engagement and remote survey. Direct engagement took place via two online meetings with targeted stakeholders, one on Feb 19th and the other on Feb 20th. This was done to better understand what was most important for inclusive play, using roundtable conversation to explore concepts and priorities that may not be easily captured by survey. The meetings were conducted using a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the project and an “online whiteboard” program called Padlet to facilitate conversation. The online survey portion was opened for public input through the latter half of February 2025. Survey questions were created to gather valuable feedback from users regarding their priorities and experiences in the City of St. Albert’s playgrounds, specifically. By evaluating these insights from both engagements, we can better inform and support the recommendations of the Strategy to reflect the diverse needs of St. Albert citizens.

WHAT WE ASKED & WHY

As there were two engagement methods, there are two parts to the summary of responses in this report. Part One contains a summary of the questions presented for conversation prompts in roundtable discussion, as well as a summary of responses. Part Two includes the questions presented for the online survey, hosted on Cultivate the Conversation, the City of St. Albert's online engagement platform.

PART ONE: TARGETED STAKEHOLDER MEETING

What we asked	Why we asked
PRIORITIES	
What would you rather see...? • Concentrated efforts with higher budgets in fewer locations? • Spread out efforts with smaller budgets, but more locations get planned improvements?	This question was asked to understand the level of effort stakeholders expect from the city when developing inclusive playgrounds.
In an ideal design, all aspects of a fully inclusive playground would be built. If you had to choose, though, what would you prioritize? • Surfacing (rubber, wood, etc.) • Play elements (physical options, sensory options, etc.) • Site design (walkways, fencing, planting, etc.) • Amenities (supports for staying, such as benches and shelter) • A balanced but less extensive approach • Other	This was designed to understand what aspects of inclusive playgrounds stakeholders prioritize.
What is most important to you in inclusive playground design? For example: • Spaces designed for many kinds of play • A diversity of play elements provided • Specific accessibility needs are met • Playgrounds allow play at all sizes, etc.	To gain insight into what stakeholders consider most important in the design of inclusive playgrounds.

What we asked	Why we asked
MUST HAVES	
What is the most important to you when it comes to site design for playgrounds? *(i.e. fencing, site-lines, access to nature, hills, quiet spaces, etc.)*	To understand what stakeholders prioritize when it comes to site design.
What is most important to you when it comes to amenities supporting playgrounds? *(i.e. bench seating, table seating, water fountains, shade provided, etc.)*	To identify which amenities stakeholders would prioritize in the design of inclusive playgrounds.
What is most important to you in playground design when it comes to play element selection? *(i.e. slides, swings, sensory, etc.)*	To determine which elements stakeholders consider most important in the design of inclusive playgrounds.
Is there anything else you understand to be essential for high-quality inclusive play in outdoor playgrounds?	To gather any additional priorities from stakeholders that would help ensure the creation of high-quality inclusive playgrounds.
ACCESS / BARRIERS	
What do you wish you were asked about before playgrounds get developed?	To ensure stakeholders are fully informed when planning future parks.
Beyond just the playground itself, what is clearly working and what is not? **What barriers are getting in the way of accessing inclusive play? What is missing that could support better access?**	To identify areas for improvement in the design of inclusive playgrounds.
Often, whether or not a playground is attended is as much up to the caregiver as their dependent. **What is needed to better support caregivers of playground users?** *(e.g. family members, support staff, etc.)*	To identify what is needed to better support caregivers in playground environments.

What we asked	Why we asked
How important is transportation in deciding where to go for inclusive play experiences? **Are things like parking, transit, or trail connections a major factor?**	To assess the importance of transportation accessibility in the design and location of inclusive playgrounds.
How important is location in deciding where to go for inclusive play experiences? **Is it better to have something less inclusive but closer to home, or something more inclusive, but further away?**	To assess whether distance influences a person's decision to visit an inclusive playground.
Is it accessible even if it's labeled as accessible?	To determine whether signage labeling a park as inclusive is an important aspect of its design.

PART TWO: ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

What we asked	Why we asked
PRE-QUALIFYING	
Are you or your dependant a member of any of the following groups: • A person with a disability (i.e. having a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, and/or sensory impairment, or some combination). • A parent, guardian, or primary caregiver to a child with a disability • A professional engaged in care work for a child with a disability • A community member with close experience supporting those facing disability-related barriers. • Other (please specify)	To gain a clearer understanding of the individuals responding to the survey.

What we asked	Why we asked
ACCESS / BARRIERS	
How often do you go to playgrounds?	To understand how frequently participants use playgrounds in St. Albert.
Who do you typically visit playgrounds with?	To understand the spread of users (ages and relationships) using playgrounds together.
How do you normally get to and from playgrounds?	To understand existing patterns of movement connecting playgrounds with users.
How would you prefer to get to and from playgrounds?	To understand preferred patterns of movement connecting playgrounds with users.
Do you experience any physical, mental, social or emotional barriers getting to and from playgrounds? Barriers may include travel time, distance to the playground or lack of information about accessible features.	To understand—more generally—barriers preventing respondents from accessing playgrounds, informing decision regarding recommendations that may address these barriers.
LOCAL PLAYGROUND EXPERIENCES	
Have you visited either of the 'fully inclusive' playgrounds in St. Albert? (*Lodgepole or Fountain)*	To understand if current playgrounds are reaching their target audiences.
What would have made your experience at these playgrounds better?	To understand what gaps in service remain at these playgrounds despite their inclusive status.
Do you travel outside of St. Albert to access inclusive and accessible playgrounds?	To understand external demand for inclusive playgrounds regardless of whether they are currently being provided locally.
What about these destinations makes them more appealing?	To understand the potential draw of playgrounds in distant locations, despite local service.

What we asked	Why we asked
Do you access other playgrounds in St. Albert that are not fully accessible?	To understand whether other playground, despite not being labeled as inclusive or accessible, are meeting some level of play need.
What are your biggest barriers to finding inclusive play opportunities?	To understand barriers to locating existing resources, specifically.
What factors influence your decision to visit these playgrounds? *(e.g. close to home, can access most equipment if not all, friends play there, etc.)*	To understand additional factors not captured by other questions.
PRIORITIES	
Rate: Importance of Play Equipment Accessibility • Some or most of the play equipment is accessible • The play equipment is all accessible • Some or most of the play surfaces are accessible • Play surfaces are completely accessible • I can see myself using the equipment in new ways	To understand the relative importance of accessibility for various types of play components.
Rate: Importance of Play Elements • Balancing • Brachiating • Climbing • Sliding • Spinning • Swinging • Creative	To understand the relative importance of various play components to assess where value should be prioritized.

What we asked	Why we asked
Rate: Importance of Amenities and Site Surroundings • There are seats available • There is shade from the sun • There are maps that explain where things are • There are washroom facilities nearby • There are quiet or low-stimulus spaces available • There is access to nature	To understand the relative importance of various amenities and other site features sometimes included at or nearby playgrounds.
Rate: Importance of Safety • There is fencing or some sense of enclosure • There is adequate lighting • I can see in and out of the play area	To understand the relative importance of various safety elements sometimes included in playgrounds.
Rank: Universal Design Elements **Please rank these concepts from most important to least important as they apply to how you access playgrounds** • Equitable Use • Size and Space for Approach and Use • Flexibility in Use • Simple and Intuitive Use • Low Physical Effort • Tolerance for Error • Perceptible Information	To gain insight into how the respondent prioritizes the various principles of universal design, informing choices made when not all principles are possible to accommodate.

What we asked	Why we asked
MOST RECENT EXPERIENCE	
Which playground did you visit?	To understand what stands out from a recent experience, using what is memorable to inform what is valuable in impacting the experience of a playground user.
What made it memorable?	
How long did you stay?	
What about the playground made you want to stay?	
What was missing that could have made your experience better?	
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS	
Are you responding for yourself or on behalf on someone else?	To understand some od the demographic information about the respondent.
How old are you?	
Where do you live?	
FEEDBACK QUESTIONS	
Is there anything else you would like us to think about as we develop this Strategy?	To assess the efficacy of the survey.
Is there anything you would change about the survey?	
How satisfied are you with this opportunity to provide feedback?	

WHAT WE HEARD

Below are the results from the stakeholder meetings and the public survey responses. Where relevant, verbatim comments are included exactly as received, without any alterations to spelling or grammar. It is intended to illustrate the distribution of feedback, not to be viewed as a vote, as the comments and responses may reflect a range of diverse perspectives.

PART ONE: TARGETED STAKEHOLDER MEETING RESPONSES

The following answers are taken directly from the web hosted platform (Padlet) used to collect them. Minimal edits have been made for clarity Complete original transcripts of these meetings may be made available upon request, at the City's discretion.

PRIORITIES

Q1 Results

- A concentrated effort creates a community hub
- There are benefits to creating one that hits all the boxes, centrally located, while also having smaller ones in the neighbourhoods
- Agreement on having one park centrally
- Are there areas with higher need? Should we use demographics of areas to steer the development of inclusive parks?

Q2 Results

- Bullish on washrooms (strong preference)
- What is the goal? To get more kids with disabilities specifically to the playground?
- Hard to do something like equipment without surfacing, or vice versa, and have it work out.
- Rubber is very durable. black colour is more challenging due to summer and heat, so lighter colours are more preferable and less staining of clothes.
- Cork surface is a potential surface but needs to be tested in a northern winter climate (currently used predominantly in the US).
- A sandbox is preferred over structures in sand.
- Having enough separation between the sand area and the rest of the surfacing.
- Rubber is more friendly for kids.
- Surfaces: mixed option (rubber + sand); some children like playing in sand, so having access to sand is key.
- Preference for mixed surfaces
- For some families, if there's no fence, they won't go as their children will run.
- Agreement with perimeter fencing and washrooms.
- 3 most important features for families: uniform and hard surfacing, perimeter fencing, and washrooms.

Q3 Results

- Equipment for all ages (teens/adults).
- Diversity in scale of equipment, with space.
- Sensory → spinning and rocking.
- The second priority (play elements) is what my child will enjoy in this playground.
- Safety is going to be the parents' top priority.
- The "highlight" of the playground should be fully accessible.
- Having a little something for everybody with different levels of challenge on the same piece of equipment → helps facilitate friendships naturally when playing on the same thing.

MUST HAVES

Q1 Results

- No woodchips as it is hard to wheel on them.
- Fencing for safety, runners.
- Quiet spaces/low-stimulus.
- Not being pigeonholed. So, access across the playground if not strictly access TO everything.
- Ground-based design that everyone can access.
- Washrooms.
- Accessible surfacing.
- Turf, if installed correctly, can act like a rubber surface and can be a potential alternative and providing a tactile experience.
- Use of natural topography in the design where possible, to provide interesting features (hills).
- Colour is good for those with visual impairments it can be a method for wayfinding/different zones; helps kids get oriented in the playground.
- Site constraints will dictate programming.

Q2 Results

- Washrooms, variety in seating, backrests/armrests/with and without, shelter and water are nice to have, ensuring amenities can accommodate a variety of uses such as people in wheelchairs.
- Ensuring amenities are low/scaled to the user.
- Signage, shade, access to water, bathrooms that are accessible, accessible tables, garbage and recycle bins.
- Animal spouts on water fountains for service animals.
- Signage is important to help children map out the playground.
- Spouts at the bottom of water fountains to provide drinking water for service animals.
- Garbage and recycling bins – people will use them if they are there.
- Shade for both caregivers and children to not be in full sun, i.e. trees.
- Access to water and bathrooms, i.e. making sure washrooms are accessible.
- Tables that you can roll right up to to eat.

Q3 Results

- Diversity in elements is important.
- Variety in swinging options.
- Swinging is currently the most popular activity.
- Climbing, rocking, and swinging equipment.
- Non-transfer options (equipment that doesn't require a person to transfer out of their mobility device.

Q4 Results

- Social play—playing together—is more important than specific elements, maybe.
- A large structure might not facilitate co-play as much.
- Challenges for all kinds of users.
- Having space for kids, i.e. quiet space for kids, having space to run without running into things/people, room for independent play, room to have big emotions, while also having these spaces connected and not segregated.

ACCESS / BARRIERS

Q1 Results

- No Answers given for this question

Q2 Results

- Wayfinding, hard surfacing, not necessarily concrete, but weather friendly.
- Snow clearing is a big help (throughout the playground), and shelters for rain.
- Wayfinding for vision impairment in winter may look different than in summer (enable shorelining/landmarking).
- Contrasting colours could be used for better wayfinding.
- A sense of security is important.
- Pet relief areas for guide dogs.
- Public destination, obvious draw, language that doesn't create segregation.
- Language to describe the park, making sure the park is known as a great park, and not "the wheelchair park"; education on inclusive playgrounds, that they are for everybody and not only for those with disabilities.
- Language: clarifying inclusive vs accessible.
- Age marking for playgrounds can feel like an "age limit."
- Staff is important to make it welcoming; people will travel if they feel like it's a safe space.
- Good communication is important; don't exclude by communicating the wrong thing.

- “Language to promote the inclusive playground, once open to the public, should be all-encompassing and appealing to all users, while letting families with disabilities know that it's safe, accessible and fun for them too. Rather than being known as the "accessible park" or the "wheelchair park", we want our inclusive playgrounds, especially the larger, destination-type playgrounds, to be known as "the best playground ever!!" for all kids. Creating fun, challenging experiences for all ages and abilities, including neuro-typical and able-bodied kids, attracts them to visit here, and once here, they can interact, play and learn with and about children with disabilities. That's where the magic happens! We want inclusive playgrounds to be spaces where ALL kids come to play, and barriers are broken down. That's how we will achieve a more positive mindset about disability, and hopefully remove the ableist attitudes.”

Q3 Results

- Power available onsite
- Adult changing tables available onsite.
- Caregivers (perhaps also with disabilities) should be able to access their kids if they get injured.
- Picnic tables and benches for caregivers/parents so they will want to stay longer; places to sit.
- Shade for both caregivers and children to not be in the full sun, i.e. trees.
- Fencing → helps feel safer and the improves ability to monitor the space.
- Access to water/bathrooms.

Q4 Results

- Public transit matter; lower-income conscious.
- Accessible parking.
- Having a central [playground] with access via transit is important to support low-income families.
- Close parking to playground/park entrance with wide stalls.
- Ample accessible stalls.
- Street parking is okay as long as it's safe; avoid busy streets for parking.
- Proximity → get them to the playground as quickly as possible to avoid distractions.
- Transportation is the biggest barrier to service, limiting the amount of travel.
- Agreement with parking stalls being located close.

Q5 Results

- Centrally located to accommodate more people.
- 25 minutes [is the limit for distance] before [you’re] really thinking about going, but if you know it's going to be fully inclusive, it's worth planning to go.

Q6 Results

- The level of challenge is different for different people.
- Err on the side of less challenging rather than too challenging.

PART TWO: SURVEY RESULTS

The following Survey Response Report details the summary responses from the online survey component of the Strategy's engagement.

Let Us Know Your Thoughts

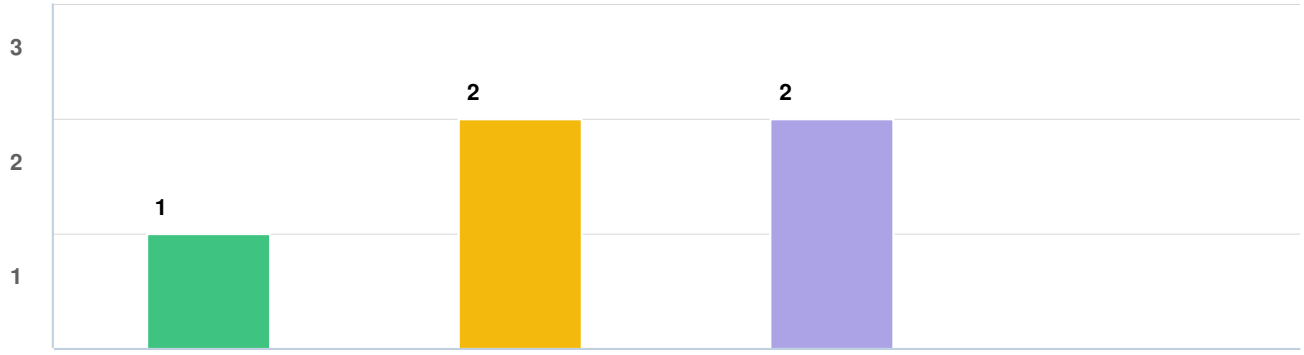
SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT
08 October 2020 - 01 June 2025

PROJECT NAME:
Inclusive Playground Strategy

GRANICUS

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 Are you or your dependant a member of any of the following groups?

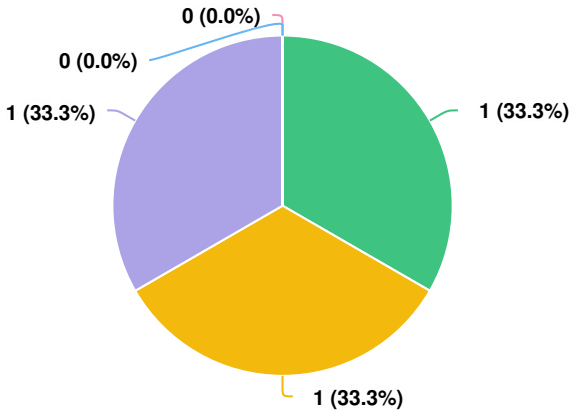


Question options

- A person with a disability (i.e. having a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, and/or sensory impairment, or some combination).
- A parent, guardian, or primary caregiver to a child with a disability A professional engaged in care work for a child, or children, with disability (ex. social worker, teacher, support/group home worker, etc.).
- A community member with close experience supporting those facing disability-related barriers.
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q2 How often do you go to playgrounds?



Question options

- 3-4 times a week
- 1-2 times a week
- Less than once a month
- 5-7 times a week
- Less than 3 times a month

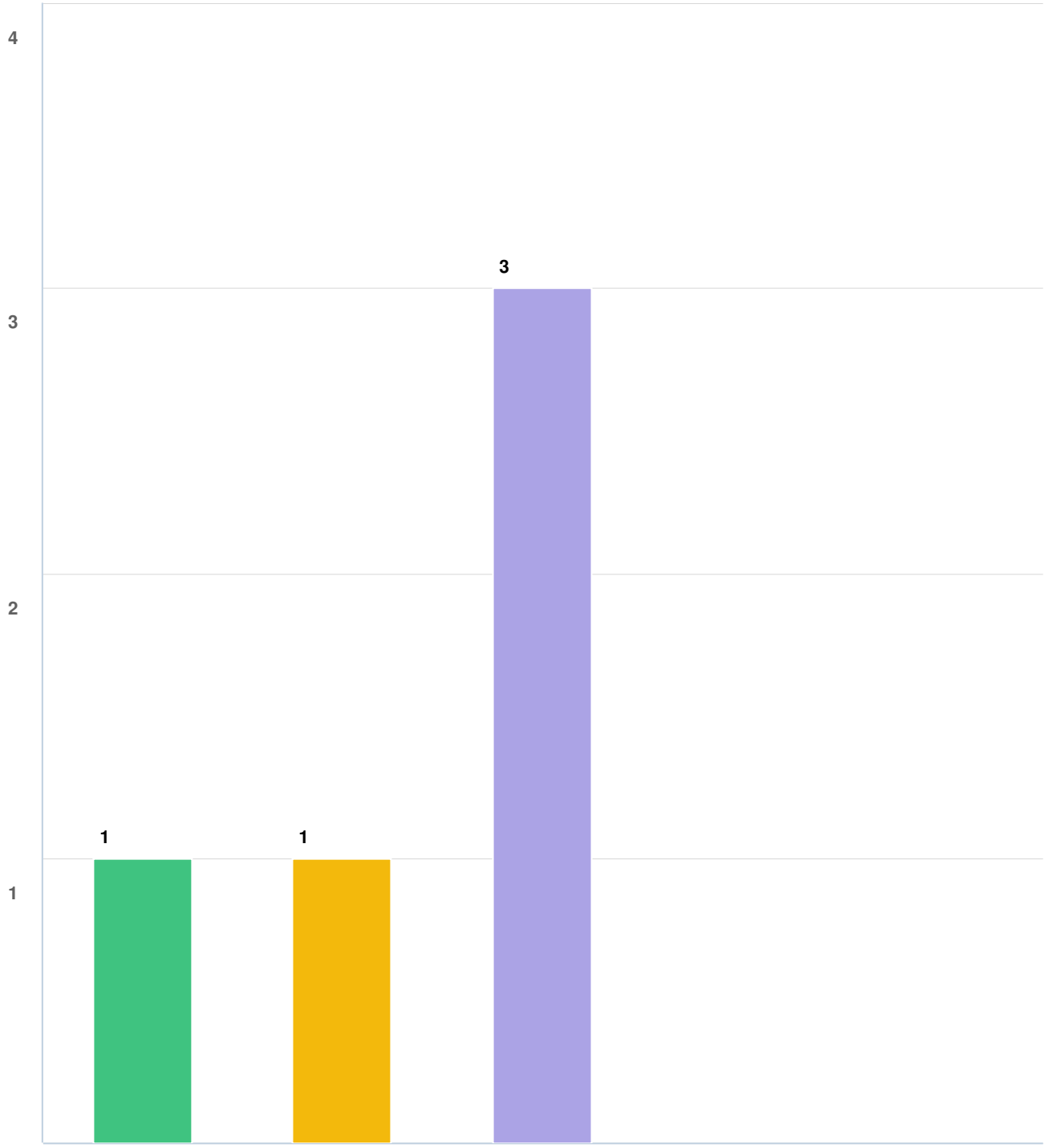
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q3 Who do you typically visit playgrounds with?

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	My spouse and kids.
JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	My 2 children
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	Neice and Nephew

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q4 How do you normally get to and from playgrounds?

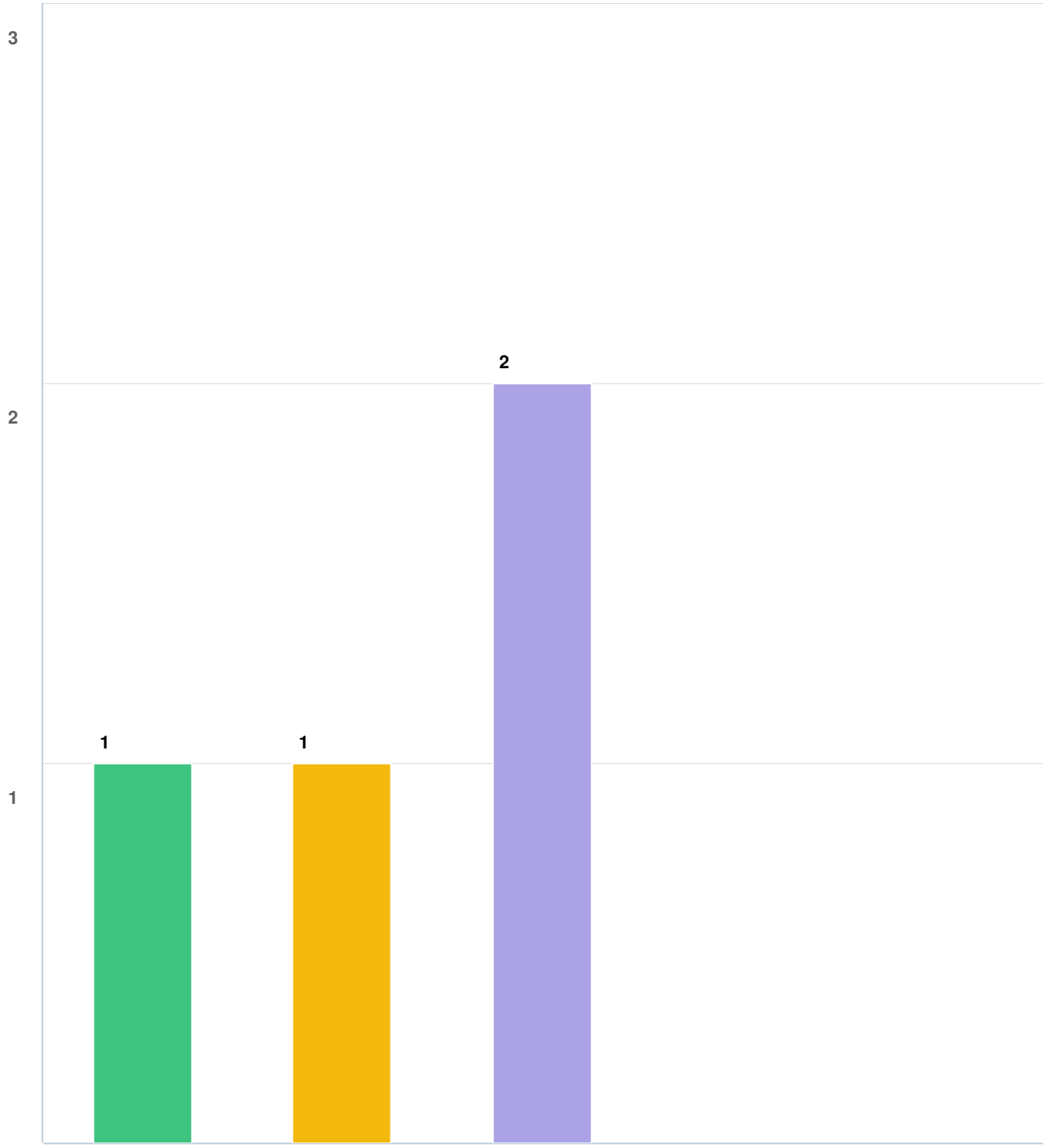


Question options

Walking
Ride, wheel or roll (bike, scooter, skateboard, etc.)
Personal vehicle or get a ride in a personal vehicle
Transit (ex. bus)
Other (please specify)

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q5 How would you prefer to get to and from playgrounds?



Question options

Walking
Ride, wheel or roll (bike, scooter, skateboard, etc.)
Personal vehicle or get a ride in a personal vehicle
Transit (ex. bus)
Other (please specify)

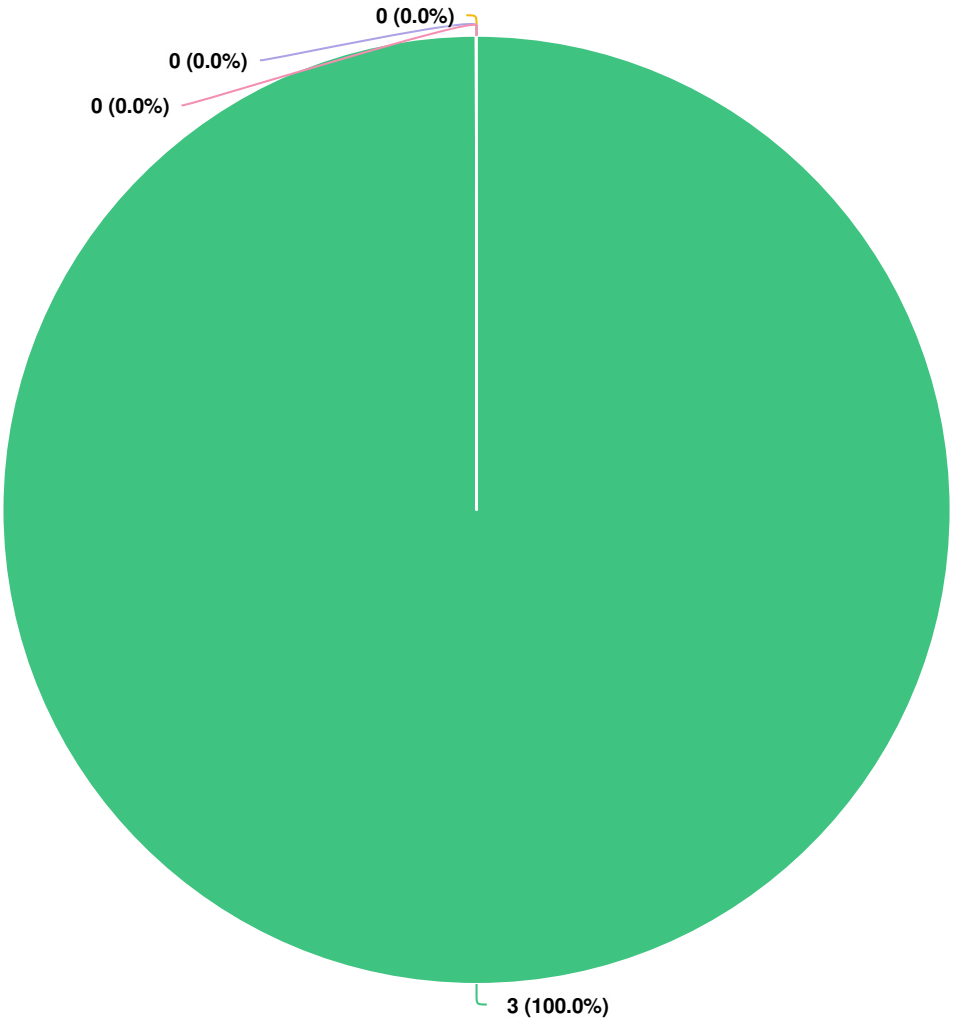
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q6 Do you experience any physical, mental, social or emotional barriers getting to and from playgrounds? Barriers may include travel time, distance to the playground or lack of information about accessible features.

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	Not since Julia's Junction opened in West Kelowna - it's a short 8 minute drive from home.
JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	I don’t go to playgrounds that don’t have baby swings. My 2.5-year-old mostly likes to swing
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	Yes, there are several barriers related to travel, accessibility, and information when it comes to getting to and from playgrounds in St. Albert. Distance & Transportation: While St. Albert is a relatively small city, not all playgrounds are easily accessible. Many families rely on private vehicles, but for those without access to a car, public transit connectivity is crucial. Inclusive playgrounds should be located along major transit routes to ensure equitable access. Pedestrian Barriers: The city has major roads and highways that bisect different areas, making it challenging for some families—especially those with mobility challenges or young children—to safely walk or bike to playgrounds. Improved pathways, pedestrian crossings, and wayfinding signage could help mitigate this issue. Lack of Information on Accessibility: There is limited public information on which playgrounds are accessible or inclusive, making it difficult for families to plan visits. A centralized resource (such as an online map or signage at playgrounds) would help families understand what features are available, such as accessible surfacing, sensory-friendly zones, or adaptive play equipment. Seasonal Barriers: During winter and early spring, snow and muddy conditions create additional barriers, especially for wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. Snow clearing should extend beyond just parking lots and entrances to ensure access throughout the entire playground.

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q7 Have you visited either fully inclusive playgrounds in St. Albert?



Question options

- I have not visited either
- I have visited Fountain Park
- I have visited Lodgepole Playground at Lacombe Lake Park
- I have visited both

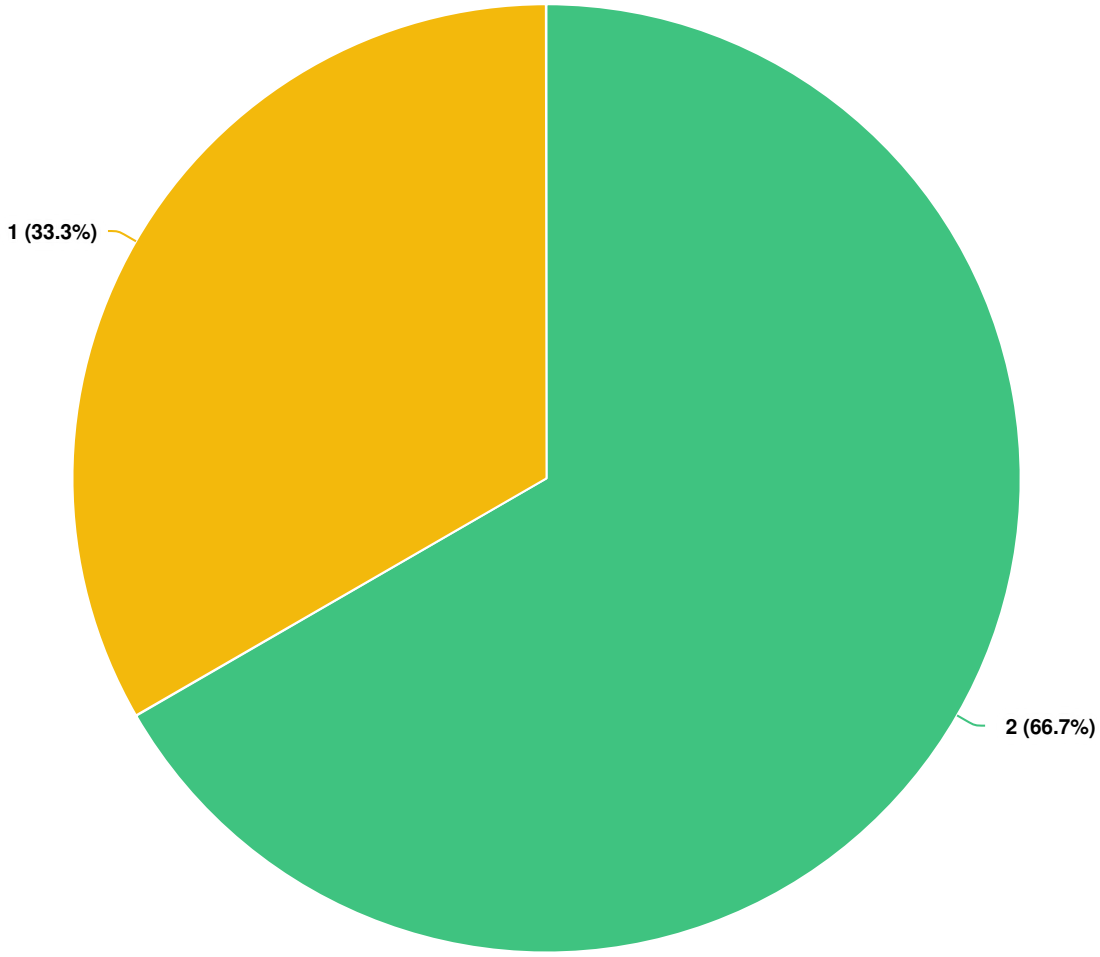
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q8 What would have made your experience at these playgrounds better?

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	N/A
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	I have not visited these playgrounds, unfortunately

Optional question (2 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q9 Do you travel outside of St. Albert to access inclusive and accessible playgrounds?



Question options

Yes No

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q10 What about these destinations makes them more appealing?

grassmickmelissa
2/26/2025 12:49 PM

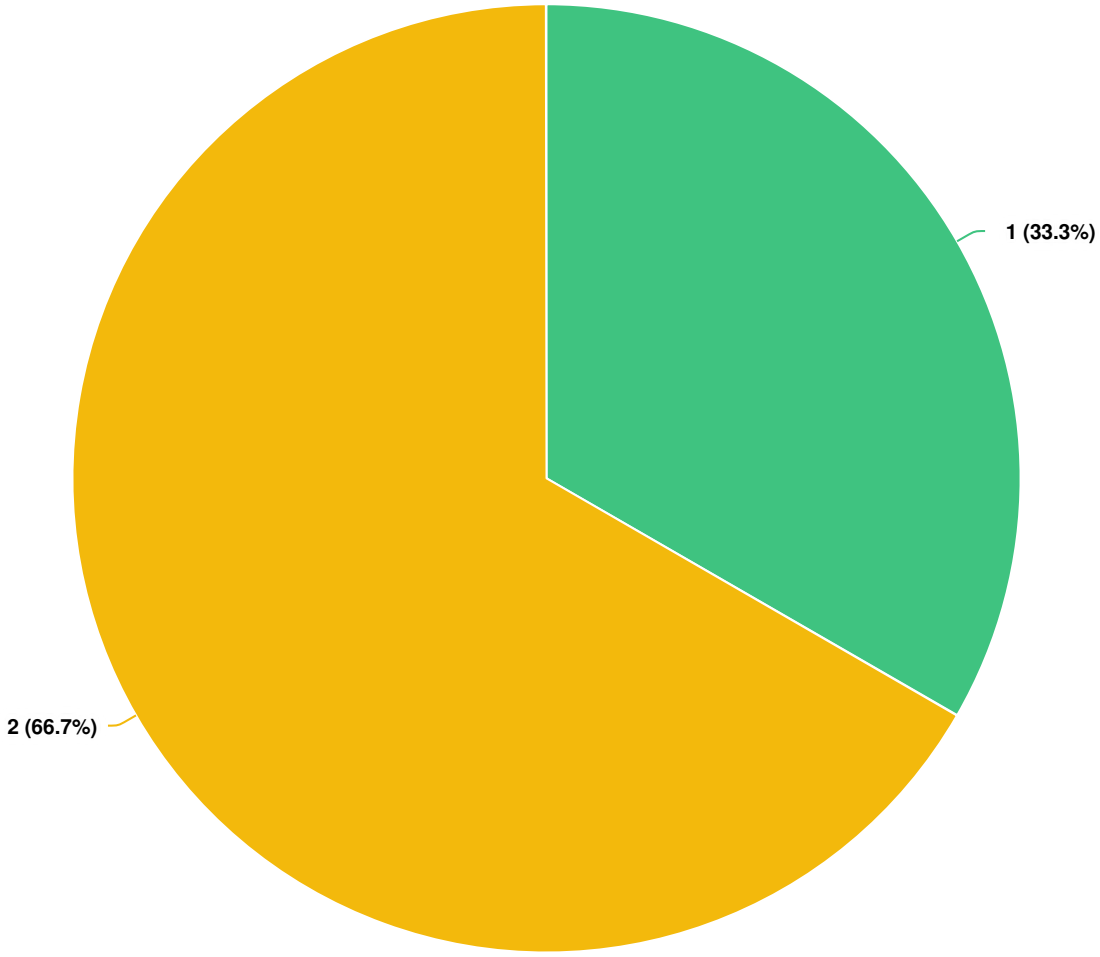
We look for inclusive playgrounds everywhere we travel.

zachary.weeks_7877
2/27/2025 12:55 PM

Higher Level of Accessibility: Playgrounds like Clareview provide fully accessible surfacing, ensuring that children and caregivers using mobility aids can navigate the entire space without barriers. Many playgrounds outside St. Albert have ramps, adaptive swings, and ground-level interactive elements, which are not consistently available within St. Albert. Diversity of Play Elements: More inclusive playgrounds offer a variety of play types (sensory, physical, social, and cognitive) to accommodate children of different abilities. Features like interactive panels, quiet zones, and fencing help support children who may have sensory sensitivities or who are runners. Supportive Amenities: Having accessible washrooms is a huge factor in deciding where to go. Many inclusive playgrounds outside St. Albert have family washrooms with adult change tables, which allow for longer, more comfortable visits. Adequate seating with armrests and back support is also important for caregivers, seniors, and individuals with mobility challenges. More Comprehensive Planning & Design: Some playgrounds outside St. Albert are designed with seamless integration of accessibility features, rather than adding them as an afterthought. They offer better navigation within the space, allowing children and caregivers to move through different play zones without feeling restricted to one section. How St. Albert Can Improve: To reduce the need to travel outside the city, St. Albert could prioritize developing more fully inclusive playgrounds in different quadrants. By incorporating accessible surfacing, sensory-friendly areas, better washrooms, and improved transit access, families would have more local options that meet their needs.

Optional question (2 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q11 Do you access other playgrounds in St. Albert that are not full accessible?

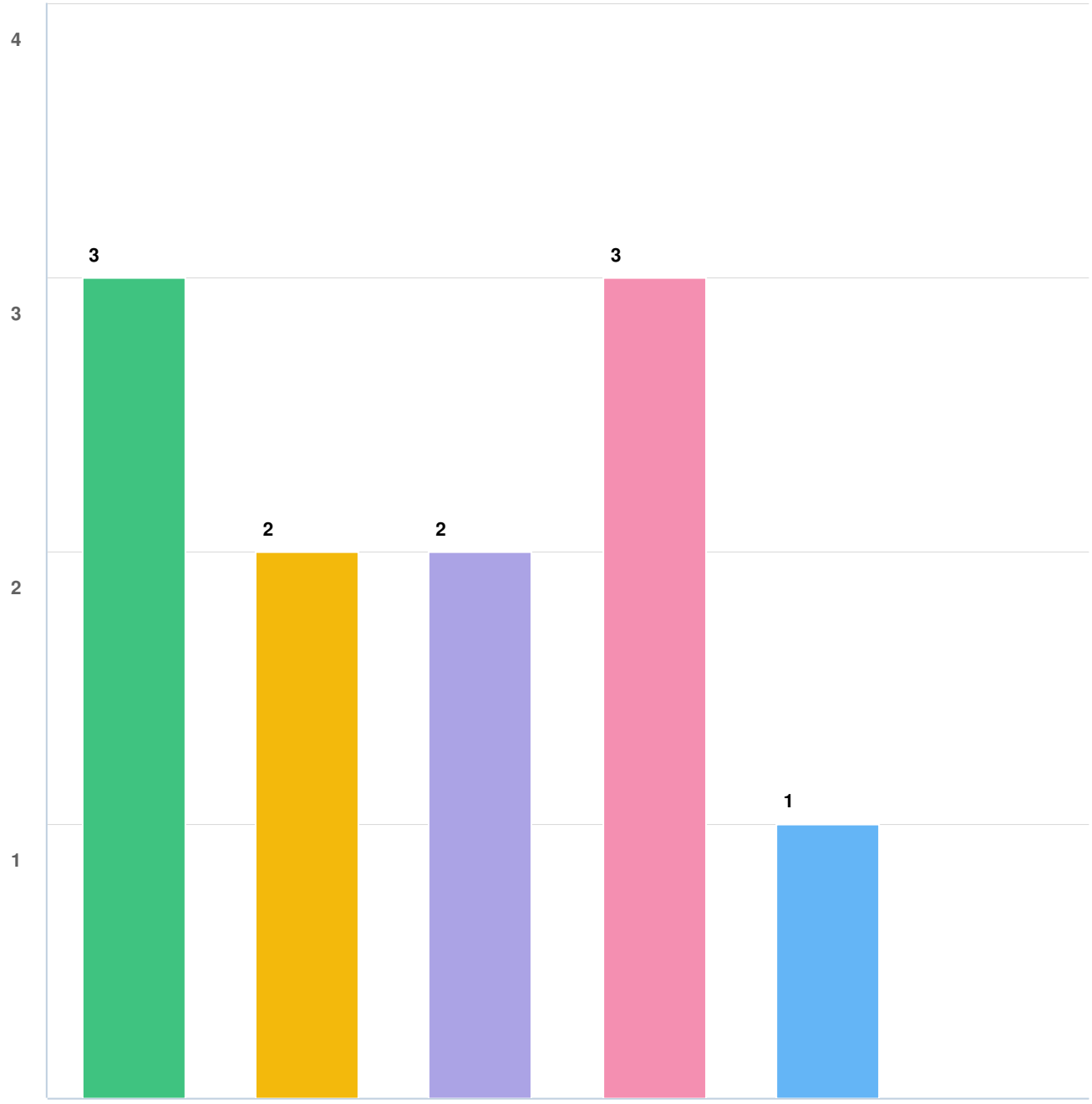


Question options

Yes No

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q12 What are you biggest barriers to finding inclusive play opportunities?



Question options

- Physical Barriers (eg. play surfacing, accessible pathways, inaccessible play equipment, etc))
- Sensory (eg. lack of quite spaces, over stimulation, lack of a quite space, etc.)
- Social (eg. lack of co-play opportunities, concern around exclusion, etc.)
- Supportive Environment (eg. lack of washrooms, inadequate signage, unable to find information, etc.)
- Other (please specify)
- None

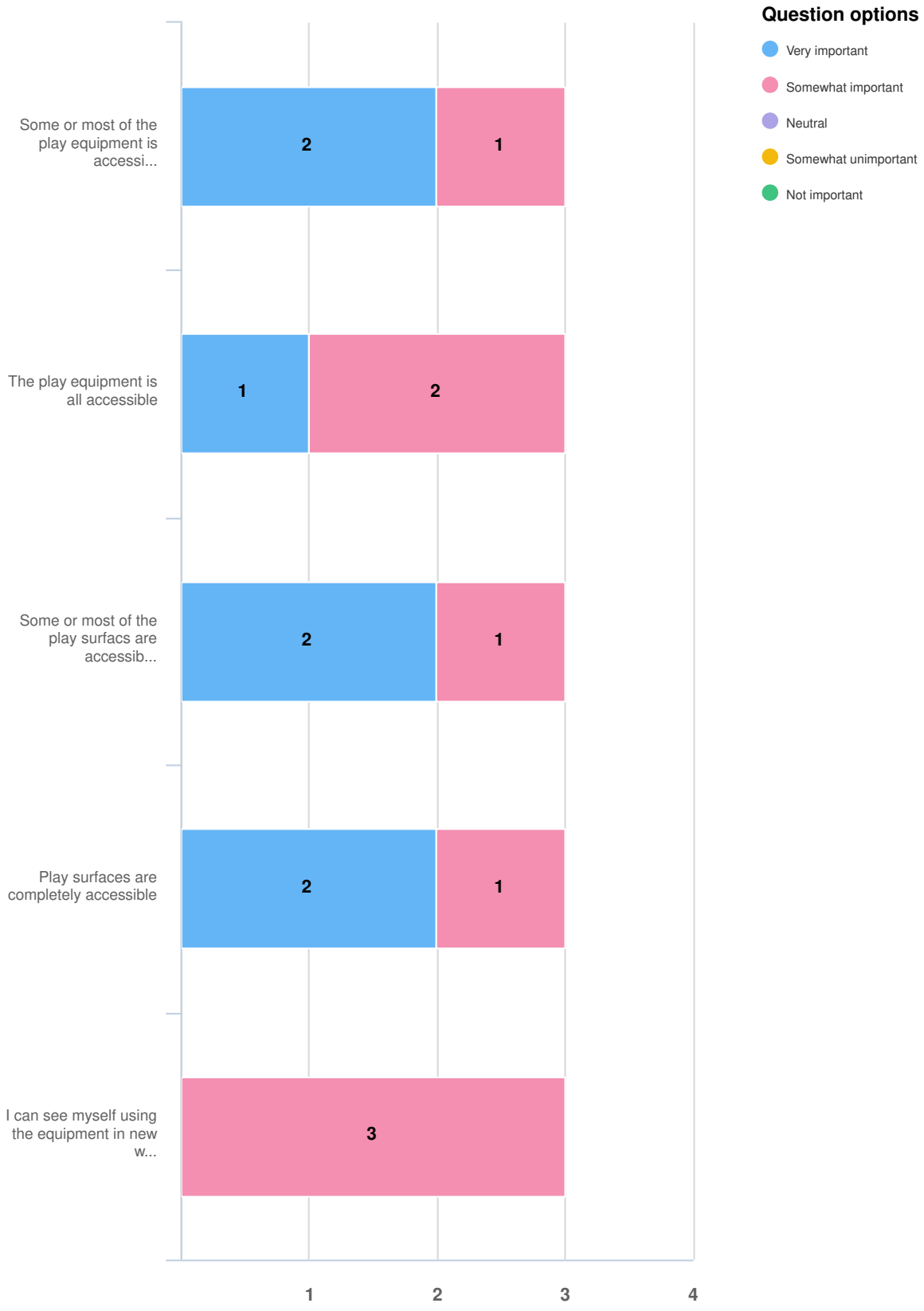
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q13 What factors influence your decision to visit these playgrounds? (eg. close to home, can access most equipment if not all, friends play there, etc.)

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	surfacing, washrooms. parking, social play inspiring equipment.
JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	Distance from home, variety of equipment that is safe for toddlers and school age kids
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	Several factors influence the decision to visit a playground, including: Accessibility: The ability to navigate the entire playground, not just a small section, is critical. Rubber surfacing, ramps, and pathways make a big difference in choosing a location. Diversity of Play Equipment: A mix of play types (physical, sensory, social, and cognitive) ensures that all children can engage meaningfully. Playgrounds that offer both simple and more challenging activities accommodate a wider range of abilities. Availability of Amenities: Accessible washrooms with adult changing tables, proper seating with backrests and armrests, and sheltered areas can determine how long a visit lasts. Safety & Fencing: Playgrounds with fencing and designated quiet areas help provide a safe environment, especially for children who are runners or have sensory sensitivities. Proximity & Transit Access: While families with cars can drive 15-25 minutes for a high-quality inclusive experience, ensuring locations along transit routes makes them accessible to more people. Community & Social Inclusion: Spaces that encourage co-play—where children of all abilities can play together—are more appealing than those that isolate accessible play features into separate areas.

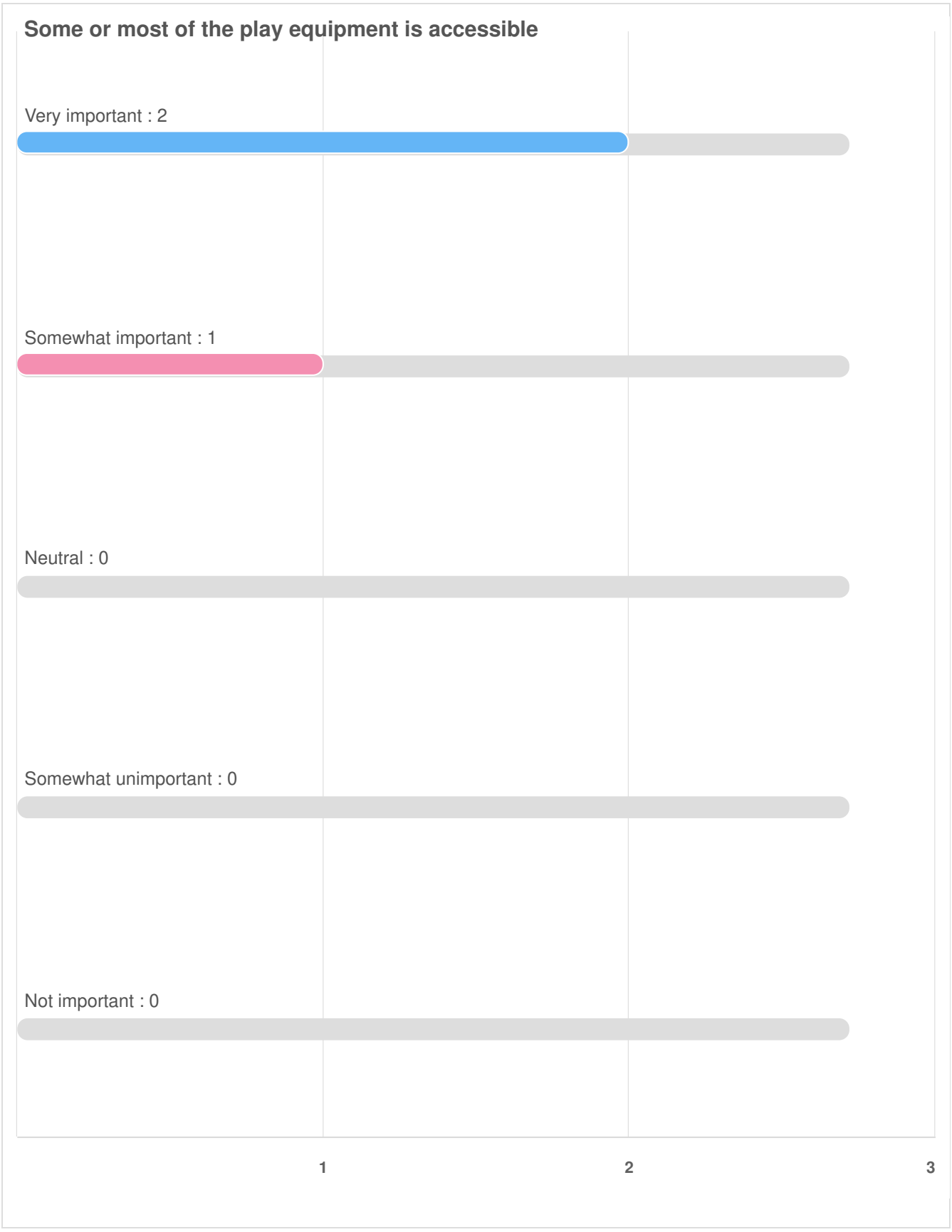
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q14 Play Equipment Accessibility

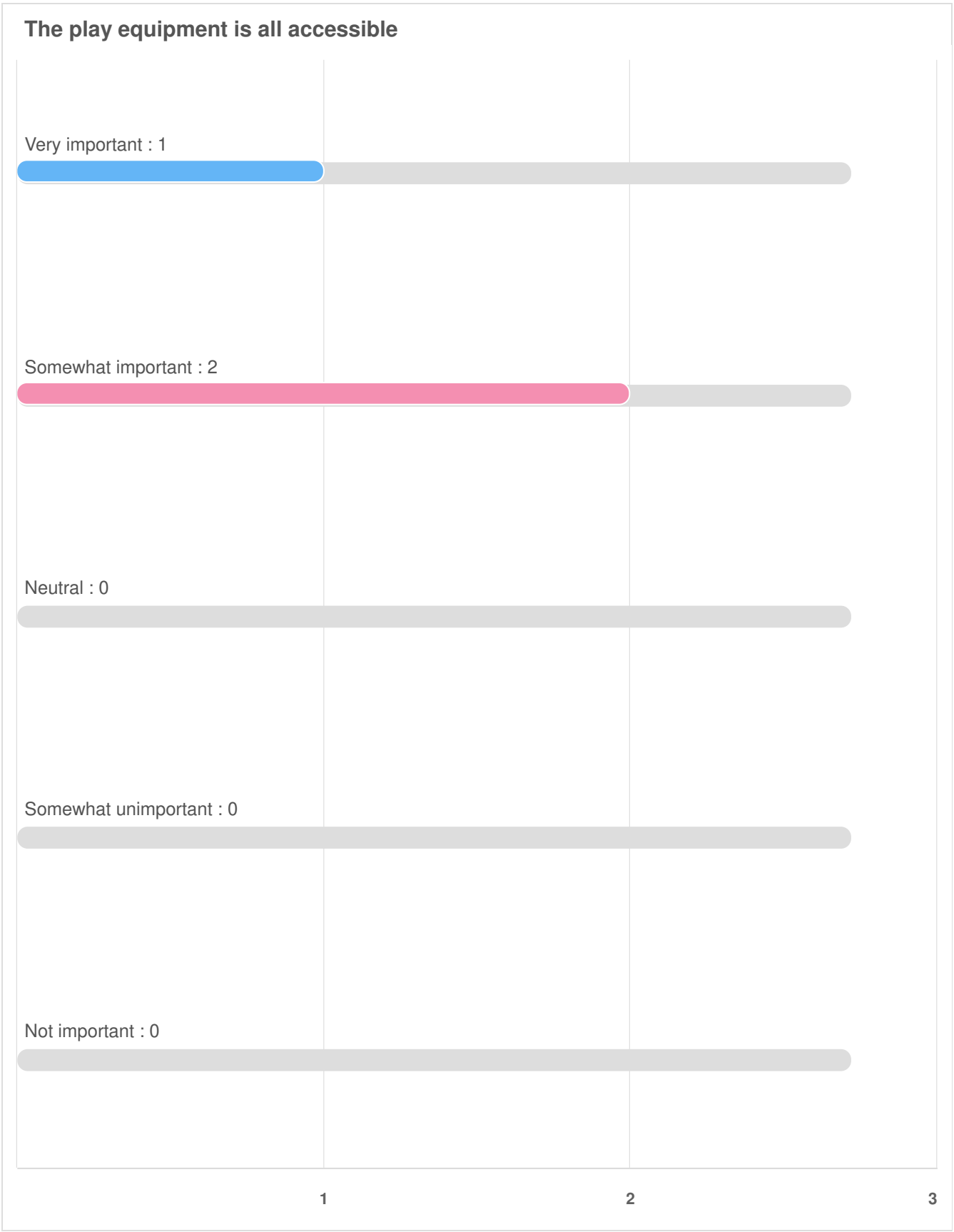


Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

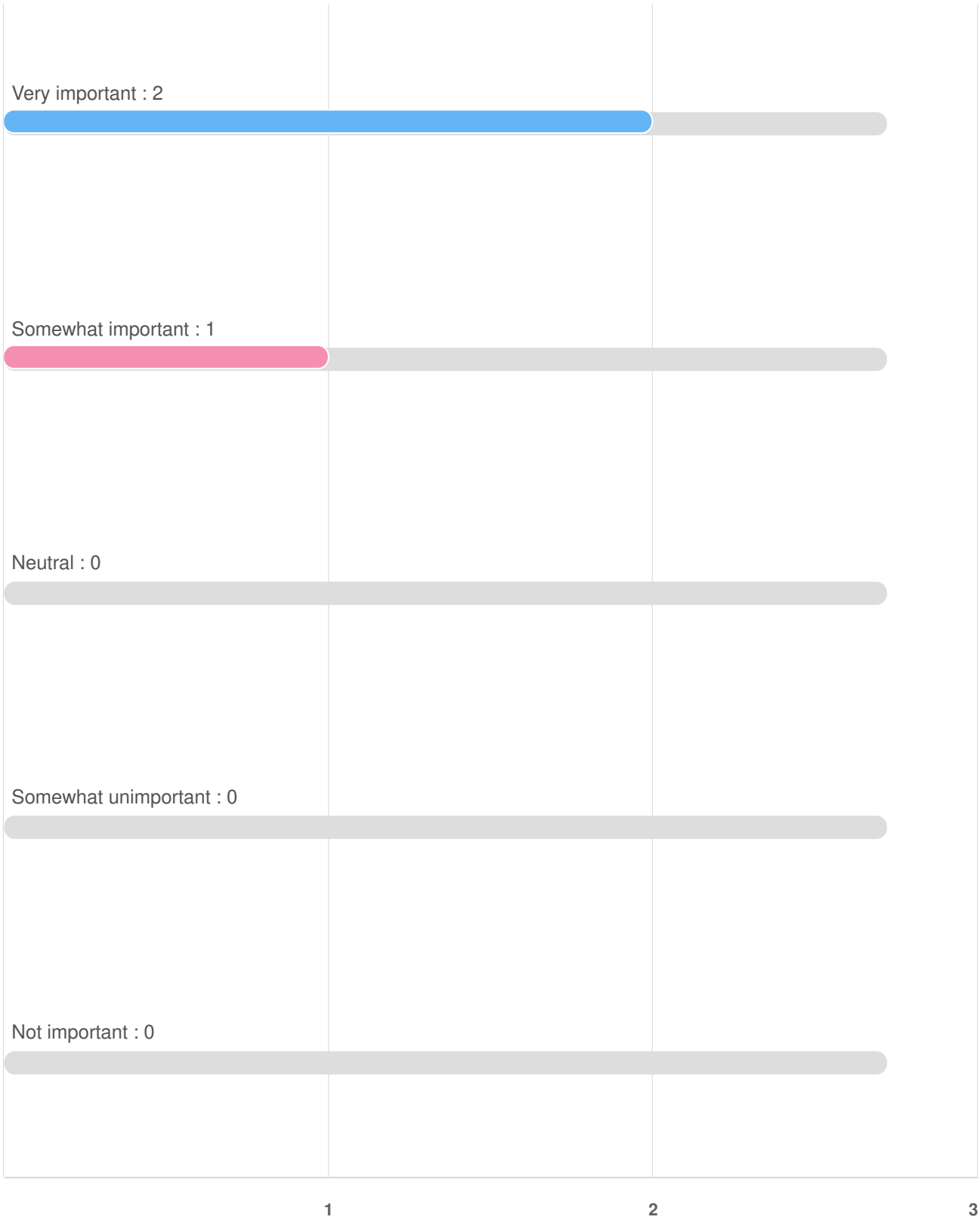
Q14 Play Equipment Accessibility



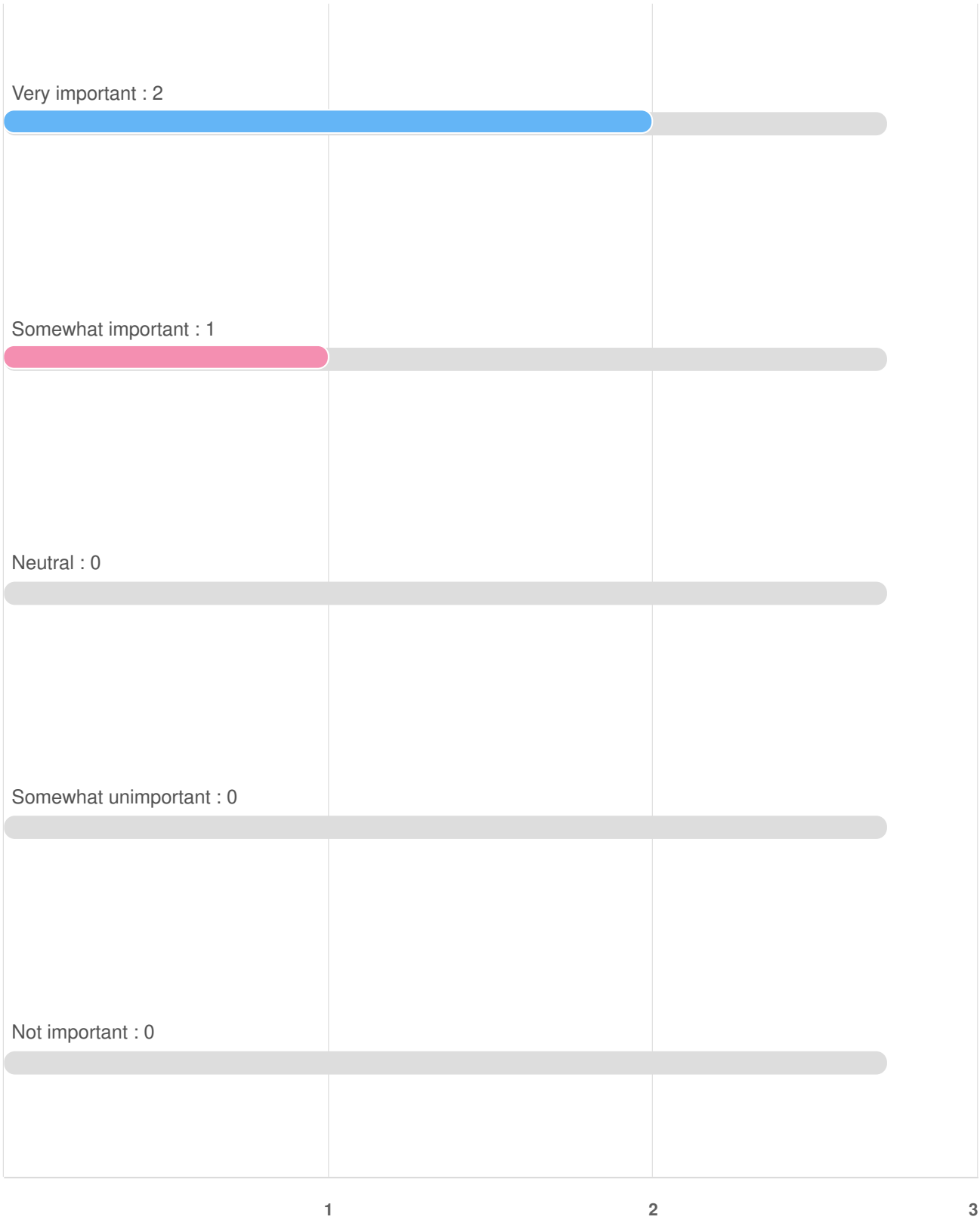
The play equipment is all accessible



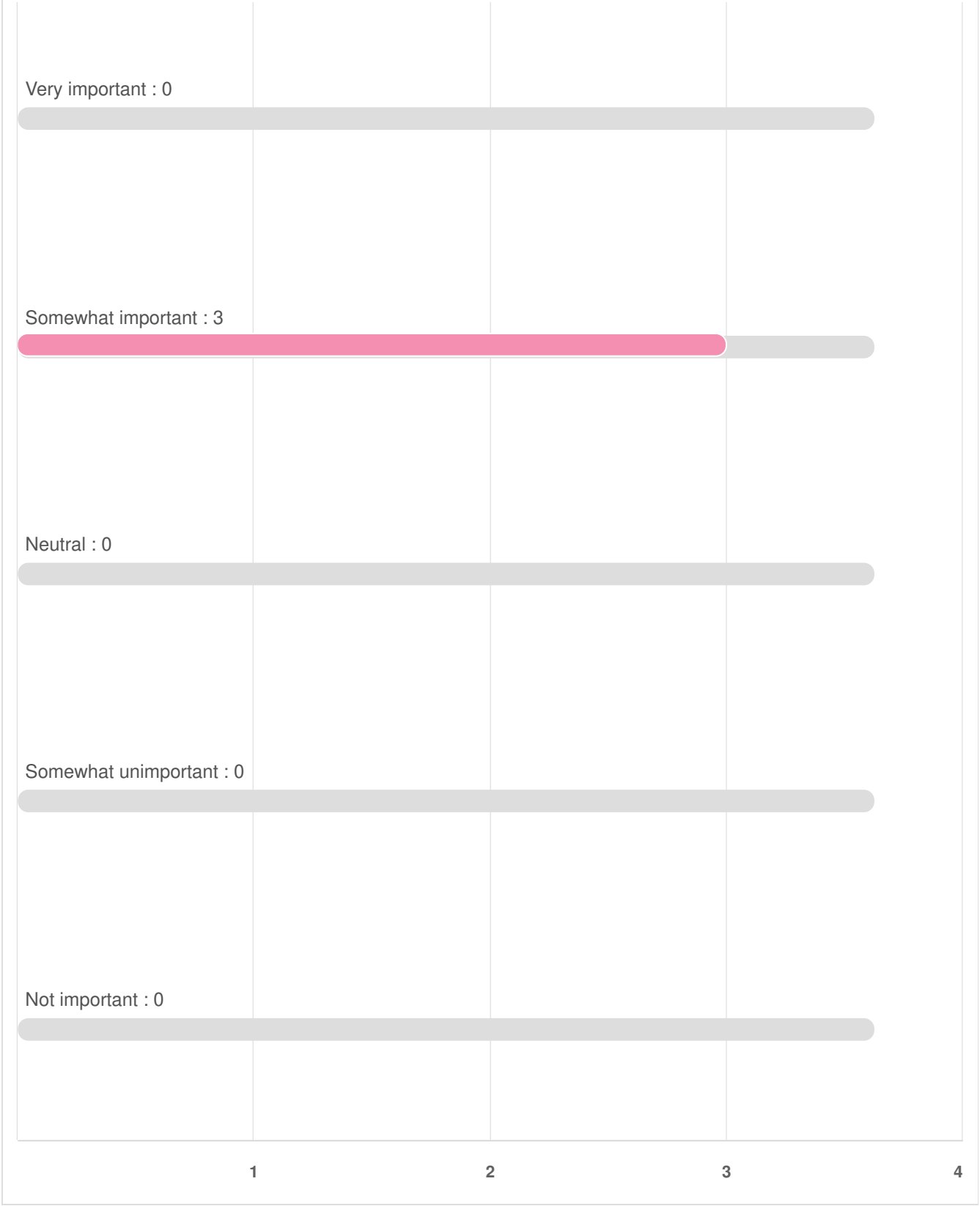
Some or most of the play surfacs are accessible



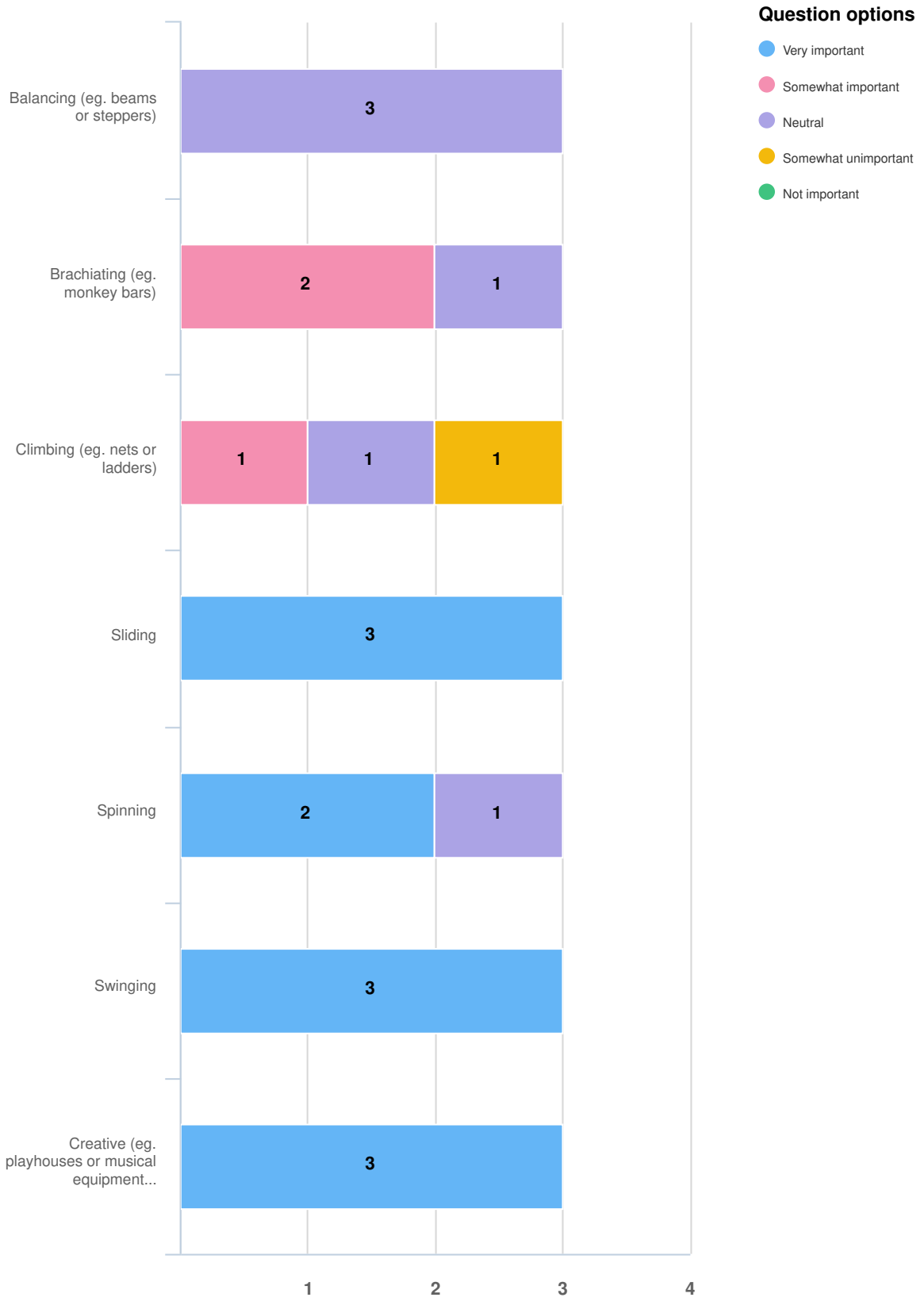
Play surfaces are completely accessible



I can see myself using the equipment in new ways as I grow in size, skill or confidence



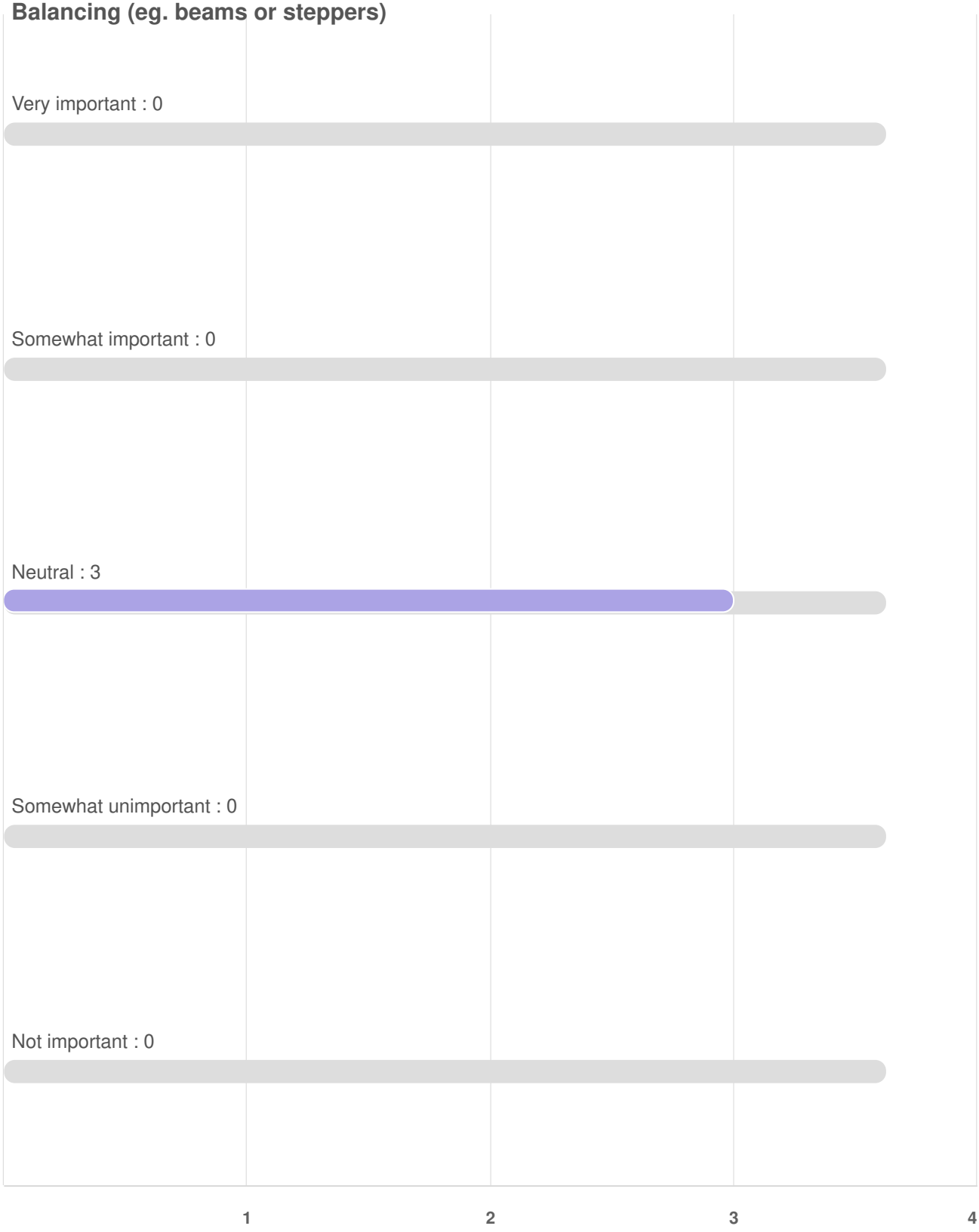
Q15 Play Elements



Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

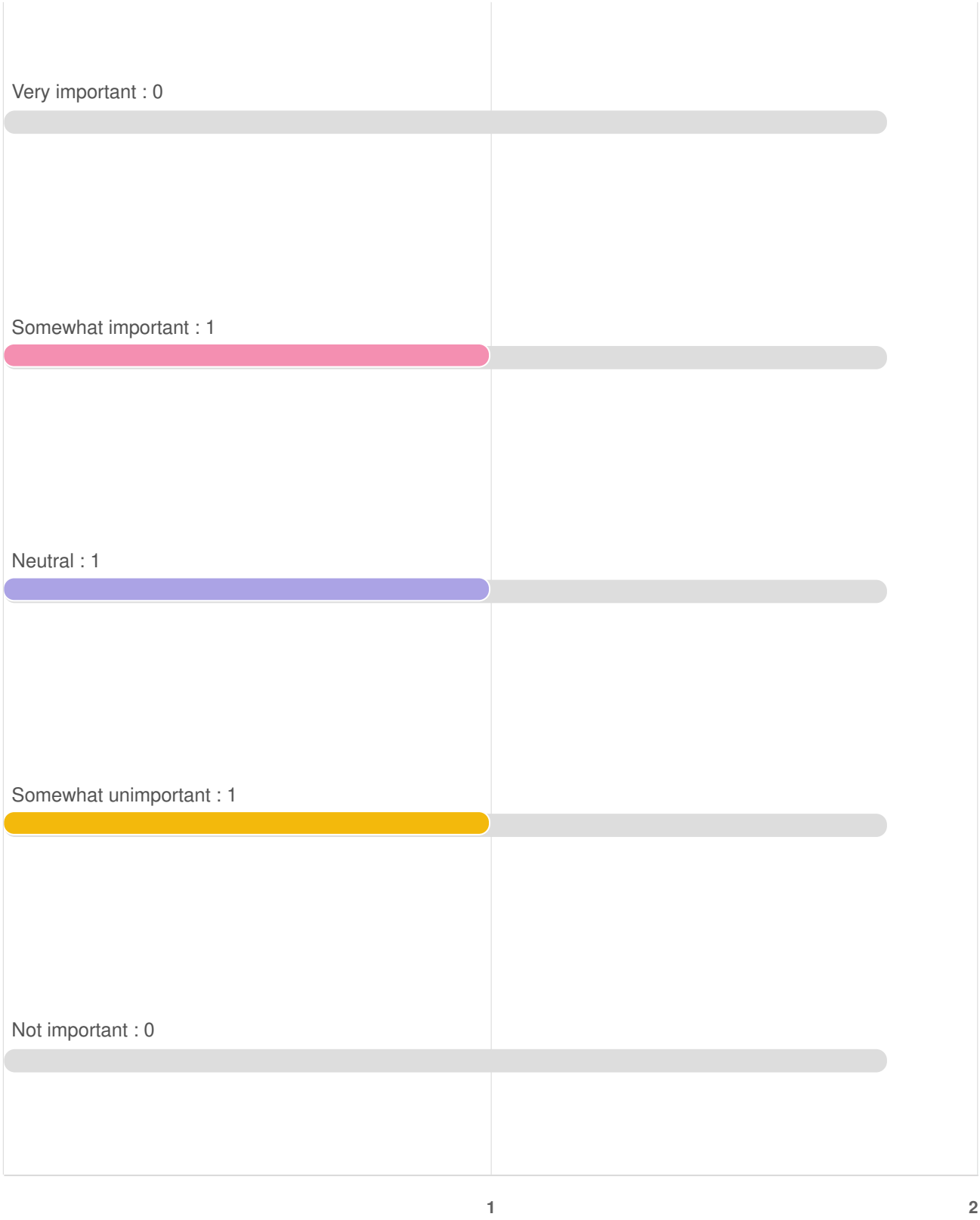
Q15 Play Elements

Balancing (eg. beams or steppers)

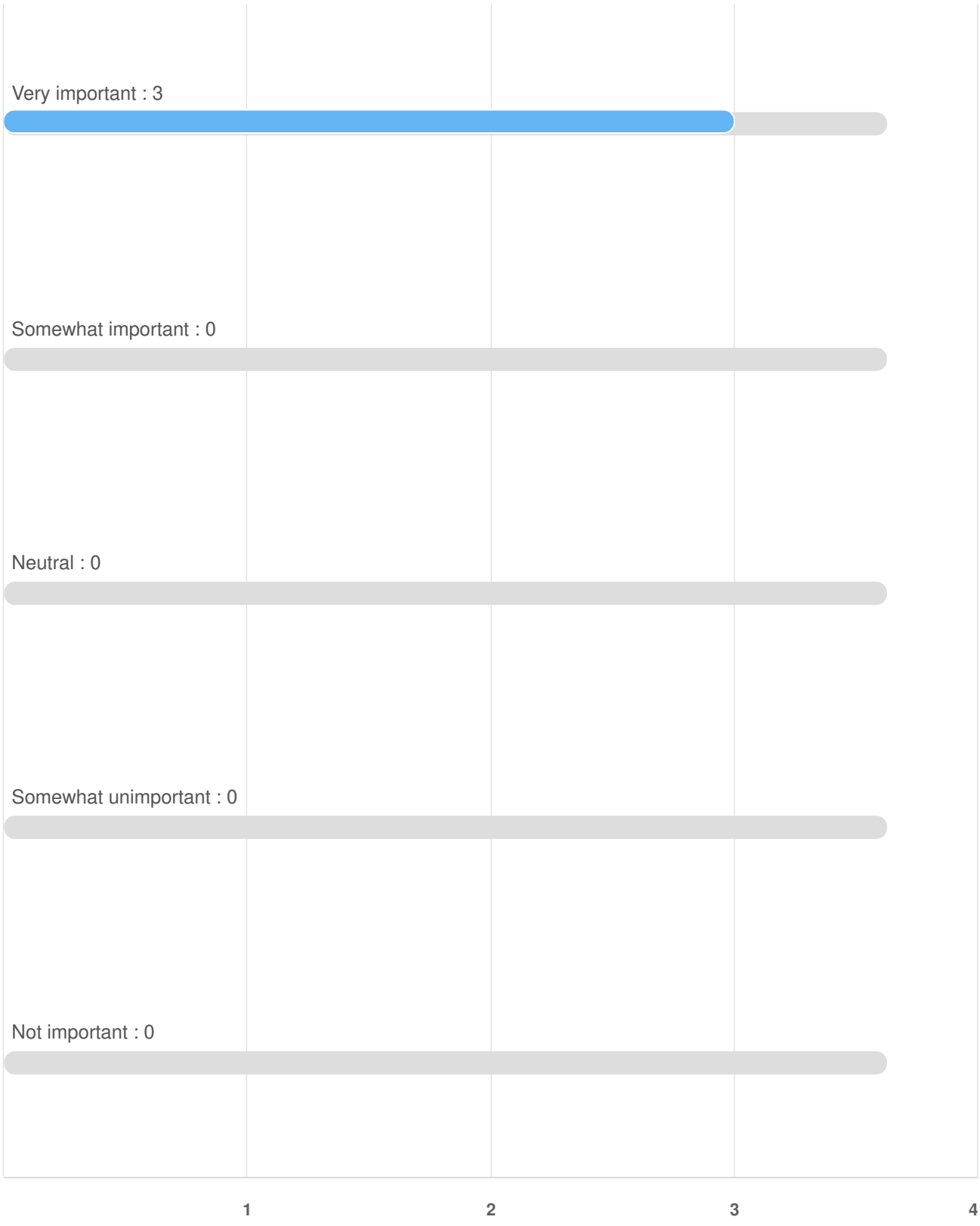


Brachiating (eg. monkey bars)

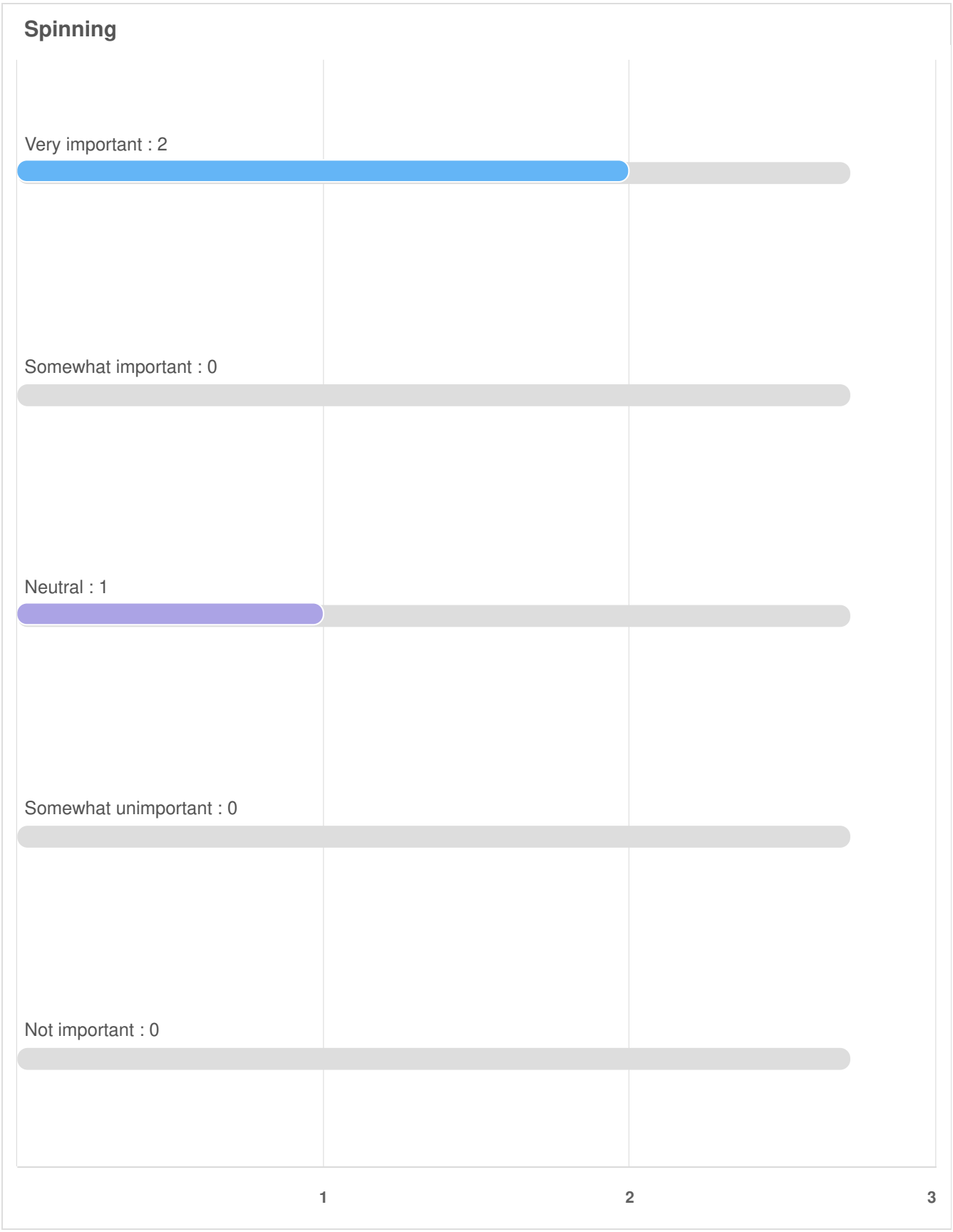
Climbing (eg. nets or ladders)



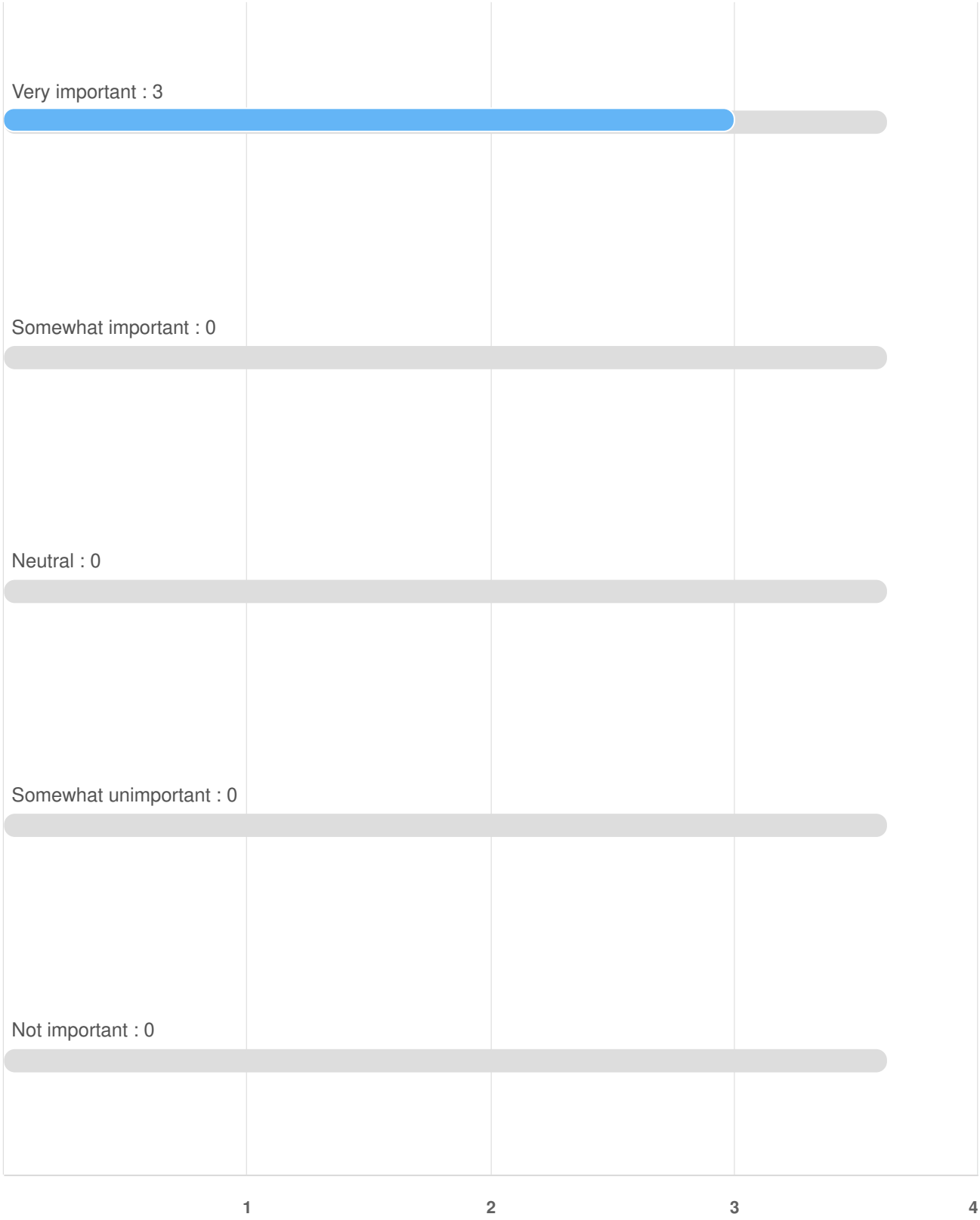
Sliding


Very important : 3
Somewhat important : 0
Neutral : 0
Somewhat unimportant : 0
Not important : 0
1
2
3
4

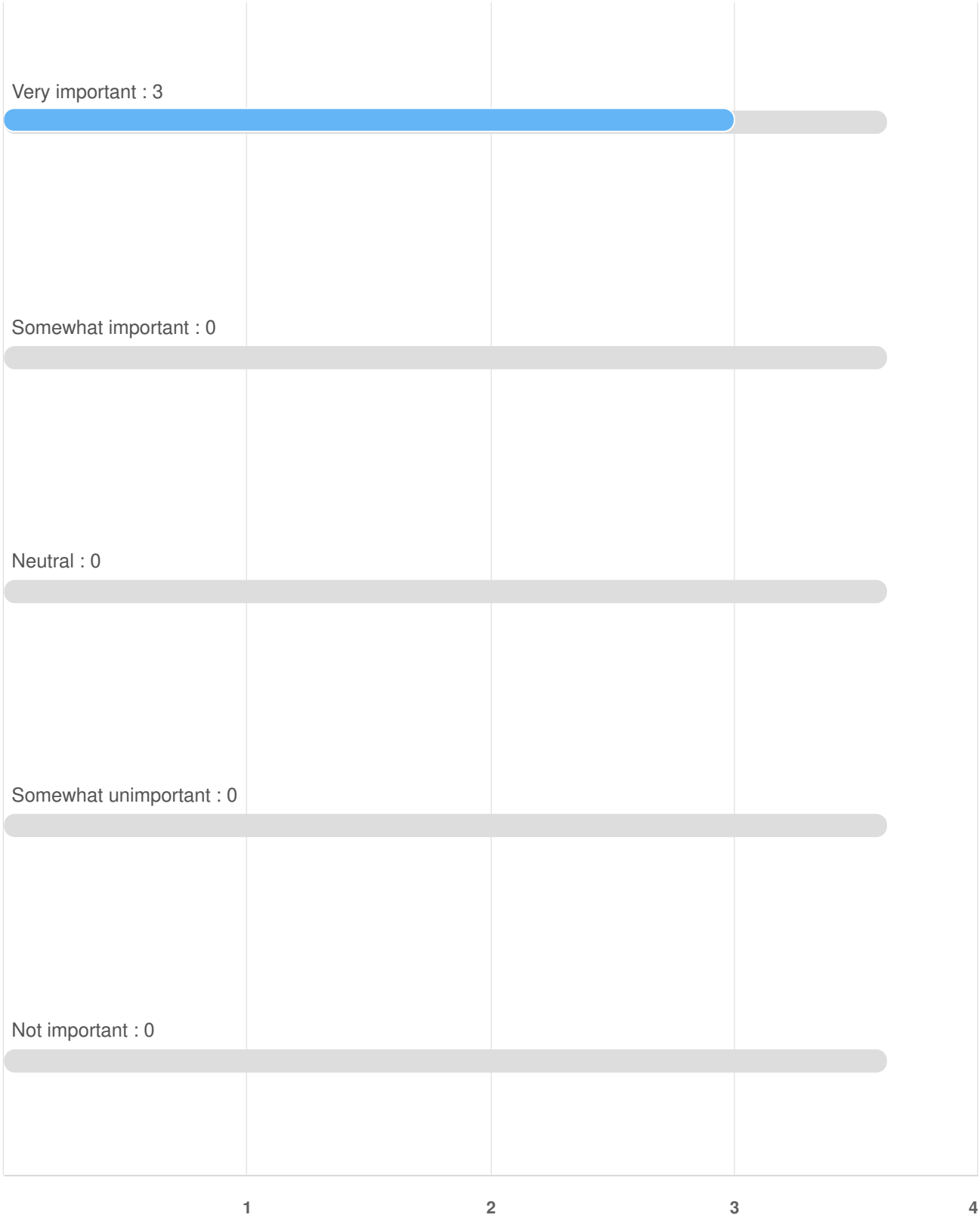
Spinning


Very important : 2
Somewhat important : 0
Neutral : 1
Somewhat unimportant : 0
Not important : 0
1
2
3

Swinging


Very important : 3
Somewhat important : 0
Neutral : 0
Somewhat unimportant : 0
Not important : 0
1
2
3
4

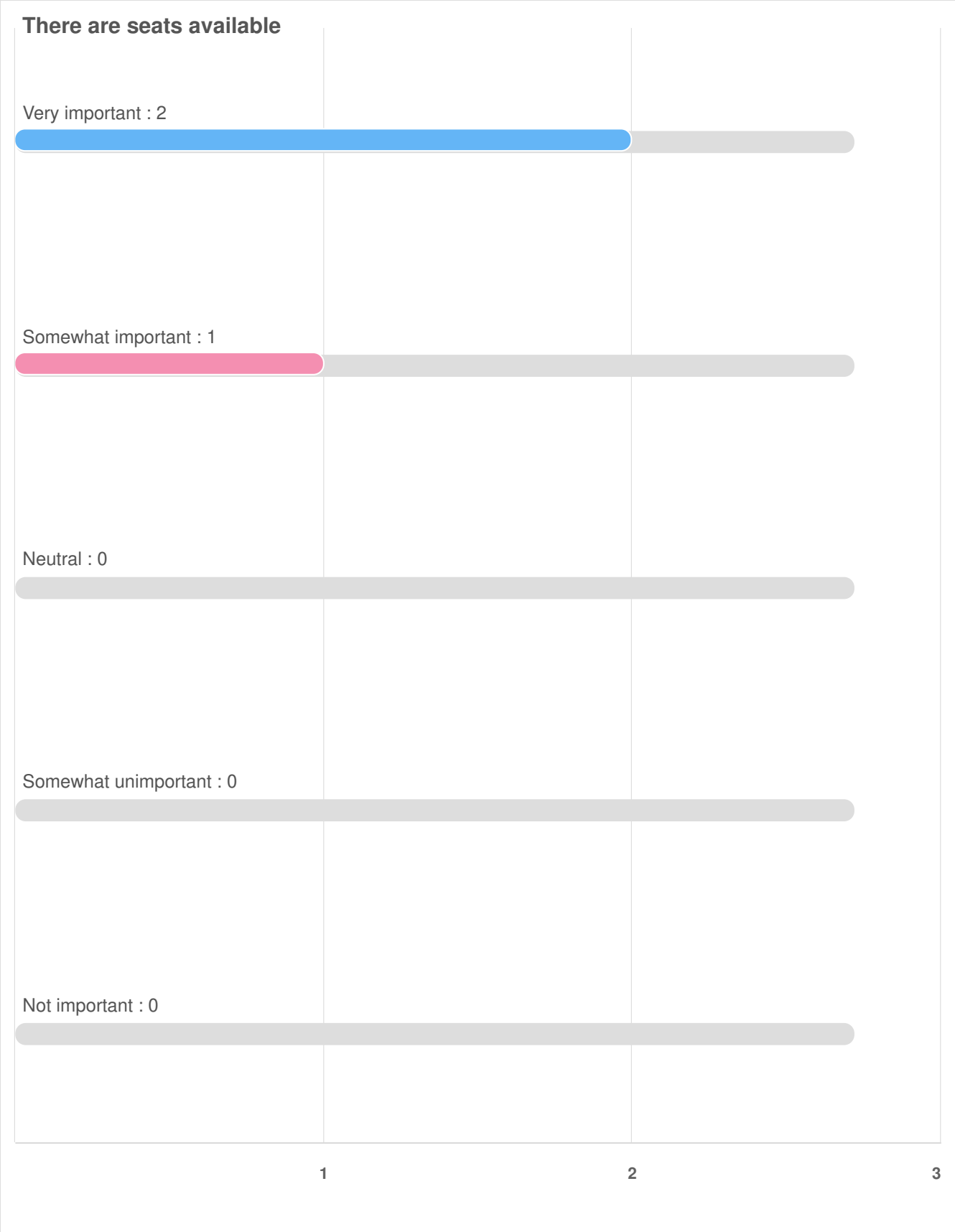
Creative (eg. playhouses or musical equipment)



Q16 Amenity and Site Surroundings

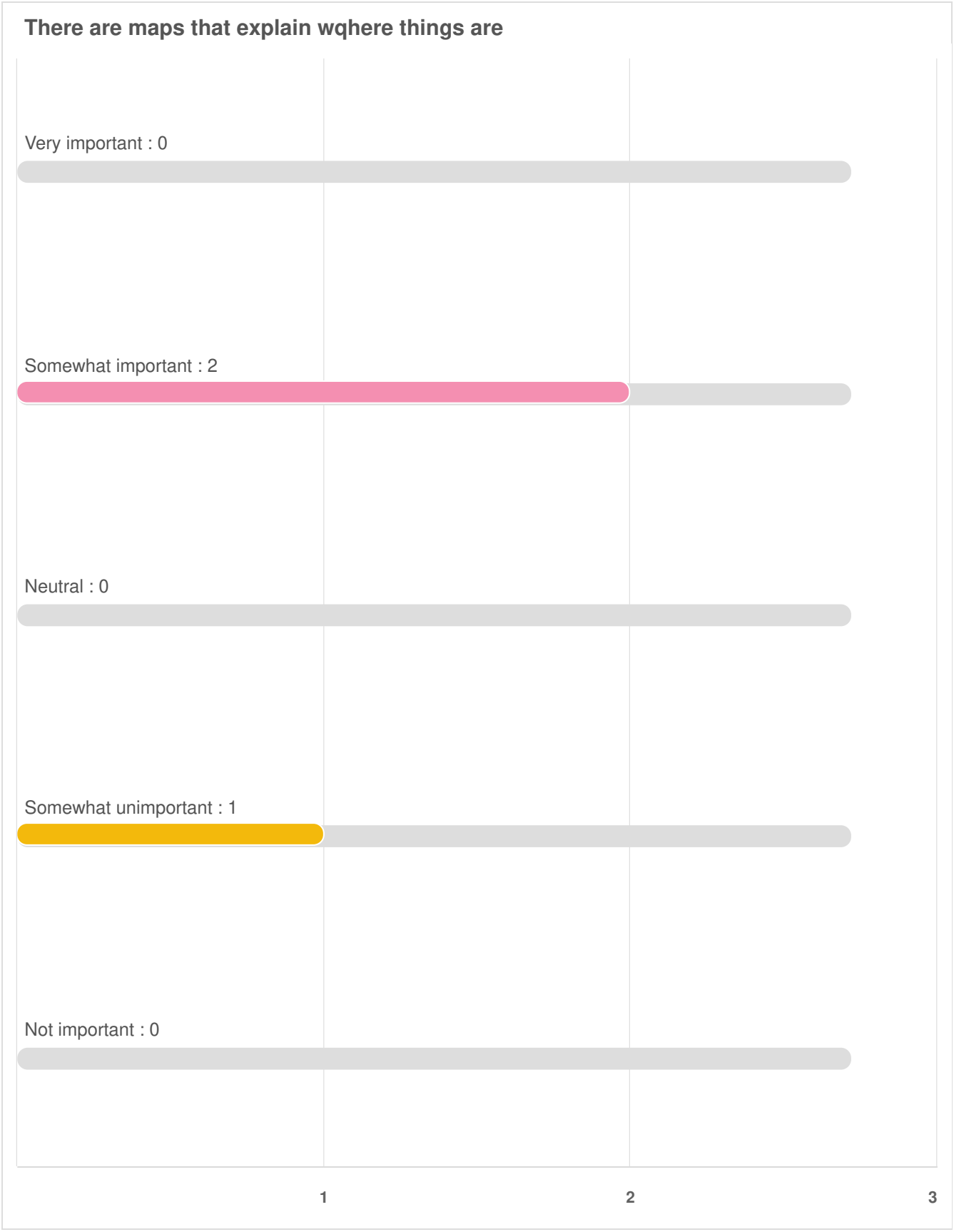
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

Q16 Amenity and Site Surroundings

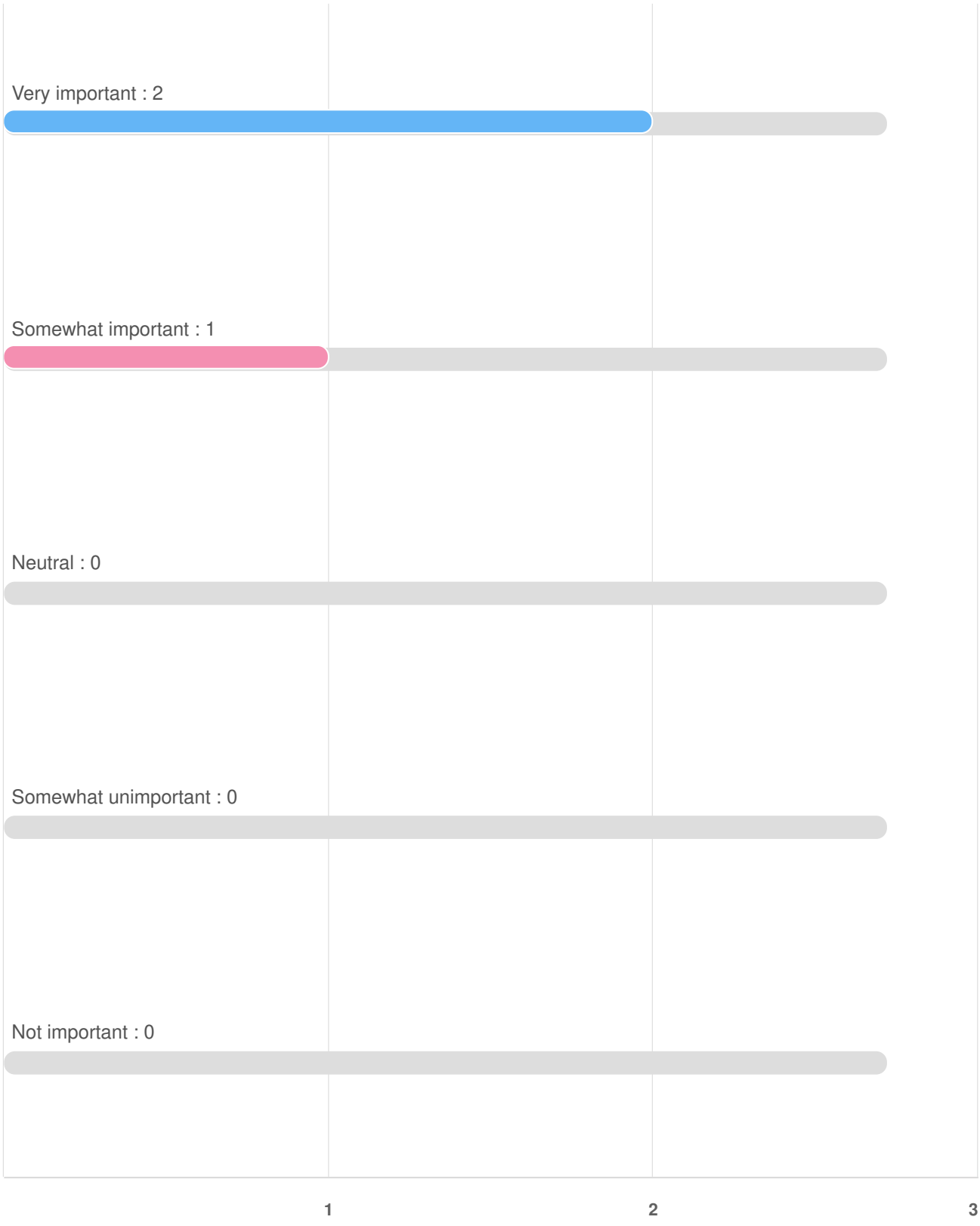


The is shade from the sun

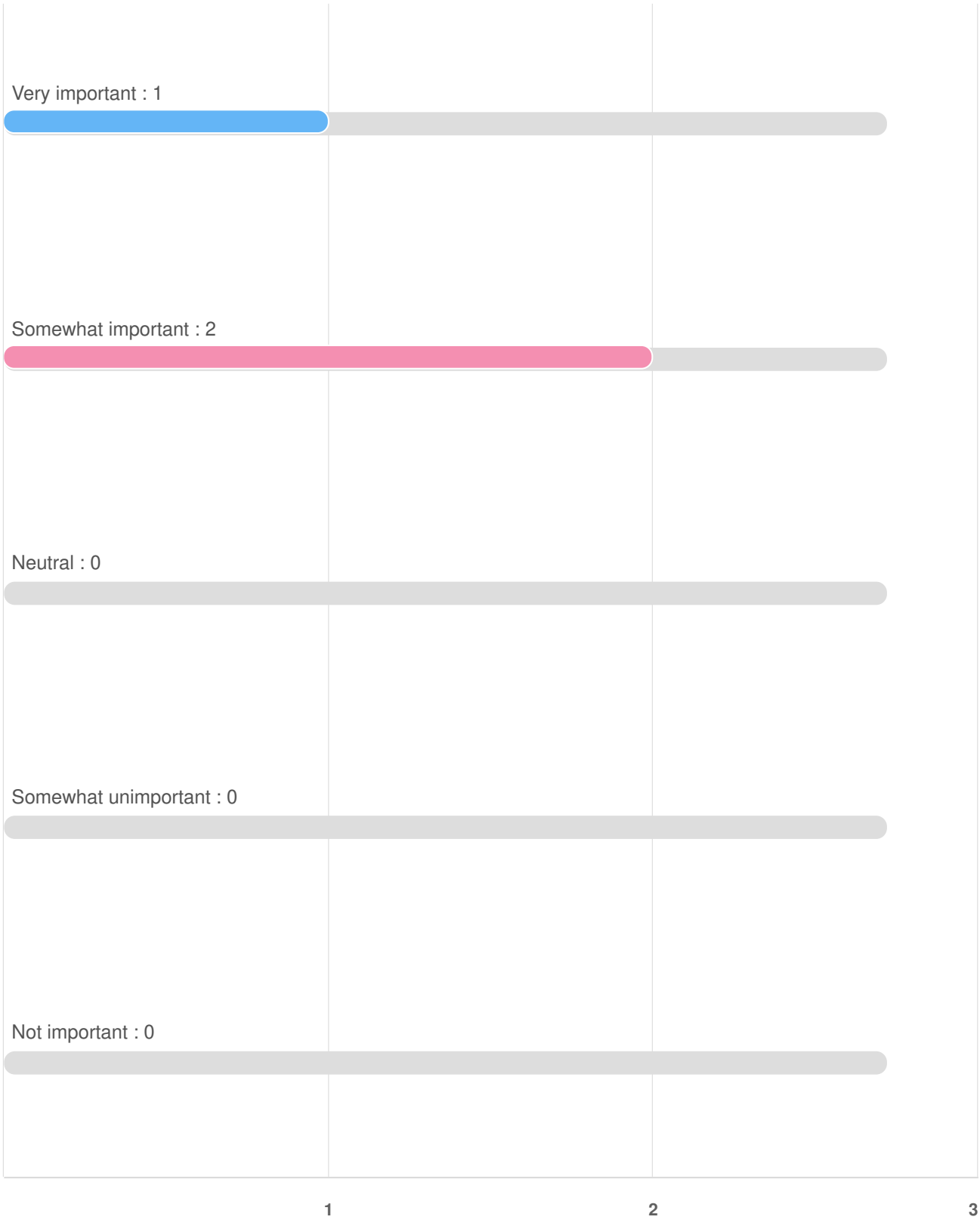
There are maps that explain wqhere things are



There are washroom facilities nearby

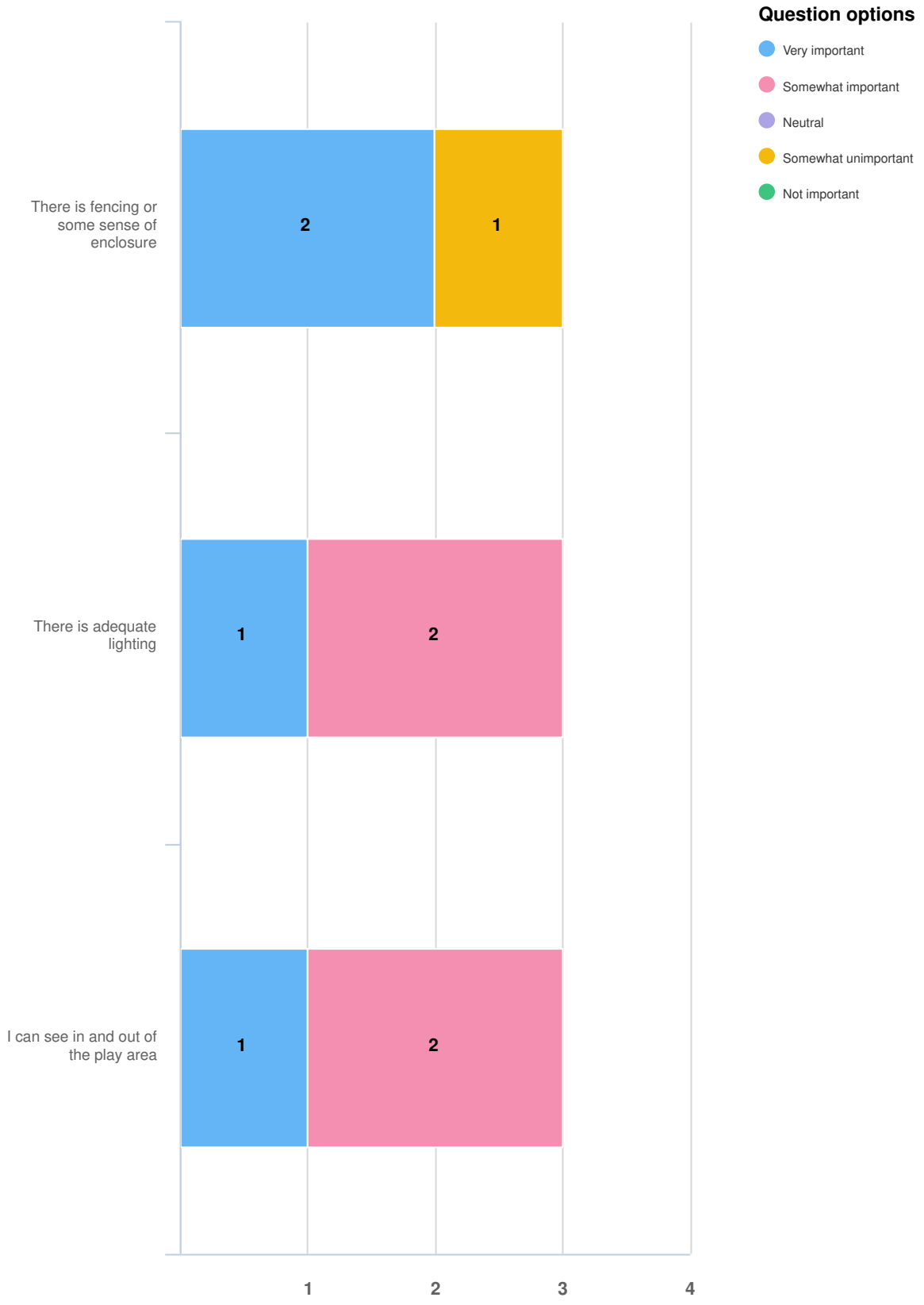


There are quiet or low-stimulation spaces available



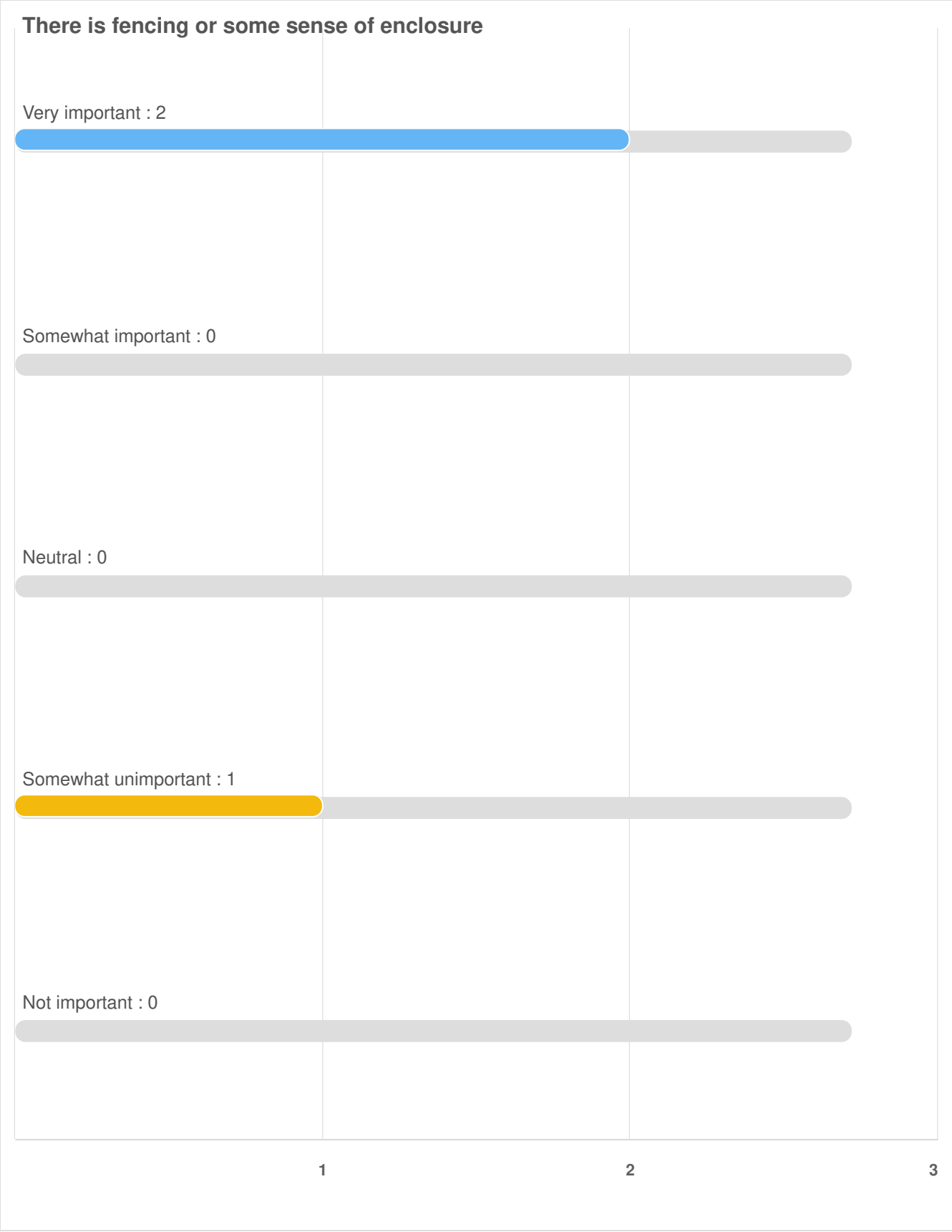
There is access to nature

Q17 Safety

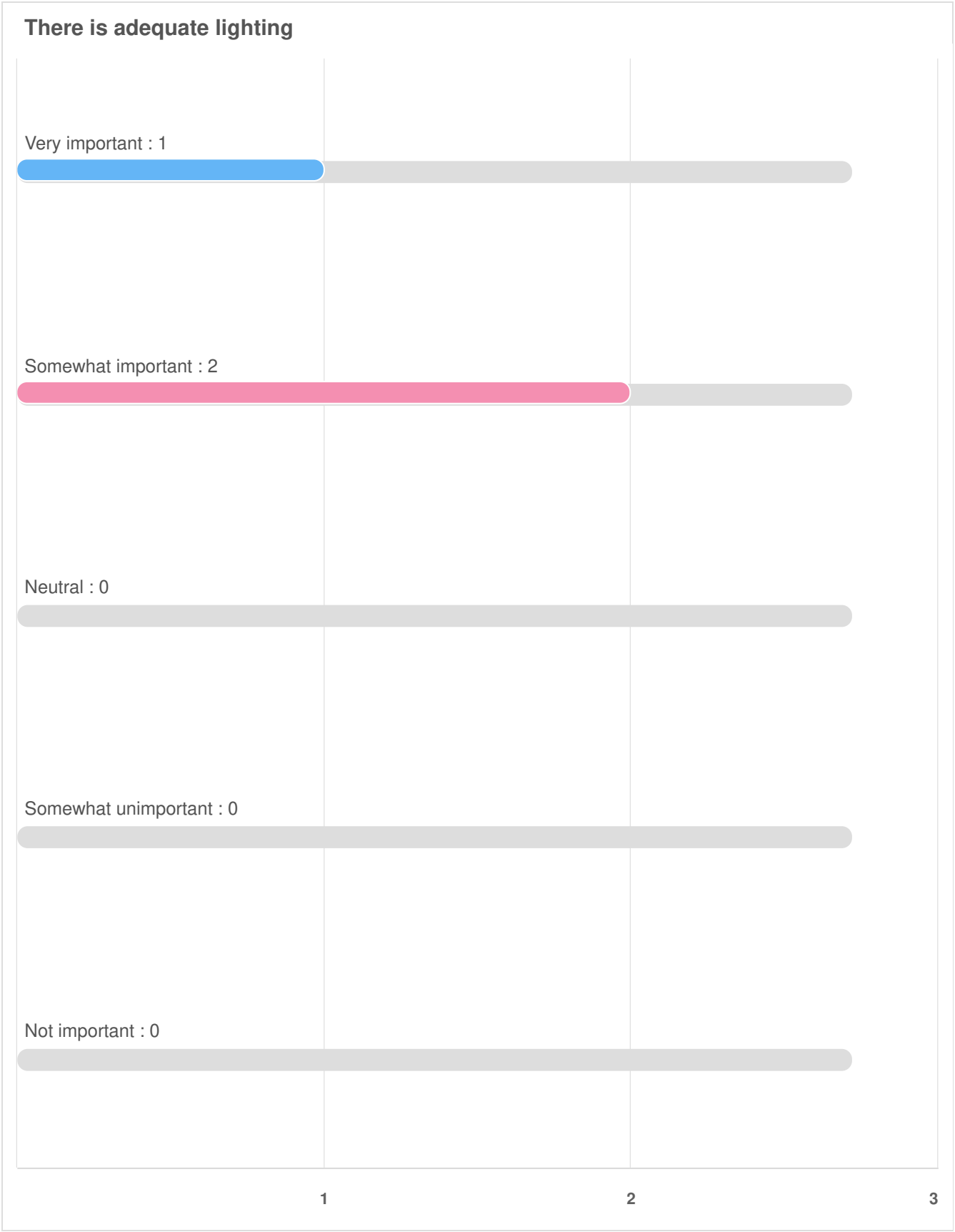


Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

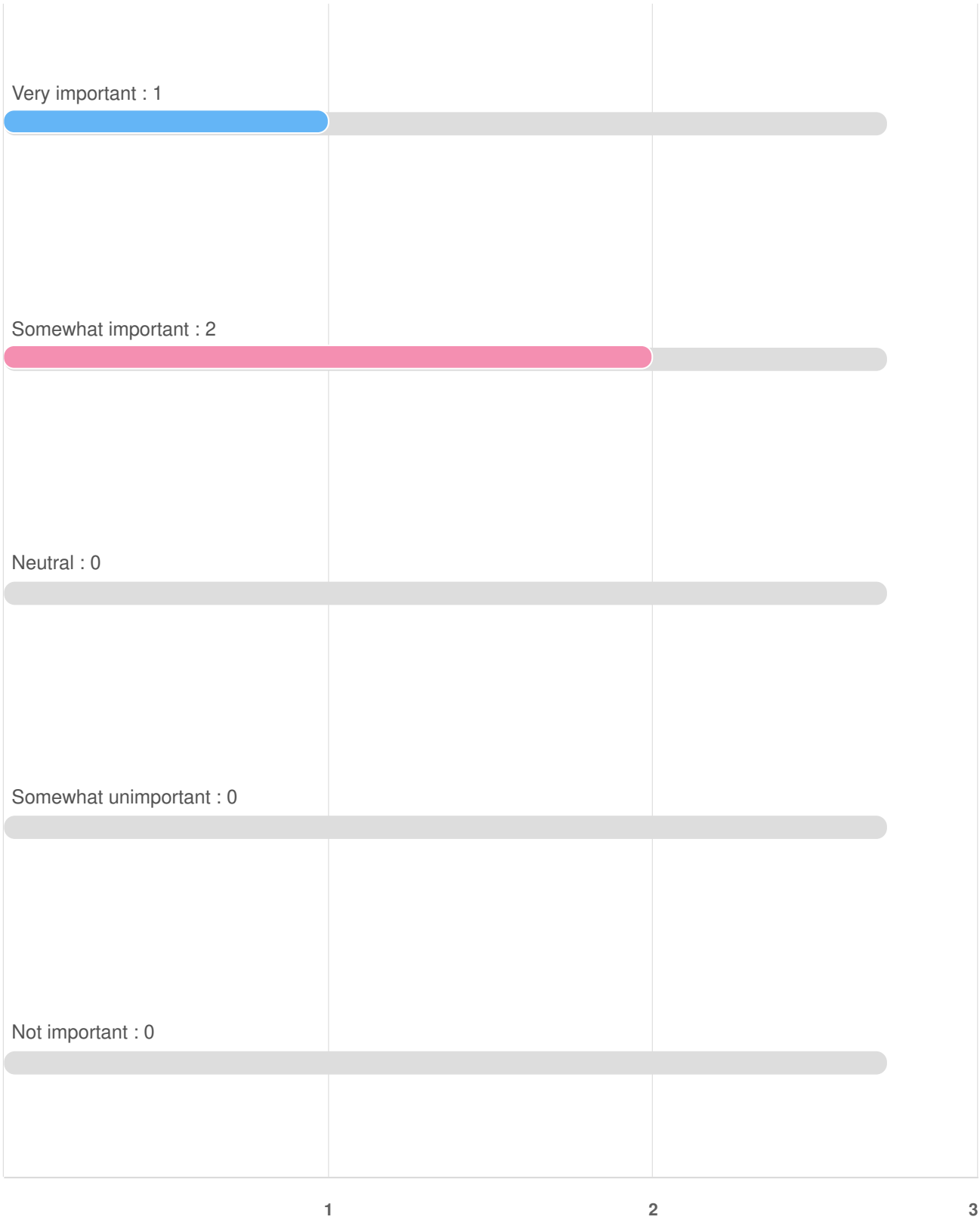
Q17 Safety


There is fencing or some sense of enclosure
Very important : 2
Somewhat important : 0
Neutral : 0
Somewhat unimportant : 1
Not important : 0
1
2
3

There is adequate lighting



I can see in and out of the play area



Q18 Universal Design Elements:Please rank these concepts from most important to least important as they apply to how you access playgrounds.

OPTIONS	AVG. RANK
Equitable Use - The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.	1.67
Size and Space for Approach and Use - Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.	1.67
Flexibility in Use - The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.	3.33
Simple and Intuitive Use - Use of design is early to understand regardless of user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.	4.67
Low Physical Effort - The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.	4.67
Tolerance for Error - The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.	5.33
Perceptible Information -The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.	6.67

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Ranking Question

Q19 Which playground did you visit?

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	Julia's Junction in West Kelowna
JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	Lachance
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	Kensington Playground (from your childhood).

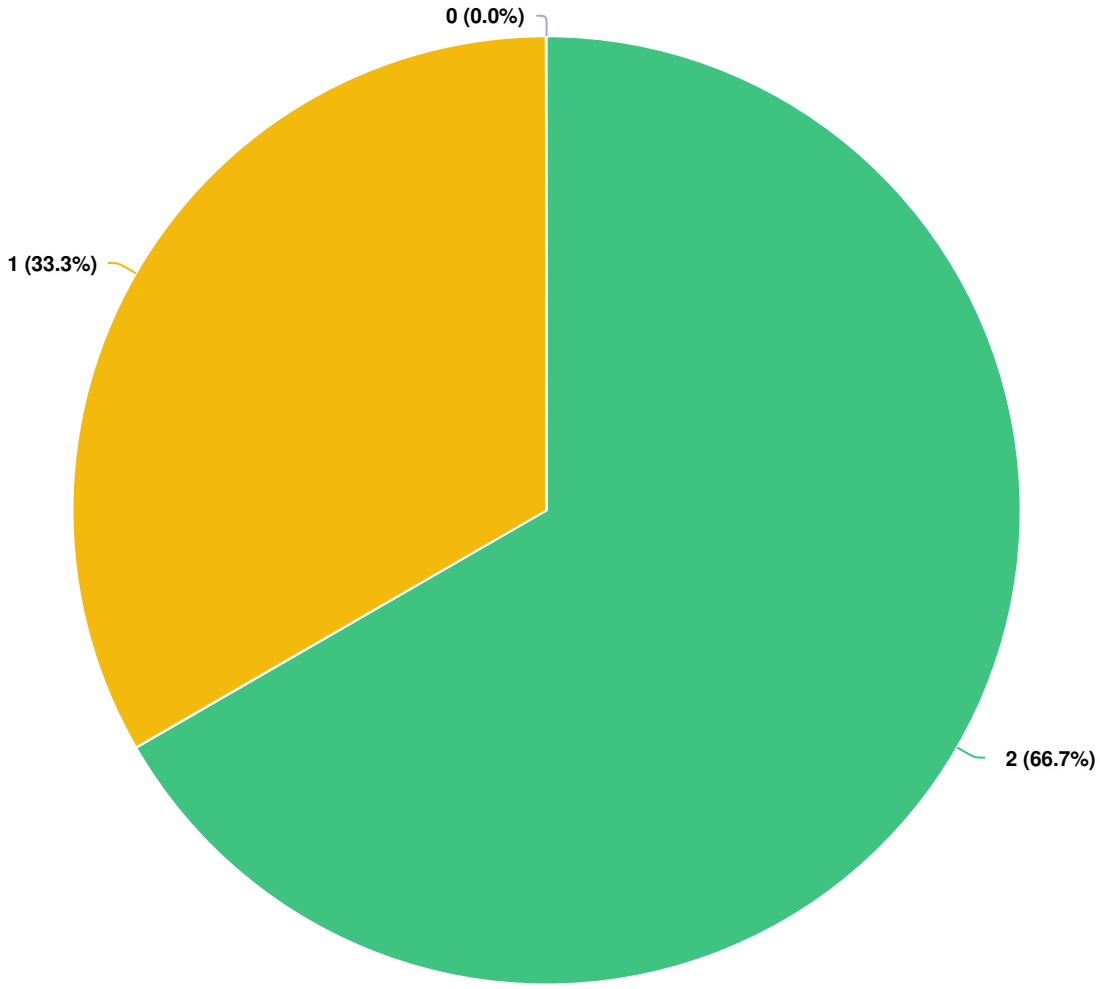
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q20 What made it memorable?

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	fun for my kids because they could access pretty much everything. Nice variety of equipment and play experiences. Washrooms on-site. Accessible parking. Unitary surfacing.
JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	Met with friends. Toddler had a meltdown because there were no swings
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	Growing up, Kensington Playground was a place where I could experience a sense of adventure and creativity. One of my favorite features was the gazebo, which was at the same level as the concrete playground, allowing me to access it easily. From the gazebo, I could also sit and interact with the surrounding sand area, even if I couldn't physically move through it. The gazebo had steering wheels attached, and I remember using them to fuel my imagination—pretending I was driving a ship, piloting a plane, or steering through a grand adventure. Looking back, while I enjoyed the aspects of the playground that I could engage with, I recognize that accessibility was limited. If more inclusive design elements had been incorporated, even more kids could have fully participated in the fun and exploration that the playground offered.

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q21 How long did stay?



Question options

As long as I planned Shorter than I planned Longer than I planned

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q22 What about the playground made you want to stay?

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	Kids were having fun - due to reasons above.
JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	Different variety of equipment
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	The gazebo was a key part of why I stayed—it provided a central space where I could interact with the environment, whether using the steering wheels for imaginative play or enjoying the connection between the concrete and sand areas. The playground had a lot of energy, with kids creating their own games and adventures. The ability to engage in different ways, even within the constraints of accessibility at the time, made it a place I wanted to return to again and again.

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q23 What was missing that could have made your experience better?

JBrown
2/26/2025 01:21 PM

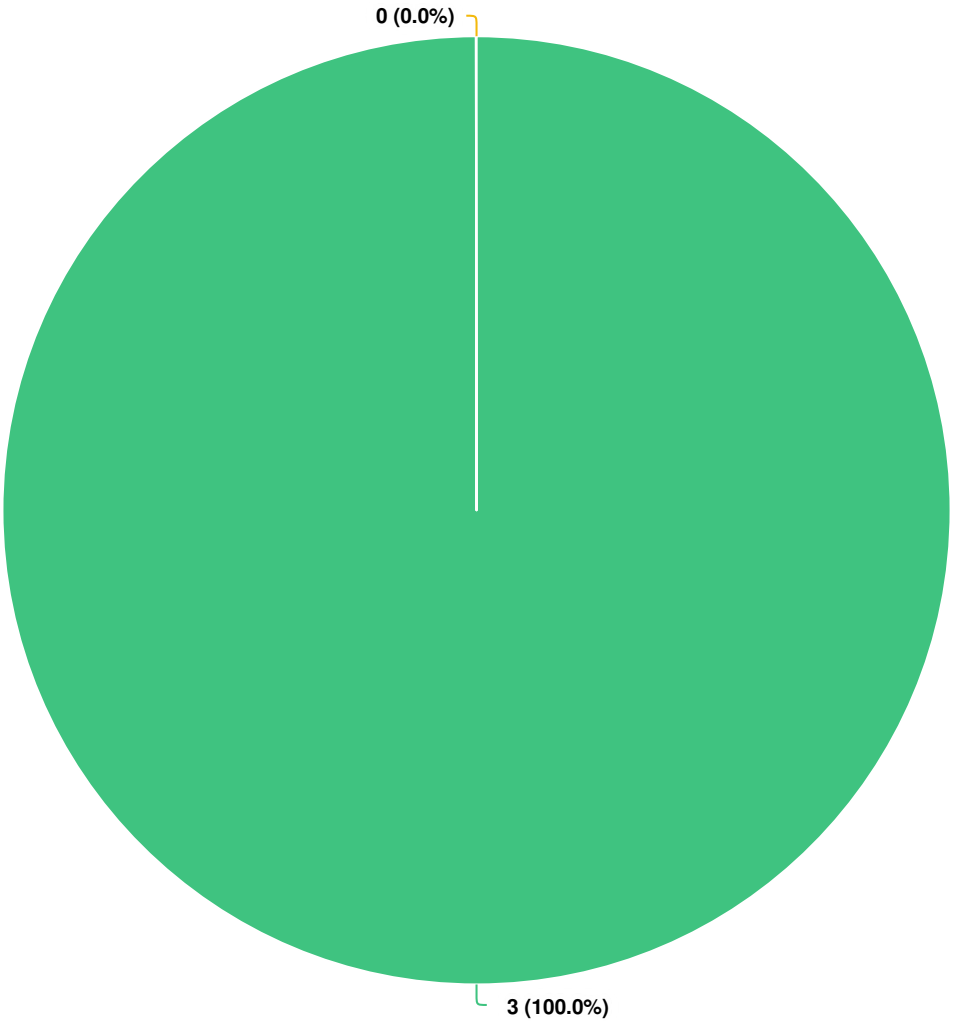
Swings

zachary.weeks_7877
2/27/2025 12:55 PM

While I enjoyed my time at Kensington Playground, there were several aspects that could have made my experience even better. The biggest limitation was the lack of true accessibility throughout the playground. While the gazebo was at the same level as the concrete, allowing me to access it, there was no way for me to fully navigate the rest of the playground independently. If there had been accessible pathways throughout or a more inclusive surfacing option instead of just sand, it would have allowed me to explore beyond the gazebo and engage more fully in play. Additionally, more inclusive equipment would have made a difference. The steering wheels in the gazebo were great for imaginative play, but the playground lacked variety in accessible play elements. Features like interactive sensory play panels, more diverse seating options, and equipment that allowed for co-play between kids of different abilities would have helped create a more inclusive environment. Lastly, an accessible washroom and a designated quiet space would have been valuable additions. Longer play sessions often meant needing an accessible place to take a break, and having a quiet area for kids who needed a lower-stimulation environment would have made the space even more inclusive for everyone.

Optional question (2 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q24 Are you responding for yourself, or on behalf of someone else?



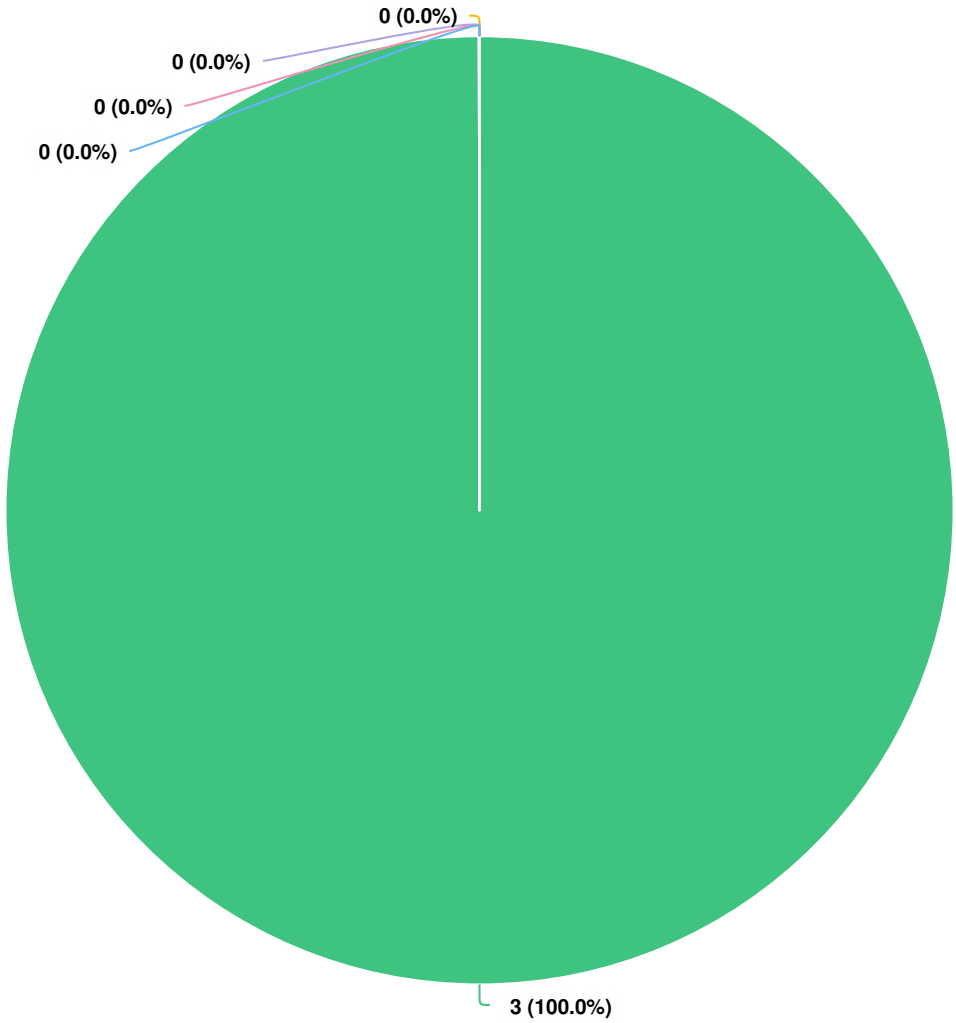
Question options

I am responding on behalf of someone else

I am responding for myself

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q25 How old are you?

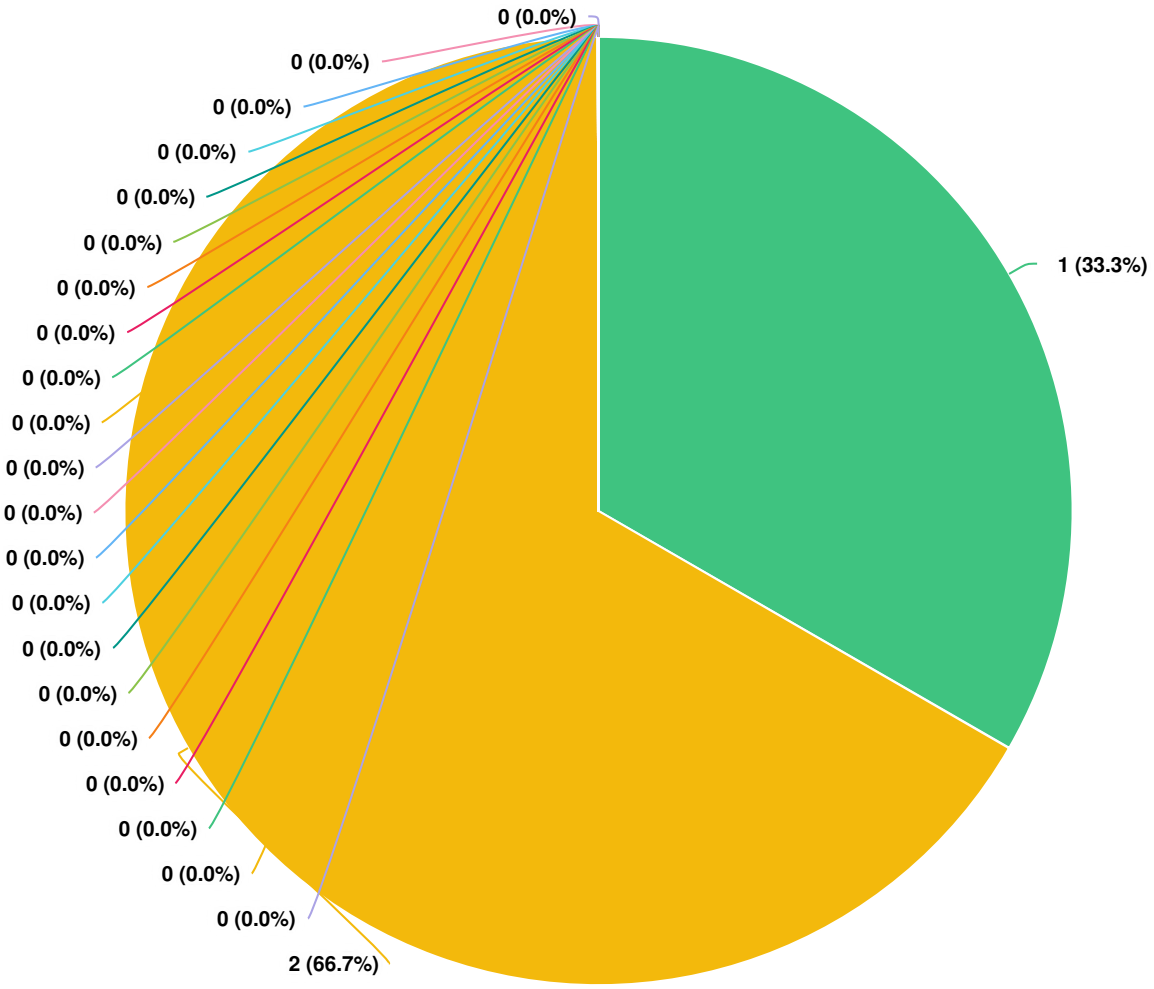


Question options

Other/prefer not to answer | 13 to 18 years | 6 to 12 years | 18 months to 5 years | 19 years or older

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q27 Where do you live?



Question options

Woodlands · Sturgeon Heights · South Riel (Midtown) · Pineview · Oakmont · North Ridge · Mission · Lacombe Lake Park · Kingswood · Jensen Lakes · Inglewood · Heritage Lakes · Grandin · Forest Lawn · Erin Ridge North · Erin Ridge · Downtown · Deer Ridge · Cherot · Braeside · Akinsdale · Other (please specify) · Prefer not to answer

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question

Q28 Is there anything else you would like us to think about as we develop this strategy?

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	Continue to consult folks who are passionate about inclusive play, and who are qualified to assist.
JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	Think less about how the playground looks and more about what it does. Keep it balanced and please include accessible swings for bigger kids that can’t learn to pump their legs. Thanks!
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	It is important to ensure that playgrounds are designed with accessibility not just for physical disabilities but also for cognitive and sensory needs. Features like quiet spaces, wayfinding with high-contrast colors, and tactile elements can support children with diverse needs. Additionally, prioritizing washroom accessibility, including adult change tables, is crucial for families who require them. Finally, transportation access should be considered—centering playground development around public transit routes will help make inclusive play more widely accessible.

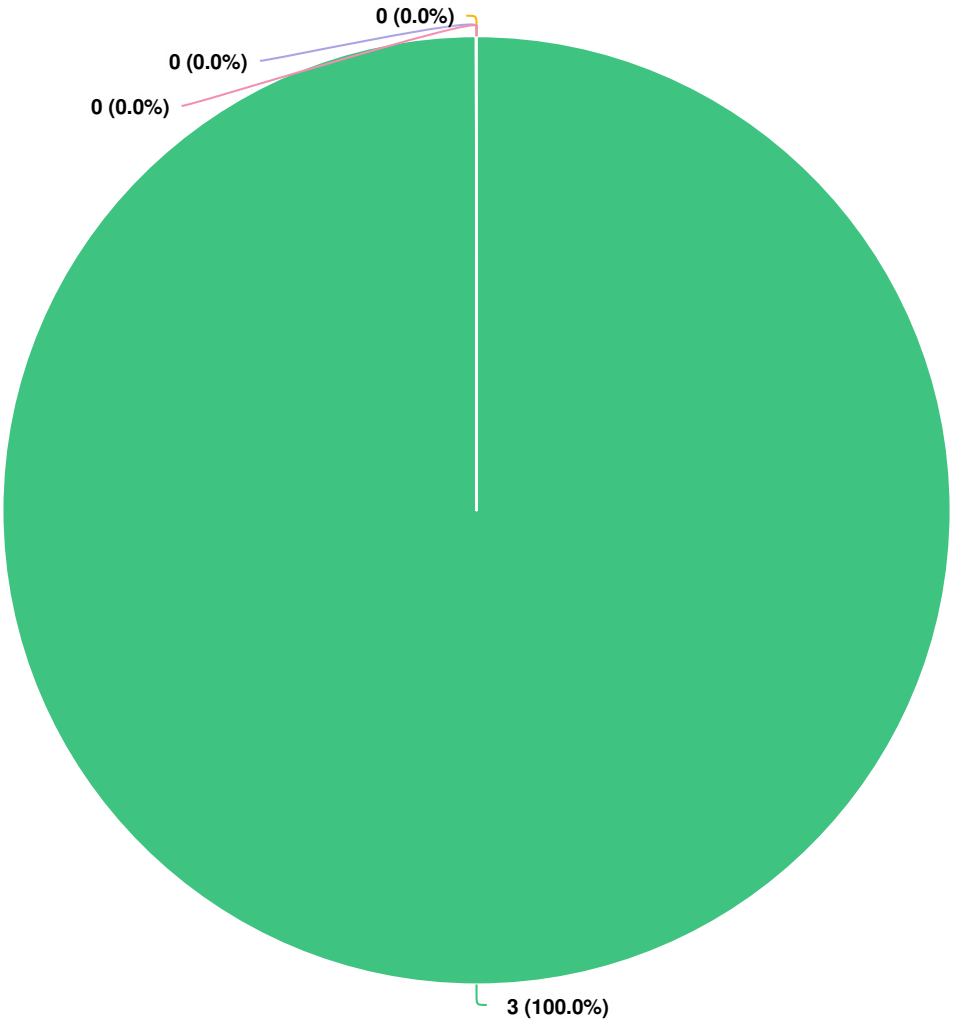
Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q29 Is there anything you would change about the survey?

JBrown 2/26/2025 01:21 PM	No
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	The survey is well-structured, but adding more open-ended opportunities to share lived experiences would enhance its impact. Additionally, ensuring clarity around definitions of inclusivity and accessibility might help respondents provide more precise feedback.

Optional question (2 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

Q30 How satisfied are you think this opportunity to provide feedback?



Question options

Other (please specify) Neutral Not Satified Satisfied

Optional question (3 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q31 Please leave your email if you would like to be contacted about the survey:

grassmickmelissa 2/26/2025 12:49 PM	grassmickmelissa@gmail.com
zachary.weeks_7877 2/27/2025 12:55 PM	zachary.weeks@gmail.com

Optional question (2 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Essay Question

NEXT STEPS

The feedback provided by the residents and stakeholders of the City of St. Albert is highly valued and has been used to inform and guide the research and recommendations of the Strategy. This input will directly contribute to the development of an inclusive and accessible playground strategy that will guide the planning, design and construction of future inclusive play opportunities within the city.

Appendix D: Accessible Play Spaces in Canada

The following document is supplied as an additional resource summarizing Annex H of the CSA Z614. It is recommended that, whenever possible and wherever necessary, the CSA standards themselves are referenced in their most recent edition.

Accessible Playspaces in Canada

A Guidebook for Children's Playspaces that are Accessible to Persons with Disabilities based on CAN/CSA Z614-07 Annex H

Canadian Coalition for Accessible Playspaces:

ipa Canada International Play Association
Promoting the Child's Right to Play

Canadian Playground Safety Institute

Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability

Introduction

In May 2007 the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) released an updated version of its CAN/CSA Z164-07 *Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard* (CAN/CSA-Z614). We are extremely pleased that this document contains a new accessibility guideline called Annex H *Children's playspaces and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities* (Annex H).

Annex H represents a landmark advancement in accessibility for disabled children and their caregivers in Canada who visit a playspace. To support awareness and use of Annex H, an interagency coalition is preparing a suite of promotional resources including this guidebook. Members of the coalition include the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with Disabilities, Canadian Playground Safety Institute (CPSI), and the International Play Association Canada (IPA Canada).

Annex H is aligned closely to the Americans with Disabilities Act: *Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas*. As such, the content and layout of this guidebook reflects the *Summary of Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas* guide prepared by the U.S. Access Board.

Annex H

Annex H establishes minimum accessibility requirements for newly constructed playspaces as well as renovations and retrofits to existing playgrounds. It provides specifications for elements within a play area to create a general level of usability for children with disabilities. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that children with disabilities are able to access the diversity of components provided in a play area.

Annex H is an informative addition to CAN/CSA -Z614-07, however, it is written in normative or mandatory language. This means that **users of CAN/CSA-Z614 must adopt Annex H formally as an additional requirement to the Standard**. This can be done in a number of ways including making an adjustment to current policy and adding Annex H as a requirement within a 'Request for Proposal' (RFP).

Designers and owner/operators are encouraged to exceed the guideline where possible to provide increased accessibility and opportunities. Incorporating accessibility into the design of play areas should begin early in the planning process with consideration to layout, circulation paths, and the selection of play components.

To facilitate engagement by designers, owner/operators, and interested public with the content of Annex H, this guidebook is divided into 5 sections:

- Where Does Annex H Apply?
- What is a Play Component?
- How Many Play Components Must Be on an Accessible Route?
- What are the Requirements for Accessible Routes?
- What Other Accessibility Requirements Apply to Play Components?

Additional copies of this guidebook and other related resources can be obtained online at http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/index.html

Contents

PLAYSPACE TERMS

Accessible "a site, building, and its facilities that can be approached, entered, and used by people, including those with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities" (CAN/CSA-B651).

Accessible Route "a continuous unobstructed pathway from the perimeter of the use zone to the equipment" (ASTM F 1487).

ASTM International American Society For Testing and Materials

CAN/CSA-Z614 *Children's Playspaces and Equipment* is the standard developed by the CSA Technical Committee on Children's Playspaces and Equipment.

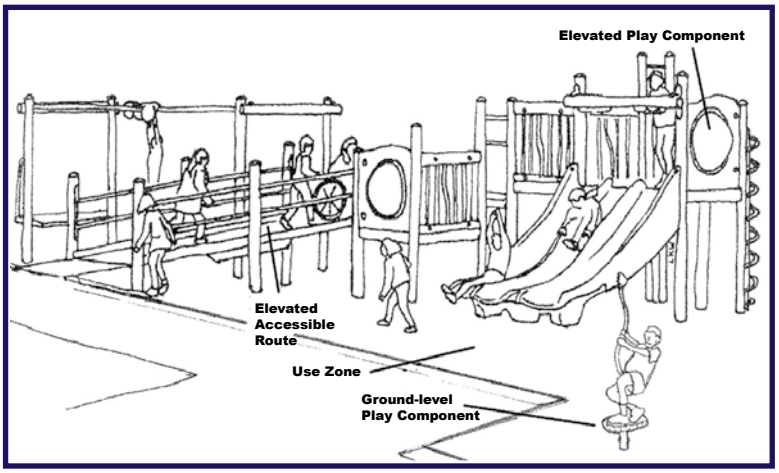
CSA the abbreviation for Canadian Standards Association, a not-for-profit membership-based association serving business, industry, government and consumers in Canada and the global marketplace.

Clear unobstructed

Composite Playstructure two or more playstructures attached or functionally linked to create one integrated unit that provides more than one play activity.

Cross Slope the slope that is perpendicular to the direction of travel (see running slope).

Elevated Play Component a play component that is approached a bove or below grade and that is part of a composite play-structure consisting of two or more play components attached or functionally linked to create an integrated unit providing more than one play activity.



Ground Level Play Component a play component that is approached and exited at the ground level

Play Component an element intended to generate specific opportunities for play, socialization, or learning. Play components may be manufactured or natural and may be stand alone or part of a composite playstructure.

Protective Surfacing Zone the area of protective surfacing beneath and immediately adjacent to a playstructure or equipment on whose surface it is predicted that a user will land when falling from or exiting the equipment.

Ramp a walking surface that has a running slope of greater than 1:20

Running Slope the slope that is parallel to the direction of travel (see cross slope)

WHERE DOES ANNEX H APPLY?

New Construction

Annex H is best applied to newly designed or constructed playspaces for children ages 18 months to 12 years.

This includes playspaces located in a variety of settings: schools, parks, childcare facilities, institutions, multiple-family dwellings, private resort and recreation development, restaurants, and other areas of public use.

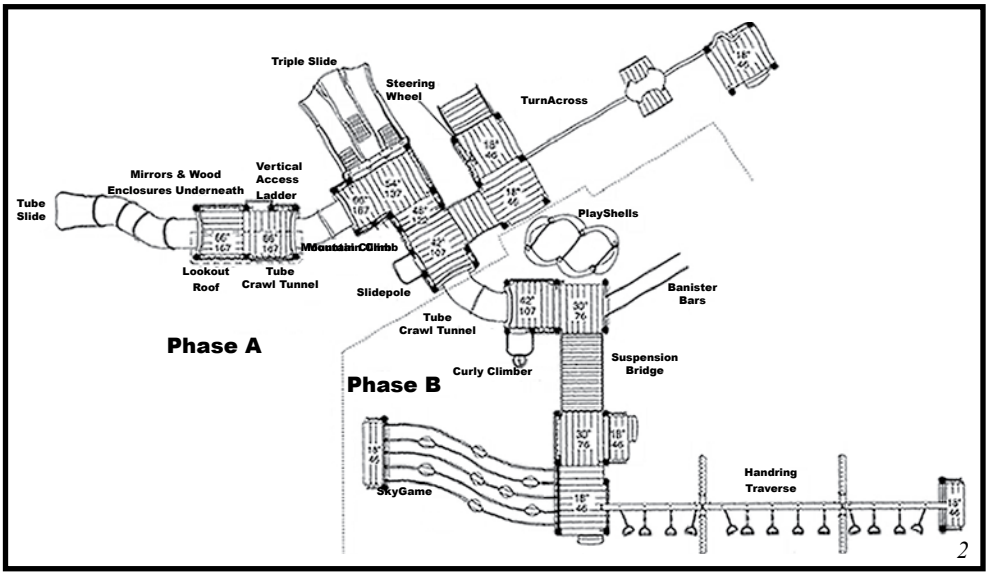
Alterations

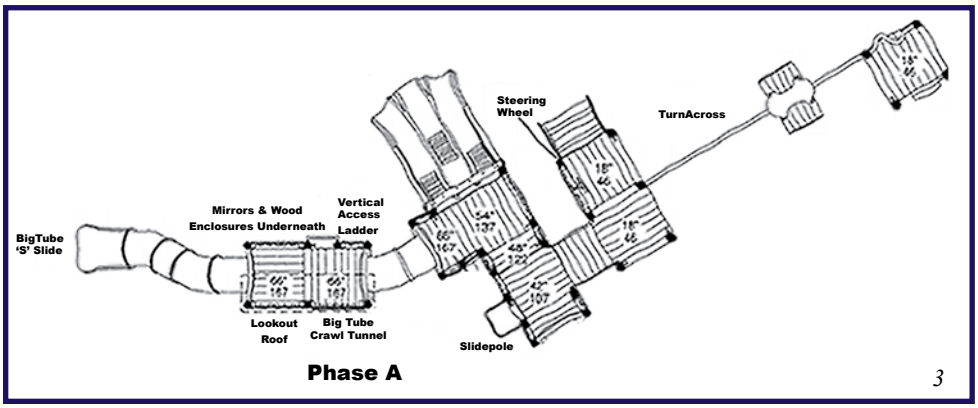
Annex H can also be applied to existing play areas where renovations and retrofits occur.

Phasing in Playspaces

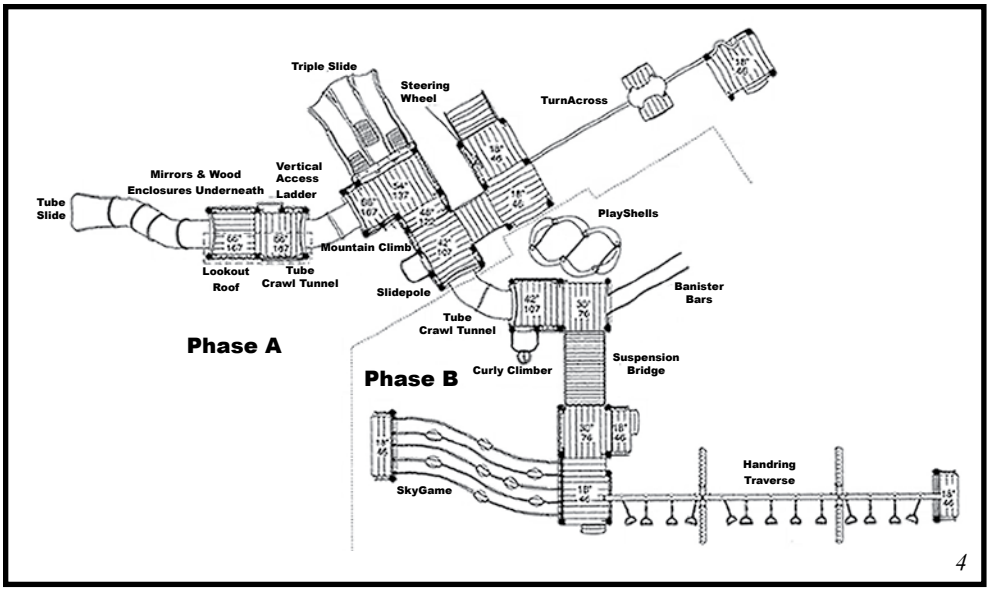
When playspaces are constructed in phases, it is recommended that they meet Annex H throughout construction. The initial phase area should meet the standard, and then at each successive phase the whole play area should be reassessed to ensure compliance.

This playspace will be installed in two phases. As each phase is completed, the entire playspace should be evaluated for compliance.





Prior to phase one, the first structure is evaluated for compliance, since Annex H is based on a minimum number of play components required to be on an accessible route.



At the onset of phase two, the playspace is re-evaluated in its entirety.

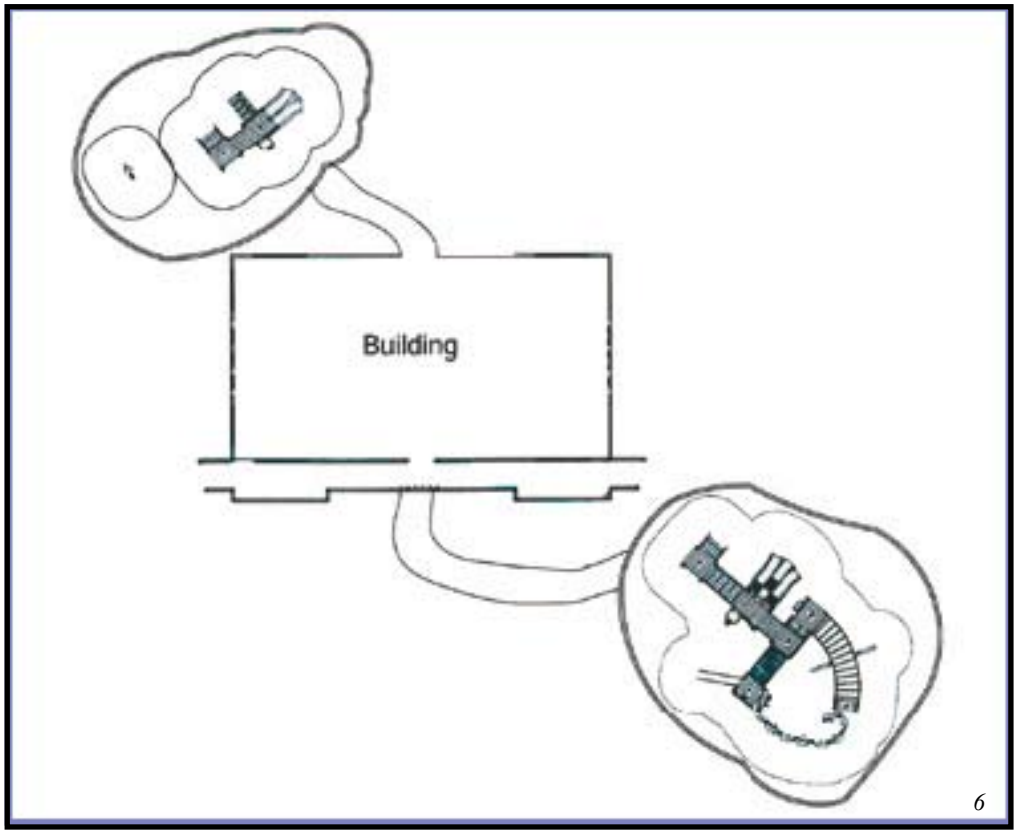
Playspaces Separated by Age

In applying Annex H, playspaces designed for different age groups should be considered separately.

A playspace designed for 18 months to 5 year-olds is considered separate from one for 5 to 12 year-olds. Therefore, compliance with Annex H should be considered for each individual play area.

This dual playspace is designed for 18 months to 5 year-olds and 5 to 12 year-olds. Each section should be evaluated separately.

Geographically Separated Play Areas



Large geographical spaces may contain several playspaces within one park setting. Where playspaces are geographically separated on a site, they are considered separate playspaces. Annex H applies to each playspace.

WHAT IS A PLAY COMPONENT?

Play Components

A play component is an element designed to generate specific opportunities for play, socialization, and learning. Play components may be manufactured or natural, and may be stand alone or part of a composite play structure. Swings, spring riders, water tables, playhouses, slides, and climbers are among the many different play components.

For the purposes of Annex H, ramps, transfer systems, steps, decks, and roofs are not considered play components. These elements are generally used to link other elements on a composite play structure. Although socialization and pretend play can occur on these elements, they are not primarily intended for play.


7

Spring rider

Climber


8

Swing


9


10

Slide

When applying Annex H, it is important to identify the different play experiences play components can provide.

Different "Types"

At least one of each type of play component provided at ground level in a play area must be on an accessible route.

Different "types" of play components are based on the general experience provided by the play component. Different types include, but are not limited to, experiences such as rocking, swinging, climbing, spinning and sliding.

A swinging type

A rocking type

A multiple individual, single play component

The number of individuals who can play on a play component at once does not determine the quantity of play components provided in a play area. A play component can hold many children but is considered one type of play experience – or one play component – in the playspace.

Examples of Sliding types


14


15

While a spiral slide provides a slightly different experience from a straight slide, the primary experience – a sense of rapid descent or sliding – is common to both activities. Therefore, a spiral slide and a straight slide are considered one "type' of play experience.

Elevated Play Components

An elevated play component is a play component that is approached above or below grade and is part of a composite play structure. Play components that are attached to a composite play structure and that can be approached from a platform or deck area are considered elevated play components.

This climber is considered an elevated component, since it can be approached or exited from the ground level or above grade from a platform or deck on a composite play structure.

Ground-Level Play Components

Ground-level play components are items that can be approached and exited at ground level. For example, a child approaches a spring rider at ground level via the accessible route. The child may ride then exit directly back onto the accessible route. The activity is considered ground level because the child approaches and exits it from the ground-level route.

Ground-level play components may be part of a composite structure.

Ground-level components may also be free-standing in a playspace

When more than one ground-level play component is required on an accessible route, the play components must be integrated. Designers should consider the optimal layout of ground-level play components to foster interaction and socialization among all children. Grouping all ground-level play components accessed by children with disabilities in one location does not constitute integration.

HOW MANY PLAY COMPONENTS MUST BE ON AN ACCESSIBLE ROUTE?

Ground-Level Play Components

There are two requirements addressing how many ground-level play components must be on an accessible route:

- One of Each Type
- Ground-Level Requirements based on the number of Elevated Play Components

One of Each Type

At least one of each type of ground-level play component that is present in the playspace must be on an accessible route.


21

As an example, this playspace includes a composite play structure, two spring riders and a swing set (see inset). To meet the requirement, an accessible route must connect to at least one spring rider and one swing for one of each type of ground-level play experiences which are present in the playspace.


22

Ground Level Requirements Based on Elevated Play Components

The number and variety of ground-level play components required to be on an accessible route is also determined by the number of elevated components provided in the playspace.

The intent of this requirement is to provide a variety of experiences for individuals who choose to remain with their mobility aids, or choose not to transfer to elevated play components.

Table H.1

Number of elevated play components provided	*Minimum number of ground-level play components required to be on accessible route*	*Minimum number of different types of ground-level play components required to be on accessible route*
1	Not applicable	Not applicable
2 to 4	1	1
5 to 7	2	2
8 to 10	3	3
11 to 13	4	3
14 to 16	5	3
17 to 19	6	3
20 to 22	7	4
23 to 25	8	4
More than 25	8 plus 1 for each additional 3 over 25, or fraction thereof	5

If ramps provide access to at least 50 percent of the elevated play components - which must include at least three different play types - then additional ground-level components are not required.

In the playspace shown on page 12, the composite structure has four elevated play components (bubble panel, slide, steering wheel, and tic-tac-toe panel). According to the table, a minimum of one ground level play component must be provided, and a minimum of one different type. The spring rider or swing can be used to meet the "one of each type" requirement and can also be used to meet the minimum number determined by Table H.1.

Elevated Play Components

At least 50 percent of the elevated play components must be on an accessible route.

Playspaces with 20 or more elevated components must use ramps to connect a minimum of 25 percent of those components. A transfer system or ramps may connect the other elevated play components required on an accessible route.

Playspacess with less than 20 elevated play components may use a transfer system instead of ramps to connect at least 50 percent of the elevated components.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE ON APPLYING ANNEX H

Step-by-Step Guide

The following step-by-step guide has been provided to assist in evaluating a playspace for meeting the minimum requirements of Annex H. The guide has been arranged in two steps and provides spaces to fill in numeric values of play components for evaluating a specific playspace design.

Step 1)

Total # Of Elevated Play Components =

Assess Present Situation	
Total # Of Components Along Accessible Route (answer = item "A")	Variety Of Play Types Along Accessible Route (answer = item "X")
Assess What Is Needed (from Table H.1)	
Min. # Of Ground Level Components Required Along Accessible Route (answer = item "B")	Variety Of Different Play Types Required Along Accessible Route (answer = item "Y")
How To Get There	
Total # Of Components To Be Added (item "B" minus item "A")	Total Variety Of Play Types To Be Added (item "Y" minus item "X")

*A negative number in the either bottom box means that there is more than the minimum number already on s te

Step 2)

Assess Access to Elevated Components

Total # of Elevated Components =

- If 20 or more components then ramps to 25% and ramp or transfer to an additional 25%
- If 19 or fewer components than transfer system or ramp to 50% of components

PLAYSPACE EVALUATION EXAMPLE

The example below shows how the step-by-step guide or 'accessibility calculator' can be used to determine if the requirements have been met for the playspace and what is needed for compliance if it is deficient.

Step 1)

Total # Of Elevated Play Components = **20**	
Assess Present Situation	
Total # Of Components Along Accessible Route (answer = item "A")	Variety Of Play Types Along Accessible Route (answer = item "X")
5	**3**
Assess What Is Needed (from Table H.1)	
Min. # Of Ground Level Components Required Along Accessible Route (answer = item "B")	Variety Of Different Play Types Required Along Accessible Route (answer = item "Y")
7	**4**
How To Get There	
Total # Of Components To Be Added (item "B" minus item "A")	Total Variety Of Play Types To Be Added (item "Y" minus item "X")
7 - 5 = 2	**4 - 3 = 1**

*A negative number in the either bottom box means that there is more than the minimum number already on site

This indicates that there are currently 5 components along the accessible route, but 7 components are required. Therefore, 2 components must be added.

This indicates that there are currently 3 different types of play components along the accessible route, but 4 are required. Therefore, 1 new type of component must be added.

Step 2)

Assess Access to Elevated Components

Total # of Elevated Components = **20**

- If 20 or more components then ramps to 25% and ramp or transfer to an additional 25%
- If 19 or fewer components than transfer system or ramp to 50% of components

This indicates that there are 20 or more components in the playspace. Therefore, at least 25% of the total 20 (or 5 components) must be accessible by ramp, and another 25% (another 5 components) must be accessible by ramp or transfer station.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCESSIBLE ROUTES?

CSA B651 addresses accessible routes for connecting the playspace to the parking area, drinking fountains and other elements that it serves.

This section describes the various features of accessible routes within a playspace, including location, clear width, slope, and accessible surfaces.

Accessible Routes

An accessible route is a pathway specifically designed to provide access for individuals with disabilities, including those using wheelchairs or mobility devices.


25

Accessible routes inside the boundaries of playspaces are addressed in Annex H. Technical provisions address the width, slope, and surface of both ground-level and elevated accessible routes.

There are two types of accessible routes:

- Ground-level
- Elevated


26

This ground-level route connects ground components and the transfer system which connects elevated components.

This elevated route connects elevated play components on a composite structure.


27

Ground-Level Accessible Routes

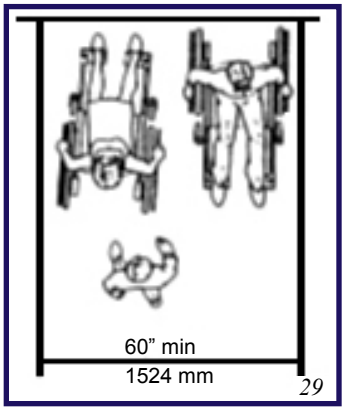
A ground-level accessible route connects play components at ground level.

- 1524 mm (60.0 in) minimum clear width
- 1:16 maximum slope


28

The route may narrow down to 914.4 mm (36.0 in) for a distance of 1524 mm (60.0 in). This permits flexibility to work around site design features like existing equipment or trees.

The required 1524 mm (60.0 in) width enables two wheelchairs to pass each other or to change direction.



29

Smaller playspaces - those that are less than 92.9 square metres (1000 square feet) - may have ground-level accessible routes that are 1117.6 mm (44 in) clear width. A wheelchair turning space 1524 mm (60.0 in) in diameter must be provided where the route exceeds 914.4 mm (36.0 in) in length.

At ground level, objects may not protrude into the defined ground-level accessible route up to or below the height of 2032 mm (80 in), measured above the accessible route surface.

The playspace provides a fun accessible roadway theme. The protective shelters for the benches have been set outside the boundary of the route providing the 2032 mm of clearance required on the route.


30

Maximum Slope at Ground Level

The maximum allowable slope for a ground-level route is 1:16

Berms are sometimes used to provide access to elevated playspaces. A berm may be a natural sloped surface that is present in a hilly playspace site, or a ground-level route built with slopes.

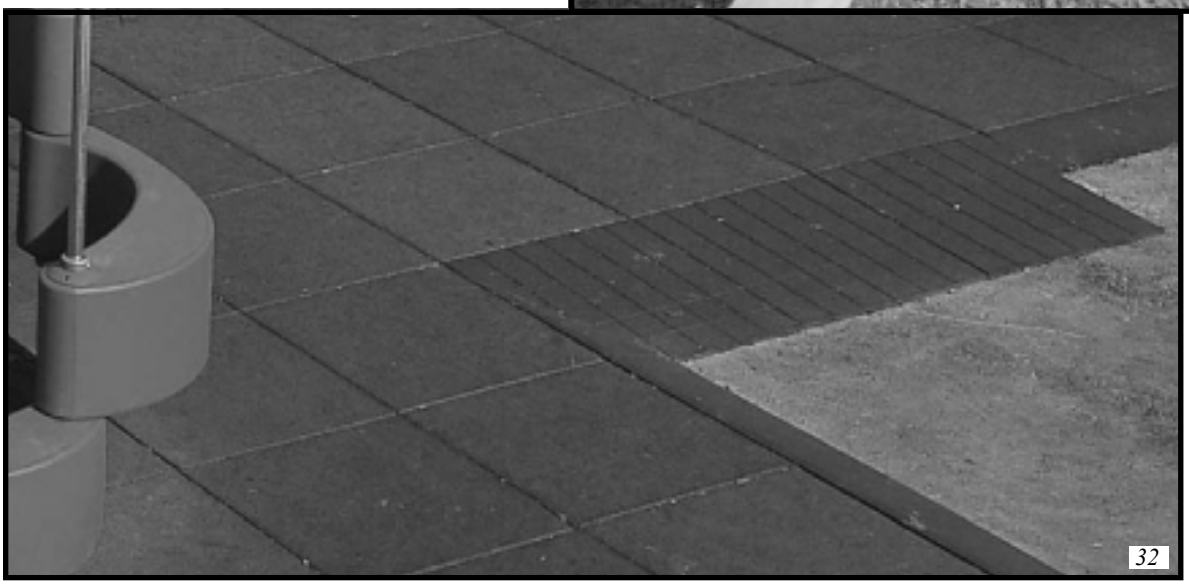
Designers are encouraged to consider edge protection and handrails on berms where there may be a drop-off. Remember the maximum slope of this "ground-level accessible route" is 1:16.

However, handrails are not required on ramps located within the ground-level, "protective surfacing zone". This is permitted since the handrails may become a safety hazard.


31

This playspace provides a bermed accessible route.

To accommodate a height change along the perimeter of a playspace – like these rubber safety tiles placed on an asphalt surface – an allowable 1:12 slope is utilized for the transition at the boundary of the playspace.


32

Accessible Ground Surfaces

Ground surfaces along accessible routes, clear floor or ground spaces, and maneuvering spaces, must comply with the American Society for Testing and Materials ASTM F 1951 *Standard Specification for Determination of Accessibility to Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment.* This standard assesses the accessibility of a surface by measuring the work an individual must exert to propel a wheelchair across the surface.

When selecting ground surfaces, operators should request information about compliance with CAN/CSA-Z614 Section 10 - Surfacing.

Accessible surfaces can include impact-attenuating tiles made of recycled rubber and engineered wood fiber that meet the ASTM requirements for accessibility and safety. The design can be created so safety is not compromised for individuals using the playspace where both standards are applied.

Accessible Surfaces located in the Protective Surfacing Zone

If located within the protective surfacing zones, ground surfaces must be impact attenuating and meet test methods specified in ASTM F 1292 and CEN EN 1177 (CAN/CSA-Z614, Clause 10).


34

Accessible and non-accessible surfaces can be combined to provide variety and excitement in the playspace.


35

Rubber surfacing and tiles facilitate access in this playspace.


36

Ground surfaces should be inspected and maintained regularly and frequently to ensure continued compliance with ASTM 1951 and if in the protective surfacing zones, CAN/CSA-Z614, Clause 10. The frequency of maintenance and inspection of resilient surfacing depends on the amount of use and the type of surfacing installed.


37


38

Accessible surfacing can be designed to complement the theme of the playspace, while providing full access and visually integrating the surface into the overall design. Individuals of all abilities will enjoy the added benefits of an imaginative design.

Designers and operators are likely to choose materials that best serve the needs of each playspace. The type of material selected will affect the frequency and cost of maintenance.

Elevated Accessible Routes

An elevated route is the path used for connecting elevated play components.

Elevated accessible routes must connect the entry and exit points of at least 50 percent of the elevated play components provided in the playspace.

Two common methods for providing access to elevated play components are ramps and transfer systems. Ramps are the preferred method since not all children who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices may be able to use – or may choose not to use – transfer systems.

This photo illustrates an elevated accessible route:

- *914.4 mm (36.0 in) clear width*
- *812.8 mm (32.0 in) narrowed width permitted for 609.6 (24 in) length to accommodate features in the composite structure*
- *Top of handrail gripping surfaces shall be between 508 and 711.2 mm (20.0 and 28.0 in) above the ramp surface*

When Ramps are Required

Ramps are required on composite structures with 20 or more elevated play components and must connect to at least 25% of the elevated play components.

Ramps allow individuals who use wheelchairs and mobility devices to access elevated play components in composite play structures without transferring.

This playspace has more than 20 play components and provides ramp access to elevated play components. The ramp system, consisting of ramp runs and landings, must connect at least 25 percent of the elevated play components. The balance of the elevated components required to be on an accessible route may be connected by the ramp system, or by a transfer system.

Rise of a ramp is the amount of vertical distance the inclined or slanted surface ascends or descends. A ramp **run** is a length of a continuous sloped surface that is ascending or descending. The maximum run of a ramp that connects elevated play components shall be 3657.6 mm (144.0 in) from a level landing or turning space with a 1:12 slope.

Ramps

For each elevated ramp run:

- From ground level to landing and/or landing to landing
- 1:12 maximum slope
- 914.4 (36 in) minimum clear width
- See Annex H for exceptions

Landings

Landings are the level surfaces at the top and bottom of each ramp run.

- Must be as wide as the ramp they connect to
- A minimum length of 1524 mm (60 in)
- If ramps change direction, the minimum landing size must be 1524 mm (60 in) wide to accommodate the turn

Maneuvering Space Where Ramps are Provided

At least one maneuvering space must be provided on the same level as the play component. The space must have a slope no steeper than 1:50 in all directions (see page 32 for further details).

Handrails

Handrails are required on both sides of ramps connecting elevated play components. Handrails must comply with the following:

- Handrails shall be between 24 and 40 mm (0.94 and 1.57 in) in diameter
- The top of the handrail gripping surfaces shall be between 508 and 711.2 mm (20.0 and 28.0 in) above the ramp surface.

However, handrails are not required on ramps located within the ground-level protective surfacing zone. This is permitted since the handrails may become a safety hazard.

In this case additional handrails have been provided.

When Transfer Systems are Used

A transfer system provides access to elevated play components within a composite system by connecting different levels with transfer platforms and steps.

A transfer system provides access to elevated play components without the use of a wheelchair or mobility device. At least 50% of the elevated play components can be connected by a transfer system in playspaces with less than 20 elevated components. In playspaces with 20 or more elevated play components, transfer systems may be used to connect up to 25% of the elevated play components and the rest of the elevated play components required to be on an accessible route must be connected by a ramp.

A transfer system typically consists of a transfer platform, transfer steps, and transfer supports.

Where a transfer system is provided, a combination of transfer platforms and transfer steps provide a continuous accessible route to elevated play components. A transfer system provides individuals the space necessary to physically transfer up or down in a composite play structure. Where provided, a 609.6 mm (24 in) minimum width is necessary for individuals moving around a structure.

Playful features can be part of the transfer system, providing interactive experiences from both an elevated or ground level approach.

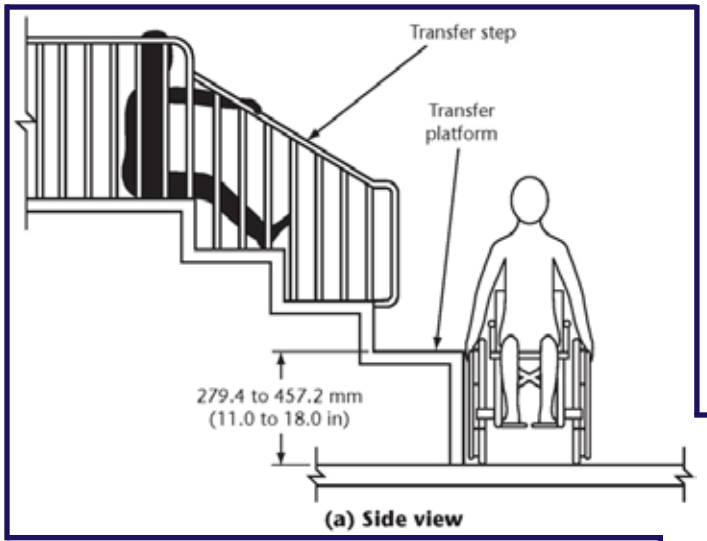
Consider the distance someone must travel to reach play components accessed by transfer systems. On page 28, the illustration shows a transfer system placed directly next to the slide. Access to this type of elevated play component has been carefully designed to minimize the distance someone must transfer to reach it.

Transfer Platforms

A transfer platform is a platform or landing that an individual who uses a wheelchair or mobility device can use to lift or *transfer* onto the play structure and leave the wheelchair or mobility device behind at ground-level.

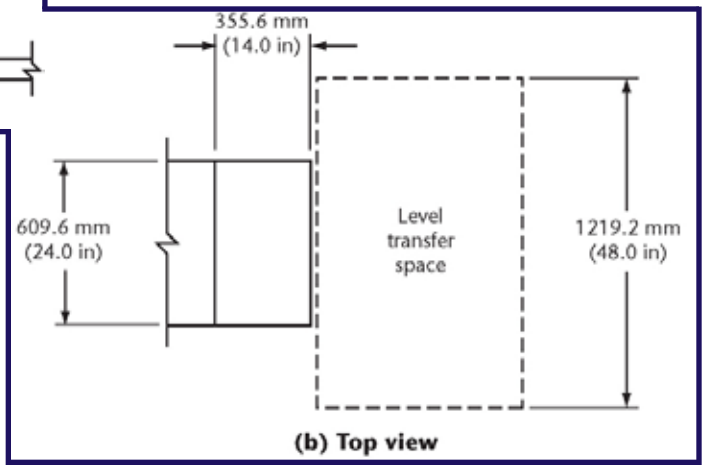
- 279.4 mm to 457.2 mm (11.0 in to 18.0 in) above the ground
- Minimum 609.6 mm (24 in) wide
- Minimum 355.6 mm (14.0 in) deep

Adding a transfer step that leads to the ground's surface increases access for children exiting components at the ground level.



Clear floor or ground space - used for parking wheelchair or mobility devices (commonly called "wheelchair parking") - is required at the transfer platform.

The 1219.2 mm (48.0 in) long side of the "wheelchair parking" space must be parallel to the 609.6 mm (24.0 in) side of the transfer platform.



Annex H, Figure H.1

(Reprinted with permission, see page 37)

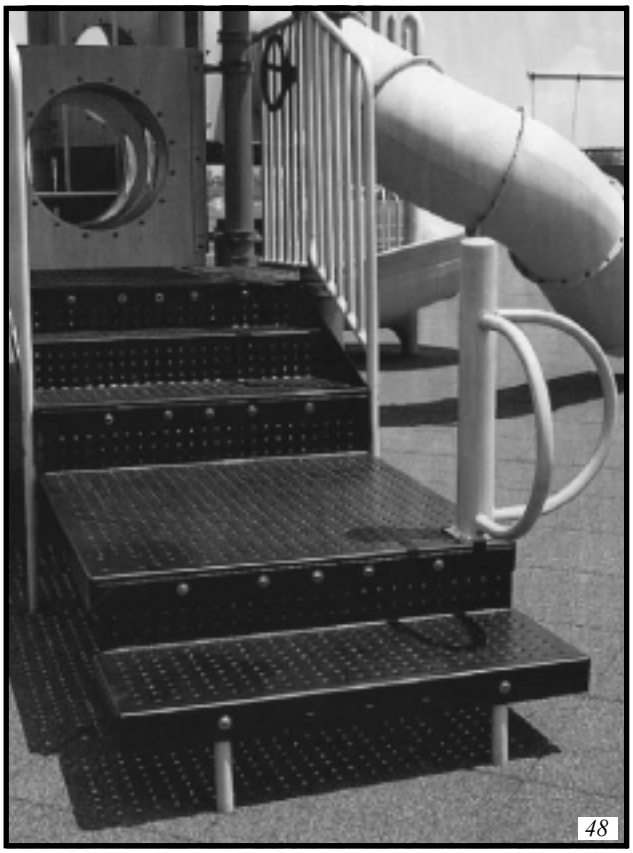
Transfer Steps

- Minimum 609.6 mm (24 in) wide
- Minimum 355.6 mm (14.0 in) deep
- 203.2 mm (8.0 in) maximum height


47

Annex H, Figure H.1a and b

Playspaces intended for smaller children should provide steps at smaller height increments. This will accommodate smaller sized children who must lift or "bump" up each step.


48

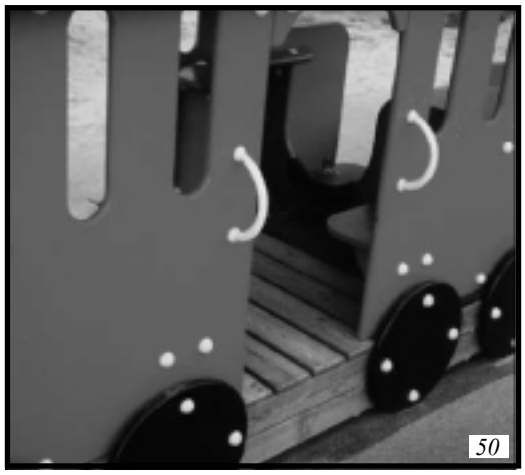
Transfer Supports

Transfer supports must be provided on transfer platforms and transfer steps at each level where transferring is the intended method of access.


49

Materials in a variety of different shapes and sizes are used to manufacture transfer supports including metal, plastic, and rope.

Aesthetically pleasing cut-out shapes and other design enhancements can provide hand supports for transferring.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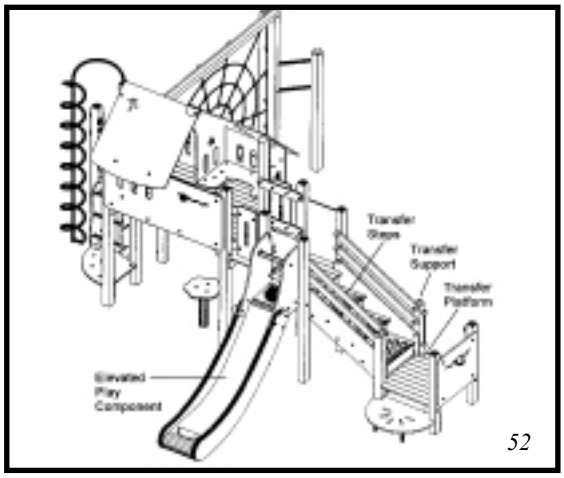
51

Consideration must be given to the distance between the transfer system and the elevated play components it is intended to facilitate. Designers should minimize the distance between the point where a child transfers from a wheelchair or mobility device and the elevated play destination.

This transfer system provides access to exciting elevated play experiences like sliding while minimizing the distance individuals must traverse.



52

Connected Elevated Components

When transfer systems are used, an elevated play component may connect to other elevated play components, providing an innovative, accessible route.

A crawl tube is an elevated play component in this composite structure. Going through the tunnel provides access to additional activities on the other side.

Consideration should be given to how a play component is utilized when it is selected to connect to other elevated play events. When a transfer system is provided, children move through a play component like this crawling tube, using their own strength without a mobility device.

Providing variety and excitement through elevated play spaces benefits all children. Tunnels and tubes make "getting there" an activity in and of itself.

WHAT OTHER REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO PLAY COMPONENTS?

Annex H addresses accessible routes connecting play components along with certain spaces that are crucial to making a playspace usable for children with disabilities. Additional requirements for play components are provided to promote general usability, with application to a variety of play components.

Clear Floor or Ground Space

Clear floor space – also known as ground space – provides unobstructed room to accommodate a single stationary wheelchair and its occupant at a play component on an accessible route.

- 762 mm (30 in) by 1219.2 mm (48 in)
- May overlap accessible routes and maneuvering spaces
- Slope not steeper than 1:50 in all directions

The clear floor space is permitted to overlap onto the landing area to provide access to this elevated window activity.


55

Play components come in a variety of shapes and sizes facilitating a broad range of experiences. A specific location for clear floor or ground space has not been designated. Each play component is unique and the spaces must be placed in the best location for the situation.


56

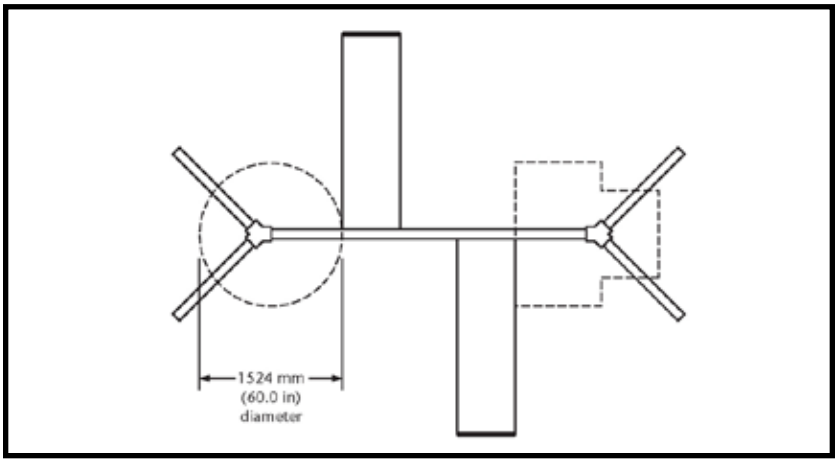
This interactive play component has a clear ground space that allows front or side reach interaction

Manoeuvering Space

Manoeuvering space is defined as the space required for a wheelchair to make a 180-degree turn. At least one maneuvering space must be provided on the same level as elevated play components.

When providing access to ground level and elevated play components by ramps, space allowances to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility devices are required.

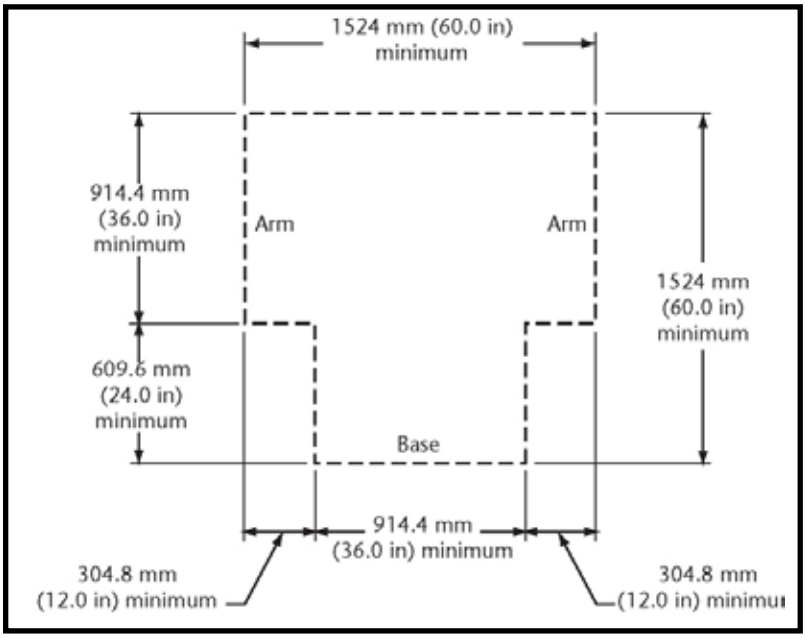
- A 1524 mm (60 in) turning circle permits individuals with mobility devices to turn around
- A 1524 mm (60 in) T-Shaped turn allows an individual to change directions by making a series of multi-point turns
- Slope not steeper than 1:50 in all directions



Annex H, Figure H.3

(Reprinted with permission, see page 37)

Manoeuvering space is required for swings and must be located adjacent to the swing. This illustration shows options for either a 1524 mm turning circle or a T-shaped turn. While this illustration shows the manoeuvering space to the side of the swing, the space may be located behind or in front of the swing as long as it is immediately adjacent to the swing.



Annex H, Figure H.4

(Reprinted with permission, see page 37)

Entry Points and Seats

Entry points and seats are features of play components where individuals would transfer, sit, or gain access. When play components are located on an accessible route, the height required to transfer directly to the entry point or seat of a play component shall be between 279.4 mm (11.0 in) and 609.6 mm (24.0 in).


57


58

Examples of entry points and seats include swing seats, spring rocker seats, and crawl-tube openings.


59


60

Consider design features like open sides, back supports, and hand supports to help facilitate easy transfer, access and independent use.

Play Tables

Play tables are surfaces, boards, slabs, or counters that are created for play. This includes tables designed for sand and water play, gathering areas, and other activities. Where play tables are located on an accessible route, the wheelchair knee clearance minimums are:

- 609.6 mm (24.0 in) high minimum
- 762 mm (30.0 in) wide minimum
- 431.8 mm (17.0 in) deep minimum


61

Play tables designed primarily for children under 5-years-old, may provide a parallel approach instead of knee clearance if the height of the rim surface is not greater than 787.4 mm (31.0 in)


62


63

The edge of this elevated sand table has been designed to provide access by providing a generous opening. The tops of rims, curbs, or other obstructions that would prevent access to a table surface should be 787.4 mm (31.0 in) maximum in height.

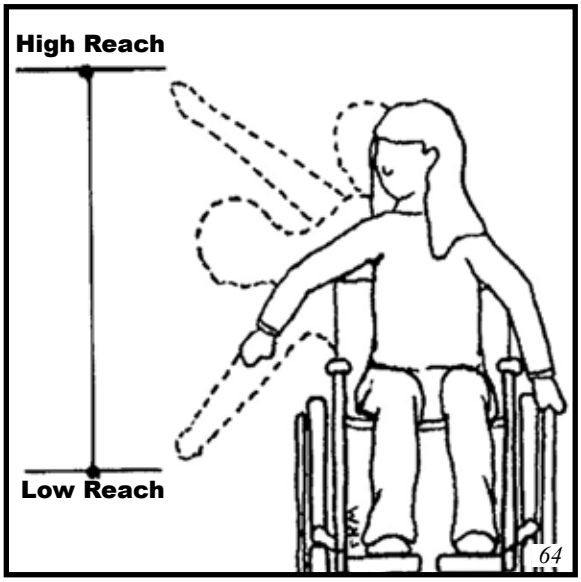
Reach Ranges (Advisory)

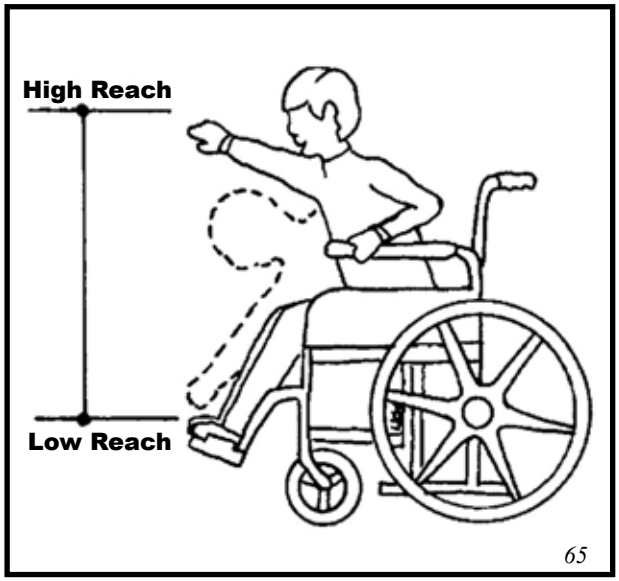
Annex H includes advisory information on recommended reach ranges.

Reach ranges are the recommended designated regions of space that a person seated in a wheelchair can reasonably extend their arm or hand to touch, manipulate, move, or interact with an object or play component.

Reach ranges should be considered when providing play components with manipulative or interactive features for children who use wheelchairs. Recommended forward or side reach ranges are:

- 508 mm to 914.4 mm (20.0 to 36.0 in) for 3 to 4 year-olds
- 457.2 mm to 1016 mm (18.0 to 40.0 in) for 5 to 8 year-olds
- 406.4 mm to 1117.6 mm (16.0 to 44.0 in) for 9 to 12 year-olds





The reach ranges appropriate for use by children who use wheelchairs to access play components are intended for ground-level components, and elevated components accessed by ramps. Reach ranges are not appropriate for play components reached by transfer systems.

Appropriate reach range heights will vary depending on how the play component is accessed. This interactive panel is mounted at a height appropriate for a child who uses a wheelchair.

NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Canadian coalition for accessible playspaces would like to acknowledge the U.S. Access Board for making the content of their Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas guide available for use in the development of this document.

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14. GameTime
15. Playworld Systems
16. GameTime
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19. Miracle
20. Recreation Creations
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22. Miracle
23. Landscape Structures
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33. Columbia Cascade
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36. Little Tikes
37. KOMPAN
38. KOMPAN
39. GameTime
40. GameTime
41. Playworld Systems
42. Landscape Structures
43. Miracle
44. Landscape Structures
45. Little Tikes
46. Landscape Structures
47. Game Time
48. Recreation Creations
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57. Playworld Systems
58. Little Tikes
59. Landscape Structures
60. GameTime
61. Playworld Systems
62. Landscape Structures
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Appendix X: Costing Methodology

The following cost estimates use vendor-provided pricing for Inclusive Playground minimum diversity requirements and are projected to be conservative as compared to available parts and catalogue options more broadly, constituting a "worst case" scenario. Pricing does not reflect custom work.

Costs by individual component represent low- and high-value play components selected to meet an Accessible Playground's minimum criteria. These components are not intended to represent an ideal or even reasonable playground design, but to reflect theoretical end range costs meeting the minimum standard. Surface estimates use 400 and 600 m^2 as default sizes, in line with Accessible and Inclusive Playground recommended sizes, respectively. Only base level supportive amenities are included in these estimates.

Costs by composite structures are also provided, as well as costing estimated by rough calculations (using methods from a range of sources). All estimating methods are taken together to generate an approximate unit rate for estimating Accessible and Inclusive Playgrounds according to surface area. General ranges are generated using low- and high-range averages.

Cost by Individual Components – Pricing: Habitat

Item	Low Price	High Price
Physical Play Components		
Balancing *disc challenge, tight rope, beam, etc.* *2-5y*	$2,500 *Wobble Pods*	$5,000 *Balance beam*
Balancing *disc challenge, tight rope, beam, etc.* *5-12y*	$5,000 *Balance beam*	$10,000 *Stepping Stones*
Brachiating (Overhead) *solid overhead ladder, monkey bars* *5-12y*	$5,000 *Overhead Ladder*	$10,000 *Overhead Ladder*
Climbing *ladder, rope/net, climbing rock, etc.* *2-5y*	$5,000 *Conical Climber*	$20,000 *Dino Climber*
Climbing *ladder, rope/net, climbing rock, etc.* *5 -12y*	$11,000 *Cascade Climber, 6 panel*	$69,000 *Mobius Climber, 12 panel*
Crawling* *tunnels, mounds, open climbers, etc.* *2-5y*	$5,000 *Freestanding Bone Tunnel*	$10,000 *Crawl tunnel*
Rocking / Gliding *spring rides, see-saws, etc.* *2-12y*	$5,000 *Spring rider*	$22,500 *We Saw*

Item	Low Price	High Price
Sliding *straight, curvy, hill, tube, etc.* *2-5y*	$4,000 *Rumble and Roll Zip Slide, 3'*	$5,000 *Double Zip Slide, 4'*
Sliding *straight, curvy, hill, tube, etc.* *5-12y*	$5,000 *Double Swoosh Slide*	$10,200 *WooshWinder Slide*
Spinning / Rotating *carousel, spinning tree, etc.* *5 -12y*	$9,300 *Curva Spinner*	$28,000 *WhirlyQ Spinner*
Swinging *belt, bucket, platform, social, etc.* *2- 12y*	$16,000 *Friendship Swing & belt swings x 2*	$43,800 *Double Oodle Swing & belt swings x 2*
Sensory Play Components		
Tactile *2-5y*	$3,000 *Marble Panel*	$5,000 *Sand Table*
Tactile *5-12y*		$25,000 *Roller Table*
Visual *2-12y*	$3,700 *Mirror panel*	$8,400 *Kaleidospin Panel*
Auditory *2-5y*	$3,500 *Bongo panel*	$5,000 *Rhapsody Ditty Metallophone*
Auditory *5-12y*		$18,000 *Vibra Chimes*
Social-Emotional Play Components		
Imaginative Play Components *variable*	$7,600 *Beach Rescue Truck*	$16,800 *Multi-Spring Vehicles*
Play Components Subtotal	$90,600	$311,700
Component Connections *(10% total component cost)*	$9,060	$31,170
Installation Cost *(25% total component cost)*	*$22,650*	*$77,925*
Play Components Total *(rounded to nearest $500)*	**$122,500**	**$421,000**

**Crawling Components are not required in City-owned Playgrounds, but are included here as options, suiting the requirement for a quiet or solitary play area.*

Basic Supportive Amenities	Low Price	High Price
Bench (max. 2)	$1,000 ($1,000 x 1)	$6,000 ($3000 x 2)
Picnic Table (max. 2)	$1,500 ($1,500 x 1)	$10,000 ($5000 x 2)
Trash Receptacle (max. 2)	$1,000 ($1,000 x 1)	$5,000 ($2,500 x 2)
Communication Board	$3,900	$3,900
Basic Supportive Amenities Subtotal	$7,400	$24,900
Installation Cost *(total component cost x 25%)*	*$1,850*	*$6,225*
Supportive Amenities Total *(rounded to nearest $500)*	**$9,500**	**$26,500**
Surfacing	**Price @ 400 m^2 Surface Area**	**Price @ 600 m^2 Surface Area**
100% Pour-in-Place (PIP) Rubber *$270 / m^2*	**$108,000**	**$162,000**
50% PIP / 50% Loose-Fill *Loose-fill surface @ $50 / m^2*	***$64,000***	***$96,000***
Concrete Curbing *Mixed Approximation*- $270 / lm*	***$21,150***	***$26,100***
Subsurface Drainage *$15 - $115 / m^2*	***$6,000 - $46,000***	***$9,000 - $69,000***

**The Mixed Approximation for concrete curbing uses an average of a circular, square, and 1:2 ratio rectangular circumference for the given surface area.*

End-Range Options* *(rounded up, nearest $10k)*	Total: 400 m^2 Surface Area	Total: 600 m^2 Surface Area *(1.65 x component price**)*
Upper Range *High value items, 100% PIP surfacing*	**$588,000 - $628,000**	**$918,000 - $978,000**
Lower Range *Lower value items, mixed surfacing*	***$223,000 - $263,000***	**$343,000 - $403,000**

**End range options are presented as ranges themselves, reflecting the impact of variable subsurface drainage costs*

***The 1.65 multiplication factor includes a factor of 1.5 for the surface area increase of 50%, as well as a compound 10% factor for additional ramping / connections*

Average ranges for **Accessible** and **Inclusive** Playgrounds by individual component estimate are therefore **$405,000 – $445,000** and **$630,500 - $690,500**, respectively

Cost by Composite Structure – Pricing: Habitat, Park N Play

Composite structures provide surface area savings compared to the number of play components that can be included but may come with additional costs associated with ramps and elevated connectors. Supplied composite structure pricing ranges from $115k to $475, depending on manufacturer and number of components, and averaging at approximately $300k. Assuming that one larger composite structure and a few select individual components (crawlers, rockers, spinners, and swings, totalling approximately $35k - $105k) will make up the composition of a 400 m^2 playground, the range of costs associate with composite structure use is estimated according to the following:

End-Range Options* *(rounded up, nearest $10k)*	**Total: 400 m^2 Surface Area**	**Total: 600 m^2 Surface Area** *(1.65 x component price**)*
Upper Range *High value items, 100% PIP surfacing*	**$567,000 - $607,000**	**$892,000 - $952,000**
Lower Range *Lower value items, mixed surfacing*	***$436,000 - $476,000***	**$693,000 - $753,000**

**End range options are presented as ranges themselves, reflecting the impact of variable subsurface drainage costs*

***The 1.65 multiplication factor includes a factor of 1.5 for the surface area increase of 50%, as well as a compound 10% factor for additional ramping / connections*

Average ranges for **Accessible** and **Inclusive** Playgrounds by composite structure estimate are therefore **$501,500 – $541,500** and **$792,500 - $852,500**, respectively

Costs by Other Methods

a. According to How to Budget for a Commercial Playground – KOMPAN, using the values of one "School" (139,600 USD) and one "Kindergarten" (120,300 USD), at a conversion of 1.0 CAD to 0.7 USD, playground projects serving both age groups may total **$370,000 CAD**. To use the same resource, selecting only a "Public Park" (232,100 USD), an estimated cost would be **$300,000 CAD**. Note that these costs are estimates including installation and delivery costs. These costs say nothing of playground size, and do not specify surfacing, curbing, drainage or amenities. Still, they are in line with estimated component costs as provided in other methods above.

b. Kompan also provides the following as a typical breakdown of playground costs for budgetary purposes:

- Components – 60%
- Safety Surfacing – 20%
- Site Amenities – 10%
- Installation Services – 10%

Using this method with the same costs for surfacing as a starting point, the following table indicates approximate costs as per the above breakdown:

Item	Price @ 400 m^2 Surface Area	Price @ 600 m^2 Surface Area
Components – 60%	$324,000	$486,000
Safety Surfacing – 20% ***(100% PIP Rubber, control)***	**$108,000**	**$162,000**
Site Amenities – 10%	$54,000	$81,000
Installation Services – 10%	$54,000	$81,000
Totals – ***100%***	**$540,000**	**$810,000**

c. According to How to Budget for a New Playground Structure by Miracle Recreation, a playground cost of 1000 USD per child can be expected. Ensuring components are inclusive can have substantial impacts on cost of components and connectors, so a doubling factor of 100% is added. Using Kompan's referenced sizing per child of 4-7 m^2 to prevent overcrowding and a 1.0 CAD to 0.7 USD conversion rate, the following table provides another estimation of component costs that may be applied:

	400 m^2 Surface Area	600 m^2 Surface Area
Number of Children ***(ave. one child per 5.5 m^2)***	73	110
Cost in USD ***($1k/child)***	$73,000	$110,000
Inclusive Development Factor ***(additional 100%)***	$73,000	$110,000
Subtotal ***(USD)***	$146,000	$220,000
Total ***(CAD, 0.7xUSD)***	**$208,500**	**$314,000**

As with method (a), above, these costs say nothing of surfacing, curbing, drainage or amenities. Still, they are in line with estimate component costs as provided in other methods.

d. Another cost estimation tool from the United States Access Board (USAB), as part of the Play Area Accessibility Guidelines, uses cost of playground equipment as the basis for total costs. Formula is as follows:

Total Cost = Playground Equipment (x) + Installation (0.30x) + Surfacing (0.12x) + Design Fees (0.1x)

Therefore, the total cost may be equal to 1.42 times the component cost. At component costs of between $115,000 and $475,000 for 400 m^2 play areas (by composite component estimates noted previously), and rounding the USAB's factor to 1.5, one might expect a range of **$150k - $600k**, consistent with numbers for costs estimated by individual component ($223,000 - $628,000).

SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES

Method	Low (400 m^2)	High (400 m^2)	Low (600 m^2)	High (600 m^2)
Individual Components	$223,000	$588,000	$343,000	$981,000
Composite Structures	$436,000	$567,000	$693,000	$892,000
a. Kompan	$400,500	$537,000	$595,500	$777,500
b. Kompan	$540,000	$540,000	$810,000	$810,000
c. Miracle	$309,000	$481,000	$444,525	$685,100
d. USAB	$209,150	$226,150	$757,100	$774,100

*Total Average Pricing**

Averages (all methods)	Accessible Playground (400 m^2)	Inclusive Playground (600 m^2)
Ranges	$352,941.67 - $529,858.33	$607,187.50 - $869.450.00
Mean Cost	$441,500	$738,500
Unit Rate	**$1,100**	**$1,250**

**Note that an additional estimate of $900 per square meter for "inclusive play" (not reflective of the Strategy's Playground Types) was provided, courtesy of GLV. This value does not include supportive amenities or factors related to curbing or drainage, and so the averages calculated above are taken to be in line with local industry estimating expectations given the additional requirements.*