

Staff Report to Council

Title: Playground Equipment Installation

Report Number: Parks & Facilities-2025-29

Director: Community Services

Manager: Parks & Facilities

Meeting Date:
Wednesday, May 28, 2025

Date to be considered by Council:
Wednesday, May 28, 2025

Recommendation:

The Council direct staff to install playground equipment at both Kin-Huron Park and Lake Huron Highlands Park; and

That Council approve an additional \$30,000 to the project budget, to be funded by the Lifecycle Reserve Fund, to ensure that both playgrounds meet the applicable accessibility requirements.

Executive Summary:

Council approved \$70,000 in the 2025 Budget as part of the Departmental Business Plan to upgrade one park in the Birchwood/Parkwood neighbourhoods. Council requested staff conduct community engagement. Based on neighbourhood feedback, staff are recommending two smaller designs be installed at both Kin-Huron Park and Lake Huron Highlands, which does require additional funds to complete both projects and ensure compliance.

Strategic Priorities:

C.8-Create vibrant parks, green space, recreation facilities and programs for residents or visitors of all ages and abilities

Financial Considerations:

The current approved budget for this project is \$70,000.

Should Council wish to expand the playground replacement project to ensure that the play structures installed at both parks meet the CSA guidelines for accessible play structures, an additional \$30,000 should be added to the project. This additional \$30,000 would allow for the installation of a composite play structure and engineered wood fiber surfacing at both parks.

Policy:

Procurement Policy; 2025 Budget

Context and Background Information:

Staff presented to Council the recommendation of improving playground equipment through consolidation of Kin-Huron Park with Lake Huron Highlands during budget deliberations and further provided a report on March 26, 2025, seeking approval to proceed.

They are a number of reasons why Staff proposed the amalgamation of the parks.

- Both parks are within .4km of each other
- Both parks are 20 years old, which surpasses the recommended 15-year age of playground equipment.
- Both locations require considerable amount of updating as it pertains to preparing the required surfacing to meet code for playgrounds.
- The approved \$70,000 budget would provide multiple robust play structures on one footprint that would meet the needs of a wide range of ages as well in keeping with the definition of an accessible playground. (These playgrounds ensure accessibility for everyone, including those with physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities)
- With limited staff, one playground would provide the ability for staff to better serve and maintain the area.

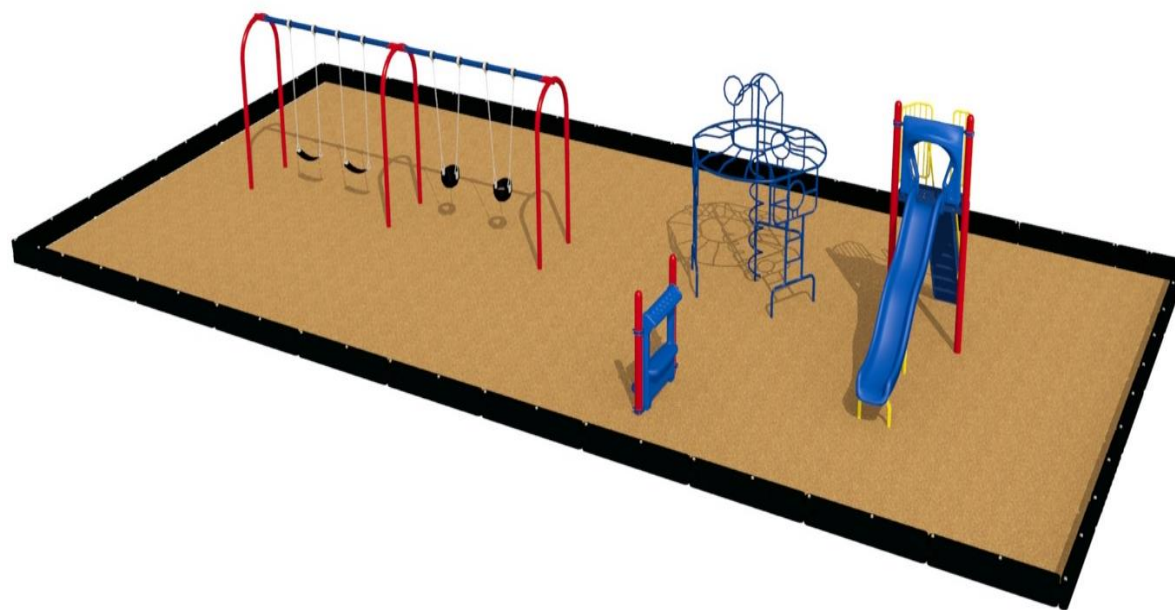
The ongoing discussion surrounding the utilization of community parks within the municipality of Kincardine presents an array of common themes related to community interests and developmental decisions. A primary theme of the feedback is the shared sentiment against the sale of existing parklands. Although not necessarily suggested by staff or Council, there was significant concern. The parks are perceived not only as beneficial public amenities but also as key contributors to community cohesion, environmental preservation, and public health. Residents highlight the essential role these spaces play in community life, serving as venues for social interaction, recreation, and enhancing safety and accessibility for all neighborhood demographics.

These pieces of community land are recognized for their ecological contributions, spaces for physical activity, and natural aesthetics that enhance the quality of life. Residents express concern over the potential adverse effects of losing these green spaces, urging the municipality to focus on upgrades and maintenance rather than elimination or consolidation of facilities. The existing park infrastructures, alongside proposals for improvements such as seating, waste management solutions, and accessible paths, are notably supported. Staff have long expressed concern over ensuring community expectations are met with the Municipality's limited parks staff.

Lastly, financial concerns and alternative funding methods were addressed, indicating public willingness to participate in fundraising efforts to supplement municipal budgets for park enhancements. Residents suggest collaborative initiatives involving community groups and local organizations, emphasizing commitment to long-term investments over short-term financial gains from potential park sales. This grassroots call for communal action highlights an ongoing theme of shared responsibility and local pride in maintaining community assets for current and future generations.

Staff wish to share with Council that both parks are currently maintained by a contractor for the purpose of cutting grass, and the qualified Municipal Parks Staff inspect both playgrounds monthly, as per Standard Operating Procedures. This is a practice that was established three years ago.

Staff support such suggestions of fundraising, but resources continue to be limited to support a fundraising campaign or assisting even with the governance of such an endeavour. Staff are recommending that the approved \$70,000 for playground enhancements be split between both parks to ensure new structures are installed for continued use at both parks. It should be noted that the current budget alone will not support the purchase of equipment that meets the accessibility guidelines for playground construction. With the current budget of \$70,000, staff would be able to purchase a standalone slide, swing set, and climber. While these features have play value, there would be very limited opportunities for accessible features that could provide physical play, creative play or quiet retreat play opportunities for children living with disabilities. The image below is a sample rendering of the equipment that would be supported by the \$70,000 budget (split between both parks).



An additional \$30,000 will allow staff to account for ensuring there are varied play opportunities available in both playgrounds, which would represent a significant improvement in the accessibility of the current play structures at both parks. Below is a sample playground that could be installed with additional funding and would meet the applicable accessibility guidelines and provide play opportunities for more age groups.



Consultation Overview:

Staff provided direct mail inserts to 149 addresses for the purpose of gathering feedback for the review of both the proposed playground location and composition. A total of 267 submissions were received by the deadline of May 3. Staff also took the time to speak directly with phone inquiries to address any concerns or questions that users may have had.

Three options were provided for selection.

- 10% of responses preferred the consolidation of the playground on North Cedar Lane (Kin-Huron Park)
- 19% of respondents preferred Parkwood Road (Lake Huron Highlands) as the preferred location.
- 71% identified that they would prefer that both playgrounds be maintained.

Origin:

Age of existing play equipment.

Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan 2024 - #30 "That the Municipality finance at least one playground revitalization in their annual capital budget on a continuous basis."

Implementation Considerations:

The \$70,000 will not sufficiently provide robust play experience for all users, and there could be potential complaints regarding the size of the play structures when compared to other playground developments.

If staff are able to order the new playgrounds components by mid-June, it is possible that installation could occur in late fall 2025. That being said, project completion in 2025 will be subject to playground installer availability. Next steps in advancing this project will be to formalize the playground(s) designs, based on Council's direction, and consult with the AAC prior to ordering the play components.

Risk Analysis:

There would be a concern about a lack of compliance with Accessibility guidelines based on the current budget allocation (\$70,000) should Council elect to proceed without a budget increase in constructing 2 playgrounds.

There is also concern that this project could carry over to 2026 if staff are not able to promptly order the new playground components, and if contractor timelines, as well as the weather, will not allow for a late fall construction date. Should this project carry over to 2026, staff will aim for an early spring playground installation, with demolition and site prep occurring in fall 2025.

Attachments: None

Prepared by: Mike Di Giovanni, Jayne K. Jagelewski

Submitted by: Jayne Jagelewski, Director of Community Services