

STAFF REPORT

TO: Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission **DATE:** 5/15/2024
FROM: Terry Snyder, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department

Subject: Playground design for the Elizabeth Austin Playground at Fruit Valley Park

Key Points:

- Fruit Valley Neighborhood Park (3200 Fruit Valley Rd.) is a six-acre park located in the Fruit Valley Neighborhood in west Vancouver. Fruit Valley is the largest neighborhood in the city by landmass, and the park serves more than 1,000 households.
- Fruit Valley Park is a popular gathering place for neighbors and offers a beautiful natural environment that includes a playground, a sports court, loop path system, community garden and enough space to host community events like summer movies in the park
- Fruit Valley Neighborhood Park has been selected to receive a fully inclusive playground thanks to a generous \$1 million donation from the Kuni Foundation.
- The new playground will honor the legacy of community leader and mother, Elizabeth Austin.
- Increasing access to inclusive play spaces is a priority for Vancouver Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, it is also one of the two funding priorities for the Kuni Foundation.
- The Elizabeth Austin Playground will be the first all fenced playground in Vancouver.
- In addition to making the park more inviting for people with disabilities, inclusive play environments also encourage strong physical, mental and social development in children who do not experience disability.
- Community engagement began in July 2023 and has run through May 2024. A variety of in-person and online opportunities have invited neighbors to help choose the playground theme (Play Like a Bird) and shape the playground amenities. Materials were provided in English and Spanish.
- This presentation is seeking approval of an inclusive playground design. The new playground will be built in the same area as the existing playground, limiting other impacts to the park.
- The community broadly supports the playground design being presented today and is excited for construction to begin, pending PRAC approval.
- Construction is slated for winter and spring 2025, with plan to be open in summer 2025. A master plan is a big vision for the design and use of a park.

Objective:

Current CDC data indicates that one in four Americans (26%) have [some type of disability](#). Most playgrounds incorporate basic ramps and a few wheelchair-accessible play options to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act's 2010 playground rules. Those accommodations only address some mobility disabilities and still leave many members of our community on the sidelines. Inclusive design reduces barriers for people with physical disabilities, while also providing engaging play opportunities for those experiencing cognitive, developmental, sensory and neurodevelopmental disabilities.

In addition to making the park more inviting for people with disabilities, inclusive play environments also encourage strong physical, mental and social development in children who do not experience disability. Inclusive playgrounds also invite parents and caregivers with disabilities to actively engage in play with the children in their lives.

The new playground at Fruit Valley Park will be a place where people of all ages and abilities can thrive together through play.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Vibrant and Distinct Neighborhoods

- Offer a variety of accessible places and spaces to interact and enjoy nature, art, culture and community.

Safe and Prepared Community

- Vancouver feels like a safe place to live, work, learn and play.

Climate and Natural Systems

- Environmental stewardship and efforts to address climate change to ensure everyone has a sustainable future.

High Performing Government

- The City is reliable, fiscally responsible, equitable and open to compromise.

Present Situation:

The playground at Fruit Valley Park was installed in the mid-1990s and will require replacement within 5-years, per the typical playground use expectancy. The Kuni Foundation approached PRCS with the goal of donating \$1 million to build a new inclusive playground to honor Elizabeth Austin. After reviewing potential locations, Fruit Valley Park was selected because of its pending need for playground replacement and a desire to increase investment and opportunity in the community the park serves.

The new playground will be named the Elizabeth Austin Playground at Fruit Valley Park. The donation and playground name were approved by Vancouver City Council in 2023. Outreach began with the neighborhood to identify a preferred theme and design components for the playground. The final preferred design concept was presented to neighbors at a community open house held at the park on May 9, project materials have also been made available online at www.beaheardvancouver.org/fruit-valley-park. There is strong support for the new playground.

Once the plan is approved by PRAC, park planners can begin preparing for construction and obtaining permits. Construction is expected to start in early 2025 and be completed by summer 2025. This timeline ensures that children in Fruit Valley will still have access to a playground this summer and pushes construction impacts to the winter and spring months, when park use is less frequent due to weather.

Advantage(s):

- Expands recreation opportunities at the park
- Enhances accessibility to the site and provides a fully inclusive play area
- Funds a future capital project need through Kuni Foundation donation

Disadvantage(s):

- No known disadvantages at this time.

Budget Impact:

None, funding is secured through the Kuni Foundation donation.

Action Requested:

Move to approve the Elizabeth Austin Playground design and construction plan at Fruit Valley Park.

Attachment(s):

Elizabeth Austin Playground Preferred Concept Design (PDF)
Elizabeth Austin Playground Key Accessibility Features (PDF)
Fruit Valley Park Open House Handout (PDF)



To request other formats, please contact:
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