



BEYOND BARRIER-FREE



Salt Spring Island – Portlock Park
Accessibility Review
November 2025

OVERVIEW

Located near Central, this park includes four tennis courts, baseball and soccer fields, a children's playground, a 400-m track, a picnic shelter, a multi-court and the PARC Administration office. The PARC portable houses a meeting/activity room which features a ramp to access it. The park features washrooms and basic amenities including parking, park benches and picnic tables.

Thoughtfully designed parks and playgrounds are the heart of vibrant, inclusive communities. These shared outdoor spaces provide vital opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to come together, socialize, and engage in healthy recreation. On Salt Spring Island outdoor recreation including parks and trails are especially important for both residents and the many visitors drawn to the area's stunning natural beauty.

Currently, Salt Spring Island doesn't have any barrier-free parks, trails and viewpoints and there are many people on the Island who experience accessibility barriers and would very much like to stay living in the community, if the amenities were provided.

As the community grows and welcomes new residents and tourists, prioritizing universal design in parks and public spaces will be key to maintaining Salt Spring Island's welcoming, inclusive character.

Local residents informed the consultant team how valued this playground and park is for the community. It's warmer and safer than the other parks found on the Island with many residents preferring to bring their children to Portlock Park as compared to Centennial Park for a variety of reasons. They also informed the consultant team how important this park is for walking and injury recovery with the track being one of the only level and maintained trail surfaces on the Island.

With some thoughtful considerations and planning, this park could be much more accessible and provide access to outdoor recreation for many more residents including reinstating the accessible washroom, creating navigable pathways across the site and some additional benches and resting spaces.

ACCESSIBILITY OF PARKS

Understanding that outdoor recreation opportunities are highly valued on Salt Spring Island, parks and playgrounds are a large piece of that puzzle already. Choosing the right equipment, layout, surface materials and communication strategies can increase accessibility for many individuals, even if a park is not universally designed at present.

Communication and Wayfinding

Let people know what is available for them and they will determine for themselves if the park or playground will meet their needs. Consider highlighting the following features on park websites:

- Trail and pathway surface materials and indication of grade
- Equipment available in playgrounds (especially items that are more inclusive such as roller slides, saucer swings)
- Location of key amenities such as washrooms and parking
- Playground surface material

Connecting Accessible Features

When increasing accessibility in a playground or park, consider how the user will access the feature such as a bench or universal picnic table. Is there a pathway that connects to it? Does the pathway surface offer the same level of accessibility as the rest of the park? Is there a level and firm surface for a mobility device or stroller to be parked? Are there any obstructions in the way to access the amenity? What is the most logical path of travel?

Offer a complete accessible experience for a user. Consider the entire path of travel from the parking lot to the amenity and ensure that a consistent level of access is provided. A universal picnic table that is connected to a primary pathway is far more accessible than one placed in the centre of a grassy field, for example.

Maintenance is also a key factor in maintaining accessibility.



Surface Materials

Trail and playground surface materials make a considerable impact on accessibility and decisions need to be made in order to maintain both accessibility and the connection to nature and the natural environment, depending on the intention of the space.

Trails & Pathways

Paved pathways are the most accessible for users with disabilities using mobility devices and should be highlighted for the community to be made aware of and increase their usage. Other highly accessible options include boardwalks (though can be quite bumpy for some users, especially for long distances) and packed gravel. Not every pathway needs to be accessible, so it is recommended to offer information on the pathway surface via maps, websites and onsite wayfinding.

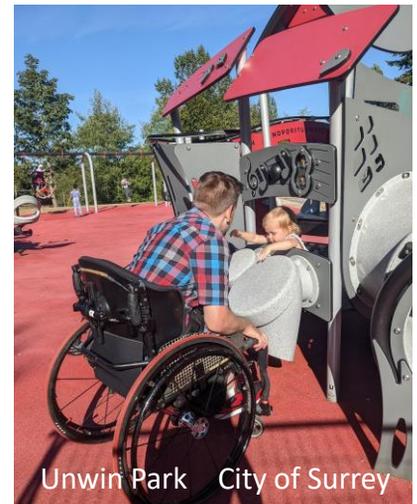
Playground Surfacing

Engineered wood chips, despite being slated as an accessible surface, are not actually an accessible surface material for playgrounds. While they provide good impact attenuation in the event of a fall, wood chips are a loose material that can be difficult for people using mobility devices to navigate.

In contrast, poured-in-place rubber or rubber tiles are considered to be the most accessible surfacing for play spaces. These surfaces are firm, stable and slip-resistant, making them much easier for people using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids to navigate. Rubber surfaces have minimal gaps or irregularities, reducing tripping hazards. They are also non-glare with low thermal conductivity, improving safety and comfort.

Who is the Target Demographic?

When it comes to accessible and universally designed outdoor play spaces, the intended target is generally thought to be the child but it's important to keep in mind the other adults in the child's life that may be taking them to the playground. A parent, grandparent or other caregiver may have a disability so consider how the adult can interact with the child on the playground as well. Places to rest, in shade are equally important as the playground surface material to ensure the inclusion of multi-generational play experiences.



Designing New Playgrounds

Ramps to Nowhere

When installing accessible features, people often just simply add ramps to structures and call it accessible. But is it? Do the ramps have a purpose such as leading to the top of a slide or an elevated engagement station?

Ramps on their own aren't fun for children using mobility devices, they need to connect the child to play with their peers in a way that is meaningful and inclusive.

How is our playground fun for a child with a physical disability, a child with low vision or a child with a hearing disability?

How can we make the playground more fun for a child with a disability?

Equipment worth Considering

- Elevated sand or water tables
- Swings with back support and safety belts
- Roller slides (recommended to support kids with cochlear implants and hearing aids as the static of plastic slides can interfere with their functioning).
- Metal slides
- Roller slides
- Transfer space for slides
- Saucer swings
- Musical equipment
- Inground trampolines
- Friendship swings
- Accessible spinners or rockers
- Diggers
- Accessible gliders (e.g. sway fun glider)
- We go round
- Transfer stations



Transfer station
Reference: Landscape Structures

Note: Fencing around playgrounds can be necessary for many children and caregivers.

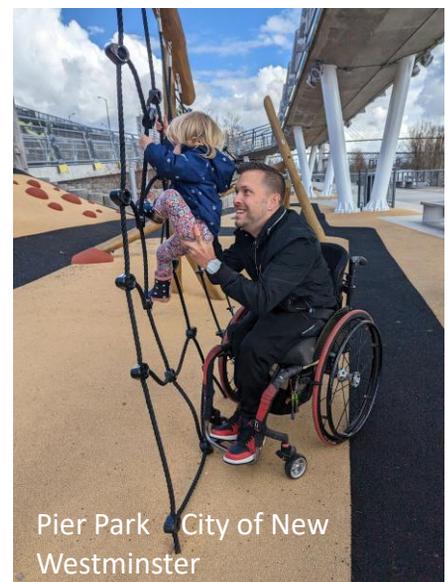
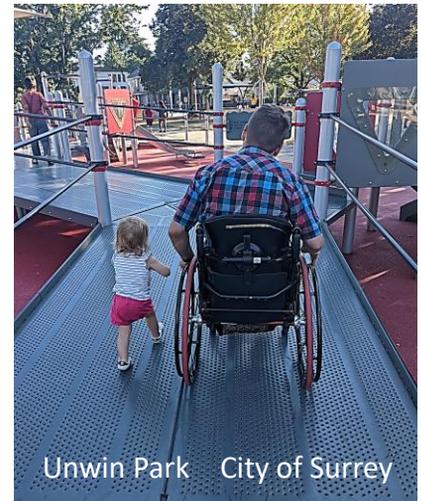
Consider the Users

Mobility Device Users

- ❑ Accessible paths of travel
- ❑ Multiple access routes into and out of the play space
- ❑ Multiple ways to use and access play equipment
- ❑ A mix of ground-level equipment integrated with elevated equipment accessible by a ramp or transfer platform
- ❑ Ramps that lead to a play component
- ❑ Ramp landings, elevated decks, and other areas that provide sufficient turning space for mobility devices
- ❑ Space to park a wheelchair or other mobility device beside transfer platforms
- ❑ Space for a caregiver to sit beside a child on a slide or other play element
- ❑ Transfer platform at the base of the slide wide enough so that children with mobility disabilities can transfer off the slide without blocking others from using the slide
- ❑ Seating space with back support adjacent to the slide exit where children can wait for their mobility device to be retrieved
- ❑ Back support and/or grips on certain play components such as swings
- ❑ Elements that can be manipulated with limited exertion

Hearing Disabilities

- ❑ Caregivers with hearing loss require clear lines of sight throughout the play space to observe their children and to identify when they need assistance.
- ❑ The use of plastic slides has been shown to generate static electricity that may damage cochlear implants. As a result, children are left with the choice of avoiding slides or removing their implants and playing without the ability to hear.

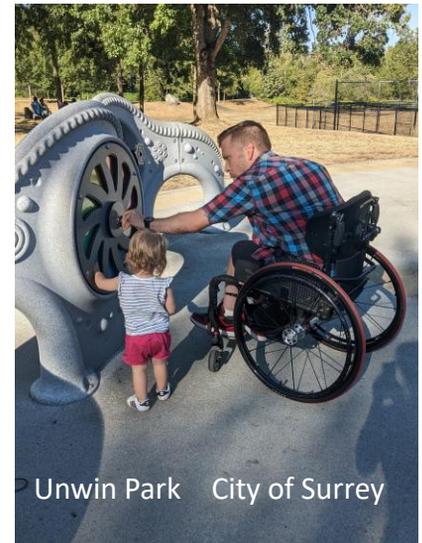


Vision Disabilities

- ❑ Appropriate use of colour, texture, and sound can help users with vision loss access and use equipment and find their way throughout a play space, and can be used to help:
 - Orient children and caregivers to different areas
 - Define different spaces throughout the play area
 - Identify different skill areas
 - Identify play element features
 - Identify pathways and changes in direction
 - Define play space boundaries and areas where children should be cautious, such as around high traffic areas like slide exits
 - Define the edges where there is a level change like at the top of the stairs or at a drop-off using a tactile warning surface

Sensory Disabilities

- ❑ Outdoor play, especially play in natural settings, has been shown to have a soothing effect on children with autism spectrum disorder. Activities that involve natural settings, motion, visual interest, and water play can be good choices.
 - Consider places that are sheltered where a child can take a moment of refuge
 - Quiet areas
 - Combinations of big energy equipment (e.g. swinging, sliding, spinning) and low-stimulation (e.g. colour wheels, digging, sensory play) is encouraged
 - Communication boards can support children with communication disabilities



Unwin Park City of Surrey



Rotary Playground St. Peters, Cape Breton



More information can be found at:
www.rickhansen.com/AccessiblePlaySpaces

Portlock Park

Located near Central, this park includes 4 tennis courts, baseball and soccer fields, a children's playground, a 400-m track, a picnic shelter, a multi-court for tennis, basketball, roller hockey etc. and the PARC Administration office. The PARC portable houses a meeting/activity room. The picnic shelter, as well as the portable, are available for public rental.



Parking Facilities

- ✔ Parking is primarily found within the connected parking lot. Additional parking during special events or busy times is available on the street.
- ✔ There is signage, visible from the street, indicating the name of the park.
- ✔ The paved portion of the parking surface is generally level, firm, non-slip and without significant slope.
- ✔ There is one designated accessible stall that is marked using both vertical pole signage as well as pavement decals allowing for the stall to be relatively visible when a car is parked within the stall and at a distance.





Barriers & Recommendations: Parking Facilities

- The gravel parking lot is very uneven and, because it falls so close to the watertable, it has very poor drainage.
- The drainage rocks surrounding the gravel parking lot, while necessary, are very uneven and make pushing a mobility device (including cane, walker or wheelchair) across very difficult or dangerous for some and completely impossible for others.
- The placement of the accessible parking stall is a bit peculiar in that while it's on a paved level surface, it's far away from the access points to any amenities. The placement makes it nearly invisible to visitors and inaccessible for its intended purpose.



Recommendations

- It's highly recommended to review the ability to pave the lot to prevent the water pooling and irregular walking surface.
 - If not possible, it's highly recommended to add additional crushed gravel to the areas that have potholes to create a stable and level path of travel.
- Additionally, it's recommended to find other mechanisms to provide drainage such as drainage grates to create drainage solutions that can be navigated across while using a wheeled device or when experiencing difficulties with balance.
 - If unable to remediate the entire parking lot, consider creating access paths using drainage grates along the paths of travel including between the parking lot and the entrance to the playground, the tennis courts and the pathway leading to the spectator bleachers.





Barriers & Recommendations: Parking Facilities

Recommendations

- The consultant team were informed that there is a high number of seniors and others using the accessible parking stalls and therefore we highly recommend additional parking accessible stalls at this site, ideally directly adjacent to the gate to access the playground and the tennis courts with greater ease.
- Accessible parking stalls are recommended to be **2600 mm** wide with a shared access aisle of **2000 mm**. The shared access aisle allows someone to drop a side-loading ramp and have space to turn and/or sufficient space for their mobility device to be comfortably transferred into or out of.
 - Currently the accessible stall's access aisle is essentially an access route for a vehicle with no-parking signage.
 - It's recommended to update this to include the hatch-marks to ensure that the width of the access aisle remains available.
- It's recommended to paint the accessible parking pavement decal to include the blue square as to increase visibility at a distance.
- Updating the accessible parking signage is recommended, including the use of "Accessible Parking" over "Handicapped Parking" as well as the use of the dynamic symbol of accessibility.

Proposed
Accessible
Parking Location

Proposed
Accessible
Parking Location

Current
Accessible
Parking Location





Barriers & Recommendations: Parking Facilities



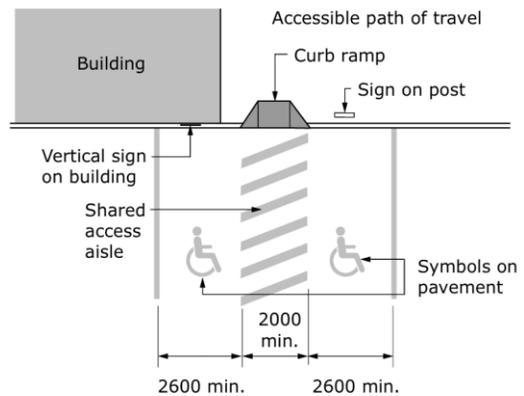
Image demonstrates an updated pavement decal and hatch marks next to the accessible parking stall to create an access aisle.



Did you know?



Using the dynamic accessibility symbol instead of the traditional symbol helps break down attitudinal barriers and helps redefine how we look at people with disabilities.



Reference: CSA B651-23
Figure 67



Park Pathways and Navigation to Amenities

Trails & Pathways

- ✓ There are paved pathways leading from the paved portion of the parking lot to a few amenities including the washrooms, storage facilities and program facility.
- ✓ There is a ramp leading to the programming facility.
 - ✓ The ramp is without threshold and is easy to navigate with independence thanks to its very accessible slope.
 - ✓ The ramp features bilateral handrails.
 - ✓ The ramp includes a non-slip surface.
- ✓ There are some waste receptacles along the path of travel without obscuring it.
- ✓ The site layout is generally quite obvious with the main amenities being clearly visible at a distance, from the parking lot.



Benches and Picnic Tables

- ✓ There are a variety of seating options in the park including park benches, with back rests and armrests.
- ✓ The park offers a picnic shelter with picnic tables under whether protection.



Barriers & Recommendations: Pathways and Navigation

Trails & Pathways

- The pathways around the park are primarily natural and not developed or maintained to a high level of accessibility. The resulting pathways are more of a 'cow path' rather than a true path of travel. Consequently, the primary paths of travel are not accessible, despite the track being a clear attraction for people as a comfortable walking surface.
 - It was highlighted to the consultant team that the track is a key Island amenity for people to use as a safe and level walking surface, particularly for seniors and for those recovering from injuries.
 - It was also brought to the consultant team's attention that the pathways around the park are not accessible for wheeled mobility device users and that users have fallen when navigating the nearly invisible threshold from the path to the track.
- The bike rack located next to the pick-up window may have people's bikes parked in such a way that it blocks the path of travel, especially for someone relying on the paved pathway.

Recommendations

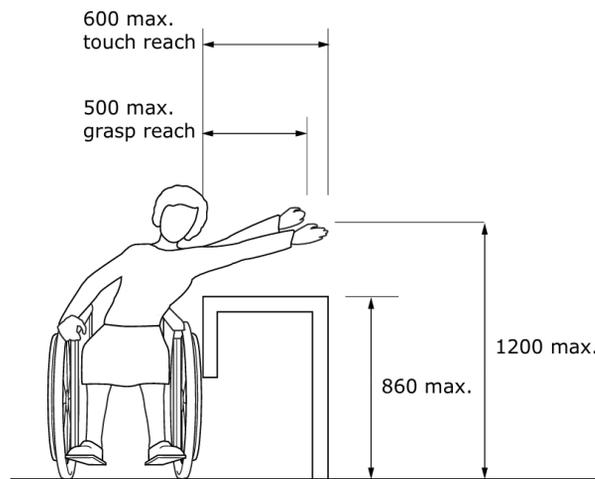
- Consider offering other options for bicycle parking and move the current bike rack to another location to ensure that the path of travel remains unobstructed.
- It's highly recommended to create an integrated network of pathways connecting key elements via level and accessible pathways.
 - If paved is not possible, then we highly recommended packed crusher dust that is well maintained or alternatively a removable surface such as a mobi mat.
- Pathways should connect to all key amenities and provide a complete path of travel for users. Consistent, stable, level and firm pathways should be considered for the following locations, from the parking lot with:
 - Access to at least one tennis and pickle ball court.
 - Access to through the playground area, including the bench located near the young children's playground area.
 - Access to the track (ideally on both sides of the tennis courts).
 - Access to the picnic shelter.
 - Access to the bleachers.

Barriers & Recommendations: Pathways and Navigation

Trails & Pathways

Recommendations

- When redeveloping the park's pathways, widening them to a minimum wide of **1200 mm** is recommended.
- Improve wayfinding and signage for accessible routes. Let people know what the most accessible routes of travel are, especially if not able to remediate all the pathways leading from the parking lot to key amenities.
- Add benches along the paths of travel to provide people opportunities to rest, watch children play or view the games or matches with comfort.
 - Place benches along the path of travel.
- Additional trash cans / waste disposal bins along the path of travel are highly recommended.
 - When installing waste disposal bins, ensuring that the controls are easily accessible by a wheeled mobility device user (note the reach requirements in the figure below.)



Reference: CSA B651-23
Figure A. 4
Demonstrates lateral reach ranges over an obstacle.

Barriers & Recommendations: Pathways and Navigation

The image below provides guidance on where accessible paths of travel should be considered. Primary paths of travel are marked in **pink**, a secondary path of travel marked in **blue** and bench recommendations are noted in **yellow**.



Barriers & Recommendations: Pathways and Navigation

The images below demonstrate the inaccessible pathways found across the park and demonstrate where accessible path of travel ideally would be located.



Barriers & Recommendations: Pathways and Navigation

Benches and Picnic Tables

A significant barrier to access is the limited number of benches and the distance they are from key amenities such as the playground where seniors and caregivers may need to rest while supervising children.

Another significant barrier is that the picnic shelter is actually inaccessible due to the step up to the concrete pad from one side and the significant slope on the other.

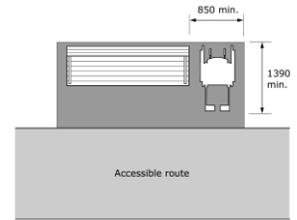
Recommendations

- Increase number of benches or resting spots along pathways and around the track.
- Consider informal seating options (e.g., tree stumps, rocks) where benches are not feasible.
- Ensure benches are placed within proximity to key play areas and washrooms to support caregivers or older adults.
- For the picnic shelter, we highly recommend installing a small ramp that connects to path of travel to the concrete pad which will make the picnic shelter accessible to not only those using mobility devices (wheelchairs and walkers) but also parents pushing strollers as well as individuals who struggle with balance or a step up.

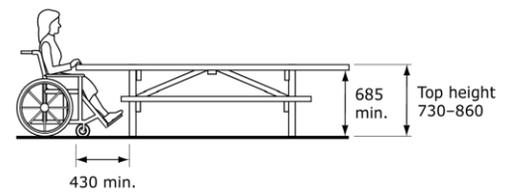


Barriers & Recommendations: Pathways and Navigation

- Additional benches with armrests and backrests would be recommended. Ideally these benches would along to a path of travel with an adjacent clear area of at **least 850 by 1390 mm** to allow for space for a mobility device or stroller to be out of the route of travel.
- Accessible benches should have a seat height between **430 and 485 mm** from the floor.
- Universal picnic benches should also be considered when replacing or supplementing current inventory. These picnic tables should be placed on a firm and level surface extending **2000 mm** on all sides, adjacent to an accessible route of travel.
- It's highly recommended to update at least one picnic table within the picnic shelter to a model that is universally designed.



Reference: CSA B651-23
Figure 57



Reference: CSA B651-23
Figure 64A



Photos demonstrate a variety of picnic table designs.

The top left photo would benefit from a path connecting the picnic table to the main path of travel.





Barriers & Recommendations: Pathways and Navigation

Seating offering should be varied in height, style and meeting a variety of needs. When it comes to benches provided, best practice is to offer benches (or seating of some type) every **30 m**. Additionally, when choosing benches, the following are best practices to keep in mind:

- Benches should have a seat height between **430 and 485 mm**
- Provide clear space next to the bench of **850 mm by 1390 mm** for a mobility device or stroller to be placed out of the path of travel
- Be located adjacent to the path of travel or connected to the primary path of travel via a pathway.
- Be of a contrasting colour to the ground surface colour.
- Selecting creative seating with a smooth and level surface, clear space and good contrast will ensure that they amplify accessibility in addition to seating with backrests and armrests. Natural elements can help elevate seating options.



Barriers & Recommendations: Washrooms

- The washrooms are not accessible at all and in fact, the accessible washroom was converted into a janitorial closet. Unfortunately, this makes it very difficult for anyone with limited mobility to attend events in the park or stay for any length of time.
 - The optics and the perception this creates is such that accessibility is not a priority in the community and that people with disabilities are neither prioritized nor considered.
- The gendered washrooms have significant accessibility limitations including the ability to enter the facilities with a mobility device and close the door.
- The washrooms are difficult to see at a distance and would benefit from some additional wayfinding including larger signage on the exterior of the facility.

Recommendations

- The gendered washrooms should greatly benefit from some small adjustments that would make the washrooms more accessible for people of all abilities and disabilities, these include:
 - The soap dispenser and paper towel dispenser are recommended to be lowered so that their operating controls are mounted no higher than **1100 mm** from the floor. This will allow someone shorter in stature, including children, be able to fully wash and dry their hands independently.
 - The threshold to enter the woman's washroom is recommended to be leveled and made even. It currently has a gap that can be difficult for some navigating across with a walker or cane.
 - Additional signage including overhead blade signage is recommended to draw attention to the location of the washrooms.
 - The washroom signage is currently mounted on the washroom door and is therefore illegible when the door is open and doesn't include contrast or tactile elements. It is highly recommended for washroom signage to include a raised icon and letters providing tactile information for someone who's blind and ideally Braille.
 - Mount the signage on the wall, on the latch-side of the door at a height of **1500 mm** center line from the floor.



Barriers & Recommendations: Washrooms

The most significant recommendation of this report is to update the accessible washroom and returned it into operation for its intended purpose. The janitorial supplies should be stored elsewhere in the facility, providing access to a universal washroom would greatly improve access at the park and resident's feelings of accessibility and inclusion as a priority of the district.

We understand that the turning radius and transfer space within the washroom may not meet current best practices but the space is significantly larger than the current gendered washrooms and, with some updates, the space would provide a significant amount of accessibility for people with limited mobility including cane, walker and wheelchair users.

It's highly recommended to reinstate the accessible washroom and complete its accessible features with the following elements:

- An angled grab bar on the wall adjacent to the toilet and a horizontal grab bar mounted on the wall behind the toilet. A toilet with a seat lid or back rest is highly recommended.
- The toilet paper dispenser within reach of someone seated on the toilet.
- The flushing mechanism should be mounted on the transfer side of the toilet.
- A hook mounted no higher than **1200 mm** from the floor.
- A locking mechanism that does not require fine dexterity and can be operated with an opened or closed fist. It's worth noting that electronic controls facilitate use by a wider range of people.
- The soap dispenser, sharps disposal unit and hand dryer or paper towel dispenser are recommended to be placed so that their operating controls are mounted no higher than **1100 mm** from the floor.
- An open canister style of toilet paper dispenser is more accessible for people with dexterity disabilities.
- An additional fold-down grab bar on the transfer side of the toilet is also recommended.
- Knee clearance, offset and insulated piping and easy to use faucet controls are recommended at the sink.



Barriers & Recommendations: Washrooms

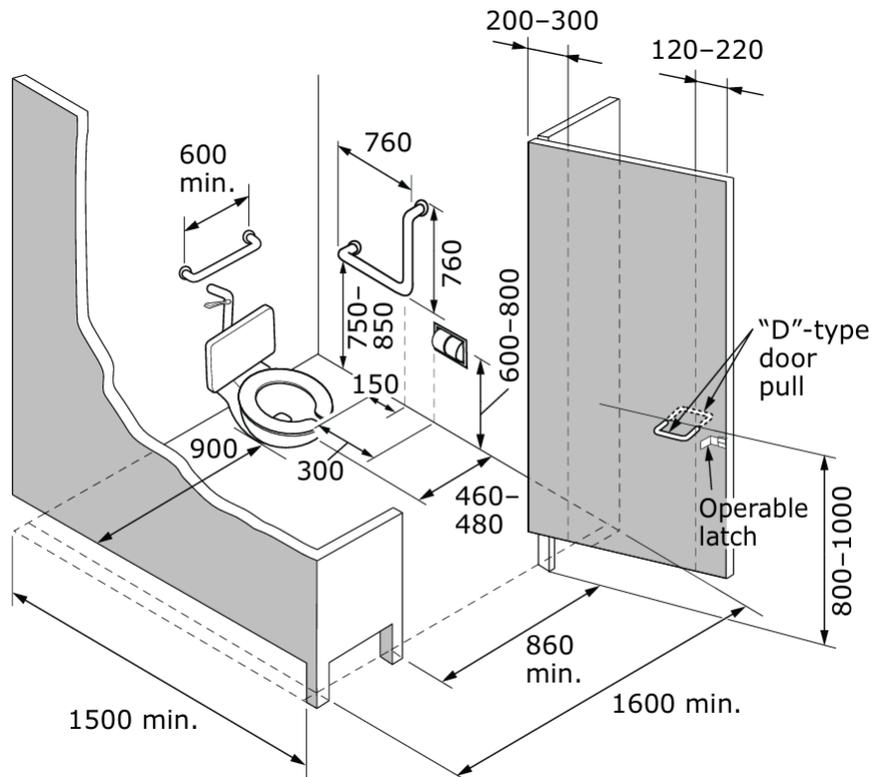


Image demonstrates best practices for an accessible toilet stall with provided measurements for the correct placement of washroom facilities.

Reference: CSA B651-23

Figure 46



Park Amenities

Tennis Courts

- ✔ Access to the tennis and pickle ball courts is sufficiently wide for mobility device users including a wheelchair user with a wheelchair of typical size to access comfortably.
- ✔ The surface material is consistent, firm and without slope or gaps making it for a very accessible athletic surface.

Track

- ✔ The track is a key feature of this park. Residents informed the consultant team that it is one of the few places that offers a place outdoors without significant slope and with additional safety features such as lighting and a washroom for people to walk.
- ✔ The track is highly used and valued by the community.
- ✔ The track, while not yet completed being packed, is navigable with a wheelchair, though with difficulty.

Playgrounds

- ✔ There are two playgrounds at this site including one designed for older children and one designed for younger children.
- ✔ There is one bench that is relatively near to the younger children's playground.
- ✔ The playground provides ample opportunities for children to engage with large, gross-motor and vestibular play.
- ✔ The sight-lines for caregivers are consistent across the playgrounds.



Barriers & Recommendations: Park Amenities

Tennis Courts

- Creating an accessible path of travel to at least one tennis court is highly recommended. This means that a level surface, without gap or threshold is provided ideally from the parking lot and from the entrance closest to the track. Pickle ball and tennis are sports that are highly accessible in nature, with pickleball in particular, growing in popularity and accessibility.
- Consider widening the access gate to the pickleball court to accommodate a sports wheelchair.

Para Pickleball is now being played in different parts of the country. Players in wheelchairs can and are playing in singles or doubles as in regular pickleball or, in teams made up of a wheelchair player partnered with a standing player. A few modifications have been made for the wheelchair athlete. A double bounce is allowed for the wheelchair athlete, and the front wheels of his chair can cross the non volley line.

These athletes are a joy to watch...they are fast, they are accurate, they are competitive and mostly...they are thrilled and proud to have a new sport in which they can excel and have fun. Pickleball Canada is committed to the development of the sport in Canada for all demographics throughout the country. Help make this a truly National pastime.





Barriers & Recommendations: Park Amenities

Tennis Courts





Barriers & Recommendations: Park Amenities

Track

- It's highly recommended to improve the threshold / grade transitions between the track and the path of travel to ensure accessible entry to the track and prevent people of falling.
- Adding signage to mark accessible routes to the track, even if it's simple directional signage without the wheelchair symbol is highly recommended, especially if choosing to make one pathway accessible over another route of access.
- Ensure the designated accessible route is built and maintained and that the connection to the track is maintained.
- Consider adding an additional bench to the far side of the track to support walkers with limited stamina or strength.
- The bleachers are highly recommended to be reviewed and updated when possible.





Barriers & Recommendations: Park Amenities

Water Fountains

- A public water fountain is highly recommended at this park to provide visitors access to clean drinking water.

Playground Equipment

- Consider include accessible outdoor fitness equipment in the plan when updating this park given how well used the park is and how few accessible outdoor recreation opportunities there are on Salt Spring. Consider elements that don't require someone to transfer out of their wheelchair or that have dual functionality, providing fitness for someone with or without mobility disabilities.
- The playground surface is pea gravel which is not an accessible surface, preventing a wheeled mobility device or stroller from being pushed easily on the surface. The uneven surface is also very challenging for people with balance disabilities including those that use mobility canes. The playground surface prevents caregivers with disabilities from getting close to their playing child to assist and prevents children with disabilities completely from playing at this playground.
- More benches, particularly ones that are placed closer to playground equipment is highly recommended to allow caregivers to be close to playing children, while also providing a place to rest.
- When updating the playground equipment, consider adding:
 - A saucer swing or high-back swing;
 - A roller slide;
 - Tactile and musical elements;
 - A place where children can hide or provide distance from stimulation;
 - Sensory play (water, sand etc.).
- It's highly recommended to consider fencing in the younger playground to help keep children who tend to run off safe.
- When completing a significant upgrade, making the playground surface accessible (rubberized) is highly recommended.



Learn more about inclusive outdoor fitness and active aging: [Inclusive Fitness Whitepaper](#) and [Active Aging Whitepaper](#)



Recommendations: Wayfinding

- There is very little signage on site, making it difficult for visitors to be aware of the amenities onsite as well as be able to find the most efficient routes of travel to get to the amenity they are seeking. Signage indicating the location of amenities is highly recommended along with supplemental directional signage. Signage should include all recreation and leisure amenities as well as public washrooms and ideally accessible parking stalls. A full map of the park is recommended as well as directional signage at key decision points.
- Washroom signage should be mounted on the wall at a height of **1500 mm** from the floor and include tactile and braille elements along with recognizable symbols.
- Blade signage for washrooms is also recommended to improve visibility at a distance.



Example of a civic complex map
Reference: Oshawa This Week News



Example of trail signage
Location: City of Richmond

Understanding Wayfinding

Imagine navigating a complex building with ease, feeling confident and in control rather than overwhelmed. This is the result of a thoughtfully designed wayfinding system, which incorporates braille, tactile elements, high-contrast signage, and intuitive icons strategically placed throughout the space.

For individuals who are blind or have low vision, tactile signage with raised characters and braille is essential. It enables them to independently access critical information, including room numbers, directions, and emergency exits, enhancing their autonomy and safety within the environment.

High-contrast signage, with light text on a dark background or vice versa, makes it easier for people with visual disabilities to read and comprehend information quickly.

Intuitive icons and pictograms are another powerful tool for accessibility. They transcend language barriers and provide a universal understanding of key features and directions. For individuals with cognitive disabilities or anxiety, these visual cues can help break down complex information into manageable chunks, reducing stress and confusion.

By providing clear, unobstructed paths and directional signage at appropriate heights, we ensure that everyone can navigate the space with ease. When the signage is visible at a distance, it allows people to make decisions on their path of travel and ensure they are using the most efficient and effective route of travel to their intended destination.



Did you know?

Sans serif fonts are considered the most accessible since they streamline the reading process by eliminating visual distractions, making them the go-to choice for maximum readability and accessibility.

WHY DO ICONS MATTER?



Iconography

Icons are important for accessibility because they provide visual cues that can be quickly and easily understood by a wide range of users, regardless of their language skills, cognitive abilities, or sensory impairments.

Universal understanding: Well-designed icons transcend language barriers and can be interpreted by people from diverse backgrounds including folks who don't speak English as a first language.

Cognitive accessibility: Icons can help people with cognitive disabilities or learning difficulties to better understand and navigate their environment. Simple, clear icons reduce the cognitive load required to process information.

Wayfinding assistance: Consistent use of standardized icons throughout a building or site can aid in wayfinding, especially for individuals with intellectual disabilities or those who are unfamiliar with the space.

Benefit for people with low vision: When designed with high contrast and sufficient size, icons can be more easily perceived by people with low vision compared to text alone.

Supports non-readers: Icons can convey important information to individuals who have difficulty reading, whether due to a visual impairment, learning disability, or language barrier.

Key Considerations

- Use internationally recognized symbols, like the International Symbol of Access.
- Ensure adequate size and contrast for visibility.
- Place icons on signage that is mounted at an accessible height and providing clear floor space for approach.
- Utilize tactile icons with braille labels on signage to support users who are blind or have low vision.
- Maintain consistency in the design and use of icons throughout a site.
- Incorporate well-designed, universally understood icons to create environments that are more intuitive, easier to navigate, and accessible to a broader range of people.

PRIORITIZATION

When considering making changes to increase accessibility, thinking about the entire 'path of accessibility.' That is, is the complete process of accessing and using a space accessible? Generally, we advocate for creating complete accessible spaces rather than adding piecemeal accessibility supports.

Short Term

- Improve wayfinding and signage in the parks highlighting key amenities and pathways.
- Include accessible equipment into the equipment replacement cycle and review opportunities to upgrade some playgrounds elements to be more accessible.
- Augment the number of accessible parking stalls and update the signage to meet current best practices.
- Remediate the threshold between the track and the attached access path.
- Add additional benches with armrests and backrest.

Long Term

- Develop a plan to create one fully inclusive playground on Salt Spring Island ensuring that families with disabilities can play in their community in a space that meets their needs.
- Upgrade the washrooms to provide an accessible washroom onsite for all visitors to use.
- Create a network of pathways across the park that connect people from the parking lot to the various amenities within the park.

THANK YOU

for choosing Meaningful Access Consulting

We are pleased to work with you and to present this review of Salt Spring Island's and Portlock Park which outlines accessibility recommendations from mobility, hearing, learning, sensory, cognitive and sight perspectives. We are so encouraged that that the CRD is truly activating on their Accessibility Plan to continue to support everyone of all abilities in being able to access the exceptional services and programs provided in this beautiful area of the world.

We continue to applaud the CRD and your efforts in working towards universal design and accessibility for all.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out! We are here to help.

Thank you again,

Marco & Karin

Marco & Karin Pasqua

Universal Design Accessibility Consultants

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