



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT • 1140 Terex Road • Hudson, Ohio 44236 • (330) 342-1790

MEMORANDUM

To: Thom Sheridan, City Manager
From: Jena Stasik, Community Relations Manager
CC: Greg Hanan, Community Development Director; Katie Behnke, Economic Development Manager
Date: October 13, 2023
Subject: State Capital Budget Funds – Inclusive Playground

The State of Ohio awards biennial capital budget funding to support regional and local projects that demonstrate a state benefit in higher education, mental health, parks and recreation, conservation, and cultural and sports facilities. The inclusive (or “universal”) playground proposal at Middleton Road Park would be a strong submittal to the State Capital Budget as the concept has received local community support to raise private funds for a portion of the project including playground equipment, specialized turf and fencing on site. The City would be responsible for infrastructure and site improvement costs as this project falls outside of the park’s five-year plan. By pursuing the State Capital Budget Grant funds, the City could receive **up to two thirds** of the total infrastructure cost through reimbursement with a **one-third local match requirement**. Total engineering costs updated October 2023 were **\$1.38 million** (See Attachment A.) If the City were to be awarded the funds, this would impact the FY 25-26 budget.

PURPOSE AND EVALUATION

Conversations surrounding the need for an inclusive (or “universal”) playground began in the Summer of 2022 following a resident’s concern that the Park Master Plan, published in 2020, only addressed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible options, but did not address inclusivity for children with and without disabilities. To provide background, ADA is federal law which, in part, requires parks and recreation departments/ districts to serve people with disabilities through physical access to parks through removal of elimination of architectural barriers and access to programs through adapted sports. ADA Standards are based on minimum guidelines set by the Access Board. Currently, the City of Hudson Parks include a handicapped accessible swing at each playground.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association, the concept of a fully “inclusive” and “universal” playground design includes an environment usable by *all persons of all abilities*. By incorporating an inclusive approach into a playground design, it enables and empowers a diverse population through human performance, health and wellness, and social participation.

The nearest fully inclusive playgrounds to Hudson, Ohio are over 45 minutes away and include:

- Preston’s Hope – Beechwood, Ohio
- Mila’s Way and Rowyn’s Dream – Randolph, Ohio

Since the initial conversations with the City, an organized group of community members has committed to raising private donations through a fund with the Hudson Community Foundation with the intent to purchase playground equipment, specialized turf, and safety fencing (See Attachment B).

The Park Board recently supported a recommendation to proceed with Middleton Road Park as the potential site of an inclusive playground, but now seeks Council approval.

The City has sought out this state capital budget funding option for infrastructure and site improvement, if City Council wishes to proceed with this initiative.

TIMELINE

October 2023 - Request Council support/approval to move forward with the request.

November/December 2023 - City Manager/Community Relations to make contact with both Representative Casey Weinstein and Senator Kristina Roegner’s office and begin initial discussion of the project submittal.

January 2024 - Submit preliminary proposal to legislative aides of Rep. Weinstein and Sen. Roegner and schedule tour of the property.

February/March 2024 - Submit final proposal.

Summer 2024 – Notification of award. *Dependent on when the State Budget passes.

BUDGET

Site improvement costs provided by the City’s Engineering Department are estimated to be \$1.38 million. If the funds are awarded, this would impact the FY25-26 budgets (Grant period: January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2026). The grant is reimbursable with a one-third local match requirement, which would indicate a need for commitment to the total project cost by City Council.

CONCLUSION

City staff recommends pursuit of the State Capital Budget Grant as there is no award cap to support infrastructure and site improvement costs for the proposed Middleton Road Inclusive Playground.