

# THE INDEPENDENCE PARK PROJECT

Connecting Community. A Legacy of Play.

A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO CONTINUE THE TRANSFORMATION



FOREVER PARKS FOUNDATION  
OF PEARLAND



Dear Friends and Community Partners,

At the grand opening of Pearland's first inclusive playground — the Ed Thompson Inclusive Park — in 2023, Mayor Kevin Cole and Pearland Parks & Recreation Director Carry Capers introduced a bold and compassionate vision: the **Inclusive Play Initiative**. This initiative established a clear direction in our Parks Master Plan — to make inclusive play a priority across Pearland. It also marked the beginning of our next transformational project: the Independence Park Inclusive Playspace.

Now, just two years later, that vision is becoming a reality — and we invite you to help bring it to life. We are raising \$5 million to elevate the existing playground at Independence Park into a vibrant four-acre inclusive playspace and water play destination comprised of essential elements of universal design. Aligned with the City's 2023 voter-approved bond initiative for Phase II improvements, this project is more than an upgrade to Pearland's largest park; **it is an investment in our shared future and the preservation of our community heritage.**

As President of the Forever Parks Foundation of Pearland, I've seen firsthand how high-quality parks change lives. They are where friendships grow, where families create memories, and where every person — regardless of ability — deserves to feel welcome, safe, and inspired to play. Thanks to the City of Pearland's 2023 Phase II bond and the support of early, generous donors, the foundation for this project is already in place. Now, we need visionary partners like you to help us bring the full vision of the Independence Park All-Inclusive Playspace to life.

I invite you to explore the materials in this packet and consider how you can support this mission. Whether through a major gift, a multi-year pledge, or by introducing us to others who believe in community, inclusion, and play — your support will leave a legacy that truly matters.

With gratitude and anticipation,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Webb".

Jeff Webb  
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## ABOUT THE INDEPENDENCE PARK PROJECT

Independence Park has long served as a vital recreational space for the Pearland community. Phase I improvements, completed in 2019, redefined the park's functionality with a new amphitheater, accessible playground, improved trails, drainage, and reoriented entrance. Building on this foundation, Phase II – supported by voter-approved funding – includes expanding and enhancing the existing pond to serve as a usable amenity lake, adding landscaping, increasing parking capacity, improving lighting, providing additional electrical serviceability, ensuring trail and sidewalk connectivity, installing new site furnishings, incorporating a water play amenity, and establishing an inclusive playground.

The cornerstone of this development is the region's premier inclusive playspace and water play amenity, providing access to all abilities and inter-generational play experiences. The project budget allocation approved in the 2023 Bond Referendum for Phase II of the park is \$16.3 million, which includes \$700,000 designated for the inclusive playground area and water play amenity, **but community feedback, precedent research, and conceptual design development revealed the true cost to achieve the vision and incorporate exceptional universal design exceeds \$5 million.**

*The Independence Park Project - Connecting Community. A Legacy of Play* capital campaign goal is to bridge the gap to raise the \$5 million in additional funding needed to realize the full concept design scope of the All-Inclusive Playspace and Splash Pad to ensure essential components of universal design are realized such as: inclusion, multi-generational elements, quiet spaces, and features designed to build strength, socialization skills, independence, and a sense of self-esteem.



## THE NEED: GROWING COMMUNITY, GROWING PRIORITIES

As Pearland continues to experience unprecedented growth and diversification, our community's needs have evolved dramatically. We now serve:

- Young families seeking safe, engaging play spaces for their children
- Aging adults looking for accessible wellness and recreation opportunities
- Individuals with disabilities who deserve full inclusion in community life
- Lifelong residents seeking connection with nature and neighbors
- New residents looking to build roots and relationships
- Cultural communities needing spaces for gathering and celebration

The demand for inclusive, multi-functional, universally designed public spaces has never been greater. This project ensures that Independence Park will reflect and serve the community it represents: accessible, inspiring, and built for authentic connection.

### Community Driven Design and Proven Impact

- This project reflects genuine community input, with 45 stakeholders participating in the concept design process with TBG Architects to ensure the park meets our residents' diverse needs.
- The Forever Parks Foundation of Pearland has a proven track record that includes the successful development of Ed Thompson Inclusive Park, which has already demonstrated the transformative power of inclusive design in our community.
- Ed Thompson Inclusive Park had 60,000+ visitors in its first 2 years from 260 zip codes and 26 states. The park is invaluable to the community with My PlayClub events, school field trips, family gatherings, educational sessions, and more.



# INDEPENDENCE PARK PHASE II PLAN OVERVIEW

The Phase II Plan Overview highlights a bold vision to expand and enhance Independence Park through inclusive, nature-inspired, and community-focused design. These planned improvements prioritize universal access, meaningful connections to nature, and welcoming experiences for every visitor.

## Transition to Authentic Nature

- Redefine current park standards of natural green space
- Create habitat and sanctuary for local flora and fauna
- Mitigate drainage with bio-swales and wetland planting, and provide educational opportunities
- Envelope the landscape with natural systems to create a cohesive park identity through the articulation of planting and native grasses
- Use reforestation for defining program buffers and establishing sight lines

## Increase Inclusivity & Usability

- Expand existing playground to create a truly all-inclusive play space for everyone
- Create spaces for activity and respite within a natural environment
- Integrate TBG Architects Tenets of Play
  - Authentic Nature
  - Responsible Risk-Taking
  - Inclusivity
  - Productive Engagement
- Exploration
- Expand efficiency and capacity of amphitheater lawn & event spaces
- Accentuate existing tree canopy and provide shade for all program areas

## Enhance Connectivity

- Establish visual connections inside the park by creating program “destinations” and limiting visual constraints around the site
- Establish pedestrian entry and connections into the park from the perimeter to create an inviting space for all users



# INDEPENDENCE PARK PHASE II CONCEPT DESIGN



**Phase II**  
 A. Regional Event Spaces  
 B. All-Inclusive Playspace  
 C. Naturalized Amenity Lake  
 D. Sports Complex  
 E. Reflection Zone

- 1. Amphitheater Expansion
- 2. Concrete Path
- 3. Shade Pavilion
- 4. Splash Pad
- 5. Parking Lot
- 6. Dog Park \*
- 7. Basketball Pavilion
- 8. Tennis Courts \*

- 9. Pickle Ball Courts \*\*
- 10. Sand Volleyball \*\*
- 11. Event Lawn
- 12. Entry Tunnel \*
- 13. Bike Access
- 14. Dry Creek
- 15. Picnic Areas
- 16. Pedestrian Bridge - Lake

- 17. Fishing Dock/Kayak launch
- 18. Native Grasses
- 19. Wetlands
- 20. Bioswale
- 21. Open Lawn
- 22. Synthetic Turf
- 23. Fitness Lawn

\*Existing

\*\*Proposed pending funding

# INDEPENDENCE PARK PHASE II PLAN OVERVIEW

## A. Regional Event Spaces

Building on the success of Phase I improvements, Phase 2 proposes to grade and expand event seating, install synthetic turf for all-weather use, and create shade opportunities with new tree plantings to create a true regional event space for a multitude of uses.

## B. All-Inclusive Playspace

Beneath the shade of existing trees, this universally inclusive play space invites users of any age to explore, surrounded by the natural environment. Slides, climbers, and a play tower are opposite the dry creek that winds through a variety of program areas, creating both structured and passive play opportunities.

## C. Naturalized Amenity Lake

This existing detention pond is transformed into a naturalized 5.6-acre amenity lake, ready for kayaks and paddle boards, while wetland and native plant species line the nearly 1-mile-long shoreline, fostering a habitat for many native animals. A looped pedestrian path is activated by a fishing dock and an adaptive kayak launch.

## D. Sports Complex

Sports opportunities, including tennis, pickleball, sand volleyball, and open fields, are consolidated to a complex with dedicated parking and shade opportunities.

## E. Reflection Zone

This area combines existing and proposed walking trails activated by passive program areas including seating opportunities for reading, picnic areas, and open lawn space for smaller gatherings.



# ALL-INCLUSIVE PLAYSPACE AND SPLASH PAD CONCEPT DESIGN



- A. Hillside Habitat
- B. Fruit Pile
- C. Farmer's Village
- D. Dry Creek Exploration
- E. Play Lawns

- |                                  |                                 |                                   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Concrete Path                 | 10. Multi-level Play Tower      | 19. Swing Zone                    |
| 2. Trails                        | 11. Builder Zone                | 20. Play Village                  |
| 3. Shade Pavilion                | 12. Racing Slides               | 21. Perimeter Fence               |
| 4. Pedestrian Bridge             | 13. Extra Wide Embankment Slide | 22. Existing Trees                |
| 5. Splash Pad                    | 14. Play Mounds                 | 23. Proposed Trees                |
| 6. Dry Creek                     | 15. Hillside Climbers           | 24. Native Grasses                |
| 7. Play Lawn                     | 16. Rubberized Play Surface     | 25. Bioswale                      |
| 8. Play "Ribbon"                 | 17. Synthetic Turf              | 26. Indigo Bunting Play Structure |
| 9. Refurbished Restroom Building | 18. Parent Hangout              |                                   |

# THE POWER OF UNIVERSAL AND INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Rooted in the principles of universal design, this four-acre all-inclusive playspace and splash pad destination will offer barrier-free, intuitive, and engaging experiences for everyone — from toddlers to grandparents, and from children with disabilities to their typically developing peers.

## What is Universal Playground Design?

Universal design means creating spaces that are usable and welcoming to people of all abilities — without the need for adaptation or special accommodations. In playground design, this goes far beyond meeting ADA compliance. It involves thoughtful integration of features that support a full range of physical, sensory, cognitive, and social needs.

## Key Principles of Universal Design in Playgrounds:

- **Equitable Use:** Equipment and experiences that can be used by everyone, not just a select few.
- **Flexibility in Use:** Options that support different ways to engage, climb, swing, spin, or rest.
- **Simple and Intuitive:** Clear layouts and signage that make it easy for all users to navigate.
- **Perceptible Information:** Design that supports different ways of understanding (visual, auditory, tactile).
- **Low Physical Effort:** Accessible pathways and features that reduce fatigue or barriers to participation.

## Essential Elements of Inclusive Playgrounds

The Independence Park Inclusive Playground will incorporate a wide range of inclusive elements, carefully selected to promote interaction, engagement, and belonging:

- Multi-sensory experiences — including musical instruments, textured surfaces, and water play
- Accessible pathways and surfacing — for mobility device users and caregivers
- Adaptive swings and spinning elements — with varied levels of support
- Quiet zones and retreat spaces — for children with sensory processing needs
- Social gathering spaces — designed to encourage cooperative play and caregiver interaction
- Visual and tactile cues — to aid navigation and communication for individuals with visual or cognitive disabilities

## Why It Matters

Inclusive playgrounds are not just about equipment — they're about equity, dignity, and joy. For children with disabilities and their families, traditional parks often mean exclusion or limited participation. An inclusive playground changes that narrative. It provides a shared space where children of all abilities can grow, explore, and play together — side by side.

Studies show that inclusive play environments:

- Improve social development and empathy in all children
- Encourage physical activity and confidence in children with disabilities
- Provide critical mental health benefits for children and caregivers
- Strengthen community connection through accessible, shared experiences

## Our Commitment to Exceptional Design

We are working with experienced designers and accessibility consultants to ensure that Independence Park sets a regional standard for excellence in inclusive design. Thank you to TIRR Memorial Hermann for serving as an advisory partner in the creation of this inclusive park by offering their deep expertise in how to develop spaces that are fully accessible for those with disabilities. Their partnership in bringing Independence Park to life reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that people of all abilities can thrive in the communities they call home. Together we are championing a future where every individual, regardless of ability, is welcomed and supported.



## ALL-INCLUSIVE PLAYSPACE ZONES

### A. Hillside Habitat (All ages)

This area is full of activity! Sliding, exploring, and crawling are among the many ways to move around. An Indigo Bunting, a migratory bird in this region, is celebrated as a play structure looking onto its home, a birdhouse tower. All the elements create a playful change in scale for imaginative and adventurous users.





## B. Fruit Pile (2-5 Years)

Even the smallest of us has a place to play right alongside everyone else. Rolling mounds of turf and soft, colorful play surface allow for endless fun. Sensory-rich, this area has texture changes and musical opportunities for young and old to experience the park in their way.



### C. Farmer's Village (All Ages)

Laughter is heard as children rush between each hut. Young minds transform these small structures into castles, secret hideaways, and market-spaces, only limited by the imaginations of each newly found friendship. A small crossing offers a hiding spot, while parents look on from a short distance at the newly renovated restroom building and shade pavilion.



### D. Dry Creek Exploration (All Ages)

Kids, young and old, are invited to explore the dry creek and boulder outcrops that wander through landscapes. Occasionally fed by the water from the nearby splash pad, explorers will get the chance to fill buckets, build dams, and observe the watery sights and sounds. Bring your nets to see how many frogs you can catch.



### E. Play Lawns

Small lawns bookend each edge of the fully enclosed playspace. These flexible private areas allow for small events, birthday parties, and unstructured play. The surrounding edges are lined with native grasses, changing colors with the seasons. Each lawn area is connected with playful trails, winding through the trees.



## TIMELINE

*The Independence Park Project: Connecting Community. A Legacy of Play* represents a transformative opportunity to create a world-class, inclusive community space in the heart of Pearland.

### Timeline:

- Now – July 2026: Fundraising Campaign
- July 2026: Detailed design begins with scope based on funding commitments
- Late 2027/Early 2028: Construction starts
- Late 2028/Early 2029: Construction completion

**Funding Goal: \$5 Million**

### Why Your Investment Commitment Matters Now...

The scope of the detailed design will be determined based on funding commitments secured by July 2026. Your commitment today directly shapes the park's future and ensures we can deliver on our full vision for universal design.

## Commit today!

*Your investment turns vision into reality — and play into possibility.*

### Ways to Support

- Secure a naming opportunity
- Sponsor a feature or program
- Make a legacy donation
- Launch a matching gift challenge
- Host a fundraiser
- Help us connect with prospective donors



# IMPACT: BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCE

This project will deliver measurable benefits to our entire community:

## Immediate Impact

- Serve 400,000+ annual visitors with enhanced amenities
- Provide an inclusive, welcoming space for visitors of all abilities
- Create new opportunities for multi-generational relationship building
- Expand access to outdoor exploration and environmental education

## Long-term Legacy

- Establish a regional destination that attracts families and businesses to Pearland
- Model inclusive design principles for other communities
- Support local ecosystem health through native landscaping
- Provide a sustainable gathering space for generations to come

**This is more than a park improvement – it's an investment in the social fabric of our community.**



# Let's build a legacy – together.

## Forever Parks Foundation of Pearland 2025 Board of Directors

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