



**Inclusive Playground Survey  
Deep Creek Lake Lions Club  
Summary of Results  
February 29, 2024**

In an effort to gather citizen and visitor input on the development of an inclusive playground in Garrett County, the Deep Creek Lake Lions Club developed and disseminated a needs assessment survey (*Inclusive Playground Survey*). It was based upon input from an external Advisory Committee made up of members of the disability community (individuals with disabilities, parents and grandparents of children and adults with disabilities, and disability advocates), community members, Garrett County officials, and experts in accessible design. The survey was designed to obtain input from homeowners, renters, and visitors throughout Garrett County, including those with and without disabilities.

The vision for an inclusive park is one that is inclusive of a wide variety of people in Garrett County. To build an inclusive public space, it was deemed necessary to understand the experience and insight of those who support the community and use its public parks. We sought the voice of Garrett County citizens and visitors to plan, design, and build the park.

The 12-item survey was developed using Qualtrics and disseminated as an online survey via a link to the survey and via a QR code. The survey was also disseminated as a hard copy to those who did not have access to the online version or preferred to answer the printed version.

The survey links were disseminated throughout Garrett County via email lists, postings on websites, social media sites, press releases, and through postcard notices displayed by local businesses and community facilities. Entities involved in dissemination included Garrett County government, Garrett County Public Schools, the Garrett County Health Department, the Garrett County Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, the Chamber of Commerce, Garrett County NAACP, Deep Creek Lake Property Owners Association, local realtors and vacation rental companies, and agencies serving persons with disabilities.

The survey was open from December 19, 2023 to January 31, 2024. A total of 524 responses were recorded. The survey sample reflects nearly 2% of the population of Garrett County, and, given the diversity of the respondents, we feel this is an accurate reflection of Garrett County residents with interest in an inclusive playground.

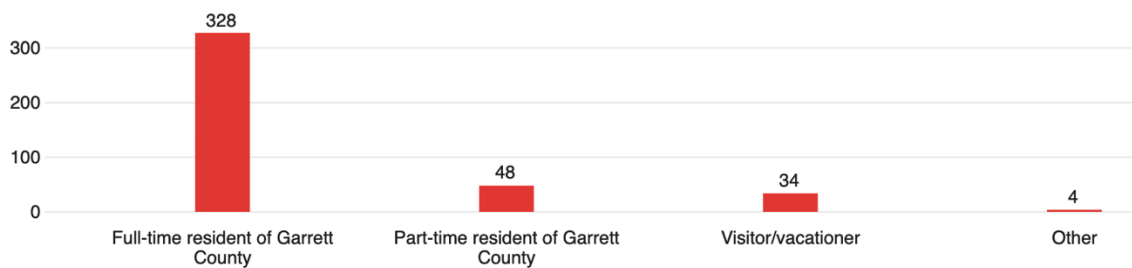
Results of the survey are described below.

**Question 1** of the survey queried respondents about their potential use of an inclusive playground. (Do you have a child or individual living with you who would use an inclusive playground?) Of respondents, 62% responded either that they would use the playground (41%), or that they may use the playground (21%).

**Question 2** asked the respondent’s primary place of residence. Results indicated that 79% were full-time residents of Garrett County, 12% were part-time residents, and 8% were visitors or vacationers.

**Q2 - What is your primary place of residence?**

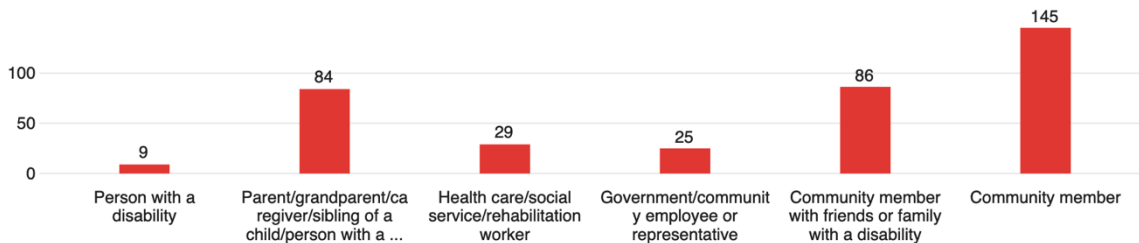
414 Responses



**Question 3** identified the respondent’s identity/role. The majority of respondents identified as community members (39%). Community members who identified as having friends or family with a disability (23%), parents/grandparents/caregivers/siblings of a child/person with a disability (22%), and persons who self-identified as having a disability (2%), indicating that the pool of respondents reflected the views of persons with disabilities and their caregivers.

**Q3 - Which best fits you?**

378 Responses

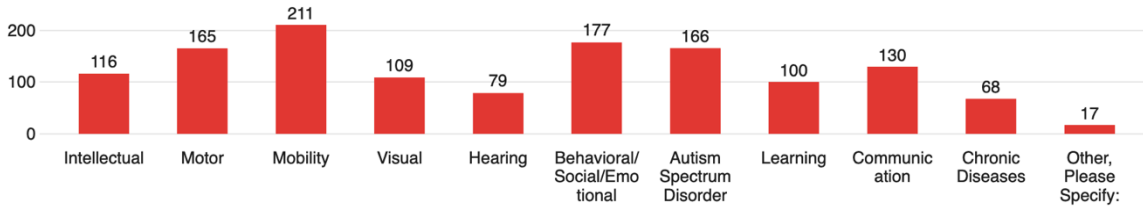


Those identifying in **Question 3** as either a person with a disability or a parent, grandparent, sibling, or caregiver of a person with a disability were asked the age of the individual who would use an inclusive playground if available (**Question 4**). Ages ranged from 1 to 65. Average age was 15.3; the most frequent age reported (mode) was age 7.

**Question 5** asked for the respondent’s perception of the most important challenges to inclusivity an individual might experience. Of 11 possible choices, the most frequently reported challenges were mobility challenges (68%), behavioral/social/emotional challenges (57%), Autism Spectrum Disorder (54%), and motor impairments (53%).

**Q5 - Please identify the most important challenges to inclusivity an individual might experience (check all that apply): - Selected Choice**

310 Responses



Additional challenges identified included those associated with aging, epilepsy, mental illness, PICA, mobility device users, memory, dwarfism, sensory disabilities, and racial diversity.

**Question 6** solicited information on the most helpful features or equipment that would *help* a child or person with a disability play in playgrounds. Respondents provided 338 suggestions. The most frequently noted helpful features included: overall accessibility; soft and smooth ground surface; access pathways to the playground, buildings, or shade areas; wheelchair accessible swings and other equipment; sensory features; use of natural spaces and elements; safety features, accessible walkways and pathways; quiet and rest/cool-down spaces with seating; perimeter fencing or barriers; multiple levels to accommodate diverse age and ability levels; shared space to accommodate integration; accessible signage; large-sized equipment for older children and adults; accessible restrooms.

Based on the provided list of helpful features, below is an organized compilation of features respondents nominated to promote inclusivity in playground design:

**Ground Accessibility:**

- o Ground surface accessibility
- o Even pathways/access surfaces
- o Smooth surfaces that do not get hot
- o Safe ground surface
- o Surface that is soft but smooth to reduce tripping with uncertain gait or using a wheelchair/walker
- o Rubber turf
- o Ground surface that is firm enough for wheelchairs but soft enough to prevent injuries
- o Ground surface for wheelchair users and people with mobility issues
- o Ground accessible surfaces
- o Soft ground surface
- o Rubber ground cover

### **Equipment Accessibility:**

- o Play equipment that can be used by disabled children
- o All types of wheelchairs accessible
- o Mobility - wheelchair accessible
- o Play equipment that's easily accessible to caregivers
- o Adult size swings
- o All-inclusive swings
- o Adaptive swings with adaptable seating options
- o Swings for kids in wheelchairs
- o Wheelchair swing
- o Wheelchair accessible swings and other types of equipment
- o Swing and other equipment that a child with CP and limited use of his limbs could be strapped in and enjoy safely
- o Equipment for older children that are mentally younger
- o Equipment that can hold heavier persons
- o Equipment that encourages exercise & group play
- o Equipment that supports sensory needs and social-emotional needs
- o Equipment/activities that can be used from the ground (in case of walking difficulties)
- o Multiple swing sets, each set featuring swings that are different from the others
- o Big wooden xylophones
- o Big shape puzzles
- o Movement equipment
- o Equipment for all disabilities
- o Equipment that can spin/swivel a person's body while standing or sitting on it
- o Interactive activities
- o Varied footing and/or matting
- o Sensorimotor activities with all senses addressed
- o Graduated levels/platforms

### **Amenities:**

- o A number of seating options
- o Several handles in each area at different levels
- o Shade
- o Water fountains
- o Drinking fountain accessibility
- o Ample lighting
- o Community engagement in the design process
- o Benches/sitting for those supervising
- o Covered area for adults/caregivers to sit in the shade
- o Quiet space for caregiver assistance to use equipment
- o Bathrooms
- o Bathroom large enough for someone who may have equipment
- o Accessible bathrooms

- o Wheelchair accessible features
- o Access to restroom and water
- o Quiet space for reflection
- o Rest areas and eating areas
- o Nearby defibrillator
- o Covered area to play when raining

**Accessibility Features:**

- o Ramps for wheelchair use
- o Flat hard surface for wheelchairs
- o Paved even ground
- o Wheelchair accessible surface
- o Fully accessible equipment
- o Accessible pathways
- o Accessible building design
- o Accessible via wheelchair
- o Wheelchair accessible playground, walking path, nature
- o Wheelchair accessible Features. Larger swings
- o Wheelchair accessible or equipment for physically disabled people
- o Wheelchair accessible swings/playsets
- o Wheelchair accessible swings and other types of equipment
- o Wheelchair or walker access to all equipment
- o Wheelchair accessible playground, walking path, nature
- o Wheelchair accessible swings and other types of equipment
- o Wheelchair accessible surfaces all can be mobile on
- o Wheelchair accessible pathways
- o Unobstructed wheelchair access from the car to spaces
- o Handicap swings
- o Handicap accessible

**Sensory and Environmental Considerations:**

- o Sensory-friendly elements for autistic children
- o Sensory-friendly stuff
- o Sensory-friendly play space
- o Sensory areas
- o Sensory play elements
- o Sensory items
- o Sensory-rich components such as textured surfaces, interactive panels, and sound features
- o Sounds and colors that are soothing for autistic people
- o Visual water feature or water play
- o Visual, touch, and auditory-specific play items
- o Sounds and colors that are soothing for autistic people
- o Sensory-friendly play space
- o Quiet space to decompress when overstimulated
- o Low noise

- o Calm surroundings
- o Sensory-friendly elements
- o Interactive and learning games/equipment

**Design and Safety:**

- o Fencing for safety
- o Permanent fence
- o Fully enclosed/gated to prevent eloping
- o Fenced in so they can't run away
- o Barrier-free path for wheelchair
- o Signs giving directions within the park
- o Safety harnesses on equipment that moves
- o Barriers on higher platforms to prevent falls
- o Safety as first priority regardless of choice
- o Braille signage for visually impaired children
- o Lower heights easier to grip things
- o Lighting and cleanliness/maintenance
- o Lights on pathways
- o High constraint marking, sensory/tactile markers, bold print, inclusive sizing for wheel shapes and low bone density children

**Community Engagement and Diversity:**

- o Racial diversity promoted through pictures
- o Inviting community members with disabilities to participate in the planning process
- o Fun
- o Integrated, shared play space (for children with and without disabilities)
- o Inclusion of natural beauty of the area
- o Incorporating universally accessible features
- o All-inclusive shared play space, lighting, shade, drinking fountain, buildings, natural spaces, ground surface, pathway, elements, colors

**Question 7** solicited information on the main *barriers* that would prevent a child or person with a disability from using playgrounds. Responses identified potential barriers that included: inaccessible location, parking, pathways, ground surface and equipment; lack of accessible bathrooms and drinking fountains; lack of shaded areas; lack of variability in features to appeal to diverse playground users; equipment undersized for larger children or adults; overstimulation; lack of supervision; non-compliant play equipment; and lack of input in design from persons with disabilities.

Based on 250 survey responses to **Question 7**, the common barrier themes can be organized into the following categories:

**Physical Accessibility:**

- o Inaccessible equipment/rough terrain
- o Uneven walking area

- o Uneven footing
- o Equipment too close together
- o Ground surface not wheelchair accessible
- o Paths not suitable for wheelchairs or mobility aids
- o Steps or stairs
- o Borders that are too high
- o Lack of ramps or narrow pathways
- o Mulch or gravel making movement difficult
- o Lack of harnesses or safety bars
- o Lack of wheelchair-accessible restrooms
- o Lack of paved pathways
- o Ground stability or obstructions

**Equipment Accessibility and Suitability:**

- o Non-accessible or non-compliant play equipment
- o Lack of play equipment suitable for specific disabilities
- o Absence of adaptive swings
- o Equipment not sturdy enough for older or larger individuals
- o Lack of equipment/toys for different levels of mobility or capability

**Environmental Factors:**

- o Loud music or noise
- o Insufficient lighting
- o Lack of shade
- o Lack of quiet areas
- o Lack of sensory-friendly features
- o Overstimulation with colors, light, or noise
- o Lack of natural elements

**Social and Community Inclusion:**

- o Lack of acceptance by peers
- o Teasing or bullying by others
- o Segregated spaces for children with disabilities
- o Lack of engagement from the community in design and planning

**Safety Concerns:**

- o Lack of safety features (e.g., fencing)
- o Inadequate supervision
- o Safety hazards like high drops or trip/fall hazards
- o Lack of harnesses or safety equipment

**Parental and Caregiver Accessibility:**

- o Lack of support persons available
- o Lack of parallel play for autistic children
- o Inability of caregivers to access equipment with children

**Communication and Information Accessibility:**

- o Inadequate signage or information
- o Lack of communication options for individuals with limited abilities

**Miscellaneous:**

- o Lack of transportation options
- o Lack of appropriate seating or seating areas
- o Lack of bathrooms or inaccessible restroom facilities
- o Lack of space for safe participation

By identifying and addressing these barrier themes, efforts can be made to create more inclusive and accessible playground environments for all individuals.

**Question 8** asked respondents to consider children with motor, visual, hearing, communication, intellectual, and/or social/emotional disabilities, and indicate what additional single factor would make the playground most accessible and usable. Responses revealed 170 recommendations. Frequently nominated suggestions included: physical accessibility to grounds and equipment; adequate space for integrated play; safety and security; universal design throughout; variety of features; coaching and supervision available; accessibility for caregivers; features for young and old at different ability levels; sensory features; and quiet spaces.

Based on the provided statements, these themes emerged:

**Accessibility and Inclusivity:**

- o Accessible playground equipment
- o Ramps, no steps
- o Wide and easy-to-access spaces
- o Wheelchair accessibility
- o Handicap parking spaces
- o Smooth surfaces for wheelchairs
- o Ground surface accessible for wheelchair users and people with walkers
- o Accessibility for individuals with fine and gross motor deficits
- o Universal design throughout
- o Equipment accessible with individuals with fine and gross motor deficits
- o Individual play/sensory stations
- o Separation of areas for different age groups
- o Designated quiet spaces
- o Multi-use and multiple sized spaces within the park
- o Fenced-in areas for safety
- o Lack of obstacles for kids with mobility issues

**Safety and Maintenance:**

- o Safe equipment
- o Adequate railing for safety



- o Well-maintained equipment and surfaces
- o Clear rules and expectations
- o Clean and safe environment

**Sensory Considerations:**

- o Sensory-friendly design
- o Sensory stimulation elements
- o Sensory areas
- o Visual, auditory, and tactile stimulation
- o Sensory items available

**Community Engagement and Education:**

- o Communication with stakeholders and caretakers
- o Inclusive design consultation
- o Community education and awareness

**Convenience and Amenities:**

- o Parking availability
- o Restroom facilities
- o Drinking fountains
- o Shade and seating areas
- o Easy access from parking areas
- o Location and transportation options

**Environmental Factors:**

- o Bright colors for visual appeal
- o Natural spaces and elements
- o Wildlife
- o Community safety from drugs/needles
- o K9 patrol for safety

**Miscellaneous:**

- o Coaching of parents on facilitation
- o Volunteering opportunities
- o Group activities for socialization
- o Instructions for equipment use
- o Solitude and family-friendly areas

**Question 9** listed eight different play themes and asked respondents to rank each in order of importance (n=206). Results revealed the most important themes were physical play, imaginative play, and nature play. The lowest ranked themes included water play and quiet reflections.

**Question 9. Ranked Importance of Play Themes (lower mean scores indicate greater importance)**

Rank	Play Theme	Mean Score
1	Physical Play (jumping, climbing)	3.50
2	Construction Play (large building blocks)	3.55
3	Imaginative Play (pretend house/log cabin)	3.76
4	Nature Play (exploration)	3.82
5	Sensory Play (music, art, color)	4.61
6	Vestibular Play (spinning, swinging)	4.98
7	Water Play (water works station)	5.89
8	Quiet Reflection (sitting, observing)	6.00
9	Other	8.90

**Question 10** listed eight different structural features of a playground and asked respondents to rank each in order of importance (n=199). Results revealed the most important features included landscaping and lighting; restrooms; and firm, flat, and soft surfacing.

**Question 10. Ranked Importance of Structural Features (lower mean scores indicate greater importance)**

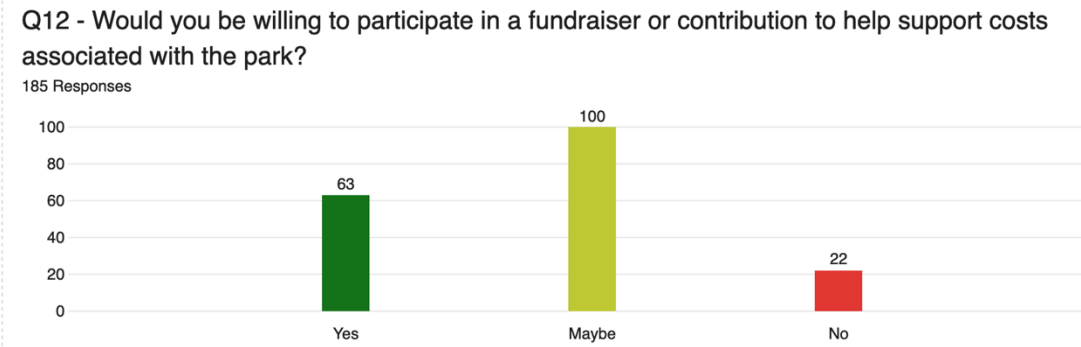
Rank	Structural Features	Mean Score
1	Landscaping and Lighting	3.59
2	Restrooms	3.75
3	Surfacing (firm, soft, flat)	3.89
4	Parking	3.94
5	Perimeter Containment Boundary	4.10
6	Seating	4.94
7	Shade	5.08
8	Signage (wayfinding, map)	6.89
9	Other	8.82

**Question 11** requested that respondents rank five specialized play features one might find in a playground and asked respondents to rank each in order of importance (n=191). Results revealed the most important specialized features included inclusive wheelchair swing sets and individual, imaginative playscapes.

**Question 11. Ranking of Specialized Play Features by Importance (lower mean scores indicate greater importance)**

Rank	Structural Features	Mean Score
1	Inclusive wheelchair swing set (with swings for people in wheelchairs and people who walk unassisted)	1.71
2	Individual playscapes (play structure for 1 child to inhabit when overstimulated, ex: cozy cocoon) and imaginative playscapes (campground)	2.86
3	Raised pathways with arm rails (to practice balance, balance tracks) and stepping stones (stump jump)	3.45
4	Climbing feature (half tunnel) and Seesaws (wheelchair-equipped seesaws, ex: AeroGlider)	3.60
5	Scavenger hunt (find items installed on the playground, items on poles) and building blocks (climbing squares)	3.73
6	Other	5.84

**Question 12** asked if the respondent would be willing to participate in a fundraiser or contribute to support costs associated with the park. Of 185 individuals responding to this survey item, 34% (63) reported that they would be willing to participate or contribute, and 54% (100) reported that they may be willing. Twelve percent of respondents (22) indicated that they were not willing to participate in fundraising efforts.



## Summary

The Deep Creek Lake Lions Club conducted an Inclusive Playground Survey specifically targeting Garrett County to gather insights for the development of an inclusive playground. The survey aimed to incorporate perspectives from various stakeholders, including individuals with disabilities, caregivers, community members, and experts in accessible design. Here's a summary of the key findings:

- Survey Methodology:** The survey, comprised of 12 questions, was developed using Qualtrics and distributed online and in hard copy format to ensure accessibility. Various channels were utilized for dissemination, including email lists, social media, press releases, and local businesses, resulting in 524 responses. Response rates ranged from 1.55 to 4.5% Of Garrett County residents and visitors.
- Demographics and Usage Patterns:** Most respondents (79%) were full-time residents of Garrett County, while 12% were part-time residents, and 8% were visitors. Regarding potential usage of the inclusive playground, 41% of respondents indicated they or someone they knew would utilize it. Of survey respondents, 47% identified as either a person with a disability or a parent, grandparent, sibling, or caregiver of a person with a disability.
- Challenges and Needs:** Mobility challenges (68%), behavioral/social/emotional challenges (57%), and challenges associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (54%) were identified as primary challenges to inclusivity. Respondents emphasized the importance of features like overall accessibility, ground surfaces, wheelchair-accessible swings, and sensory elements to facilitate inclusive play.
- Barriers to Accessibility:** Identified barriers included inaccessible locations, pathways, and equipment, as well as a lack of accessible facilities such as bathrooms and drinking

fountains. Input from individuals with disabilities in the design process was also highlighted as crucial to identification of barriers.

5. **Recommendations for Accessibility:** Respondents emphasized the importance of physical accessibility, safety, universal design, sensory features, and integrated play spaces. Themes such as physical play, imaginative play, and nature play were deemed most important for the playground.
6. **Structural Features and Specialized Equipment:** Landscaping, lighting, restrooms, and soft surfacing were ranked highest in importance for structural features. In terms of specialized equipment, inclusive wheelchair swing sets and individual imaginative playscapes were prioritized.
7. **Community Support:** A significant portion of respondents (88%) expressed willingness to participate in fundraising efforts or contribute to the park's costs, indicating strong community support for the initiative.

In conclusion, the survey findings underscore the community's commitment to creating an inclusive playground that addresses diverse needs and fosters social inclusion. The data gathered will be invaluable in guiding the development and design of the playground to ensure it meets the needs of all users in Garrett County.