

FAMILY FRIENDLY COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this checklist is to provide stakeholders in the Region of Waterloo with practical design techniques to make the Region a better place for families. The *Family Friendly Community Checklist* has been developed to provide communities with a list of characteristics that contribute to, or detract from the quality of life for families and children. The intent of this checklist is to service a variety of stakeholders such as City and Regional staff, developers, designers, members of the Alliance, other organizations, and community citizens.

The checkpoints have been divided into two individual checklists – one for indoor spaces and the other for outdoor spaces. Within these two checklists, the checkpoints have been divided into sub-categories: safety, accessibility, community events and health and wellness. There is also a general checklist for education, participation and social interaction. These three categories were separated into a general checklist because the concepts for indoor and outdoor spaces were very similar.

The criteria included in the checklist is not exclusive, the checkpoints are merely suggestions for means to create both family/child friendly spaces within communities. The checklists are the initial step in helping stakeholders make improvements to the Region of Waterloo communities to better support families and children. The document serves as a resource intended to be used as a guideline to suggest methods and spark ideas for making spaces family oriented and welcoming.

FAMILY FRIENDLY SPACES: OUTDOOR SPACES CHECKLIST

SAFETY

- Traffic calming measures exclude cars from certain areas and enable children to safely play outdoors
- Playworkers facilitate play in the local streets and parks where children are present
- Regular adult presence (community members or paid staff) at play areas reassure children and eliminate concerns of 'stranger danger'
- Well-defined borders for territorial reinforcement
- Play zones are clearly marked for passing motorists
- Parks are planned for safe use by citizens both during the day and at night
- Playgrounds and parks offer programs that the whole family can participate in

- Play areas are safe and visible to parents
- Streets and crossings are safe for children and walkways are clean and well lit
- The area is free of dangerous objects
 - For example: glass and sharp objects

ACCESSIBILITY

- Interesting play resources inclusive of disabled children
- Good flow around the site allowing children to move from one area to another with ease
- Good relationships between areas with a logical division of space and a cross-over between areas of play
- A number of ways to navigate the space and access various areas
- Suitable entrances and exits, particularly for families and people using wheelchairs
- Visitors do not have difficulty moving about or freely moving established spaces
- Avoidance of materials that obstruct the use of the space and incorporating specific elements
- The play zones are not limiting to those with mental or physical disabilities
- The playground considers children of all sizes
- The play area can be enjoyed by all visitors, even adults
- All accesses and routes including stairs and slopes are complimented with ramps
- Pathways are at least 90cm wide to facilitate movement and wheelchair access
- Slopes are not steeper than 6-8%
- Side protection for paths – handrails and marked pathways
- Stairs are equidistant from each other have a continuous surface, and handrails on both sides
- Areas for resting; places where a child can sit quietly and relax
 - For example: benches, shelters, and tree shading
- Rest areas are organized in intervals and spaced around the outdoor space
- Designated areas are available for children of different age groups
- Facilities are accessible to strollers, carriages, walkers, wheelchairs, etc.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Children feel a strong connection to the community and participation is encouraged
- Children with disabilities are equally entitled to participate
- Outdoor play environments allow people of different backgrounds and ages to meet and promote social cohesion
- Aspects of heritage and education are included in community events
- Activities are linked to important aspects of the city such as textiles, fishing, agriculture, commerce, community memories, etc.
- Community gardens are available
- Children contribute and are a part of the life of the community

- Children are present and participate in activities and events organized by the community
- Activities for children are available without concerning cost
 - For example: nature walks

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Opportunities exist for children to play without organized sports or teams
- Children are motivated to engage in physical activity as part of their daily life
- Play environment do not restrict but encourage opportunities for active play
 - For example: “Keep off grass”, “No ball play”
- Physical environment is varied and interesting
- The spaces facilitate movement such as running, jumping, rolling, climbing, and balancing
- Shady and sunny areas are available
- Attractive rest areas are available in public places

SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Children develop confidence and their own sense of identity
- Children understand themselves as individuals and in relation to their peers and community
- Children have the opportunity to make friends and socialize with a variety of other children
- Children can discover their own preferences, choices, and outlook on life, including an ethical outlook
- There are places for parents to sit and talk while children play
- Picnic areas are provided

VEGETATION

- Vegetation is present to provide environmental and/or aesthetic aspects and fun
- Existing trees are respected
- The harmful effects the space has on the environment is minimized
- Maintenance and upkeep programs are available
- Colourful spaces make it exciting for children
- Elements encourage play with optical effects

FAMILY FRIENDLY SPACES: INDOOR SPACES CHECKLIST

SAFETY

- Play spaces are in view of adult activities
- Adequate storage space for toys and materials
- Spaces are built to proper standards
- Play spaces are designated and protected
- Areas are free of sharp and fragile objects
- Adequate lighting with varying heights and avoidance of colourful lights

- For example: increased lighting in hallways to washrooms
- Designated places with well-defined routes to get there for children who are in need of help
- Designated paths for children that are coloured, shaped like arrows, footprints, etc.
- At least one play worker available all day
- Buildings and mall surveillance are clearly distinct
- Surveillance is placed in parking lots, entrances, and exits
- Use of windows instead of concrete or cement where appropriate such as elevator foyer in underground parking
- Use of soft materials for seating such as comfy cushions

ACCESSIBILITY

- Furniture is varying heights to accommodate standing, seating, and a range of other tasks
- Child-size entrance doors are provided in public buildings
- Changing tables are provided in all public washrooms
- Floor surface materials prevent tripping hazards and slipping
- Full-length mirrors can be viewed by people of all sizes, including children
- Temporary child care spaces/centres are provided
- Affordable, accessible child care alternatives are present or nearby for working parents
- Designed areas are available for children of different age groups
- Shelves with dangerous chemicals or materials located out of children's' reach
- Sufficient floor space is available to accommodate wheelchair access with enough room for a U-turn (minimum space: 78 inches by 60 inches)
- Colour coded maps and building directories are legible for all height levels
- Website design is available for parents to plan their shopping
- Family parking spaces are available close to entrances
- Family dining zones are distinct in food court either through the use of signs or change of colour and/or texture
- Family dining zones provide parents and children seating
- Family lounges provide comfortable seating for parents and children, play space, changing areas, and family restrooms
- Family lounges are secure and all users are required to provide a form of identification such as temporary relieving a parent's driver's license
- Family-friendly labelled indoor spaces are properly licensed and inspected
- Division of children and youth zones are distinctly defined

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Volunteer and permanent staff are friendly when meeting the public
- A wide-variety of activities are provided for children of all ages, as well as parents
- Events are held during flexible hours

- Public facilities such as local libraries, schools, community centers, and or recreational centres provide certain events such as story-telling, local youth performance, and creative arts and craft classes

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Recycling and garbage receptacles are provided
- Spaces and play areas are clean and sanitary
- Attractive rest areas are available in public spaces
- Places are provided for parents to sit and socialize while children play
- Play spaces and rooms use materials that are not synthetically produced
 - For example: linoleum, recycled rubber, and renewable woods
- Sanitizers are provided at the entrances to buildings or entrances/exits in play space
- Vegetation and natural lighting are provided in all corridors and rooms
- Buildings use naturally composed materials such as bricks, woods, bamboos, etc.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Play spaces are available throughout large commercial indoor spaces such as malls and indoor plazas
- Play spaces are located in large indoor open areas that have a high volume pedestrian movement
- Play spaces are designed to foster interactions between children rather than the interactive objects within the space
- Interactive boards such as electronic touch screen advertisement boards are catered to children and adults
- A single interactive education theme is continued throughout the indoor environment

FAMILY FRIENDLY SPACES: GENERAL CHECKLIST

EDUCATION

- Children feel a sense of wonder and connection with the planet we live in
- Children have first-hand experience with nature
 - For example: playing with natural elements such as earth, wind, and water
- Play spaces stimulate the five senses
- Spaces encourage interactive learning through the manipulating natural and fabricated materials and social interactions
- Children are able to sense a range of different emotions
- Schools welcome families and community members using various design elements such as colours, textures, and signage
- Education events include all family members and people of all ages

- Businesses and schools work together in partnership to encourage career exploration, job training, and skills development
- Many different educational opportunities are provided to meet different interest groups
- Play spaces convey an interactive form of education
 - For example: fun-facts
- Play spaces use graphics to convey information to younger children while text is used to convey information to older children
- Theme facilities engage positive physical and psychological responses and experiences

MAINTENANCE AND CLEANLINESS

- Cleansing or maintenance departments prioritize to make sure the space is clean and safe
- Neighbourhood clean-up projects exist to make the play space more accessible
- Playground equipment such as swings, slides, teeter-totters are safe and well maintained and built to proper standards
- Play areas are designated and protected
- Proper ground maintenance is evident
- Garbage receptacles are provided
- Indoor play spaces are shoe free environment
- Small scale outdoor and indoor play spaces are easy to assemble and disassemble

PARTICIPATION

- The play space brings together people with responsibility and interest in developing opportunities for play
- Teenagers and young adults provide input into planning and decision-making
- Teenagers and young adults are supported in planned community events
- Elected officials are approachable and responsive to family members and sensitive to family issues and concerns
- Decision making procedures are clear and participation is encouraged
- All family members are encouraged to participate in discussing issues, making decisions, and implementing change
- Community based systems of support such as self-help initiatives, support groups, volunteers, and religious institutions are available to help mobilize local resources
- Family members are encouraged and supported in the process of being or becoming self-reliant
- Members are supported in their ability to take care of themselves and their families
- Professional staff is responsive and available to those in need

- For example: outreach activities, financial planning assistance, food preparation workshops, consumer protection services, employment search, etc.
- Professional staff is able to provide help and support for families within a reasonable period of time
- Professional staff is sensitive to families, respectful of individual dignity, and reflect community values
- All family members are encouraged to become involved in issues that affect them and their community
- Information is readily available to the public as sources of support for families
- Policies and programs offered by municipalities, communities, and institutions are assessed for their impact on families
 - For example: Premier's Council Family Policy Grid
- All documents and records are written and presented in plain language
- Local community leaders collaborate with diverse partners, including civil society, and the public and private sectors towards improving the environmental conditions of children
- Local government must provide the opportunity to engage parents and children in the designing of community recreational centres, schools, and public libraries
- Social programs such as recreational clubs involve parents and children in the designing process in order to understand the needs of the community from both parents and children's perspective

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