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PSATC Impact Award Winner
Parks, Recreation & Community Quality of Life

Abington Township's "A Place to Play" Inclusive Park



The Catalyst:

Abington parents raising children with a range of physical, cognitive, sensory, and developmental needs wanted a dedicated public space where their children could play alongside their able-bodied friends and classmates. Former Commissioner Mike Thompson and Township Administrators partnered with families to bring the vision to life.

Implementation:

Grounded in community engagement, the Township engaged Engineering and Land Planning Associates, Inc., through a competitive request for proposals to lead planning and design in 2022. The Township held two public meetings and numerous meetings with parent groups to ensure their input was incorporated into the design. After the project was put out to competitive bid, MECO Constructors, Inc. was awarded the contract, and construction took place from January to September 2025. The official ribbon cutting was held on November 20, 2025.

Fiscal Responsibility:

The total project cost of $1.9 million was funded almost entirely through federal and state grants, with only $33,882 in direct costs to local taxpayers.

Innovation:

"A Place to Play" was purpose-built around five pillars of inclusive play:

1. Physical elements that develop fine motor skills, balance, and endurance.
2. Cognitive elements that present problem-solving and support early childhood development.
3. Social and communicative elements that create shared play experiences for both verbal and non-verbal children.
4. Sensory elements that intentionally engage visual, auditory, and tactile senses.
5. Universal infrastructure such as surfacing, pathways, and equipment, designed from the outset to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers, and every form of mobility.

Takeaways for Municipalities:

- Consider how to structure opportunities for residents and how to champion their needs.
- Leverage grant funding and recognize which capital projects carry grant-eligible characteristics.
- Prioritize inclusion in design, rather than thinking of it as an add-on.