



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
REGULAR MEETING

#25-0425

TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager

DATE: September 3, 2025

TITLE: First Reading - Ordinance Amending Chapter 19 of the City of Fort
Lauderdale Code of Ordinances, by Creating Section 19-8 Entitled
"Exclusive Children Play Area" to Establish Regulations Designating
Exclusive Children Play Areas Within City Parks - (**Commission Districts
1, 2, 3 and 4**)

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission approve an ordinance amending Chapter 19 of the City of Fort Lauderdale Code of Ordinances, by creating Section 19-8 entitled "Exclusive Children Play Area" to establish regulations designating exclusive children play areas within City Parks.

Background

At the August 20, 2024, City Commission Conference Meeting, former City Attorney Thomas Ansbro brought forward the exclusive children play area concept as part of the City Commission Reports (Exhibit 1). A "play area" is a designated space, typically outdoors, designed for children to play, engage in physical activity, and develop social and cognitive skills. Play areas are not intended to be used by adults, except for circumstances where an adult is accompanying a child or children utilizing these play areas. Former City Attorney Ansbro indicated that numerous cities have enacted ordinances that prohibit anyone over the age of 18 who is not accompanied by a child, from being in close proximity to a designated exclusive children play area in a park.

At the direction of the City Commission, City staff drafted an ordinance amending Chapter 19 of the City of Fort Lauderdale Code of Ordinances to establish regulations designating exclusive children play areas within City parks. In September 2024 (Exhibit 2), City staff presented the draft ordinance to the Parks, Recreation, and Beaches Advisory Board (PRBAB) which received unanimous support. Staff returned to the PRBAB on February 26, 2025, with a revised version of the proposed ordinance to clarify the title and definitions (Exhibit 3). The PRBAB passed a motion to approve the proposed ordinance language by a vote of 10 – 0.

The proposed ordinance serves a municipal purpose by reinforcing that the purpose of children play areas are to provide spaces for active and social engagement among children, while deterring inappropriate or loitering behavior by unaccompanied adults. Exclusive children play areas are designated areas within City parks, that will be clearly marked with signage, where adults are not permitted unless accompanying a child 17 years of age or younger.

The approval of the proposed ordinance does not automatically designate all playgrounds as exclusive children play areas. City staff will designate exclusive children play areas on a case-by-case basis after gaining support from the PRBAB, installing proper signage, and providing notice to the community.

Designated exclusive children play areas may result in additional demand for Fort Lauderdale Police Department resources. Park Rangers can monitor exclusive play area conditions as part of their daily responsibilities but will not have authority to issue violations. The lack of a physical border surrounding exclusive children play areas and the proximity to other parks' amenities may create additional enforcement considerations that would require Fort Lauderdale Police Department involvement.

Resource Impact

Signage will need to be installed once specific exclusive children play areas within City parks are designated. Staff anticipate a potential implementation cost of \$20,000 (50 playgrounds at \$400 per playground) for signage. In addition, if it was determined that chain link fencing is necessary to demarcate the designated exclusive children play areas, the estimated cost (for the 50 parks) is \$540,000.

Strategic Connections

This is a FY 2025 Commission Priority, advancing Public Spaces and Community Initiatives.

This item supports the 2029 Strategic Plan, specifically advancing:

- The Public Places Focus Area, Goal 5: Build a beautiful and welcoming community.

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035 Vision Plan: We Are Here*.

This item supports the Advance Fort Lauderdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan, specifically advancing:

- The Public Places Focus Area
- The Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces Element
- Goal 1: Be a community where persons of all ages are able to partake in a fun and healthy lifestyle.

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – August 20, 2024, Minutes from City Commission Conference Agenda

Exhibit 2 – September 25, 2024, Parks, Recreation and Beaches Board Minutes

Exhibit 3 – February 26, 2025, Parks, Recreation and Beaches Board Minutes

Exhibit 4 – Business Impact Statement

Exhibit 5 – Ordinance

Prepared by: Carolyn Bean, Assistant to the Director, Parks and Recreation

Department Director: Carl Williams, Parks and Recreation