

CADES Inclusive Playground Will Re-Open in Late Spring

It's fair to say that many of us look forward to the summer months during these cold, dark-at-four days in January, and now we have some fun news that we think will make the summer here in Swarthmore even better. Because in June, CADES will be opening our brand-new Inclusive Playground and Sound Garden to the community!

After a year of planning, and as we continue to actively fundraise to fully pay for the project, we learned that due to the mild winter, we had the opportunity to begin construction of our new playground in January, ahead of schedule and with an anticipated finish in late May. This was music to our ears, as our students and our adults here at CADES have waited long enough, and we don't want them to wait any longer. We don't want you to wait any longer either.

In order to complete the phases of demolition, construction, storm water management and restoration of the adjacent property used for staging, there are some short-term changes to the Rutgers Ave. Field and portions of the sidewalk that we understand will require the flexibility and understanding of the local community. We know however, that when construction is complete, it will be a place that we all will be proud to bring our families to, something that shows how deep our commitment is to the ideal of inclusion.



Elle is just one of our many students who we can't wait to see back out there on the playground.

What will this new inclusive playground bring? We invite you to take a look at the Inclusive Playground page on our website, which you can visit using this QR code or by going to cades.org. In our previous submission to *The Swarthmorean* in November, for example, we discussed equipment like the Inclusive Whirl. The whirl has a roll-on surface, bench seating at transfer height, and a large turning radius for maneuverability; characteristics that are common across much of the new equipment we will be bringing into this playground space. But perhaps unlike its ancestor, equipment like the whirl can be played on by kids (and adults) of all ages and abilities together, at the same time. And that is how we give children the opportunity to build their own understandings about children who interact with the world differently from them.



Visit the CADES Inclusive Playground webpage by scanning this QR Code with your phone.

It will bring accessibility with a new level of adaptability that our playground has not had before including many more sensory activities located around the playground deck. On the new playground those activities will be switch-accessible devices our students and adults here at CADES use to communicate, to help make decisions, to operate machines - devices that help them feel more independent, which is something those of us with neurotypical children can take for granted. No playground would be complete without slides, and this time one of our slides will be a roller slide, which will greatly reduce the amount of static electricity produced. Seeing children with their hair standing up after sliding may look adorable, but for children who have cochlear implants, that level of static electricity is harmful, and makes slides inaccessible. But not on our new playground!

Two new features we are just as excited about are the Sound Garden and the Peace Pad. In addition to the main playground area, the smaller playground area in between the CADES building and Paulsen Park (which will remain untouched during construction) will feature many different kinds of outdoor musical equipment, like chimes, xylophones, small drums, and small voice-modulating “flowers.” Back on the main playground area, we have a small space with equipment that can either be used to cool down, both physically and emotionally, during a very active session on the playground or if someone is overstimulated, or a place to warm up, to get comfortable with the playground before moving on to the larger playground area.

And this time, our playground will have shade! Shades that cover the swing bays, that cover the Peace Pad and large portions of the main playground area, so that children and adults that should not be in direct sunlight for extended periods of time can play until their heart is content. We believe that all of these features will help make kids and adults of all abilities feel included, understood, and welcomed by our playground.

All of this will not come without some sacrifice, some patience, and some mutual understanding. We also know that we are asking a lot of our neighbors here in Swarthmore. In our zeal in taking the opportunity to begin work for a June opening, our construction company began preparing the space in and around the playground for its demolition last week, prior to us getting the word out beyond direct contact with our neighbors on surrounding streets. For members of our greater community, relevant information about the construction timeline and impact, follow to know what to expect in the months to come.

We have so many people to thank for helping us make this day a reality, and we will be doing that in the months to come. We are 80% of the way to our fundraising goal of \$1.2 million – an investment that will bring years of fun and growth for the entire community to enjoy. In the interim, we are thankful to you, our community for your flexibility and support over the upcoming months, as we enter the home stretch to the finish line.

FAQ:

What is the timeline for construction of the new playground?

Here is a quick breakdown of what will be happening each month, with a caveat that timelines may shift based on weather.

- **February-** Demolition of both the playground and garden areas will begin, including the removal of the current equipment and surface.
- **March-April-** Installation of the new equipment in both the main playground and sound garden will begin and continue into early May.

- **May-** Final inspection of all installed equipment and restoration of any areas that were disturbed by the construction work.
- **June-** Grand Opening and celebration of our new Inclusive Playground & Sound Garden.

During what days and times should we expect to see and hear construction happening in the playground area?

- Swarthmore Borough standards state that construction can occur between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM on weekdays only. There will be no demolition or construction happening on weekends.

How will construction affect the Rutgers Ave Field (located on Strath Haven Ave.)?

- CADES has entered into an easement agreement with Wallingford-Swarthmore School District to utilize a portion of the track and field for construction vehicles to access the main playground site.
- The turn on the track closest to the CADES parking lot will be cordoned off by an orange safety fence and will not be available to the public for use during the construction period, leaving a “horseshoe” shape that the community will continue to have access to use.
 - The fields will still be open for public use.
- A portion of the sidewalk will be covered to allow construction vehicles to access the field and playground area during construction hours. This covering will be removed daily when work for the day has completed.
- Per the agreement between CADES and the WSSD, any areas of the track and field that are disturbed by construction will be restored at the end of the construction phase.

Why did we enter into an agreement to use a portion of the track for our playground construction?

- Emergency access to the building, as well as a safe emergency egress from the building precluded the back parking lot as a viable option for construction access.
- It is our expectation that by using the portion of the track we can provide the same level of safety to the individuals that we serve and also reduce the number of construction trucks and vehicles that would be using street parking.

How will construction affect the surrounding community?

- **Noise:**
 - During the month of February, when demolition of the original playgrounds occur, the construction company will be using a backhoe, dump trucks, and jackhammers intermittently.
 - We will periodically provide an updated project scope of work on the Inclusive Playground page on our website as well as on NextDoor, to help anticipate when to expect construction noise (<https://cades.org/inclusive-playground/>).
 - While we anticipate there being less noise during the installation months of March and April, we cannot say absolutely that this will be the case; we will keep you updated as we progress.
- **Street Access:**
 - Construction vehicles will access the main playground by crossing the sidewalk on Strath Haven Ave. and the Rutgers Ave. Field.
 - The future site of the sound garden will be accessed by construction vehicles crossing the sidewalk off Rutgers Ave.
 - The construction crew will park personal vehicles in the CADES back parking lot.

- It is possible at times that construction vehicles may be using street parking on Strath Haven Ave.
- **Paulsen Park:**
 - We do not foresee any disruption, and every action will be taken to preserve the use of the park for the community during the construction of the sound garden.
- **Restoration**
 - Sidewalk covering and fencing will be restored at the end of each day of construction on Strath Haven Ave. and Rutgers Ave. to ensure access to the sidewalk during non-construction hours.
 - Any disturbance to grass, fencing, concrete or other areas impacted by construction will be restored to an acceptable manner before the end of the project.

You said that you are still fundraising. Why?

- We are at a phase in fundraising that if absolutely necessary, we could cover costs with money that is earmarked for other important projects that help our students to learn.
- We do not want to use funds in this way but waiting longer for the playground to be rebuilt has just as negative an impact on their learning as postponing another project.
- So, we are determined to raise the remaining \$200,000 necessary to meet our goal. We will continue to organize and hold events in the coming months and will continue to reach out for donations. *If even a third of adults living in Swarthmore and Wallingford donated \$20 this week we would be finally reach the funds we need.*



*To donate to the CADES Inclusive Playground, use your phone with this QR code or visit our Playground Webpage-
<https://cades.org/inclusive-playground/>*

Communication:

- The CADES contact through the duration of the project is **Alena Subacus**, Senior Director of Operations. She can be reached at: alena.subacus@cades.org or by calling: **610-328-5955** during business hours.