

## A New Inclusive Park for Vineland

A new park at Romano aims to make recreation more inclusive in Vineland

Ellie Harper • 4/9/2026 • 3 min read



Vineland is preparing to mark an important civic moment with the official groundbreaking of its Special Needs Park at the Romano Youth Sports Complex, 1911 Maple Avenue. City officials, including Mayor Anthony Fanucci, members of City Council,

community leaders, invited guests, and residents are expected to take part in a ceremony that reflects a larger idea behind the project: public recreation should be built for more people, not just for the people who already fit easily into traditional spaces.

That goal carries real weight in a city like Vineland, which is home to more than 60,000 residents. A meaningful share of the population lives with disabilities, making inclusive public spaces not just a nice addition, but a real community need. This project responds directly to that reality by creating a place where more people can take part in everyday recreation.



The setting makes the project even more significant. The Romano Youth Sports Complex is already one of Vineland's central recreation hubs. Spanning 52 acres, it includes lighted soccer fields, a baseball field, a football field, a walking path, a running track, a playground area, and supporting facilities. Building the

Special Needs Park within this complex places inclusive recreation at the center of community activity rather than on the margins.

The park itself is designed to offer a wide range of experiences. The plan includes eight distinct activity areas. Seven of them feature inclusive playground zones with accessible equipment, while another is a sensory garden designed for children and adults on the autism spectrum. A splash play area will add a dynamic water element, and inclusive exercise stations will be placed around the existing track to support physical activity for a broader range of users. Additional features such as picnic tables, benches, restroom access, and improved parking are meant to make the entire space easier and more comfortable to use.



What stands out in this project is not just the equipment, but the overall approach. Inclusive design is treated as a complete experience. It considers how people arrive, how they move through the space, and how they spend time there together. When done well, this kind of planning allows families to share the same environment instead of being separated by limitations in design.

The project also reflects ongoing work by the city over the past few years. It has moved through planning, design, and funding stages before reaching this groundbreaking moment, showing that it is the result of consistent effort rather than a one time initiative.



For Mayor Anthony Fanucci and city leadership, the park represents a broader commitment to equality and community well being. It is a way of turning values like inclusion into something physical and accessible. Instead of being an abstract goal, it becomes a place that residents

can visit, use, and experience together.

Ultimately, the impact of the park will be felt in everyday moments. A child being able to join in instead of standing aside. A parent feeling more at ease. Families spending time together in a space that works for everyone. These are small moments on their own, but together they define what a strong public space can offer.



The groundbreaking at Romano Youth Sports Complex marks the beginning of that process. It is not just about building a new park, but about shaping a more inclusive version of Vineland, one where public spaces are designed to reflect the full community.