



CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE PLAN

March 2022



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

City Council

Lisa Anderl
Jake Jacobson
Salim Nice
Craig Reynolds
David Rosenbaum
Wendy Weiker
Ted Weinberg

Former City Councilmembers

Benson Wong

Arts Council

Anumeha
Rachel Blum
Elizabeth Mitchell
Rosemary Moore
Suzanne Skone

Former Arts Councilmembers

Amy Barnes
Erik Gordon
Erin Vivion

City Staff

Jessi Bon, City Manager
Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations
Paul West, CIP Project Manager
Ryan Daly, Recreation Manager
Alaine Sommargren, Deputy Public Works Director
Sarah Bluvas, Economic Development Coordinator
Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager
Ross Freeman, Sustainability Manager
Merrill Thomas-Schadt, Sr. Management Analyst

Consultants

Conservation Technix
PRR, Inc.
MacLeod Reckord PLLC
Emily Moon

Parks & Recreation Commission

Sara Berkenwald
Paul Burstein
Don Cohen
Sara Marxen
Jodi McCarthy
Peter Struck
Rory Westberg

Former Parks & Recreation Commissioners

Lyn Gualtieri
Amy Richter

Open Space Conservancy Trust Board

Marie Bender
Carol Lynn Berseth
Hillary Ethe
Thomas Hildebrandt
Craig Olson
Geraldine Poor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Chief of Operations	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	2
Chapter 2: Community Profile.....	8
Chapter 3: Community Engagement.....	14
Chapter 4: Goals & Objectives	18
Chapter 5: Classifications & Inventory	30
Chapter 6: Parks & Active Use Spaces	38
Chapter 7: Recreation, Arts & Culture	74
Chapter 8: Trails & Pathways.....	80
Chapter 9: Open Space, Land Conservation & Stewardship.....	92
Chapter 10: Operations & Maintenance	102
Chapter 11: Capital Planning & Implementation.....	108

Technical Appendix: Volume I

Appendix A: Community Survey #1	A-1
Appendix B: Recreation Reset Survey	A-21
Appendix C: Community Survey #2.....	A-47
Appendix D: Virtual Public Meeting #1	A-67
Appendix E: Virtual Public Meeting #2	A-77
Appendix F: Recreation Reset Plan	A-89
Appendix G: Comprehensive Arts & Culture Plan	A-121
Appendix H: Summary of Past Plans.....	A-141
Appendix I: Historical Background.....	A-147
Appendix J: Recreation Trends.....	A-167
Appendix K: Implementation Tools & Tactics	A-179

Technical Appendix: Volume II

Consultant Field Notes & Observations	B-1
---	-----





Luther Burbank Docks and Boiler Building

Message from the Chief of Operations

On behalf of the Parks & Recreation Department, I am pleased to present the 2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan for the City of Mercer Island. This six-year plan anticipates the programming and capital infrastructure investments necessary to meet the community's needs for parks, recreation, open space, trails, arts, and cultural events. The Plan is a guiding tool used by the City Council, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the staff as they develop annual work plans, create policy, shape budgets, and carry out capital projects. Crucially, it is the foundation for pursuing capital funding, state grants, and other sources of revenue.

The City of Mercer Island, like communities across the world, has experienced significant change not only since the adoption of the previous PROS Plan in 2014, but throughout this Plan's development during the COVID-19 pandemic. The value Mercer Islanders derive from their parks facilities and open spaces became even more clear, as did the great need to protect and maintain them.

Throughout the process of creating this plan, the project team collected and incorporated input received from community members. Those thoughts and interests helped shape the 2022 PROS Plan, which includes goals and objectives to guide future decisions, facility-specific evaluations, and recommendations on future projects, programming, and other potential initiatives.

At the core of the 2022 PROS Plan is a recommended \$41.7 million Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP), guiding parks, facilities, trails, and open space capital investments through 2028. This is the largest Parks CIP in City history and reflects the urgent need to address many critical community infrastructure projects.

Staff recognizes the magnitude of this recommendation and acknowledges the challenges ahead in identifying critical funding support. City Council, Commissioners, and City staff feel strongly that the solutions to address parks capital infrastructure challenges start with a plan and a vision. Staff anticipates the implementation of the 2023-2028 Parks CIP will be the primary focus of our work in the coming years.

I am grateful for the time and thoughtful contributions provided by members of the community, the Parks & Recreation Commission, the City Council, and the staff throughout the development of this Plan. Mercer Islanders love their parks! I look forward to working together with the community and City leadership to implement the goals of this plan.

Sincerely,

Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations
City of Mercer Island

1

INTRODUCTION

The City of Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan creates a vision for an innovative, inclusive, and interconnected system of parks, trails, and open spaces that promotes recreation, health, environmental conservation, and fiscal responsibility as integral elements of a thriving, livable Mercer Island.

Aubrey Davis Park Picnic Shelter

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The City of Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan, (PROS Plan), is an update to the 2014 Plan that builds on the previously completed planning work and incorporates the feedback from an extensive community engagement process conducted in 2020 and throughout 2021. This Plan creates a vision for an innovative, inclusive, and interconnected system of parks, trails, and open space that promotes recreation, health, environmental conservation, and fiscal responsibility as integral elements of a thriving, livable Mercer Island.

The PROS Plan serves as a blueprint for the growth, enhancement, and management of the City of Mercer

Island parks and recreation system and assists in guiding decisions related to planning, acquiring, developing, and maintaining parks, open space, trails, and recreational facilities. This plan also identifies priorities for recreation programs, special events, and arts and cultural activities.

The 2021 PROS Plan provides updated system inventories, demographic conditions, needs analyses, and a comprehensive capital project list. The Plan identifies parks and recreation goals and establishes a long-range capital plan for the Mercer Island parks and recreation system, including action items and strategies for implementation over the next six to 10 years. The recommendations in this Plan are based on community input, evaluations of the existing park system, operating conditions, and fiscal considerations.

The PROS Plan is part of the City's broader Comprehensive Plan and is consistent with the guidelines established by the Growth Management Act. The PROS Plan, updated approximately every six years, allows Mercer Island to remain current with community interests and retain eligibility for state grants through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), which administers various grant programs for outdoor recreation and conservation efforts.

PLANNING PROCESS

This PROS Plan represents the culmination of a two-year planning effort, and reflects the community's interests and needs for parks, open space, trails, facilities, and programming - balanced with the realities of budget considerations. The planning process, which included a variety of public outreach activities, encouraged public engagement to inform the development of the priorities and future direction of Mercer Island's park and recreation system. Community members expressed their interests through surveys, public meetings, online outreach, and Parks and Recreation Commission meetings.

In addition to community engagement, the actions identified in this Plan are based on:

- An inventory and assessment of the City's existing parks and recreation facilities to establish the system's current performance and to identify needed maintenance and capital repair and replacement projects.
- Service level and walkability assessments to quantify the system's ability to serve current and future residents.

The Plan's capital facilities section and accompanying implementation and funding strategies are intended to sustain and enhance, preserve, and steward the City's critical parks and recreation infrastructure.

GUIDED BY VALUES

The City of Mercer Island adheres to a collection of values to help shape its future and provide the foundation for a host of community actions. The following seven values are among the community's most essential and have framed the development of the City's recent Comprehensive Plan:

- Residential Community
- Quality Municipal Services
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Education is the Key
- Livability is Paramount
- Cherish the Environment
- Sustainable Community

The City's mission statement also provides a framework for the future planning of Mercer Island, and it reads as follows:

We provide outstanding municipal services that enhance and protect the environment, the quality of life, and the community health, safety, and welfare on Mercer Island.

Many of the City's values and the heart of its mission statement are reflected, in part, through the provision of parks, open space, trails, facilities, and recreation services.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Mercer Island Parks & Recreation Department significantly contributes to a sense of community and an enhanced quality of life for Mercer Island residents by providing recreation and social opportunities to people of all ages.

The Department is responsible for the administration, planning, marketing, management, and maintenance of parks, trails, open space, facilities, and recreation programs. The Department manages the 42,000 square foot Mercer Island Community and Event Center, 481 acres of parks and open space, and 28 miles of trails.

Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic considerably impacted the Parks & Recreation Department. The Community & Event Center closed in March 2020, and all recreation programs, special events, and facility rentals were canceled, which eliminated a critical funding source for the Department. Athletic field reservations and picnic shelter/area reservations were also canceled but resumed on a limited basis in the summer of 2020. When this PROS Plan update was developed, the Recreation Transition Team was focused on re-establishing operations for the Mercer Island Community and Event Center and rebuilding the Recreation division. Pre-pandemic, the Department offered nearly 200 recreation programs and events annually and hosted

BENEFITS OF PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

A number of organizations and non-profits have documented the overall health and wellness benefits provided by parks, open space and trails. The Trust for Public Land published a report called *The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space*. This report makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental and social benefits of parks and open space:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and assisting with stormwater control.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.



Aubrey Davis Park Area B basketball court



Volunteers planting native plants at Luther Burbank Park



Spectators at a Summer Celebration fireworks show at Luther Burbank Park

Physical Activity Benefits

Residents in communities with increased access to parks, recreation, natural areas and trails have more opportunities for physical activity, both through recreation and active transportation. By participating in physical activity, residents can reduce their risk of being or becoming overweight or obese, decrease their likelihood of suffering from chronic diseases, such as heart disease and type-2 diabetes, and improve their levels of stress and anxiety. Nearby access to parks has been shown to increase levels of physical activity. According to studies cited in a 2010 report by the National Park and Recreation Association, the majority of people of all ages who visit parks are physically active during their visit. Also, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that greater access to parks leads to 25% more people exercising three or more days per week.

Social & Community Benefits

Park and recreation facilities provide opportunities to engage with family, friends, and neighbors, thereby increasing social capital and community cohesion, which can improve residents' mental health and overall well-being. People who feel that they are connected to their community and those who participate in recreational, community and other activities are more likely to have better mental and physical health and to live longer lives. Access to parks and recreational facilities has also been linked to reductions in crime, particularly juvenile delinquency.

Economic Benefits

Parks and recreation facilities can bring positive economic impacts through increased property values, increased attractiveness for businesses and workers (quality of life), and through direct increases in employment opportunities. In Washington, outdoor recreation generates \$10.2 billion in total outdoor recreation value added and \$5.8 billion in wages and salaries. Preserving access to outdoor recreation protects the economy, the businesses, the communities and the people who depend on the ability to play outside. According to the 2020 Outdoor Recreation Economy Report published by the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation can grow jobs and drive the economy through management and investment in parks, waters and trails as an interconnected system designed to sustain economic dividends for citizens.

over 125,000 annual visitors to the Mercer Island Community and Event Center.

The Park Maintenance and Natural Resources teams were also significantly impacted by the pandemic and are now housed within the Public Works/Operations Department, one of many organizational changes made in 2020. Workforce reductions due to budget cuts significantly scaled back park maintenance functions through most of 2020 and were gradually restored in 2021. In addition, natural resource stewardship programs were reduced due to pandemic guidelines that significantly limited group gatherings. At the time this plan was developed, recovery work was underway to catch up on systemwide vegetation and landscaping maintenance.

Accomplishments Since the 2014 PROS Plan

The 2014 PROS Plan guided City officials, management, and staff in making decisions about planning, operating, and implementing various parks and recreation services. The following represents some of the major accomplishments realized following the adoption of the previous Plan.

- Luther Burbank North Wetland Boardwalk Extension (2014)
- Open Space Vegetation Plan 10-year Update (2015)
- Calkins Landing Street End Improvements (2015)
- Luther Burbank Park Calkins Point Shoreline Improvements (2016)

- Luther Burbank Hawthorn Trail Installation (2017)
- Luther Burbank Park Boiler Building Study (2017)
- Island Crest Park North Field Synthetic Turf and LED Lights (2018)
- South Mercer Playfields playground replacement (2018)
- Groveland Beach Pier Repairs and Shoreline Improvements (2018)
- Adoption of the Comprehensive Arts & Culture Plan (2018)
- Mercer Island Tree Canopy Assessment (2018)
- Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan adopted (2019)
- Parks and Recreation Commission established (2019)
- Development of a Recreation Restart Plan to guide post-pandemic recovery (2021)

The Parks and Recreation Department also faced multiple challenges since the 2014 PROS Plan was adopted. In 2019 several recreation services and programs were reduced as a result of Citywide fiscal challenges. The lifeguard program was eliminated and a number of special events, including the Summer Celebration, were canceled. Operating hours were scaled back at the Community and Event Center, and programming was reduced. As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the operations of the Parks and Recreation Department in 2020 and 2021.



Young athletes at Island Crest Park north field



Commissions & Boards

Parks & Recreation Commission

In January 2019, the City Council created the seven-member Parks & Recreation Commission to serve in a policy advisory capacity to the City Council. The responsibilities of the Commission include:

- Providing a forum for the community to express their views on parks, recreation, and other community services, including serving as a liaison to the Mercer Island Library and the King County Library System.
- Supporting inclusivity and embracing cultural diversity in all policy recommendations.
- Serving as community ambassadors and helping to promote parks and recreation activities within the City of Mercer Island, including support for cooperative relationships with community partners and other organizations.
- Providing recommendations on park master plans, potential property acquisitions, certain budget items, grant funding, and other policy matters, as assigned by the City Council.
- Collaborating with staff on developing and updating the PROS Plan as a component of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The Parks and Recreation Commission collaborates with other City boards and commissions in performing their work, particularly the Arts Council and the Open Space Conservancy Trust.

Arts Council

The Arts Council was established in 1985 with a mission to nurture, promote, and support high-quality arts and cultural activities for the Mercer Island community. The goals of the Arts Council include:

- Advocating for the arts, artists, and arts organizations of Mercer Island.
- Stimulating and promoting community awareness, education, and enjoyment of the fine arts.
- Supporting performing, visual, and literary arts programs, projects, and events.

The Arts Council is supported by the Parks and Recreation Department staff.

Open Space Conservancy Trust

The Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust is appointed to oversee the passive, low-impact, recreational open space properties placed in the Trust. Currently, the Trust owns and oversees the management

of Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space. The Trust was established by ordinance on February 10, 1992 (amended May 6, 1996). The ordinance defines open space as a property of potential natural or scenic resources that the City has reserved for passive and low impact forms of use, such as walking, jogging, and picnicking. The seven-member Trust meets quarterly and is supported by the Parks and Recreation Department staff.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Public engagement during a pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and the health mandates for social distancing have transformed the way municipalities plan for and conduct public engagement. While hope remains for a safe return to some semblance of normalcy, the City of Mercer Island implemented public processes that were COVID-sensitive and utilized a range of tools to optimize its use of online engagement for communications and community feedback.

Balancing the visions for the future with current fiscal realities

For the past several years, strains on the City's operating and capital budgets have led to the re-assessment of the Parks and Recreation Department's structure, necessitating the evaluation of all programs and services. The framework of the PROS Plan acknowledges the fiscal challenges of the City, while providing a community-based foundation to shape future project priorities and inform implementation strategies. This includes consideration of future maintenance and operations impacts and potential development costs for proposed projects.

Deferred maintenance and aging infrastructure

The City of Mercer Island's parks, trails, and open space system is facing numerous challenges related to aging infrastructure. Deferred maintenance and changing demands translate to the need for up-to-date assessments of the condition, function, and quality of park system assets, in addition to understanding where deficiencies may exist. Park aesthetics and amenities are important to usage patterns. Also, a user's perception of personal safety is a determining factor in how one uses and feels in and around parks, trails, and open spaces.

The conditions assessment of the parks, trails, and open spaces included in this PROS Plan provided a baseline of current conditions to inform the development of

the capital improvement program and implementation strategies. The fiscal needs of the parks system are significant and long-term funding strategies are needed.

Equity, inclusivity and accessibility

The City of Mercer Island parks, trails, and open space system were primarily developed before the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was implemented. The conditions assessment identified several deficiencies related to ADA compliance. The City must continue to find ways to provide safe and equitable access to parks, trails, open space, facilities, recreation programs, and other services. The social contexts of disability rights, LGBTQ+ advocacy, and racial justice have led the City to reexamine its responsibility in addressing these issues.

Balancing passive and active uses

Mercer Island residents have worked to preserve and maintain the Island's greenspaces over many decades. The park system currently includes nearly 300 acres of open space. These areas serve a critical environmental purpose, including sustaining a robust tree canopy, supporting wildlife, clean air, and reducing pollutants in stormwater runoff. Some open spaces include passive use trails and provide much-needed natural respite, while other open spaces (like steep slopes) function solely as conservation areas.

From accessible playgrounds to spray parks to natural play areas, the types of play experiences provided are changing and diversifying, and the population of Mercer Island has increased over time. The demand for new amenities must be balanced against preserving and maintaining open space and natural areas. New amenities may require the use or re-use of existing parkland, or more parkland may be required to support the community's future needs.

GUIDING DOCUMENTS

This PROS Plan is one of several documents that comprise Mercer Island's long-range planning and policy framework. Past community plans and other relevant documents were reviewed for policy direction and goals as they relate to parks, open space, trails, recreation, and arts and cultural opportunities across Mercer Island. The following list of plans was reviewed, and summaries for each appear in Appendix H.

- Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities Plan (2010)
- Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan (2014)
- City of Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan (2015)
- Open Space Vegetation Management Plan (2015)

- Comprehensive Arts & Culture Plan (2018)
- Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report (2018)
- Site Specific Park Master Plans, including Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan (2019), Luther Burbank Park Master Plan (2006), Pioneer Park Master Plan (2001), and others

CONTENTS OF THE PLAN

The remainder of the Mercer Island PROS Plan is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2: Community Profile – provides an overview of the City of Mercer Island and its demographics.
- Chapter 3: Community Engagement – highlights the methods used to engage the Mercer Island community in developing the Plan.
- Chapter 4: Goals & Objectives – provides a policy framework for the parks and recreation system grouped by major functional or program area.
- Chapter 5: Classification & Inventory – describes the existing park and recreation system.
- Chapter 6: Parks & Active Use Spaces
- Chapter 7: Recreation, Arts & Culture
- Chapter 8: Trails
- Chapter 9: Open Space, Land Conservation & Stewardship
- Chapter 10: Operations & Maintenance
- Chapter 11: Capital Planning & Implementation – details a 6-year program for addressing park and recreation facility enhancements, maintenance, or expansion projects, and describes a range of strategies and alternatives to consider in implementing the Plan.
- Appendices: Provides technical or supporting information to the planning effort and includes survey summaries, focus group notes, recreation trends, and funding options, among others.

2 COMMUNITY PROFILE

Mercer Island is a full-service city dedicated to quality public service. Parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities are highly valued. The Island has 481 acres of park and open space including neighborhood parks and trails, as well as several larger recreational areas, including Luther Burbank Park and Aubrey Davis Park surrounding the Interstate 90 corridor.

Paddleboard camp off the east shoreline of Luther Burbank Park

The City of Mercer Island is located on an island of the same name in Lake Washington and consists of high-quality residential areas, conserved open space, parks, and miles of shoreline. Mercer Island, which was formerly part of East Seattle, was incorporated in 1960 and has a population of just over 25,000.

Mercer Island, nestled between the large population centers of Seattle and Bellevue, has its own distinct identity. Most of Mercer Island's 6.2 square miles of land area (just over five miles long and two miles wide) is developed with single family homes. Mercer Island is served by a town center and two other commercial areas that provide a range of business and service opportunities for the community.

Mercer Island is a full-service city dedicated to quality public service. Parks, open spaces, and recreational

opportunities are highly valued. Mercer Island has 481 acres of park and open space, including neighborhood parks and trails, and several larger recreational areas, including Luther Burbank Park and Aubrey Davis Park surrounding the Interstate 90 corridor. The park system currently includes nearly 300 acres of open space. These areas serve a critical purpose, including preservation of the tree canopy, supporting wildlife, clean air, and reducing pollutants in stormwater runoff.

Note: This chapter was prepared prior to obtaining the full report from the 2020 United States Census. The total population of Mercer Island had been released at the time the draft was prepared, but the remaining census data had not. This chapter reflects demographic data from pre-2020 sources.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The population of Mercer Island is 25,748 according to the 2020 Census and has grown slowly over the past 60 years, see Figure 2.1. Mercer Island prides itself on being a residential community and is home to many families with children as well as older adults. The City's residents are generally very well educated and many have higher incomes than other county and state residents. Mercer Island has limited employment and commercial centers. Most employed residents commute to other areas of the Seattle metropolitan region for jobs in the education, technology, health care, professional, and finance sectors, although commuting patterns have shifted dramatically due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2.1. Population Characteristics: Mercer Island, King County, and Washington

Demographics	Mercer Island	King County	Washington	Source
Population Characteristics				
Population (2020)	25,748	2,269,675	7,705,281	A
Population (2010)	22,699	1,931,249	6,724,540	B
Population (2000)	22,036	1,737,034	5,894,121	C
Percent Change (2000-20)	16.85%	30.66%	30.73%	D
Persons w/ Disabilities (%)	10.1%	9.5%	12.7%	D
Household Characteristics				
Households	10,570	969,234	3,202,241	A
Percent with children	33.9%	28.8%	30.6%	D
Median Household Income	\$147,566	\$94,974	\$73,775	D
Average Household Size	2.50	2.45	2.55	D
Average Family Size	2.99	3.06	3.09	D
Owner Occupancy Rate	68.7%	56.9%	63.0%	D
Age Groups				
Median Age	46.0	37.0	37.7	D
Population < 5 years of age	3.8%	5.8%	6.1%	D
Population < 18 years of age	23.2%	20.4%	22.2%	D
Population 25 - 64 years of age	56.4%	66.6%	62.7%	D
Population > 65 years of age	20.4%	13.0%	15.1%	D

Sources

- A. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census Redistricting Data Summary File, accessed August 2021.
- B. U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census
- C. U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census
- D. U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

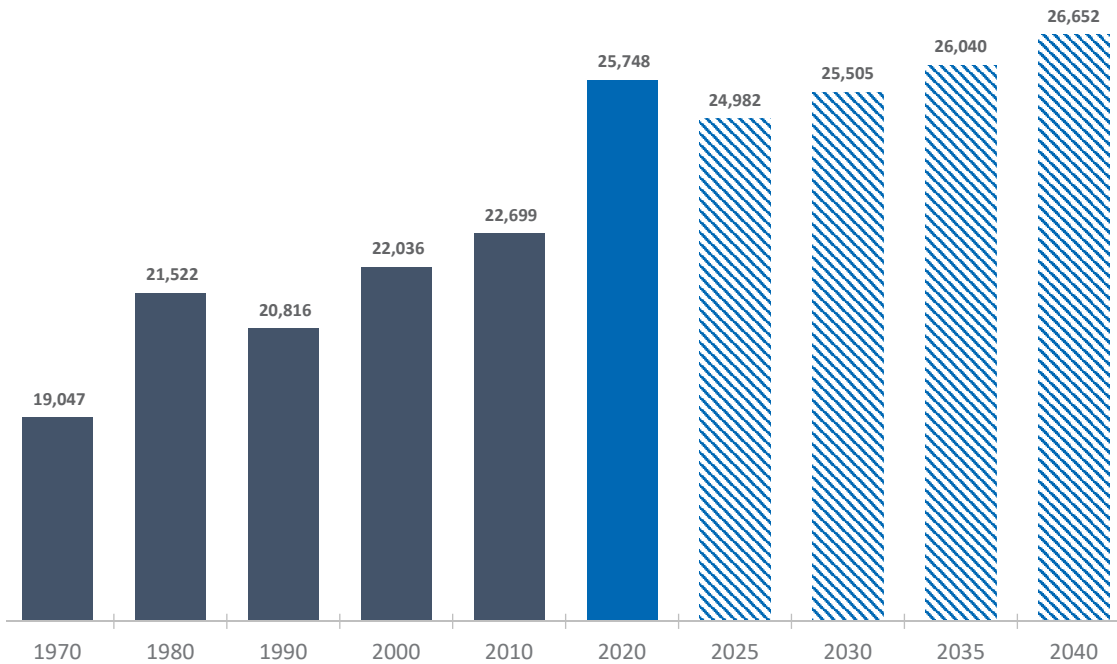
Population

The City of Mercer Island has generally grown at a slow but steady rate since its incorporation in 1960, see Figure 2.2. The City is currently home to 25,748 residents (2020), and its population is expected to grow by approximately 8% by 2040, to 26,652 people.

Annual population growth has averaged about 0.5% per year over the past forty years but is expected to slow to less than 0.25% per year over the coming decades. Mercer Island currently makes up about 1% of the combined population of King County. Population forecasts are provided by the Puget Sound Regional Council.



Figure 2.2. Population – Actual and Projected: 1970-2040



Sources: US Census; Puget Sound Regional Council

Age Group Distribution

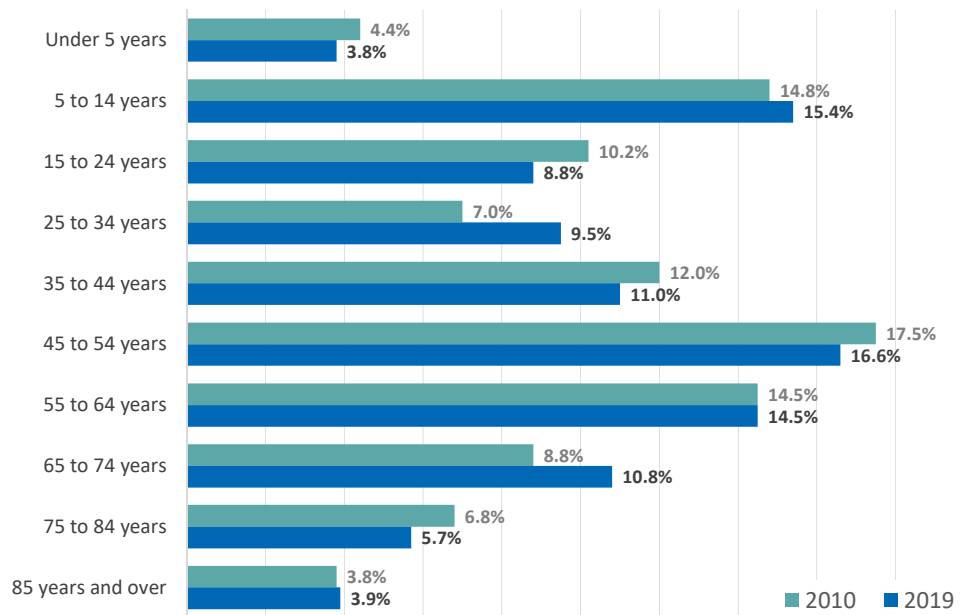
Mercer Island has a median age of 46 (2019) and a relatively high population of families with children (34%). This distinction has significant implications for parks and recreation needs. Adults between 40 to 59 years old make up the City’s largest 20-year population group, comprising 31% of the overall population in 2019, see Figure 2.3.

- Youth under 5 years of age make up 4% of Mercer Island’s population (see Figure 3). This group represents preschool and tot programs and facilities users, and, as trails and open space users, are often in strollers. These individuals are the future participants in youth activities.
- Children, ages 5 to 14 years, make up 15% of Mercer Island’s population. This group represents users of current youth programs, family programs, and event participants.
- Teens and young adults, ages 15 to 24 years make up 9% of Mercer Island’s population. This group represents users that are in transition from youth programs to adult programs and participate in teen/young adult programs where available. Members of this age group are often seasonal employment seekers.
- While approximately 28% of residents are youth and young adults up to 24 years of age, 37% are 25 to 54 years old, and 35% are 55 and older.

- Adults, ages 25 to 34, make up 10% of Mercer Island’s population. These residents may be entering long-term relationships and establishing families and are users of fitness and athletic programs, and park facilities.
- Adults between 35 and 54 years of age represent users of a wide range of adult programs and park facilities. Their characteristics extend from having children attending preschool and youth programs to becoming empty nesters. They participate in a variety of recreation programs and utilize many types of park facilities. This age group makes up 28% of the Island’s population.
- Older adults, age 55 and over, make up approximately 35% of Mercer Island’s population. This group represents users of adult and senior programs who also extensively use park facilities. These residents may be approaching retirement or already retired and potentially spending time with grandchildren. This group also ranges from very healthy, active seniors to more physically inactive seniors.

The City’s median age (46) has remained stable since 2010 and is significantly older than that of King County (37.2) and Washington State (37.6).

Figure 2.3. Age Group Distributions: 2010 & 2019



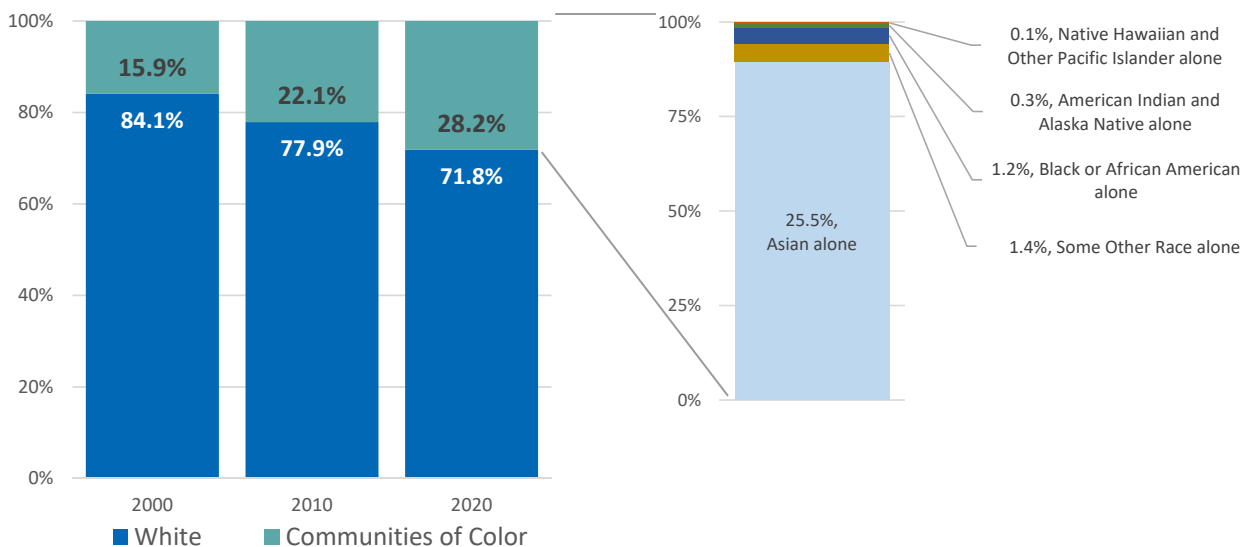
Source: 2010 Census, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Race and Ethnicity

According to the 2020 US Census Redistricting Data, the City was 72% White, 25% Asian, 1.2% African American, less than 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native or Pacific Islander, and 1.4% some other race alone (see Figure 2.4). Approximately 4.5% of people identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race. In King County, communities of color make up a significantly larger portion of the population (35% compared to 28% on Mercer Island).

In 2019, approximately 20% of Mercer Island’s population spoke a language other than English at home. Asian and Pacific Island languages and other Indo-European languages comprise most non-English language groups. Mercer Island has a lower percentage of people who speak a language other than English at home compared to King County as a whole (27%). The City should consider how it could best provide recreational opportunities, programs, and information that is accessible and able to meet the language needs of all community members.

Figure 2.4. Changes in Racial Composition - 2000 - 2020



Sources: 2000, 2010, 2020 US Census



Household Characteristics

The 2019 average household size on Mercer Island was 2.5 people, slightly lower than the state (2.55) average. The average family size is larger, at 2.99 people. Of the 9,867 households in the City, 34% were families with children under 18, and 23% were individuals living alone. According to Puget Sound Regional Council projections, the number of households on Mercer Island is anticipated to grow by 1,239 to approximately 11,106 by 2044.

Employment & Education

The 2019 work force population (16 years and over) of Mercer Island was 20,473 (80%). Of this population, 63% is in the labor force, 4% is unemployed, and 33% is not in the labor force. Over seven in ten employed residents work in management, business, science, or arts occupations. One in two work in either the education/health care industries or the professional/management industries. The finance and insurance sector also employs a large percentage of local workers (approximately 13%).

According to the 2019 American Community Survey, approximately 81% of Mercer Island residents over age 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 94% have at least some college education. This level of education attainment is higher than that of King County and the state (in which 77% and 68% of residents have some college, respectively). Additionally, 99% of City residents have a high school degree or higher, approximately 8 percentage points higher than the statewide average.

Income & Poverty

A community's level of household income can impact the types of recreational services prioritized by community members, as well as their willingness and ability to pay for recreational services. Perhaps more importantly, household income is closely linked with levels of physical activity. According to an analysis of national data by the Active Living by Design organization, low-income households are three times more likely to live a sedentary lifestyle than middle- and upper-income households.

In 2019, the median household income on Mercer Island was \$147,566. This income level was more than double the median income for Washington households (\$73,775) and significantly higher than that of King County households (\$94,974).

Higher-income households have an increased ability and willingness to pay for recreation and leisure services, and they often face fewer barriers to participation. Approximately 67% of Mercer Island households have incomes in the higher income brackets (\$100,000 and greater), significantly more than across the state (30%).

At the lower end of the household income scale, approximately 8% percent of Mercer Island households¹ earn less than \$25,000 annually, significantly fewer than households in King County (13%), Washington State (17%), and across the United States (23%). In 2019, 3.3% of Mercer Island's families² were living below the poverty level. The poverty threshold was an income of \$24,600 for a family of four. This percentage is also significantly lower than the countywide (approximately 6%) and statewide (8%) levels. On Mercer Island, poverty affects 5.5% of youth under 18 and 3.9% of those 65 and older.

Generally, lower-income residents may face barriers to physical activity, including reduced access to parks and recreational facilities, a lack of transportation options, a lack of time, and poor health. Low-income residents may also be less financially able to afford recreational service fees or to pay for services, such as childcare, that can make physical activity possible.

Persons with Disabilities

The 2019 American Community Survey reported 10.1% (2,571 persons) of Mercer Island's population 5 years and older as having a disability that interferes with life activities. This number is lower than county and state averages (both about 12%). Approximately 6% of residents between 18 and 64 have a disability. Among residents 65 and older, the percentage rises to 30%, which is slightly lower than the percentage found in the general senior population of Washington State (36%).

Planning, designing, and operating a park system that facilitates participation by residents of all abilities will help ensure compliance with Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition to ADA, there are other accommodations that people with disabilities may need to access parks and participate in recreation programs.

Health Status

Residents of Mercer Island tend to be in better health than residents of King County and Washington State, according to the King County City Health Profile, developed by Seattle/King County Public

¹ U.S. Census defines a household as all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship.

² U.S. Census defines a family as two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit.

Health in 2019. Mercer Island residents have high life expectancies (86 years), and fewer residents experience poor mental or physical health as compared to the county and state. Residents also have a lower prevalence of many health risk factors, including obesity, lack of exercise, diabetes, asthma, and hypertension, compared to King County residents, who have fewer risk factors than residents of Washington State as a whole.

In addition, King County residents rank as some of the healthiest residents in Washington State (2nd out of 39 counties), according to the County Health Rankings. Approximately 16% of Mercer Island and 22% of King County adults are overweight or obese, compared to 27% of Washington State adults.

Approximately 9% of Mercer Island and 15% of King County adults ages 20 and older report getting no

leisure-time physical activity – lower than the statewide average of 18%. This figure may be due, in part, to the large number of places to participate in physical activity, including parks and public or private community centers, gyms, or other recreational facilities. Over 95% of residents in King County have access to adequate physical activity opportunities, which is slightly higher than the 88% average for all Washington State residents.

According to the County Health Rankings, King County also ranks in the top tier of Washington State counties for health outcomes, including length and quality of life, and health factors, such as health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment.



Skate Park at Mercerdale Park

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community engagement played an essential role in developing the PROS Plan. Although the planning process occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous efforts were made to connect with the community, seek their input and provide information about the project.

City staff during public engagement for the Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan process

Public outreach methods were varied and extensive, including:

- Three community-wide surveys.
- Two virtual public meetings for general public participation and discussion
- Meetings with the Park and Recreation Commission, Arts Council, Open Space Conservancy Trust, and City Council
- Mercer Island City website and online engagement forum (Let's Talk) with plan information and contact opportunities
- Multiple social media postings, email blasts, and city newsletter articles

Community Survey

In early 2020, a community-wide, mail and online survey was conducted to assess the recreational needs and priorities of Mercer Island residents. On February 4, 2020, the survey was mailed to a random sample (statistically valid) of 2,500 households within the City of Mercer Island boundaries. An online version of the survey was posted to the City's website several days later to allow the mail recipients to receive first notice about the survey. Overall, 525 responses were completed from the random sample mail survey (21% response rate), and 1,238 responses were generated via the online link published on the City's website. In total, 1,763 survey responses were recorded.

The survey measured current levels of satisfaction and

which facilities were primarily being used by residents. Residents were asked about future improvements and the types of recreational amenities they would like to see considered for the park system. Survey respondents were asked about:

- Performance and quality of programs and parks
- Usage of City parks and recreation facilities
- Overall satisfaction with the value of services being delivered by the City
- Opinions about the need for various park, recreation, and trail improvements
- Priorities for future park and recreation services and facilities

Significant survey findings are noted below, and a more detailed discussion of results can be found in the needs assessment chapters covering parks, open space, recreation, and trails (Chapters 6 - 9).

Major Survey Findings:

- **Livability:** Nearly all respondents (99%) feel that public parks and recreation opportunities are important or essential to the quality of life on Mercer Island.
- **Overall Satisfaction:** A large majority (94%) of respondents indicated that they are very or somewhat satisfied with the overall value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation for parks, facilities, and open space.
- **Usage:** Park visitation is high, with 68% of mail survey respondents visiting at least once a week and another 25% visiting one to three times per month.
- **Park Amenity Priorities:** Trails for walking ranked as the amenity of highest need. The second tier of need included bike trails, indoor fitness facilities, picnic shelters, and off-leash dog areas.
- **Programming:** Respondents indicated a higher interest in seeing more performing arts, educational and boating classes, and fitness programs.

The survey summary is provided in Appendix A.

Recreation Reset Survey

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City canceled and suspended recreation services and closed facilities in March 2020 due to ongoing public health and safety concerns. In late 2020, a planning process was initiated to assess the scope and function of recreation programming to prepare for summer 2021. An online survey was conducted in January and February 2021 to focus on needs and priorities for recreation programs and operations of the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC). A short, five-question survey was promoted via the City's Let's Talk online forum and social media platforms, and 565 responses were collected.

Major Survey Findings:

- **Balancing benefit:** The highest positive scores were for programs or services that balance individual and community benefits or where the community benefits considerably (examples: providing summer camp opportunities for youth, and programs that provide scholarships to increase accessibility).
- **Private rentals to support public programs:** There was consensus that maximizing private evening and weekend use to support lower-cost public programs and services was "really important."
- **Use of space:** Respondents stated that the MICEC's space should be prioritized for seniors, youth, adaptive recreation, school break/after school programs, and fitness.

The survey summary is provided in Appendix B.

Parks & Recreation System Priorities Survey

A third survey was administered to gain insights on priority projects and improvements. As with the first community survey, a random-sample of 2,500 households received a print version with a QR code and URL access to an online portal (statistically valid), plus the broader community was encouraged to participate through an identical online-only version of the survey. The 15-question survey was used to compare priorities from the 2020 survey and gauge community interest in park, trail and program enhancements. The survey was promoted via the Let's Talk online forum and social media postings. In all, the survey collected 1,329 responses, with 505 from the random-sample mail



version (20 % response rate) and 824 from the online-only, community-wide survey.

Major Survey Findings:

- Most needed park system improvements: A strong plurality of respondents (44%) noted connecting gaps in the trail system as a top priority, which was also 13 points higher than the next highest ranked option provided. The next top three improvements were expanding maintenance and restoration of open space (31%), repairing or upgrading waterfront areas (29%), and improving restroom facilities (25%).
- Outdoor recreation amenities: Strong majorities of respondents indicated an interest in walking or jogging trails (93% very or somewhat important) and open space and natural areas (90% very or somewhat important). A second tier of amenities of strong interest include restrooms (84%), bike lanes (68%), pocket parks (70%), parking (70%) and playgrounds (61%).
- Water-oriented programs or activities: A majority of respondents (67%) were either very or somewhat interested in access to kayak or paddleboard rentals.

A survey summary is provided in Appendix C.

Virtual Public Meeting #1

On March 23, 2021, the City hosted a virtual public meeting using Zoom technology. The public meeting included a number of ways for the public to provide input, including live polling and topic-oriented breakout rooms. The meeting started with a presentation to inform participants about the PROS Plan process and purpose, highlight some of the current challenges facing the City’s parks and recreation system, and provide an overview of the structure and format of the virtual meeting. Community members were asked to share their ideas and comments and help identify priorities for future programs and investments through in-session live polling questions, live chat, and three distinct breakout room discussions. Participants were assigned to breakout rooms that a City staff member or project consultant facilitated. Breakout room topics included waterfront and water-oriented recreation, trails, and balancing active and passive park uses.

Key themes from the March 23, 2021 meeting:

- Community: A majority of participants in the meeting noted that they missed events and festivals most during the pandemic, concluding that community gatherings remain firmly in demand on Mercer Island.

- Aging park amenities: Most felt that addressing aging park amenities and extending the useful life of existing facilities was the most pressing need in the City’s park system.
- Future programming: Boating and performing arts programming had the highest interest when considering expansion or enhancement of certain kinds of programming.
- Hot Topic: BMX or mountain biking facility access was a popular topic at the meeting, with much discussion on both sides of the issue. Some participants felt that expanded bike facilities are needed while others expressed concern that open space and natural forest areas should not accommodate these types of active park uses.

More than 70 people participated in the meeting. A meeting summary from the virtual public meeting is provided in Appendix D.

Virtual Public Meeting #2

On September 28, 2021, the City hosted a second virtual public meeting using Zoom technology. The virtual meeting was structured in a manner similar to the first virtual public meeting and included an introductory presentation, live polling, topic-oriented breakout rooms, and a question-and-answer period. The breakout room topics focused on the challenges related to balancing existing park amenities with community interest for new or different recreation opportunities, as well as exploring community interests related to system-wide playground equipment replacements.

Key themes from the September 28, 2021 meeting:

- The majority of respondents indicated that prioritizing dock repair and replacement at parks is very important (49%) or somewhat important (37%).
- Regarding trails, the two top priorities noted were to improve maintenance and upkeep of existing trails (44%) and to acquire and build new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or rights-of-way (31%).
- Regarding the installation of new recreational amenities, participants noted interest to accommodate new uses at existing popular and accessible parks (29%) and to add amenities to the areas currently underserved by active play areas (28%).
- A majority of participants favored either converting some existing tennis courts as multi-sport courts by adding pickleball lines (48%) or replacing some tennis courts with dedicated pickleball courts (34%).

Fifty-five people participated in the meeting. A summary from the second virtual public meeting is provided in Appendix E.

Parks & Recreation Commission Meetings

The Parks and Recreation Commission provided feedback on the development of the PROS Plan during nine regularly scheduled public sessions. The first session occurred in January 2020 in a joint session with the Arts Council. Following a pause in the PROS Plan project due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission resumed discussions of the plan in January 2021 and provided guidance and insight as the project progressed through the end of 2021. The Commission spent significant effort reviewing and commenting on the PROS Plan public process, project priorities, and system-wide goals and strategies to implement future projects.

Other Public Sessions

Other commissions and boards were engaged as best as possible with the development of the PROS Plan, including the Arts Council and the Open Space Conservancy Trust. City Council provided feedback, guidance and direction on the draft PROS Plan, prior to final adoption.

Other Outreach

In addition to the direct outreach opportunities described above, the Mercer Island community was informed about the planning process through a variety of media platforms. The following methods were used to share information about the project and provide opportunities to participate and offer their comments:

- City website home page
- City newsletter: MI Weekly
- Let's Talk project website and online forum
- Email blasts
- Social media: Twitter, Instagram & Facebook

Figure 3.1 provides samples of some media posts.

Figure 3.1. Samples of Community Outreach Postings

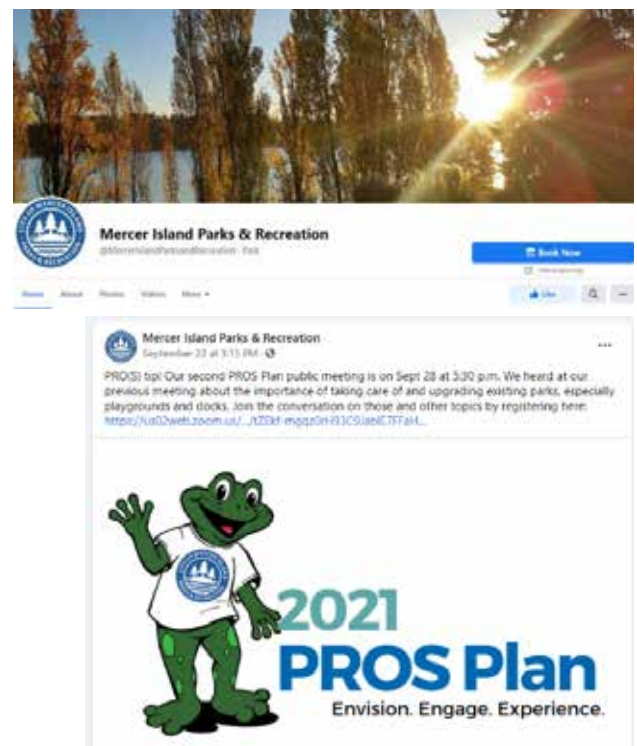
Public Meeting #1 Posting on Let's Talk



Community Survey Posting on Let's Talk



Public Meeting #2 Posting on Facebook



4 GOALS & OBJECTIVES



Included in this chapter and at the heart of the PROS Plan is the establishment of goals and objectives that provide strategic direction for the Mercer Island Parks and Recreation system.

Summer camp fun at the Island Crest Park ballfields.

The goals and objectives from past plans have been reorganized, enhanced, and arranged to align with the common themes noted by the community during the planning process. These goals and objectives will guide the delivery of parks and recreation services for the next six years and beyond.

Goals & Objectives

The Growth Management Act (GMA), adopted by the Washington State Legislature in 1990, provided a foundation for land use planning in selected cities and counties throughout the state, including King County and the City of Mercer Island. The GMA's purpose is to help communities deal efficiently with growth

challenges to ensure long-term sustainability and a high quality of life. The GMA identifies 14 planning goals to guide the creation of comprehensive plans and development regulations (codified in Chapter 36.70A of the Revised Code of Washington). Four of these goals directly affect the development and implementation of this plan.

- “Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.”
- “Protect the environment and enhance the state’s high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.”

- “Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.”
- “Carry-out the goals of the Shoreline Management Act with regards to shorelines and critical areas.”

Furthermore, the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, previous parks and recreation plans, other City plans, and county-wide planning policies provide a framework for this PROS Plan.

A goal is a general statement that describes the overarching direction for the parks and recreation system. Objectives are more specific and describe an outcome or a means to achieve the stated goals. Recommendations are specific and measurable actions intended to implement and achieve the goals and objectives and are contained in the Needs Assessment and Capital Planning chapters of the PROS Plan. Action items not related directly to capital projects are prioritized and adopted as part of the City of Mercer Island biennial budget.

A summary of the PROS Plan goals is provided below:

- Goal 1 – Planning, Acquisition & Access: Provide a high quality, welcoming, and inclusive parks and recreation system that meets community needs now and in the future.
- Goal 2 – Maintenance & Operations: Provide the Mercer Island community with safe, well-maintained parks and recreation facilities.
- Goal 3 – Environment & Sustainability: Provide a high quality, diversified open space system that preserves and enhances urban forests, critical habitat, and other environmental resources. Incorporate sustainability practices into operations, maintenance, and planning.
- Goal 4 – Trails: Develop and promote an interconnected community through safe, accessible, and attractive trails and pathways easily accessed by a variety of trail users.
- Goal 5 – Recreation Facilities & Programming: Provide a variety of recreation programs, services, and facilities that promote the health and well-being of residents of all ages and abilities.
- Goal 6 – Arts & Culture: Facilitate and promote comprehensive and engaging arts and culture experiences.
- Goal 7 – Community Engagement & Partnerships: Encourage and support community engagement and pursue collaborative partnerships to strengthen and grow parks and recreation programs and services.
- Goal 8 – Administration & Fiscal Sustainability: Provide leadership and sufficient resources to maintain and operate a welcoming, efficient, safe, and sustainable parks and recreation system.



Pergola area at Mercerdale Park

PLANNING, ACQUISITION & ACCESS

Goal 1: Provide a high quality, welcoming, and inclusive parks and recreation system that meets community needs now and in the future.

Objectives:

- 1.1. Retain publicly owned parks and open spaces in perpetuity. Actively pursue options to permanently protect parks and open space through conservation easements, zoning changes, or other strategies. Evaluate the transfer of some or all open space to the Open Space Conservancy Trust.
- 1.2. Update the Parks, Recreation & Open Space (PROS) Plan periodically and approximately every six years to ensure facilities and services meet current and future community needs and maintain eligibility for State grants. Incorporate the PROS Plan as an appendix to the Citywide Comprehensive Plan during the next update process.
- 1.3. Periodically review and update level of service standards for parks, trails, open space, playgrounds, and athletic fields. Include accompanying standards for maintenance, operations, and safety.
- 1.4. Identify and prioritize the need for master plans to guide all significant park development projects, achieve cohesive designs, and ensure project phasing is efficient and in alignment with community needs and priorities. Utilize management plans or other adopted strategies to guide the stewardship and maintenance of parks, open space, and trails.
- 1.5. Update the six-year Capital Improvement Plan at least every two years and use prioritization criteria, financial guidelines, and other factors to sequence projects. Maintain and publish a companion twenty-year capital project list at least every two years to capture long-term capital project needs and to guide the development of long-term funding strategies.
- 1.6. Design and maintain parks and facilities to offer universal accessibility for residents of all physical capabilities, skill levels, and ages as appropriate and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design. Seek opportunities to eliminate barriers at existing facilities and address goals identified in the Citywide ADA Transition Plan.
- 1.7. Strive to provide a distributed network of parks, such that all Mercer Island residents live within one-half mile of a developed neighborhood or community park.
- 1.8. Pursue and implement strategies to maximize use of existing park and recreation assets.
- 1.9. Prepare a Land Acquisition Strategy to prioritize property acquisition to meet the future parks, trails, open space, and facility needs of the Mercer Island community.
- 1.10. Maintain a minimum overall satisfaction level for the parks system above 90% as measured through the community-wide survey, normally conducted every other year.



Luther Burbank Park

- 1.11 Partner with public, private, and non-profit organizations and donors to acquire land for park and recreation needs.
- 1.12 When evaluating the vacation of any right-of-way, consider its appropriateness for use as public park or open space.
- 1.13 Plan for a range of play types, universal access, and a phasing plan when replacing or upgrading playground equipment. Identify partnerships, grants, sponsorships, and other funding opportunities for playground replacement projects.
- 1.14 Improve and upgrade developed, and undeveloped street ends where appropriate to enhance public access to waterfront facilities. Identify opportunities where achieving ADA access is feasible and improve parking options.
- 1.15 Ensure public safety is included in all development and planning projects by coordinating with police and fire services and applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques.
- 1.16 Integrate public art and park design from the onset of facility planning to create compelling, engaging, and captivating public places. Prioritize experiences that are interactive and allow for dynamic sensory exploration.
- 1.17 Ensure that the allocation and use of athletic facilities, amenities, and field space aligns with Title IX provisions prohibiting discrimination or disparity in sports, recreation, and athletic facilities.



Volunteers planting native plants at Luther Burbank Park

MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

Goal 2: Provide the Mercer Island community with safe, well-maintained parks and recreation facilities.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Maintain all parks and facilities in a manner that keeps them in a safe and attractive condition.
- 2.2 Continue to improve the City's comprehensive risk management program to ensure regular safety inspections are completed and assess the likelihood and consequence of the failure of its assets in terms of financial, community, and environmental impacts.
- 2.3 Track and monitor costs of maintaining parks and recreation facilities, including quantity, location, condition, and expected useful life. Utilize data to inform maintenance and capital investment decisions, including the timing of asset replacement.
- 2.4 Estimate the maintenance costs and staffing levels associated with land acquisition, development, or renovation of facilities, parks, open space, or trails, and ensure adequate ongoing funding is available prior to action.
- 2.5 Provide amenities at parks, trails, open space, and facilities where appropriate and when feasible to improve the user experience and access.



Native plantings at Luther Burbank Park

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

Goal 3: Provide a high quality, diversified open space system that preserves and enhances urban forests, critical habitat, and other environmental resources. Incorporate sustainability practices into operations, maintenance, and planning.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Preserve and protect open space and park land areas with significant environmental features such as wetlands, forests, steep slopes, and plant and animal habitats from development impacts.
- 3.2 Provide appropriate public access (e.g. trails, viewpoints, and wildlife viewing areas) within open space to support passive recreation, and parking, where appropriate and feasible. Provide environmental education opportunities in open space with creative and interactive interpretation strategies, such as hands-on displays, self-guided walks, and other engaging experiences.
- 3.3 Incorporate cost-effective sustainable practices into management, maintenance, and operations activities. Maintain equipment in good working order, purchase green equipment when feasible (e.g., battery-powered or low-emissions), replace existing lighting with high-efficiency fixtures, and keep systems (irrigation, lighting, HVAC, etc.) updated and fully functional for maximum performance. Pursue pilot programs to field test sustainable alternatives and to implement demonstration projects.
- 3.4 Pursue cost-effective sustainable design alternatives and include in the project scope of work for construction projects and major maintenance activities, when feasible and appropriate.
- 3.5 Continue to support the Open Space Conservancy Trust and the planning, development, and management of Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space. Promote Pioneer Park as a demonstration site for best practices in forest management and environmental education.
- 3.6 Actively work to improve the condition of City-owned parks, trails, and open space through invasive species removal, planting of native species, and restoration of urban forests, creeks, wetlands, and other habitat areas. Anticipate climate trends and foster climate-resilient landscapes in parks and open space. Seek opportunities for community education on invasive species and their safe removal to help reduce their spread on Mercer Island. Maintain an Integrated Pest Management Program that maximizes ecological benefits while minimizing environmental, social, and economic impacts.
- 3.7 Develop a Citywide Urban Forestry Management Plan to articulate a long-term strategy for tree protection, urban forestry management, and public education and outreach. Include forest health, canopy replacement, wildfire, climate change, and general risk planning for City parks and open space as part of the overall strategy. Continue to gather and maintain Island-wide data on tree canopy coverage.



Trail at Upper Luther Burbank Park

- 3.8 Encourage conservation opportunities to buffer and enhance the built environment. Pursue low-cost and non-purchase options to preserve open space and park land, including the use of conservation easements and development covenants. Promote and encourage private property owners to enroll in the King County Current Use taxation programs, emphasizing properties contiguous to existing open space.
- 3.9 Promote and expand recycling opportunities at all park facilities and in association with all public and private special events. Include composting options at special events when food vendors are present.
- 3.10 Conserve and reduce water use through sustainable landscape design and maintenance practices.
- 3.11 Design and restore parks, trails, and open space to naturally capture and filter stormwater to improve water quality, increase water infiltration and recharge, and promote a healthy watershed and lake environment. Where feasible, coordinate park, trail, and open space projects with stormwater and utility projects for efficiency and to reduce environmental impacts.
- 3.12 Steward waterfront and shoreline properties with the goal of protecting and enhancing critical shoreline habitat while preserving safe water access for recreational use.
- 3.13 Maintain the Tree City USA designation with continued review of tree policy and management. Ensure that City-owned properties are viewed as leading proponents of the Tree City USA designation.
- 3.14 Continue to facilitate volunteer programs that enhance park improvement and restoration efforts, promote environmental education, support ongoing maintenance efforts, and engage the community in stewardship opportunities.
- 3.15 Within city-owned open space, prevent the encroachment of active-use areas and minimize the installation of hardscape (e.g., paved, non-permeable, compacted) park amenities through low-impact design solutions to maintain the natural conditions of open space. Evaluate opportunities to reduce or decommission existing hardscape surfaces that are no longer needed or in use.



Luther Burbank Park north wetland boardwalk

TRAILS

Goal 4: Develop and promote an interconnected community through safe, accessible, and attractive trails and pathways easily accessed by a variety of trail users.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Develop and implement a trail system hierarchy to accommodate different user types and experiences.
- 4.2 Prioritize trail projects that address gaps between existing paths, create longer, more usable connections, and improve safety. Promote trail connections to parks, schools, neighborhoods, the library, transit stops, the Eastlink Light Rail Station, commercial areas, and regional trail networks.
- 4.3 Coordinate construction of trail projects with other capital improvement projects including utility and transportation projects.
- 4.4 Expand and link the pedestrian and bicycle circulation system by acquiring rights-of-way and easements for trails and trail connections.
- 4.5 Integrate the siting of proposed trail segments into the development review process; require designated trail routes to be incorporated as part of the development project.
- 4.6 Utilize and implement park or open space site master plans to guide the development of trails within existing properties and to promote connections to external trail networks.
- 4.7 Develop clear and consistent wayfinding signage and information materials for trails and associated facilities.
- 4.8 Continue to support use of non-motorized small craft along the Mercer Island shoreline via the “water trail.” Seek opportunities to integrate and enhance water trail use through upgrades to access points, including at street ends.



Young athletes at Island Crest Park north field

RECREATION FACILITIES & PROGRAMMING

Goal 5: Provide a variety of recreation programs, services, and facilities that promote the health and well-being of residents of all ages and abilities.

Objectives:

- 5.1 Refine the City's role as a provider of recreation programs and services by implementing the Recreation Reset Strategy's cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy. Revisit and update business planning goals at least every six years to address changing community needs and to revisit performance goals. Provide annual updates on work progress and implementation.
- 5.2 Enhance the diversity of recreation programs offered, focusing on programs that are in high demand or serve a wide range of users and adhere to the guidelines established in the Recreation Reset Strategy.
 - a. Expand service offerings for water-oriented recreation programs.
 - b. Continue work to restore and expand youth and teen programs to provide engaging, affordable, enriching, inclusive, and safe options for children on Mercer Island. Identify programs and activities that provide for whole-family participation.
 - c. Work to restore and expand opportunities for seniors to engage in social, recreational, educational, nutritional, and health programs designed to encourage social connections, independence, physical fitness, and overall well-being.
- 5.5 Identify and address recreation and service accessibility barriers (socio-economic, language, physical, mental health, geographic, transportation). Seek to reduce access barriers and expand inclusive opportunities. Implement diversity, equity and inclusion policies and a priority matrix to guide the allocation of resources to address known service gaps over time.
- 5.6 Review and establish a funding strategy for the Mercer Island Community and Event Center to sustain annual operating needs to include periodic review of the fee policy for programs, indoor facility uses, and rental rates to meet operational requirements and cost recovery goals.
- 5.7 Maintain and enhance program scholarships and other mechanisms to support and promote recreation access for low-income community members.
- 5.8 Evaluate the City's role and function in community events and pursue sponsorships, partnerships, and outside funding to support existing or additional events and festivals.
- 5.9 Leverage City resources by forming and maintaining partnerships with other public, non-profit, and private recreation providers to deliver recreation programs and services and secure access to existing facilities for community recreation.
- 5.10 Conduct periodic evaluations of program offerings. Utilize data to inform program and service planning decisions.
- 5.12 Manage and coordinate recreation facility uses to serve a variety of programs, activities, events, and rentals. Develop and implement protocols and policies to ensure efficient and cost-effective scheduling.



Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery (Aubrey Davis Park)

ARTS & CULTURE

Goal 6: Facilitate and promote comprehensive and engaging arts and culture experiences.

Objectives:

- 6.1 Foster the City's role as a convener of artists, arts organizations, and community groups to facilitate collaboration and efficiently serve the community through arts and culture programs and experiences.
- 6.2 Support the priorities of the Mercer Island Arts Council and the goals and initiatives of the Comprehensive Arts & Culture Plan.
- 6.3 Identify and implement opportunities for integrating arts and culture into parks and open space, including, where feasible and appropriate, through permanent and temporary public art installations, arts performance and events, interpretive strategies, and other dynamic expressions. Collaborate with diverse groups to ensure incorporation of art in public space occurs through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 6.4 Partner with the community and local organizations to foster a variety of cultural events and support community cultural celebrations.
- 6.5 Develop a long-range project plan for the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund that articulates the City's vision for the public art program and includes integration with the Capital Improvement Program, strategies for engaging the community in public art acquisition, and updated policies for public art acquisition, siting, security, maintenance, and deaccession.
- 6.6 Encourage private contributions and donations for the arts, consistent with City gift and donation policies, and the City's pursuit of grant funding to enhance widespread public access to arts, culture, and heritage.
- 6.7 Encourage the collaboration of arts and culture marketing and communication efforts through shared event calendars, social media management, and other cohesive strategies.



Community Campout at Luther Burbank Park

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

Goal 7: Encourage and support community engagement and pursue collaborative partnerships to strengthen and grow parks and recreation programs and services.

Objectives:

- 7.1 Involve the community in system-wide planning and site design. Use a variety of communication tools and engagement strategies to solicit community input, facilitate project understanding, and build community support.
- 7.2 Enhance and strengthen the Mercer Island School District partnership, seeking opportunities to collaborate on facility use, maintenance, programs, and other services. Review and update existing Interlocal Agreements regularly, approximately every two years.
- 7.3 Identify and implement partnerships with other public, private, non-profit, and community organizations to support capital projects, community events, programs, and other special initiatives.
- 7.4 Support the Parks & Recreation Commission as the forum for public discussion of parks and recreation issues and ensure collaboration with the Open Space Conservancy Trust and the Arts Council. Conduct periodic joint sessions between the Parks & Recreation Commission, other standing City boards, and the City Council to improve coordination and discuss policy matters of mutual interest.
- 7.5 Communicate the value of the City's investment in parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities by highlighting the benefits such as better human health, increased community interaction, favorable environmental conditions, increased revenue, and higher property values.
- 7.6 Provide informative, timely and consistent communication, informational materials, and signage to help community members connect with and fully utilize the many parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services. Maintain a consistent brand identity through marketing campaigns, social media presence, and other communication mediums. Adapt community outreach efforts to ensure a broad reach.
- 7.7 Track and evaluate recreation trends, park use patterns, and park user needs.



Leap the Frog at Leap For Green, the City's community sustainability fair

ADMINISTRATION & FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

Goal 8: Provide leadership and sufficient resources to maintain and operate a welcoming, efficient, safe, and sustainable parks and recreation system.

Objectives:

- 8.1 Promote a welcoming and inclusive environment, seeking opportunities to address barriers and expand program and service offerings to meet a diverse audience. Provide diversity, equity, and inclusion training opportunities for staff, volunteers, and appointed officials.
- 8.2 Pursue sufficient financial resources to ensure a vibrant and well-maintained parks and recreation system.
- 8.3 Pursue alternative funding options and dedicated revenues for the acquisition and development of parks and facilities.
- 8.4 Periodically review and update the Park Impact Fee rates and methodology approximately every 5 to 7 years and utilize impact fees to accommodate growth through the expansion of the parks system.
- 8.5 Develop a recommendation for City Council consideration to renew the Parks Maintenance and Operations Levy, scheduled to end in 2023.
- 8.6 Collaborate with the Community Planning and Development Department on economic development initiatives related to parks, recreation, and cultural arts programs and services. Seek opportunities to buy-local when procuring products and services and identify other opportunities to partner with Mercer Island small businesses in the delivery of programs, events, and other services.
- 8.7 Stay abreast of best practices in technology and implement systems and tools to improve customer service and support efficient operations.
- 8.8 Continue to use part-time, seasonal, and contract employees for select functions to meet peak demands and respond to specialized or urgent needs. Maintain flexibility in the staffing structure to address changing program and service needs.
- 8.9 Promote volunteerism to involve individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses in the development and stewardship of the park and recreation system.
- 8.9 Promote professional development opportunities that strengthen the core skills and engender greater commitment from staff, advisory board members, and volunteers. Include trainings, materials, and/or affiliation with the National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA), Washington Recreation & Park Association (WRPA), and others.

5 CLASSIFICATIONS & INVENTORY

The City of Mercer Island manages 481 acres of parks and open space lands, providing numerous public waterfront access sites, active recreational facilities for team sports, playground equipment at 11 parks, 28 miles of walking paths and trails, picnic areas, and hundreds of acres of natural forest lands. Parklands cover about 12% of the Island.

Calkins Landing

City of Mercer Island parks are defined as “all city parks, public squares, public drives, parkways, boulevards, golf courses, park museums, pools, bathing beaches and play and recreation grounds under the management and control of the park and recreation department.” (Ord. A-91 § 1, 1991).

Some parks and recreation facilities have been developed and are managed in collaboration with the Mercer Island School District, providing high-quality sports fields and developed recreational amenities. The School District also owns and manages more than 100 acres of property, allowing scheduled public recreation programming of indoor gyms and shared public access to outdoor playgrounds and sports fields when feasible. Additionally, in coordination with the Open Space Conservancy Trust, the City manages Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space.

The public parklands and shared school facilities create a wide range of active and passive recreational opportunities for the Mercer Island community.

Parkland Classifications

Parkland is classified to assist in planning for the community’s recreational needs. The classifications also reflect standards that inform development decisions during site planning, in addition to operations and maintenance expectations for the level of developed facilities or natural lands. The Mercer Island park system is composed of a hierarchy of various park types, each offering recreational opportunities and natural environmental functions. Collectively, the park system is intended to serve the full range of community needs.

CLASSIFICATIONS & INVENTORY

Each park classification defines the site's function and expected amenities and recreational uses. The classification characteristics serve as general guidelines addressing the size and use of each park type. The following six classifications are used in Mercer Island's park system:

- Regional Parks
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Mini Parks
- Special Facilities
- Open Space

Regional Parks

Regional parks have a mix of recreational amenities for both active sports and passive play. These parks provide parking, restrooms, picnic areas, large open lawn areas for informal gathering, and outdoor play activities. Special features such as community gardens, amphitheaters, trail networks, natural areas, public art, and community centers may be located in regional parks.

Often provided by county park systems, regional parks are much larger compared to community parks, typically greater than 50 acres and draw users from a larger geographic area. Luther Burbank Park, once owned by King County, is one of two regional parks on Mercer Island. Aubrey Davis Park, constructed as 92 acres of highway lids and landscape buffers surrounding I-90, is the other. Both regional parks provide many outdoor recreational opportunities and connect to a regional bike trail and water trail. They also provide developed public access to Lake Washington, including swim beaches and a boat launch.

Community Parks

Community parks are larger sites, typically between 10 and 49 acres, containing a wider array of facilities and, as a result, appealing to a more diverse group of users. Community parks often include recreational amenities, such as sports fields or waterfront beaches, that draw park users from beyond the immediate neighborhood. They also frequently include open space with trails that connect to adjacent neighborhoods, schools, or retail areas. One example is Homestead Park, which is 10.5 acres and provides a mix of active opportunities including athletic fields, a playground, a basketball court, and tennis courts, in addition to a network of trails. At nearly 36 acres, Island Crest Park is also a

community park and includes athletic fields and open spaces areas with an extensive trail network.

While active areas of community parks are designed for more organized or intensive recreational activities and sports, natural areas provide passive options for outdoor recreation. Community parks typically provide parking, restrooms, paved pathways, picnic tables, and benches to support outdoor recreation uses. Community parks may also serve as local neighborhood parks and they may be connected to schools or other community facilities.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are intended to serve residential areas within close proximity (generally up to a half-mile walking or biking distance). They are 2 to 9 acres in size, depending on a variety of factors, including neighborhood need, physical location, and opportunity. One example of a neighborhood park is Roanoke Park. At 3.76 acres this park provides a playground and tennis courts.

Ideally, neighborhood parks are geographically distributed throughout the community. Developed neighborhood parks typically include amenities such as paved pathways, picnic tables, benches, play equipment, a multi-use open field for informal play, sport courts, and/or multi-purpose paved areas and landscaping. Except for waterfront sites, parking areas are generally not required or provided. During non-school hours, public elementary school properties function very similarly to neighborhood parks.

Mini Parks

Mini parks are small pocket parks, typically under one acre, offering outdoor experiences ranging from playgrounds to waterfront access.

Mini parks are the smallest park classification and serve a limited radius (generally up to a quarter-mile) from the site and provide passive and play-oriented recreational opportunities. Mini parks are distinguished from neighborhood parks primarily by their smaller size. Amenities are usually limited to small playground facilities, small open grass areas, and minimal site furnishings such as picnic tables or benches. Parking is not typically provided at mini parks; however, in some cases, limited parking is available at some street end mini-parks that include access to Lake Washington. At 0.72 acres, Secret Park is one example of a mini park and includes a playground and small open grass area. Many of the waterfront street end parks are also considered mini parks due to their size.



Special Facilities

Special facilities include single-purpose recreational areas or stand-alone sites designed to support a specific, specialized use. Special facilities include community recreation centers, swimming pools, sports complexes, community gardens, indoor gyms, and fitness centers. Some special facilities may be included in park acreage and not listed as stand-alone amenities, such as the Mercer Island Boat Launch and the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery in Aubrey Davis Park and the P-Patch in Luther Burbank Park. No standards exist for special facilities since the facility size is a function of the special use.

Open Space

Open space is managed in their natural condition and may or may not provide public access. This type of conserved land often includes wetlands, wildlife corridors, shorelines, rivers and streams, steep hillsides, or other natural or environmentally sensitive spaces. These lands provide ecosystem benefits, such as improved water quality, forest canopy, and wildlife habitat, and are usually managed for their ecological function or natural resource value. Where appropriate, open spaces may provide areas for trail corridors and low-impact or passive activities, such as walking, nature observation, or fishing. At more than 110 acres, Pioneer Park is the largest open space on Mercer Island. Open space lands are primarily forested and may include stream corridors and steep slopes that cannot be developed for other land uses.

Parkland Inventory

The City of Mercer Island provides 481 acres of parkland including 27 developed parks. Open space totals just under 286 acres across 23 different sites. Figure 5.1 lists the existing city-owned park and open space. An inventory of trails is provided in Chapter 8.

Mercer Island provides and maintains an extensive inventory of developed parks, special facilities, natural open space lands, and trails. Larger developed parks with regional significance include Aubrey Davis Park, which follows the I-90 corridor, and Luther Burbank Park, which covers the northeast waterfront of Mercer Island. Pioneer Park is maintained and operationally managed by the City at the direction of the Open Space Conservancy Trust, which owns and oversees the land offers more than 110 acres of public preserved open space.

In addition to the boat launch in Aubrey Davis Park and boat moorage at Luther Burbank Park, the City provides numerous public access points to the Lake Washington waterfront and the Lakes to Locks Water Trail through two community parks and developed street ends.

Developed sports fields, including baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, and football, are provided by the City of Mercer Island and the Mercer Island School District. The South Mercer Playfields were developed in a shared agreement between the District and the City to provide synthetic turf fields to support school athletic programs and public recreation. The City also owns and operates the Mercer Island Community and Event Center offering recreational programming, special events, arts and culture activities, private rental opportunities, and community activities adjacent to Luther Burbank Park.



Mercerdale Skate Park



Calkins Point – Luther Burbank Park

Figure 5.1. Parkland Inventory by Type

City-owned Parklands	Type	Acres
Aubrey Davis Park	Regional	91.81
Luther Burbank Park †	Regional	54.56
Subtotal		146.37
Clarke Beach Park †	Community	8.66
Groveland Beach Park †	Community	3.03
Homestead Park †	Community	10.46
Island Crest Park †	Community	35.94
Mercerdale Park †	Community	12.01
South Mercer Playfields	Community	28.09
Subtotal		98.19
Deane's Children's Park	Neighborhood	3.04
First Hill Park	Neighborhood	0.68
Roanoke Park	Neighborhood	0.98
Rotary Park	Neighborhood	3.76
Wildwood Park †	Neighborhood	2.84
Subtotal		11.30
77th Ave SE Landing	Mini	0.29
Bicentennial Park	Mini	0.16
Calkins Landing	Mini	0.48
Forest Landing	Mini	0.05
Franklin Landing	Mini	0.10
Fruitland Landing	Mini	0.14
Garfield Landing	Mini	0.44
Lincoln Landing	Mini	0.23
Miller Landing	Mini	0.24
Proctor Landing	Mini	0.42
Roanoke Landing	Mini	0.15
SE 28th Street Mini Park	Mini	0.06
Secret Park †	Mini	0.72
Slater Park	Mini	0.59
Subtotal		4.07

Cayhill Open Space	Open Space	1.08
Clise Park	Open Space	1.47
Ellis Pond	Open Space	4.13
Engstrom Open Space	Open Space	8.51
Gallagher Hill	Open Space	11.29
Hollerbach Open Space	Open Space	5.23
Mercerdale Hillside	Open Space	18.14
N Mercerdale Hillside	Open Space	5.11
Parkwood Ridge Open Space	Open Space	3.79
Pioneer Park	Open Space	113.67
Salem Woods	Open Space	0.32
SE 47th Street Open Space	Open Space	1.27
SE 50th Street Open Space	Open Space	1.78
SE 53rd Place Open Space	Open Space	24.01
Upper Luther Burbank Park	Open Space	18.05
Subtotal		217.85
Mercer Island Community & Event Center		2.90
TOTAL ACREAGE		480.7

† NOTE: Portion of these parks contain open space





Facilities

The Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC) began providing recreation and event programming in 2005. The 42,000 square-foot facility includes a 10,500 square-foot gymnasium, dance room, game room, library, catering kitchen, large multi-purpose room, fitness room, and five additional program rooms. The lobby also features the Mercer Island Gallery, an indoor gallery space hosting rotating art exhibits.

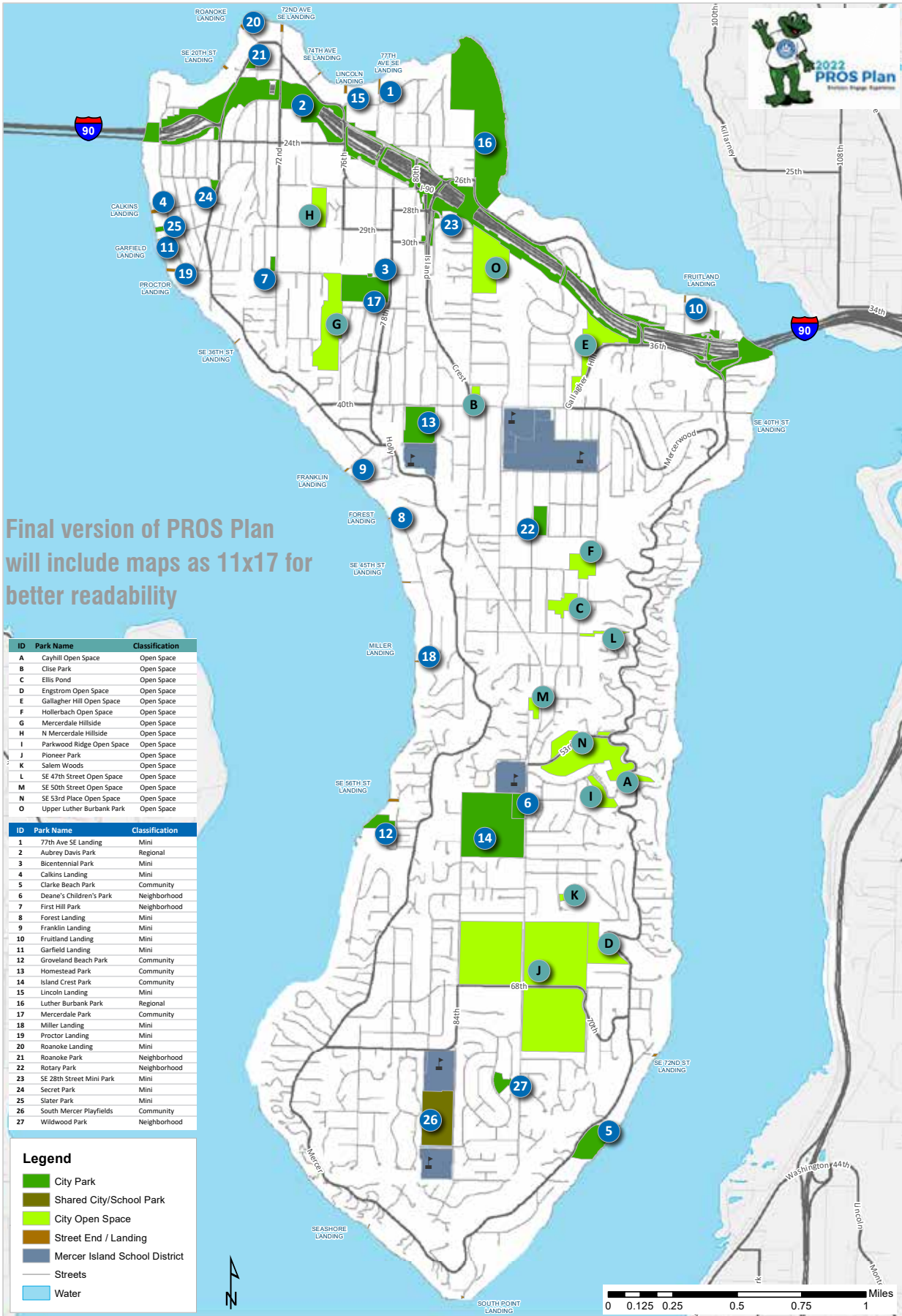
The MICEC closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and re-opened in June 2021 for programming. Under normal conditions and prior to the pandemic, the MICEC offered various rental spaces for events, activities, and celebrations. The North Annex, which includes leased daycare facilities and an outdoor playground, is located next to the main MICEC building. The MICEC and its amenities also serve to provide the community with various emergency services. These include serving as a “cooling or warming” site, an emergency shelter, and a reunification location.

In addition to the MICEC, a variety of special facilities are available to Mercer Island residents through shared agreements, school facilities, non-profit organizations, and private organizations, see Figure 5.2. The City and Mercer Island School District collaborate to provide outdoor sports fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, and indoor gyms. Some parks and sports fields are adjacent to schools and offer expanded amenities for the community, such as the South Mercer Playfields located between Islander Middle School and Lakeridge Elementary School.

The Mary Wayte Pool is a public pool owned by the Mercer Island School District and operated by Olympic Cascade Aquatics (OCA), a coach-owned competitive USA swimming program. The pool offers swimming lessons, lap swimming, water aerobics, swim team programs, and facility rentals. The City provides funding support for the operation of the pool through an Interlocal Agreement with the Mercer Island School District.

Figure 5.2. Multi-Jurisdictional Special Facilities Inventory

Alphabetical Facility List		Owner			
		City	School District	Private	Non-Profit
Facility Name	Park Type				
Island Park Elementary School	Special Facility		X		
Islander Middle School/South Mercer Playfields	Special Facility	X	X		
Lakeridge Elementary School	Special Facility		X		X
M.I. High School/North Mercer Campus	Special Facility		X		
Mary Wayte Pool	Special Facility				X
Mercer Island Boat Launch (part of Aubrey Davis Park)	Special Facility	X			
Mercer Island Boys & Girls Club (PEAK)	Special Facility		X		X
Mercer Island Community & Event Center	Special Facility	X			
Stroum Jewish Community Center	Special Facility				X
West Mercer Elementary School	Special Facility		X		



Map 1: Existing Parks & Open Spaces



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Sports Fields

Various sports fields support football, baseball, softball, soccer, ultimate frisbee, and lacrosse and offer natural grass, synthetic infields, and multi-purpose synthetic-turf fields, see Figure 5.3. For non-school sports programs, the City coordinates field reservations for multiple sports leagues and clubs, including facilities at Aubrey Davis Park, Island Crest Park, Homestead Park, and the South Mercer Playfields. A 2007 Ballfield Analysis indicated that the number of sports fields was adequate to meet programming needs, as long as fields were maintained in good condition and all scheduling was coordinated for equal distribution and access.

Twenty public tennis courts are provided in public parks and school sites, and the tennis courts at Luther Burbank Park also include pickleball lines. Three basketball courts are provided in public parks.



Island Crest Park north field


Figure 5.3. Sports Field and Sports Courts Inventory

Facility Name	Field Type*					Courts		
	Football	Baseball	Softball	Soccer	Lacrosse	Tennis	Pickleball	Basketball
Aubrey Davis Park			2	1	1	4		2
Homestead Park			2	1		4		1
Island Crest Park	1	2		1		2		
Island Park Elementary School		1		1				
Islander Middle School	1							
Lakeridge Elementary School		1		1				
Luther Burbank Park						3		
Mercer Island Community & Event Center							6**	
M.I. High School/North Mercer Campus	2			1	1	6		
Roanoke Park						1		
South Mercer Playfields			4	3	1			
West Mercer Elementary School				1				
Totals	4	4	8	10	3	20	6**	3

* Note: Fields may be multi-purpose and counted as both ballfield and soccer/lacrosse

** Note: MICEC offers up to six indoor pickleball courts during dedicated times only

6 PARKS & ACTIVE USE SPACES



The PROS planning process assesses recreational needs and priorities for park facilities and active use areas on Mercer Island. The park assessment included a discussion of specific local needs with consideration given to the City's broader parks system. Public input and information on park inventory conditions were also heavily relied upon in the planning process.

Playground at South Mercer Playfields

By considering the location, size, and the number of park facilities by type and use, along with community interests and priorities, the PROS Plan evaluates the existing and future demand for park and recreation amenities and provides recommendations for future initiatives. The six-year Capital Improvement Program, which identifies and prioritizes crucial upgrades, improvements, and expansions, is based on the needs assessment and the recreational interests expressed by residents and is further detailed in Chapter 11.

PARK USE TRENDS

Various resources have been assembled and summarized to provide an overview of current trends, market

demands, and agency comparisons in the provision of parks and recreation services. This information is helpful when balanced with local insights and feedback from the community in guiding future initiatives.

The following national and state data highlights some of the current park use trends and may help frame future considerations for Mercer Island's park system. Additional trend data and summaries are provided in Appendix J.

- Nationwide, 82% of U.S. adults believe that parks and recreation are essential according to the American Engagement with Parks Survey from 2020. ⁽¹⁾
- 77% of those survey respondents indicate that having a high-quality park, playground, public

PARKS & ACTIVE USE SPACES

open space, or a recreation center nearby is an important factor in deciding where they want to live. ⁽¹⁾

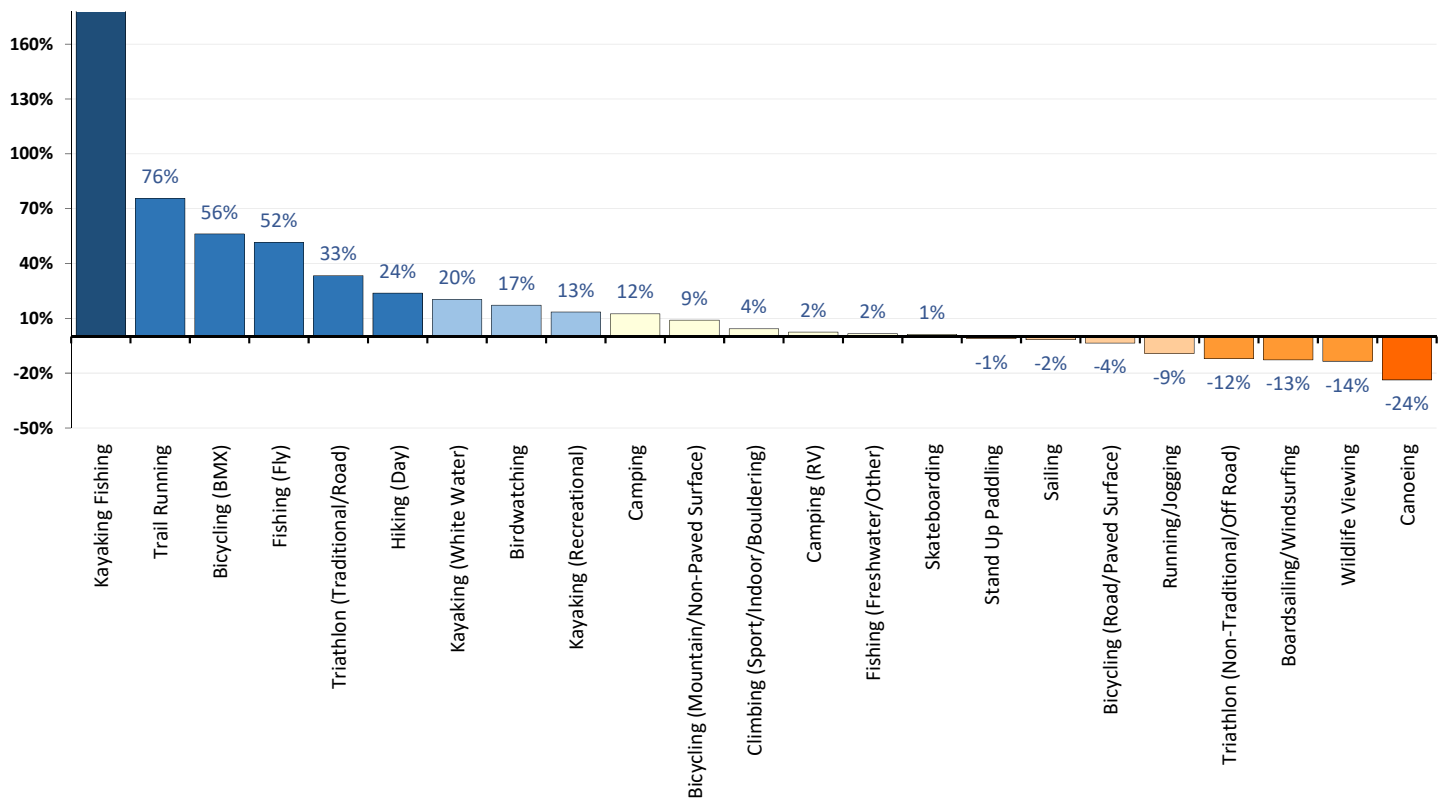
- Just over half of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation at least once in 2019, the highest participation rate in five years. However, the number of outings per participant declined – continuing a decade-long trend – resulting in fewer total recreational outings. ⁽²⁾
- Running, jogging, and trail running are the most popular outdoor activities across the nation, based on levels of participation, followed by fishing, hiking, biking, and camping. ⁽²⁾
- Walking ranked as the top activity by participation rate (94%) in Washington State. ⁽⁴⁾
- Trail running, day hiking, and recreational kayaking are rapidly increasing in popularity – participation in each increased more than 5% per year between 2014 and 2019. ⁽³⁾

- Walking, running, hiking, and cycling saw significant increases in participation in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic (March to June 2020). ⁽²⁾
- People of all ages and income levels are interested in outdoor activities like fishing, camping, hiking, biking, bicycling, and swimming. Younger people are more interested in participating in team sports, such as soccer, basketball, and volleyball. Older adults are more likely to aspire to individual activities like swimming for fitness, bird and nature viewing, and canoeing. ⁽³⁾

Sources:

- (1) 2020 American Engagement with Parks Survey, NRPA
- (2) 2020 Outdoor Participation Report, Outdoor Foundation
- (3) 2020 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report, Sports & Fitness Industry Association
- (4) 2018-2022 Recreation and Conservation Plan for Washington State

Figure 6.1. 5-Year Change in Outdoor Recreation Participation by Major Activity (2020 Outdoor Participation Report)





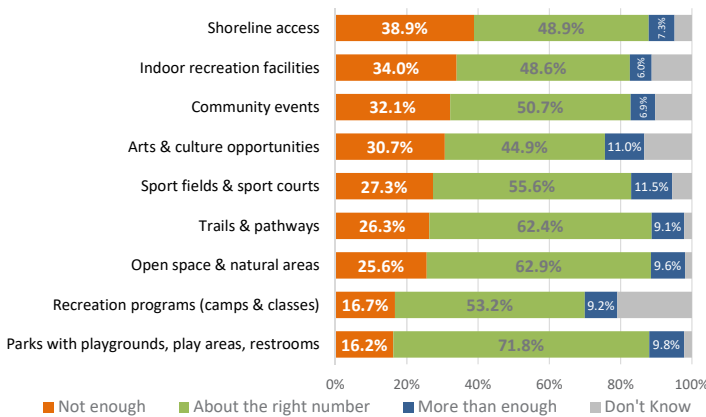
LOCAL INSIGHTS

Local recreation demands and needs were explored through various community engagements to gather feedback on the strengths and limitations of existing recreational resources and parks available to Mercer Island residents. Public outreach included two community surveys and two virtual public meetings to explore project priorities and opportunities to enhance the City’s park system (see Appendices A, C, D & E). Through this outreach, nearly 3,200 responses were recorded.

Both iterations of the community survey confirmed that local parks, recreation options, and open space opportunities are important or essential to the quality of life on Mercer Island. A strong majority of respondents (93%) were satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island for parks, facilities, and open space.

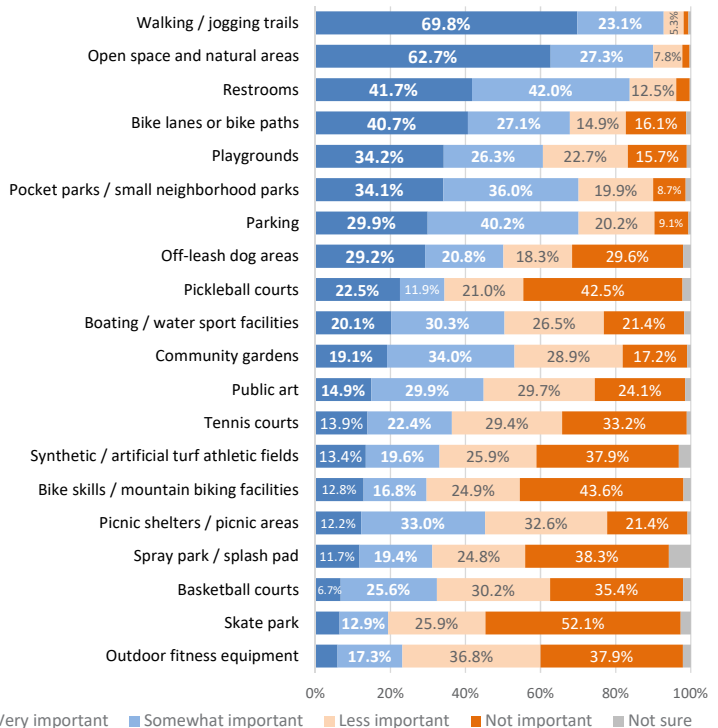
Survey respondents were generally satisfied with the number of park and recreation amenities on Mercer Island; over half said there are more than enough or about the correct number amenities, see Figure 6.2. Respondents were most satisfied with the number of parks with playgrounds and restrooms (81% think there is an adequate number or more than enough), sports fields and courts (67%), trails and pathways (73%), and open space and natural areas (73%). However, between one-quarter and one-third of respondents felt there is not enough shoreline access (39%), community events (32%), indoor facilities (34%), arts and culture opportunities (31%), and open space (26%).

Figure 6.2. Needs Expressed for Parks, Trails, and Recreation Facilities



The survey provided a list of outdoor recreation amenities and asked respondents to identify those important to their household, see Figure 6.3. A strong majority indicated an interest in walking or jogging trails (93% very or somewhat important) and open space and natural areas (90% very or somewhat important). The second tier of amenities of substantial interest included restrooms (84% very or somewhat important), bike lanes (68% very or somewhat important), pocket parks (70% very or somewhat important), parking (70% very or somewhat important) and playgrounds (61% very or somewhat important). Additionally, approximately half of the respondents identified community gardens, boating and water sport facilities, and off-leash dog areas as either very or somewhat important.

Figure 6.3. Relative Importance of Various Recreation Amenities



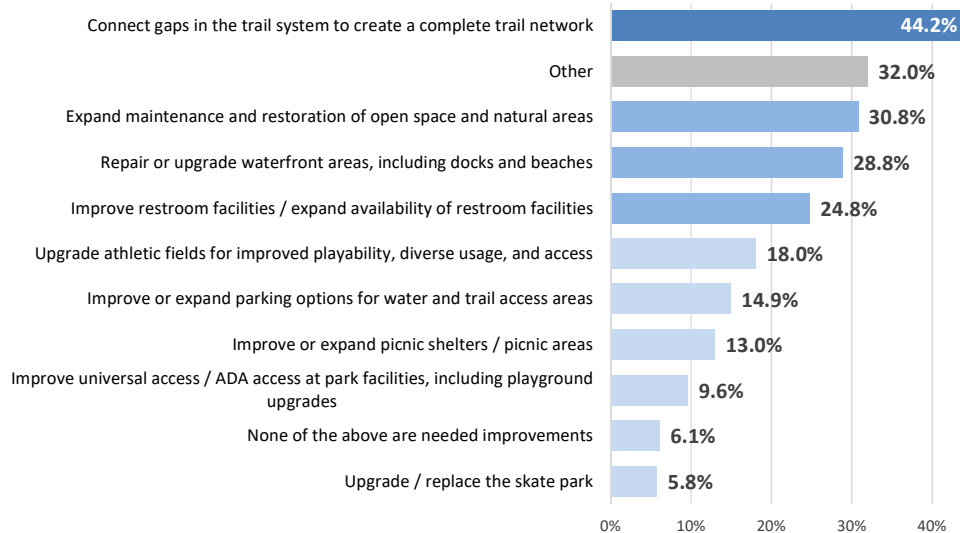
To further distinguish community priorities from those noted in the 2020 community survey, respondents of the second survey were provided a range of options related to specific potential improvements to the Mercer Island park system and were asked to select their top three choices, see Figure 6.4.

A strong plurality of respondents (44%) noted connecting gaps in the trail system as a top priority, which was also 13 points higher than the next highest ranked option provided. Between one-quarter and one-third of respondents identified the following as the next top three options: expanding maintenance and restoration of open space (31%), repairing or upgrading waterfront areas (29%), and improving restroom facilities (25%). With the write-in ‘other’ option

provided, over 400 respondents provided comments, and the most common responses among these included:

- Add pickleball courts; convert tennis and/or basketball courts to pickleball
- Enhance maintenance, to include playground replacements, trail maintenance, pathway repaving, and invasive plant management
- Off-leash dog management and leash law enforcement
- Enhanced trash management, such as adding more trash cans and more frequent waste hauling
- Security and safety management, including managing for homeless encampments

Figure 6.4. Priority System Improvements



Common Themes from Community Outreach

Waterfront Infrastructure

- There is consistent, strong support for replacing docks and piers as part of maintaining waterfront infrastructure.
- Repairing and upgrading waterfront infrastructure is a top-tier community priority – supported by survey data and validated via virtual public meetings.
- There is strong interest in improved and additional waterfront access, including street ends and water-oriented programming, such as boating classes, watercraft equipment rental, and swimming/water safety programs.

Parks & Open Space

- Playground renovations and replacements that include inclusive play opportunities are strongly supported, including larger and different playgrounds.
- There is strong interest in expanding recreational options in the park system that include the installation of a splash pad and pickleball courts.

Groveland Beach Park



Pickleball Courts (example)



- If the City were to pursue additional acquisitions for the park and open space system, local priorities indicated a preference toward purchases to preserve habitat and open space, accommodate additional waterfront access and active-use parklands, and secure pocket parks to fill gaps.
- Some community members shared concerns and frustrations about topics that will require additional effort and attention by the City. These include off-leash dogs in parks and on trails and leash law enforcement, in addition to site management of the Bike Skills Area at Upper Luther Burbank Park.



User Convenience & Support Amenities

- Maintenance of existing parks and open spaces remains a key priority.
- Upgraded and expanded access to restrooms is the highest-rated user convenience improvement.
- The community supports appropriate system-wide signage and wayfinding improvements.



Facility map at Luther Burbank Park


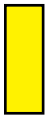
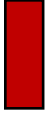
PARK SYSTEM CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The overall condition of park infrastructure and amenities is one measure of park adequacy and assurance of public safety. Proper stewardship of parks infrastructure requires developing a long-term maintenance and capital plan to ensure the safety of park users that aligns with community needs and allocates limited funding resources properly.

The current conditions of the Mercer Island park system were assessed, by an outside consultant, to identify existing site maintenance issues and opportunities for future capital improvements, see Technical Appendix: Volume II. The assessment included walkways, parking lots, park furniture, drainage and irrigation, lighting systems, vegetation, and other amenities. The following conditions assessment matrices summarize the results of these assessments. They will inform the PROS Plan, including developing the project prioritization strategy for park improvements, identifying funding strategies, and updating the recommended parks six-year Capital Improvement Program.

Ratings Approach

Park infrastructure and amenities were rated based on the following scale:

-  1 – Good Condition: Generally, amenities in good condition offer full functionality and do not need repairs. Good facilities have playable sports surfaces and equipment, working fixtures, and fully intact safety features (railings, fences, etc.). Good facilities may have minor cosmetic defects and encourage area residents to use the park.
-  2 – Fair: In general, amenities in fair condition are mainly functional, but need minor or moderate repairs. Play surfaces, equipment, fixtures, and safety features that are operational and allow play, but have deficiencies or periods where they are unusable. Fair facilities remain essential amenities for the community but may slightly discourage the use of the park by residents given the current condition.
-  3 – Poor: In general, amenities in poor condition are largely or completely unusable. They need significant repairs to be functional. Some examples include athletic fields that are too uneven for ball games, irreparably broken features, buildings that need structural retrofitting, etc. Poor facilities discourage residents from using the park and may present safety issues if left open or operational.

In general, good conditions should be the goal for the management and stewardship of park facilities. Where infrastructure or amenities are rated as “fair,” strategies should be developed for repair or restoration. Park features, structures, amenities, or landscapes rated as “poor” should receive immediate attention and be prioritized for near-term maintenance, capital repairs, or a new capital project. Facilities in “poor” condition should also be evaluated and taken out of operation if they are deemed unsafe.

Final version of PROS Plan will include maps as 11x17 for better readability

Mercer Island Parks Master Plan
Park & Facility Condition Assessment Matrix

Figure 6.5. Parks Conditions Assessment Matrix

Site Name	Address	Acreage*	Park Type	Recreation Amenities										Site Amenities					Park Structures					Vegetation			ADA Compliance				
				Playgrounds	Paved Courts: Basketball	Paved Courts: Tennis	Volleyball	Soccer Fields	Baseball / Softball Fields	Pathways/Trails	Skate Park / Spray Park	Off-Leash Area	Waterfront / Beach	Site Furnishings	Lighting (Y/N)	Signage	Parking Areas	Public Art	Restrooms	Picnic Shelters	Amphitheater/Stage	Boat Dock / Ramp	Concession Building	Turf	Park Trees	Landscaped Beds		Natural Areas			
PARKS																															
Aubrey Davis Park	72nd SE & SE 22nd	91.81	Regional	3	2	2	-	3	1	2	2	2	Y	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Bicentennial Park	77th SE & SE 22nd	0.16	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	Y	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	
Clarke Beach Park	7700 Mercer Way	9.05	Community	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	3	3	
Deane's Children's Park	5500 Island Crest Way	3.04	Neighborhood	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	
First Hill Park	SE 32nd & 72nd SE	0.83	Neighborhood	1	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	N	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	2	
Groveland Beach Park	SE 58th & 80th Ave SE	3.07	Community	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	
Homestead Park	SE 40th & 82nd	11.09	Community	1	2	1	-	1	2	1	1	1	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	
Island Crest Park	5500 Island Crest Way	38.91	Community	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Luther Burbank Park	2040 84th Ave SE	54.52	Regional	1	-	3	-	-	-	2	2	2	Y	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	1	2	
Mercerdale Park	77th SE & SE 32nd	12.17	Community	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	Y	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Roanoke Park	70th Ave SE & W Mercer Way	1.46	Neighborhood	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	N	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3
Rotary Park	88th SE & SE 44th	4.83	Neighborhood	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
SE 28th Street Mini Park	SE 28th Street	0.06	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	N	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	1	1	3	2
Secret Park	SE 27th & W Mercer Way	0.86	Mini	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	N	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Slater Park	2835 60th Place SE	0.68	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	N	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
South Mercer Playfields	SE 78th & 84th SE	17.31	School/Park/OS	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Wildwood Park	7400 86th Ave SE	2.84	Park/OS	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Averages:				1.70	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.67	1.25	1.71	1.00	1.00	1.44	1.50	1.18	1.38	1.11	1.00	2.00	2.25	1.67	1.19	1.29	1.56	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	2.29	
STREET ENDS - DEVELOPED																															
77th Ave SE Landing	7670 SE 22nd St	0.29	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	1	N	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	1	2	
Calkins Landing	SE 28th St & 60th Ave SE	0.31	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Forest Landing	SE 43rd St & Forest Ave SE	0.03	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Franklin Landing	78th Ave SE & SE 42nd St	0.03	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	N	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	1	2	2
Fruitland Landing	97th Ave SE & SE 34th St	0.15	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	Y	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	2	2
Garfield Landing	SE 30th St & 60th Ave SE	0.34	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	N	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3
Lincoln Landing	76th Ave SE & SE 22nd St	0.23	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	3	2	2
Miller Landing	Forest Ave SE & SE 48th St	0.30	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	3	3	3	3
Proctor Landing	SE 32nd St & 60th Ave SE	0.30	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Roanoke Landing	W/WV & Roanoke Way	0.18	Mini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Averages:				1.87						2.00	1.80	1.25	1.43	1.50	1.43	1.50					1.00	1.57	1.29	1.00	1.86	1.50	1.50	1.86	2.29		

Rating Scale: 1 = Good 2 = Fair 3 = Poor



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Overall Considerations

Developed Parks

Overall, the condition rating for the Mercer Island park system averages as 1.34, with most amenities receiving a “good” rating.

General grounds maintenance, restoration areas, arboricultural care, and trail maintenance appear to be in good condition throughout the park system, indicating good stewardship.*

Aging infrastructure, particularly storage buildings, play equipment, restroom buildings, piers and docks, pathway pavement, and sport court surfaces, are ready for significant repairs or replacement and largely rated at “fair” or below.

The natural grass at most parks with open mown grass areas is in very good condition, with only a few parks having patchy or worn areas in high traffic locations or in partially or fully shaded areas.

Many of the play structures in playgrounds are older and have standard features supporting prescribed activities. More abstract and open-ended play structures and designs that comply with ADA requirements should be considered when replacing existing play structures.

Many parks do not have bike racks. Bike racks should be a standard amenity at every park.

*Maintenance conditions observed in 2021, two years after the original park conditions assessment was performed, reflect a reduced level of service. This resulted from temporary service reductions that occurred in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but plans are underway to “catch-up” on planter bed maintenance, general weeding, pruning, etc.



Other Parklands & Open Space

The rating for Mercer Island open spaces and trails averages 1.5 on the 3-point scale, which is halfway between “good” and “fair” and reflects a good condition where publicly accessible, though many are not ADA-compliant.

Most of the trails within open spaces are well-maintained, have suitable surfacing, and appear structurally sound. While some open spaces have trails with timber steps that are in excellent condition, others have timber steps that are degraded and extremely slippery when wet. Many of the handrails associated with these steps are also degraded and may not meet code.

The thoroughness of the 2018 Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report illustrates the City’s comprehensive grasp of the needs for upkeep and safety on the extensive (30+ mile) trail network. The report prioritizes trail repair and replacement needs and remains a tool to guide trail system enhancements. This report, along with the information in the Conditions Assessment, will be used to inform project prioritization and future capital planning decisions.



Wayfinding & Signage

The overall rating for park signage is 1.44, also halfway between “good” and “fair.” Park signage gaps, particularly at open spaces, landings, and street ends, resulted in a “fair” rating. The overall trail network could be improved with enhanced wayfinding and signage.

With some exceptions, every park and open space has at least one primary park identification sign in good condition. Many sites can be improved with additional park signs at secondary entries and provide





route and distance information for bicyclists. Most of the secondary park entry points only have “Trail” signs on timber posts or no signs at all. Identifying parks by name at each entrance will improve each park’s identity and provide critical information to public safety personnel that may be responding to an emergency.

Most trails and trail intersections within parks are identified with the generic “Trail” signs or not identified at all. Parks with complex trail networks will benefit from signage appropriate as to type, scale, and number, that identifies the different trails or loops within the park. As appropriate, trail junctions should provide low-impact navigation aids that identify trails, connections, and destination options.

Numerous water-oriented parks, street-end parks, and landings are designated as water trailheads. The City should consider park signage that is oriented toward the water at these locations for water-based wayfinding. Additional signage should be considered for water trail users to assist them in identifying routes from the water to desired amenities, such as park restrooms or parking lots.

Pavement Conditions

Generally, the pavement in most parks is in good condition; however, some parks have older asphalt paths that are cracking or succumbing to root heave. Slumping of outside edges at cross slopes is also occurring. The average pavement rating is 1.7 for parking areas, trails, and paved sport courts. Cracked or buckled pavement, particularly where paved paths go through open spaces, needs to be repaired to eliminate tripping hazards and address ADA accessibility barriers. A pavement maintenance program should be considered to seal pavement (similar to public roadway management) when cracks appear, to extend the useful life of the pavement.



Docks & Piers

Aging docks and swim piers, with an overall rating of 2.25, need significant repair or replacement. Some over-water structures should be redesigned and replaced and in some locations evaluated for removal if they are part of a natural shoreline restoration effort. The redesign of the pier system in Luther Burbank Park is already underway.



Sport Courts & Amenities

Sport court surfacing at tennis courts and basketball courts shows cracks and aging that affects playability. Repairs, resurfacing, or complete replacement may be necessary. As part of this planning process, an evaluation about current use and future trends may warrant converting certain courts into another type of recreational amenity (such as converting tennis to pickleball) to provide broader public recreational value and use.



Many of the free-standing bleachers at sport fields do not have safety railings on the backs or sides. According to the International Building Code, any seating with two or more tiers should have safety rails. Existing bleachers should have railings retrofitted or be replaced with compliant (railed) bleachers.

Accessibility Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 provides comprehensive civil rights protections to persons with disabilities in the areas of employment, state and local government services, and access to public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. The City of Mercer Island is required to comply with ADA Title II and Title III requirements, which are specific to local governments.

The PROS Plan process included identifying obvious ADA compliance issues. Still, it does not record or evaluate every item or detail that should be remediated to provide reasonable universal access and meet ADA standards. However, this general parks conditions assessment will be used to support the development of the comprehensive Citywide ADA Transition Plan, which is currently in the early stages of development.

ADA Transition Plan

The City is required to complete a Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (ADA Transition Plan) that will address the requirements of ADA Title II. The Transition Plan will be used to identify obstacles limiting accessibility, describe and identify methods to make these obstacles accessible, and plan a schedule to bring City facilities and operations into compliance. Funding for ADA Transition planning work was included in the 2021-2022 biennial budget and will incorporate findings and recommendations from this PROS Plan.

Universal Access and Parks & Recreation

Under federal regulations, when parks and recreation facilities are built or altered, they must comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design (ADA Standards), which require the inclusion of features such as accessible parking spaces, routes, toilet facilities, public telephones, and spectator seating areas. For parks and facilities built or altered before the ADA Standards took effect, local governments must devise ways to make the programs and activities in those parks and facilities accessible to people with disabilities. If local government decides to modify facilities to provide access to a recreation program or activity with more than one facility available (such as when several ball fields are provided), only some facilities may need to be accessible.

Outdoor Developed Areas Accessibility Guidelines (Architectural Barriers Act – ABA) have been established for many of the common elements in public parks. Picnic areas, outdoor access routes, outdoor constructed features, and trails are described to ensure accessibility standards are met in parks, viewing areas, and trailheads. These standards allow for somewhat

more flexibility compared to the ADA Standards for public buildings and public spaces.

Eliminating barriers is a fundamental premise of the ADA to ensure that individuals with disabilities are provided an equal opportunity to access and use a public facility. Barriers include any obstacles that prevent or restrict the entrance to or use of a facility. Alterations to older buildings and infrastructure may be needed to ensure accessibility; however, there is a greater obligation to first remedy “readily achievable barrier removal” at public facilities.

A local government is not required to take any actions that will result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the facility, will create a hazardous condition resulting in a direct threat to the participant or others, or create an undue financial and administrative burden. If a particular course of action is deemed unduly burdensome, other options should be explored to provide reasonable access to similar benefits.

Existing Conditions

All parks, trails, and open spaces in the City of Mercer Island assessed during the fall of 2019 had some aspect of non-compliance with the ADA guidelines. This is not a surprise, as many of the facilities and amenities were constructed prior to the passage of the ADA in 1990 and the development of the ADA Standards in 2010. Based on the conditions assessment, the overall score for ADA compliance for the Mercer Island parks system is rated as “fair” to “poor.” Additional details and recommendations regarding ADA compliance issues are described below.

Parking & Entrances

The conditions assessment evaluated park entrances, including the availability and accessibility of ADA parking, marked travel aisles, curb cuts or ramps, tactile warning strips, and designated signage. Issues related to these requirements were noted at several parks, including improper installation or the absence of these features altogether. ADA access and parking are feasible in several developed street-end public spaces, but no designated parking space was provided. The total number of ADA parking spaces at each facility was not evaluated, but this should be reviewed as part of the Citywide ADA Transition Plan.

Accessible Routes

Within each park, paved and unpaved pathways connect different park features and amenities. Pathways provide perimeter routes for walking and links to shelters, tables, benches, sports courts, playgrounds, and other park resources. A significant quantity of pavement cracks, caused mainly by tree root upheavals, was noted in many parks. Gaps between pavement surface

changes, such as asphalt pathway to decking, occurred in parks where boardwalks or docks were aging. The need for detectible warning strips was observed at some park and trail facilities where paved pathways enter traffic or parking areas.

Site Furnishings

Site furnishings, such as picnic tables, benches, trash receptacles, dog waste dispensers, and drinking fountains, need to have accessible routes. The ADA guidelines recommend that at least 50% of each amenity type should be located on an accessible path and designed as ADA-compliant. Many picnic tables and benches in Mercer Island parks are not accessible. The degree of compliance varied from park to park, and most parks will require some retrofitting to provide consistent access to picnic tables via paved routes and to wheelchair seating and benches with proper back and armrests. Older drinking fountains often lack universal access and should be phased out with ADA-compliant fixtures as they are replaced.

Playgrounds

Most Mercer Island playgrounds do not meet ADA or universal accessibility requirements. Containment methods, such as timber edging or safety surfacing like engineered wood fiber, present barriers to individuals with mobility or wheelchair use needs. The timbers used to retain the wood chips interfered with a smooth transition from pathways, or the curbs containing wood chips created drop-off heights that were access barriers. Additionally, most of the playground equipment itself is not accessible. At the time the PROS Plan was being developed, the Merderdale Park playground was undergoing renovation. The playground, scheduled to open in early 2022, will be the first fully-accessible playground on Mercer Island.



Playground at Aubrey Davis Park Area A

Parkland Distribution – Gap Analysis

Mercer Island residents are fortunate to have great access to great parks; however, not all areas of the Island are equally served by access to parks and open space. Understanding the known gaps in the park system and evaluating the City’s existing levels of service for parks will provide a foundation for strategic planning as a basis for a balanced distribution of parks, trails, and recreation amenities in the future.

A gap analysis of the park and open space system was conducted to examine and assess the current distribution of parks across the City. Park ‘travelsheds’ (the adjacent region to a park where users can gain easy access) were defined for each major parkland classification to acknowledge that different park types draw users depending on the park’s scale or uniqueness of the park or open space. The following travelshed service areas were used in crafting the maps listed below. The travelsheds represent catchment areas for each park and open space based on the road network and by the indicated travel distances starting from known and accessible access points at each park:

- Mini parks: ¼-mile service area
- Neighborhood parks: ¼-mile primary and ½-mile secondary service area
- Community parks: ¼-mile, ½-mile, and 1-mile service areas
- Regional parks: ¼-mile, ½-mile, 1-mile, and 3-mile service areas
- Water access sites: ¼-mile, ½-mile, and 1-mile service areas
- Open space: ¼-mile, ½-mile, and 1-mile service areas

Maps 2 through 9 illustrate the application of the distribution criteria from existing parks, open space, and water access sites. Areas on the maps in “white” represent those areas where residents do not have a public park or open space within reasonable travel distance of their home. The illustrated travelshed for each existing Mercer Island park and open space highlights that certain areas within the city do not have the desired proximity to a local park.

Striving to provide a mini-park or neighborhood park within a reasonable walking distance (e.g., ½-mile) may require acquiring new properties in currently underserved locations. Improving multi-modal transportation connections will allow local residents to safely and conveniently reach their local park, and evaluating the potential for use agreements of other lands to serve as

proxies for local neighborhood parks would also aid this endeavor. The results from this assessment reveal potential parkland distribution gaps exist in two regions of the island:

- Central Mercer Island between Rotary Park and Island Crest Park, and
- Southwest Mercer Island, west of Pioneer Park and South Mercer Playfields.

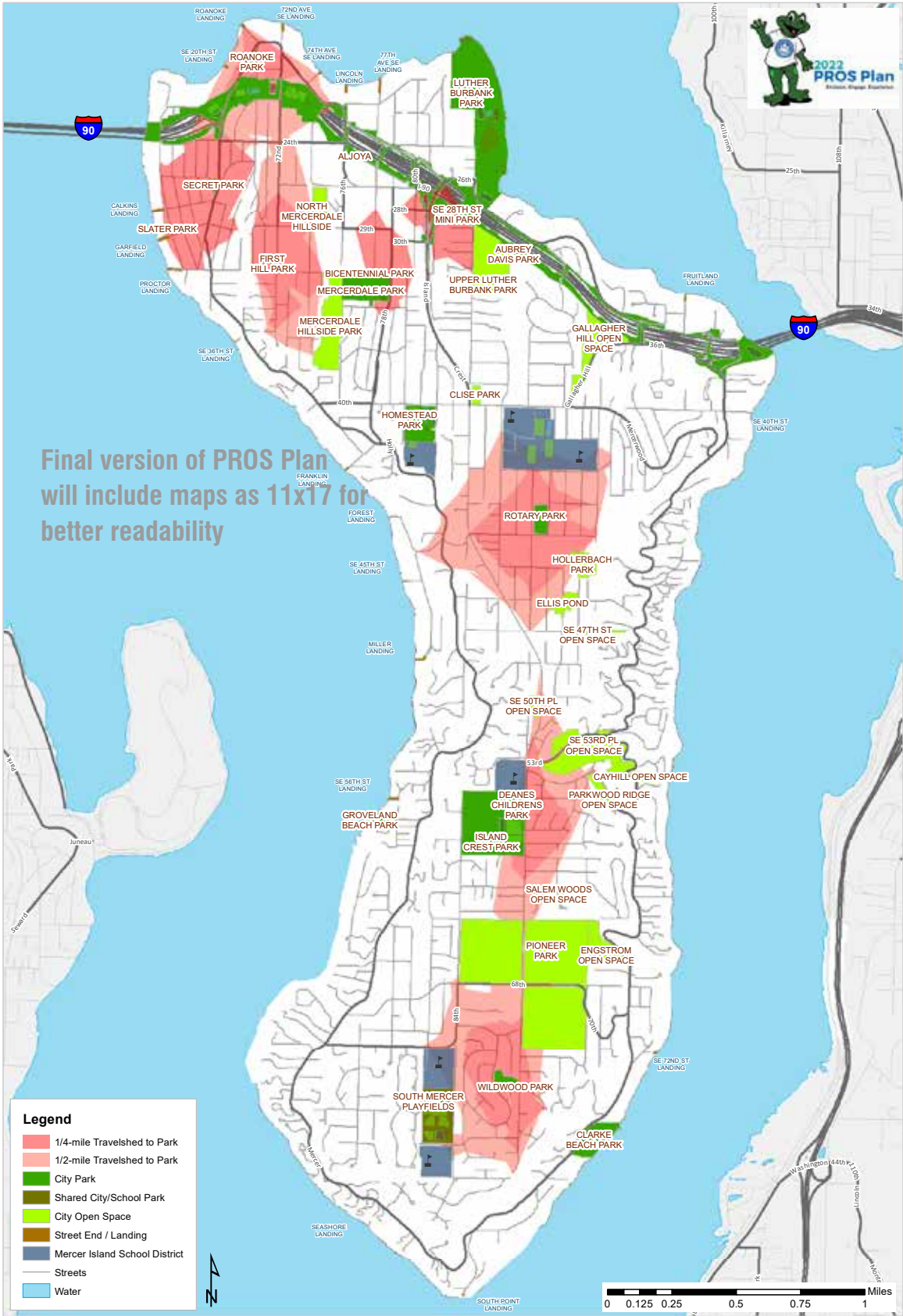
Additionally, opportunities may exist to enhance some street ends for better distribution of water access points around the City. The development of these street ends might afford physical water access, such as small beach areas or human-powered watercraft launches. Still, some might only accommodate passive uses, such as picnicking, respite, or waterfront viewing. These sites include:

- 77th Avenue SE Landing
- Forest Landing
- Roanoke Landing
- SE 56th Street Landing
- South Point Landing

Mercer Island is effectively built out, and acquisition opportunities are limited now and will likely diminish in the future. The City should consider taking advantage of acquisition opportunities in strategic locations and as funding allows to fill known gaps. Recognizing the high land valuations on Mercer Island, the City should conduct a more in-depth analysis of candidate acquisitions as part of a future Property Acquisition Strategy to guide future investments. Such a planning effort should also explore the potential of accumulating adjoining waterfront parcels to accommodate a future waterfront park akin to Clarke Beach or Groveland Beach.



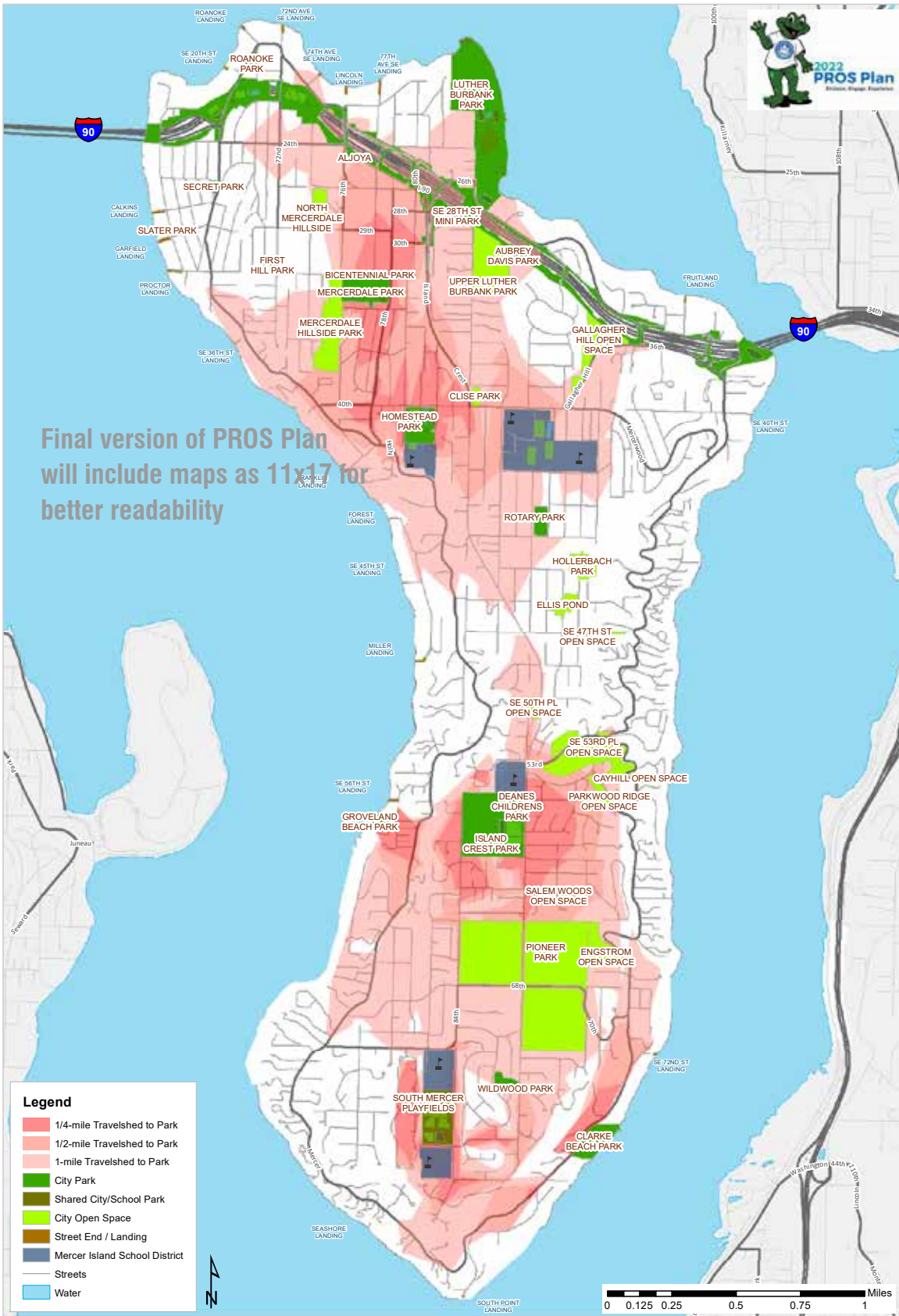
PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 2: Travelsheds for Small Parks (Mini & Neighborhood to 1/2-mile)



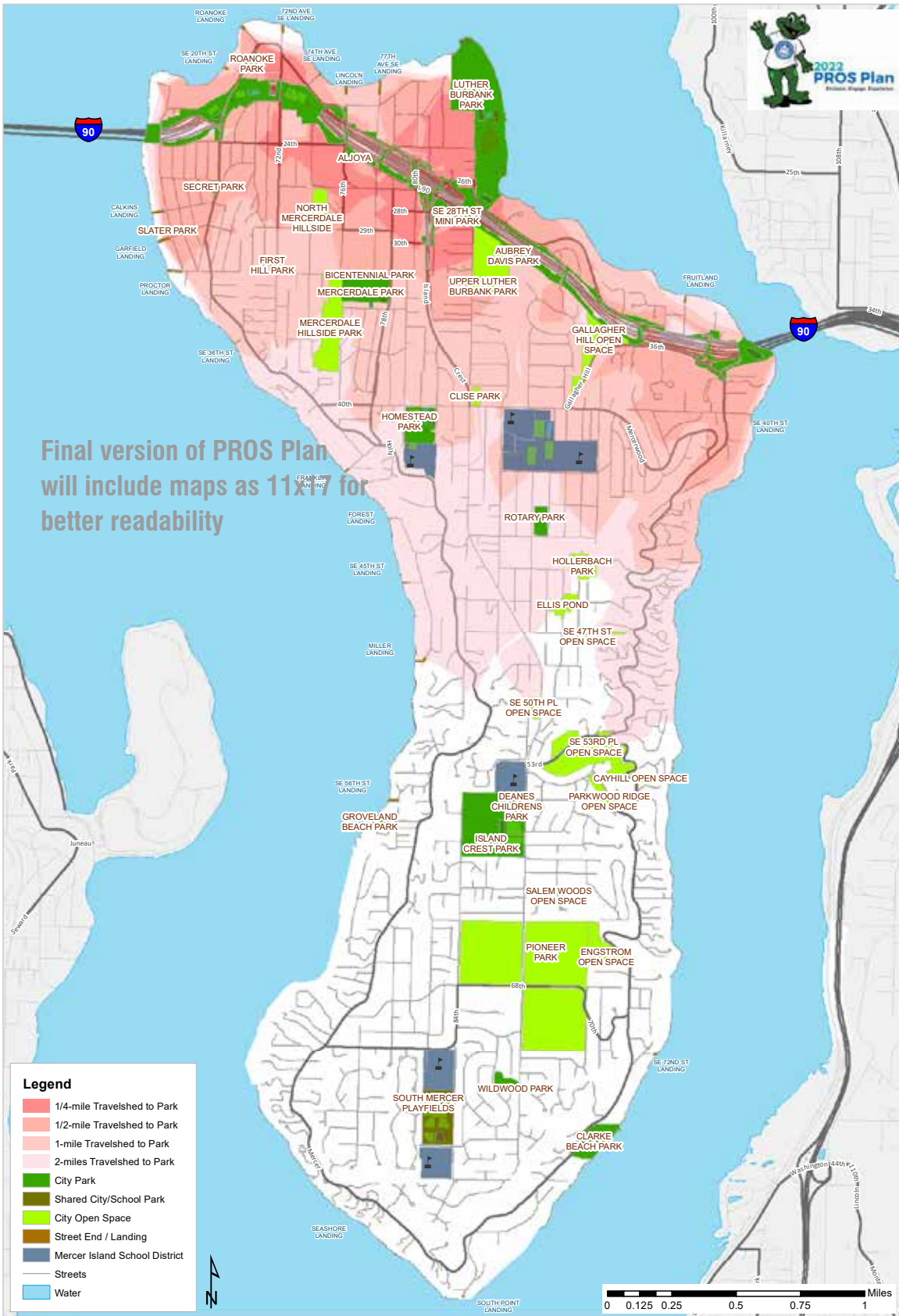
PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 3: Travelsheds for Community Parks (1-mile)



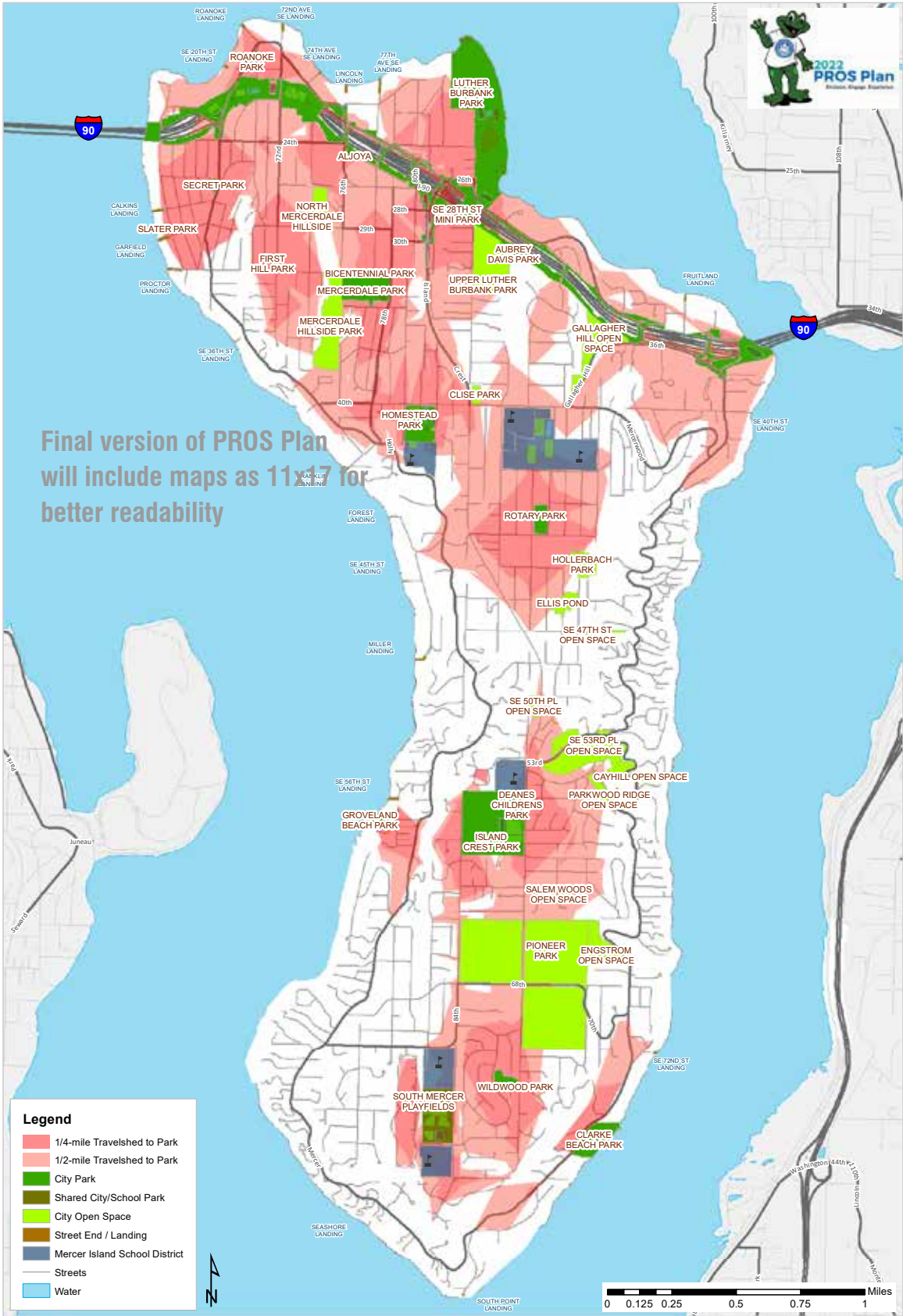
PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 4: Travelsheds for Regional Parks (3-miles)



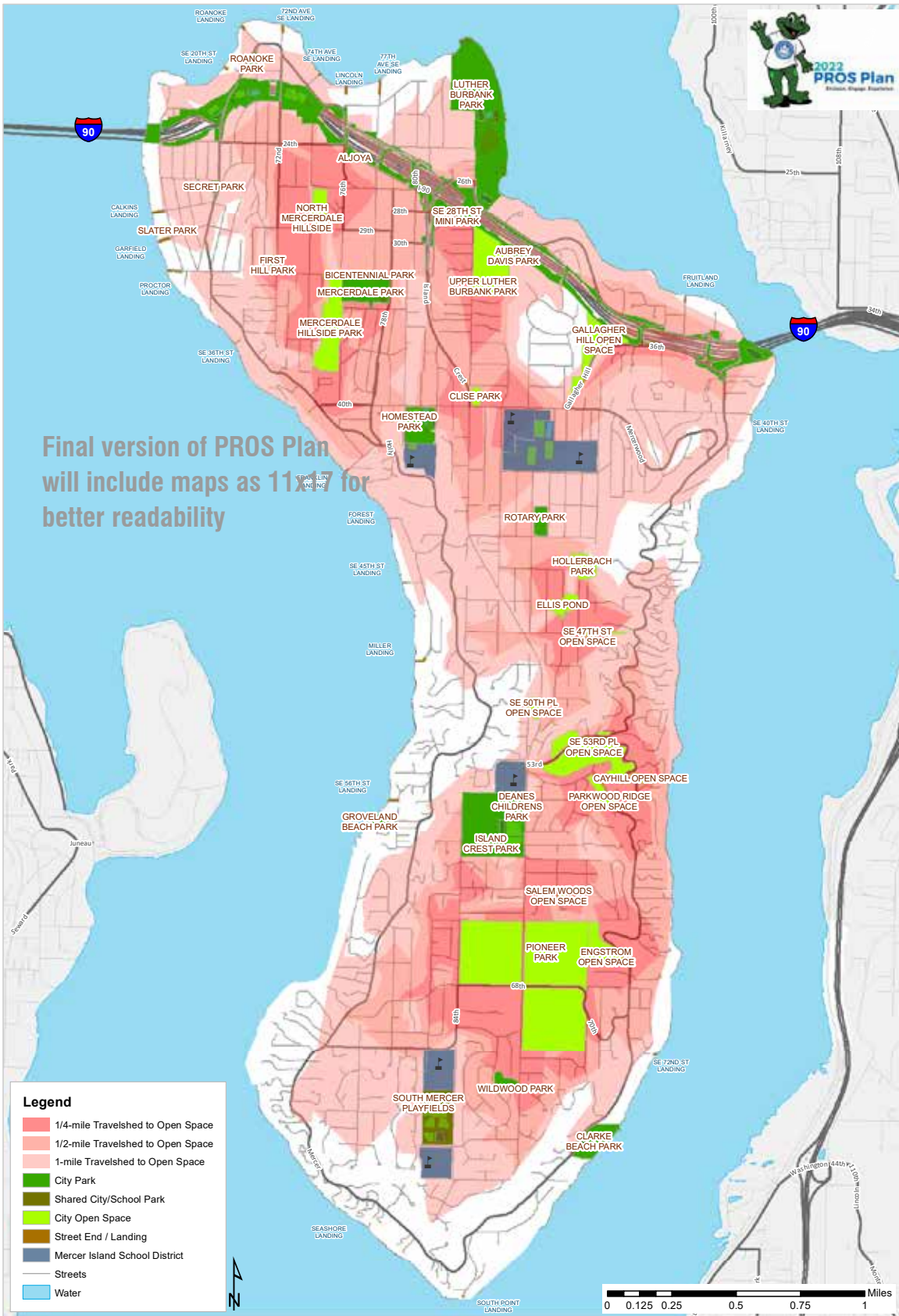
PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 5: Travelsheds Areas - All Parks (1/2-mile)



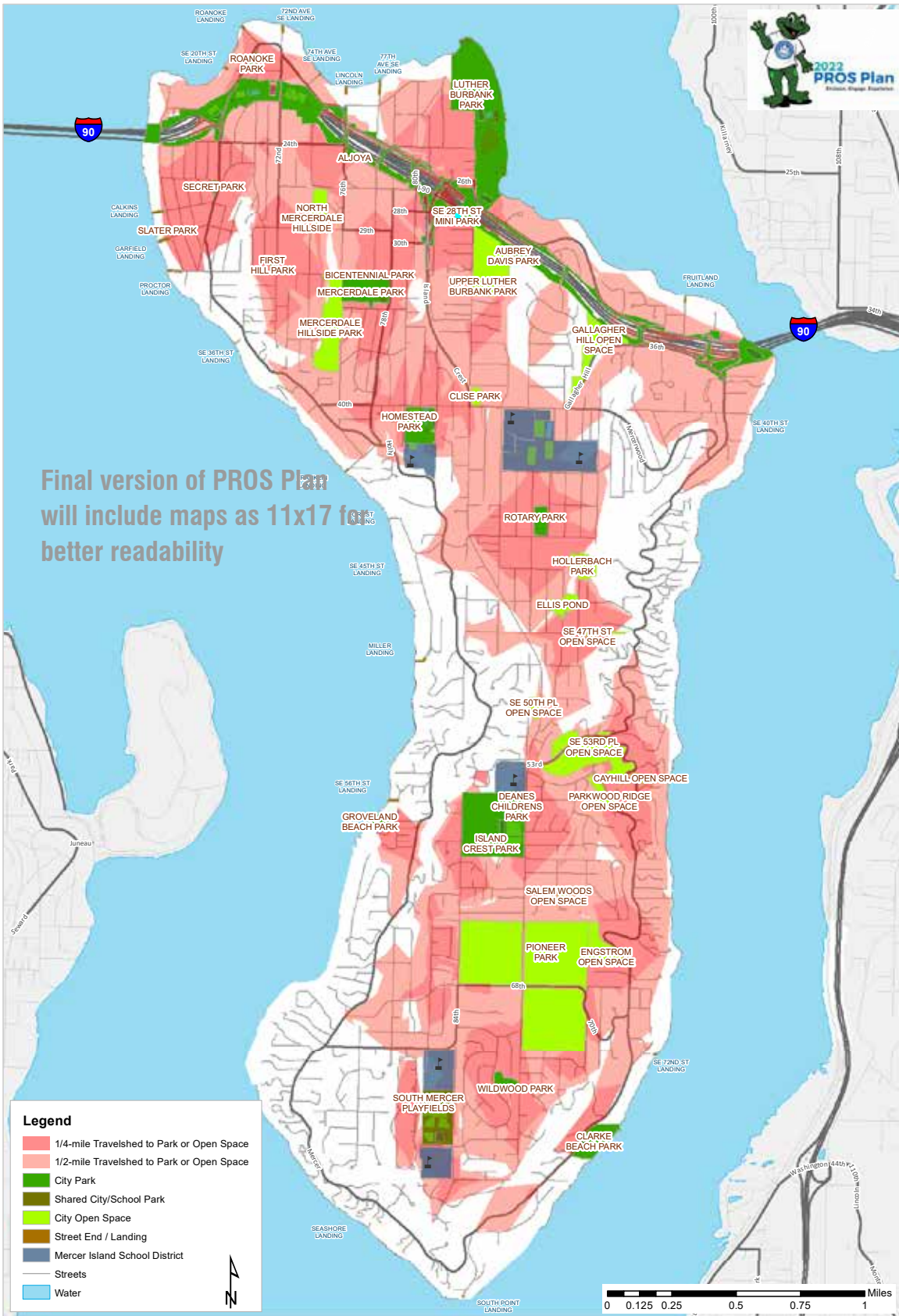
PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 6: Travelsheds Areas - Open Spaces (1-mile)



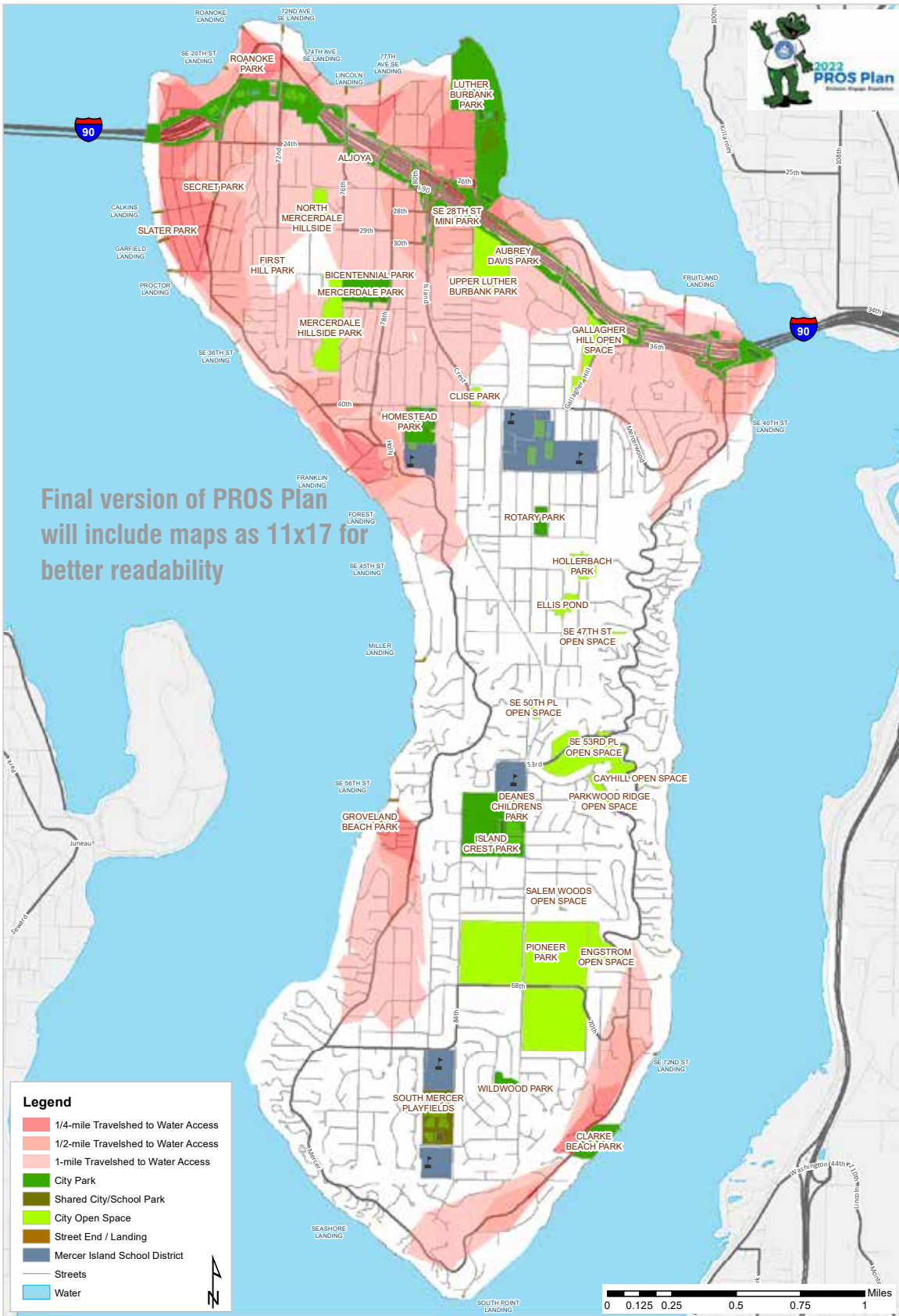
PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 7: Travelsheds - All Parks & Open Space (1/2-mile)



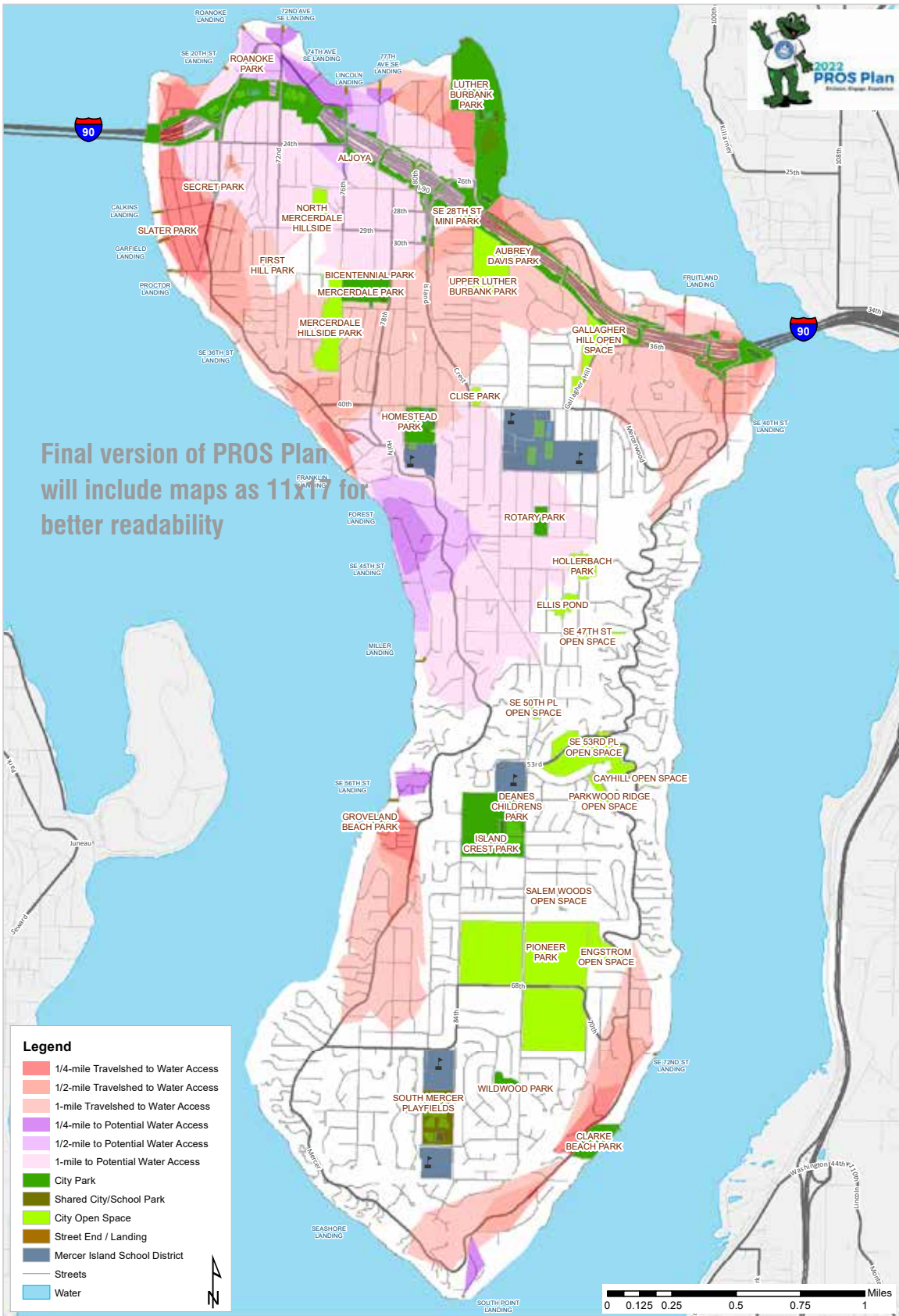
PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 8: Travelsheds - Existing Water Access Sites (1-mile)



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



Map 9: Travelsheds - Potential Water Access (1-mile)



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Levels of Service

A level of service (LOS) review was conducted in addition to and in support of the gap analysis as a means to understand the distribution of parkland acreage by classification and for a broader measure of how well the City is serving its residents with access to parks, trails, and open spaces. Service standards are the adopted guidelines or benchmarks the City is trying to attain with the park system; the level of service is a snapshot in time of how well the City is meeting its adopted standards.

Many jurisdictions are developing guidelines customized to their community and its unique and often changing park and recreation demands, rather than solely applying the historic National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) published park standards that focus on parkland acreage per resident. The use and application of standards continue to evolve and develop diverse approaches. This Plan evaluates the City's current parkland level of service through a variety of characteristics, including acreage per capita, as a snapshot in time and means to describe the performance of the park system.

NRPA conducts annual surveys to generate a Park Metrics database (formerly known as PRORAGIS) that reflects the current levels of service of park agencies across the country based on a variety of factors: population size, population density, number of full-time equivalent employees, number of park facilities, acres of parkland, and more. The Park Metrics survey data compares different park and recreation providers from different communities across the country; however,

the Park Metrics database relies on self-reporting by municipalities. Some agencies only include developed, active parks, while others include natural lands with little or no improvements, amenities, or access. The comparative standards in the table below should be viewed with this variability in mind. Also, Mercer Island is unique because it has two City-provided regional parks and significant waterfront access in a densely populated metropolitan region.

A few highlights from the NRPA agency comparison provide perspectives on Mercer Island's park system. Figure 6.6 compares jurisdictional populations served by park and recreation agencies against certain performance metrics. The number of residents per park and acres of parkland per 1,000 residents implicate the potential wear and tear on park facilities.

Compared with similar population sizes, Mercer Island provides considerably more parkland acreage (18.5 acres, including open space) per 1,000 residents. Comparing just developed park properties, the City has 10.1 acres per 1,000 residents. Looking at the numbers of residents per playground, Mercer Island has more playgrounds (at 1,430 residents per playground) than similar-sized jurisdictions (at 3,157 residents per playground). Those favorable comparisons are even more dramatic when evaluating the number of tennis courts provided for public use. With 14 outdoor tennis courts in five different parks, Mercer Island provides one court for every 1,839 residents compared to other similar-sized jurisdictions who provide one court for 4,347 residents. That comparison does not consider the six high school tennis courts and the 25 tennis courts at the three private community clubs on Mercer Island.

Figure 6.6. Service Levels Comparing Park Metric (NRPA) Data

Metric	Median Value		
	All Agencies	Pop. Range 20-50,000	Mercer Island
Residents per Park	2,281	1,963	954
Acres of Parkland per 1,000 population	9.9	9.6	18.5
Miles of Trails	11	8.5	29
Number of Residents per Playground	3,750	3,157	1,430
Number of Residents per Tennis Court (public-outdoor)	5,004	4,347	1,839
Number of Residents per Rec Center	31,141	25,716	25,748



Numeric standards are a blunt and limited tool to assess how well the City delivers park and recreation services. The numeric values alone neglect any recognition of the facilities' quality or distribution (i.e., the ease which residents have reasonable, proximate access to park sites). While public ownership of a broad range of recreation lands is crucial to the City's well-being, the simple use of an overall acreage standard does not match the community input received during this planning process. Residents were particularly interested in the availability of trails, waterfronts, and open spaces within a reasonable distance from their homes.

The City's park system also was assessed using the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office's (RCO) level of service metrics provided in their planning manual. In reviewing the park system as a whole, Figure 6.7 illustrates the current levels of service across different performance measurements. From the community survey results, public satisfaction of the facilities and amenities that Mercer Island provides ranked as the strongest indicator for the park system.

Figure 6.7. Levels of Service with RCO Metrics (System-wide)

Quality Criteria	
Public Satisfaction	
Overall Satisfaction (rated as Very or Somewhat Satisfied)	92.5%
LOS Grade	A
Agency-based Assessment	
Condition Assessment Rating of Existing Parks (3-point scale)	1.54
LOS Grade	C
Distribution Criteria	
Parkland Access (within 1/2-mile travelshed)	
Percent Service Area with Access to Parks & Open Space	73.2%
LOS Grade	B
Trail System Access (within 1/2-mile travelshed)	
Percent Service Area with Access to Recreational Trails	68.5%
LOS Grade	C
Usage / Visitation Criteria	
Frequency of Park or Trail Usage	
Percent Visiting Parks at Least Multiple Times per Month	87.7%
LOS Grade	A

* Note: The percentage of land area covered by service area walksheds is a proxy for the population within the residential portion of the City.

No numeric standards are recommended or proposed for open spaces. While numerical planning standards are common for helping to determine a desirable number of neighborhood parks per thousand residents, they do not translate easily to open space because of the uniqueness of the land base itself. Rather than being guided by numerical standards for open space, the priority for future open space acquisitions should be focused on those lands that expand ownership of adjacent City-owned properties or to ensure sufficient property is available to accommodate public access, to address future trail connections, and to enhance environmental functions.

Other Considerations

While this Plan uses total parkland acreage and parkland access as primary indicators of parkland need, the City may consider other factors as its population grows, including:

- Park pressure, or the potential user demand on a park: residents are most likely to use the park closest to their home. This measure uses GIS analysis to assign all households to their nearest respective park. It calculates the level of service (in acres of parkland per 1,000 residents) based on the acreage of the park and the number of residents in the 'travelshed'. Areas with lower levels of service are more likely to be underserved by parkland and to see higher degrees of use and wear and tear on park amenities.
- Availability of park amenities: Park systems should include an equitable distribution and quantity of the most common amenities like playgrounds, picnic shelters, sport courts, sports fields, and trails to meet local needs and help distribute the potential usage of individual parks. Providing well-distributed basic park amenities, while also offering unique outdoor experiences, will result in a varied park system with various recreational opportunities for residents.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

Waterfronts & In-Water Infrastructure

Mercer Island's location on Lake Washington and the numerous waterfront parks and street-ends provides countless water-based recreation opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, paddle sports, wildlife watching, and other beach activities. The City's waterfront parks connect residents to the water and reinforce the uniqueness of Mercer Island's park system.

- The City has made significant investments in waterfront and water-oriented infrastructure over the past decades. This infrastructure, which includes docks, piers, and other water access amenities, is aging and needs to be replaced. Specifically, the City should initiate a joint master planning process for Groveland Beach Park and Clarke Beach Park to establish a long-term plan to address aging infrastructure at both parks. Potential outcomes may include replacing the docks at both parks and considering rehabilitating the shoreline to enhance habitat.

Playgrounds

Similar manufacturers built the existing playgrounds on Mercer Island for a style of play, mainly intended for 2-5 year olds and 5-10 year olds. A review of play equipment installation dates guided the need for and timing of future replacements. Manufactured play equipment has a typical useful service life of 15 to 20 years, depending on play equipment condition, wear, and usage. Of the 18 playgrounds in the parks system, 10 are nearing the end of their useful life and will require replacement within ten years.

- As playground replacements are planned, Mercer Island should consider opportunities for fully-accessible all-inclusive play areas to provide for users of all abilities.

Another significant, recent trend is that of the relationship between child development and access to nature or nature play. Stemming from Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods*, a network of organizations and agencies have come together to discuss the impacts of nature play and seek funding and partnerships to facilitate ways to connect kids to their local environment. According to the Children & Nature Network, a national non-profit organization working to reconnect children with nature, which Louv co-founded, recent studies show that children are smarter, more cooperative, happier, and healthier when they have frequent and varied opportunities for free and unstructured play outside.

- In developing future park sites, the City should consider installing nature play features and look for ways to optimize nature play opportunities.

Sport Fields

The City currently provides significant infrastructure in the way of athletic fields, specifically with synthetic turf fields at Island Crest Park and the South Mercer Playfields, which will require replacement in the coming years.

- Turf replacement projects at both sites should include replacing the existing backstops with higher structures since foul balls currently fall into spectator areas and parking lots. Future field lighting projects should include conversion to energy-saving LEDs.

Sport Courts

A limited variety of sport courts exists within Mercer Island. Fourteen tennis courts are provided at five parks, and three basketball courts are provided at two parks. Several school sites do provide limited access to outdoor basketball and tennis courts. Mercer Island currently has no outdoor, dedicated pickleball courts available within public parks. Still, the tennis court and basketball court at Luther Burbank Park has been used by pickleball players for games.

- Pickleball continues to rank as one of the fastest-growing sports and has seen significant jumps in participation over the past decade, attracting a wide range of age groups. As an interim step, the City should plan to convert some tennis courts to multi-sport courts through striping and plan for a grouping of new, dedicated pickleball courts. Outdoor pickleball courts are most successful if clustered rather than spread individually throughout the park system. Such a grouping promotes leagues, pick-up tournaments, and related social interaction. Courts are best located in groups (at least two, but preferably six to eight to accommodate the social aspects of the sport) to provide for the regular league activity that grows as the sport is adopted within a community.

Expanding Recreation Options

Spray Parks

Spray parks are water play features that are very popular and provide a means of integrating aquatics into parks at a relatively low cost. Mercer Island currently does not have a spray park in the park system, and strong public support exists for this feature.

- The City should consider at least one spray park to serve residents as an option for summertime water play that doesn't require lifeguarding. This special use amenity typically is supported by parking and restrooms since it draws users from a wider area. Any spray park facility should be designed to recycle water if possible.

Bike Skills

Engaging older youth, teens, and adults in more intense physical activity within parks requires amenities that support challenging active movement.

- The existing Bike Skills Area at Upper Luther Burbank Park has been a source of local tension in recent months. At the time the PROS Plan was under development, the City had retained a consultant to assess the Bike Skills Area.

Street End Development

- As noted earlier, expanded access to water-oriented sites and related recreation options is a strong interest of the Mercer Island community. Several street-ends can be improved to provide small spaces for picnicking, human-powered watercraft access, and waterfront viewing.

Spray Park (example)



Other Amenities

Recreation options that require large land areas to accommodate large, dedicated facilities are not recommended for Mercer Island. These include a golf course, disc golf course, and dedicated, single-track mountain bike courses. Each of these types of facilities are available off-island and within reasonable proximity to Mercer Island.

User Conveniences

Providing a range of outdoor sports facilities is a critical element in fostering a healthy and active community. Support for activities and for facilities that can accommodate less physically active park users must also be prioritized. While parking and restrooms provide basic necessities for supporting accessible outdoor recreation, the value of shelters and gathering places should not be underrated.

Restrooms

- Supporting park and trail use through the provision of restrooms is a critical element in any park system. A new restroom is proposed at Aubrey Davis Park, and several other parks should have the restrooms replaced or upgraded. These sites include Clarke Beach Park, Groveland Beach Park, Luther Burbank Park, and Island Crest Park. For Clarke Beach and Groveland Beach, new site master plans for those parks should guide the future decisions about the need and location of restroom facilities.

Picnic Areas & Shelters

- Improving access to existing picnic areas and shelters for ADA compliance should be a core focus. Additionally, the City should replace the recently burned shelter at Aubrey Davis Park and install a new shelter at Luther Burbank Park. As with restrooms, new site master plans for Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks should guide the future decisions about the need and location of picnic areas and shelter facilities.

Wayfinding

- The City of Mercer Island can benefit from enhanced wayfinding and signage supporting its overall park and trail system. Opportunities exist to help visitors navigate and inform them about the public spaces they are entering. A clear need was identified for small identification signs at side entrances to parks and open spaces and 'share the trail' hierarchy-of-uses signs to reinforce user

etiquette. A good wayfinding system can provide a consistent identity and display valuable and accessible information to orient the user. This guidance system ensures efficient use of the trail, park, or other public space and conveys safety to the user by translating the environment into a known geography. Signs, symbols, mapping, color, and standardized site amenities combined with good design of the physical environment (i.e., trail or park) help the user navigate the space and stay comfortably oriented. The use of consistent graphics and a coordinated hierarchy of sign types and sizes can provide park and trail users with wayfinding information, as appropriate, to enhance their access and knowledge of the recreational system available for their enjoyment.

Information on Recreational Opportunities

- The City should continue to enhance its website to provide information on local and regional park and recreation opportunities. The City should continue strengthening existing partnerships with local businesses, athletic leagues, the Mercer Island School District, and other community organizations to facilitate the promotion and distribution of information to residents. Promotional and marketing materials should include an updated parks guide, online maps and amenity lists, and print materials.



SUSTAINABILITY

The Sustainability staff team researches and implements projects, programs, and policies within the city organization and across the community to advance sustainability in Mercer Island, demonstrate climate leadership, and serve as a model for environmental collaboration and innovation. The vision presented in the 2006 City Comprehensive Plan stated, “Mercer Island strives to be a sustainable community...”. With an initial target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the City joined ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability, a non-profit, global network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Since then, the City has become a founding partner in the local policy collective, King County—Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C). Continuing efforts to fulfill sustainable policies have included waste reduction, energy conservation, solar installations, public outreach and education about sustainable practices, electric vehicles, green building requirements, and climate impact mitigation. In late 2020, the City reported that 100 percent of its government operations were now powered by clean, renewable energy from a new turbine windfarm in Western Washington. The City is currently in the process of drafting a Climate Action Plan.

A Role in Shaping a Successful City

Recognizing the potential of parks to shape cities, the National Recreation and Parks Association and the American Planning Association collaborated to address the challenges of creating and enhancing parks in cities. The joint effort concluded that the role of parks is no longer simply relegated to places for recreation or the preservation of open space. Parks in town centers and urban areas increasingly influence the quality of life, economic development, and the connectivity of civic spaces. Parks can also improve stormwater management as green infrastructure, provide flood management benefits, preserve habitat, protect and enhance the tree canopy, and more.


The City recognizes the importance of its parks in shaping a livable Mercer Island and the contribution that parks and recreation provide to the community’s character and quality of life. Partnerships and coordination between City departments (such as planning and parks and water/stormwater) and across other governmental agencies (county, regional, state & federal) connect broader resources and provide multiple benefits for proactively integrating parks in the urban fabric.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Green stormwater infrastructure investments to reduce and treat stormwater flooding and pollutants have been on the rise across the country. These nature-based methods apply permeable pavements to reduce runoff, bioswales to slow and treat draining waters, stream restorations to stabilize banks and improve aquatic resources and tree canopy cover to alleviate heat impacts and reduce stormwater quantity. Many cities and towns fail to coordinate their stormwater management efforts with their park system operations, missing a valuable opportunity to improve surface water resources and inform the community about the importance of stormwater management and the value of green infrastructure applications.

Relating city-wide environmental stewardship and the regulatory requirements of stormwater planning, Mercer Island’s park and open space system plays a key role in helping to manage surface water resources and its stormwater runoff control program. Through the City’s Stormwater Management Program, which includes public education and outreach, the City’s parks and open space provide the venues





for opportunities to illustrate best practices for managing rainwater runoff and reducing stormwater impacts. In the park system today, interpretive signs about reducing runoff, installing rain gardens, and using native and naturalized plantings are located in several parks. Park maintenance practices and restoration activities help mitigate runoff volumes and improve water quality. Forest management within parks and open space help reduce stormwater impacts. The Stormwater Management Program outlines the monthly interdepartmental workgroup coordination to help ensure practices and projects that help meet water quality goals. In City parks, the stormwater educational effort includes encouraging pet owners to collect pet waste and properly dispose of it.

Volunteer restoration events in parks and open spaces incorporate information about the importance of restoring and conserving the health of forests, wetlands, and watercourses. Mercer Island's Arbor Day celebration helps promote the importance of trees and their contribution to water quality and a healthy lake environment. The role of urban forestry in contributing to stormwater management is also highlighted in Arbor Day events. The Stormwater Management Program also targets ongoing training for City employees whose operations may impact stormwater quality. New park capital projects should be designed to incorporate green infrastructure techniques that improve rather than adversely impact existing stormwater runoff quality.

As part of its stormwater management, the City seeks to upgrade and improve the aesthetics of its planter beds located in right-of-way roadside and median locations and at individual park entrances. There are 18 different median/roadside sites and 12 park entrance planter beds that are part of a spring 2021 improvement project to optimize visual appeal, provide year-round interest, and incorporate sustainable designs. While these new plantings eventually should consist of "low maintenance" and drought-tolerant plantings, the establishment of new landscape plantings should be expected to increase both monitoring and maintenance to ensure successful growth. In addition, these planting designs may provide a sample palette for future landscape plantings with parks.

Green stormwater infrastructure should become a standard park design practice to ensure that future park projects, upgrades, and ongoing restoration activities continue to promote a healthy lake environment, conserve and protect natural ecosystems, and maintain low-impact park environments. Park planning and management should continue routine collaboration with stormwater utility planning to capture opportunities for financing and implementing coordinated projects and programs.

Advocacy Partnerships

Many park and recreation agencies have supportive local non-profit organizations that provide advocacy and fundraising capacity to park and recreation programming and operations. These relationships can be highly beneficial in capturing local resources to support needed programming and capital improvements that cannot be fully funded solely through tax or program revenues. As non-governmental agencies, non-profit park foundations and open space conservancies can advocate on political issues such as bond initiatives or proposed levies and have more flexibility to publicly lobby local leaders for park, recreation, and conservation causes. Expanding on the community's legacy of supporting philanthropic ventures, creating a park and recreation foundation can be a critical element in future fundraising, marketing, volunteer organization, planning, and strategy.

7

RECREATION, ARTS & CULTURE



The City's recreation, arts, and cultural programs enhance physical and mental health, provide educational value, build social connectedness, and are highly valued by the community.

Tai Chi course at the MICEC

Recreation, arts, and cultural programming assume many forms such as classes, athletics, camps, gymnasium, drop-in programs, performances, special events, social groups, and more. The City is fortunate to host these activities in a variety of indoor and outdoor venues, including the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC), which is an important facility to support delivery of recreation programs and services. This facility provides active recreational space, community gathering opportunities, and serves as a local and regional venue for private events, meetings, and athletic rentals.

Recreation and Arts Trends

Various resources have been assembled and summarized to offer a comprehensive overview of current recreation trends, market demands, and agency comparisons.

The following national and state data highlights some of the current trends in recreation and arts and may frame future considerations in program and activity development. Additional trend data is provided in Appendix I.

- 77% of respondents to the American Engagement with Parks Survey indicate that having a high-quality park, playground, public open space, or recreation center nearby is an essential factor in deciding where they want to live.⁽¹⁾
- Nearly all (93%) of park and recreation agencies provide recreation programs and services. The top five most commonly offered programs include holiday or other special events (65%), educational programs (59%), group exercise (59%), fitness programs (58%), and day or summer camps (57%).⁽²⁾

- Just over half of Americans ages 6 and older participated in outdoor recreation at least once in 2019, the highest participation rate in five years. (Note: This trend may be higher in 2020 and 2021 given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.) The number of outings per participant declined, however, in 2019 continuing a decade-long trend and resulting in fewer total recreational outings. ⁽³⁾
- Youth aged 6 to 17 were active outside far less in 2019 than in previous years; the average number of outings per child dropped 15% between 2012 and 2019. ⁽³⁾
- Nearly all park and recreation providers in the U.S. experienced declines in revenue in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As early as May 2020, most providers had to close facilities temporarily in accordance with health and safety directives. Nearly half of the providers also furloughed or laid off staff due to the funding and facility impacts of the pandemic. ⁽⁴⁾
- When it comes to costs and revenues, the percentage of costs recovered depends on the type of organization. On average, respondents to the 2020 Managed Recreation Industry survey said they recovered nearly 50% of their operating costs. Only a few facilities reported that they covered more than 75% of their operating costs via revenue. For public organizations, 45% of costs are recovered, up slightly from 42% in 2019. ⁽⁴⁾
- Research from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that arts and culture drive 4.2% of the US gross domestic product (GDP), generating \$736.6 Billion in 2015. In Washington State, this sector beats the national GDP, providing 7.8% of the State's GDP. Both in Washington and nationally, arts and culture surpass construction and education services in contribution to GDP. ⁽⁵⁾
- 28% of the nation's approximately 4,500 Local Arts Agencies (LAAs) are government agencies, departments, programs, facilities, or other associations. Of those LAAs, 80% are affiliated with municipalities. LAAs promote, support, and develop the arts at the local level, ensuring a vital presence for arts and culture throughout America's communities. ⁽⁶⁾
- 84% of LAAs present their own cultural programming to their community. These programs include after-school arts education programs, public art, free concerts in the park, exhibitions, heritage and preservation efforts, festivals, and special events. ⁽⁶⁾
- 53% of LAAs said the general public's perceived value of the arts has increased since the onset of the pandemic. ⁽⁶⁾
- The pandemic disproportionately impacted the cultural sector. It will be among the last sectors to fully reopen, in part due to social distancing requirements. ⁽⁷⁾
- After eight consecutive years of increases, the average size of the LAAs budget (income/revenue) declined 10.0% in 2020 and is anticipated to decline another 10.6% in 2021. ⁽⁸⁾
- People who say their neighborhood has easy access to quality arts and cultural activities tend to be more satisfied, identify more with local lifestyle and culture, and invest more time and resources in their communities. ⁽⁹⁾
- Arts activities increase residents' interest in getting involved in local issues and projects. 86% of civic engagement participants want to be involved in future projects. After their involvement, people living where projects occurred were more than twice as likely to be civically engaged as those whose blocks did not have projects. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Sources:

- (1) American Engagement with Parks Survey (2021)
- (2) 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review
- (3) 2020 Outdoor Participation Report, Outdoor Foundation
- (4) 2020 State of the Industry Report, Recreation Management magazine
- (5) US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2015
- (6) AFTA 2020 LAA Profile http://surveys.americansforthearts.org/r/391676_60549cd4741a42.54488835
- (7) ArtsWA <https://www.arts.wa.gov/wa-covid-recovery-survey/>
- (8) AFTA LAA COVID-19 Impacts https://www.americans-forthearts.org/sites/default/files/2Pager_ImpactOfCOVIDPandemicOnLAAs_WithBudgetHistory.pdf
- (9) Knight Foundation Community Ties survey Community-Ties-Final-pg.pdf (knightfoundation.org). Builds off Soul of Community Longitudinal Study (2008-2010) conducted by the Knight Foundation found key drivers of community attachment to be social offerings, openness, and aesthetics. <https://knightfoundation.org/sotc/overall-findings/>
- (10) Nicodemus, A., Engh, R., & Mascaro, C. (2016). Adding it Up: 52 Projects by 30+ Artists in 4 Neighborhoods. Metris Arts



Recreation Reset Strategy

The City of Mercer Island's recreation, arts and cultural programs were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as facilities were closed, revenues declined, and staffing was reduced in March 2020. The City's leadership took the opportunity during the pandemic to think strategically about how to "reset" the Recreation Division for a successful future. The pause in the provision of most services led to the development of a new strategic approach for delivering recreation and services. The adopted Reset Strategy, which is included as Appendix E, provides guidance for the purposeful allocation or investment of City resources into recreation, arts and cultural programs and services. The Reset Strategy also guides the long-term work and offerings of the Recreation Division, targeting resources and efforts toward:

- Service and program offerings that are aligned with community values and goals.
- Financial sustainability that ensures stewardship and accessibility that benefits all.
- A purposefully planned balance between community investment and individual benefits.

As the City moves forward with implementing the Reset Strategy, it will focus on balancing competing needs and priorities, and determining the best way to maximize or optimize benefits using limited resources. The Reset Strategy's cost recovery framework (where some programs receive a greater share of tax dollars, and some programs subsidize others) will help the City be deliberate about offering services where it is the best or most appropriate and concentrate support toward core services and programs of the Recreation Division. Core and desirable services are defined below.

Social Good or Public Good Core Services

These programs and services are those that may benefit all members of the community, are typically offered through tax support (rather than user/participant fees), and may focus on health, safety, equity, or access. These programs and services will receive the greatest share of community investment.

Business Sustainability Core Services

These programs and services meet community needs and produce revenue for the City that covers some of the indirect costs of programs or reduces the need for tax support for other programs. These programs and services are designed to meet the market's needs and are offered with market rates in mind. These programs typically benefit individuals or specific groups. They are financially supported by the beneficiaries of the service.

Desirable Services

Many programs and services could be labeled as desirable, and this categorization includes those programs and services that simply do not fall into either the social/public good core or the business sustainability core. Desirable programs offered by the City should meet these criteria:

- The program is likely to generate sufficient revenues to offset its costs and meet cost recovery targets.
- Hosting the program at a City facility will not adversely affect the City's ability to offer social/public good or business sustainability core services.
- High demand exists.
- The program will serve a large population or significant, identified community need.

Recreation and Arts Programs

The City has, in the past and will continue to offer in the future, a wide range of programs and activities to diverse participants in a multitude of settings. This commitment is consistent with residents' stated desire for the City to offer programs for various ages and abilities. As the Reset Strategy is implemented, the Recreation Division will initially focus on providing programs and services categorized as "core" and expand offerings in response to community needs and as resources allow. The strongest demand for recreation programs has been for:

- Youth summer camps.
- Drop-in sports, such as pickleball.
- Field and gymnasium rentals for sports programs and leagues.
- Meeting and event room rentals.
- Organized, instructor-led fitness programs.

In addition to advocating for popular, recurring programs, residents have expressed interest in the City offering more of the following:

- Outdoor classes and activities.
- Aquatics programming such as swimming, water safety, and boating.
- Educational classes.

Going forward, recreation staff will pilot new programs to explore the demand for trends such as e-sports, intergenerational activities, and other outdoor activities. As an island community the demand is high for water-oriented activities, and the Recreation staff will pursue

enhanced programming opportunities at the City's waterfront locations. There is strong community support for the City to avoid duplication of services and to partner with other providers as a way to satisfy demand, enrich the variety of offerings, and efficiently use City resources.

Recreation Facilities

The City of Mercer Island hosts recreation and arts and culture programs in its parks and in several municipal buildings, most notably the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC). The day-to-day management, ongoing maintenance, and long-term reinvestment in these facilities are crucial to the success of the City's programs. Additionally, efficient scheduling and use of the facilities ensures that cost recovery, diversity, equity and inclusion, program lifespan vitality, and other goals are met. The City should continue to coordinate with the other facility providers on Mercer Island, such as the Mercer Island School District, the Boys & Girls Club, Mary Wayte Pool, the Mercer Island Library, and the Stroum Jewish Community Center, among others, on program offerings and scheduling.

When residents were asked to state how they would prioritize the use of MICEC facilities, they indicated the following were top priorities:

- Activities for youth
- Activities for seniors
- Adaptive or therapeutic recreation
- Fitness programs,
- After school or school break programs.

Additionally, there is strong support for the MICEC to serve as a gathering place for spontaneous play and socialization, one-time activities, and special events, and to showcase local art. The City can leverage the facility as an event center by maximizing private use on evenings and weekends. Also, the future use and function of the North Annex at the MICEC should be guided by a focused master planning effort to examine the community needs and program options suited for that space while also identifying options to replace the aging infrastructure.



Fitness program at the MICEC



Camp Mercer participants



Climbing wall during a special event at Luther Burbank Park

Special Events

The Recreation Division is responsible for the overall coordination of community and special events. These public events provide gathering opportunities, celebrations, inspiration, remembrance, activation of Town Center and city parks, entertainment, and education. Special events draw the community together and also attract off-Island visitors. Some recurring, multi-day community events of the recent past included Summer Celebration, Mostly Music in the Park, Friday Night Films, Leap for Green, Shakespeare in the Park, and Illuminate MI. The City has also hosted or supported numerous one-time or single-day events.

Community gathering and special events should continue to be an area of emphasis; however, the overall number and breadth of City-sponsored special events should be carefully managed to align with the availability of resources and impacts to general park and facility use. Upcoming policy and budget deliberations will guide the City in the number and extent of the special events through the allocation of dedicated resources. A structured approach will help the City manage the growth of these popular offerings; ensure high-quality, adequately resourced events; and enlist community sponsorships, partnerships, and support.

Opportunities to connect are clearly crucial to Mercer Island residents, particularly as the community emerges from the global pandemic. Recent surveys showed strong community support for spending “some tax dollars on a few special events open to all community members,” a desire for more “community events for those without children,” and an interest in “performing arts such as community theater or concerts.”

Wedding ceremony at the Luther Burbank Park Amphitheater



Arts and Culture

The City of Mercer Island plays a critical role in supporting and sustaining the community’s rich and diverse arts and cultural identity. This responsibility is upheld largely through the ongoing work of the Recreation Division and Arts Council, which is more fully described in the City’s Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan (adopted in November 2018 and provided in Appendix F).

As the City’s official Local Arts Agency (LAA), the Arts Council strives to:

- Advocate for the arts, artists, and arts organizations on Mercer Island.
- Stimulate and promote community awareness, education, and enjoyment of the fine arts.
- Support performing, visual, and literary arts programs, projects, and events.

These goals have been advanced through a range of one-time and ongoing activities, including oversight of the City’s public art collection, the Mercer Island Gallery, and the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery; advocating for art experiences such as special programs and classes, concerts, film series, dances, and theater performances; fostering community art creation projects; and convening and cooperating with other arts organizations.

The Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan describes a vision of assimilating “positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members” and areas of policy focus and actions to take to achieve that vision. The plan also names two barriers to achieving the vision: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation among Mercer Island arts groups, and (2) a lack of space for arts activities and performances. The plan encourages enhancing alliances in the local arts community to improve availability of arts and cultural resources and the ability to fulfill community needs.

The City’s PROS Plan community surveys reflect similar themes and are in alignment with the Arts and Culture Plan findings. Community members voiced a desire for the City to “explore partnerships” as a way to deliver program, event, and facility-based “opportunities for all.” Community members see the City as playing an important role in facilitating access to the diversity of arts and cultural opportunities, regardless of whether or not the City is the primary provider of an event, activity, or facility.

As the City implements the Recreation Reset Strategy, it is redefining expectations for allocating City resources and the outcomes sought from using those resources. Work plans for the Arts Council, the Parks

and Recreation Commission, and City staff identify the policies that need to be developed or updated to enhance alignment with the Reset Strategy and implement program, events, and other experiences. The City will conscientiously target its arts and cultural work efforts and devote energy to evaluating performance on named objectives.

Arts and Culture Programming

The Recreation Division and its community partners deliver arts and cultural programming, with support from the Arts Council and community volunteers. Arts and cultural opportunities have included visual arts classes and exhibits, dance performances and instruction, concerts, summer camps with various arts themes, and special events. As with the approach to other recreation programs, the City endeavors to provide a broad array of public art and community arts and cultural programs encompassing literary arts, performing arts, educational topics, history, and diverse cultures accessible to people of all ages and abilities. Programming varies yearly based on demand, input from the Arts Council and community members, special occasions, availability of resources, and new opportunities.

Arts Venues & Assets

The City conducts arts and culture programs and events at the MICEC. The facility includes the Mercer Island Gallery, a dance room, an outdoor covered terrace, a gymnasium, classrooms, and a large event space. The City maintains a public art collection of more than 65 two- and three-dimensional works, which can be found in public parks and rights-of-way, municipal buildings, and at the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery. Outdoor venues for arts and cultural opportunities include the City's parks and an amphitheater. Other resources and assets include the City's 1% for the Art fund, which supports the public art collection, and digital tools like the Public Art Story Map and STQRY.

The City's arts and cultural programming, venues and assets are augmented by those provided by Mercer Island arts organizations. A list of these essential partners and resources can be found in the Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan (Appendix F).

Future Programming Directions

Implementation of the Recreation Reset Strategy, which began in 2021, will take a few years and will require ongoing collaboration between staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Arts Council, the City Council, and the community.

The Reset Strategy is not designed to simply restart everything at once but to improve outcomes and align offerings to an overall community investment and prioritization structure. Program offerings will be considered based on several factors, including an assessment of trends and program life cycle stages, competition and duplication within the community, desired program outcomes, partnership and cooperation possibilities, the commitment level of potential participants, availability of resources, and consistency with the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, it is an exciting time in the Recreation Division as programming and services resume with a robust business framework, in alignment with community priorities, and with an eye towards the future.

Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery (Aubrey Davis Park)



8 TRAILS & PATHWAYS

Trails and paths provide people with valuable links between neighborhoods, parks, schools, transit, business centers, regional trail networks, and other destinations. This chapter provides an overview of the trails system on Mercer Island, including an assessment and recommendations on future initiatives.

Mountains to Sound Trail through Aubrey Davis Park

Completing trail system connections was identified as one of the highest capital project priorities during the community engagement process, and walking was the top activity for Mercer Island residents. Continuing to manage and invest in the trails system while also improving access to transit options is essential to maintaining a healthy and livable community and promoting alternatives to motor vehicle use.

Trail Use Trends

Walking and hiking continue to be the most popular recreational activities nationally and regionally. Furthermore, national recreation studies have consistently ranked walking and hiking as the most

popular form of outdoor recreation over the last ten years. These studies include:

- Sports Participation Survey by the National Sporting Goods Association (2020)
- State of the Industry Report by the Recreation Management Magazine (2020)
- Outdoor Recreation in America by the Recreation Roundtable (2020)

According to the 2020 Outdoor Participation Report published by the Outdoor Foundation, running (including jogging and trail running) was the most popular activity among Americans when measured by the number of participants and total annual outings. Running was also the most popular outdoor activity for all ethnic groups.

The 2018-2022 Recreation and Conservation Plan for Washington State confirmed that outdoor recreation is an integral part of life for most Washington residents, with strong participation in the most popular category of activities, which includes walking (94%) and hiking (61%). Considerable increases in participation rates in outdoor recreation activities since 2006 indicate the importance of State and local communities continuing to invest in parks, trails, and open space infrastructure.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted outdoor recreation activities, including trail use. Indoor facilities and in-person programming were shut down and then only partially restarted in 2020. Local and regional park and recreation agencies that managed trail systems were pressed to adapt to heavy use and crowded trailhead parking, as many people shifted their daily exercise routines to outdoor activities, such as walking and bicycling.

The 2020 Sports & Fitness Industry Topline Report identified sports that increased in popularity in the last six years, including trail running, cardio tennis, BMX biking, and day hiking. For most age segments, activities that households aspired to (e.g., fishing, camping, biking, and hiking) related to the need for supporting trail infrastructure.

An August 2020 report from the Outdoor Industries Association revealed that Americans took up new activities in significant numbers with the biggest gains in running, cycling, and hiking. Walking, running, and hiking were widely considered the safest activities during pandemic shutdowns. Reviewing only three months of data (April, May, and June 2020) revealed that participation rates for day hiking rose more than any other activity, up 8.4%.

BENEFITS OF TRAILS

Trails for Walkable Communities

In the NRPA publication, *Safe Routes to Parks*, walkable, healthy community design elements are outlined as convenience, comfort, access and design, safety, and the park itself. Sidewalks, bike paths, and trails should provide an integrated alternative transportation system for residents to access parks and other destinations within their community. To further emphasize the importance of a walkable community to promote public health, the Surgeon General has issued a Call to Action to “step it up” to encourage walking and build a more walkable world. A more connected network of trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes linked to local and regional public transit also provides economic values and invites a broader range of participants.

Trails for Aging Populations

Today’s active seniors are looking at retirement differently, as many are retooling for a new career, finding ways to engage with their community, and focusing on their health and fitness. It is critical for Mercer Island to pursue a comprehensive approach to the City’s aging population needs. Trails provide the infrastructure for the most popular and frequent outdoor recreation activity of older adults: walking. Constructing and operating trails for a wide range of abilities will help walkers sustain healthy physical activity throughout life. Trails meeting a wide range of abilities will require planning, constructing, and operating a range of trail options that walkers can select based on their abilities. Ideally, the trail system will include a spectrum of choices ranging from steep and uneven “backcountry” trails that access remote open spaces to trails with more gradual grades and fine gravel surfacing that traverse both parks and open spaces. Paved trails close to parking and that offer several distance options to meet the trail users’ needs should also be considered. These trail choices would be clearly communicated through multiple channels, including low-impact site signage where appropriate with key information on trail length, width, grade, and surfacing. Barrier-free parking and paths, walkability, and connectivity also will be key components of future pedestrian planning.

Trails for Economic Health

In the 2009 report, *Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Housing Values in US Cities* by Joe Cortright for CEOs for Cities, research cited the connection between home values and walkability. Higher WalkScore measurements where more typical consumer destinations were within walking distance were directly associated with higher home values. Homes located in more walkable neighborhoods command a price premium over otherwise similar homes in less walkable areas. The publication, *On Common Ground*, distributed by the National Association of Realtors, highlights numerous articles citing the preference of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and the role of walkability in creating healthier communities. These preferences translate into higher real estate prices and housing values. Even the National Association of Homebuilders (March 2014 publication: “Walkability, why we care and you should too”) has recognized that walkability is desired by consumers, creates lower development costs, and allows flexibility in design. As part of the system of walkability and bike-ability, recreational trails are real estate assets that enhance community connections and contribute to community-wide economic health.



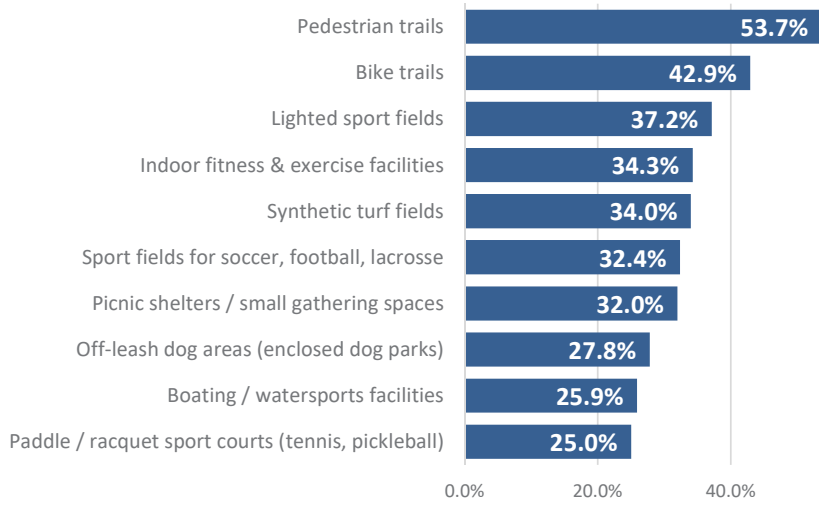
Local Insights

As noted in previous chapters, community feedback from two community surveys and two virtual public meetings (see Appendices A, C, D & E) provided a wealth of local insights on current usage and interests in various park and recreation amenities.

Respondents to the first community survey indicated that the most popular activity is walking or running

(81%) and is the top reason for visiting Mercer Island parks and open space. Respondents indicated that the highest unmet park and recreation facility need is for pedestrian trails. In the same survey, respondents also noted a strong need for additional pedestrian trails (54%) and bike trails (43%), see Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1. Community Need for Additional Park and Recreation Amenities



To further distinguish community priorities from those noted in the first survey, respondents were provided a range of options related to specific potential improvements to the Mercer Island park system. They were asked to select their top three choices. A strong plurality of respondents (44%) noted that connecting gaps in the trail system is a top priority, which was also 13 points higher than the next highest ranked option provided.

Also, respondents were asked to select their top three park and recreation amenities to identify community priorities. The essential amenities noted included walking or jogging trails (93% very or somewhat important) and open space and natural areas (90% very or somewhat important). The second tier of amenities of strong interest includes restrooms (84% very or somewhat important) and bike lanes or paths (68% very or somewhat important).

In the second virtual public meeting and when explicitly asked about improvements to the City’s trail system, participants identified the top two priorities as improving maintenance and upkeep of existing trails (44%) and acquiring and building new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or right-of-way (31%).

Trail Classifications

Defining and reinforcing a recreational trail classification establishes a framework for trail design and prioritizes proposed trail enhancements and development. The recreational trail classification system is based on a tiered network and includes five trail categories:

- Shared-Use Paved Trails
- Neighborhood Links
- Natural Surface Trails
- Water Trails
- Park Trails

While some sections of trail will accommodate higher volumes of traffic and provide regional connections, other sections may rely on the local street network and be designed to link local or neighborhood destinations. Planning for differing trail types is essential as it encourages appropriate usage and discourages informal trail creation that could destroy vegetation and cause erosion.



Shared-Use Paved Trails

Shared-use paved trails serve as a vital circulation connection that link adjacent developments, neighborhoods, parks, schools, and other destinations. This trail type is paved with either asphalt or concrete and should be a minimum of 10' wide with one-foot shoulders on each side of the trail. Typical trail users include pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with other wheeled devices (such as scooters). Some bicyclists use these routes for commuting purposes.

Neighborhood Links

Neighborhood linkage trails are multi-use pedestrian walking, hiking, biking, and equestrian connections that link neighborhoods with each other and with other open space, parks, schools, and other destinations. They provide the functional network of the trail system and consist of right-of-way

and facilities designed for use by a variety of non-motorized users. They consist of both soft-surface and hard-surface materials and vary in width.

Natural Surface Trails

Natural surface trails provide connections to remote and unique natural areas within or adjacent to the community. Ideally, natural surface trails should connect to multi-use paved trails. Natural surface trails are generally 2-4' wide. Typical trail users include hikers and mountain bikers.

Park Trails

Numerous City parks include pathways, sidewalks, and hiking trails, etc., that provide access to the park and circulation within the park

Kayak camp at Luther Burbank Park



Water Trails

Water trails are recreational water routes for non-motorized boats and watercraft. The trailhead locations are parks or street ends with dock or beach facilities to enable non-motorized crafts to launch and land. The Lakes-to-Locks Water Trail provides a water-borne route for non-motorized boaters that connects inland lakes, rivers, and waterways with the shores of Elliott Bay and Puget Sound. With more than 100 miles of shoreline and a chain of 100 launch and landing sites, this urban freshwater trail provides numerous opportunities to explore multiple communities, including Mercer Island. Ten Mercer Island water trailheads provide amenities and shoreline access to human-powered watercraft, including:

- 85th Place SE (South Point)
- Clarke Beach Park
- Franklin Landing
- Fruitland Landing
- Groveland Beach Park
- I-90 East Channel Boat Launch
- Lincoln Landing
- Luther Burbank Park
- Proctor Landing
- Slater Park

The Lakes-To-Locks Water Trail was designated in August 2000. The Hiram M. Chittenden Locks in Seattle provides the connection to the Cascadia Marine Trail on Puget Sound.

See: <https://www.wwta.org/water-trails/lakes-to-locks-trail/>

Photo credit: MI Reporter

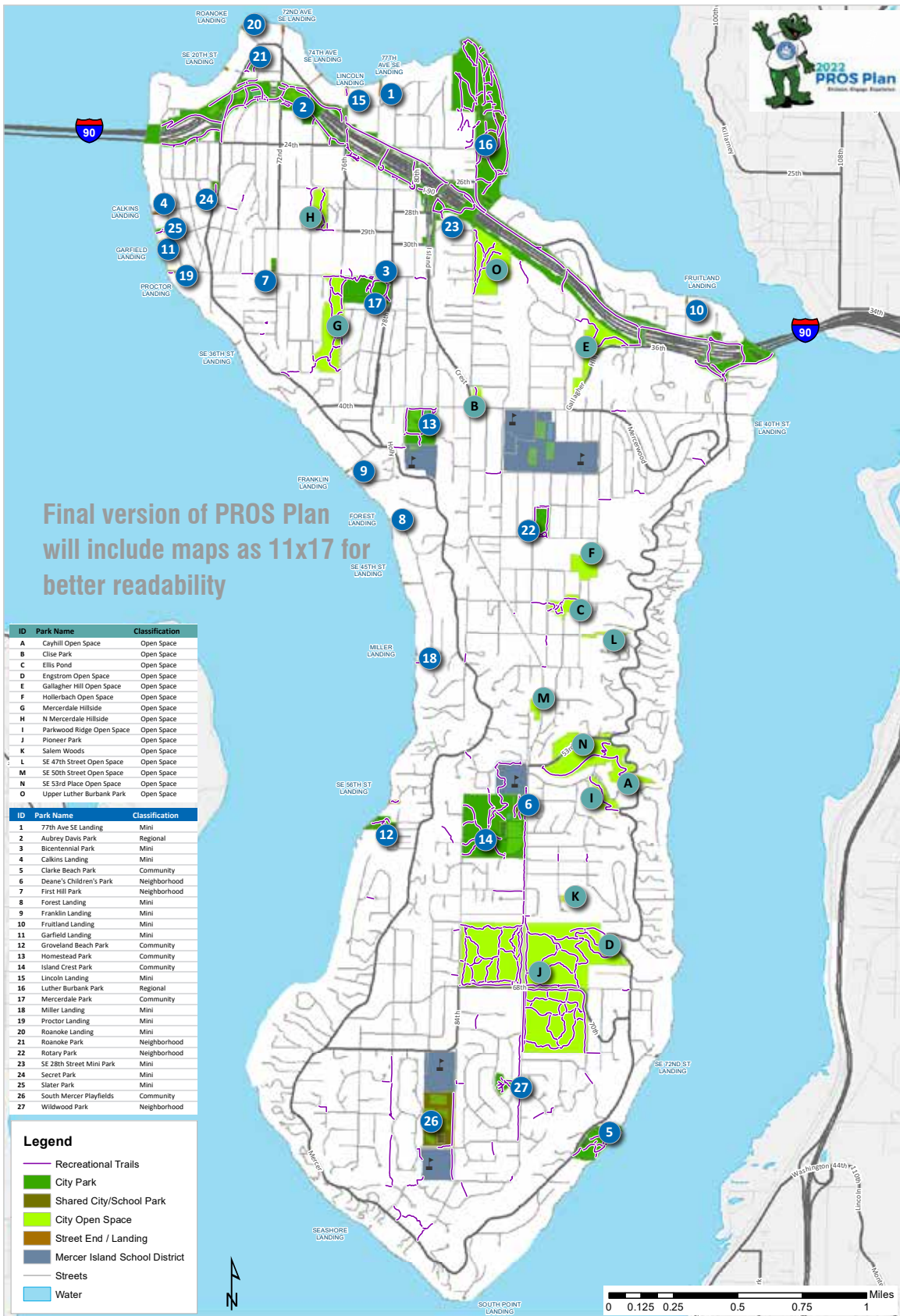


Trail System Inventory

The City of Mercer Island has created a growing neighborhood and park trails system with linkages between parks and across the Island. The existing trails comprise 28.5 miles of trail facilities providing many opportunities for connecting to outdoor recreation locations and other destinations, see Figure 8.2. However, there are still gaps in the trail network that limit the access and enjoyment of trail use on Mercer Island.

Figure 8.2. Existing City-maintained Trails within Mercer Island

Park/Trail/Facility Name	Trail Tread	Length (miles)
Aubrey Davis Park/I-90 Lid	Concrete, asphalt	4.97
Bicentennial Park	Concrete	0.05
Clarke Beach Park	Asphalt	0.48
Clise Park	Rock	0.08
Deane's Childrens Park	Rock, dirt	0.31
Ellis Pond	Boardwalk, stone	0.36
Gallagher Hill Open Space	Gravel, dirt	0.35
Groveland Beach Park	Asphalt	0.16
Homestead Park	Asphalt, gravel	0.57
Island Crest Park	Asphalt, dirt	1.37
Lincoln Landing	Asphalt	0.03
Luther Burbank Park	Concrete, asphalt, stone, boardwalk, dirt	3.02
Luther Burbank Park - MICEC	Concrete, asphalt, gravel	1.17
Mercerdale Hillside Open Space	Gravel, dirt	1.52
Mercerdale Park	Concrete, asphalt, dirt	0.19
Miller Landing	Concrete	0.02
North Mercerdale Hillside Open Space	Gravel, dirt	0.53
Parkwood Ridge Open Space	Gravel, dirt	0.23
Pioneer Park	Asphalt, gravel, dirt	6.43
Pioneer Park - Enstrom Open Space	Gravel, dirt	0.45
Proctor Landing	Gravel	0.02
Roanoke Park playground	Asphalt, dirt	0.13
Rotary Park	Asphalt, rock, dirt	0.45
SE 53rd Open Space	Gravel, dirt	0.60
SE 56th St Landing	Gravel	0.03
Secret Park	Dirt	0.07
Slater Park	Concrete, paver	0.09
South Mercer Playfields	Asphalt	0.26
Upper Luther Burbank Park	Gravel, dirt	0.66
Misc. ROW Trails	Asphalt, gravel, dirt	3.87
	Total	28.46



Map 10: Existing Recreational Trails



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Trail Network Travelsheds

Paths and trails provide people with valuable links between neighborhoods, parks, schools, business centers, and other destinations.

As a supplement to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan (last updated in June 2010), a gap analysis was conducted to examine and assess the distribution of existing recreational paths and trails. As with the parkland analysis, shared-use path travelsheds were defined using a ¼-mile primary service area and a ½-mile secondary service area. Travel distances were calculated along the road network starting from each existing segment's known and accessible access points. Trails within parks were also examined, and service areas were calculated with ¼-mile and ½-mile travelsheds for major parks (e.g., Pioneer Park, Luther Burbank Park, and Mercedale Park) and ¼-mile travelsheds for the remainder. Map 11 (page 91) illustrates the citywide distribution of recreational trails and the relative access to these corridors within reasonable travel travelsheds. Approximately 65% of the City has reasonable access to recreational trails, including park trails and the I-90 Bike Trail (also referred to as the Mountains to Sound Regional Trail).

Similar to transportation planning, recreational trail planning should be geared toward connectivity, rather than mileage. Only considering a mileage standard for paths within the Mercer Island park system will result in an isolated and inadequate assessment of community needs with little consideration for better trail connectivity. This Plan recommends eliminating the recreational trail mileage standard in favor of a connectivity goal that re-states and reinforces the desire to improve overall connections across the City and enhance off-street linkages between parks and major destinations, as feasible. Completing trail connections was identified as a top priority through the community engagement process and should also include connections to transit when possible.

Trail System Design Considerations

Alignment

The future growth of the trail network will need to prioritize trail alignments and locations that are optimal from multiple perspectives: trail user, trail experience, and trail connectivity. Cost, regulatory, and site suitability factors should also be incorporated. New trail alignments should attempt to accommodate different trail use types (i.e., commuter vs. recreational/destination oriented) and utilize interim solutions such as widening sidewalks and utilizing existing or planned

utility corridors as opportunities for trail improvements. Accommodating trail alignments for local, neighborhood link trails as connections to regional, shared-used trails or major park trails is essential for providing access and reducing the sole reliance on trailheads for providing access to the trail network.

Access & Trailheads

Safe, convenient entryways to the trail network expand access for users and are a necessary component of a robust and successful system. A trailhead typically includes parking, kiosks, and signage and may consist of site furnishings such as trash receptacles, benches, restrooms, drinking fountains, and bike racks. Trailheads may be within public parks and open space or provided via interagency agreements with partner organizations (e.g., county, school district, etc.) to increase use and reduce unnecessary duplication of support facilities. Specific trailhead design and layout should be created as part of planning and design development for individual projects and consider the intended user groups and unique site conditions.

In many areas, parking on the shoulders is a significant problem that hinders the utility of the shoulders for pedestrian and bicycle use while also creating environmental and neighborhood impacts. While this problem has been particularly noted along East and West Mercer Way and near Pioneer Park, it is also a potential issue in other neighborhood areas. In areas where parking on the road shoulder is persistent for trail access, the City should explore options for formalizing trailhead parking improvements to accommodate typical demand and localize and manage site impacts resulting from trail use parking. The City should also continue to explore first/last-mile connections so that potential park visitors can arrive using transit, reducing the need for on-site parking.

Trail Development Limitations

Opportunities to develop additional trails and connections may be limited due to the built-out nature of Mercer Island. One underlying tenet of the recreational trail system is to enable the placement of trails within or close to natural features to provide access to the City's unique landscapes and accommodate outdoor recreational access to creeks, hillsides, and waterfront. The future planning and design of trail routes through natural areas should be based on sensitive and low-impact design solutions that offer controlled access to protect the resource while providing for a positive experience for all modes of trail user. The determination of future trail alignments should prioritize natural resource and natural hazards planning and protections, in part to meet local land-use policies and Washington State requirements.

Ongoing Maintenance

Following trail construction, ongoing trail monitoring and maintenance will keep the trails functioning as designed, while protecting capital investments in the network. The City of Mercer Island should continue to perform routine trail maintenance through the guidance of its existing trail maintenance program and continue to implement the maintenance and repair projects identified in the 2018 Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report.

This report also identifies substantial portions of the City's existing trail infrastructure that will require significant renovation in the coming years to preserve its function. Future trail renovation projects should be included in the Capital Improvement Plans as a means to identify and secure appropriate resources for needed enhancement. The City should maintain and expand the connection to and communications with the robust network of local volunteers to provide support as appropriate.

Trail Signs & Wayfinding

Coordinated signage plays an important role in facilitating a successful trail system. A comprehensive and consistent signage system, implemented appropriately according to the type, scale and site of the trail setting, is a critical component of the trail network. It is necessary to inform, orient and educate users about the trail system itself, as well as appropriate trail etiquette. Such a system of signs should include trail

identification information, orientation markers, safety and regulatory messages and a unifying design identity or element for branding. The following signage types should be considered and implemented as appropriate throughout the network:

- Directional and regulatory signage
- Trail user etiquette and hierarchy signage
- Continuous route signage for route identification and wayfinding
- Design for consistency with the industry best practices and neighboring cities.
- Mileage markers or periodic information regarding distance to areas of interest
- Warning signs to caution users of upcoming trail transitions or potential conflicts with motor vehicles
- Interpretive information regarding ecological, historical, and cultural features found along and in proximity to the trail
- Consider alternatives to physical signs, such as QR codes and online trail maps, to provide additional information

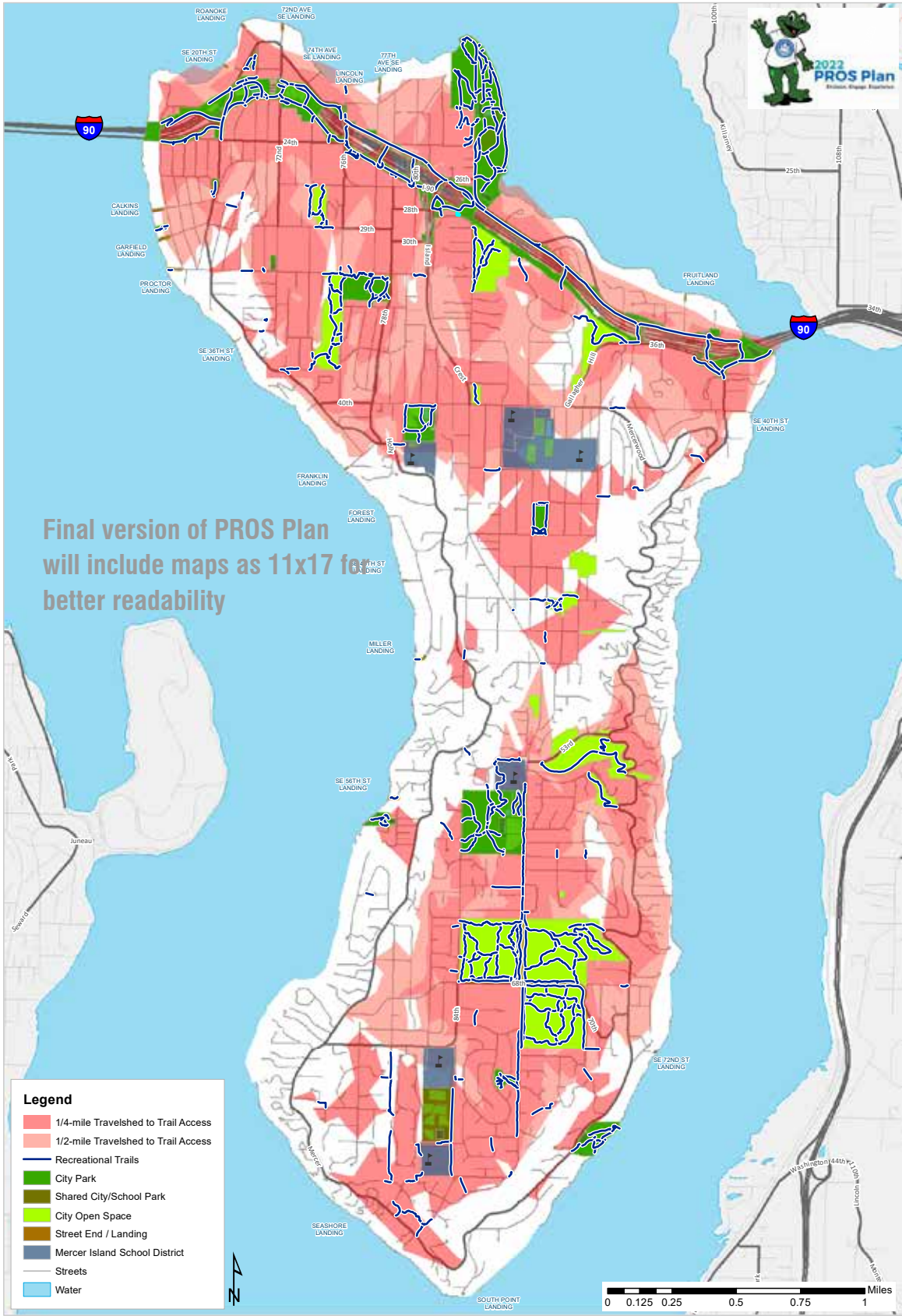
The installation of kiosks at trailheads is a best practice that should continue. Kiosks provide important trail information, while reinforcing the visual brand of the Mercer Island trail experience.



Mountains to Sound Trail at Area A, Aubrey Davis Park



Trailhead at SE 53rd Open Space



Map 11: Travelsheds - Recreational Trails (1/2-mile)



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Future Initiatives

- Continue to implement the pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements from the Transportation Improvement Program.
- Update the 2010 Bicycle Facilities Plan.
- Plan for future shared mobility pilots (such as shareable E-bikes and E-scooters) and the increased public adoption of electric-assist bicycles and other wheeled mobility devices.
- Conduct repairs and trail maintenance as identified in the Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report.
- Continue to improve trail and trailhead signage and wayfinding and explore ways to indicate connections to bus and rail transit.
- Support or provide bicycle skills development and education classes for youth in partnership with the school district and local community-based organizations.
- Explore options to improve parking management that enhances safe trail access sensitive to neighborhood context and environmental impacts.



Trail entry at Engstrom Open Space



9 OPEN SPACE, LAND CONSERVATION & STEWARDSHIP

Mercer Island’s open space and natural areas are an important component of the City’s green infrastructure and play critical roles in supporting healthy, well-functioning ecosystems. These many benefits include maintaining air and water quality, mitigating impacts of climate change, capturing stormwater runoff, and providing recreational and scenic opportunities to connect with nature that promote physical and mental well-being.

Gallagher Hillside

OPEN SPACE

Thanks to the foresight of former City leaders, the Mercer Island community is fortunate to have retained several significant natural areas across the City. Nearly 300 acres of open space properties and natural lands are either owned or managed by the City, in coordination with the acreage of the developed park areas, see Figure 9.1 on the next page. These open space properties include forested lands, riparian corridors, wetlands, and steep slopes across 22 different sites. Together, Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space comprise the most extensive public open spaces, accounting for 43% of the open space in the City. Several other significant natural areas, ranging in size from 11 to 27 acres, also provide substantial forested areas. Smaller open space properties, under 10 acres in size, are distributed across Mercer Island.

The “open space” classification distinguishes natural lands from parks developed for active recreation and other highly managed landscapes. Open space may refer to public properties that are exclusively natural areas or portions of larger parks that are managed as natural areas. They may include trails, interpretive signs, or artwork, along with modest support amenities such as parking or restrooms. These open space lands are managed to conserve and restore ecosystem functions, native vegetation, and wildlife habitat. Since 2004, the system-wide management of these lands has been guided by adopted vegetation management plans, which established long term goals that prioritize ecosystem processes and health over aesthetic values. These goals differentiate the maintenance priorities and methods from those prescribed for developed parks.

OPEN SPACE & CONSERVATION

Figure 9.1. Open Space in Parklands

Open Space Areas	Acres
Cayhill Open Space	1.1
Clarke Beach Park	7.1
Clise Park	1.5
Ellis Pond	4.1
Engstrom Open Space	8.5
Gallagher Hill	11.3
Groveland Beach Park	1.8
Hollerbach Open Space	5.2
Homestead Park	3.2
Island Crest Park	27.6
Luther Burbank Park	19.6
Mercerdale Hillside	18.1
Mercerdale Park	6.4
N Mercerdale Hillside	5.1
Parkwood Ridge Open Space	3.8
Pioneer Park	113.7
Salem Woods	0.3
SE 47th Street Open Space	1.3
SE 50th Street Open Space	1.8
SE 53rd Place Open Space	24.0
Secret Park	0.6
Upper Luther Burbank Park	18.1
Wildwood Park	1.8
Total Open Space	286.0



Mercerdale Open Space

In addition to protecting habitat and providing ecological services (e.g., stormwater management and air quality), the open space system provides educational and stewardship opportunities. It is the primary setting for off-street recreational trails. The open space system offers access to nature for passive recreation (including opportunities for viewpoints and wildlife viewing areas) and relaxation.

Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space

As the largest single open space in the City, Pioneer Park provides an expansive forested area in the southcentral portion of Mercer Island, divided into three quadrants separated by Island Crest Way and SE 68th Street, see Figure 9.2. The property was transferred to the Mercer Island Open Space

Conservancy Trust in 1992 to protect and preserve the land in its natural state. Pioneer Park offers passive and low-impact recreation, such as walking, jogging, and picnicking.

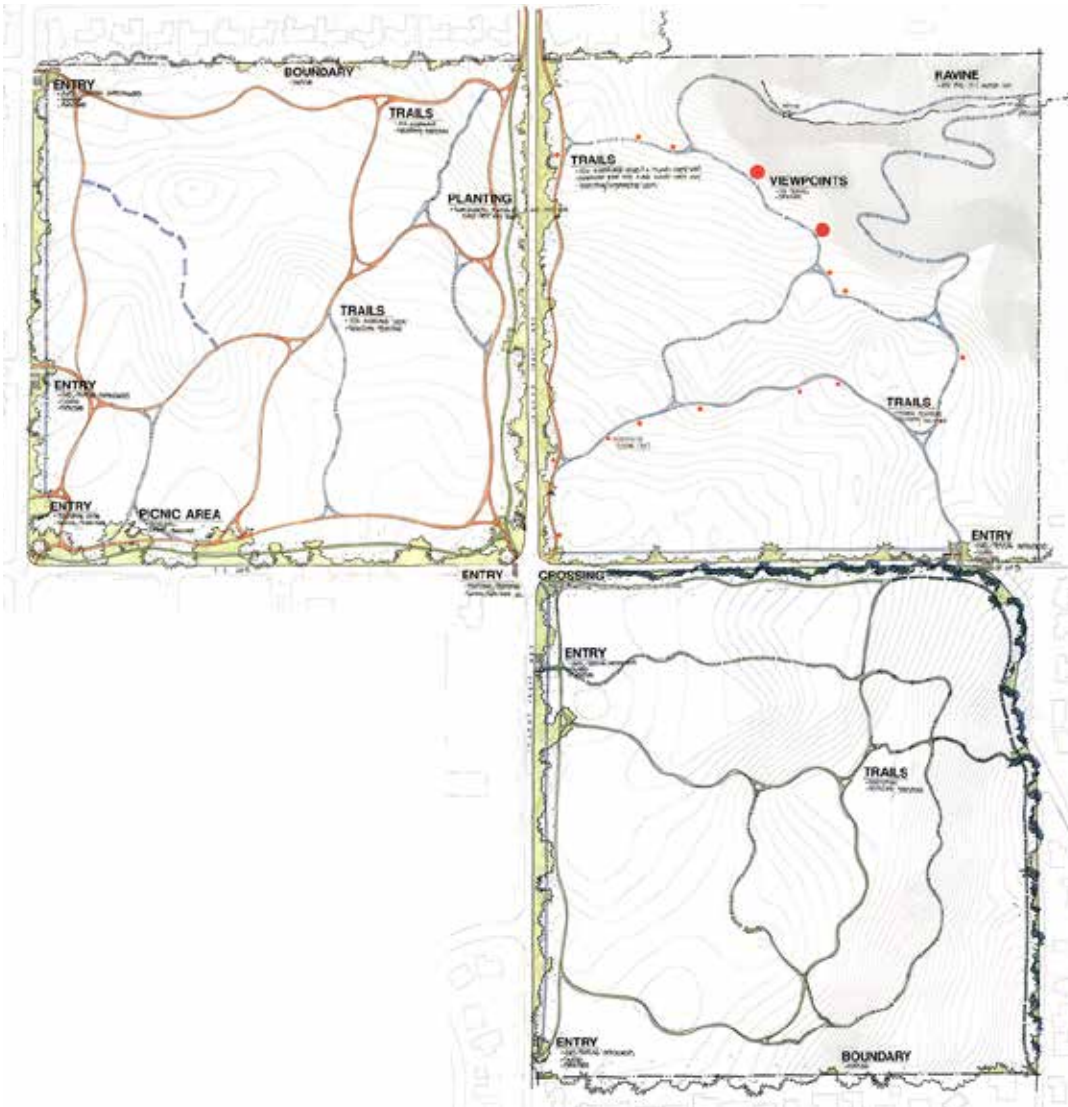
Pioneer Park contains a range of trail types, access points, and trail surfacing. Trails are the primary way park users experience Pioneer Park, so the trail system is crucial to the recreational value of the open space. Trail users include pedestrians (runners, walkers, dog walkers), cyclists, and horseback riders. Equestrian use has been limited to the southeast quadrant and the northwest quadrant's eastern and southern perimeter trails. Large format trail maps are posted at the primary trailheads in each quadrant, with informal trailheads dispersed along the roadsides. Existing amenities in the park include benches, a picnic table, interpretive signs, and trash receptacles.



Acquired in two transactions in the early 2000s, the 8.5-acre Engstrom Open Space abuts the northeast quadrant of Pioneer Park and provides ravine habitat, additional second-growth forest, and perched wetlands. The property has been permanently dedicated for park

and recreation uses, and a pedestrian trail easement on adjacent private property provides a trail connection to East Mercer Way. The Open Space Conservancy Trust charter also includes oversight of Engstrom Open Space.

Figure 9.2. Map of Pioneer Park Trail System (from Pioneer Park Master Plan)



Large Open Space Properties

The City manages several other sizeable open space properties. These areas, which include SE 53rd Open Space, Mercedale Hillside, Upper Luther Burbank Park, Island Crest Park, Gallagher Hill Open Space, and Parkwood Ridge Open Space, contain a variety of distinct habitats, such as wetlands and streams, adding to the diversity of plant species they host. These open spaces also include developed trail systems, serving as recreation opportunities and valuable pedestrian connections for local streets and neighborhoods.

Two of these open spaces, Island Crest Park and Luther Burbank Park, are natural areas that are contained within larger developed parks. Across Mercer Island, eight developed parks include open space, which accounts for 53% of their total acreage. Aubrey Davis Park, which contains many acres of upland forest, is not currently managed as open space, but may be added to this designation in the future. Figure 9.3 shows all developed parks that contain areas currently managed as open space acreage.

Figure 9.3. Acreage of Open Space within Developed City Parks

Park Name	Open Space Acres	Park Acres	Total Acres	Classification
Clarke Beach Park	7.1	1.6	8.7	Community
Groveland Beach Park	1.8	1.2	3.0	Community
Homestead Park	3.2	7.2	10.5	Community
Island Crest Park	27.6	8.3	35.9	Community
Luther Burbank Park	19.6	35.0	54.6	Regional
Mercerdale Park	6.4	5.6	12.0	Community
Secret Park	0.6	0.1	0.7	Mini
Wildwood Park	1.8	1.1	2.8	Neighborhood
Total	68.2	60.0	128.2	

Smaller open spaces, ranging from less than one acre to seven acres, are distributed across the City. Though small, these pockets of natural area serve as refuges for wildlife traveling between larger forested areas, and in some cases, provide meaningful trail connections between adjoining neighborhoods.

Several of these areas have no developed trails or site improvements and are managed exclusively for habitat and to preserve or enhance their ecosystem functions and include: Cayhill Open Space, Hollerbach Open Space, Salem Woods, SE 47th Open Space, and SE 50th Open Space. Development of these sites for public recreational use, including the construction of trails, may be limited, or restricted by natural characteristics of the land, including steep slopes, wetlands, and other features.

LAND CONSERVATION

The City of Mercer Island has demonstrated its commitment to conserving its natural resources within the context of a major metropolitan region. The preservation of Pioneer Park is a shining example of the importance of land conservation to the community. The City has also preserved a variety of public waterfront access and public park amenities along the shoreline of Lake Washington.

Conservation of High-Value Ecosystems

Many of the public lands that the City owns and manages host unique, high-value landscapes. These areas are prioritized for conservation, acquisition, and restoration activities to ensure that they continue to thrive and provide their distinct ecosystem functions and benefits. High-quality shorelines, watercourses,

and wetlands are all vital to preserving Mercer Island's diversity of habitats. Providing safe public access to and within these areas needs to be carefully balanced with the crucial goal of environmental stewardship and natural habitat protection.

Shorelines

Mercer Island's shoreline presents one of its most aesthetic and environmentally important characteristics. Shorelines directly impact water quality as surface, and subsurface waters, are filtered back into the lake. Additionally, shorelines are a valuable fish habitat area, characterized by lake bottom conditions, erosion tendencies, and the proximity to watercourse outfalls that combine to provide a suitable environment for spawning fish. The City's Shoreline Master Program includes goals, policies, and regulations consistent with state guidelines to protect shorelines.

Luther Burbank Park contains three-quarters of a mile of shoreline, much of which is managed as a natural shoreline. Two waterfront community parks, Clarke Beach and Groveland Beach Park, provide public access to Lake Washington while retaining much of their park acreage in natural forested conditions. The conservation and continued restoration of these open spaces further highlight the conservation values of the Mercer Island community.

Watercourses

The City of Mercer Island has identified approximately 90 sub-basins as part of its stormwater management plan. Within these sub-basins, approximately 55 identified watercourses drain into Lake Washington. Watercourses are naturally occurring or partially altered streams characterized by perennial or seasonal flows that contribute to water filtration, stormwater buffering,



erosion control, and the provision of wildlife habitats. Within City-owned properties, preservation and restoration of the land surrounding watercourses are a priority, ensuring that these areas continue to provide their unique ecosystem services.

Wetlands

The City code also protects and regulates wetlands on Mercer Island characterized by soil types (e.g., hydric), water-tolerant plants, and surface waters that are either saturated or inundated for a minimum period of time. Mercer Island's open space is home to several wetland areas, including lakeside wetlands and perched wetlands in upland forest areas. These areas are also a high priority for protection and restoration work. They are fragile ecosystems that host unique plant communities and serve as a valuable habitat for many animals, including bird and amphibian populations.

Land Acquisition

Conservation may also take the form of acquiring important lands that contribute to the ecological health of Mercer Islands' forests, wetlands, and watercourses. The City has developed a park and open space evaluation and acquisition framework for use when considering potential properties utilizing the general goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The framework contains property criteria to assess the value of the physical property for parks and open space, and criteria to determine the impact the acquisition would have on the City and the community as a whole. When private landowners or non-profit organizations look to donate or sell their properties to the City as future conserved open space or parkland, this framework considers how the property adds recreational value or conservation benefits to the parks and open space system.

The acquisition of properties that provide access to the waterfront provides high-value contributions to the open space system. This is supported by the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, which encourages water-dependent recreational activities to be available to the public and increases the public shoreline suitable for water-related recreational uses. Street rights-of-way abutting bodies of water are generally encouraged to remain in the public domain to preserve public access to the waterfront. Any potential consideration of the vacation of rights-of-way should involve a detailed analysis of the City's projected needs for waterfront access.

Undeveloped lands or sections of existing properties are often restricted in their potential development by steep slopes, wetlands, or critical areas. These features are often highly valued for habitat conservation. These areas may extend existing natural areas or serve as essential habitat corridors between larger open space lands. Conservation easements and public access easements are tools that could be applied to increase habitat benefits and access across the parks and open space system.



Hawthorn Trail at Luther Burbank Park



STEWARDSHIP

For almost two decades, the City has allocated resources toward stewardship of its open space and natural lands. These properties provide an enormous array of services to people and wildlife, including habitat for a diverse range of plants and animals, sites for stormwater filtration and erosion control, and venues for visitors to enjoy Mercer Island's dynamic and diverse natural environments. Their close proximity to urban development, which can alter the biological processes of native landscapes, presents challenges that must be addressed with active management. Without this management, these open space lands will be heavily impacted by invasive plant species, low tree regeneration, and canopy deterioration, limiting their associated ecological benefits. Stewardship of these lands is guided by several studies conducted in Mercer Island open spaces and subsequent management plans informed by quantitative data, site assessments and observations, and periodic reviews of best practices for managing ecosystem health.

Open Space Studies and Management Plans

System-wide Open Space Vegetation Management

In 2004, the City adopted the Open Space Vegetation Management (OSVM) Plan that identified significant threats to the parks system, established work priorities based on research and public involvement, and outlined open space restoration goals. The 2004 OSVM Plan focused on maintaining functional benefits derived from Mercer Island's open space. It noted that native canopy trees, regenerating conifers, and native understory vegetation were critical factors in maintaining these benefits. At the time of this study, more than 50% of Mercer Island's public open space was significantly impacted by invasive plants.

During the subsequent ten years, Parks and Recreation Department staff managed a systematic restoration program to reduce invasive plant cover and plant native species, particularly coniferous trees, to improve forest cover. During this period, 43,000 native plants were installed (covering more than 50% of the open space area) and over 100 acres of trees were freed from climbing ivy.

The 10-Year Evaluation and Update of the OSVM Plan, conducted in 2014, determined that conifer planting had successfully established a new cohort of trees, ivy control efforts were effective in reducing pressures on canopy trees, and restoration work over the preceding years had reduced invasive species cover. The 2014 Plan Update amended goals to reflect the realities of limited program funding and the newly apparent challenges presented by climate change to include the following:

1. Maintain the functional benefits of open space vegetation.
2. Foster resilient plant communities that can recover from disturbances and adapt to climate change.
3. Implement work based on the value of these functional benefits, the community's priorities for the open space properties and the condition of the vegetation found there.
4. Maximize the return on available funding through volunteers, matching grants, and donations.

Pioneer Park Forest Management

In 2003, the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan was adopted specifically to address the needs of Mercer Island's largest forest tract. The Pioneer Park



Forest Management Plan directs site management and intervention to maintain the native forest ecosystem, protect public safety, and enhance positive uses of the park over time. The Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan addressed a range of considerations for vegetation in the park included by reference in the 2004 OSVM Plan. Among the considerations were tree risk assessment and management, fire management, tree pruning and removal, tree protection, invasive plant control, rare or unusual plants, off-trail use, and habitat management.

In 2009, the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan was amended to include the findings of the Forest Health Survey, a comprehensive, quantitative study of the park's vegetation and forest structure. This data was used to prioritize restoration work and set specific goals for the park for the next 20 years, shifting from a site-based approach to a systemic approach. The new work plan focused primarily on canopy regeneration, invasive tree removal, and ivy management as the foundational steps toward a healthier and more resilient native forest. In 2018, the City performed a similar vegetation study to assess the effectiveness of the new strategies. The data confirmed that the prescribed restoration tasks in native tree establishment and invasive tree removal had been successful in the first 10 years, but that completion of the 20-year work plan was necessary to address widespread invasive species in the park.

Habitat Restoration and Invasive Species Management

The City has been diligent in working to restore disturbed natural landscapes in open spaces and developed parks, guided by the goals and work plans established in the Open Space Vegetation Management Plan and the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan. Each year, Natural Resources staff perform an extensive evaluation of each open space property to determine the success of past restoration activities and to plan the subsequent scope of restoration work that will move each landscape toward greater health and resiliency. The majority of restoration fieldwork is performed by contracted landscape crews knowledgeable in native and invasive species identification and ecological restoration best practices. All contracted restoration tasks follow exacting specifications and time constraints established by the City based on various biological and site factors. By evaluating each site, staff can maximize the effectiveness of invasive control, improve the survivorship of newly installed plants, and consider soil characteristics and health. In addition to hiring contracted crews, the City employs a small seasonal team to perform targeted and complex restoration tasks, such as noxious weed monitoring, mapping, and control.

The control of invasive species is a critical element of the restoration process and essential in maintaining a healthy natural landscape. Many invasive and non-native species exhibit strong adaptability to Pacific Northwest environments and displace native species, especially in the disturbed landscapes proximate to urban development. In 2004, more than 50% of Mercer Island's public open space was significantly impacted by invasive plants. In the intervening years, the City has dedicated staff and resources to managing invasive species and expanded partnerships to help with these efforts. While removal efforts are ongoing, the restoration sites cleared of invasives will require continuous monitoring and intervention to reduce or limit the re-establishment of the invasive plants.

Community Partnerships & Volunteers

While the COVID-19 pandemic eliminated many parks and open space volunteer activities in 2020 and 2021, the engagement and management of volunteer resources has been and continues to be an essential element in the restoration and stewardship of Mercer Island's public lands.

For over a decade, the City has contracted with EarthCorps and Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, two local non-profit organizations, to provide volunteer recruitment and management services for restoration events in open space. These organizations coordinate and lead 45-50 volunteer events each year in natural areas across Mercer Island, providing training, tools, and support for volunteers of all ages and abilities. They have established long-standing partnerships with schools, places of worship, and community groups and perform regular outreach to draw new volunteers and forest stewards. Between 2008 and 2018, 20,980 volunteers contributed over 64,000 hours to restoration work in Mercer Island's natural areas.

The City's Natural Resources team also oversees the Forest Stewardship Program, which provides dedicated community volunteers with training, tools, and ongoing support to run effective volunteer projects. Training includes native plant identification, invasive plant identification and removal, native plant installation, and volunteer event coordination. People who complete the training become Forest Stewards qualified to lead projects on behalf of the City's park and open space system. Due to the on-site training program and ongoing support of these Forest Stewards, which require significant staff resources, this program is limited to a small number of community members who express an interest in the long-term stewardship of Mercer Islands' natural areas.

In addition to training local volunteers, community partnerships are a vital component of hands-on stewardship work, and the City has fostered partnerships with many groups.

Besides participating in restoration work, several volunteer groups and individuals have also contributed to studying animals and plants within the City's open spaces. Perhaps the most notable community project is an ongoing bird survey of the Luther Burbank Park North Wetland, which members of the Friends of Luther Burbank Park have performed monthly, beginning in June 2008. Over the last 13 years, this group has identified and documented at least 107 unique bird species within the wetland.

Community members also regularly contact staff about rare plant and animal species seen across Mercer Island, as well as new invasive plant species, which staff can control before they are allowed to spread. Whether one-time or ongoing, these surveys and observations have furthered our understanding of how Mercer Island's natural areas are used by wildlife and contribute to the regional network of diverse habitats.

Sustainable Stewardship Practices

The management of landscapes in City parklands, whether formal plantings in developed parks or diverse forest ecosystems in open space, requires continual attention and an investment of significant resources to properly steward and maintain the living landscape. Regardless of the use of these landscapes, the desired outcomes are the same: to sustain healthy, thriving plants.

However, past practices and traditional horticultural methods to achieve this goal have become less reliable in recent years. Changes to the Pacific Northwest climate have increased summer heat and drought, causing more stress for mature and establishing plants. This change has been accompanied by a shift toward more sustainable landscape maintenance practices, reducing potential impacts on the surrounding environment and its inhabitants.

Water Conservation

Despite the rainy winters, water is not an unlimited resource in Puget Sound, and summers are expected to get even hotter and drier as climate change intensifies. It is increasingly likely that not just voluntary but mandatory water conservation measures will become necessary on occasion to preserve supplies for the most critical uses, such as domestic consumption. In recent years, the City has allowed some grassland and

recreational areas to brown out for the summer months to conserve water and save on significant irrigation costs.

In landscaped areas where shrubs and trees rely on some summer water, staff have adjusted the irrigation systems to water before sunrise to reduce water waste and maximize plant uptake. Depending on the landscape, watering may also be shifted to a deeper and less frequent watering schedule to reduce evaporation and encourage plants to root more deeply.

In addition to reducing irrigation volumes and frequency, the City has shifted to planting more drought-tolerant species and schedules the majority of new plant installations in the early part of the rainy season to maximize root growth and establishment before the onset of the dry season.

Plant Selection

Selecting appropriate plants species for park landscapes is the source of a great deal of discussion, both on the local and regional scale. While drought-tolerant plants will be better able to establish in the short term, consideration is also given to how well newly established plants will survive in the long term. In recent years, cities across the Pacific Northwest, including Mercer Island, have seen many mature native trees decline and die in recent years, unable to adapt quickly to the increased summer temperatures and lack of summer moisture. Plant selection for tree replacements or renovations that consider the anticipated climate in 10-50 years will be more likely to create resilient, mature landscapes that can better transition to warmer, drier conditions.

In natural areas, generally replanted with trees and shrubs native to the immediate area, staff have been selecting new plants from seed zones that reflect the Puget Sound area's projected climate. This focus on plant provenance (the original geographic source of seed, pollen, or propagule) allows staff to plant the same native species better adapted to future conditions. Generally, these plants are propagated from forests in southern Washington and Oregon.

In addition to considering the climate in the selection of plants for developed parks, other factors must also be considered, including the mature size of the tree or shrub, any known pests or diseases that may affect the species, and how a fully developed root system will interact with nearby paved surfaces.



Maintenance Practices

Standard maintenance practices for Mercer Island's park landscapes have shifted considerably toward more sustainable practices that consider the health of the whole system, including soil health, nutrient cycling, and water quality.

All new plantings are provided with a mulch top dressing. Using wood chips, bark, or leaves as mulch in the landscape helps the soil retain moisture, suppresses weed germination and growth, and contributes vital organic matter to the soil. The bulk of the mulch used around new plantings and formal planter beds are wood chips created from tree pruning and removals on the island. Leaves collected in the fall are also used as mulch, which allows their organic matter and nutrients to be reincorporated into the soil over time.

The increased use of mulch in beds has assisted in reducing weed growth and helped staff significantly reduce pesticide use in developed parks. In many cases, remaining weeds are either removed using manual extraction methods or cut at ground level to slow their regrowth. Because this method is more labor-intensive, weeds may be more visible in the landscape, particularly during the active growing season.

A focus on soil and water health has also refined how fertilizers are used in park landscapes such as athletic fields, shifting away from fertilizer applications that may lead to nutrient leaching or runoff. These newer practices include using organic or slow-release products and performing smaller, more frequent applications.

Stormwater Management

The Pacific Northwest region is experiencing more severe rainstorms due to climate change, and more of that rain is falling on impervious surfaces: roads, parking lots, and rooftops. This untreated surface water runoff is a significant source of contamination all along the Lake Washington shoreline and in other riparian areas, impacting both people and wildlife, especially salmon populations.

State requirements for surface water management are becoming more stringent and costly for both developers and the City. Runoff volumes, peak stream flows, and local flooding can be reduced by incorporating trees into stormwater management planning, lessening the need for expensive detention facilities (e.g., catch basins) and the cost of treatment to remove sediment and other pollutants such as lawn chemicals. Green infrastructure is far more cost-effective than grey infrastructure.

Using open space and greenspaces to capture stormwater runoff encourages infiltration into the soil, prevents excessive streambed erosion, and reduces sedimentation in Lake Washington. In addition, a healthy tree canopy increases carbon sequestration potential, encourages local biodiversity, and enhances overall environmental resilience by reducing heat island effects and offering cooler, shaded air.



FUTURE INITIATIVES

A number of future initiatives were identified and recommended for incorporation into the City's work plan over the next six to ten years and are summarized below.

Land Conservation

- Develop a Land Acquisition Strategy to proactively acquire high-quality natural areas and parklands, to expand the existing network of parks, trails, and open space systems.
- Determine the most effective strategy for protecting open space lands in perpetuity. Explore various mechanisms for such protection, including zoning changes, conservation easements, deed restrictions, and transfer of these lands to the Open Space Conservancy Trust's governance.

Open Space Studies and Management Plans

- Continue studies of open space health, collecting vegetation data that can be used to illustrate restoration progress and guide adjustments to management plans.
- Develop a citywide urban forest management plan to define goals for local forested ecosystems and outline the best management tactics to sustain forest canopy. This plan could include a citywide tree inventory, tree preservation and protection code amendments, and considerations for climate resiliency. A more broadly defined urban forestry plan can also be a means to engage the community in tree-related activities and facilitate community conversations about the overall health and diversity of Mercer Island's urban forest.

Habitat Restoration

- Continue restoration work in open space to ensure that progress to date is not lost and ecosystems remain healthy, diverse, and functional.
- Practice adaptive management by regularly evaluating the successes and failures of restoration activities and modify practices accordingly.
- Stay current with evolving best management practices in the field of restoration ecology.
- Collaborate with regional partners to share resources and knowledge. Participate in regional research opportunities.
- Pursue opportunities to contract grow or purchase plants from southern seed zones.

Community Partnerships & Volunteers

- Foster new partnerships that support the conservation and restoration of Mercer Island's open space properties.

Sustainable Stewardship Practices

- Explore the use of non-gas-powered landscape equipment to reduce emissions.
- Continue to adjust landscape maintenance practices in favor of techniques that contribute to the health of the land and lake environments.



Flowering red currant



10 OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

The following assessment examines agency resource comparisons, identifies trends in park operations, and provides general recommendations for park maintenance operations on Mercer Island.

Luther Burbank Docks and Boiler Building

To effectively plan, develop, maintain, and operate a high-quality park and recreation system, the City needs to continually reassess and reinvest in its park and recreation infrastructure. Older infrastructure will continue to require repairs or replacements to ensure safe and functional facilities. And newer infrastructure requires ongoing care and maintenance to protect the asset. Appropriate use of data and collaboration across City work groups ensures consistency in service delivery and promotes efficient and focused operations and maintenance.

Park Agency Performance Benchmarks

As noted in Chapter 6, the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) Park Metrics database was used to compare Mercer Island's park and open space system to averages from comparably-sized jurisdictions from across the country. This agency performance data provides a benchmark to compare administration, operations, and programming with other providers. While comparisons can be helpful, no two agencies are exactly alike. History, culture, landforms, hydrology, climate, demographics, and other local variables contribute to how park and recreation providers perform in their communities. Figure 10.1 compares jurisdictional populations served by park and recreation agencies against specific performance metrics.

Figure 10.1. NRPA Agency Comparisons - Facilities

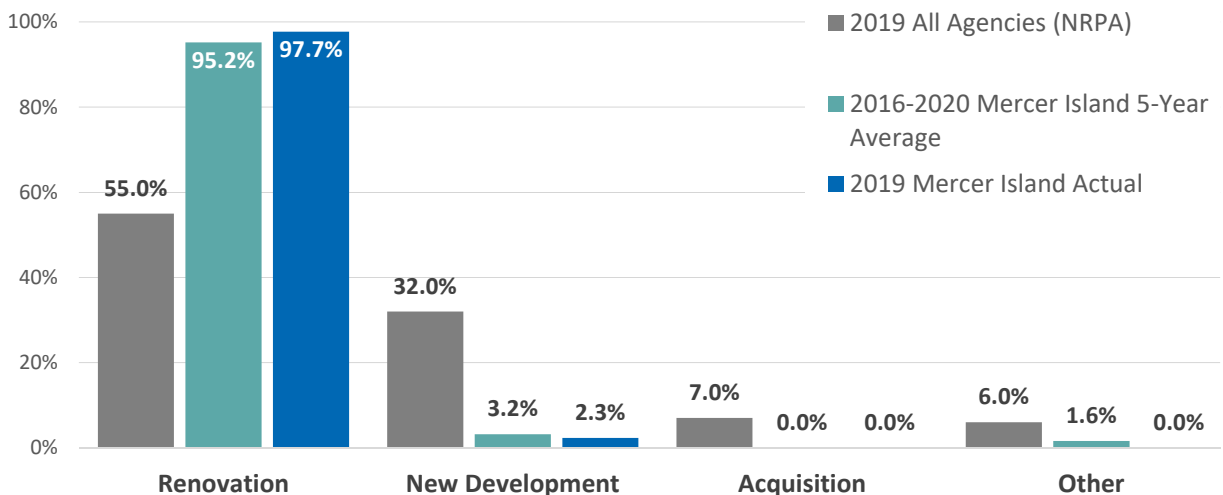
Metric	Median Value		
	All Agencies	Pop. Range 20-50,000	Mercer Island
Residents per Park	2,281	1,963	954
Acres of Parkland per 1,000 population	9.9	9.6	18.5
Miles of Trails	11	8.5	29
Number of Residents per Playground	3,750	3,157	1,430
Number of Residents per Tennis Court (public-outdoor)	5,004	4,347	1,839
Number of Residents per Rec Center	31,141	25,716	25,748

The City should take pride in its admirable service levels compared to the average of all agencies reporting in the Park Metrics data and somewhat comparable jurisdictions with populations between 20,000 and 50,000. Mercer Island's park and recreation services significantly contribute to its residents' high quality of life with higher-than-average parkland acreage ratios, more sports courts, and more miles of trail per capita.

A notable comparison with other park and recreation agencies across the nation comes from capital spending

allocations, see Figure 10.2. The median capital allocations for all agencies who shared data with the NRPA indicated that renovation was the primary focus (55% of the capital budget expenditures) with 32% for new development and 7% for parkland acquisitions. For the City of Mercer Island, budget allocations for park system renovations topped the spending allocations for capital projects, both for the 2019-2020 biennium and over a longer, five-year period.

Figure 10.2. Capital Spending Comparisons: Annual and 5-year Allocations



There has been no capital spending for parkland acquisition over the last five years, largely due to the City's built-out character. Most City of Mercer Island parks, open space, and trails capital projects involve the renovation, replacement, or redevelopment of park amenities. Docks, piers, and other over-water/

waterfront facilities have significant costs with their initial development and repairs or renovations. Mercer Island should expect higher than average capital costs to sustain its waterfront infrastructure as an island community that values its public waterfront amenities.



Existing Staffing Resources

Investing strongly and consistently in the staff, infrastructure, and services that have created and maintained the park and recreation system is necessary to ensure a well-maintained and viable parks system. The dedicated professional staff and labor resources ensure the delivery of quality services and care for the City’s parks and recreation system.

Mercer Island’s Parks Operations staff provide a range of functions related to maintaining high-demand, multi-use athletic fields, playgrounds, sport courts, swimming beaches, street-end waterfront access areas, hiking, biking, and equestrian trails, open spaces areas, and picnic facilities. These staff also provide arboricultural planning, project management, and consultation services for trees and the urban forest in public parks and open spaces and maintain and repair public art installations.

In 2019, in an effort to reduce costs, three parks and recreation positions were eliminated resulting in the reduction in special events, reduced operating hours at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC), and elimination of lifeguards at the beaches. The City further shifted its staffing resources in 2020 to align park maintenance, operations, planning, and development under Public Works. Parks Maintenance includes park and facility maintenance, custodial services for the MICEC, open space management, and urban forestry programs. Park capital projects are aligned under the Engineering and Capital Division in Public Works. Park maintenance staff was 11.7 FTEs in 2019-2020 and was reduced by 15% to 9.95 FTEs for the 2021-2022 budget.

The COVID-19 pandemic considerably impacted the Parks & Recreation Department. MICEC closed in March 2020, and all recreation programs, special events, and facility rentals were suspended. Athletic field reservations and picnic shelter/area reservations were also suspended. As a result, workforce reductions were implemented in the spring of 2020. The Recreation Transition Team is now focused on re-establishing operations for MICEC and rebuilding the Recreation Division.

Parks Operations also relies on casual labor to support operations during the peak recreation season (Q2-Q3 annually) to meet community needs and maintain existing service levels. This includes duties such as park mowing,

general landscaping, park restroom maintenance and cleaning, park access and safety, ballfield rentals, and other general park services. On average, 8-10 part-time/casual labor positions are used to help maintain service levels. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the casual labor positions within Parks Maintenance were eliminated in 2020. Maintenance was deferred, and service levels in parks significantly declined. The casual labor positions were restored in 2021.

Maintenance & Operations Standards

Developing maintenance standards that define the level of park upkeep and care can help identify and clarify the expectations for both Parks Maintenance staff and the public. If the level of budgetary support solely determines maintenance standards, a loss in efficiency and a gradual lowering of quality, care and safety may result. Lower maintenance levels often lead to higher capital repair needs due, in part, to a growing backlog of deferred maintenance. Park standards can be refined for new park design and development. Park standards for acceptable maintenance levels can also be developed to identify the level of care in existing parks proactively. These standards can include adequate levels of care for grounds, walkways and paths, signage, trees and landscaping, litter control and trash receptacles, play equipment and play surfacing, picnic shelters, restrooms, sport courts surfacing, accessories and benches and other site furnishings.

Staff time is required to maintain the desired maintenance standards. To ensure adequate staffing resources are allocated to parks maintenance functions, tracking time for the various tasks helps predict staffing needs when additional facilities and amenities are added to the system. One park system in Washington predicted its future labor needs for new neighborhood and community parks by tracking labor hours necessary to maintain current parks based on the type of park and acreage. Figure 10.3 illustrates that the system’s cost per acre is associated with direct labor requirements. The information can be further extrapolated to predict the number of FTE’s reasonably necessary to maintain and operate developed urban parks. As Mercer Island integrates its asset management system with tracking labor allocations, a predictive model could be developed for staffing needs associated with future improvements and programming.

Figure 10.3. Sample of Accounting of Labor Costs per Acre per Park Classification

Type of Facility	Average Acreage per Park	Annual Cost per Acre	Annual Labor Hours per Acre
Neighborhood Parks	4.8 ac.	\$5,500 per ac.	110 per ac.
Community Parks	26.2 ac.	\$4,400 per ac.	112 per ac.
Regional Parks	63.4 ac.	\$3,330 per ac.	100 per ac.
Greenspaces / Undeveloped Parks	5.6 ac.	\$2,400 per ac.	16 per ac.

Operational & Service Challenges Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

A statewide survey of park and recreation agencies was conducted in the second half of 2020, focusing on service demand and operational challenges preceding and resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic. The project was a collaboration between the Washington Recreation & Park Association, the Washington State Association of Counties, the Association of Washington Cities, and Metro Parks Tacoma.

In a question that asked agencies about how stable their outlook was for 2020 before and during COVID-19 Pandemic, the percentage of agencies that stated their outlook as very strong and stable decreased by 25 points, with 27.8% indicating as very stable at the beginning of the year to 2.8% indicating as very stable by August 1, 2020. Similarly, agencies that felt moderately or significantly underfunded and unstable rose from 5.5% to 50% by August 1, 2020. Also, a significant number of agencies indicated service delivery impacts due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the following ways:

- Reduced ability to manage, maintain, operate, and secure passive parks to safety standards and control access (87%).
- Cancellation of special events and tourism campaigns supporting local employment and driving the local economy (87%).
- Inability to operate critical community programs, pools, attractions and facilities, including services for vulnerable populations (81%).
- Lack of ability to hire/maintain seasonal employees and offer programs/services allowable under Safe Start (74%).
- Addressing public use and behaviors that put the community at risk, such as tearing down caution tape, using fields (85%).

Outside Contractors/In-house Expertise

Park and recreation agencies continually weigh the costs of providing services through internal staffing versus external contract arrangements. Landscape maintenance contractors are sometimes engaged for specific grounds areas and tasks such as mowing and weeding, and specialized services such as tree care and ecological restoration. Other specialized contractors are hired as needed to handle park facility issues, including pavement, plumbing and electrical repairs.

Project management for park capital projects is coordinated with in-house expertise in the Public Works Department, with a limited-term budget allocation for funding an additional capital project manager. Within City departments, Roads, Sewer, and Water divisions have coordinating policies that ensure active cooperation enables efficiencies for capital projects and system repairs that benefit city infrastructure. For park development, trail expansion, waterfront access, and significant capital repairs, a coordinating policy with other city departments also would be beneficial.

Existing undeveloped street ends offer an example of opportunities for collaboration between the Parks planning, Parks Operations, and Utility divisions for creating or improving public waterfront access when upgrading city utilities. The public desire for more waterfront access opportunities could be addressed when future water or sewer projects trigger a need to acquire additional waterfront lands. As those potential future utility improvements are designed and implemented, consideration should be given to accommodating public recreation access to the lake.

With the pending ADA Transition Plan, the City should also coordinate and bundle capital improvements that remove architectural barriers and improve universal access across all public infrastructure.

Asset Management

With limited budgets, many cities struggle to provide adequate maintenance and operational support resulting in situations where proactive maintenance is deferred and assets are repaired, rehabilitated, or replaced only when there is an urgent need or imminent risk. This situation can result in a loss of services or closure of a facility due to lack of funding for needed repairs, higher long-term maintenance costs as assets in worse condition may degrade more quickly and be more difficult and costly to fix, and a loss of public confidence. Consequently, Mercer Island must continue to consider and plan for long-term asset management needs.

The foundation of a holistic asset management program is a comprehensive inventory and assessment of existing facilities and unmet needs. In 2019, the City began implementing an asset management program to help track repairs, maintenance tasks, and operating activities. The City should continue to maintain standardized and systematic inventory documentation of park system infrastructure, including quantity, location, and condition. By tracking installation and the expected useful life of assets, the City can



plan for proactive maintenance and replacement of assets in the future. This life cycle planning should be further supplemented by ongoing condition assessments of assets – particularly those with a high consequence of failure. The City does this regularly with playground equipment inspections, and this practice can be replicated across the other site amenities and improvements. Such assessments can highlight urgent repair needs and can help the City fine-tune maintenance practices for Mercer Island’s weather, wear, and usage patterns. Such information can aid in future budgeting for capital repairs and overall asset management and predict staffing requirements. Going forward, the City could refine its data management through its CityWorks software and utilize life cycle planning to help predict capital repairs and future capital projects.

Volunteer Resources

Volunteer efforts – through volunteer groups, students, neighborhood groups, non-profit partners, or sport and service organizations – have resulted in significant site improvements in Mercer Island’s park system, especially in areas of ecological restoration through invasive species control and native plants species re-establishment. An engaging volunteer program allows community members to gain a sense of ownership in the park system; however, operating a volunteer program requires constant coordination and management. The City must invest in the necessary staffing to manage a successful volunteer base to capitalize on the enhanced resources and community connections.

Although volunteers require effective management at the City’s expense, volunteer contributions readily result in a net gain for the City and community. The City should continue to promote and coordinate volunteer opportunities and specifically identify the needs for volunteers on the website or through social media well in advance of major events. As restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic are safely lifted, the City should re-engage its volunteer program and capitalize on these local human resources to enhance its operational strengths.


More details on the City’s volunteer program can be found in Chapter 9.

Future Initiatives

- Refine data management through CityWorks asset management software to fine-tune maintenance practices, track inventory, predict capital repairs and future capital projects, and develop modeling for staffing needs for future park improvements and programming. Utilize the long-term data to formalize park maintenance service standards.
- Pursue resources to support investments in capital replacements, including upgrading aging shoreline infrastructure, which includes multiple dock projects.
- Seek to collaborate with other City divisions and City-wide planning efforts to coordinate capital and infrastructure work with development and improvement to park spaces, especially in the case of street end and waterfront parks, trail expansion, and expanding public access.
- Consider investing in staffing for the management of a volunteer program to capitalize on strong community engagement and contribute to the improvement of the park system.

PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

11 CAPITAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION



The preceding chapters provided an overview of the Mercer Island parks and recreation system and established goals and objectives to guide future operations, maintenance, and planning. This chapter includes the proposed six-year capital program and provides recommendations on other strategies and areas of focus to successfully implement the plan.

Solemates walking group at Luther Burbank Park

2023-2028 Capital Improvement Plan - \$41.7 Million

A key priority for this PROS Plan is a significant investment in parks infrastructure to maintain and restore existing amenities. The 2023-2028 Parks Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) includes estimated project expenditures of \$41.7 million. Preliminary revenues are estimated at \$17.4 million, which leaves a funding gap of \$24.3 million.

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP establishes the capital investment priorities for Mercer Island parks, facilities, trails, and open space. The projects were selected based on the need to address aging facilities, implement long-standing plans for improvements, and meet the goal of

better connecting and improving access to parks and recreation facilities. A project prioritization tool, see Figure 11.2, was used to evaluate the projects.

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP assigns design, permitting, and construction timelines for each project. Planning level cost estimates are provided and include staff and consulting time for delivery of the project and reflect an annual 3% escalator for most projects.

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP Project list is provided in Figure 11.1 on the following page.

For reference, an estimation of potential revenue by source is provided in Figure 11.2. The estimates represent potential in-flows to support the CIP projects and are subject to change.

IMPLEMENTATION

Figure 11.1. 2023-2028 Parks CIP Project Summary

ID	Location	Description	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	6-YEAR TOTAL
ATHLETIC FIELD PROJECTS									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
PA0110	Aubrey Davis Park	Lid A Backstop Replacement	-	-	-	-	96,000	689,000	785,000
PA0116	Island Crest Park	South Field Lights Replacement and Turf Upgrade	-	-	113,000	1,160,000	-	-	1,273,000
PA0117A	Island Crest Park	North Infield Turf and Backstop Replacement	1,061,000	-	-	-	-	-	1,061,000
PA0117B	Island Crest Park	South Field Backstop Replacement	319,000	-	-	-	-	-	319,000
PA0131	South Mercer	Turf Replacement & Ballfield Backstop Upgrade	1,698,000	-	-	-	-	-	1,698,000
ATHLETIC FIELD PROJECTS - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			3,078,000	-	113,000	1,160,000	96,000	689,000	5,136,000
BEACHES AND SHORELINE PROJECTS									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
PA0121	Luther Burbank	Swim Beach Renovation	-	55,000	113,000	1,015,000	-	-	1,183,000
PA0122	Luther Burbank	Dock Repair and Adjacent Waterfront Improvements	425,000	3,388,000	-	-	-	-	3,813,000
PA0114	Groveland	Dock Replacement & Shoreline Improvements (TBD)	-	-	-	-	4,180,000	-	4,180,000
PA0112	Clarke Beach	Shoreline Improvements (TBD)	-	-	2,814,000	-	-	-	2,814,000
BEACHES & SHORELINE PROJECTS - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			425,000	3,443,000	2,927,000	1,015,000	4,180,000	-	11,990,000
OPEN SPACE & TRAILS PROJECTS									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
PA0100	Multiple Locations	Open Space Management (Ongoing)	319,000	329,000	339,000	350,000	361,000	372,000	2,070,000
PA0103	Multiple Locations	Trail Renovation & Property Management (Ongoing)	54,000	56,000	58,000	60,000	62,000	64,000	354,000
PA0129	Pioneer/Engstrom	Open Space Forest Management (Ongoing)	191,000	197,000	203,000	210,000	217,000	224,000	1,242,000
PA0108	Aubrey Davis Park	Luther Lid Connector Trail	-	164,000	845,000	-	-	-	1,009,000
PA0143	Aubrey Davis Park	Mountains to Sound Trail Pavement Renovation	101,000	-	-	-	-	-	101,000
PA0144	Aubrey Davis Park	Mountains to Sound Trail Connection at Shorewood	-	82,000	-	-	-	-	82,000
PA0145	Aubrey Davis Park	MTS Trail Lighting from ICW to Shorewood	-	-	-	58,000	299,000	-	357,000
PA0115	Hollerbach OS	Hollerbach SE 45th Trail System	-	93,000	423,000	-	-	-	516,000
PA0132	Luther Burbank	Upper Luther Ravine Trail Phase 2	-	-	113,000	261,000	-	-	374,000
PA0175	Mercerdale Hill.	Trail Renovation	-	-	-	-	120,000	615,000	735,000
PA0190	Wildwood Park	ADA Perimeter Path & General Park Improvements	-	-	-	58,000	180,000	-	238,000
OPEN SPACE & TRAILS PROJECTS - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			665,000	921,000	1,981,000	997,000	1,239,000	1,275,000	7,078,000
PARKS PROJECTS									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
PA0101	Multiple Locations	Recurring Parks Minor Capital (Ongoing)	149,000	154,000	159,000	164,000	169,000	175,000	970,000
PA0111	Aubrey Davis Park	Vegetation Management (Ongoing)	117,000	121,000	125,000	129,000	133,000	137,000	762,000
PA0123	Luther Burbank	Minor Capital Levy (Ongoing)	103,000	105,000	107,000	109,000	111,000	113,000	648,000
PA0104	Multiple Locations	Lake Water Irrigation Development	-	82,000	141,000	-	-	-	223,000
PA0106A	Aubrey Davis Park	Lid B Playground Replacement and ADA Parking	-	-	-	232,000	836,000	-	1,068,000
PA0106B	Aubrey Davis Park	Lid B Restroom and ADA Path	-	-	-	232,000	1,195,000	-	1,427,000
PA0107	Aubrey Davis Park	Outdoor Sculpture Gallery Improvements	-	33,000	68,000	198,000	-	-	299,000
PA0141	Aubrey Davis Park	Tennis Court Resurfacing/Shared-Use Pickleball	-	121,000	-	-	-	-	121,000
PA0119	Luther Burbank	Tennis Court Renovation/Shared-Use Pickleball	107,000	438,000	-	-	-	-	545,000
PA0120	Luther Burbank	Parking Lot Lighting	133,000	-	-	-	-	-	133,000
PA0130A	Roanoke Park	Playground Replacement	-	-	-	-	60,000	431,000	491,000
PA0130B	Roanoke Park	General Park & ADA Improvements	-	-	-	-	30,000	93,000	123,000
PA0148	Deane's	Playground Replacement (Castle/Swings/Climb Rock)	-	55,000	226,000	-	-	-	281,000
PA0151	First Hill Park	Playground Replacement & Court Resurfacing	-	-	-	87,000	329,000	-	416,000
PA0166	Luther Burbank	Amphitheater Renovation (Design Only)	-	-	85,000	-	-	-	85,000
PA0182	MICEC/LB	Stair Replacement between MICEC & LB Parking Lot	-	-	-	-	36,000	197,000	233,000
PA0187	Secret Park	Playground Replacement	-	-	-	87,000	448,000	-	535,000
PA0189	South Pt. Landing	General Park Improvements	-	158,000	-	-	-	-	158,000
PARKS PROJECTS - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			609,000	1,267,000	911,000	1,238,000	3,347,000	1,146,000	8,518,000



Figure 11.1. 2023-2028 Parks CIP Project Summary (cont.)

ID	Location	Description	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	6-YEAR TOTAL
RECREATION FACILITIES PROJECTS									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
GB0102	MICEC	Building Repairs (Ongoing)	107,000	111,000	115,000	119,000	123,000	127,000	702,000
PA0133	MICEC	Technology and Equipment Replacement (Ongoing)	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	240,000
PA0178	MICEC	Entryway Parking Lot Asphalt Replacement	160,000	-	-	-	-	-	160,000
PA0179	MICEC	Parking Lot Planter Bed Renovation	-	-	-	-	239,000	-	239,000
PA0181	MICEC	Generator for Emergency Use	-	-	-	-	478,000	-	478,000
PA0124B	Luther Burbank	Boiler Building Full Renovation	-	-	-	-	239,000	3,690,000	3,929,000
RECREATION FACILITIES PROJECTS - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			307,000	151,000	155,000	159,000	1,119,000	3,857,000	5,748,000
PARK PLANNING PROJECTS									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
PA0126	Mercerdale Park	Mercerdale Park Master Plan	200,000	-	-	-	-	-	200,000
PA0157	Groveland/Clarke	Clarke and Groveland Beach Joint Master Plan	300,000	-	-	-	-	-	300,000
PA0127	MICEC	Annex Facilities Plan	200,000	-	-	-	-	-	200,000
PA0192	TBD	Spray Park - Site Analysis	-	50,000	-	-	-	-	50,000
PARK PLANNING PROJECTS - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			700,000	50,000	-	-	-	-	750,000
PARK PROPERTY ACQUISITION RESERVE									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
N/A	System-Wide	Property Acquisition - Reserve			500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
PARK PROPERTY ACQUISITION - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			-	-	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
OTHER PROJECTS									
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES									
PA0142	Aubrey Davis	Intersection and Crossing Improvements	80,000	83,000	86,000	89,000	92,000	95,000	525,000
PA0150	Ellis Pond	Aquatic Habitat Enhancement	20,000	-	-	-	-	-	20,000
OTHER PROJECTS - ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			100,000	83,000	86,000	89,000	92,000	95,000	545,000
2023-2028 TOTAL ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES			5,884,000	5,915,000	6,673,000	5,158,000	10,573,000	7,562,000	41,765,000

20-Year Capital Facilities Plan

The projects included in the 2023-2028 Parks CIP recommendation were prioritized based on the 20-year parks project list, also known as the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP). The CFP is a compilation of all the anticipated parks capital projects over the next two decades and includes a brief project description and cost estimate for each project. Prior master plans, staff recommendations, and information on anticipated replacement cycles were used to develop the 20-year CFP.

Going forward, the 20-year Parks CFP will be updated at least annually to reflect changing park system needs, remove completed projects, and include new projects identified through master planning or other planning projects.

Figure 11.2. 2023-2028 Parks CIP Revenue Estimate

Description	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	6-YEAR TOTAL
2023-2028 TOTAL ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES	5,884,000	5,915,000	6,673,000	5,158,000	10,573,000	7,562,000	41,765,000
REVENUE SUMMARY							
Real Estate Excise Tax	3,492,000	1,136,000	1,253,000	2,024,000	1,149,000	1,149,000	10,203,000
King County Parks Levy	206,000	208,100	210,000	-	-	-	624,100
Parks Levy/Luther Burbank Levy	252,000	-	-	-	-	-	252,000
Impact Fees	-	-	-	80,000	-	-	80,000
Sinking Fund - Turf Replacement	900,000	-	-	-	-	-	900,000
Sinking Fund - MICEC Technology	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	240,000
Grants	100,000	2,348,000	500,000	300,000	500,000	-	3,748,000
1% for Arts Fund	-	45,000	-	75,000	-	-	120,000
Stormwater Fund	20,000	-	-	-	120,000	-	140,000
Transportation Improvement Fund	80,000	83,000	86,000	89,000	92,000	95,000	525,000
WSDOT Maintenance Agreement	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	600,000
2023-2028 TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES	5,190,000	3,960,100	2,189,000	2,708,000	2,001,000	1,384,000	17,432,100
2023-2028 TOTAL PROJECTED NET	(694,000)	(1,954,900)	(4,484,000)	(2,450,000)	(8,572,000)	(6,178,000)	(24,332,900)

Project Prioritization Tool

Between June and November 2021, City staff worked with the Parks and Recreation Commission to develop a project prioritization tool to rate each capital project on the CFP List. The rating tool informed capital project priorities but was not the sole determinant of the projects advanced to the proposed 2023-2028 Parks CIP, see Figure 11.3. The criteria used to evaluate the projects were as follows:

- **Safety & Security:** projects that address safety and security needs in order to provide safe public park spaces accessible to all, with a higher rating applied for projects with increased risk of safety concern or amenities at the end of their useful life.
- **Operating Budget Impact:** assesses the project impact on the operating budget, with a high rating given to projects that decrease the operating budget impact.
- **Extending Useful Life / Enhancing Level of Service:** projects that repair or replace existing amenities and extend the life of the asset or projects that improve service levels receive a higher rating.

- **Expanding Opportunities:** projects that offer new or expanded recreation opportunities and projects that improve ADA/universal access receive a higher rating.
- **Environmental/Sustainability Impact:** projects that enhance the environmental characteristics of the site receive a higher rating.
- **Unique Recreation Feature:** projects with high value and unique amenities, such as docks, piers, all-weather turf, splash pad, bike skills areas, or other specialized uses receive a higher rating.

The criteria were applied to the CFP project list using weighted values. The result was a composite score for each project to inform development of the 2023-2028 Parks CIP. The 20-Year Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) with assigned project ratings follows.



Figure 11.3. CFP Prioritization Rating Matrix

Criteria	Rating Scale	Rating Definitions	Weighting Factor	Max. Score
Safety & Security: projects that address safety and security needs in order to provide safe public park spaces accessible to all, with a higher rating applied for projects with increased risk of safety concern or amenities at the end of their useful life.	(0, 1, 2)	0: No / Low risk (Note: Playground age less than 10 years) 1: Moderate risk of safety or failure to be addressed (Note: Playground age 10 to 13 years) 2: High risk of safety or failure to be addressed (Note: Playground age 14+ years)	6	12
Operating Budget Impact: assesses the project impact on the operating budget.	(0, 1, 2)	0: Increase to operating budget (i.e., >5% impact for park site/amenity) 1: Nominal or no material change to operating budget (i.e., <5% budget impact for park site/amenity). 2: Decrease in operating budget at park site/amenity.	3	6
Extending Useful Life / Enhancing Level of Service: projects that repair or replace existing amenities and extend the life of the asset or projects that improve service levels. If new amenity, rank based on life expectancy of new asset or improvement.	(0, 1, 2)	0: Nominal / No extension of life or enhanced service. If new amenity, life expectancy is five years or less. 1: Moderate extension of useful life (i.e., 5-10 years) or modest improvement to level of service for users. If new amenity, life expectancy is 5 to 10 years. 2: Significant extension of useful life (i.e., 10-20 years) or significant improvement to level of service for users. If new amenity, life expectancy is more than 10 years.	3	6
Expanding Opportunities: projects that offer new or expanded recreation opportunities and projects that improve ADA/universal access.	(0, 1, 2)	0: No new recreational amenity or opportunity. 1: Moderate / Minor improvement to recreational opportunity (i.e., small trail connections, modest ADA enhancements). 2: Significant / New recreational improvements (i.e., newly added features, new amenities, new trail, major ADA upgrades).	2	4
Environmental/Sustainability Impact: projects that maintain or enhance the environmental characteristics of the site.	(0, 1, 2)	0: Significantly impacts or diminishes existing environmental characteristics (i.e., removes substantial number of trees, hardens additional shoreline, requires substantial mitigation, adds significant impervious surface.) 1: Nominally impacts or maintains existing environmental characteristics. 2: Enhances or improves environmental characteristics, includes sustainability projects (i.e., reforestation, substantial invasive species removal, removes hardened shoreline, serves as mitigation bank, improves water quality, energy efficiency projects, etc.)	3	6
Unique Recreation Feature: projects with high value and unique amenities, such as docks, piers, all-weather turf, splash pad, bike skills areas, or other specialized uses.	(0, 2) Binary	0: Does not pertain to a unique amenity 2: Does pertain to a unique amenity	1	2

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Rating Scale Weighting						TOTAL
								Operating Budget Impact	Extends Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	MAX	
PA0137		Shoreline/ Water Access	77th Ave SE Landing	General Park & ADA Improvements	Modify concrete retaining wall for shore launch. Replace the timber steps with ADA path. Requires some hedge removal for grading & path alignment.	380,000	1	1	1	1	1	2	19	
PA0111	Ongoing	Minor Capital	Aubrey Davis Park	Vegetation Management	Ongoing capital funding for vegetation management, including replacement and replanting at Aubrey Davis Park as identified in the Master Plan.	110,000	1	1	1	0	2	0	18	
PA0105		Playground	Aubrey Davis Park	Lid A Playground Replacement	Replace playground equipment and provide ADA access from identified parking. Coordinate with nearby playground replacements to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2011 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards.	350,000	1	1	2	1	1	0	20	
PA0106A	2026-2027	Playground	Aubrey Davis Park	Lid B Playground Replacement and ADA Parking	Replace playground equipment and provide ADA access with rubberized surfacing. Implement new ADA West Mercer Way parking and a new ADA path from the parking to the playground. Coordinate with nearby playground replacements to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2007 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards. Recommend to complete with PA0106B.	900,000	2	1	2	1	1	0	26	
PA0106B	2026-2027	General/Other	Aubrey Davis Park	New Restroom at Lid B and ADA Path	Construct a restroom (with retaining wall) near the playground at Lid B. The sports field and playground make this a high use area with no restrooms available nearby. A restroom here could also ease congestion at the Lid A restroom and may eliminate use of honey buckets. Project includes construction of a new ADA path from West Mercer Way to the restroom and the basketball courts according to the master plan. ADA connection requires completion of PA0106A to make connection to ADA parking on West Mercer Way.	1,200,000	0	0	2	2	1	2	15	
PA0107	2024-2025	Art	Aubrey Davis Park	Outdoor Sculpture Gallery Improvements	Replace outdoor sculpture pieces with new art and enhanced security (e.g. lighting). Scope of work intended to be developed post-opening of Eastlink Light Rail Station to address emerging needs.	260,000	1	1	1	0	1	2	17	
PA0108	2024-2025	Trail	Aubrey Davis Park	Luther Lid Connector Trail	Construct a new staircase from North Mercer Way and 84th Ave SE to Mountains to Sound Trail at the Luther Lid intersection. Existing social trail is steep and difficult to walk. Identified in both Luther Burbank and Aubrey Davis master plans. Approved by WSDOT.	900,000	1	0	1	1	1	0	14	
PA0110	2027-2028	Athletic Field	Aubrey Davis Park	Lid A Backstop Lifecycle Replacement	Replace two backstops with taller chain link structure and extend high safety fences on foul lines. Thirty year old facility; foul balls can land around a busy regional trail.	640,000	2	1	2	0	1	0	24	



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Operating Budget Impact	Extends Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	Rating Scale						MAX					
													0	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10
PA0134		Athletic Field	Aubrey Davis Park	Lid C Field Drainage Renovation	Replace sand base and install new natural/grass turf. Existing sand base is clogged with fine particles and is draining poorly affecting maintenance and playability. Stormwater treatment enhancement included in project.	990,000	1	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0138		General/Other	Aubrey Davis Park	ADA Access Improvements to Picnic Shelter	Construct one ADA parking space at SE 74th St, establish an ADA route to the picnic shelter and complete other improvements according to the master plan. Note: The picnic shelter was recently burned and is a total loss. The shelter will be replaced and necessary ADA upgrades will be incorporated into the replacement project.	190,000	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0139		Shoreline/ Water Access	Aubrey Davis Park	Improved Shoreline Access at Boat Launch	Create a shoreline access point directly south of the boat launch ramp for kayak launching, wading, and staging passengers. Current site has limited low-bank access and is not useful to hand-carry boats. Additional land acquisition or easement may be needed.	330,000	0	1	2	2	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0140A		Special Use	Aubrey Davis Park	Dog Off-leash Area	Design and construct improvements to formalize the use of the stacks area as a dog off-leash site. Likely includes fencing, double entry gate, seating, surfacing, etc. Recommend to combine with ADA path project from the parking lot to the tennis courts and stacks (PA0140B).	580,000	1	0	2	2	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0140B		Trail	Aubrey Davis Park	ADA Access Trail to Tennis Courts	Construct a new ADA path from SE 22nd St. to the tennis courts according to the Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan. Recommend to combine with the off-leash dog area project at the stacks (PA0140A).	242,000	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0141	2024	Sport Courts	Aubrey Davis Park	Tennis Court Resurfacing/Conversion to Shared Use for Pickleball	Resurface existing tennis courts, including addressing crack sealing and explore re-striping for other types of recreational opportunities (i.e. pickleball facilities).	110,000	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0142	2023-2028	Trail	Aubrey Davis Park	Intersection and Crossing Improvements	Remove bollards, improve crosswalks and traffic control at intersections. Improves safety and meets current standards across entirety of Aubrey Davis Park. Approximately 15 intersections need to be addressed; improvements at each intersection vary. Recommend to address at least one intersection every year or every other year.	600,000	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0143	2023	Trail	Aubrey Davis Park	Mountains to Sound Trail Pavement Renovation	Repave sections of the trail that are deteriorated or damaged. The trail currently has cracks and root heaved areas that are uneven and present safety issues. Cost-sharing with WSDOT per agreements shall be considered.	95,000	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36
PA0144	2025	Trail	Aubrey Davis Park	Mountains to Sound Trail Connection at Shorewood Drive	Construct a new spur trail to allow cyclists to enter/leave North Mercer Way to avoid the hill to Shorewood. There is an existing route that is used on a narrow sidewalk. It would separate cyclists from pedestrians wanting to access the trail.	75,000	2	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	36



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Rating Scale			Unique Feature	TOTAL
								0, 1, 2, 6	0, 1, 2, 3	0, 1, 2, 3		
PA0145	2027-2028	Trail	Aubrey Davis Park	Mountains To Sound Trail Lighting from Island Crest Way to Shorewood	Illuminate the trail section along the north side of a tall retaining wall from Shorewood to Town Center. This trail is dark in the winter because of the heavy shade from the wall and adjacent trees. This is an important pedestrian route from Shorewood to Town Center.	300,000	2	0	1	1	0	20
PA0146		Trail	Aubrey Davis Park	Luther Lid Trail Connection to Upper Luther	Construct a new staircase from the south side of the Luther Lid to SE 28th ("Snake Hill") to provide a direct connection to Upper Luther. This fulfills the intention of the Luther Lid to reconnect the two parts of Luther Burbank Park that were separated by the highway.	1,100,000	0	0	1	2	0	10
PA0112	Pending Joint Master Plan 2025-2028	Shoreline/ Water Access	Clarke Beach	Shoreline Repair/Restoration	Replace hardened shoreline with natural shoreline and pocket beaches. Existing bulkheads and docks are at the end of their lifecycle, consider replace or removal. This is critical salmon habitat because of its proximity to the Cedar River. Work may be preceded by a Master Plan. This is a placeholder cost estimate, scope of work needs to be fully developed.	2,500,000	2	1	2	2	2	33
PA0147	Pending Joint Master Plan 2025-2028	General/Other	Clarke Beach	General Park & ADA Improvements	Replace/upgrade restroom building. Install/replace amenities to include a new bike rack, picnic tables, and benches. Replace/upgrade drinking fountains. New trail signage. Improve ADA path from parking lot to park and shoreline. Upgrade park lighting with LED fixtures. Remove invasive plants and replace with native species. Work may be preceded by a Master Plan. This is a placeholder cost estimate, scope of work needs to be fully developed.	900,000	2	2	2	2	0	34
PA0148	2024-2025	Playground	Deane's Children's Park	Playground Replacement (Castle/Swings/Climbing Rock)	Replace playground equipment and provide ADA access from identified parking. Coordinate with nearby playground replacements to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2005 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards.	250,000	2	1	2	1	0	26
PA0149		Playground	Deane's Children's Park	Playground Replacement (Main Play Area/Swings)	Replace playground equipment and provide ADA access from identified parking. Coordinate with nearby playground replacements to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2012 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards.	800,000	0	1	2	1	0	14
PA0150	2023	Environment & Sustainability	Ellis Pond	Aquatic Habitat Enhancement	Evaluate the pond for habitat needs. This landlocked pond is vulnerable to eutrophication and sedimentation. Waterfowl add to the nutrient load. The open water habitat will shrink unless managed. (This work to be funded through the stormwater).	18,000	0	0	2	0	2	14



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Operating Budget Impact	Extends Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	Rating Scale Weighting						MAX
													0	1	2	3	4	5	
PA0151	2026-2027	Playground	First Hill Park	Playground Replacement and Sport Court Resurfacing	Resurface existing basketball court and replace aging playground equipment. Coordinate with nearby playground equipment to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2007 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards. This project may be coordinated with a broader evaluation of this park, perhaps a neighborhood engagement strategy.	350,000	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	1	36	
PA0152		Shoreline/ Water Access	Franklin Landing	ADA Parking	ADA path to beach. Striping for one ADA parking stall and add signage	73,000	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	1	36	
PA0153		Shoreline/ Water Access	Garfield Landing	General Park & ADA Improvements	Replace the existing bench and add up to two new benches. Install bike rack. Restore shoreline to maintain public access, cut back vegetation. Develop planting plan to replace White poplars. Address ADA access opportunities.	105,000	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	1	36	
PA0114	Pending Joint Master Plan 2025-2028	Shoreline/ Water Access	Groveland Beach	Bulkhead Replacement and Beach Upgrade	Replace existing concrete bulkhead with a larger bulkhead at a higher elevation and create a zero-entry beach. The existing bulkhead is undermined and is difficult to secure sufficiently. Groveland Beach likely needs a comprehensive planning process to address multiple infrastructure needs.	3,500,000	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	36	
PA0154	Pending Joint Master Plan 2025-2028	General/Other	Groveland Beach	General Park & ADA Improvements	Replace picnic tables and benches. Upgrade trail to the north upper picnic area to address erosion. Repair asphalt beach path and replace the chain gate to improve access. Replace or upgrade the restroom building. Consider opportunities to improve ADA access to upper park, full ADA access to the beach is challenging due to steep slopes. Update park signage. Groveland Beach likely needs a comprehensive planning process to address multiple infrastructure needs.	1,325,000	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	4	5	6	36	
PA0155		Playground	Groveland Beach	Playground Replacement	Resurface existing basketball court and replace aging playground equipment. Coordinate with nearby playground equipment to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2012 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards. Groveland Beach likely needs a comprehensive planning process to address multiple infrastructure needs.	400,000	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	1	36	
PA0156	Pending Joint Master Plan 2025-2028	Shoreline/ Water Access	Groveland Beach	Dock Replacement	Design and construct the replacement for the existing pier at Groveland. Further repairs to the existing structure are not feasible. The timeline for the replacement is 2028. This pier could be replaced in-kind, or an alternative substitute could be considered, such as a large swim float. Groveland Beach likely needs a comprehensive planning process to address multiple infrastructure needs.	1,700,000	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	36	



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Operating Budget Impact	Expands Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	Rating Scale Weighting						MAX
													0	1	2	3	4	5	
PA0157	2023-2024	Planning Document	Groveland Beach Park and Clarke Beach Park	Joint Master Plan for Groveland Beach Park and Clarke Beach Park	Conduct a joint master planning process for Groveland Beach Park and Clarke Beach Park to establish a long-term vision and a plan to address aging infrastructure at both parks. Planning for beach sites and shoreline areas requires technical expertise and there will be efficiencies in conducting both plans jointly.	300,000	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	1	1	29
PA0115	2024-2025	Trail	Hollerbach Open Space	SE 45th Trail System (Phase 1)	Construct a new trail from 90th Ave SE eastward to Cedars East Rd. through Hollerbach Park. There is no public access to Hollerbach Park. There is no similar east-west pedestrian connection in this part of Mercer Island. The project will require a boardwalk, a bridge, and lots of timber steps. New trail will assist with restoration and stewardship work.	460,000	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	10
PA0158		Trail	Hollerbach Open Space	92nd Ave SE trail (Phase 2)	Design and construct a new trail connection from SE 46th Street north to connect with the SE 45th trail (PA0115).	150,000	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	10
PA0159		Playground	Homestead Park	Playground Replacement	Resurface existing basketball court and replace aging playground equipment. Coordinate with nearby playground replacements to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2012 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards.	375,000	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	14
PA0116	2025-2026	Athletic Field	Island Crest Park	South Field Lights and Backstop Replacement and Upgrade	Replace existing metal halide lights on wood poles with LED lights on metal poles. Upgrades meet current standards and improve user safety.	1,100,000	2	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	24
PA0117A	2022-2023	Athletic Field	Island Crest Park	North Infield Turf and Backstop Replacement	Replace synthetic turf in the north infield to match the cork and shock pad system used in the rest of the field. The turf was installed in 2012 and has an estimated 10-year life span. Replace backstop with taller chain link structure. Thirty-five year old facility; foul balls land around a busy parking lot and gathering area. A sinking fund covers part of the turf replacement cost. Recommend to combine with South Field Backstop Replacement Project (PA0117B).	1,000,000	2	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	24
PA0117B	2022-2023	Athletic Field	Island Crest Park	South Field Backstop Replacement	Replace backstop with taller backstops. Upgrades meet current standards and improve user safety. Recommend to combine with North Field project work (PA0117A).	300,000	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	20
PA0160		Athletic Field	Island Crest Park	South Field Synthetic Turf	Install new synthetic turf on the south field similar to that at the north field. This provides greater all-season playability, increases revenue and reduces maintenance.	1,650,000	0	2	2	2	0	2	0	2	3	1	1	1	18
PA0161		Restroom	Island Crest Park	Restroom Upgrades	Upgrade restroom facility to include new toilets, sinks and other fixtures. Address ADA access to facility.	300,000	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	22
PA0123	Ongoing	Minor Capital	Luther Burbank Park	Recurring Minor Capital	Ongoing capital funding for major maintenance and repairs at Luther Burbank Park. This funding is tied to the 2012 Parks Levy and will sunset in 2023.	100,000	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	15



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 GIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Operating Budget Impact	Extends Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	Rating Scale Weighting					
													0, 1, 2 6	0, 1, 2 3	0, 1, 2 3	0, 1, 2 2	0, 1, 2 3	0, 1, 2 3
PA0119	2024-2025	Sport Courts	Luther Burbank Park	Tennis Court Upgrade or Conversion to Pickleball	Install new asphalt surface on court area and configure new courts to include pickleball and other games, or convert two tennis courts to dedicated pickleball. Fifty year old facility. Existing surface is failing and does not drain.	500,000	2	2	2	1	1	0	29					
PA0120	2023	General/Other	Luther Burbank Park	Parking Lot Lighting	Provide energy efficiency lighting for a portion of the main parking lot, including ADA stalls, that connects to the main walkway. Some conduit already in place. Project enhances security at park facility.	125,000	2	1	1	1	1	0	23					
PA0121	2024-2026	Shoreline/ Water Access	Luther Burbank Park	Swim Beach Renovation	Renovate swim beach, restrooms and provide ADA access from the south parking lot. Fifty year old facilities need renovation. Shoreline erosion needs to be addressed.	1,025,000	2	1	2	1	1	2	28					
PA0122	2023-2024	Shoreline/ Water Access	Luther Burbank Park	Dock and Adjacent Waterfront Improvements	Renovate north pier. Replace south piers with floating dock and breakwater. Improve shoreline access and renovate adjacent waterfront plaza. Fifty year old facility no longer meets current recreational needs.	3,500,000	2	1	2	1	2	2	31					
PA0124B	2027-2028	Recreation Facility	Luther Burbank Park	Boiler Building Full Renovation (Phase 2)	Construct a boating facility inside the boiler building including boat storage, office, classroom and an ADA accessible route from the main parking lot, according to a 2017 study. Will support expanded boating programs at the waterfront.	3,200,000	0	0	2	2	1	2	15					
PA0162	Art		Luther Burbank Park	The Source Fountain Renovation	Implement restoration on The Source landform sculpture. Design, permit and construct a lake water plumbing system that would supply it with sufficient water to run irrigation and the center fountain. Current fountain system gets clogged with weeds and has other technical issues. May be feasible to tie into the lake water rights development project PA 0104. Should be designed/constructed in conjunction with PA 0121 Swim Beach Renovation. May be eligible for arts grant funding.	250,000	0	0	2	0	1	2	11					
PA0163		General/Other	Luther Burbank Park	Maintenance Facility Improvements	Design and construct improvements to the yard area around the existing Caretakers House to improve storage and vehicle access. The existing storage area encroaches into the wetland buffer and should be set back. Storage needs are ongoing. Placeholder cost estimate only, needs to be further evaluated.	360,000	1	1	2	0	2	0	21					
PA0164		General/Other	Luther Burbank Park	Picnic Shelter at the Meadow	Design and construct a new picnic shelter along the north side of the meadow per the Luther Burbank Park Master Plan.	275,000	0	0	2	2	1	2	15					
PA0165		Special Use	Luther Burbank Park	Fishing Pier Renovation	Renovate fishing pier, replace rotting timbers and reinforce bracing. Fifty year old facility is at the end of its lifecycle.	275,000	2	1	2	0	2	2	29					
PA0166	2025	Special Use	Luther Burbank Park	Amphitheater Renovation	Design and construct renovations to maintain outdoor theater needs. Fifty year-old facility has rot, electrical problems that need to be addressed. Project cost estimate is a placeholder pending design discussions. (\$75k design)	800,000	2	1	2	0	1	2	26					

6 of 10



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Rating Scale Weighting						TOTAL
								Operating Budget Impact	Expands Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	MAX	
PA0167	2022	Special Use	Luther Burbank Park	Bike Skills Area Improvements	Improve bike skills area at Upper Luther Burbank Park. Improvements limited to current footprint, final scope of work TBD.	215,000	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	25
PA0168		Special Use	Luther Burbank Park	West Hill ("Kite Hill") Gardens	Design and construct pathways and landscaping to provide a garden facility according to the master plan. Cost reflects disposal and replacement of existing fill dirt.	825,000	0	0	2	2	1	1	2	15
PA0169		Special Use	Luther Burbank Park	P-Patch Renovation	Regrade P-patch and reset plots with permanent no-till plots and annual till plots in separate sections. Install deer fencing. Improve entrance trail.	215,000	0	1	2	0	1	1	2	14
PA0170		Special Use	Luther Burbank Park	Off leash Area Improvements	Complete master plan improvements including adding small shelter and seating.	50,000	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	13
PA0171		Trail	Luther Burbank Park	South Park Entrance Improvements	Design and construct crosswalks, wayfinding, and pavement treatments at SE 26th St and 84th Ave SE. Provides signature park identifiers and directions at a point where park users encounter the park.	190,000	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	21
PA0172		Trail	Luther Burbank Park	Main Entry Plaza at 84th and 24th	Design and construct intersection improvements and park entrance path at SE 24th and 84th Ave SE. Use pavement treatment, raised crosswalk, and overlook feature to draw in active recreation traffic. Current entry path is steep and pedestrians often walk down the driveway instead.	400,000	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	18
PA0173		Trail	Luther Burbank Park	Central Campus Trail Connections	Improve trail connections to the Community Center, P-Patch, Hawthorn Trail, and picnic areas. Address safety improvements and ADA access to park amenities.	180,000	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	14
PA0174		Art	Luther Burbank Park/Aubrey Davis Park	Downtown Entry Improvements	Construct placemaking improvements in the green space at Island Crest Way and SE 28th according to the Luther Burbank and Aubrey Davis Park Master Plans. Activates valuable Town Center open space. Cost estimate is a placeholder, scope of work TBD.	250,000	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	12
PA0175	2027-2028	Trail	Mercerdale Hillside	Trail Renovation	Remove timber steps and replace them or reroute trails to improve walkability and reduce ongoing maintenance of trails. The trails in Mercerdale Hillside were constructed with many flights of steps, some of which do not function well. The wood stair structures, including the long hillside stairway, are decaying and need to be rebuilt. Longer-lasting building materials should be considered for these new structures. Conduct a master planning process ahead of the sewer line replacement project. The sewer replacement project was identified in the 2003 and 2018 General Sewer Plan. The sewer line runs approximately north to south through the middle of the park and is recommended for replacement. The sewer line replacement project will impact much of the park and this is a good time to revisit the comprehensive plan for this park facility.	600,000	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	27
PA0126	2022-2023	Planning Document	Mercerdale Park	Mercerdale Park Master Plan		200,000	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	26



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Operating Budget Impact	Expands Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	Rating Scale Weighting						MAX
													0	1	2	3	4	5	
PA0128		Trail	Pioneer Park	Bike Trail Path Lighting	Provide bollard lighting for wayfinding along the asphalt path on the east side of Island Crest Way from SE 63rd to SE 68th St. This route is functionally a sidewalk along a major arterial. There is no alternate route. The lack of lighting and overhanging tree canopy make this section too dark to walk especially in winter. This project is within the zone of the Island Crest Way Safety Corridor Analysis and should be included in the analysis.	100,000	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	3	1	36
PA0129	Ongoing	Minor Capital	Pioneer Park and Engstrom	Open Space Forest Management	Ongoing capital funding for major maintenance and restoration at Pioneer Park and Engstrom.	180,000	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	18					
PA0183		Shoreline/ Water Access	Proctor Landing	General Park & ADA Improvements	Install benches, bike rack, and signage. Renovate dock, add ADA parking spot and path to benches.	420,000	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	20					
PA0130A	2027-2028	Playground	Roanoke Park	Playground Replacement	Replace playground equipment and provide ADA access from identified parking. Install new fence along North Mercer Way. Coordinate with nearby playground replacements to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2004 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards. Recommend to combine with general park improvement project (PA0130B).	400,000	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	26					
PA0130B	2027-2028	General/Other	Roanoke Park	General Park & ADA Improvements	Install a park sign and a new bike rack. Install new benches near the tennis court and stairs leading to the court. Address landscaping on the east side of the tennis court, consider removal or thinning. Resurface tennis court and consider striping for pickleball. Improve paths for ADA access. Recommend to combine with playground replacement project (PA0130A).	100,000	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	20					
PA0184		Trail	SE 47th Open Space	EMW Trail Connection	Acquire easements, design and construct a new trail from East Mercer Way to 90th Ave SE through the SE 47th St Open Space. Project is included in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan. Creates a pedestrian connection from East Mercer Way to the top of the island. One easement has already been obtained.	450,000	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	16					
PA0185		Shoreline/ Water Access	SE 56th St Landing	General Park & ADA Improvements	Replace existing bench, install entryway sign, trail signage, landscape plan & plantings. New ADA path.	120,000	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	11					
PA0186		Trail	SE 56th St Landing	SE 56th & WMW Trail Improvement	Construct a new trail from West Mercer Way through unopened right-of-way to SE 56th Landing. Provides a visible pedestrian connection to the lake from West Mercer Way for the broader neighborhood.	215,000	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	16					
PA0187	2026-2027	Playground	Secret Park	Playground Replacement	Replace playground equipment and provide ADA access from nearest public ROW. Coordinate with nearby playground replacements to diversify play opportunities. Playground equipment was installed in 2007 and normal lifespan is 15-20 years. A renovation project is required to meet ADA standards.	450,000	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	26					



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Mercer Island PROS Plan - Capital Facilities Plan (20-Year Project List - by Location)

ID#	Proposed 2023-2028 CIP	Project Type	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description	Revised Cost Estimate (2021)	Safety / Liability	Operating Budget Impact	Expands Useful Life	Expands Opportunities	Environment/ Sustainability Impact	Unique Feature	Rating Scale Weighting				
													0, 1, 2	0, 1, 2	0, 1, 2	0, 1, 2	0, 1, 2
PA0188		Planning Document	Slater Park	Landscape and Stormwater Plan	Develop a landscape plan for Slater Park. The current landscape was converted from an estate. The site needs to be rehabilitated. Addressing stormwater runoff due to the adjacency of the lake is a priority.	45,000	0	2	2	0	2	0	1	3	2	1	36
PA0131	2023	Athletic Field	South Mercer Playfields	Synthetic Turf Replacement & Ballfield Backstop Upgrade	Replace synthetic turf in three softball infields. The turf was installed in 2010 and has an estimated 10-year life span. A sinking fund covers part of the turf replacement cost. This project also includes replacement of existing backstops with new structures that are higher. Foul balls fall into spectator area and parking lot.	1,600,000	2	1	2	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	24
PA0189	2025	General/Other	South Point Landing	General Park Improvements	Install benches, improve trail to include stairs, install park sign, and supplement plantings with native plants.	140,000	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	15
PA0100	Ongoing	Minor Capital	System-Wide	Open Space Management	Ongoing capital funding for major maintenance and restoration at open space facilities.	300,000	1	1	1	0	2	0	2	3	2	1	18
PA0101	Ongoing	Minor Capital	System-Wide	Recurring Minor Capital	Ongoing capital funding for major maintenance and repairs at park facilities.	140,000	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	21
PA0103	Ongoing	Minor Capital	System-Wide	Trail Renovation & Property Management	Ongoing capital funding for trail restoration and major repairs.	50,000	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	21
PA0104	2024-2025	General/Other	System-Wide	Lake Water Irrigation Development	Develop lake water irrigation at Groveland Beach, Clarke Beach, and Luther Burbank Park. Using lake water will expand irrigation to high use beach areas and other park landscapes.	200,000	0	2	2	0	1	2	1	3	2	1	17
PA0192		Special Use	TBD	Spray Park	Installation of a new spray park. This project includes multiple phases including the initial planning work required to identify a suitable location/site for a spray park, followed by design, and construction. A community engagement process will accompany many of the phases.	TBD	0	0	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	1	15
PA0132	2025-2026	Trail	Upper Luther Burbank Park	Ravine Trail Phase 2	Continue the ravine trail from the stream in Luther Burbank Park to Shorewood. This new trail will provide a pedestrian walking route from Shorewood to Town Center.	325,000	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	3	2	1	13
PA0190	2026-2027	Trail	Wildwood Park	ADA Perimeter Path & General Park Improvements	Install park sign on Island Crest Way. Add ADA perimeter path along 86th Ave SE and around grass area to access park amenities. Potential to extend ADA access to Island Crest Way through a trail connection.	200,000	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	3	2	1	11



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Key CIP Project Recommendations & Implementation

The following section provides an overview of the capital project recommendations (see figure 11.1 above) and additional implementation strategies including policies and financial recommendations.

Preserving the Natural Character of Open Spaces

As detailed in Chapter 9, the Mercer Island parks system includes nearly 300 acres of open space, a critical component of the City's green infrastructure. Stewardship and preservation of the City's open space were identified as a high priority during the community engagement process.

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP includes projects to continue restoration work in open space throughout the parks system, including Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space. The current level of investment in open space restoration work is considered a baseline investment (about \$500,000 annually) to ensure that restoration progress to date is not lost and that ecosystems remain healthy, diverse, and functional. Additional capital project recommendations include:

- Develop strategies which balance access and utilization of open space with preservation of the natural environment.
- Continue to utilize data to inform restoration planning work and to change and adapt practices as needed.
- Seek opportunities through grants, volunteers, community collaborations, or other options to expand restoration work beyond the baseline.
- Develop a property acquisition reserve to ensure that funding is available for open space acquisition in the future. In addition, developing a comprehensive property acquisition strategy, detailed later in this chapter, will ensure resources are available to preserve and protect additional open space in the future.

ADA/Universal Access at Parks Facilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 provides comprehensive civil rights protections to persons with disabilities in the areas of employment, state and local government services, and access to public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. The City of Mercer Island must comply with ADA Title II and Title III requirements specific to local governments.

Under federal regulations, when parks and recreation facilities are built or altered, they must comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design (ADA Standards), which require the inclusion of features such as accessible parking spaces, routes, toilet facilities, public telephones, and spectator seating areas. For parks and facilities built or altered before the ADA Standards took effect, local governments must develop ways to make the programs and activities in those parks and facilities accessible to people with disabilities.

An assessment conducted in the fall of 2019 revealed that each park, trail, and open space area in the City of Mercer Island had some aspect of non-compliance with the ADA guidelines. This finding is not a surprise as many of the facilities and amenities were constructed before the passage of the ADA in 1990 and the development of the ADA Standards in 2010.

To address issues of non-compliance, most of the 2023-2028 Parks CIP projects include consideration of needed improvements to address ADA accessibility. The proposed improvements include removing barriers such as curbs around playgrounds, improved access to amenities such as trails and parking, and constructing new access where appropriate.

Some of the proposed projects do not include ADA access improvements, and one of those examples is Groveland Beach Park, specifically beach and dock access. A local government is not required to take any actions that will result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the facility, will create a hazardous condition resulting in a direct threat to the participant or others, or will create an undue financial and administrative burden. If a particular course of action is deemed unduly burdensome, other options should be explored to provide reasonable access to similar benefits. The challenging grades at Groveland Beach Park, as an example, present a considerable design and construction barrier to achieving ADA access.

Additional capital project considerations:

- At the time of the PROS Plan publication, the City was developing an ADA Transition Plan. The City is required to complete a Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan that will address the requirements of ADA Title II. This plan will be used to identify obstacles limiting accessibility, describe and identify methods to make these obstacles accessible, and plan a schedule to bring City facilities and operations into compliance. The capital project recommendations identified in the ADA Transition plan should be added to the 20-Year CFP List once adopted and considered for inclusion in future updates to the Parks CIP.



Beaches and Shorelines

The City has made significant investments in waterfront and water-oriented infrastructure over the past fifty years. Much of this infrastructure, including docks, piers, and shorelines, is aging and needs to be replaced. The community indicated a high degree of support for waterfront parks, amenities, and programs through the recent public engagement process and these types of projects are a key feature of the proposed 2023-2028 Parks CIP. Specific project recommendations include:

- Completing the design of the Luther Burbank Dock project and proceeding to construction. The Luther Burbank Docks are at the end of their useful life, and repairs are no longer feasible. A comprehensive re-design is underway in anticipation of total replacement occurring by 2024. Given the regional nature of this facility, the project has already received grant funds to support the design. The pursuit of grant funds for construction and allocating funds through the City's Capital Improvement Fund is one of the highest priorities in the CIP. The total project cost is estimated at \$4 million.
- The City should immediately initiate a collaborative planning process for Groveland Beach Park and Clarke Beach Park to establish a long-term vision and plan to address aging shoreline and dock infrastructure at both facilities. Potential outcomes may include replacing the docks at both parks, enhancing swimming areas, and rehabilitating the shoreline to improve habitat. The infrastructure at both facilities is at the end of its useful life and planning for the replacement is an urgent priority. The 2023-2028 Parks CIP includes \$300,000 for the master planning process in 2023 (for both facilities) and a placeholder of \$7 million for future improvements at both facilities, depending on the outcome of the master planning process.
- The Mercer Island parks system includes numerous street-end parks that provide waterfront access or views. Although modest in size, most of these street-end parks could be improved to enhance waterfront access for picnics, human-powered watercraft access, and waterfront viewing. At the south tip of the Island, South Point Landing is proposed as the first street-end improvement project in 2024 at \$158,000. Future CIP updates should include additional investments in street-end projects. Given that parking at most of these facilities is extremely limited, or non-existent, additional emphasis should be placed on improved user access via alternative transportation modes other than personal automobile.

Playgrounds

Of the 18 playgrounds in the parks system, ten are nearing the end of their useful life and will need to be replaced over the next ten years. The 2023-2028 Parks CIP includes proposed playground replacement projects at Aubrey Davis Park (Lid B), First Hill Park, Roanoke Park, Secret Park, and a portion of Deane's Children's Park. Playground equipment has an anticipated life of about twenty years; therefore, planning for ongoing replacements should be considered in future updates to the Parks CIP.

Diversifying the types of play equipment and upgrading play areas to meet ADA access requirements should be considered for each project. Other capital project recommendations include:

- Initiating a community engagement process a year or more ahead of each playground replacement project to identify preferred replacement equipment and play styles.
- Collaborating with neighborhood groups, community partners, and others to fundraise for the playground replacement projects.
- Although grants for playground replacement projects are highly competitive, some funding may be available for ADA-access improvement projects and those opportunities should be explored.
- Consider combining playground replacement projects with other capital projects to realize design, bidding, and construction efficiencies.
- Efforts should be made over the next two decades or more to phase the playground replacement projects so that they are not all happening at once.

Trail Connections & Linkages

Mercer Island community members are actively using the existing trail system, and walking is the top outdoor recreational activity on Mercer Island, aligning with regional and national trends. During the community engagement process, completing trail system connections and building new walking and biking paths was identified as one of the highest capital project priorities.

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP includes several trail projects to address missing links such as the Luther Lid Connector Trail, the Mountains to Sound Trail Connection at Shorewood, and the second phase of the Upper Luther Ravine Trail.

One of the new trail projects proposed in the 2023-2028 Parks CIP is the construction of the trail system in Hollerbach Open Space, which currently has no public access. Once completed, this trail project will provide an essential east-west pedestrian connection

and better access for maintenance and restoration work. In addition, the proposed project at Wildwood Park will formalize the walking path around the perimeter of the park and include ADA access improvements.

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP also identifies capital projects to address ongoing trail maintenance throughout the parks system such as resources to repair the pavement on the Mountains to Sound Trail and new lighting on a section of the Mountains to Sound Trail near Shorewood. Restoration of the Mercedale Hillside trails and stairways is also included in the project proposal.

Additional capital project considerations:

- Development of a property acquisition reserve will ensure funds are available for future trail easements or outright property acquisition. In addition, the development of a comprehensive property acquisition strategy, detailed later in this chapter, will also support the continued development of the trails system on Mercer Island.
- There are some limited and very competitive grant resources available for trails projects. The City should consider these opportunities when available.
- The City maintains Aubrey Davis Park and the Mountains to Sound Trail through Mercer Island under an operating agreement with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). This maintenance agreement should be renegotiated and include State support for capital re-investment and significant maintenance projects in Aubrey Davis Park.

Athletic Fields

One of the other important areas of capital investment in the 2023-2028 Parks CIP is in the category of athletic fields. The projects fall into two primary categories – safety enhancements and synthetic turf replacements. Nearly all the athletic fields in the Mercer Island parks system are due for backstop replacements and extension of the foul ball fence lines. These are critical safety projects to address fly balls in spectator areas. Backstop replacements are proposed at Aubrey Davis Park (Feroglia Fields), Island Crest Park, and the South Mercer Playfields.

Synthetic turf has an expected useful life of 8 to 12 years and depends on many factors, including maintenance and hours of play. In the Mercer Island parks system, synthetic turf typically lasts about ten years. Several fields are due for replacement, including infield turf replacement on the north field at Island Crest Park and infield turf replacement at the South

Mercer Playfields. For efficiency, a number of these projects are recommended to be combined for design in 2022 and construction in 2023.

And finally, a new synthetic turf and light upgrade project is proposed on the south field at Island Crest Park. This project will replace the natural grass outfield and the dirt infield with synthetic turf to match the north field. The project includes replacing the aging light poles and light heads using the latest energy-efficient technology that also reduces light spillover and glare. This project will be eligible for grant funding, but the grants are highly competitive.

Restrooms

Supporting park use through the provision of restrooms is a critical element in any park system and restroom facilities were identified as a top priority in the community engagement process. The 2023-2028 Parks CIP includes a new restroom at Aubrey Davis Park (Lid B). Several other projects anticipate restroom replacements or upgrades, including Clarke Beach Park, Groveland Beach Park, and Luther Burbank Park. For Clarke Beach and Groveland, a proposed joint master plan for those parks should guide future decisions about the need and location of restroom facilities.

Recreation Facilities

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP proposes completing the Annex Facilities Plan in 2023 to address the aging Annex Building directly behind the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC). This 1960's building is at the end of its useful life and a decision on a future renovation or replacement is needed. The building is currently leased, and the tenants provide preschool programs.

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP includes ongoing funding for MICEC building repairs and equipment and technology replacement. As one of the newer facilities in the parks system, capital investments at the MICEC are primarily focused on preserving the asset. Other projects at MICEC include a new generator, parking lot asphalt repairs, and renovation of the planter beds. The generator project is a strong contender for grant funding.

One of the more aspirational projects in the 2023-2028 Parks CIP is the renovation of the Boiler Building at Luther Burbank Park, proposed to begin design in 2026, with renovations estimated at \$4 million. This project, first identified in the Luther Burbank Master Plan, will repurpose the boat house facility to support water-oriented recreation. Waterfront access and water-oriented recreation activities were identified as a high priority in the community process, so this



facility renovation project was included in the CIP to support the expansion of those services. This project may be eligible for grant funding in categories related to historic preservation and ADA accessibility and those opportunities should be explored.

Property Acquisition Reserve

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP proposes the establishment of a property acquisition reserve to provide resources for future acquisitions. The proposal includes beginning this reserve in 2025 and aiming for an annual contribution of \$500,000. Though the policy guidance for this reserve will need to be developed, the intent is to ensure resources are available for acquisition of property to support all types of park system needs in the future – trails, open space, active uses, and more.

Setting aside funding for this reserve is challenging, especially considering the magnitude of the other capital project priorities. Still, even a modest amount of dedicated funding each year will ensure the reserve grows over time and can be used to support expansion of the parks system to meet future needs.

Grant funding is available for certain types of property acquisition and establishing a reserve account ensures resources are available to meet grant match requirements.

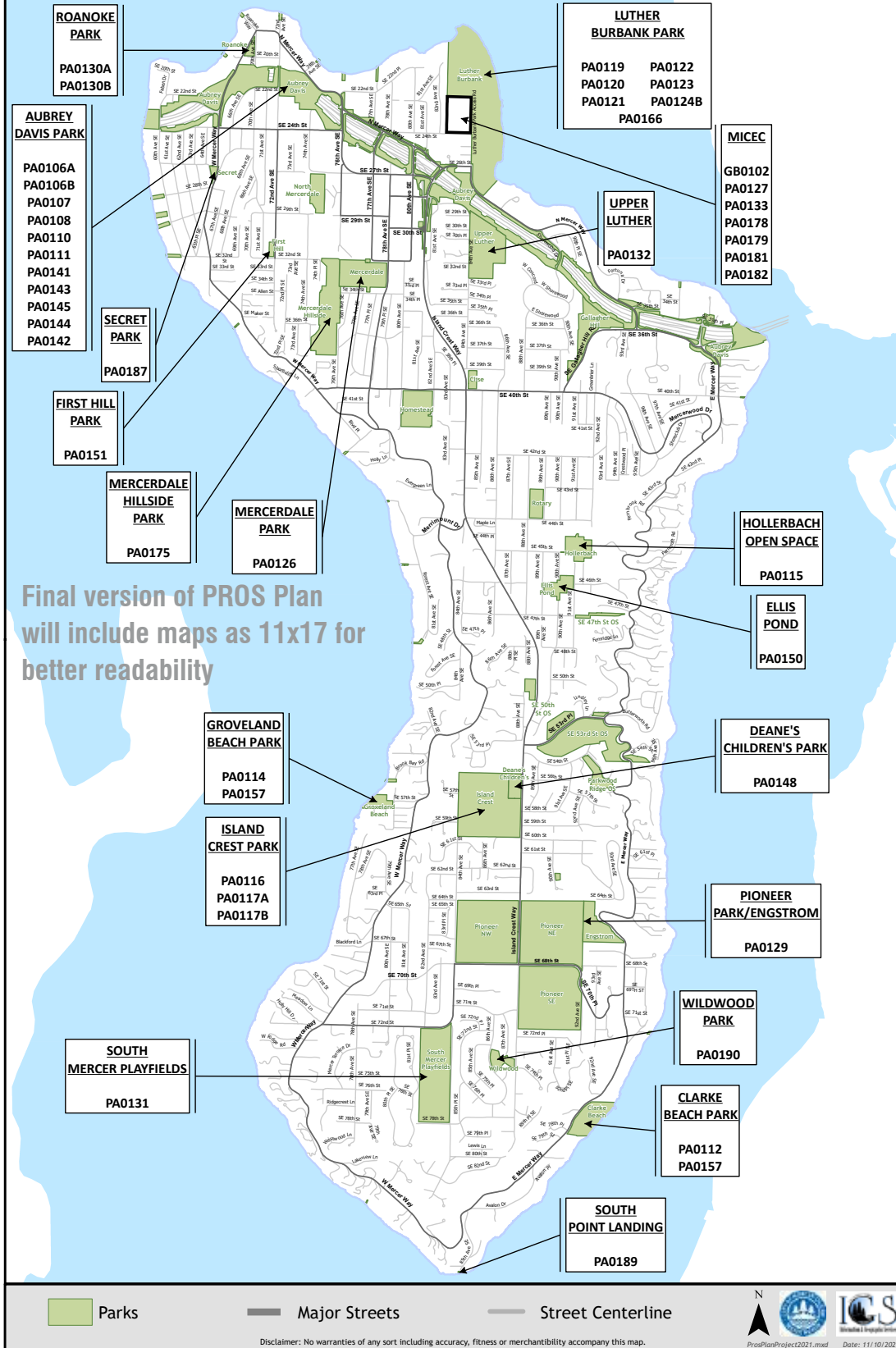
Other CIP Projects

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP also includes the following projects:

- Sports court repairs and resurfacing at Aubrey Davis Park, Luther Burbank Park, and First Hill Park with the intent to expand offerings to include pickleball
- Completion of a Master Plan at Mercerdale Park ahead of the sewer replacement project
- Implementation of lake water irrigation program at Clarke Beach Park, Groveland Beach Park, and Luther Burbank Park
- Improvements to the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery
- Design of the proposed renovation for the amphitheater at Luther Burbank Park
- Development of an aquatic habitat assessment at Ellis Pond (Stormwater project)
- Intersection and crossing improvements at Aubrey Davis Park (Transportation improvement project)

As stated at the outset of this section, the 2023-2028 Parks CIP is the largest in City history and sets forth an aggressive plan to address the critical infrastructure needs within the Mercer Island parks system. Adopting the CIP provides the roadmap, but much work remains to ensure resources are available to implement the projects. The following section provides an overview of potential CIP funding opportunities.

PROS Plan Project Locations (2023-2028)



Final version of PROS Plan will include maps as 11x17 for better readability

Map 12: Capital Improvement Project Locations



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

PARKS CIP IMPLEMENTATION

The 2023-2028 Parks CIP project recommendations will trigger funding needs beyond current allocations and may also require additional staffing and resources for operations and maintenance responsibilities. Given that the operating and capital budgets of the Parks and Recreation Department are finite, additional resources will need to be considered. While grants and other efficiencies may help, these alone will not be enough to achieve the project goals identified in this plan.

The following recommendations and strategies are presented to offer near-term direction to realize these projects and as a means to continue a dialogue between City leadership, community members, and partners. A comprehensive review of potential funding and implementation tools is included in Appendix K, which addresses local financing, federal and state grant and conservation programs, acquisition methods, and others.

Potential Funding and Implementation Tools

Levy Lid Lift Renewal

An existing levy lid lift dedicated to parks maintenance and operations expires at the end of 2023. The levy provides nearly \$1 million in annual funding for the Mercer Island parks system, of which about \$250k goes towards capital projects. With the scale of renovation and restoration projects noted throughout this Plan, the City will, at a minimum, need to pursue renewal of the parks levy at its current rate to maintain current service levels.

The City should also evaluate the potential to expand the levy or contemplate a companion ballot measure to provide funding for some of the 2023-2028 Parks CIP projects. Given the expiration of the levy renewal, studying these options should be prioritized and included in the City's 2022 work plan.

Park Impact Fees

Park Impact Fees are imposed on new development to meet the increased demand for parks resulting from new growth. Park impact fees can only be used for park property acquisition and projects that increase capacity of the parks system. Park impact fees cannot be used for the operations and maintenance of parks and facilities.

The City of Mercer Island currently assesses park impact fees. Still, the City should pursue updating the methodology and rate structure, as appropriate, to be best positioned to obtain future acquisition and

development financing from the planned growth of the community. This work item is already identified in the City's 2022 work plan and will be informed by adopting the 2023-2028 Parks CIP and the 20-Year CFP.

Several projects identified in the 2023-2028 Parks CIP are eligible for impact fees, including the new restroom at Aubrey Davis Park (Lid B), the new trails at Hollerbach Open Space, the new walking path at Wildwood Park, the installation of synthetic turf on the south field at Island Crest Park, and all of the trail connections to name just a few.

Real Estate Excise Tax

The City currently imposes both quarter percent excise taxes on real estate, known as REET 1 and REET 2. The REET must be spent on capital projects listed in the City's capital facilities plan element of the comprehensive plan. Eligible project types include planning, construction, reconstruction, repair, rehabilitation or improvement of parks, recreational facilities, and trails. Acquisition of land for parks is an eligible use of REET 1 resources but not a permitted use of REET 2.

REET resources currently fund facilities, parks, trails, open space, and transportation capital projects and average about \$4 million per year based on the six-year historical look-back. Recently, a hot housing market and increasing sales prices have increased REET revenues, with projections for 2021 near \$5.5 million and 2022 at \$5 million.

REET is consistently the single greatest source of revenue for parks capital projects, with annual contributions close to \$2 million. Through the annual budgeting process, and with discussions with City Council, the Parks and Recreation Department should continue to seek access to REET funds to support the delivery of the 2023-2028 Parks CIP.

Collaboration with the Mercer Island School District

The City of Mercer Island and the Mercer Island School District collaborate on a number of projects, including the provision of athletic fields. The City of Mercer Island maintains a sinking fund to replace synthetic turf, funded through field rental fees. The sinking fund does not generate enough resources to cover the total costs of synthetic turf replacement, partly because the City does not charge a fee to the School District for the use of Island Crest Park or the South Mercer Playfields.



The City and the School District should revisit the capital funding plan to replace the synthetic turf and other capital investment needs at shared-use facilities.

WSDOT Maintenance Agreement

The City maintains Aubrey Davis Park and the Mountains to Sound Trail through a maintenance agreement with WSDOT developed over twenty years ago. The City should pursue an update to the agreement to revisit maintenance costs and to address capital project investment needs.

Enhanced Local Funding

The City of Mercer Island maintains reserve debt capacity for councilmanic (non-voted) bonds and voter-approved debt. Councilmanic bonds, however, are an unlikely funding tool due to limited resources for bond repayment.

Conservation Futures

King County assesses the maximum allowable excise fee of \$0.0625 per \$1,000 assessed value to fund the Conservation Futures program and provides cities a venue to access these funds through a competitive, local grant process. The City should continue to submit grant applications to support open space projects and improved linkages to expand the trail network.

Parkland Donations & Dedications

A program to support parkland donation should be developed to support the City's property acquisition goals. Gift deeds or bequests from philanthropic-minded landowners could allow for lands to come into City ownership upon the owner's death or as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The City should develop policies to facilitate such donations efficiently. This work is anticipated to be combined with the overall property acquisition strategy.

Property dedication for park use by a developer could occur in exchange for Park Impact Fees or as part of a planned development where public open space is a key design for the layout and marketing of a new residential project. The Parks and Recreation Department should vet any potential dedications to ensure that such land is located in an area of need and can be developed with site amenities appropriate for the projected use of the property.

Grants & Appropriations

Several state and federal grant programs are available on a competitive basis, including WWRP, ALEA, and LWCF, all of which are further detailed in Appendix K. Pursuing grants is not a panacea for park system funding. Grants are both competitive and often require a significant percentage of local funds to match the request to the granting agency. This can be as much as 50% of the total project budget, depending on the grant program. Mercer Island should continue to leverage its local resources to the greatest extent by pursuing grants independently and cooperating with other local partners.

Appropriations from state or federal sources, though rare, can supplement projects with partial funding. State and federal funding allocations are particularly relevant on regional transportation projects, and the likelihood for appropriations could be increased if multiple partners are collaborating on projects.

Internal Project Coordination & Collaboration

Internal coordination with the Public Works and Community Planning & Development Departments can increase the potential of discrete actions toward the implementation of the proposed trail and path network, which relies heavily on street right-of-way enhancements, and in the review of development applications with consideration toward potential property acquisition areas, planned path corridors, and the need for easement or set-aside requests. However, to expand the extent of the park system and recreation programs, additional partnerships and collaborations should be considered.

Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships are increasingly necessary for local agencies to leverage their limited resources to provide community parks and recreation services. Corporate sponsorships, health organization grants, conservation stewardship programs, and non-profit organizations are just a few examples of partnerships where collaboration provides value to both partners. The City has existing partners and should continue to explore additional and expanded partnerships to help implement these capital project recommendations.

Volunteer & Community-based Action

Volunteers and community groups already contribute to the improvement of park and recreation services in Mercer Island. Volunteer projects include wildlife habitat enhancement, invasive plant removal, and tree planting, among others. Mercer Island should maintain and update a revolving list of potential small works or volunteer-appropriate projects for the website, while connecting to the Mercer Island School District to encourage student projects.

While supporting organized groups and community-minded individuals adds value to the Mercer Island parks and recreation system, volunteer coordination requires a substantial amount of staff time. Additional resources may be necessary to enable a volunteer coordinator to fully utilize the community's willingness to support park and recreation efforts.



72nd SE Landing



Future Work Plan Items and Other Considerations

While this chapter primarily focuses on capital planning, several other work items are identified throughout the plan that the City should consider as potential future initiatives. They are included in the summary below.

Future CIP Funding

- Develop a recommendation for City Council consideration to renew the Parks Maintenance and Operations Levy, scheduled to end in 2023.
- Evaluate other options, including a potential ballot measure, to provide resources to fund the implementation of the 2023-2028 Parks CIP.
- Renegotiate and update the agreement with WSDOT for maintenance of Aubrey Davis Park.
- Renegotiate and update the Interlocal Agreement with the Mercer Island School District for shared use of facilities. Include provisions to fully fund the replacement of synthetic turf at shared use facilities.

Future Planning

In addition to the many capital project recommendations included in the 2023-2028 CIP, a number of future planning projects were identified:

- Amend the City's Comprehensive Plan to include the 2022 PROS Plan as an appendix. This action is anticipated in 2023 as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update.
- Support completion of the Citywide ADA Transition Plan in 2022 and incorporate potential projects into the 20-Year CFP.
- Support completion of the Citywide Climate Action Plan in 2022 and incorporate potential projects into the 20-Year CFP and identify other items for inclusion in future work plans.
- Update the 2010 Bicycle Facilities Plan, currently identified as a potential future project in the City's Transportation Improvement Plan.
- Develop a citywide urban forest management plan to define goals for local forested ecosystems and outline the best management practices to sustain the forest canopy. This plan could include a citywide tree inventory, tree preservation and protection code amendments, and considerations for climate resiliency. A more broadly defined urban forestry plan can also be a means to engage the community in tree-related activities and facilitate community conversations about the overall health and diversity of Mercer Island's

urban forest.

- Prepare a Parks Property Acquisition Strategy to prioritize property acquisition to meet the future parks, trails, open space, and facility needs of the Mercer Island community. Include guiding factors such as level of service standards, connectivity, geographic distribution, preservation, and recreation needs. Develop policies to support donation and gifting of land.
- Continue studies of open space health, collecting vegetation data that can be used to illustrate restoration progress and guide adjustments to management plans.
- Evaluate existing conservation easements and how they are performing, including addressing and remedying encroachments. Map all existing easements.
- Develop a comprehensive wayfinding and signage plan to include consistency in branding and design. The plan will identify recommendations as to type, scale, and number of signs and consider a low-impact approach to system-wide signage.

Future Facilities

- Continue to assess the feasibility of replacing or upgrading the existing maintenance facility behind City Hall with energy efficiency and other sustainability measures in mind.
- Assess the financial feasibility of renovating or replacing the North Annex building at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center to meet indoor recreation needs and support early learning partnership programs.
- Assess the financial feasibility of completing the renovations and seismic retrofits to the Luther Burbank Boiler Building to meet the community demand for expanded water-oriented recreation programs and classes.
- The City should consider at least one spray park to serve residents as an option for summertime water play. This special use amenity typically is supported by parking and restrooms since it draws users from a wider area. Any spray park facility should be designed to recycle water if possible.
- The Bike Skills Area at Upper Luther Burbank Park is a popular recreational amenity among youth and teens. During the development of this PROS Plan, the area was temporarily closed to allow for an assessment of the site and public input in developing recommendations on improving the site for riders while minimizing environmental impacts. Outcomes of this assessment will guide future site planning and operations.

- In developing future park sites, consider installing nature play features and look for ways to optimize nature play opportunities with the unique characteristics of future parks. Nature play includes interacting with the environment in an imaginative way (e.g., climbing a tree).
- Future master plans should include consideration for expanded picnic areas and new picnic shelters throughout the parks system.

Future Policies

- Determine the most effective strategy for protecting open space lands in perpetuity. Explore various mechanisms for such protection, including zoning changes, conservation easements, deed restrictions, and transfer of these lands to the Open Space Conservancy Trust's governance.
- Revisit off-leash dog policies related to the usage of parks, open space, and trails.
- Continue to develop and review policies related to MICEC operations including special event and facility rental policies and ensure that sustainability requirements and expectations are incorporated.
- Plan for future shared mobility pilots (such as shareable E-bikes and E-scooters) and the increased public adoption of electric-assist bicycles and other wheeled mobility devices.

Future Operations & Best Practices

- Establish park maintenance standards and a routine preventative maintenance program to ensure all assets are in good working order and protect the public investment.
- Explore options to improve parking management that enhances safe trail access which is sensitive to neighborhood context and environmental impacts.
- Refine data management through CityWorks asset management software to fine-tune maintenance practices, track inventory, predict capital repairs and future capital projects, and develop modeling for staffing needs for future park improvements and programming. Utilize the long-term data to formalize park maintenance service standards.
- Incorporate sustainable practices into management, maintenance, and operations activities. Maintain equipment in good working order, purchase green equipment when feasible (e.g., battery-powered or low-emissions), replace existing lighting with high-efficiency fixtures, and keep systems (irrigation, lighting, HVAC, etc.) updated and fully functional for maximum

performance. Evaluate and, if feasible, pursue pilot programs to field test sustainable alternatives and to implement demonstration projects.

- Explore the use of non-gas-powered landscape equipment and vehicles to reduce emissions.
- Continue to adjust landscape maintenance practices in favor of techniques that contribute to the health of the land and lake environments.
- Strive to reuse locally-generated materials (such as downed trees, trimmings, leaves, etc.) as components of on-Island projects, rather than transporting and disposing off-Island.
- Continue to follow and advance the use of Integrated Pest Management strategies that maximize ecological benefits while minimizing environmental, social, and economic impacts.
- In collaboration with other City Departments, assess the feasibility of adding a dedicated staff position to support volunteer programs.

Future Recreation Programming, Arts & Culture

As the Recreation Reset Strategy is implemented, the City will initially focus on providing programs and services categorized as “core” and expand offerings in response to community needs and as resources allow.

- As the recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continues, recreation staff should evaluate and pilot new programs to explore the demand for other activities, as well as pursue enhanced programming opportunities at the City's waterfront locations.
- Develop a long-range project plan for the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund that articulates the City's vision for the public art program. This includes integration with the Capital Improvement Program, strategies for engaging the community in public art acquisition, updated policies for public art acquisition, siting, security, maintenance, and deaccession.
- Community gathering and special events should continue to be an area of emphasis; however, the overall number and breadth of City-sponsored special events should be carefully managed to align with the availability of resources and impacts to general park and facility use.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities for the delivery of programs and services.



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

**TECHNICAL APPENDIX:
VOLUME 1**

**APPENDIX A:
COMMUNITY SURVEY #1**





To: Jessi Bon, City Manager
From: Steve Duh, Conservation Technix, Inc.
Date: March 31, 2020
Re: **Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan**
 Community Survey Summary Results

Conservation Technix is pleased to present the results of a survey of the general population of the City of Mercer Island that assesses residents’ recreational needs and priorities.

KEY FINDINGS

Mercer Island residents strongly value their parks and recreation facilities.

Nearly all respondents (99%) think parks and recreation are important to quality of life on Mercer Island.



Residents are generally very satisfied with existing parks and recreation amenities and facilities.

A large majority of respondents (94%) are somewhat to very satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation for parks, facilities and open space. The majority visit at least once a week, often to walk or run (81%), walk or exercise their dog (57%), visit beaches or waterfront (56%), and relax (56%).

Residents would like to see improvements made to the parks & recreation system and want to see the City preserve parks and natural areas for their wildlife and ecological values.

Respondents are generally satisfied with the number of park and recreation amenities on Mercer Island; over half of respondents said there are more than enough or about the right number of all amenities surveyed. However, between one-quarter and one-third of respondents feel like there is not enough shoreline access, community events, indoor facilities, arts and culture opportunities, and open space. Many respondents wrote about their support for enhanced boating and water sports opportunities, the restoration of the Summer Celebration, and the creation of a performing arts center on the island.

When it comes to recreational programs and activities, respondents expressed greater interest in, and need for, adult programs and activities than those geared towards youth or teens. In particular, respondents had a higher interest in seeing more performing arts, educational, and boating classes and programs.

Respondents also want the City to protect access to nature, trees, and open space for both people and wildlife.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In close collaboration with City of Mercer Island staff and the Parks & Recreation Commission, Conservation Technix developed the 17-question survey that was estimated to take less than ten minutes to complete.

The survey was mailed to a random sample of 2,500 households within the boundaries of the City of Mercer Island on February 4, 2020. An online version of the survey was posted to the City’s website several days later to allow the mail recipients to receive first notice about the survey. Reminder postcards were mailed to the 2,500 households on February 25th. Information about the survey was provided on the City’s website home page and on the Let’s Talk PROS Plan subpage. It also was promoted via multiple social media postings. The survey was closed on March 10th, and data were compiled and reviewed.

Overall, 525 responses were completed from the random-sample mail survey (21% response rate), and 1,238 responses were generated via the online link published on the City’s website. In total, 1,763 survey responses were recorded. Although households were randomly chosen to receive the mail survey, respondents were not necessarily representative of all City residents, see age demographics below.

Age group	Survey Respondents			M.I. Population	
	Mail	Online-only	Combined	Full	Over 20
Under 20	0%	1%	0%	25%	--
20-34	5%	5%	5%	12%	16%
35-44	12%	23%	20%	12%	16%
45-54	19%	33%	28%	17%	23%
55-64	26%	19%	21%	14%	19%
65 and older	39%	20%	26%	20%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

This report includes findings of community opinions based principally on mailed survey responses. This report includes findings on general community opinions. Data are summarized for the mail and online surveys to highlight overall community preferences, with clarifying remarks on response differences between the two datasets. The data for the mail and online versions were kept separated.

The survey data were compared against the demographic data (e.g., age, location, number of children in household) to examine if differences existed between the different respondent subgroups. The summary below identifies variations in responses per question, if such variations existed and were significant between subgroups. Percentages in the report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



FULL RESULTS

How much do residents value parks and recreation?

Virtually all respondents (99%) feel that local parks, recreation options and open space opportunities are important or essential to the quality of life on Mercer Island. More than nine in ten respondents feel that they are essential; while an additional 8% believe that they are important to quality of life, but not essential. Less than 1% of respondents believe parks are “Useful, but not important”.

Respondents of various ages, length of residence, and household composition, as well as those who responded to the online survey, valued parks and recreation opportunities similarly.

1. When you think about the things that contribute to the quality of life in Mercer Island, would you say that public parks and recreation opportunities are...

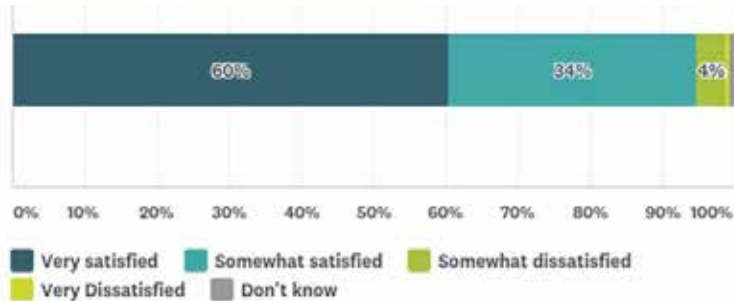
Response options	Mail	Online-only	
Essential to the quality of life here	92%	99%	90%
Important, but not really necessary	8%		8%
More of a luxury that we don't need	<1%	<1%	
Don't know	0%	<1%	

Are residents satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation?

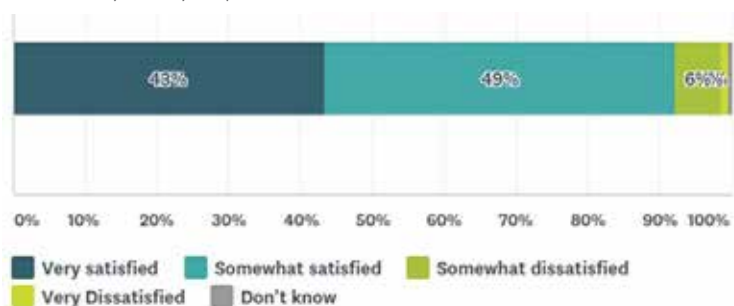
A large majority of respondents are somewhat to very satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation for parks, facilities and open space (94% for the mail survey and 92% in the online-only survey). However, one in twenty respondents (5%) is either somewhat or very dissatisfied. There were no significant differences in levels of satisfaction between subgroups.

6. Rate your household's overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks or open spaces.

Mail survey responses



Online-only survey responses

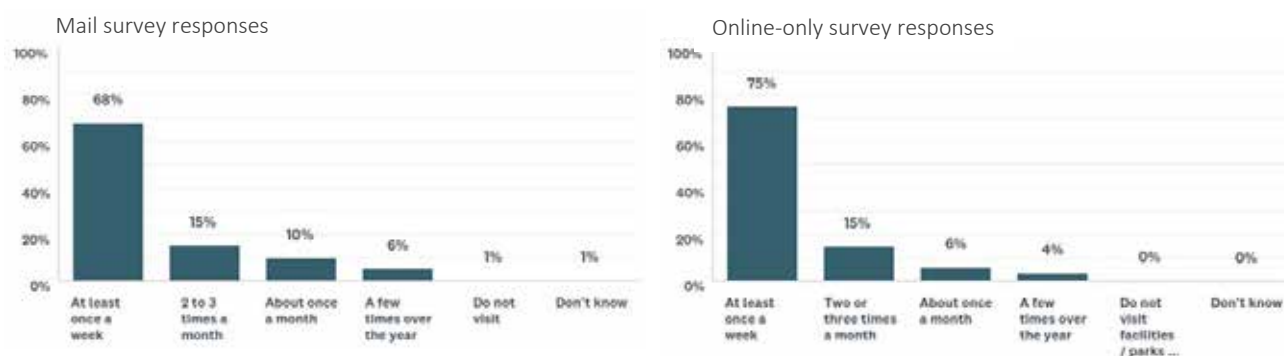


How often do residents use Mercer Island parks & recreation facilities?

Respondents were asked how often they, or members of their household, visited a Mercer Island Parks & Recreation park, recreation facility, or open space. Visitation is high, with 68% of mail survey respondents visiting at least once a week and another 25% visiting one to three times per month. Only 6% of respondents visit just a few times per year. Very few (1%) did not visit a park last year.

As compared to other subgroups, adults between 45 and 54 are the most frequent users of Mercer Island’s parks. Respondents of households with children also visit significantly more frequently than those without children. Online-only survey respondents tended to visit even more frequently than mail respondents, with 75% visiting at least once a week and 96% visiting at least once per month.

3. How often do you visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces?



Why do residents visit parks?

Respondents visit local parks and recreation facilities for a variety of reasons. The most popular activities are walking or running (81%), followed by dog walking/exercise (57%), visiting beaches or waterfront (56%), and relaxation (56%). More than one-third of respondents visited for fitness (43%), to attend a community event or concert (36%), or use a playground (33%). Between 15% and 30% of residents visited Mercer Island parks to view wildlife, gather with family, ride a bike, use a sports court, boat, or view public art. Less than one in ten respondents visit for public meetings, private events, adult sports leagues, or fishing.

Respondents between 35 and 54, and those with children in their household, were more likely than other groups to visit for playgrounds, classes and camps, biking, family gatherings, and youth sports. Respondents over 55 were more likely than younger residents to visit to view art or wildlife. Respondents with children in their home were more likely to visit for youth sports leagues, playgrounds, family gatherings, or classes and camps than those without children.

In general, respondents to the online-only survey visited Mercer Island parks and facilities for similar reasons as respondents to the mail survey. However, 40% of online-only respondents visited to attend a youth sports league event, which is a frequency that is more than twice the percentage of mail respondents.

4. What would you say are the main reasons you visited Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks or open spaces in the last year?

Reason	Mail	Online
Walking or running	81%	75%
Dog walking/exercise	57%	54%
Beach/waterfront	56%	49%
Relaxation	56%	46%
Fitness	43%	39%
Community events/concerts	36%	36%
Playgrounds	33%	40%
Wildlife viewing	27%	19%
Family gatherings/picnics	25%	29%
Biking	22%	29%
Outdoor sport courts	17%	24%
Youth sports league	16%	40%
Boating/watersports	15%	17%
Public art viewing	15%	10%
Class or camp	14%	18%
Public meeting	9%	7%
Private event/celebration	9%	10%
Adult sports league	3%	6%
Fishing	3%	4%



Why don't residents visit more often?

When asked why they do not visit Mercer Island's parks and recreation facilities more often, many residents responded that they do visit (53%). Approximately one in eight residents responded that they do not visit more often because of lack of parking (13%) and restrooms (11%). Similar numbers use parks or facilities provided by other cities or organizations (11%) or are too busy (9%) suggesting that further improvements would not increase their use of parks.

Between 4% and 9% of respondents selected a reason that could be addressed by the City, including concerns about conflicts between users (8%), lack of information (7%), crowding (5%), distance to parks (4%), maintenance issues (4%), and safety concerns (4%). In addition, multiple respondents wrote responses regarding concerns about off-leash dogs and a desire for additional hours for recreational facilities.

In general, respondents to both the mail and online-only survey expressed similar reasons for not visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities more frequently. Respondents between 35 and 44 and those with children at home were more likely to cite that parks do not have enough restrooms as a reason why they do not visit more often.

5. Please check all the reasons why your household does not use City of Mercer Island park or recreation facilities more often.

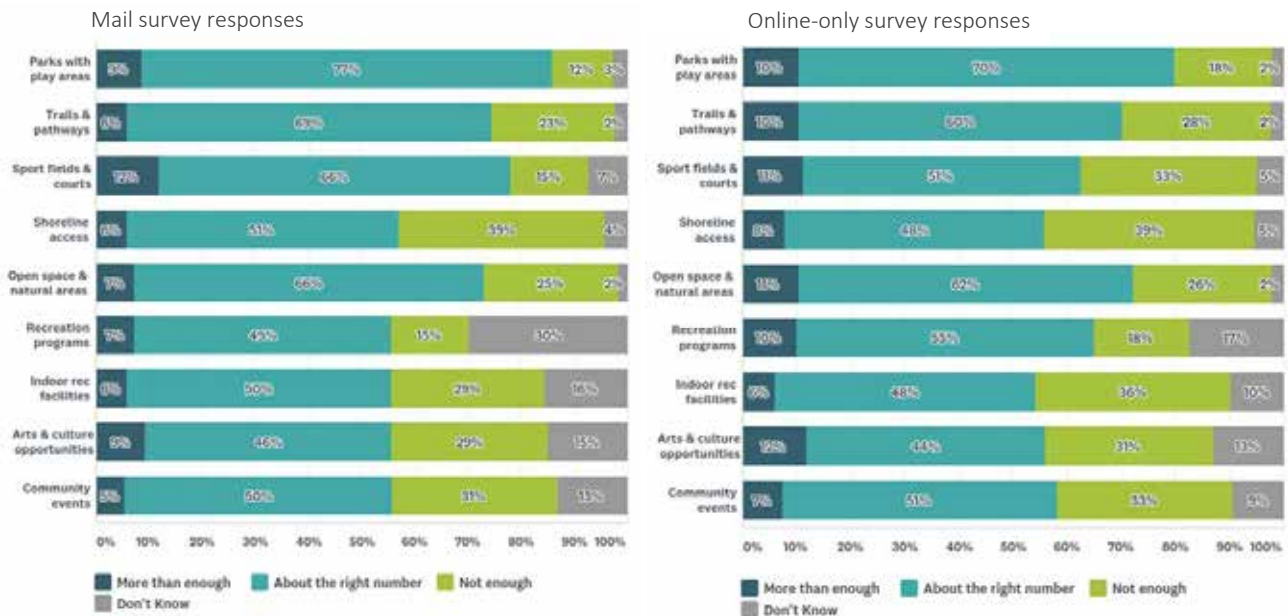
Reason	Mail	Online
None / Does not apply to me	53%	48%
Not enough parking	13%	11%
Use parks or facilities provided by another city or organization	11%	9%
Not enough restrooms	11%	11%
Too busy to go to parks and facilities	9%	8%
Concerns about conflicts with other users	8%	9%
I do not know what is offered	7%	6%
Too crowded	5%	6%
Too far from my home	4%	4%
Are not well-maintained	4%	5%
Do not feel safe	4%	3%
Do not have appropriate equipment	<1%	4%
Barriers related to accessibility	<1%	2%
Cost prohibitive	<1%	2%

Do residents think the City of Mercer Island needs more parks and recreation opportunities?

Respondents are generally satisfied with the number of park and recreation amenities on Mercer Island; over half said there are more than enough or about the right number of all amenities listed. Respondents are most satisfied with the number of parks with playgrounds and restrooms (86% think there about the right number of more than enough), sports fields and courts (78%), trails and pathways (75%), and open space and natural areas (73%). However, between one-quarter and one-third of respondents feel like there is not enough shoreline access (39%), community events (31%), indoor facilities (29%), arts and culture opportunities (29%), and open space (25%).

Respondents to the online-only survey were more likely than respondents to the mail survey to feel there are ‘not enough’ parks and recreation amenities and activities. However, a majority of online-only respondents felt there are enough or more than enough of all amenities listed. Younger respondents were more likely to believe the City of Mercer Island does not have enough parks with play areas, sports fields and courts, and community events. Those with children in their household expressed a greater need for sports fields and courts, recreation programs, indoor recreation facilities, and community events than those without children. In general, respondents who are newer to the island tended to think that Mercer Island needs more park and recreation amenities.

2. When it comes to amenities provided by the City of Mercer Island... would you say there are...





What park and recreation options do residents have a need for? Do they feel their needs are met?

The survey asked a series of questions regarding needs for typical park and recreation facilities. The first pair of questions asked which park and recreation facilities and amenities the respondent’s household has a need for, and then, whether that need is well met, somewhat met, or unmet locally. The second set asked similar questions related to recreational programs and activities.

Respondents indicated that the highest unmet park and recreation facility need is for pedestrian trails. Respondents have a more limited need for bike trails, indoor fitness facilities, picnic shelters, and off-leash dog areas, but many feel that these needs are met by existing facilities. On the other end of the scale, respondents generally expressed little additional need for outdoor fitness equipment, boating facilities, paddle sports courts, fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and lacrosse (including lit and synthetic fields), basketball courts, all-inclusive play equipment, and skate parks. However, multiple respondents used open-ended questions to voice their desire for boating facilities, pickleball courts, off-leash dog areas and all-inclusive play equipment.

Younger respondents, especially those under 45, expressed a greater need for all-inclusive play equipment, picnic shelters, basketball courts, indoor recreation facilities, and outdoor fitness equipment than residents over 55 years of age. Respondents over 45 years of age stated a greater need for boating and watersports facilities than younger residents. Respondents with children at home were more likely than those without to have a desire for more sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, and boating areas.

Respondents to the online-only survey generally expressed similar levels of interest and need for park amenities and facilities as respondents to the mail survey. A notable exception, however, was with sports fields – between 21% and 42% of online-only survey respondents stated they need more baseball/softball, soccer/lacrosse, lighted, and synthetic fields, approximately twice rate of mail survey respondents.

7. Please indicate how well your household needs are met locally for each of type of **amenity or facility** and indicate if you have a need for more...

Higher need but well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	Moderate need and well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	Lower need and well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pedestrian trails Mail: 50% / 56% Online: 55% / 51% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bike trails Mail: 39% / 59% Online: 44% / 50% ● Indoor fitness facilities Mail: 34% / 60% Online: 34% / 53% ● Picnic shelters / gathering spaces Mail: 29% / 59% Online: 33% / 54% ● Off leash dog areas Mail: 28% / 70% Online: 28% / 69% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outdoor fitness equipment Mail: 24% / 68% Online: 24% / 59% ● Boating/watersports facilities Mail: 24% / 70% Online: 27% / 64% ● Paddle/Racquet sports courts Mail: 23% / 71% Online: 26% / 63% ● Synthetic turf fields Mail: 19% / 78% Online: 38% / 60% ● Lighted sports fields Mail: 19% / 75% Online: 42% / 56% ● Soccer/Lacrosse fields Mail: 18% / 78% Online: 37% / 60% ● Basketball courts Mail: 12% / 79% Online: 21% / 66% ● All-inclusive equipment Mail: 9% / 87% Online: 12% / 81% ● Baseball/Softball fields Mail: 8% / 85% Online: 21% / 71% ● Skate park Mail: 5% / 90% Online: 10% / 84%

When it comes to recreational programs and activities, respondents expressed greater interest in, and need for, adult programs and activities than those geared towards youth or teens. In particular, respondents had a higher interest in seeing more performing arts, educational, and boating classes and programs.

Respondents under 55 were more likely than older residents to state a need for adult sports leagues, boating programs, and children’s activities. Those over 55 years of age were more likely than younger respondents to be interested in and want more adult classes and programs for people over 55. Households with children were more likely than those without to feel like their need for children’s activities were well met but expressed a greater interest in having more teen activities, swimming and water safety programs, and youth sports programs and camps.

8. Please indicate how will your household needs are met locally for each of the existing **programs and activities** and indicate if you have an interest in each...

Higher interest but well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	Moderate interest and well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	Lower interest and well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing arts Mail: 67% / 50% Online: 61% / 49% • Adult classes Mail: 65% / 58% Online: 62% / 58% • Educational classes Mail: 57% / 57% Online: 56% / 59% • Boating programs Mail: 56% / 62% Online: 55% / 58% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs for adults over 55 Mail: 47% / 64% Online: 35% / 75% • Swimming & water safety Mail: 46% / 67% Online: 45% / 60% • Outdoor classes Mail: 44% / 67% Online: 49% / 63% • Youth activities Mail: 37% / 73% Online: 48% / 61% • Youth sports and camps Mail: 35% / 75% Online: 49% / 63% • Children’s activities Mail: 33% / 77% Online: 44% / 65% • Adult sports Mail: 30% / 79% Online: 31% / 73% • Teen activities Mail: 26% / 81% Online: 36% / 73% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs for people with special needs Mail: 20% / 86% Online: 24% / 81%



Which special events do residents prioritize?

The City of Mercer Island offers a wide variety of community special events each year. When asked which of these events they felt the City should prioritize, costs aside, respondents strongly supported the Summer Celebration (44% listed as a top and 34% as a high priority) and Mostly Music in the Park (35% and 46%, respectively). Other priority events included Holiday Lights and Firehouse Munch, Movies in the Park, and Shakespeare in the Park. Respondents listed Arbor Day, First Fridays with Friends, Family Nights at the Community Center, and the Egg Hunt as lower priorities. However, the annual Egg Hunt and Movies in the Park were a higher priority for respondents between 35 and 44 and those with children, while Shakespeare in the Park was a higher priority for adults over 55. Respondents to the online-only survey had mostly similar priorities as those who responded to the mail survey.

10. Below is a list of City community special events that have been offered in the past or are currently offered. Although there are costs associated with each event, costs aside, for each event indicate whether you think it is a High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority or Not a Priority for your household.

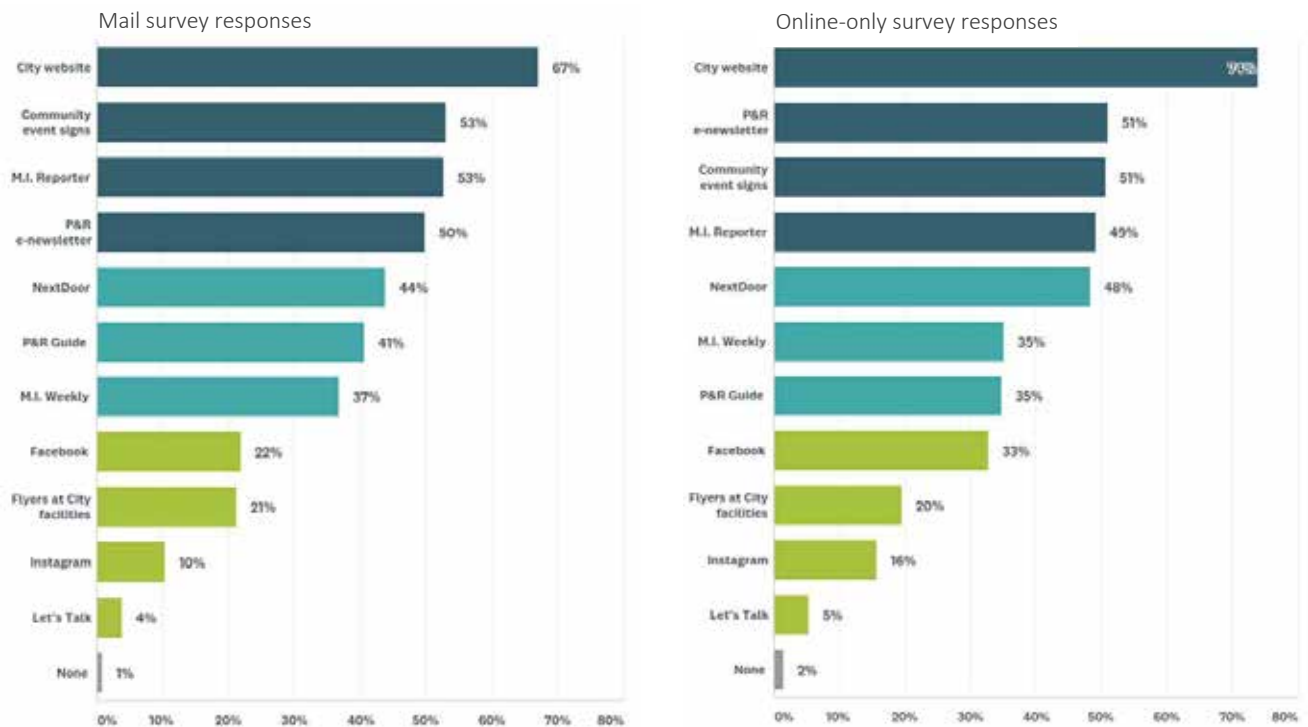


How do residents want to hear about Mercer Island’s parks, facilities, and events?

The majority of respondents prefer to hear about Mercer Island’s parks, facilities, and events through online channels such as the City’s website (67%) and Parks & Recreation e-newsletter (50%) as well as posted event signs (53%) and the Mercer Island Reporter (53%). These sources were popular with respondents to both the mail and online-only surveys.

Fewer than one in three respondents would like to hear about park and recreation opportunities through Facebook (22%), flyers at City facilities (21%), Instagram (10%), and Let’s Talk (4%). However, social media, including Facebook and Instagram, is a more popular source of information for respondents under 44, who prefer these sources 2-to-1 over older residents, and for families with children. The Mercer Island Reporter and Parks & Recreation Guide are preferred at higher rates by older residents, though all age groups use these printed publications to get information about parks and recreation offerings.

11. Please check ALL the ways you would prefer to learn about Mercer Island’s parks, recreation facilities, programs and special events.





Other Comments

The survey provided respondents with two opportunities to share their ideas and suggestions via open-ended responses. Common themes from these comments include:

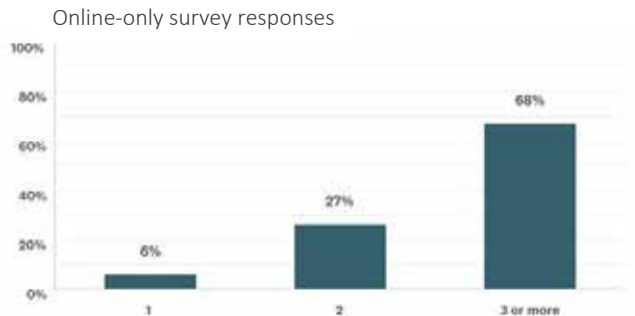
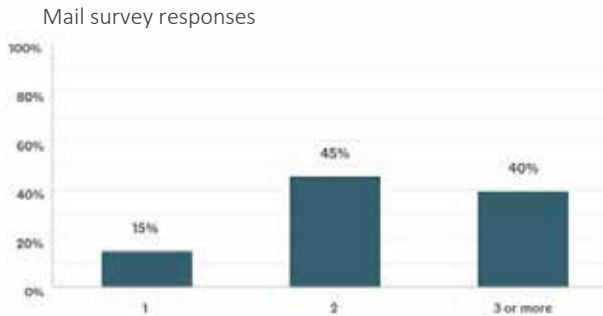
- Many respondents want to make sure the City protects access to nature, trees, and open space for both people and wildlife. Some respondents encouraged the City to permanently protect all park spaces. Others specifically encouraged the City to use of bee- and pollinator-friendly planting and landscape practices.
- Many respondents responded that they are eager to see additional off-leash dog parks in the City, either because they would use it themselves or because they hope it would lessen the number and impacts of unauthorized off-leash dogs in Mercer Island parks.
- Respondents expressed interest in, and enthusiasm for, specific park improvements, including the development of pickleball courts, sports fields, picnic shelters, and park restrooms, and additional adult programs and classes.
- Many respondents see the Summer Celebration Festival as an important tradition on the island and felt dismayed at the reductions to the Festival. They encouraged the City to restore the Summer Celebration, including the parade and fireworks.
- Many respondents comment on the need for improved swimming and boating opportunities, including renovations and expanded hours at Mary Wayte pool, additional splash pads, lifeguards at beaches, improvements to docks at Luther Burbank Park, kayak/canoe/SUP rentals, and the creation of sailing and rowing programs.
- Multiple respondents see the development of a performing arts center and venue as an important need on the island, frequently referencing the Mercer Island Center for the Arts (MICA) proposal and the desire to have a venue for Youth Theater Northwest (YTN).

A compilation of write-in comments is on file with the Mercer Island Parks & Recreation Department.

Demographics

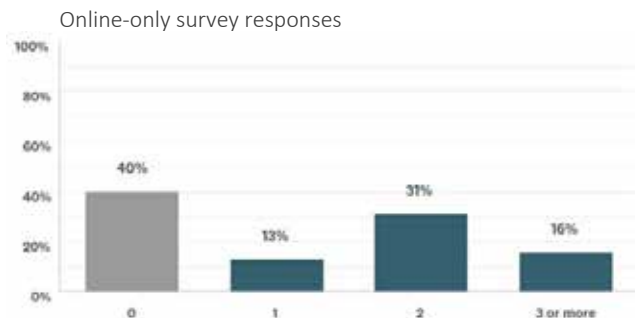
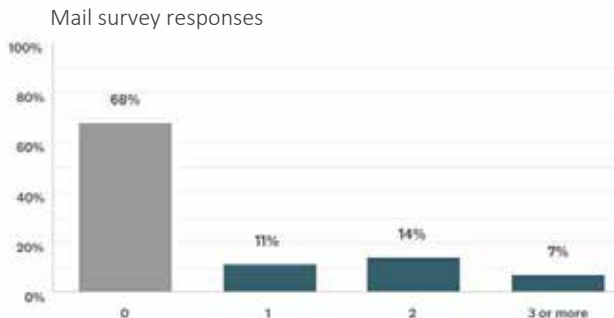
Number of People in Household

The majority (85%) of respondents to the mail survey live in households with either two (45%) or three (40%) people, while 15% percent live in single person households. Online-only survey respondents were more likely to live in households with three or more residents.



Number of Children in Household

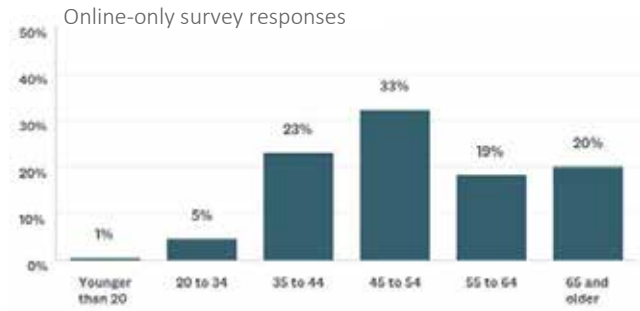
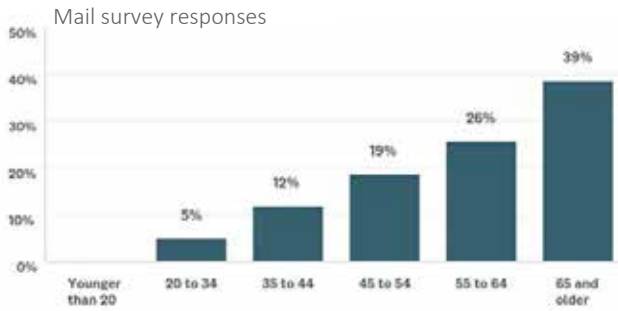
Nearly seven in ten respondents to the mail survey (68%) have no children in their household. These households tended to include older adults (over age 55). The remaining 32% of households have one (11%), two (14%), or three or more (7%) children in the home. Online-only respondents were more 28% likely to have children at home than mail survey respondents.





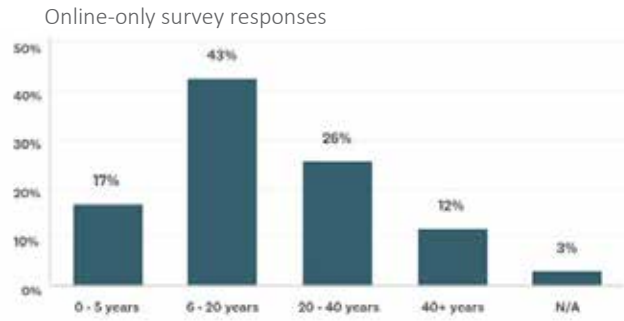
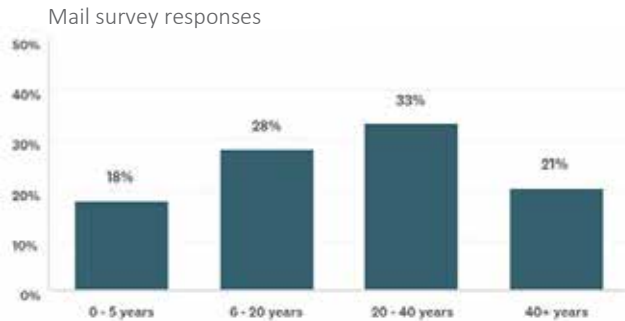
Age

Nearly 40% of respondents to the mail survey were over 65 years of age. Another 26% were between 55 and 64 years, while 19% were 45 to 64 years. There were few responses from younger residents, 12% of responses were from people 35 to 44 and 5% were from those 20 to 34 years of age. Respondents to the online-only survey were predominately 45-64 years old (33%), followed by 35-44 years (23%), with fewer residents over 55 responding.



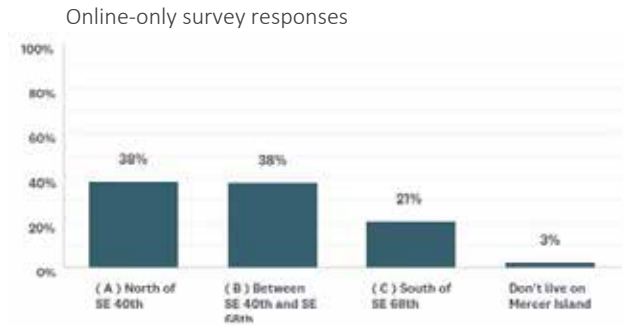
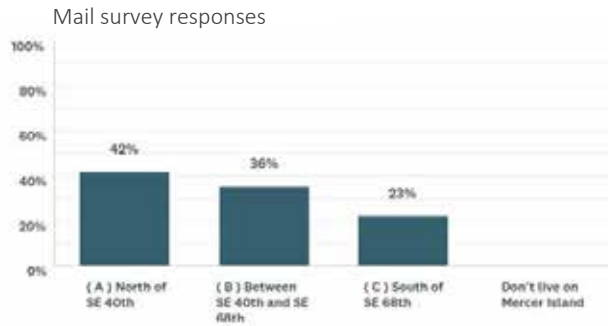
Length of Residence

Over half of mail survey respondents have lived on Mercer Island for decades, with 21% having lived on the island for more than 40 years and 33% having done so for 20-40 years. Approximately 28% have lived on the island for 6 to 20 years, while 18% are relative newcomers (less than 5 years). Respondents to the online-only survey were more likely to have lived on Mercer Island for between 6 and 20 years.

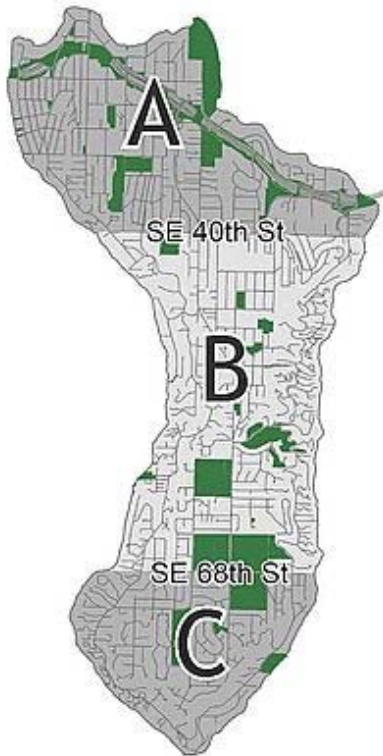


Location of Residence

Approximately 42% of mail survey respondents live on the northern part of the island (north of SE 40th Street). Another 36% respondents live between SE 40th and SE 68th Street. The remainder of respondents live south of SE 68th (23%). No respondents live outside of the City of Mercer Island. Respondents to the online-only survey were similarly distributed across the island. However, 3% of online-only respondents do not live on Mercer Island.



Location Map (for reference)





ATTACHMENT 1. SURVEY INSTRUMENT



City of Mercer Island

Community Survey on Parks and Recreation

Dear Mercer Island Resident:

The City of Mercer Island has begun a community-driven process to update its citywide Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS Plan). We need your help to determine how to prioritize projects and where to focus to keep our parks and programs thriving. As an initial step in the process, the City is conducting this short, random-sample survey to assess the community's recreation and facility needs. Additional public engagement will follow, and final review of the Plan is tentatively targeted for the end of 2020. Your opinions are important to the City.

The survey has 17 questions and will only take a few minutes to complete.

If you prefer to take the survey online, use the unique ID number above to access the survey at miprosplan.com or with this QR code:



1. When you think about the things that contribute to the quality of life in Mercer Island, would you say that public parks and recreation opportunities are... (CHECK ONE OPTION)

- Essential to the quality of life here
- Important, but not really essential
- Useful, but not important
- Not Important at all

2. When it comes to amenities provided by the City of Mercer Island for meeting your needs for parks, amenities and activities, would you say there are... (CHECK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW)

	More than Enough	About the Right Amount	Not Enough	Don't Know
Parks with playgrounds, play areas, restrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trails & pathways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sport fields & sport courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shoreline access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Open space & natural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation programs (camps & classes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor recreation facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arts & culture opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How often do you visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces?

- At least once a week
- Two or three times a month
- About once a month
- A few times over the year
- Do not visit facilities / parks / open spaces
- Don't know

4. What would you say are the main reasons you visited Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces in the past year? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Adult sports league
- Beach / waterfront
- Biking
- Boating / watersports
- Class or camp
- Community events / concerts
- Dog walking / exercise
- Family gatherings / picnics
- Fishing
- Fitness
- Outdoor sport courts
- Playgrounds
- Private event / celebration
- Public art viewing
- Relaxation
- Public meeting
- Walking or running
- Wildlife viewing
- Youth sports league
- N/A - I didn't go to Mercer Island parks or open spaces
- Other: _____

Take this survey [online](#) or use the QR code, and enter the unique ID number on the front:

miprosplan.com

Or send it back in the self-addressed envelope provided. Thank you in advance for participating!



5. Please CHECK ALL the reasons why your household does not use City of Mercer Island parks or facilities more often.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are not well maintained | <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough restrooms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barriers related to physical accessibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Too busy to go to facilities, parks or open spaces |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concerns about conflicts with other users | <input type="checkbox"/> Too crowded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost prohibitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Too far from my home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not have the appropriate equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Use amenities provided by another city, organization or private club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not feel safe in facility, park or open space | <input type="checkbox"/> None / Does not apply to me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not know what is offered | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough parking | |

6. Rate your household's overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks or open spaces.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Dissatisfied |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |

7. For each of the following existing park and recreation amenities, indicate how well your household needs are met locally AND if you have a need for more of each amenity.

Type of Amenity	How well met are your needs for each?				Do you have need for more?	
	Very Well Met	Somewhat Met	Not At All Met	N / A	Yes	No
All-inclusive playground equipment (ADA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnic shelters / small gathering spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boating / watersports facilities (docks, boat launch, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paddle / racquet sport courts (tennis, pickleball)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Indoor fitness & exercise facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor fitness equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pedestrian trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Off-leash dog areas (enclosed dog parks)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skate park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport fields for baseball, softball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport fields for soccer, football, lacrosse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lighted sport fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Synthetic turf fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



8. For each of the following existing programs and activities, indicate how well your household needs are met locally **AND** if you have an interest in each program or activity.

Type of Program / Activity	How well met are your needs for each?				Do you have interest?	
	Very Well Met	Somewhat Met	Not At All Met	N / A	Yes	No
Adult classes, such as arts, crafts, music, fitness or wellness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adult sports leagues, such as soccer or softball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boating programs, such as sailing, kayaking, paddleboarding or rowing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's activities, such as after-school programs or summer day camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational classes, such as technology, natural history, safety or health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor classes, such as fishing, environmental or orienteering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performing arts, such as community theater or concerts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programs for adults 55 and over, such as drop-in activities, trips or health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programs for youth, teens and young adults with special needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming & water safety, such as classes or for fitness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teen activities, such as drop-in, trips or camps during school breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth activities, such as fitness, music, arts or crafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth sports programs and camps during school breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Please share additional needs for amenities, programs or activities you may have on Mercer Island.

10. Below is a list of City community special events that have been offered in the past or are currently offered. Although there are costs associated with each event, costs aside, for each event indicate whether you think it is a High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority or Not a Priority for your household.

	Top Priority	High Priority	Low Priority	Not a Priority
Arbor Day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Argosy Holiday Ships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Egg Hunt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Nights at the Community Center (Around the World, Hoedown, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Fridays with Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holiday Lights & Firehouse Munch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leap for Green Sustainability Fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mostly Music in the Park concerts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Movies in the Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior events & lunches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shakespeare in the Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summer Celebration Festival	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Please check ALL the ways you would prefer to learn about Mercer Island's parks, recreation facilities, programs and special events.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> City website | <input type="checkbox"/> Mercer Island Reporter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community event signs | <input type="checkbox"/> Mercer Island Weekly (City e-news) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> NextDoor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flyers at City facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation e-newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation Guide publication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Let's Talk | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

12. This survey may not have addressed all of the topics important to you. Please share any other issues, policy-related items, concerns, or other information the City should consider for future planning.

The following questions help us understand whether we have a cross-section of the community responding to this survey. It's important that you provide a response to each question. Please remember your answers are confidential.

13. How many people live in your household?

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more |

14. How many children under age 18 live in your household?

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more |

15. What is your age?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Younger than 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 to 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 and older |

16. If you are a Mercer Island resident, how long have you lived on the Island?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 - 40 years | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 - 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 40+ years | |

17. Using the map, in which section of Mercer Island do you live?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (A) North of SE 40th | <input type="checkbox"/> (C) South of SE 68th |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (B) Between SE 40th and SE 68th | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't live on Mercer Island |



Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Your input will help guide the development of the Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan.

Save a stamp! Take this survey online with the unique ID number on the front: miprosplan.com

Learn more about why Mercer Island needs a PROS Plan and stay informed about the process at <https://letstalk.mercisgov.org/miprosplan>



The City of Mercer Island is using the services of a consultant team who specializes in park and recreation planning.

Please return your completed survey in the enclosed Return-Reply Envelope addressed to:

Conservation Technix Inc.
PO Box 12736
Portland, OR 97212



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



APPENDIX B: RECREATION RESET SURVEY #2

Island Crest Park north field



MICEC Recovery Survey

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

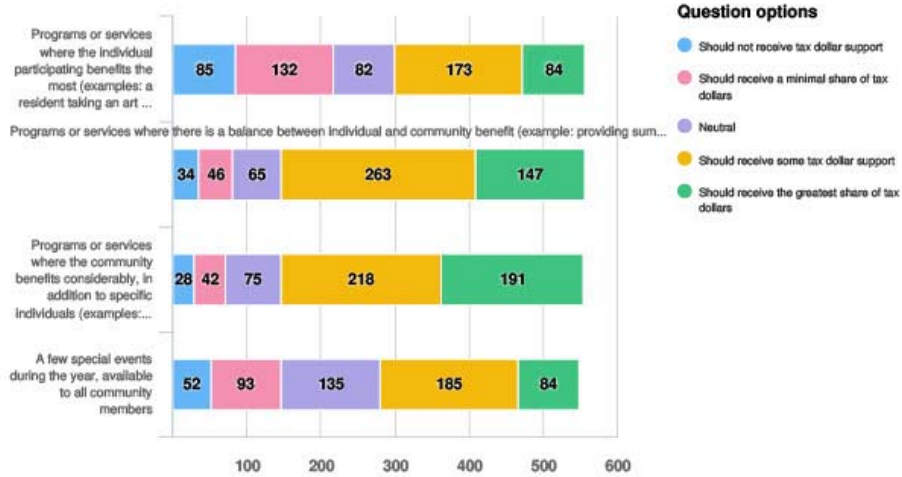
05 January 2021 - 16 February 2021

PROJECT NAME:

Planning for the Future: Recreation and the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC)



Q1 In the past, the revenue that supported recreation operations and programs and the Mercer Island Community and Events Center...

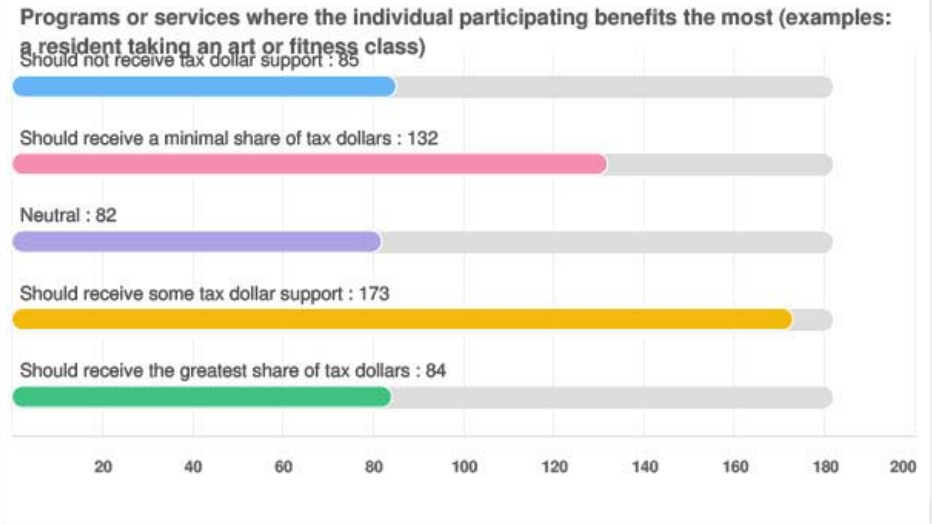


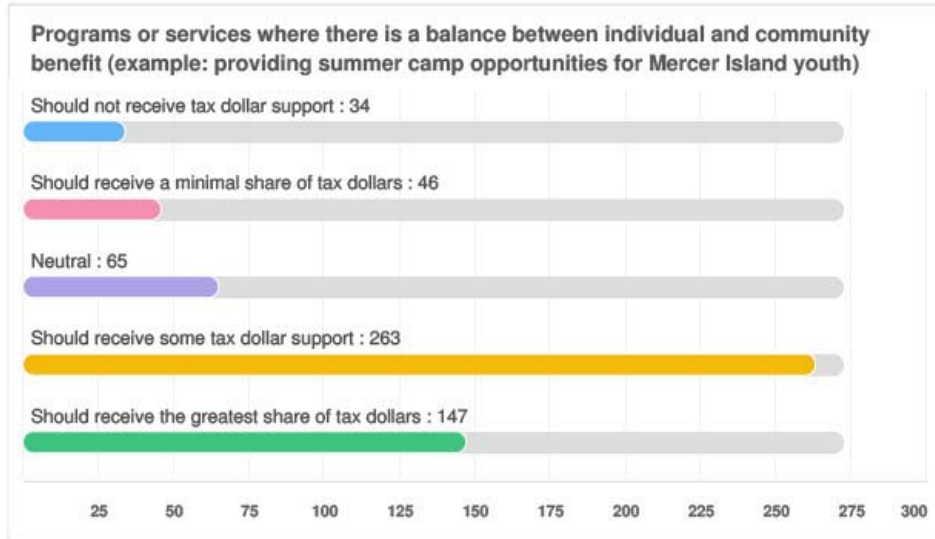
Optional question (565 response(s), 15 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question



MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

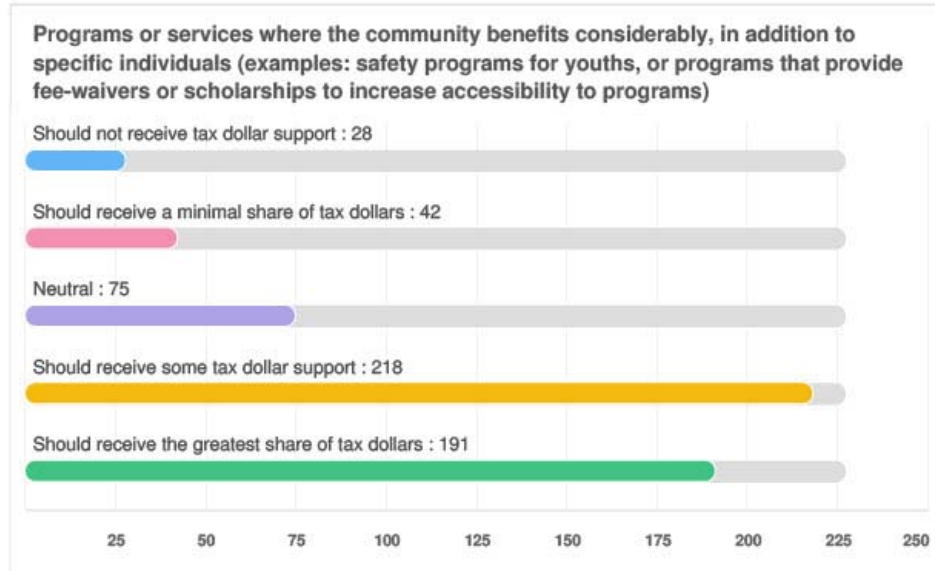
Q1 | In the past, the revenue that supported recreation operations and programs and the Mercer Island Community and Events Cente...

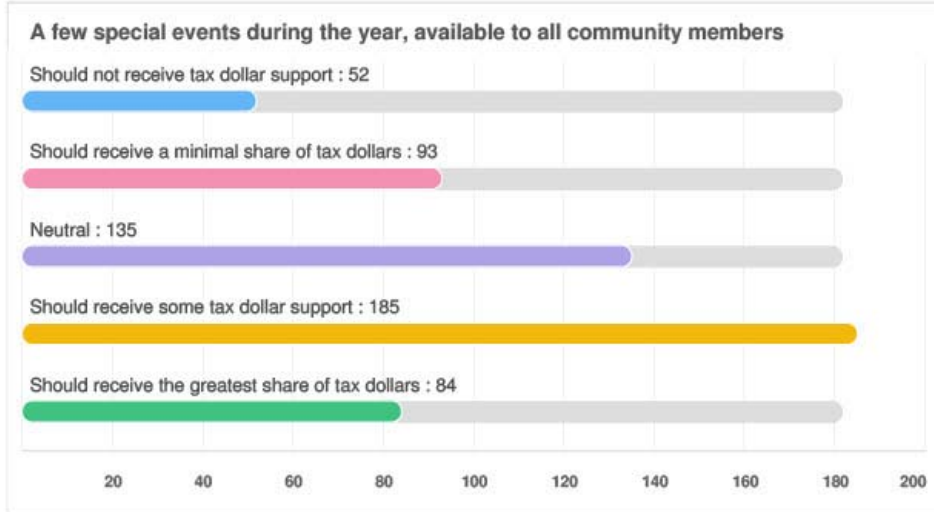






MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021





Q2 How important is it to you personally or to your family that the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC):

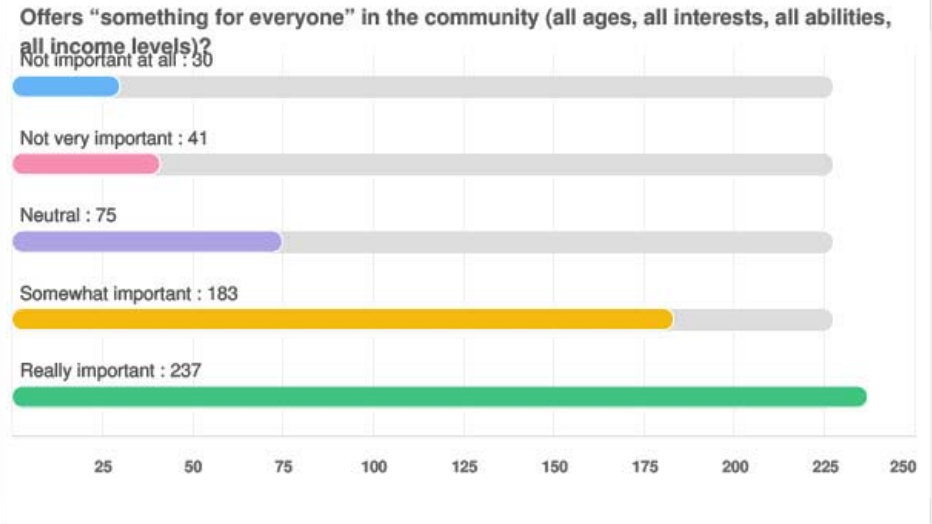


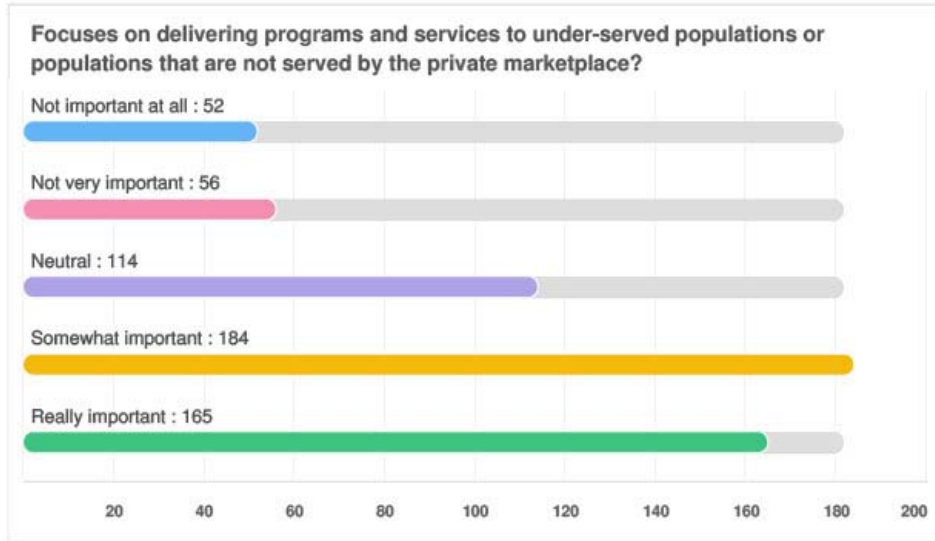
Optional question (576 response(s), 4 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question



MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

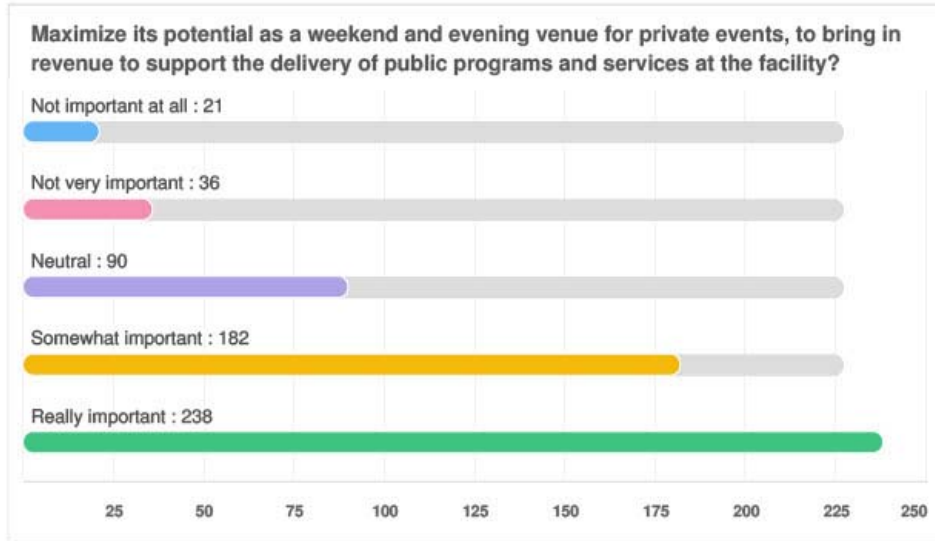
Q2 How important is it to you personally or to your family that the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC):

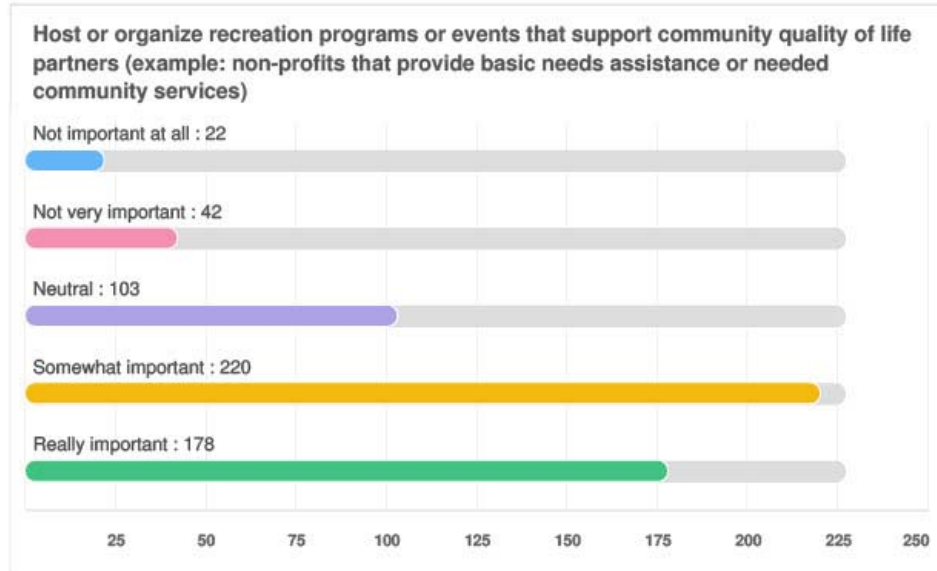




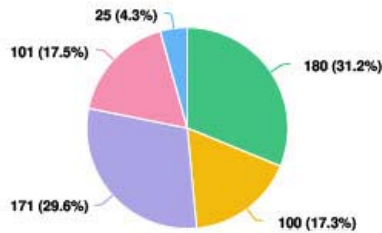


MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021





Q3 How frequently did you or your family use or visit the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC)?



Question options

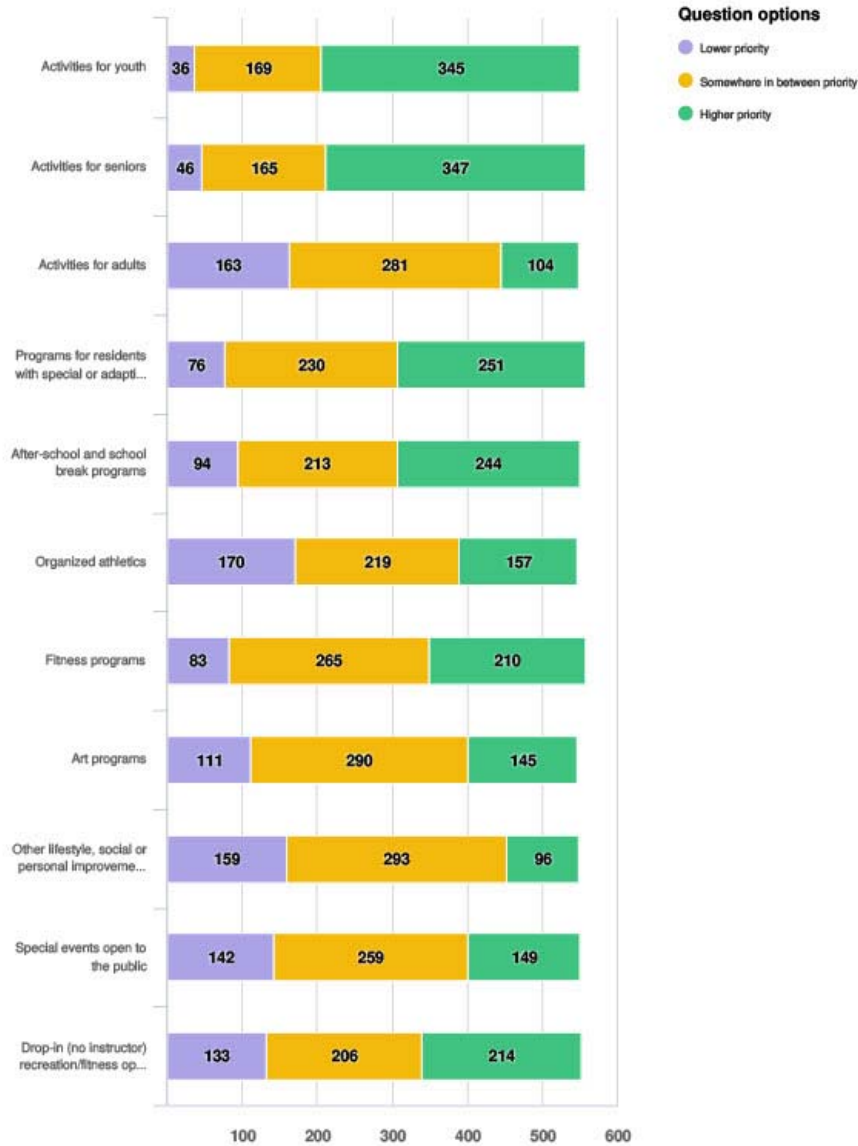
- Never
- Rarely (may have visited once or twice a year or every other year)
- Somewhat (attended an event, participated in a program, visited the art gallery, or went there for another reason a few times each year)
- Fairly frequently (at least once a month)
- Very frequently (often once a week)

*Optional question (577 response(s), 3 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question*



MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

Q4 If the City were to prioritize providing space at the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC) for some types of public uses more than others, which of the following would you recommend it prioritize for the community:



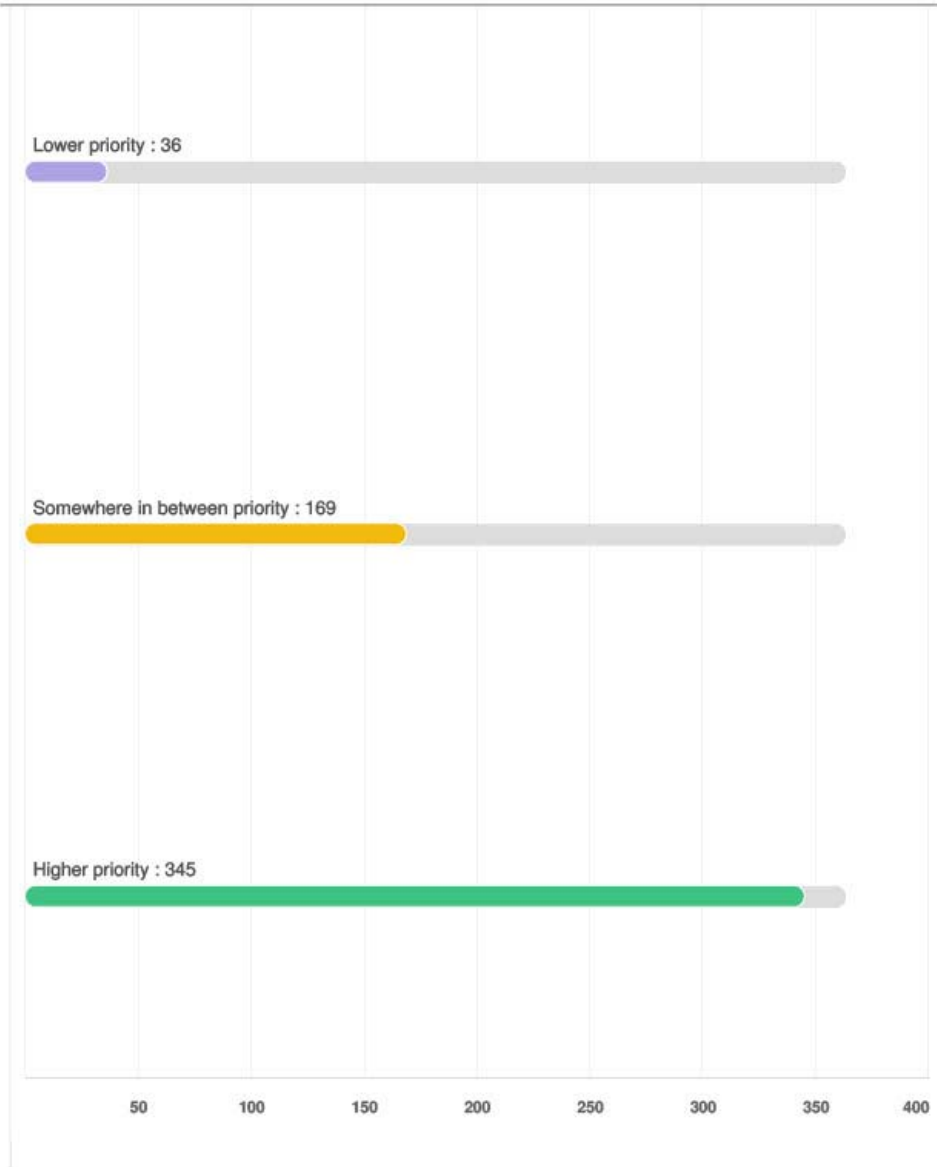
Optional question (573 response(s), 7 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question



MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

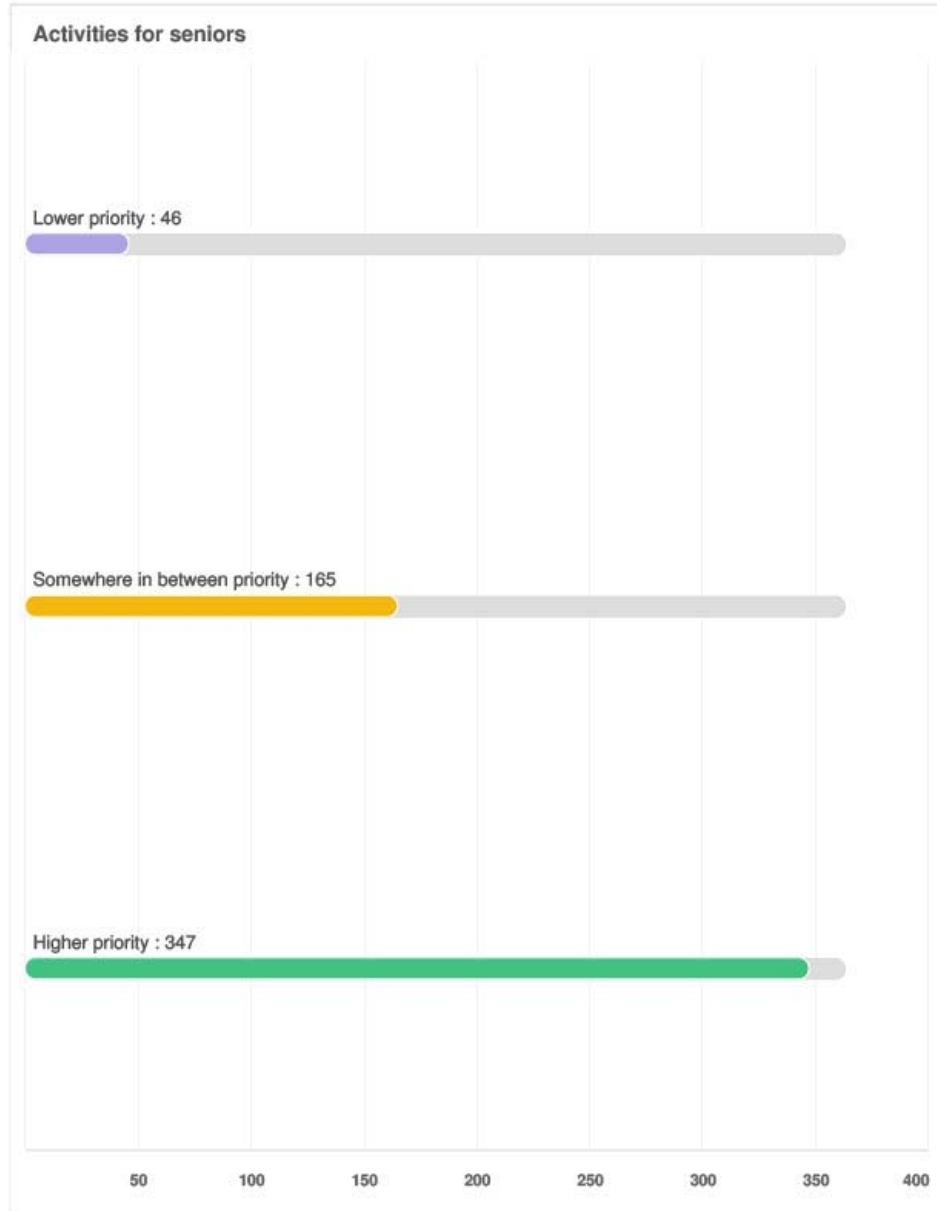
Q4 | If the City were to prioritize providing space at the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC) for some types of public uses more than others, which of the following would you recommend it prioritize for the community:

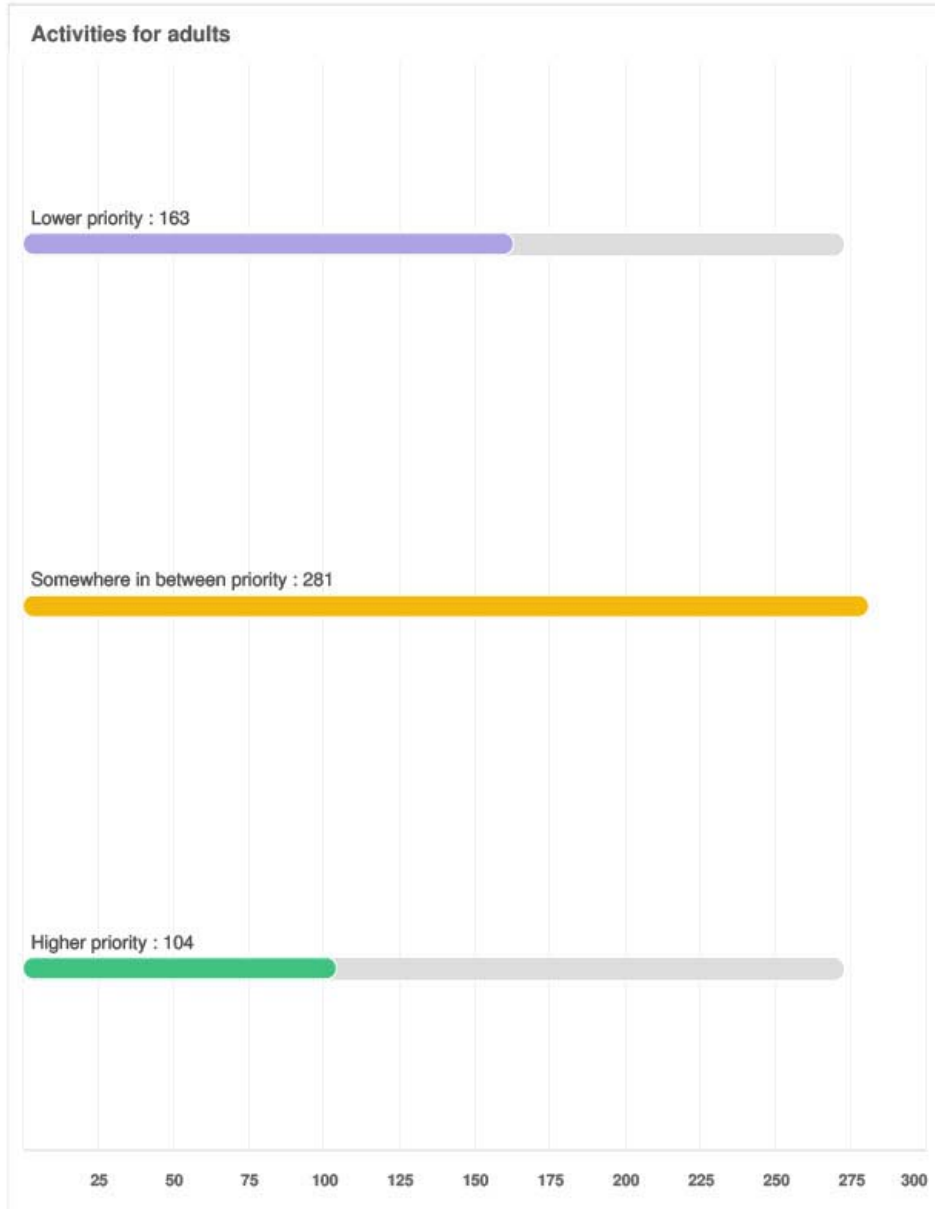
Activities for youth





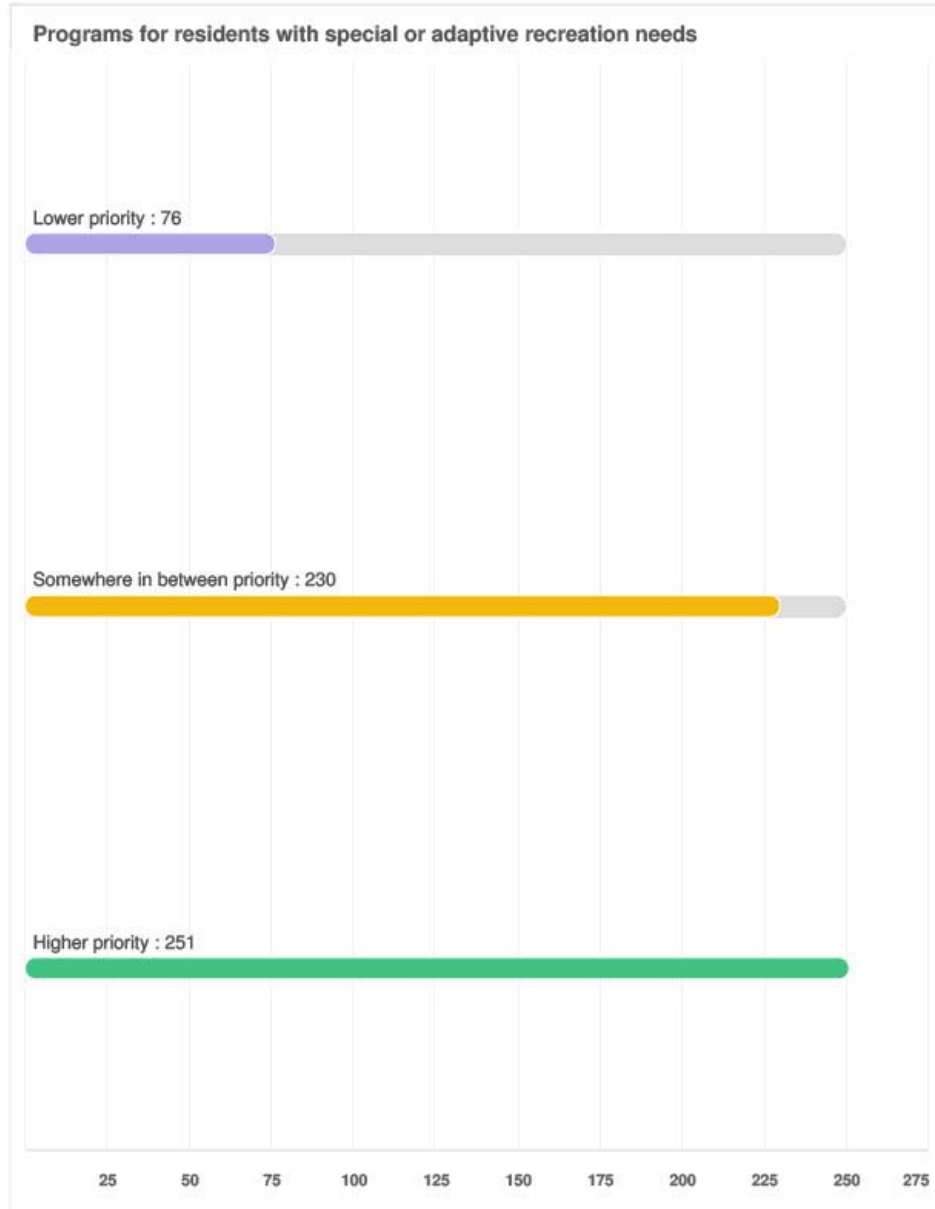
MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

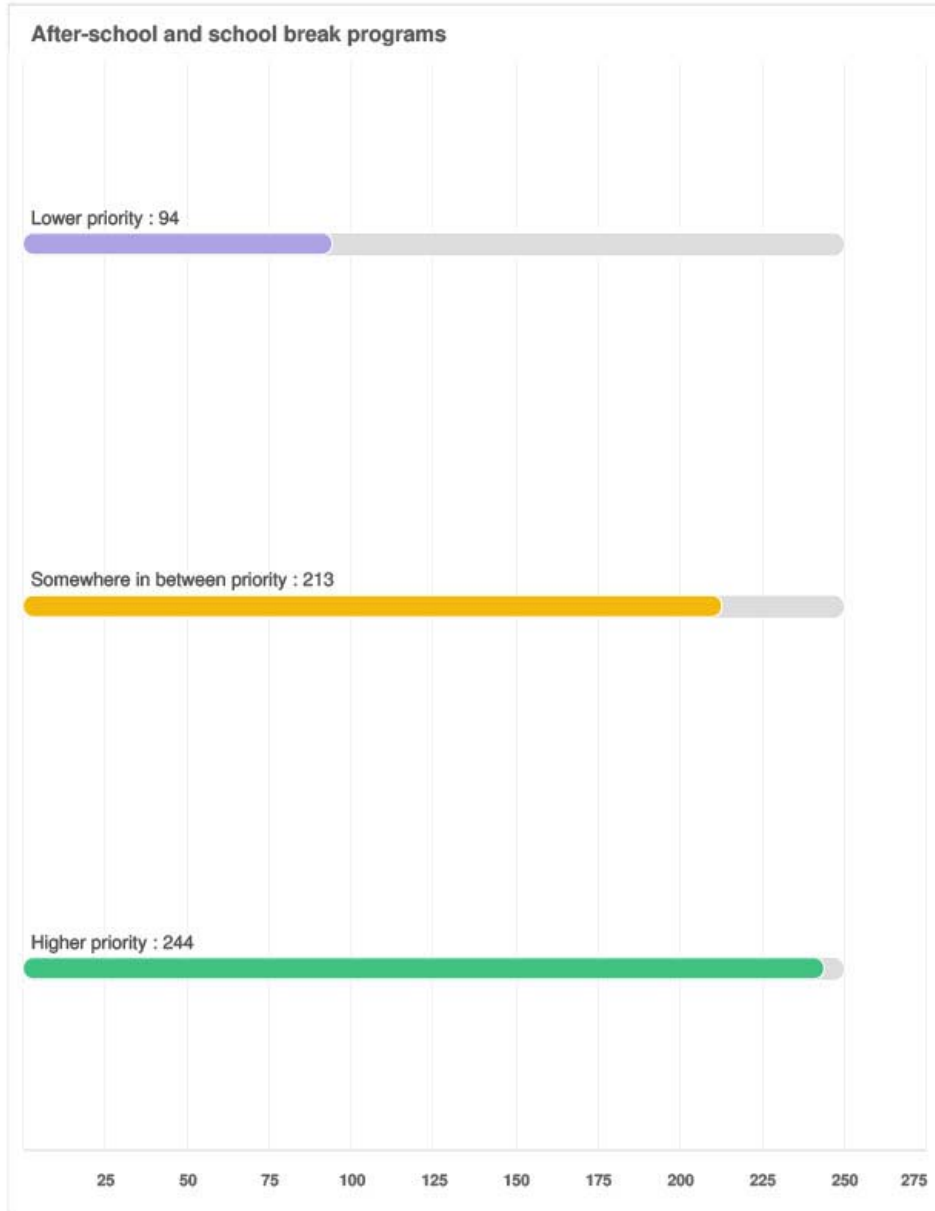






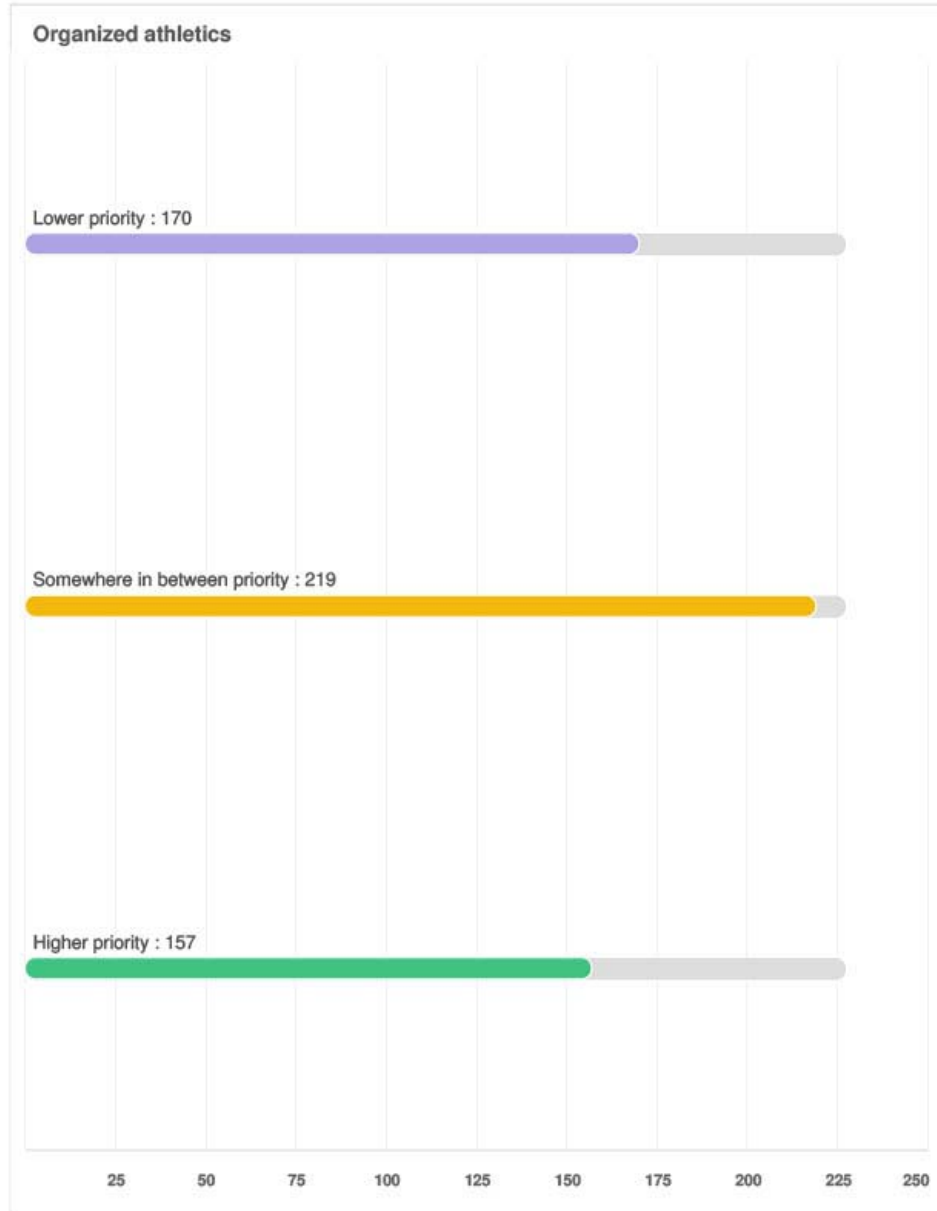
MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

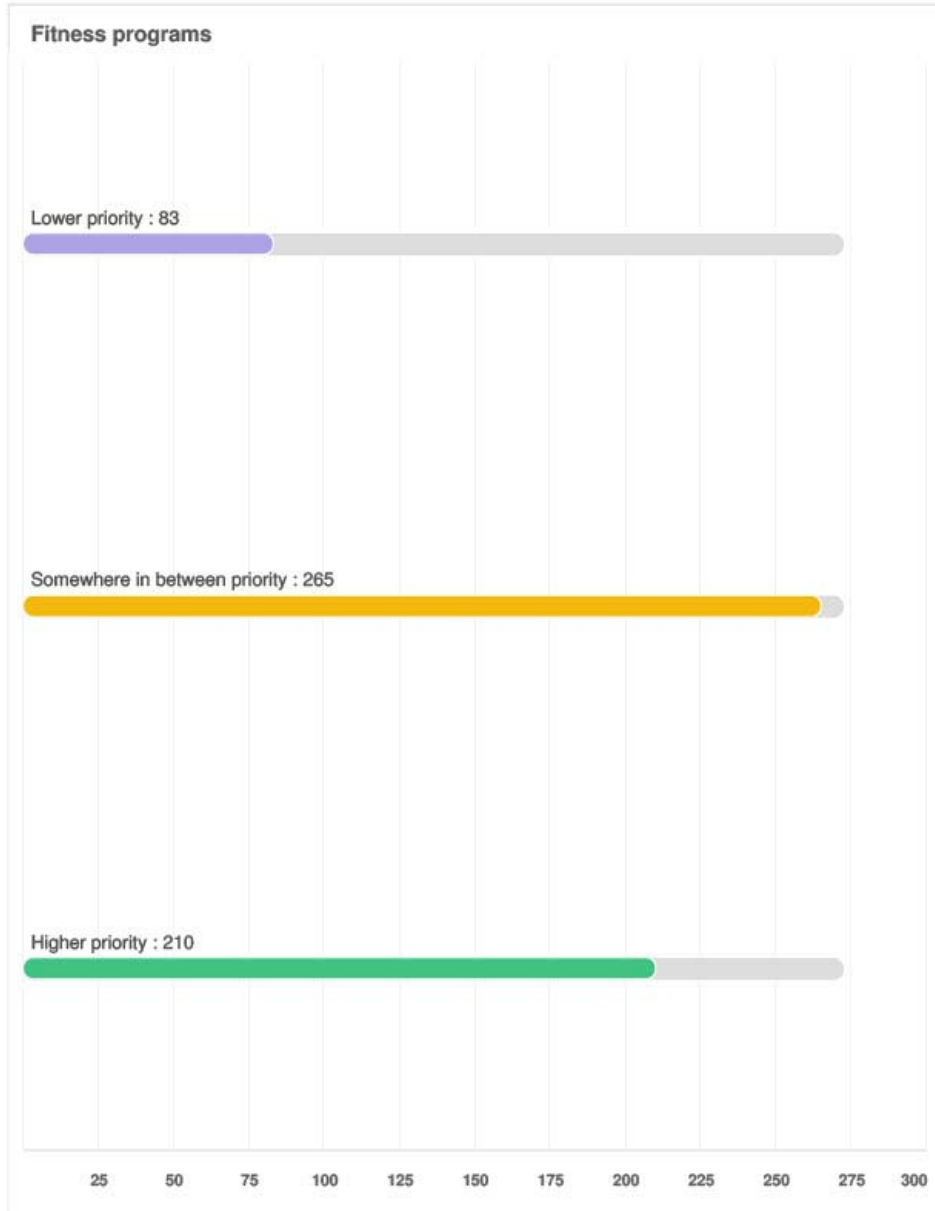






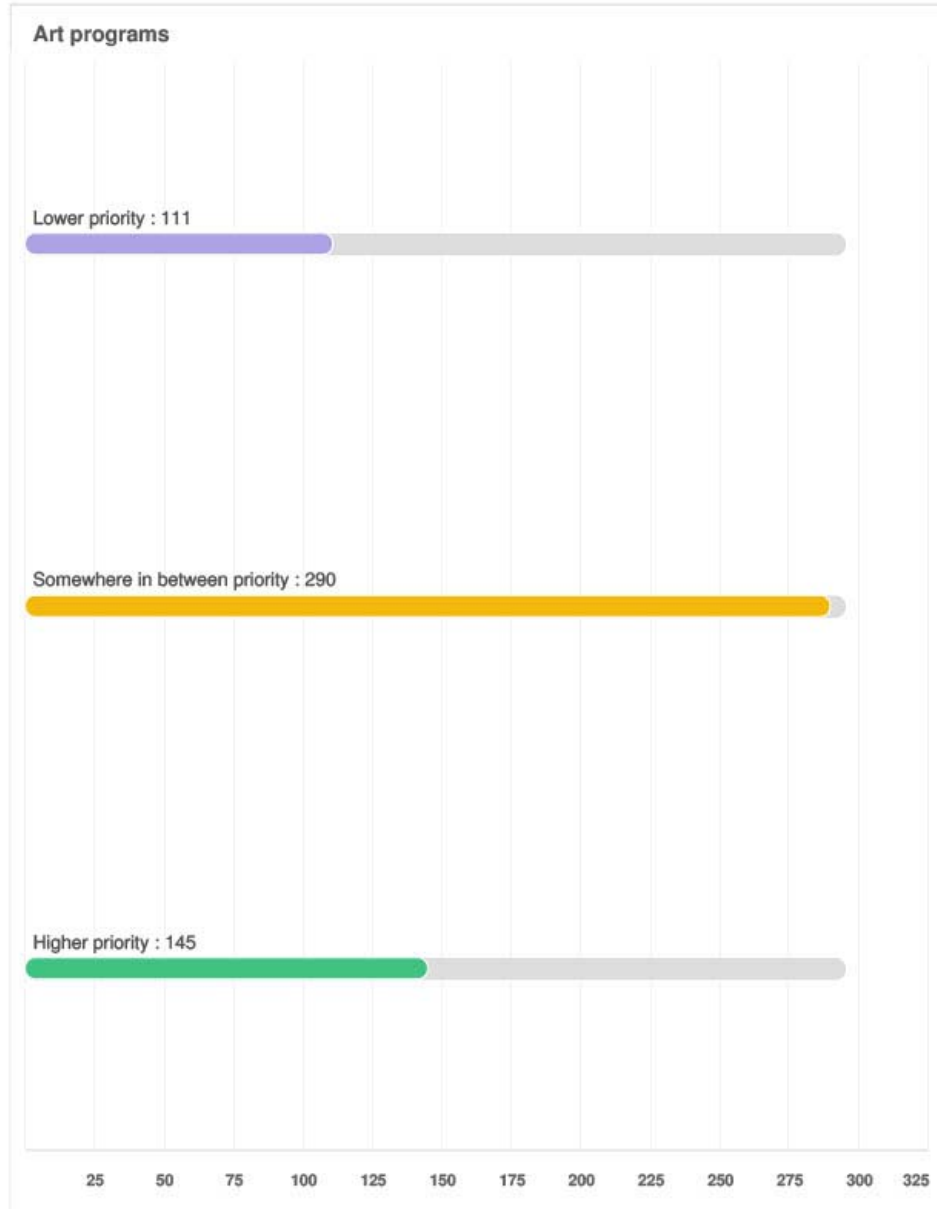
MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

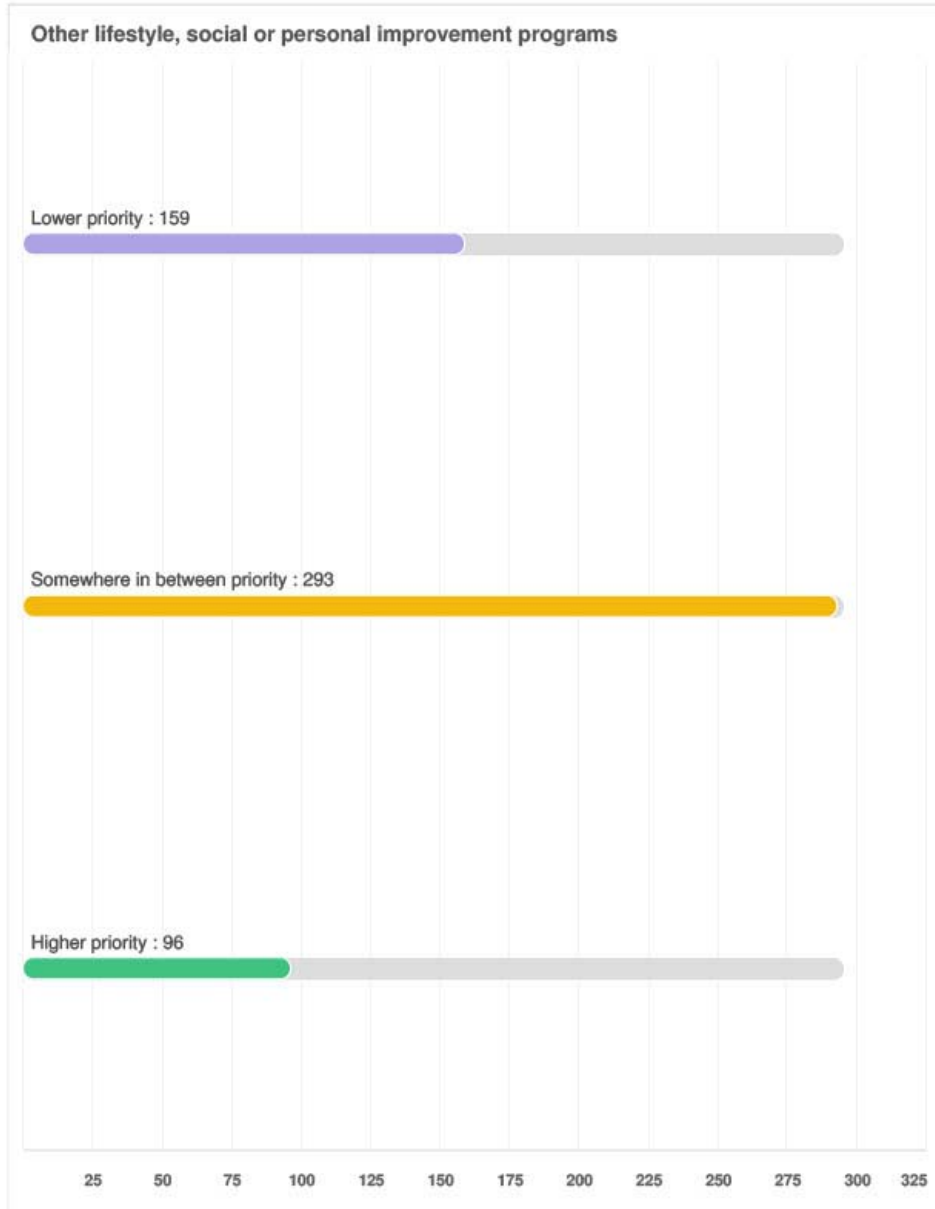






MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

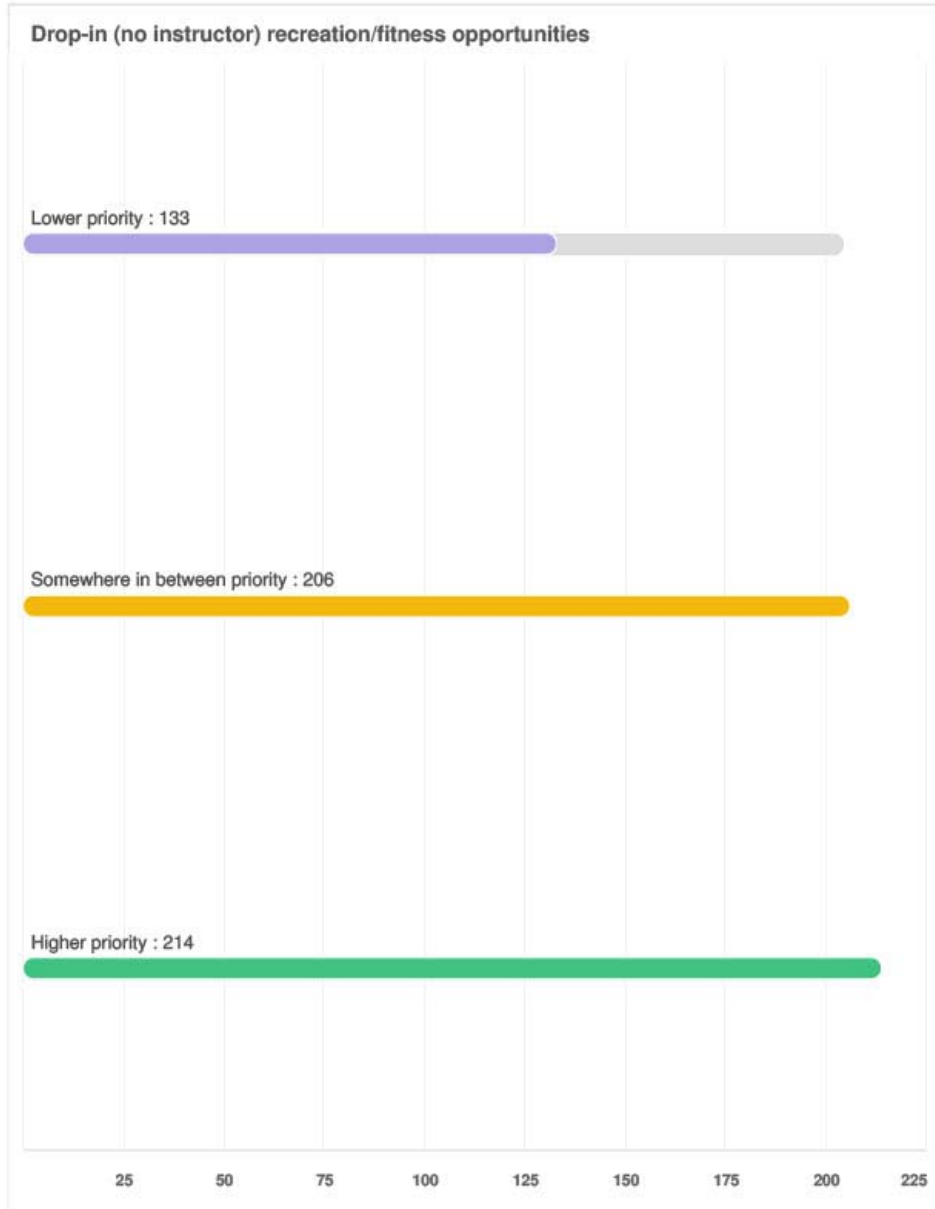






MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021





Q5 Please share with us any other ideas, considerations or input you may have concerning the future delivery of recreation and Mercer Island Community and Events Center programs



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

A photograph of a playground area. In the foreground, a large, thick tree trunk stands on the right side. The ground is covered in brown wood chips. In the middle ground, there is a playground structure with a prominent green slide on the left. The structure includes various climbing elements and platforms. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage under a bright sky.

APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY SURVEY #2



To: Jessi Bon, City Manager
From: Steve Duh, Conservation Technix, Inc.
Date: September 30, 2021
Re: **Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan**
Community Survey #2 Summary Results

Conservation Technix is pleased to present the results of the survey of the general population of the City of Mercer Island that assesses the recreational needs and priorities of the community.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In close collaboration with the City of Mercer Island staff and the Parks & Recreation Commission, Conservation Technix developed the 15-question survey.

The survey was mailed to a random sample of 2,500 households within the boundaries of the City of Mercer Island on August 23, 2021. The random sample of addresses was unique to this survey and not the same address list used in the PROS Plan survey from early 2020. Reminder postcards were mailed to the 2,500 households on September 1.

An online version of the survey was also available and posted to the City's website. The online survey was posted several days after the mail survey was distributed to allow the mail recipients to receive first notice about the survey.

Information about the survey was provided on the City's website home page and on the Let's Talk PROS Plan page. It also was promoted via multiple social media postings. The survey was closed on September 17.

Overall, 505 responses were received from the random-sample mail survey (20% response rate), and 824 responses were generated via the online link published on the City's website. In total, 1,329 survey responses were recorded. These may not have been unique responses given that someone completing the mail survey could also complete the online survey. The data for the mail and online surveys was kept separate.

This report includes findings of community opinions based principally on mailed survey responses. The data is summarized for the mail and online surveys to highlight overall community preferences, with clarifying remarks on response differences between the two datasets.

Although households were randomly chosen to receive the mail survey, respondents were not necessarily representative of all City residents, see age demographics in the table on the following page indicating the higher response rate (as compared to population) from people age 65 and older for the mail survey.

The survey data was compared against the demographic data (e.g., age, location, number of children in the household) to examine if differences existed between the different respondent subgroups.

Age group	Survey Respondents			M.I. Population	
	Mail	Online-only	Combined	Full	Over 20
Under 20	<1%	2%	<2%	25%	--
20-34	5%	4%	4%	12%	16%
35-44	14%	20%	17%	12%	16%
45-54	22%	28%	26%	17%	23%
55-64	19%	23%	21%	14%	19%
65 and older	40%	23%	30%	20%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The survey summary on the following pages identifies variations in responses per question, if such variations existed and were significant between subgroups.

Percentages in the report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



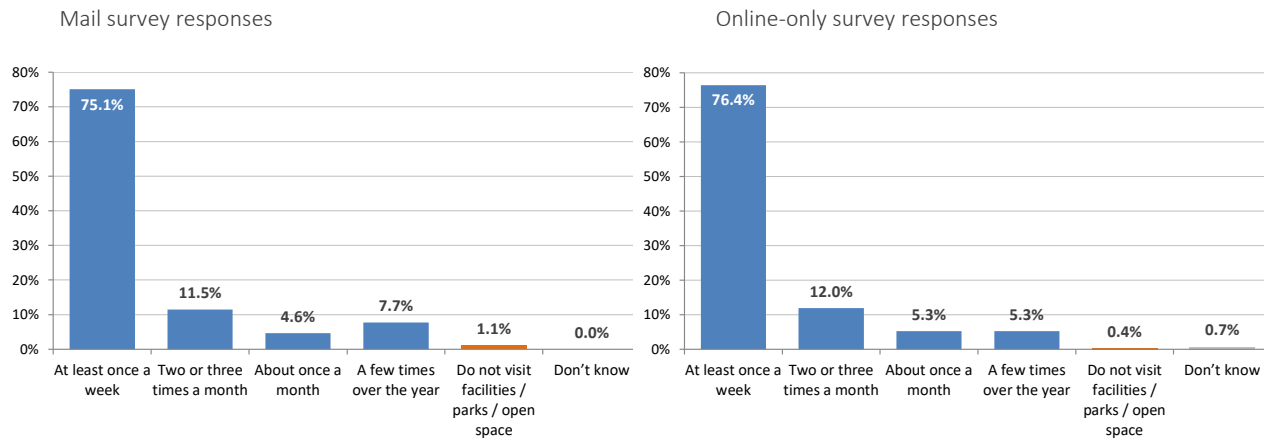
FULL RESULTS

How often do residents use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities?

Respondents were asked how often they, or members of their household, visited a Mercer Island Parks & Recreation park, recreation facility, or open space area. Visitation is high, with 75% of mail survey respondents visiting at least once a week and another 16% visiting one to three times per month. Only 7% of respondents visit just a few times per year. Very few (1%) did not visit a park last year. Responses about visitation were nearly identical in the online-only survey.

As compared to other subgroups, adults between 35 and 54 are the most frequent users of Mercer Island parks. Respondents of households with children also visit significantly more frequently than those without children. No significant differences in park visitation exist between respondents living in different areas of Mercer Island.

1. How often do you visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces?

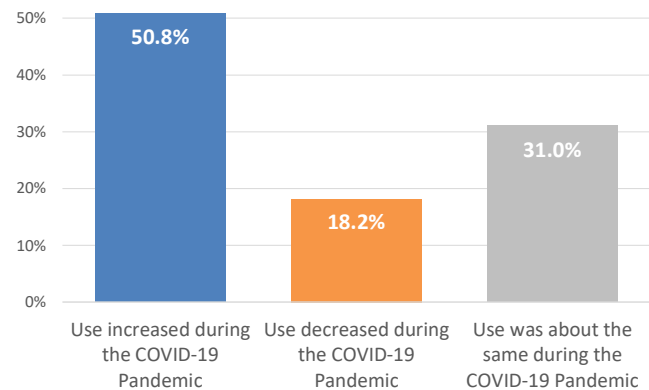


How has resident usage changed due to the COVID pandemic?

Half of all respondents (51%) indicated an increase in usage of parks, trails, and open space areas since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately one in five respondents (18%) said their usage decreased due to the pandemic. Approximately one-third noted their usage of parks, trails and open space has been the same. The mail survey and online-only survey responses were similar.

As compared to other subgroups, respondents between 20 and 34 noted slightly increased usage of parks, trails, and open space areas during the pandemic than other age groups. Respondents of households with two children also noted slightly increased usage as compared to other household types. No significant differences in park usage due to the pandemic were noted between respondents living in different areas of Mercer Island.

3. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your use of Mercer Island parks, trails and open space?

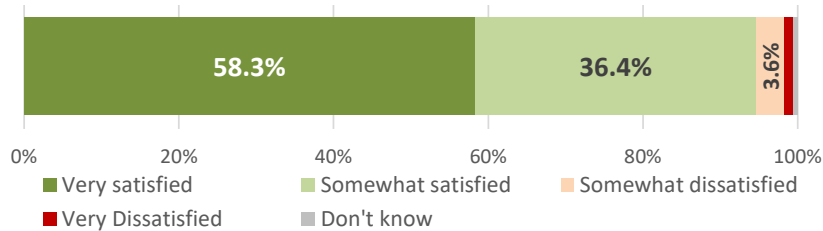


Are residents satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation?

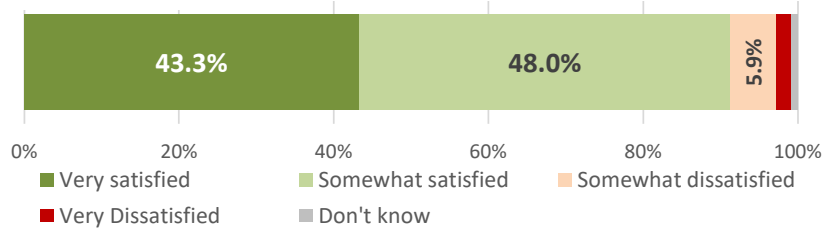
A large majority of respondents are somewhat to very satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation for parks, facilities, and open space areas (95% for the mail survey and 91% in the online-only survey). However, one in twenty respondents (5%) is either somewhat or very dissatisfied. This question was also re-tested from the 2020 survey to see if community sentiment has shifted over the past 18 months; the responses to both the mail survey and the online survey were nearly identical to that of the responses from the 2020 survey. Also, the online-only survey respondents were slightly less satisfied than mail survey respondents, with more than a 10 point difference in being ‘somewhat satisfied’ with the City’s facilities, parks or open spaces. There were no significant differences in levels of satisfaction between subgroups.

2. Rate your household’s overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces.

Mail survey responses



Online-only survey responses



What do residents see as the most needed improvements for parks, trails, and open space?

In an effort to further distinguish community priorities from those noted in the 2020 community survey, respondents were provided a range of options related to specific potential improvements to the Mercer Island park system and were asked to select their top three choices.

A strong number of respondents (44%) noted that connecting gaps in the trail system was a top priority, which was also 13 points higher than the next highest ranked option provided. Between one-quarter and one-third of respondents identified as the next top three options the following priorities: expanding maintenance and restoration of open space (31%), repairing or upgrading waterfront areas (29%), and improving restroom facilities (25%). Fewer than one in five respondents selected the remaining options. With the write-in ‘other’ option provided, 409 respondents provided comments, and the most common responses among these included:

- Add pickleball courts; convert tennis and/or basketball courts to pickleball
- Enhance maintenance, to include playground replacements, trail maintenance, pathway repaving and invasive plant management
- Off-leash dog management and leash law enforcement

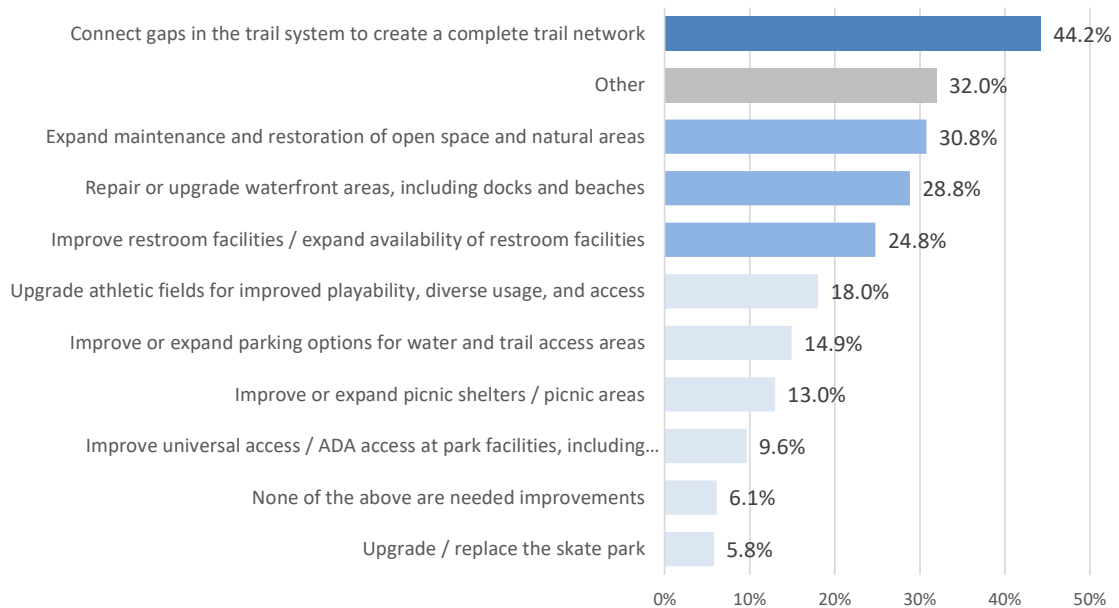


- Enhanced trash management, such as adding more trash cans and more frequent waste hauling
- Security and safety management, including managing for homeless encampments

Respondents to the mail survey were more favorable toward the top three most needed improvements by at least 10 points over those from the online-only survey. Respondents to the online survey were more strongly in favor of upgrading athletic fields (23% for online-only versus 10% for mail responses).

Respondents living in the southern portion of the island noted a slightly stronger interest in upgrading athletic fields. Respondents with children in the household more strongly supported the following improvements: improved picnic areas, improved restrooms, improved universal access, upgraded athletic fields, and upgraded skate park. Respondents over 65 years of age noted a stronger interest in expanded maintenance and restoration of open space, while those between 20 and 44 years of age more strongly supported improved picnic areas and improved universal access.

4. What do you think are the most needed improvements to the current City of Mercer Island parks system, including trails, and open space areas? Select UP TO 3 items.



Which outdoor recreation amenities are important to residents' households?

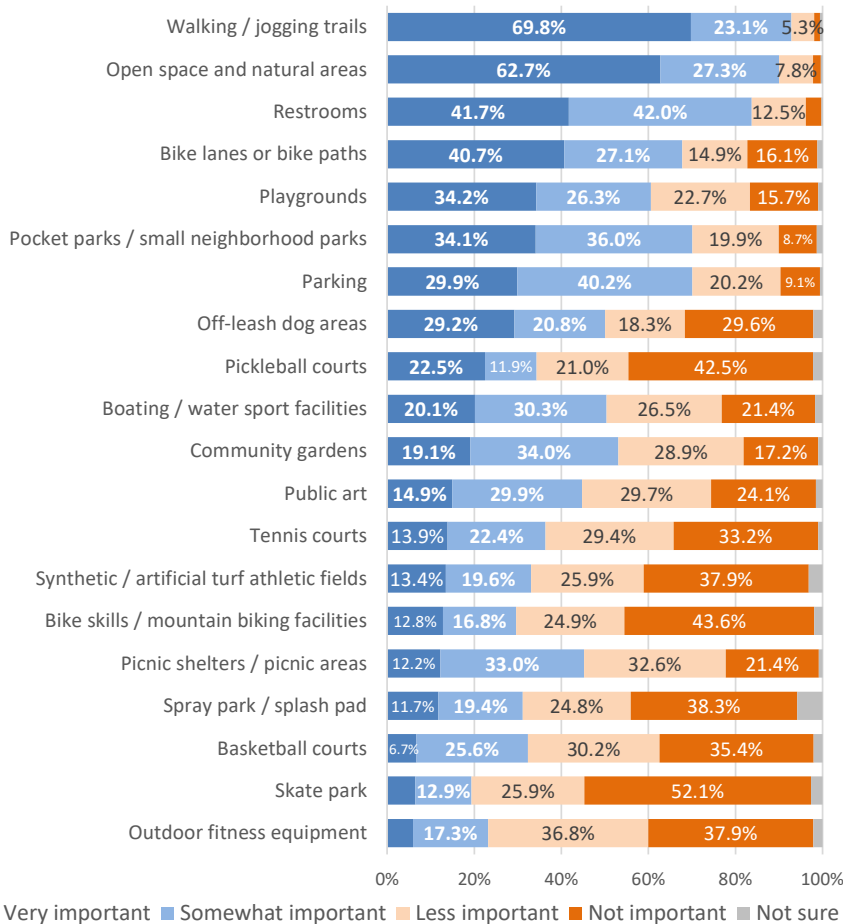
The survey provided a list of outdoor recreation amenities and asked respondents to identify those amenities that are important to their household, using a scale of very important to not important. Strong majorities of respondents indicated an interest in walking or jogging trails (93% very or somewhat important) and open space and natural areas (90% very or somewhat important). A second tier of amenities of strong interest include restrooms (84% very or somewhat important), bike lanes (68% very or somewhat important), pocket parks (70% very or somewhat important), parking (70% very or somewhat important) and playgrounds (61% very or somewhat important). Additionally, community gardens, boating and water sport facilities and off-leash dog areas were identified as either very or somewhat important by approximately half of respondents.

Respondents to the online-only survey were more likely than respondents to the mail survey to indicate pickleball courts as an important amenity (30% for online-only versus 7% for mail responses). Respondents to the mail survey noted a

strong level of importance of walking/jogging trails and open space/natural areas by more than 12 points over those from the online-only survey.

Respondents with two or more children in their household placed a slightly higher level of importance on restrooms, bike lanes, splash pad, bike skills area, and turf sport fields. In addition, respondents with children and those between 20 and 44 years of age noted a slightly higher level of importance for playgrounds and pocket parks. Respondents without children and those between 55 and 64 years of age indicated a higher level of importance for pickleball courts. Also, a substantial portion of the non-resident respondents (93%) noted the importance of pickleball courts. Respondents living in the northern portion of the island placed a higher level of importance on picnic areas than other locations.

5. How important are each of the following parks, trails or open space amenities to your household?



Respondents were asked to use the same list of amenities to also select their top three amenities, in an effort to identify community priorities. Four of the top five amenities selected aligned with the top tier responses based on the sum of very and somewhat important responses; these included walking/jogging trails (59%), open space and natural areas (33%), restrooms (27%) and playgrounds (20%). Approximately one in five respondents noted bike lanes (22%), pickleball courts (19%) and off-leash dog areas (18%) as important to their household. Also, local interest in pickleball courts outpaced support for any other field or court sport facility by at least a factor of two.

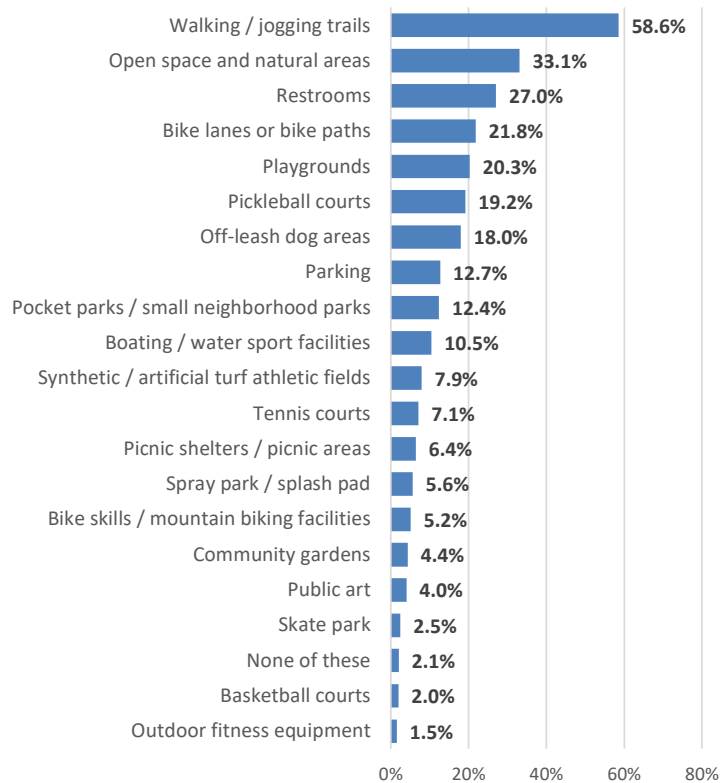


City of Mercer Island

PROS Plan: Survey #2 Summary Results

In reviewing the top five amenities between the mail and online-only survey response, four of the top five amenities identified were the same. Mail survey respondents included bike lanes and paths within the grouping of top five, and online-only respondents included pickleball courts in the top five.

6. Using the same list again, select UP TO THREE amenities from the list that are the most important to you and your household.

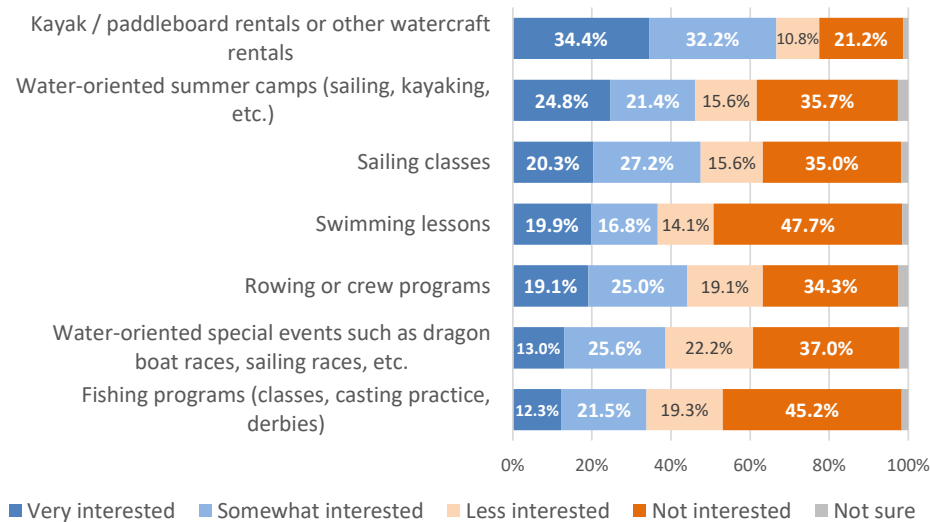


Which water-oriented programs and activities are of interest to residents’ households?

The survey asked respondents to identify their level of interest in a variety of water-oriented activities and programs. A majority of respondents (67%) were either very or somewhat interested in access to kayak or paddleboard rentals. None of the other options listed secured a majority of respondents’ interest; however, strong responses were noted for water-oriented summer camps (46%), sailing classes (47%), and rowing or crew programs (44%). Interest in fishing programs (33%) was the weakest of the options listed. Online-only survey respondents were ‘very interested’ in water-oriented summer camps by a larger degree than those from the mail survey (27% for online-only versus 21% for mail responses), which is likely due to the higher percentage of households with children responding to the online-only survey.

Households with children indicated stronger interest in all of the water-oriented program and activity options over households without children, with the strongest support for swimming classes (25 points higher on average) and water-oriented summer classes (13 points higher on average). Respondents living in the northern portion of the island indicated a slightly stronger interest in swimming lessons. Those living in the central portion of the island indicated a slightly higher interest for kayak and paddleboard rental opportunities.

7. Indicate your household’s interest in participating in the following aquatic programs and activities.

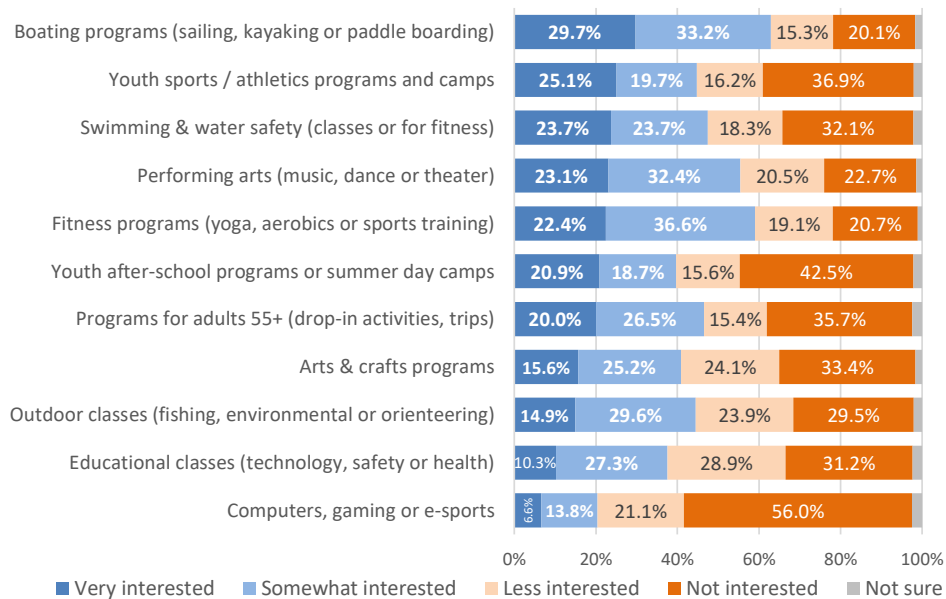




What recreation options are of interest to residents' households?

The survey asked respondents which types of recreation programs, classes, and activities their household might have interest in. Similar to the responses on water-oriented recreation, a majority of respondents (63%) were either very or somewhat interested in boating programs. A majority of respondents also indicated interest in fitness programs (59%) and performing arts (55%). In addition, at least two in five respondents indicated interest in programs for adults 55+ (47%), youth sports camps (45%), outdoor classes (45%), and arts & crafts programs (41%).

8. Indicate your household's interest in participating in the following recreation programs and activities.



Online-only survey respondents were 'very interested' in outdoor classes (16%) and youth sports (28%) by a slightly larger degree than those from the mail survey. Respondents to the mail survey were 'very interested' in fitness programs (26%) to a slighter larger degree.

Respondents living in the northern portion of the island indicated slightly stronger interest for swimming classes and fitness programs. Respondents with children in the household and those between 35 and 54 years of age had more interest for youth-oriented recreation options including youth sports, after-school programs, educational programs and outdoor camps. Respondents without children noted stronger interest for fitness programs and programs for 55+ adults. Respondents to the mail survey who were over 45 years of age indicated stronger interest for performing arts.

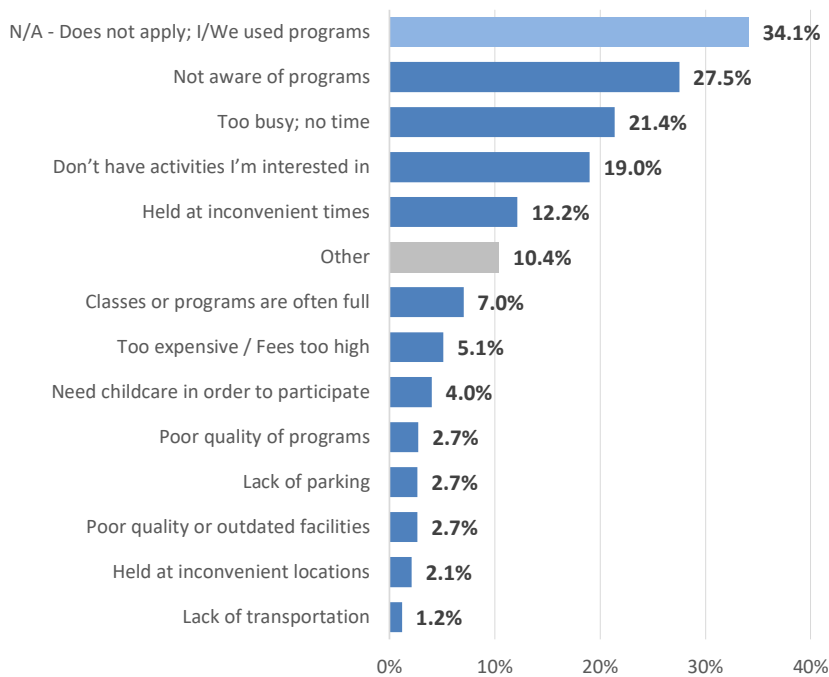
What are residents’ reasons for not participating in City recreation programs?

A majority of respondents (34%) indicated that the question about the reasons for not participating in recreation programs does not apply and that they use recreation programs. In terms of other feedback, two of the top three responses relate to conditions the City might be able to address in the future: being not aware of programs (28%) and not having activities of interest (19%) to respondents. Approximately one in five respondents (21%) indicated that they were too busy to participate in programs. Of the other options to choose, none were noted as barriers by more than 7% of respondents, with the exception of programs being held at inconvenient times (12%). Respondents to the online-only survey indicated the lack of childcare (5%) and programs being held at inconvenient times (14%) by a slightly larger degree than those from the mail survey.

Responses to the write-in option for ‘other’ included several comments about having recently moved to Mercer Island, having a lack of interest, utilizing private facilities, or references to age or physical abilities.

Respondents with children in the household indicated that a need for childcare and classes being full as limitations to participating in programs more often. No other significant difference were noted between other subgroups.

9. Prior to COVID-19, if your household did not often participate in or utilize recreation programs or activities offered by the City of Mercer Island, what are the reasons?
 CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.



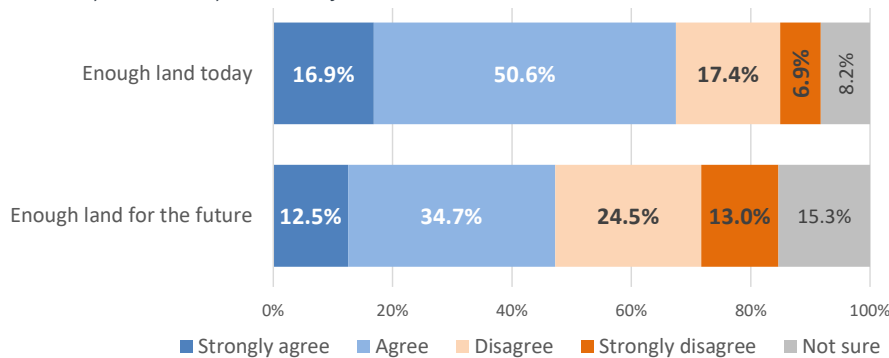


What are residents' sentiment and priorities regarding the supply of parkland?

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with two statements about the supply of parks, trails, and open space areas and whether there is enough land today and enough for the future. A strong majority of respondents (68%) indicated agreement that there is enough park and open space land today on Mercer Island. Approximately one-quarter of respondents (24%) disagree that enough land exists today for parks and open space. Considering the sentiment about the supply of park and open space land for the future, fewer than half of respondents (47%) feel there is enough land, which is a 20 point decrease from sentiment about the supply of parkland today. More than two-thirds of respondents (37%) disagree that there will be enough parklands for the future. The percentage of 'not sure' responses regarding future sentiment doubled from that of having enough parkland today. No significant differences were noted between the mail survey and online-only survey responses.

Respondents over 55 years of age, those with three or more children, or those living in the northern portion of the city indicated a stronger sentiment about disagreeing with the statement that Mercer Island has enough parkland for the future. No other significant differences were noted between the subgroup responses.

10. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: *The City of Mercer Island has enough land for parks, trails and open space to meet community needs today and in the future.*

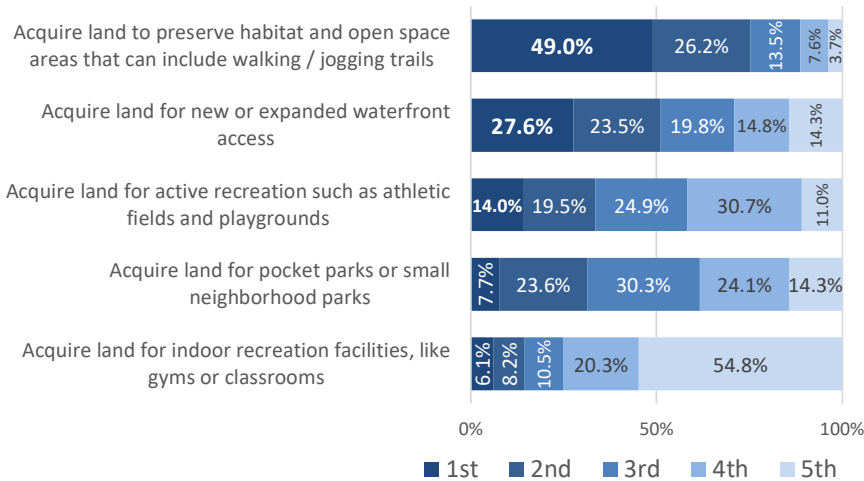


In a follow-up question, respondents were asked to prioritize in a forced-rank question which types of parkland acquisitions should be a priority if the City were to acquire additional parkland. Nearly half of respondents (49%) prioritized the acquisition of land to preserve habitat and open space as their top choice, and 75% of respondents indicated this option as either their first or second priority in rank order. Acquiring land for waterfront access was ranked as the second highest priority, with 51% of respondents indicating this option as either their first or second priority.

The priority rankings indicated by the responses to the mail survey and the online-only survey were listed in the same order; however, respondents to the mail survey indicated slightly greater strength in priority for acquiring land to preserve habitat and open space (84% for mail versus 70% for online-only responses as first choice priority).

Respondents between 35 and 44 years of age and households with two or more children indicated that acquiring land for waterfront access and for active recreation uses was a higher priority than other household types. Respondents over 55 years of age and households without children indicated that acquiring land to preserve habitat and open space was a higher priority than others.

11. If the City of Mercer Island were to acquire additional park land, please rank your land acquisition priorities from 1st (highest priority) to 5th (lowest priority). Select each priority only once.



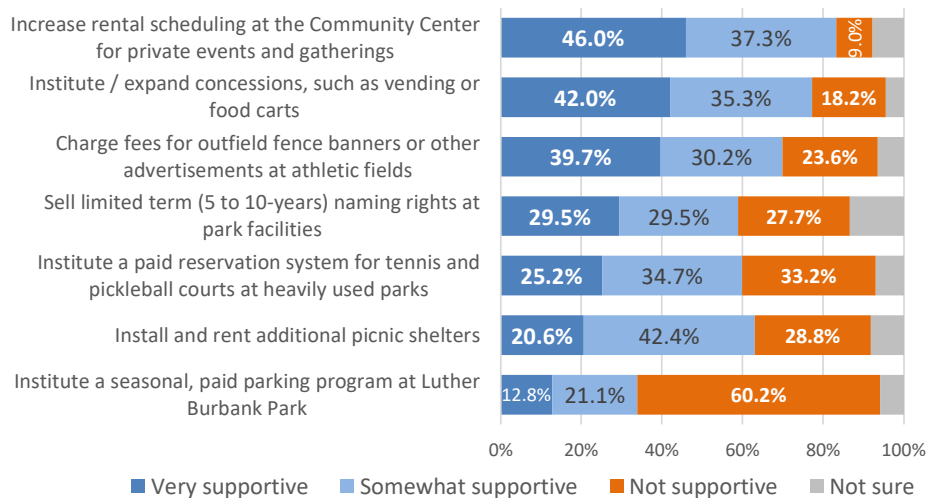
What revenue generating options would residents support?

The survey asked respondents their level of support from a list of potential revenue generating options. A majority of respondents were either very or somewhat supportive of every option listed, except for a paid parking program at Luther Burbank Park. A strong majority of respondents were either very or somewhat supportive of increasing rental scheduling at the Community Center (83%), instituting or expanding concessions options (77%), and charging fees for outfield fence banners or advertisements (70%). Significantly fewer respondents (34%) were supportive of implementing a paid parking program at Luther Burbank Park, with 60% of respondents being not supportive. No significant differences were noted between the mail survey and online-only survey responses.

Households with children were more supportive of all of the potential revenue options compared to households without children, with at least a 15 point difference in responses in support of outfield, selling naming rights, and concessions.

Those living in the northern portion of the city were slightly more favorable toward outfield banners than other parts of the City.

12. The City of Mercer Island is exploring options to increase revenue to support the delivery of parks and recreation services. How would you rate your level of support for each of the following potential suggestions?





What one improvement would residents make to Mercer Island's parks, trails or open space?

A closing question on the survey was open-ended for write-in responses, and the question asked "If you wanted the City of Mercer Island to do just one thing to improve parks, trails, and/or open space, what would it be?" In all, 802 write-in responses were provided. The most frequently noted remarks include the following:

- Improve maintenance of existing parks, trails, and open space, including more frequent trash removal, weed and invasive plant management and eliminating the use of certain pesticides/herbicides
- Create more trail connections and linkages, including improved trail safety and separating bike and pedestrian uses
- Provide pickleball
- Acquire additional open space and provide additional beach or waterfront access, including street end improvements
- Provide additional amenities, such as more/larger playgrounds, splash pads and restrooms
- Replace the Luther Burbank Park dock
- Provide additional off-leash parks and trails, and also enforce leash laws
- Upgrade sport fields

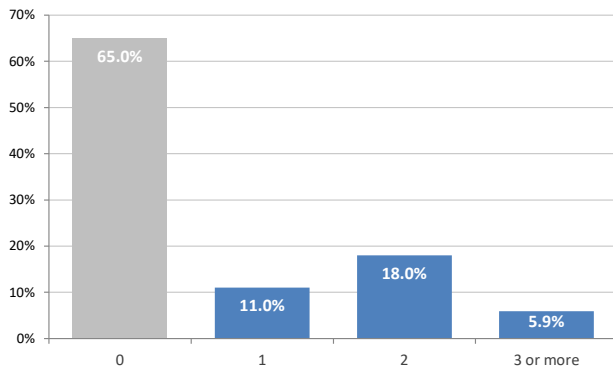
The full list of write-in comments is on file with the Parks & Recreation Department.

Demographics

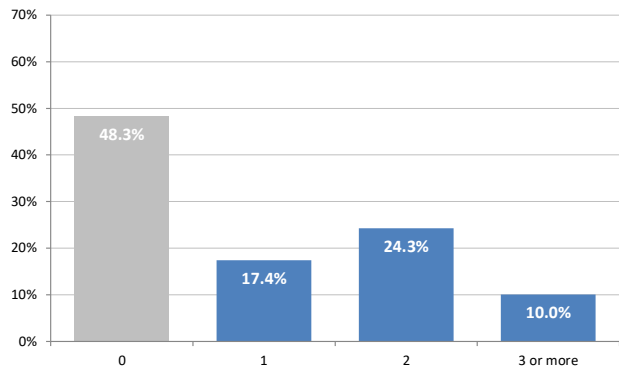
Number of Children in Household

Nearly seven in ten respondents to the mail survey (65%) have no children in their household. These households tended to include older adults (over age 55). The remaining 35% of households have one (11%), two (18%), or three or more (6%) children in the home. These responses from the random-sample mail survey are nearly identical to that of the 2020 survey. Online-only respondents were 16% more likely to have children at home than mail survey respondents.

Mail survey responses



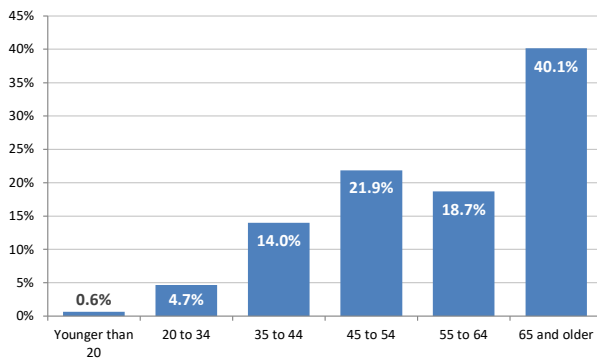
Online-only survey responses



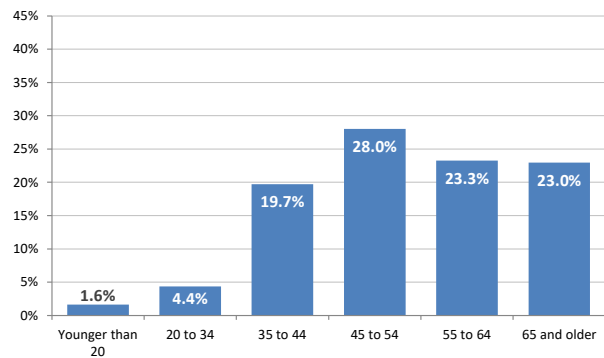
Age

Nearly 40% of respondents to the mail survey were over 65 years of age. Another 19% were between 55 and 64, while 22% were 45 to 54. There were few responses from younger residents, 14% of responses were from people 35 to 44 and 5% were from those under 35 years of age. Respondents to the online-only survey were predominately 45-64 years old (51%), followed by 35-44 (20%), with fewer residents over 65 responding.

Mail survey responses



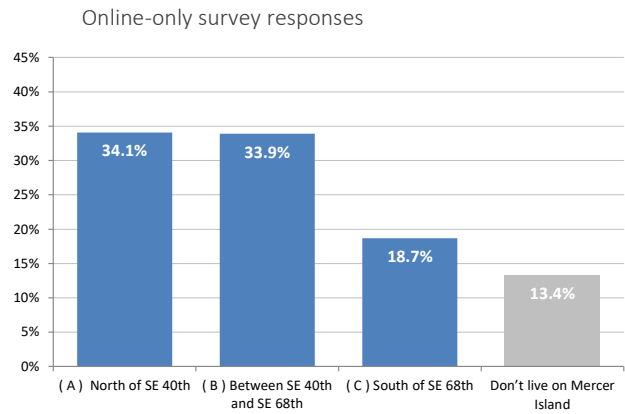
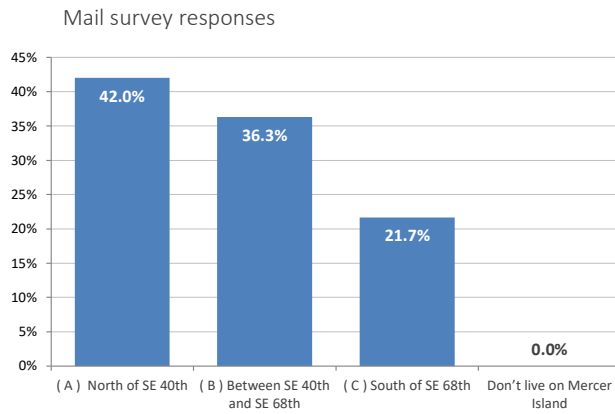
Online-only survey responses



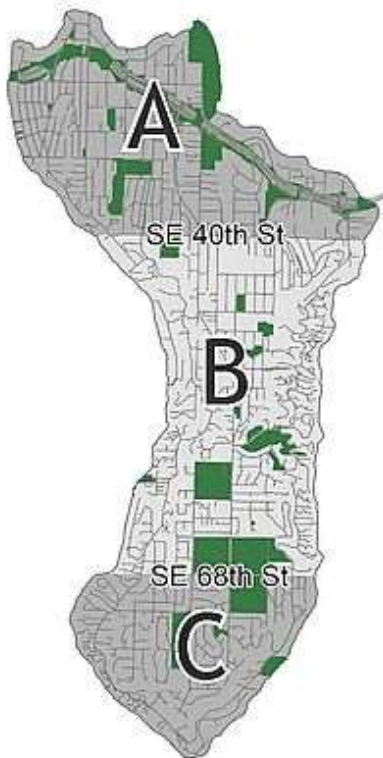


Location of Residence

Approximately 42% of mail survey respondents live on the northern part of the island (north of SE 40th Street). Another 36% respondents live between SE 40th and SE 68th Street. The remainder of respondents live south of SE 68th (22%). No respondents to the mail survey live outside of the City of Mercer Island. As with the household composition statistics, the random-sample mail survey responses were nearly identical to those of the 2020 survey. Respondents to the online-only survey were similarly distributed across the island. However, 13% of online-only respondents indicated that they do not live on Mercer Island.



Location Map (for reference)



ATTACHMENT 1. SURVEY INSTRUMENT



City of Mercer Island

2021 Community Survey on Parks and Recreation

Dear Mercer Island Resident:

The City of Mercer Island began updating the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan in early 2020. The PROS Plan will help inform parks and recreation priorities for the next 6 to 10 years. Work on the PROS Plan was suspended in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and resumed in early 2021. For more information on the PROS Plan, please visit the Mercer Island Let's Talk page (<https://letstalk.mercergov.org/miprosplan>).

In early 2020, the City facilitated a community survey on parks and recreation and now is conducting a second PROS Plan survey to better understand local priorities for improvements to the parks system. We understand that COVID-19 may have impacted your ability to visit parks and trails this past year. We ask that you consider the future orientation of the parks plan as you evaluate needs and priorities for the parks and recreation system. Your opinions are important to the City.




You can return the survey in the reply-ready envelope provided or with this QR code:

1. How often do you or members of your household visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities (Community Center, parks, trails or open space)?
 - At least once a week
 - Two or three times a month
 - About once a month
 - A few times over the year
 - Do not visit facilities / parks / open space
 - Don't know
2. Rate your household's overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, trails and open space.
 - Very satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Somewhat dissatisfied
 - Very dissatisfied
 - Don't know
3. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted your use of Mercer Island parks, trails and open space?
 - Use increased during the COVID-19 Pandemic
 - Use decreased during the COVID-19 Pandemic
 - Use was about the same during the COVID-19 Pandemic
4. What do you think are the most needed improvements to the current City of Mercer Island parks system, including trails and open space areas? Select UP TO 3 items. (Responses with more than three items selected will not be recorded.)
 - Improve or expand picnic shelters / picnic areas
 - Improve or expand parking options for water and trail access areas
 - Improve restroom facilities / expand availability of restroom facilities
 - Improve universal access / ADA access at park facilities, including playground upgrades
 - Repair or upgrade waterfront areas, including docks and beaches
 - Upgrade athletic fields for improved playability, diverse usage and access
 - Connect gaps in the trail system to create a complete trail network
 - Upgrade / replace the skate park
 - Expand maintenance and restoration of open space and natural areas
 - None of the above are needed improvements
 - Other: _____



Take this survey online using the link below or the QR code:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MercerIslandPROS>
 Or send it back in the reply-ready envelope provided. **Thank you in advance for participating!**



5. How important are each of the following parks, trails or open space amenities to your household? Then, Select UP TO THREE amenities from the list that are the most important to you and your household.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Less important	Not important	Not sure	TOP 3 Priorities
Picnic shelters / picnic areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Walking / jogging trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open space and natural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pickleball courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Synthetic / artificial turf athletic fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tennis courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pocket parks / small neighborhood parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike skills / mountain biking facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skate park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike lanes or bike paths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor fitness equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spray park / splash pad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Off-leash dog areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public art	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boating / water sport facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community gardens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Indicate your household's interest in participating in the following aquatic programs and activities.

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Less interested	Not interested	Not sure
Swimming lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sailing classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kayak / paddleboard rentals or other watercraft rentals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fishing programs (classes, casting practice, derbies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water-oriented special events such as dragon boat races, sailing races, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water-oriented summer camps (sailing, kayaking, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rowing or crew programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Community Survey on Parks and Recreation Preferences

7. Indicate your household's interest in participating in the following recreation programs and activities.

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Less interested	Not interested	Not sure
Swimming & water safety (classes or for fitness)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boating programs (sailing, kayaking or paddle boarding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outdoor classes (fishing, environmental or orienteering)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational classes (technology, safety or health)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performing arts (music, dance or theater)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs for adults 55+ (drop-in activities, trips)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fitness programs (yoga, aerobics or sports training)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth after-school programs or summer day camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arts & crafts programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth sports / athletics programs and camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computers, gaming or e-sports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Prior to COVID-19, if your household did not often participate in or utilize recreation programs or activities offered by the City of Mercer Island, what are the reasons? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> N/A - Does not apply; I/We used programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Classes or programs are often full |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not aware of programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Need childcare in order to participate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have activities I'm interested in | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of parking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor quality of programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor quality or outdated facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive / Fees too high |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Held at inconvenient times | <input type="checkbox"/> Too busy; no time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Held at inconvenient locations | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

9. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: The City of Mercer Island has enough land for parks, trails and open space to meet community needs today and in the future.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Enough land today	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enough land for the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. If the City of Mercer Island were to acquire additional park land, please rank your land acquisition priorities from 1st (highest priority) to 5th (lowest priority). Select each priority only once.

	Select each priority ONLY ONCE.					Don't know
	Highest priority → Lowest priority					
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	
Acquire land for new or expanded waterfront access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land to preserve habitat and open space that can include walking / jogging trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land for active recreation such as athletic fields and playgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land for pocket parks or small neighborhood parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land for indoor recreation facilities, like gyms or classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



11. The City of Mercer Island is exploring options to increase revenue to support the delivery of parks and recreation services. How would you rate your level of support for each of the following potential suggestions?

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not supportive	Not sure
Install and rent additional picnic shelters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charge fees for outfield fence banners or other advertisements at athletic fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institute a seasonal, paid parking program at Luther Burbank Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institute a paid reservation system for tennis and pickleball courts at heavily used parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institute / expand concessions, such as vending or food carts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase rental scheduling at the Community Center for private events and gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sell limited term (5 to 10-years) naming rights at park facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. If you wanted the City of Mercer Island to do just one thing to improve parks, trails and/or open space, what would it be?

The following questions help us understand whether we have a cross-section of the community responding to this survey. It's important that you provide a response to each question. Please remember your answers are confidential.

13. How many children under age 18 live in your household?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

14. What is your age?

- Younger than 20
- 20 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 and older

15. Using the map, in which section of Mercer Island do you live?

- (A) North of SE 40th
- (B) Between SE 40th and SE 68th
- (C) South of SE 68th
- Don't live on Mercer Island



Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Your input will help guide the development of the Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan.

Save a stamp! Take this survey online with the QR code or link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MercerIslandPROS>

Learn more about why Mercer Island needs a PROS Plan and stay informed about the process at <https://letstalk.mercergov.org/miprospan>



The City of Mercer Island is using the services of a consultant team who specializes in park and recreation planning.

Please return your completed survey in the enclosed Return-Reply Envelope addressed to:

Conservation Technix Inc.
PO Box 885
Orinda, CA 94563



APPENDIX D: VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING #1

Hawthorn Trail at Luther Burbank Park



Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House Meeting Summary

March 23, 2021 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. | Zoom Meeting

Presenters

- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Chris Hoffman, PRR

Breakout Room Facilitators

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessi Bon, City of Mercer Island • Ryan Daly, City of Mercer Island • Brian Hartvigson, City of Mercer Island • Katie Herzog, City of Mercer Island • Zachary Houvener, City of Mercer Island • Allen Hunter, City of Mercer Island | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jason Kinter, City of Mercer Island • Alaine Sommargren, City of Mercer Island • Merrill Thomas-Schadt, City of Mercer Island • Jean Akers, Conservation Technix • Nancy Thai, PRR • Lauren Wheeler, PR |
|--|--|

Introduction and Background

The City of Mercer Island began the process to update the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan in September 2019, but paused the planning work in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PROS Plan update process was restarted in December 2020.

Since restarting the planning process, several meetings have occurred including a joint meeting with the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 19, 2021 to formally re-start the planning process. This was followed by a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on February 4, 2021 to gather input to help inform the first Virtual Open House.

The first Virtual Open House was held on March 23, 2021 using the Zoom platform. The virtual public meeting provided an opportunity to share information about the PROS Plan update and gather feedback from community members to help inform further development the Plan.



Notifications

The project team used a variety of methods to spread the word about the Virtual Open House . These included:

- An article in the [MI Weekly newsletter](#)
- [Social media posts](#)
- Posting flyers at park kiosks, the P-Patch, and the Boat Launch
- Email notification sent to a variety of Parks and Recreation distribution lists.
- Inclusion in the City Manager’s Report at City Council meetings
- Posting information about the public meeting on the City website and [Let’s Talk page](#)



City of Mercer Island Facebook post reminding people to attend the Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House on March 23.

Meeting overview

PROS Plan consultant Steve Duh described the Mercer Island PROS plan process and provided an overview of the survey results. The survey was conducted in in early 2020 and prior to pausing the project in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The presentation also included an overview of the important role the community plays in the planning process including helping to shape the community’s vision for Mercer Island parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces.

Seventy-three participants attended the meeting. The meeting was recorded, and the video is available on the Let’s Talk Page.

What we heard

The project team used polling questions and facilitated breakout room discussions to gather input from meeting participants.

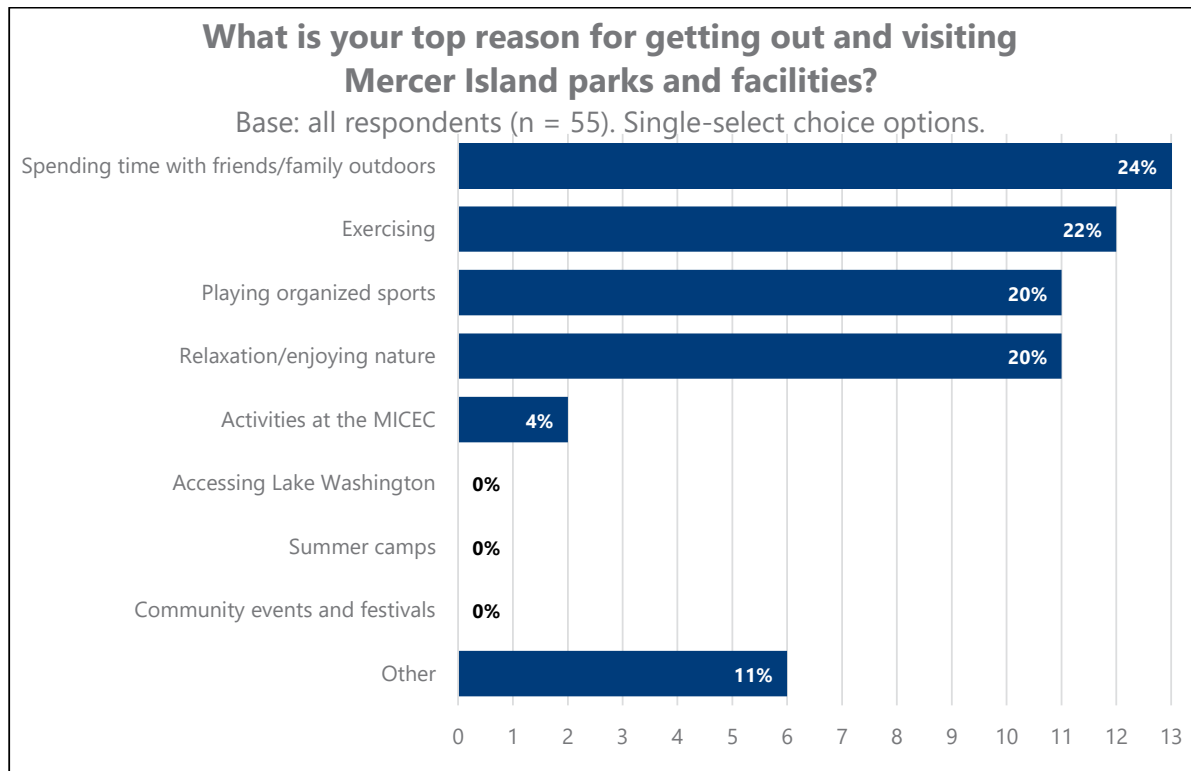


Polling

The project team asked the following questions using the polling function in Zoom. Attendees could share answers in the chat box if they selected “Other” as an answer.

1. **What is your top reason for getting out and visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities? (Single choice)**
 - a. Exercising
 - b. Spending time with friends/family outdoors
 - c. Accessing Lake Washington
 - d. Playing organized sports
 - e. Activities at the MICEC
 - f. Relaxation/enjoying nature
 - g. Summer camps
 - h. Community events and festivals
 - i. Other

The top two reasons for getting out and visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities were to spend time with friends/family outdoors and exercising. Playing organized sports and relaxation were tied for the number three spot. People who selected “Other” shared their top reason as walking their dog(s), mountain biking, and forest stewardship.

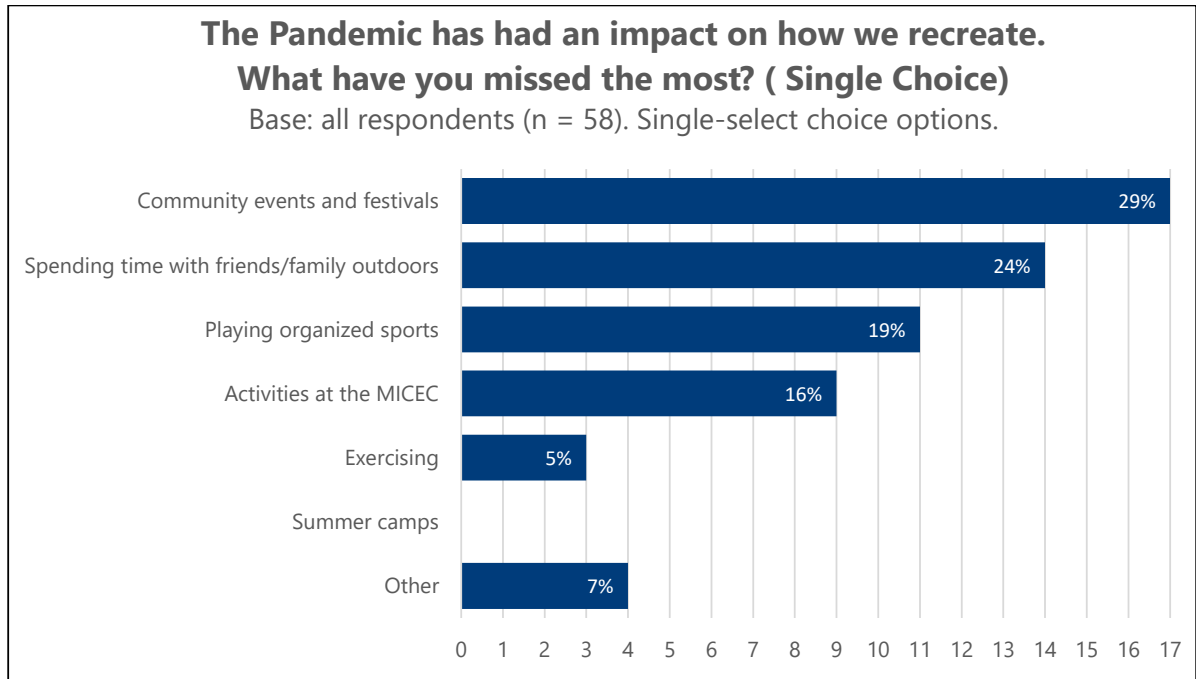




2. The Pandemic has had an impact on how we recreate. What have you missed the most? (Single choice)

- a. Exercising
- b. Spending time with friends/family outdoors
- c. Playing organized sports
- d. Activities at the MICEC
- e. Summer camps
- f. Community events and festivals
- g. Other

The majority of respondents selected they missed community events and festivals the most during the Pandemic. Spending time with friends/family outdoors was second. People who selected “Other” shared they most missed mountain biking and going to the beach.

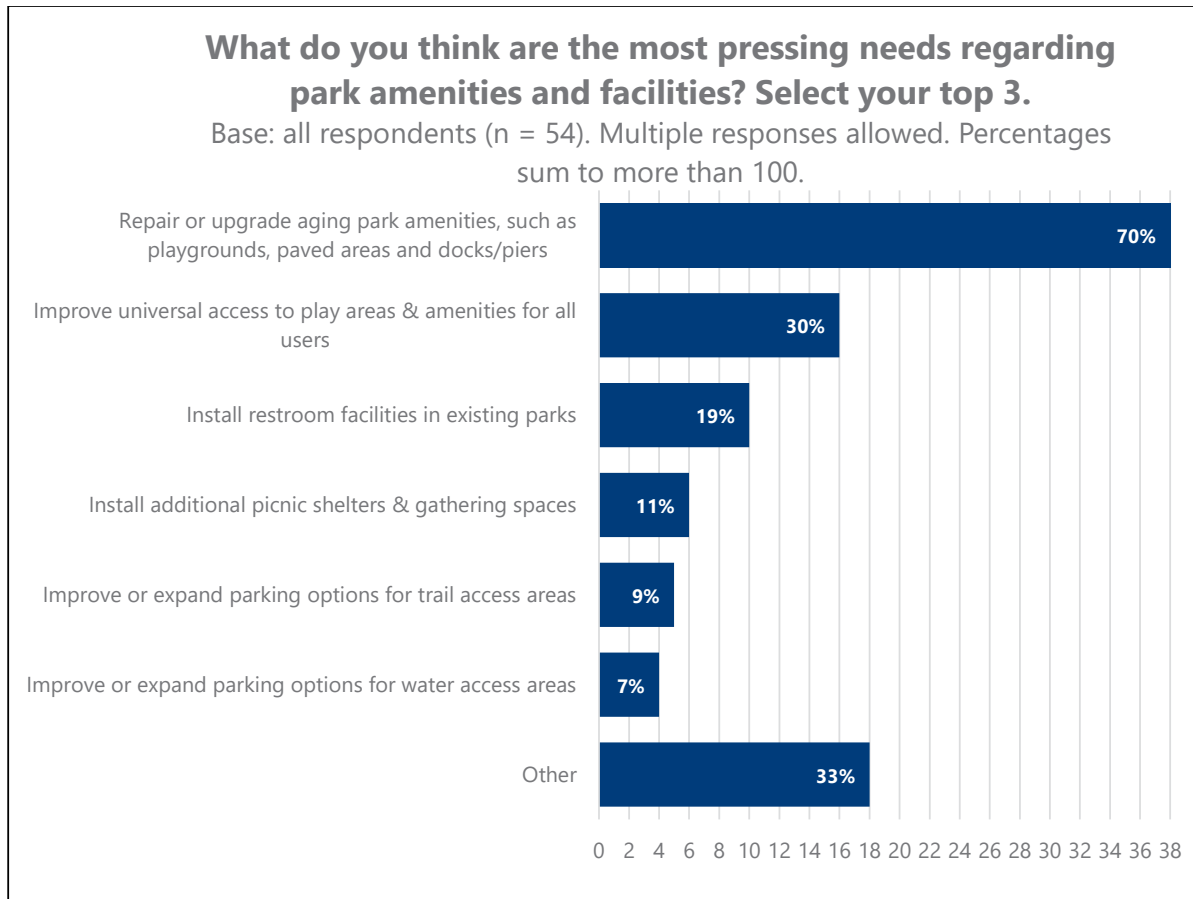




3. What do you think are the most pressing needs regarding park amenities and facilities? Select your top 3.

- a. Improve universal access to play areas & amenities for all users
- b. Install additional picnic shelters & gathering spaces
- c. Improve or expand parking options for water access areas
- d. Improve or expand parking options for trail access areas
- e. Repair or upgrade aging park amenities, such as playgrounds, paved areas and docks/piers
- f. Install restroom facilities in existing parks
- g. Other

Over two-thirds of the 54 respondents thought repairing or upgrading aging park amenities is one of the most pressing needs regarding park amenities and facilities. People who selected “Other” shared they thought the most pressing needs were more mountain bike specific trails and bike parks, indoor and outdoor pickleball courts, allocating more funds for trail maintenance and forest restoration efforts, improving and expanding trails, and synthetic turf fields at schools or public parks.

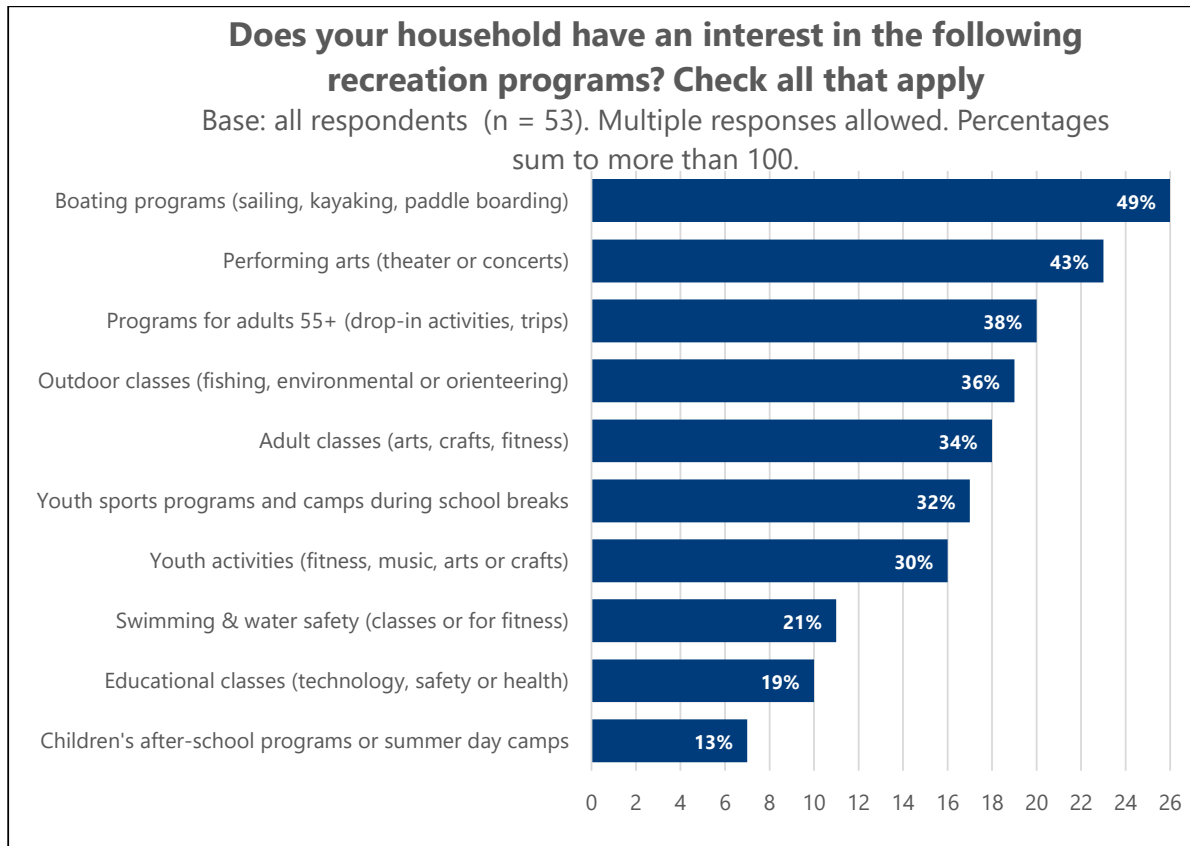




4. Does your household have an interest in the following recreation programs? Check all that apply.

- a. Swimming & water safety (classes or for fitness)
- b. Boating programs (sailing, kayaking, paddle boarding)
- c. Outdoor classes (fishing, environmental or orienteering)
- d. Educational classes (technology, safety or health)
- e. Performing arts (theater or concerts)
- f. Programs for adults 55+ (drop-in activities, trips)
- g. Adult classes (arts, crafts, fitness)
- h. Children's after-school programs or summer day camps
- i. Youth activities (fitness, music, arts or crafts)
- j. Youth sports programs and camps during school breaks

Nearly half of the 53 respondents had an interest in boating programs followed by 43 percent of respondents having an interest in performing arts. Four of the top five responses (boating programs, performing arts, outdoor classes, and adult classes) were also in the top five responses to the same question that was part of the first community survey conducted in early 2020. People who selected “Other” share they have an interest in bicycle safety and maintenance programs, inclusive activities for adults and children with disabilities, and first aid and CPR classes.





Breakout Room Discussions and Key Themes

The project team hosted three breakout room sessions to provide attendees an opportunity to share feedback and ideas in small group settings. All breakout room sessions and questions are listed below and organized by key themes as summarized by the project team.

#1 Beaches, Waterfront & Water-oriented experiences

- What's working well at our waterfronts?
 - Appreciation for the street end parks
 - Appreciation for waterfront beaches (especially Groveland and Proctor Landing), parks, and access
- What could we do better?
 - Improve water safety by having lifeguards on duty
 - Improve infrastructure such as repairing docks and cement that is aging and providing seating and more trash cans
 - Increased and safer access to the water for hand-carry watercraft, such as kayaks, and for people with accessibility needs
- If you had to pick one area to focus on for water-oriented recreation experiences, what would it be?
 - Improve accessibility of street end parks and provide clearer signage to find them
 - Provide boating classes, facilities, and rentals

#2 Trails:

- What's working well with the Mercer Island trail system?
 - Appreciation for the variety of rustic and paved trails that connect around the Island that can be used in a variety of ways
 - Appreciation for well-maintained trails
 - Appreciation for space to ride bicycles and for mountain biking
- What could we be doing better?
 - Clearer signage and education about the trails available on Mercer Island
 - Provide clearer signage about dogs on trails or in off-leash parks
 - Expand trails available for bicycles
 - Improve infrastructure and accessibility on the trails
 - Repair paved trails that need it
 - Consider designating parts of trails for certain use to promote walking and bicycle safety
 - Improve safety at street crossings
 - Balance trails for active and passive uses
 - Expand BMX trails
 - Protect and repair walking and hiking trails
- What's one new idea for the trail system?
 - A centralized location to learn about the trail system, whether that is a website or smartphone application
 - Expand mountain biking opportunities
 - Provide opportunities for community members to participate in maintenance



#3 Balancing access to nature with active park uses

- What are your thoughts on our current mix of active and passive uses of open space and parks?
 - Mix of community members who feel there is a good balance between passive and active uses of space and those who would like more passive use space and more active use space. Wide range of responses.
- What would you do differently?
 - Make Mercer Island spaces more accessible
 - Make spaces usable all year round, for example adding lighting and turf grass to some spaces
 - Update some spaces to have multiple uses
 - Provide independent oversight at Snake Hill
 - Would like to see more opportunities to play pickleball, for example updating the old tennis courts at Luther Burbank Park to pickleball courts
- Should the City invest in acquisition of new park land and/or open space?
 - Interest in strategic land acquisition, but acknowledgement that cost and availability may be prohibitive
 - Interest in improving what Mercer Island already has and using those spaces effectively
- What's one new idea?
 - A lot of interest to update some tennis courts to provide space to play pickleball
 - Add new opportunities such as bouldering or a museum
 - Provide more signage and wayfinding to help people find the space for the activity they are seeking

Next Steps

The project team will use the feedback from this public meeting to inform the next community survey, future community engagement opportunities, and the PROS plan itself. Please send any questions or comments related to the Mercer Island PROS plan to PROS@mercerisland.gov.



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



APPENDIX E: VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING #2

Climbing wall during a special event at Luther Burbank Park



Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Public Meeting DRAFT Meeting Summary

September 28, 2021 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. | Zoom Meeting

Presenters

- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Chris Hoffman, PRR

Breakout Room Facilitators

- Ryan Daly, City of Mercer Island
- Jason Kinter, City of Mercer Island
- Merrill Thomas-Schadt, City of Mercer Island
- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Jean Akers, Conservation Technix
- Nancy Thai, PRR
- Lauren Wheeler, PRR

Introduction and Background

The City of Mercer Island began the process to update the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan in September 2019, but paused the planning work in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PROS Plan update process was restarted in December 2020.

Since restarting the planning process, several meetings have occurred including a joint meeting with the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 19, 2021 to formally re-start the planning process. This was followed by a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on February 4, 2021 to gather input to help inform the first Virtual public Meeting.

The first Virtual Public Meeting was held on March 23, 2021 using the Zoom platform. The virtual public meeting provided an opportunity to share information about the PROS Plan update and gather feedback from community members to help inform further development of the Plan.

The second Virtual Public Meeting was held on September 28, 2021. The project team provide an update on the PROS planning process, shared the community input the City has received to date, and provided another opportunity to explore that feedback and other topics that may be featured in the plan.

Notifications

The project team used a variety of methods to promote the Virtual Open House on September 28, 2021. These included:

- An article in the [MI Weekly newsletter](#)
- Social media posts



- Email notification sent to a variety of Parks and Recreation distribution lists.
- Inclusion in the City Manager’s Report at City Council meetings
- Posting information about the public meeting on the City website and [Let’s Talk page](#)

Meeting overview

PROS Plan consultant Steve Duh described the Mercer Island PROS plan process and reviewed the public planning process since the March 23, 2021 virtual open house.

The presentation included an overview of the important role the community plays in the planning process including helping to shape the community’s vision for Mercer Island parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces.

Fifty-five participants attended the meeting. The meeting was recorded, and the video will be available on the Let’s Talk Page.

What We Heard

The project team used polling questions and facilitated breakout room discussions to gather input from meeting participants.

Polling

The project team asked the following questions using the polling function in Zoom. Attendees could share answers in the chat box if they selected “Other” as an answer.

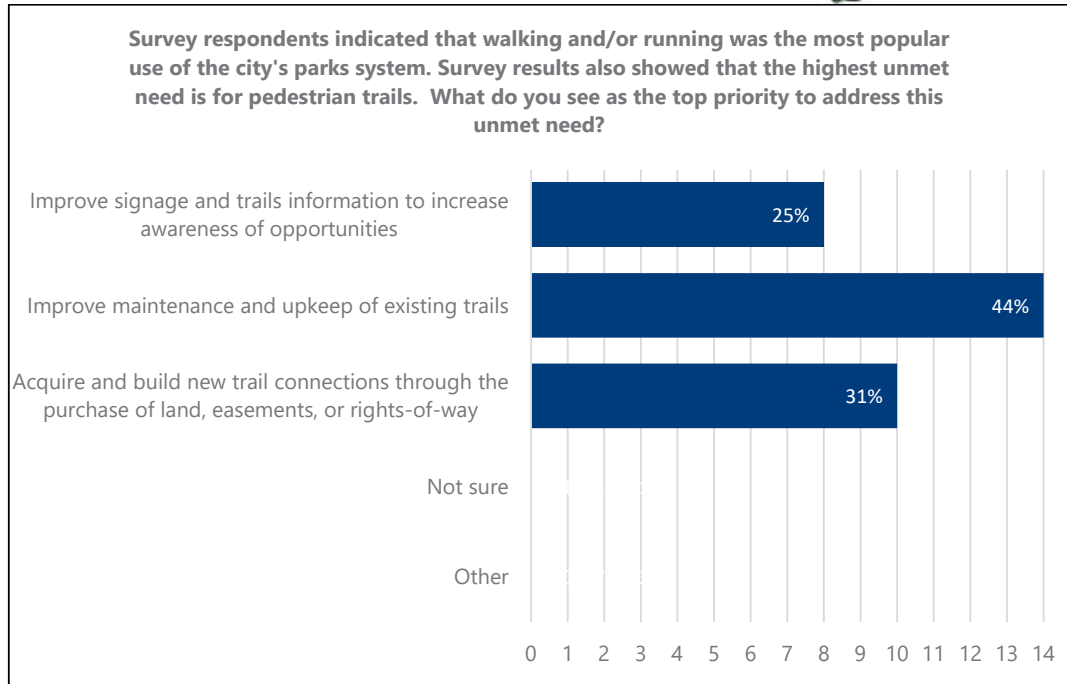
- 1. Survey respondents indicated that walking and/or running was the most popular use of the city’s parks system. Survey results also showed that the highest unmet need is for pedestrian trails. What do you see as the top priority to address this unmet need?¹**
 - a. Improve signage and trails information
 - b. Improve maintenance and upkeep of existing trails
 - c. Acquire and build new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or rights-of-way
 - d. Not sure
 - e. Other

The two top priorities identified by participants were to improve maintenance and upkeep of existing trails (44%) and to acquire and build new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or-right-of-way (31%).



City of Mercer Island Let’s Talk website inviting people to attend the second Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House on September 28, 2021.

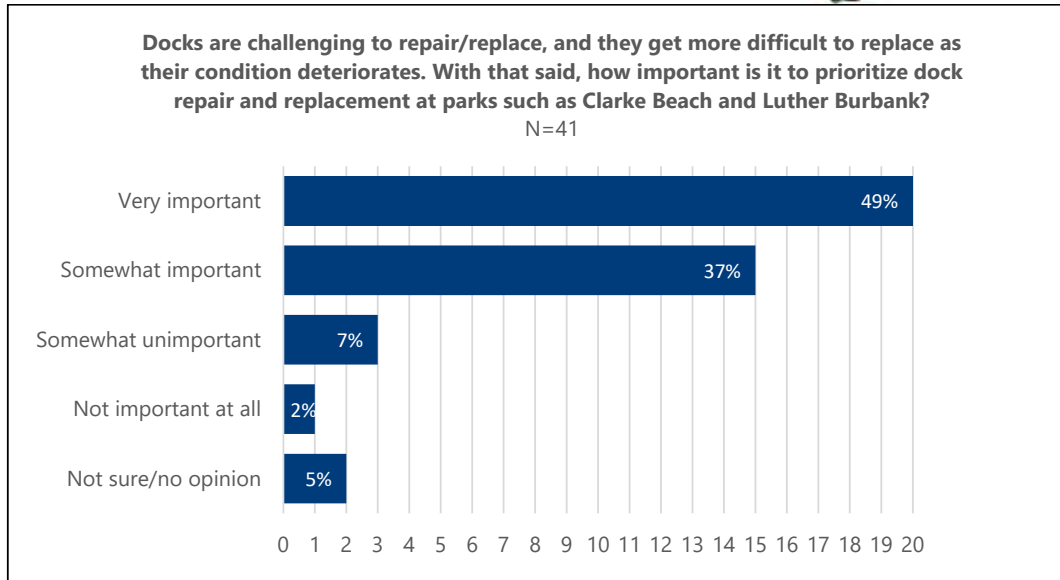
¹ Due to a technical issue, the question asked at the public meeting was missing one of the response options that was part of the presentation, which was “Build new connecting trails in existing parks to link walking and running routes throughout Mercer Island.” This may have affected the results.



2. Docks are challenging to repair/replace, and they get more difficult to replace as their condition deteriorates. With that said, how important is it to prioritize dock repair and replacement at parks such as Clarke Beach and Luther Burbank?

- a. Very important
- b. Somewhat Important
- c. Somewhat unimportant
- d. Not important at all
- e. Not sure / No opinion

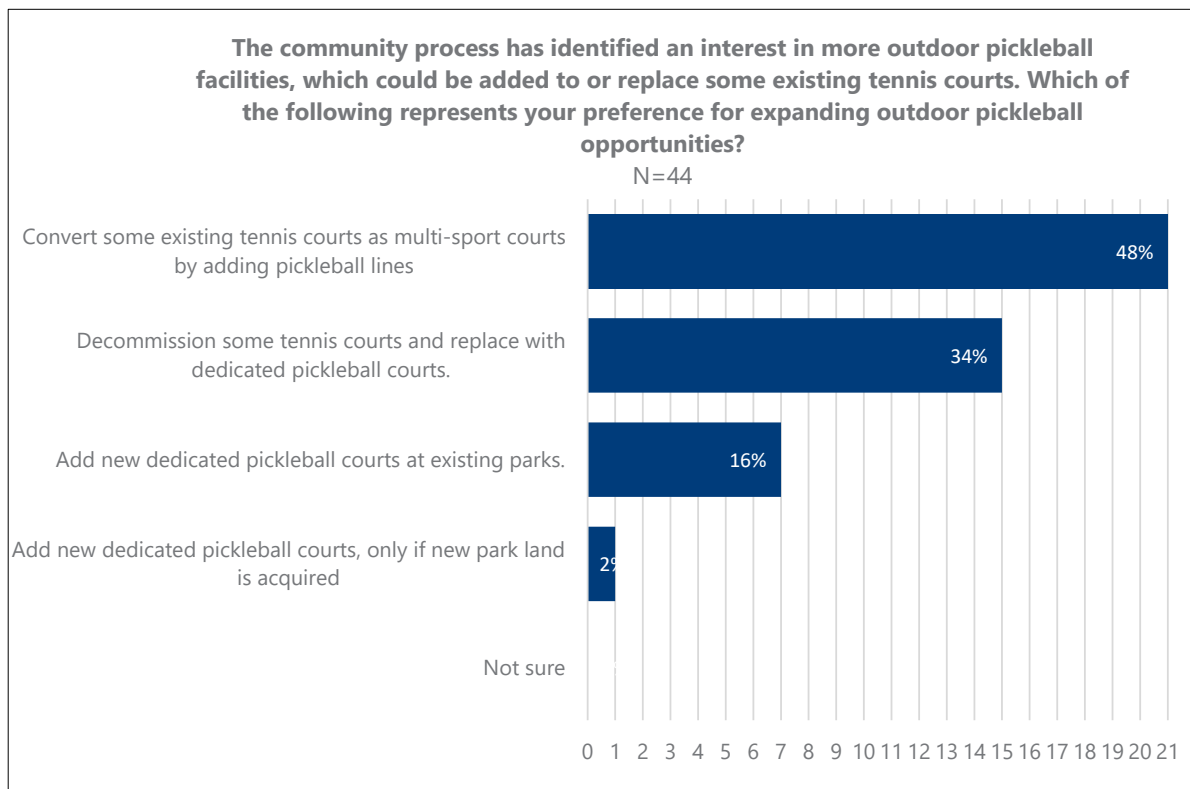
The majority of respondents indicated that prioritizing dock repair and replacement at parks is very important (49%) or somewhat important (37%). A few respondents didn't think dock repair and replacement was all that important and some weren't sure or had not opinion on the topic.



3. The community process has identified an interest in more outdoor pickleball facilities, which could be added to or replace some existing tennis courts. Which of the following represents your preference for expanding outdoor pickleball opportunities?

- a. Convert some existing courts as multi-sport courts by adding pickleball lines
- b. Decommission some tennis courts and replace with dedicated pickleball courts
- c. Add new dedicated pickleball courts at existing parks
- d. Add new dedicated pickleball courts, only if new park land is acquired
- e. Not sure

The majority of respondents desire the city to convert some existing tennis courts as multi-sport courts by adding pickleball lines (48%). The second largest number of responses want to decommission tennis courts and replace them with dedicated pickleball courts (34%).

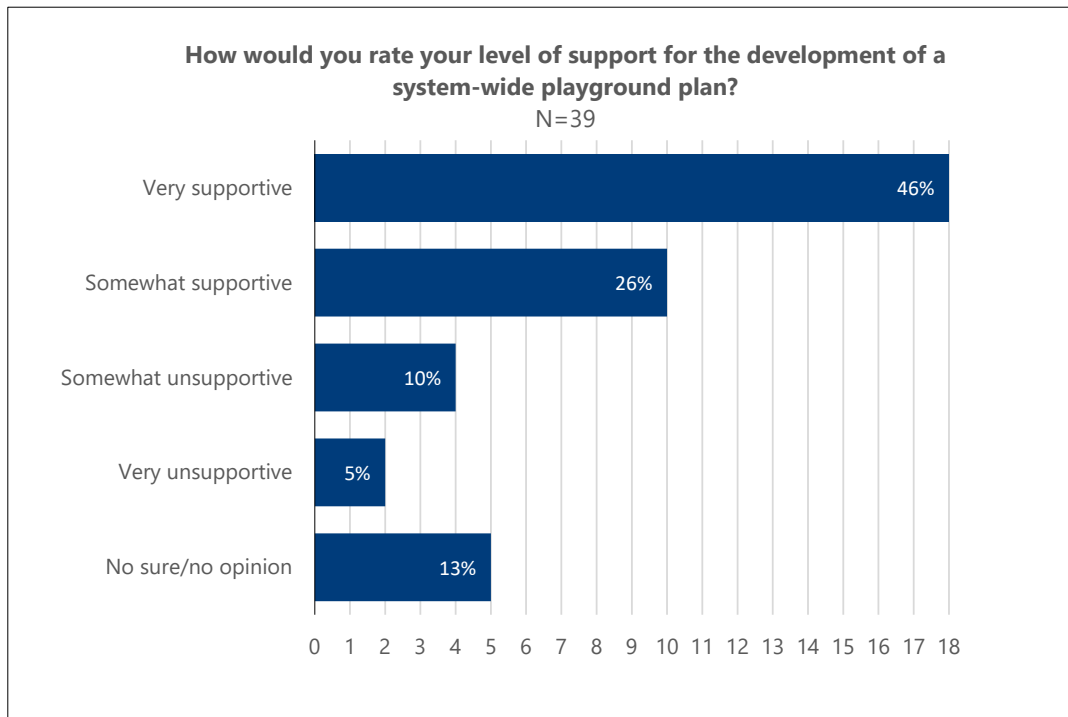




4. How would you rate your level of support for the development of a system-wide playground plan?

- a. Very supportive
- b. Somewhat supportive
- c. Somewhat unsupportive
- d. Very unsupportive
- e. Not sure/no opinion

Almost half (46%) of respondents were very supportive for development of a system-wide playground plan. More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents were somewhat supportive. 15% of respondents were either somewhat unsupportive or very unsupportive.

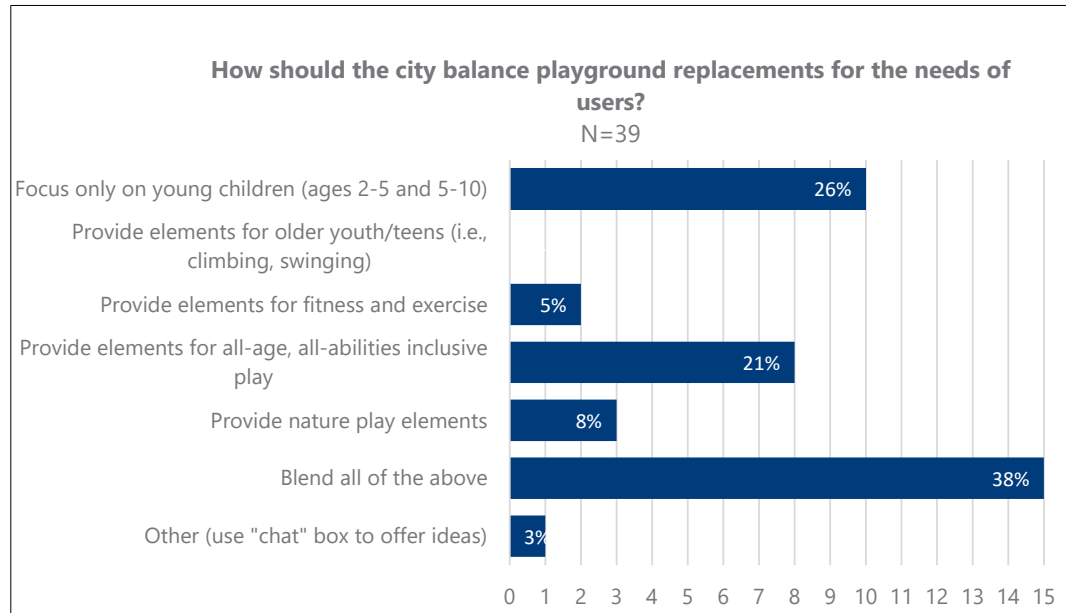




5. How should the city balance playground replacements for the needs of users?

- a. Focus on young children (ages 2-5 and 5-10)
- b. Provide elements for older youth/teens (i.e., climbing, swinging)
- c. Provide elements for fitness and exercise
- d. Provide elements for all-age, all-abilities inclusive play
- e. Provide nature play elements
- f. Blend all of the above
- g. Other (use "chat" box to offer ideas)

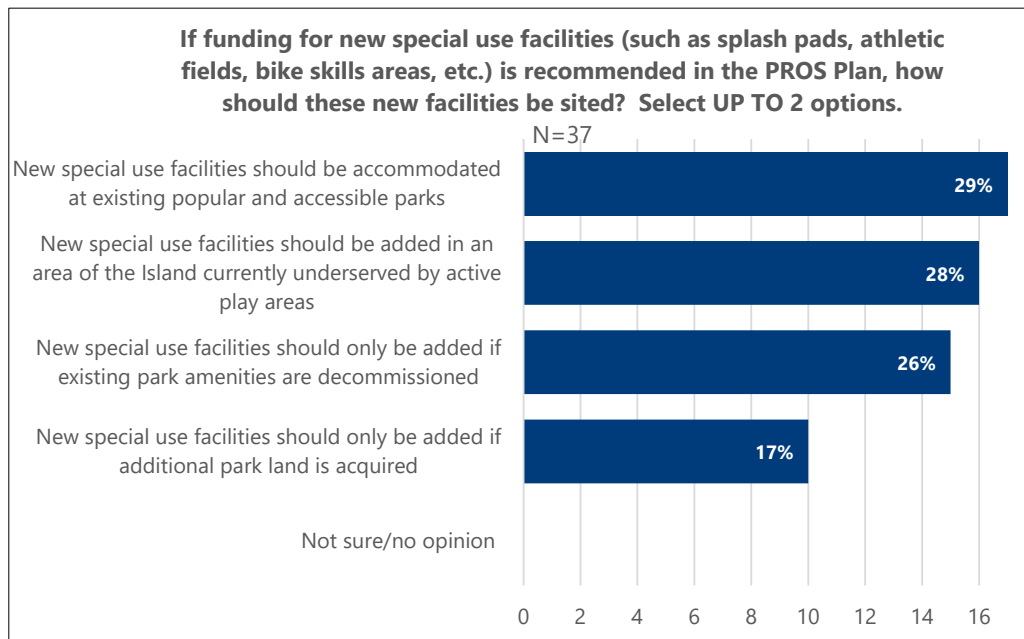
The top responses to balancing playground replacements were to blend all of the above elements (38%) and focus on young children (ages 2-5 and 5-10) (26%). About half of the respondents would like playground elements for all-age and all-abilities inclusive play. Providing nature play and fitness and exercise elements were selected collectively by 3 participants.





- 6. If funding for new special use facilities (such as splash pads, athletic fields, bike skills areas, etc.) is recommended in the PROS Plan, how should these new facilities be sited? Select UP TO 2 options.**
- a. New special use facilities should be accommodated at existing popular and accessible parks
 - b. New special use facilities should be added in an area of the Island currently underserved by active play areas
 - c. New special use facilities should only be added if existing park amenities are decommissioned
 - d. New special use facilities should only be added if additional park land is acquired
 - e. Not sure/no opinion

The top two selections selected for new special use facilities were to accommodate existing popular and accessible parks (29%) and to add to the areas currently underserved by active play areas (28%). 26% of respondents said to add new special use facilities only if existing park amenities are decommissioned. A few respondents selected the option to add new special use facilities if additional park land is acquired.





Breakout Room Discussions and Key Themes

The project team hosted one 30-minute facilitated breakout room session to provide attendees an opportunity to share feedback and ideas in small group settings. A summary of all seven breakout room sessions and questions are listed below and organized by key themes as summarized by the project team.

#1 Exploring trail interests & connectivity

Questions

- Where are the gaps that need to be filled – to connect neighborhoods, to connect parks, or to link trails within parks and open space? What destinations need to be connected?
 - The trails are adequate.
 - Create connection to trails along the waterfront, e.g. Luther Burbank Park lakefront and North Mercedale hillside to Mercedale Park hillside.
 - Create connections from park to park and link important pieces, similar to Ellis Pond connections.
 - More comprehensive signage, maps and visuals are needed to show people where trails go and how they connect.

- Are you mostly interested in road-based connections or trails within parks and open space?
 - Create accessible bike paths and “off-road” pathways to provide a variety of destinations, like along Island Crest Way.
 - Concern that electric bikes may add challenges for shared trail use.
 - Look at options to separate trails from roads for safety; use plantings or vegetation to create safe zones.
 - Support for trails within parks.
 - Need additional routes on roads.

- Expanding trails within parks and open space are treated as additional impervious surface (gravel and impacted dirt are examples of this type of surface). Is that a concern for you? Should there be a tradeoff elsewhere in park development?
 - Maintenance and clearing of trails more important than building new trails; no more impervious.
 - Don’t just pave for new trails; consider decommissioning some segments based on low usage and restore to natural conditions to balance against new segments.
 - Consider pervious surfaces/limit paved trails.

#2 Balancing Existing & New Recreational Uses

Questions

- What are your thoughts on accommodating a wider variety of recreational choices on Mercer Island?



- Concern that “bike skill area” may be challenging to manage and contribute to mismanaged trail systems.
 - Consider building a bike skills/pump track similar to a skate park that is in a more exposed and easier to monitor location.
 - Concern over losing green space to new amenities. If money is available, consider acquiring more land to support new recreational options.
 - Support for adding a splash pad in an existing park.
 - Support for inclusive spaces.
 - More dedicated pickleball courts are needed.
- Do you feel that additional recreational amenities to our parks system will enhance overall satisfaction and park usage?
 - Yes, but add parking if adding more amenities. Adding more activities could draw more people.
 - What should be considered when thinking about balancing the ‘where’ and ‘how’ of installing new features with maintaining existing uses? Should new features be added only if an existing feature is reduced or replaced?
 - It’s important to find a middle ground and provide a variety of recreational opportunities, especially for kids.
 - Retain play options for small children but also add opportunities for older kids.
 - Convert tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts.
 - Avoid putting too many amenities in one area (i.e., Luther Burbank Park).
 - Trade out the older elements with new ones based on levels of use/support of existing elements. Look at survey data to confirm current needs and uses.

#3: Strategizing for Play Area Upgrades

Questions

- What are your thoughts on the different play area options referenced earlier?
 - Natural elements and nature play are good options; great idea to have kids move elements around and manipulate for play.
 - Support a broader range of play spaces; existing playgrounds are too similar
 - Give deference to local families with children who use playgrounds for detailed discussions about needed play experiences.
 - Consider spaces that encourage interaction among different age groups.
- When it comes time to replace playgrounds, should we replace with similar structures or consider other styles of play features?
 - Support for inclusive play areas and more shaded picnic areas/covered areas close by so people can use for more parts of the day (hot sun or rain).
 - Amphitheater at Luther Burbank Park needs to be repaired and be safe.
- Is there a feature or type of play you enjoy elsewhere, that we’re missing?



- Include some disc golf or ultimate frisbee in parks.
- Features that use motion e.g. swings sets, tire swings, slides, bucket swings for safety.
- Improve playgrounds by adding bathrooms, fences, benches, and areas with shade.

Next Steps

The project team will use the feedback from this public meeting to inform the PROS plan as it is being finalized over the next three months. The City Council is scheduled to review and adopt the PROS Plan in early 2022.

Please send any questions or comments related to the Mercer Island PROS plan to PROS@mercerisland.gov.

APPENDIX F: RECREATION RESET PLAN



Fitness program at the MICEC



STRATEGY FOR MERCER ISLAND COMMUNITY AND EVENT CENTER & RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



April 20,
2021

A Reset Roadmap for Cost Recovery,
Resource Allocation, Pricing and
Policies

A strategy and philosophy to help guide the selection, delivery and support of future programs and services.



CONTENTS

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY 4

- Development of the Strategy 5
- Reset Project Process..... 6
- Reset Plan Architecture..... 8

COST RECOVERY 10

- What is Cost Recovery? 10
- Past Cost Recovery in Mercer Island..... 10
- Establishing a Cost Recovery Framework 11
- Defining Direct and Indirect Costs 15
- Mercer Island’s Cost Recovery Pyramid 17

RESOURCE ALLOCATION PHILOSOPHY 19

- Goals 19
- Core or Essential Services 19
 - Social Good or Public Good Core 20
 - Business Sustainability Core 20
 - Desirable Set..... 20
- Community Input on Resource Allocation 21
- Building and Maintaining the City’s Portfolio of Programs and Services 24

PRICING..... 26

- MICEC and Recreation Pricing Strategy..... 27
- Fee study 27
- Fee Schedule 28
- Differential Pricing and the Scholarship Program 28
- Alternative Sources of Funding and Support 29

POLICY AND PROCEDURE ADJUSTMENTS 30

RESET ROADMAP AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE..... 30

APPENDIX A 32

PYRAMID TIER DEFINITIONS AND GUIDANCE 32

APPENDIX B: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES CATEGORIES..... 35

APPENDIX C: MERCER ISLAND COST RECOVERY PYRAMID 39

APPENDIX D: LET’S TALK RECREATION AND MICEC RESET SURVEY RESULTS 41

APPENDIX E: POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT “TO DO” LIST BY
RESET PHASE..... 92

APPENDIX F: RESET ROADMAP AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE 98

Strategy for Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services

A RESET ROADMAP FOR COST RECOVERY, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, PRICING AND POLICIES

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

Residents of the City of Mercer Island are fortunate to have a wide variety of recreation providers and opportunities within the community. The municipality’s recreation services, programs and facilities are an important portion of this abundance and can play a unique



role in ensuring equitable access and promoting community values and goals. This strategy provides guidance for the purposeful allocation or investment of City resources into recreation programs and services.

Development of the Strategy

After the COVID-19 global pandemic caused the City to reduce staff and budget and close facilities, the City had an opportunity to reconsider important questions about the provision of programs and services. Through this “Reset Project,” the City:

- Examined its priorities, and wished to be deliberate about which programs it offered and what level of resources it would put into them;
- Considered how to leverage its assets, using its strengths and resources to improve the City’s ability to deliver more service, services that need more financial support, or higher quality services;
- Put a focus on promoting financial sustainability, thinking about how to reduce reliance on tax dollar support and how to use tax subsidy wisely;
- Contemplated how to deliver desired outcomes by providing services in a fair and equitable manner, consistent with values and goals; and
- Created greater clarity around who is benefitting from services and who is paying for them.

Answers to those areas of inquiry were woven into this new strategic approach for recreation and Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC) programs and services. This strategy includes tools such as a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy, an aligned fee structure, and identification of policies and practices that are needed or will require adjustment to implement the new strategy. The fundamental outcomes sought by this new Reset Strategy are:



The Parks and Recreation mission is to “take pride in providing the highest quality facilities and services in partnership with the community to enhance livability on Mercer Island.”

The City’s vision is to “provide valued and effective municipal services in ways that are efficient, flexible, innovative, and creative, with an emphasis on sustainability. We strive to be among the best in all we do.”

Reset Project Process

The Reset Project’s timeline was an aggressive five months. The project began in earnest in November 2020 with a goal of delivering recommendations to the City Council in April 2021. The City used a variety of channels to share information with the public about the Reset Project and invited public input during meetings, via an online survey and through its “Let’s Talk” online engagement platform. Given the constantly changing nature of the



pandemic and related public health regulations, it was challenging to identify when the City could assume that the MICEC could open and operate normally and fully. The Reset Project Team, a group of City staff plus a consultant, proceeded with a goal of designing the new strategy, resourcing some initial programs and services, and delivering those offerings beginning in the Summer of 2021. Additionally, the Reset Team focused on creating a roadmap for how to restructure and gradually provide more programs and services over the next two years.

An overview of the plan development process follows:

November – December 2020

- A staff team facilitated by a consultant began collecting data, discussing past practices, contemplating goals for the project and identifying recommendations for an Immediate Action Plan. That plan called for contractor-led summer camps to be planned and delivered, in an adaptable fashion should pandemic constraints still exist. The Immediate Action Plan also recommended that the City prepare for the possibility that some facility rentals could resume in the summer or fall of 2021.

January 2021

- The Parks and Recreation Commission received an introduction to the project and reviewed the Immediate Action Plan.
- The Parks and Recreation Commission held a workshop focused on categorizing types of services and programs and understanding the objectives of cost recovery.
- The City launched a community engagement survey on its Let's Talk platform. The survey requested input on community priorities, including the investment of tax dollars in recreation programs and services.

February 2021

- The Parks and Recreation Commission further refined the cost recovery framework during its regular meeting in January.
- The City Council received a written update and provided staffing resources to implement the Immediate Action Plan (agenda bill AB 5814).
- The Commission held a special meeting workshop focused on learning about a pricing strategy, reviewing the results of the Let's Talk surveys, understanding how the Reset Team was approaching the fee study, and discussing parameters for future program and service offerings.

March 2021

- During their March 4 regular meeting, the Parks and Recreation Commission examined the resources necessary to implement Phase 1, learned which policies and procedures may require adjustment to implement the new Reset Strategy, and reviewed the proposed Reset phases.
- A special meeting was held on March 18 for the Commission to hear about and discuss the draft Reset Strategy and to receive an initial fee schedule. The group also discussed the City's differential pricing policy.

April 2021

- The Parks and Recreation Commission acted to approve and recommend the Reset Strategy and a request for Accelerated Phase 1 resources.
- The Reset Team and Parks and Recreation Commission presented the proposed Reset Strategy to City Council for consideration.

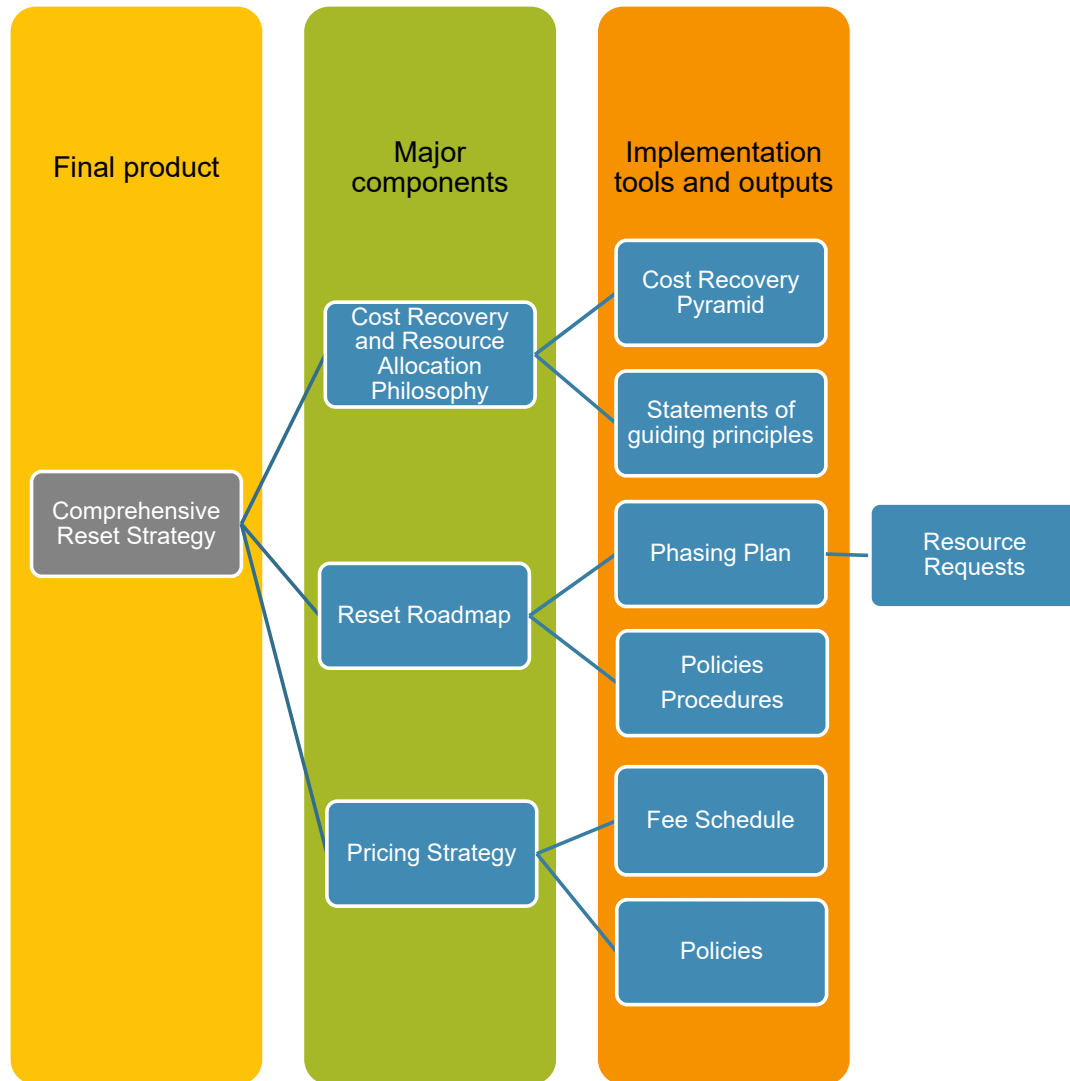
July 2021

- City Council review and acceptance of the plan.

Reset Plan Architecture



This strategy introduces several terms and has multiple parts. The following diagram illustrates how each of the pieces are connected. Definitions of the terms can be found in subsequent sections of this document.



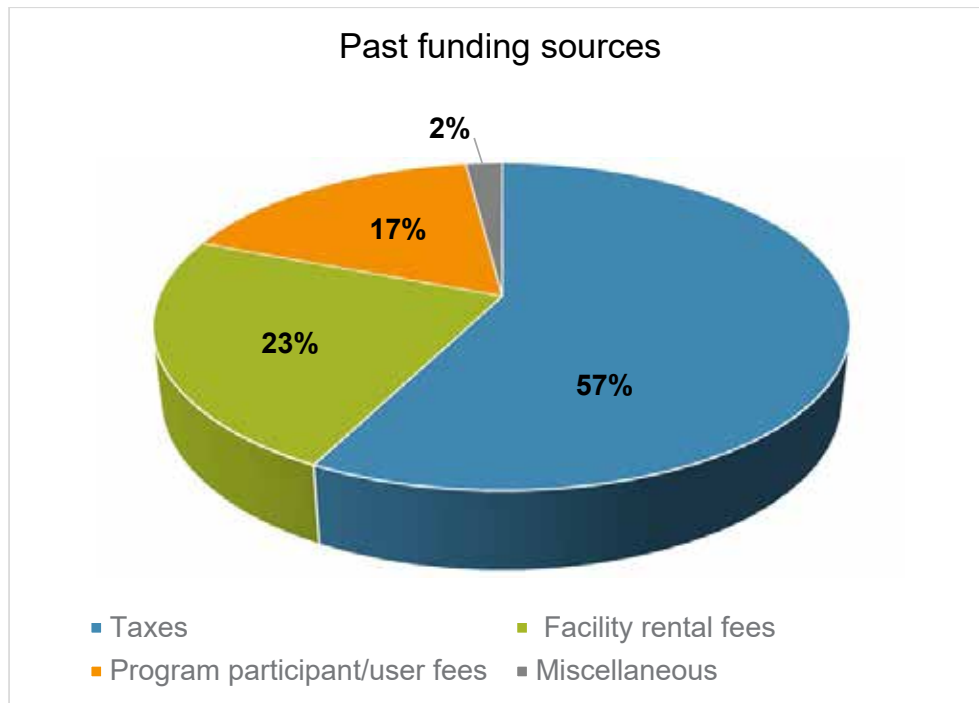
COST RECOVERY

What is Cost Recovery?

Cost recovery is the degree to which the operational (and sometimes maintenance) costs of providing a program or service are supported by user fees and/or other funding mechanisms such as grants, partnerships, donations, sponsorships, or other alternative (non-tax) funding sources. Programs and services can range from recovering more than their costs (i.e., generating surplus revenue) to being wholly subsidized or supported by General Fund support such as revenue from taxes collected by the City. Subsidy can be thought of as the community's investment in recreation. Most often, when establishing cost recovery goals, municipalities focus on how much of the city's direct costs can be covered by non-tax revenue.

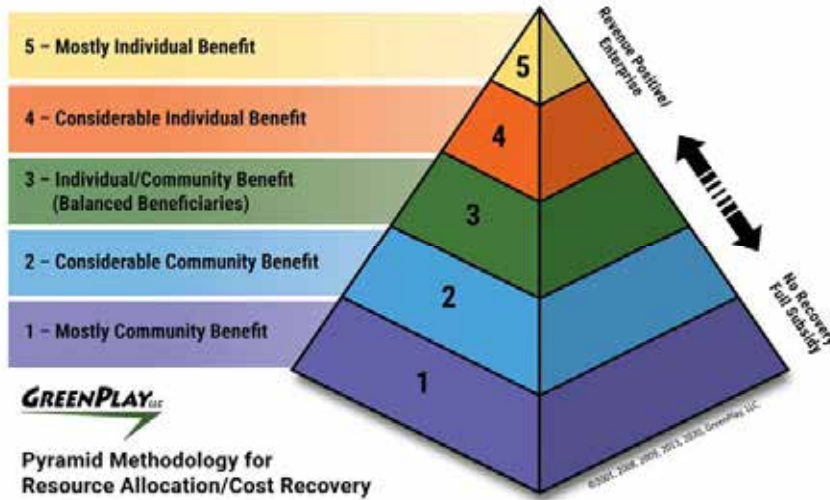
Past Cost Recovery in Mercer Island

The City of Mercer Island has embraced the concept of cost recovery for at least two decades. Previous City budgets and other governing documents declared a few, overall cost recovery goals and some guidance regarding fees. While the City's desire to organize services and programs within a cost recovery structure was clear, the City had not firmly established the foundational philosophy for that structure nor the policies and practices to support it.



Establishing a Cost Recovery Framework

The Reset Project Team utilized, with permission, a cost recovery methodology construct from GreenPlay, LLC due to that model’s ability to address Mercer Island’s desired project outcomes. The GreenPlay model requires that programs and services be sorted into tiers on a pyramid based on who benefits from the program or service. Doing this sort of categorization helps put essential services and priorities into focus and promotes discussions about who should pay for the benefits received from the program or service.



While the primary way of sorting programs and services in this methodology is to assess who benefits, several other ways of viewing service provision and other pieces of information can be influential. Those filters and factors include:

Filters	Definitions
Benefit	Who receives the benefit of the service? (Skill development, education, physical health, mental health, safety)
Access/Type of Service	Is the service available to everyone equally? Is participation or eligibility restricted by diversity factors (i.e., age, ability, skill, financial)?
Organizational Responsibility	Is it the organization's responsibility or obligation to provide the service based upon mission, legal mandate, or other obligation or requirement?



Historical Expectations	What have we always done that we cannot change?
Anticipated Impacts	What is the anticipated impact of the service on existing resources? On other users? On the environment? What is the anticipated impact of not providing the service?
Social Value	What is the perceived social value of the service by constituents, city staff and leadership, and policy makers? Is it a community builder?
Factors:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trends (ranging from traditional/expected to innovative/fad)• Commitment factors (ranging from drop-in to specialized)• Political filter (may require asking and understanding, “What is in/out of our control? What is going on right now?”)• Marketing factor (i.e., the effect in attracting participants/customers)• Relative cost to provide factor (ranging from low to high)• Economic conditions factor (the financial realities; City and participant abilities to pay)• Financial goals factor (ranging from 100% subsidized to programs and services that generate excess revenue)	

The pyramid’s five tiers identify the varying degrees to which the community or individuals benefit from an assortment of programs and services. The lower tiers represent programs that often serve the entire community, are thought of as essential,

may be the kinds of services that are traditionally provided by recreation departments, or may be necessary for the business sustainability of the greater operation. The upper tiers represent programs that provide a greater degree of benefit to individual participants or specialized groups, may go beyond the core mission of the providing agency, may be available in the private marketplace, and likely could generate revenue to cover direct costs or more. (See Appendix A for more definitions of the tiers and additional guidance on sorting programs.)

The Reset Team developed a list of past and/or possible programs and services for team members and Parks and Recreation Commissioners to sort into the five tiers. Over time, these categories can be deleted, renamed, broadened, narrowed or added to, depending on policy makers' and practitioners' desires. (See Appendix B for definitions of programs' and services' categories.)

Each tier is also differentiated by its related expectations for cost recovery or General Fund subsidy. Programs and services that are placed in the upper tiers must help subsidize the costs of providing those in the lower tiers. Programs and services in the lower tiers receive more tax support than those in the upper tiers. Cost recovery tier placement is not synonymous with the level or amount of fee. Actual fees for programs within the same tier will vary, and fees will be set based on a variety of factors. (See the Pricing section of this document for more information about setting fees.) The tier-level cost recovery targets represent the minimum cost recovery for the aggregated categories of service within that tier. While each individual service within the tier may have a fee that is established to recover at or above the minimum cost recovery target level, the primary objective is for the entire tier as a group to achieve the target. Tier-level cost recovery targets are set to primarily recover the direct operating costs of service provision – not all costs (such as capital or indirect costs). However, some programs or services may have fees that enable the City to recover some of the indirect costs of providing the service and/or to further offset the tax subsidy of programs in other tiers.

Recommended cost recovery targets were set based on the Reset Team's examination of a sampling of historical program expenditure and revenue data, assumptions about



revenue potential and/or the ability to control direct costs, an understanding of the marketplace, and after a review of the cost recovery targets of several other municipalities. The City's current way of accounting costs and revenues in recreation and for the MICEC does not easily allow quantification at the program or service level. Going forward, Staff will track and report on costs and revenues based on the categories of programs and services identified in the cost recovery pyramid. Tier-level cost recovery targets and individual program cost recovery expectations should be re-examined and adjusted, as needed, on a periodic basis.

Defining Direct and Indirect Costs

To effectively set targets and monitor cost recovery performance, the City must first define what will constitute a direct cost versus an indirect cost.

Direct costs include all the specific, identifiable expenses (fixed and variable) associated with providing a service, program, or facility. These expenses would not exist without the program or service and often increase exponentially. Examples of direct costs include: salary and benefits costs for all personnel directly attached to the program, all consumable supplies for the program, all related contractual services expenses, and non-consumable equipment purchased only for the program that require periodic, continual replacement or are necessary for the start of the program. Direct expenses may also include or a prorated share of some expenses such as marketing or promotional costs.

Indirect costs include departmental administration, support services or cost allocations from other internal departments that encompass the remaining overhead (fixed and variable) and are not identified as direct costs. Examples of indirect costs include: office furniture, building maintenance and utility costs if they are not charged back to the program, groundskeeping costs, debt service, vehicle use or mileage reimbursement, and hiring costs (such as advertising jobs).

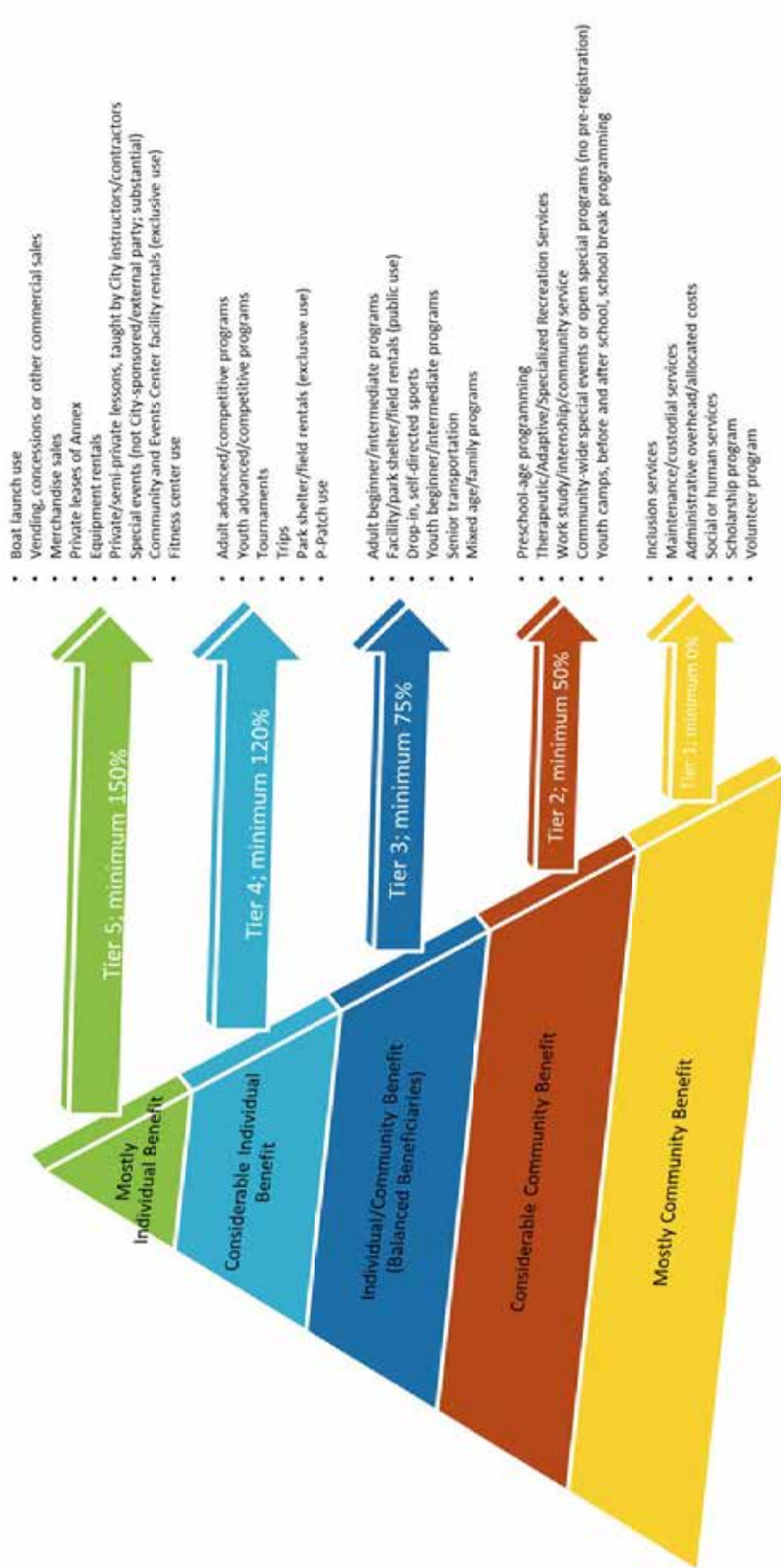
The Reset Team has categorized each past program's costs (i.e., expenditure types by the financial management system's object codes) according to whether it should be

considered a direct or indirect cost. In addition, the Reset Team has identified shares of indirect costs that upper tier program fees may be constructed to recover. For example, the revenue received from the service category of “Community and Event Center facility rentals (exclusive use)” may help cover building utility costs. City staff will utilize this cost accounting tool each time a new program is designed, offered and evaluated, to ensure that its cost recovery can be calculated and assessed.



Mercer Island's Cost Recovery Pyramid

The City's cost recovery pyramid is depicted below and in Appendix C.



Note: Categories of programs and services are listed in no particular order within each tier.



RESOURCE ALLOCATION PHILOSOPHY

When an organization seeks to create better financial sustainability and wise investment of tax resources, establishing the cost recovery framework is critical. In addition, the cost recovery framework sparks the promotion of a resource allocation philosophy to govern which programs and services should be offered, why and with what resources. A resource allocation philosophy helps the City manage its resources according to its strategic goals. The philosophy involves balancing competing needs and priorities and determining the best way to maximize or optimize benefit using limited resources.

Goals

The resource allocation philosophy has several aims:

- To support the cost recovery framework (i.e., some programs receive a greater share of tax dollars and some programs will subsidize others)
- To sustain core services (both social/public good core and business sustainability core)
- To be deliberate about where resources are going
- To offer services when the City is the best or most appropriate provider
- To be thoughtful about how to best offer services with feasible resources, including through partnerships or contracting
- To reflect the values, mission and priorities of the City and its residents
- To assist the City in meeting its performance and quality of service goals.

The resource allocation philosophy provides the parameters for offering services and programs, and guidance to avoid offering too much or acting inconsistently or irresponsibly.

Core or Essential Services

Through the development of the Cost Recovery Pyramid, the City began identifying which programs and service categories could be considered “core” or “essential.” Having some degree of clarity about this is important when establishing a resources allocation philosophy. Simply stated, the level of resource support should be higher for core or essential services. This is how these terms are defined and how programs and services are categorized for the purpose of the Reset Strategy:

Social Good or Public Good Core

These programs and services are those that may benefit all members of the community, are typically offered through tax support (rather than user/participant fees), and may focus on health, safety and equity or access.

In the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy, these programs are found in the lower tiers (predominantly 1 and 2) and will receive the greatest share of community investment.

Business Sustainability Core

These programs and services produce revenue for the City that covers some of the indirect costs of programs or reduces the need for tax support for other programs. These programs and services are designed to meet the needs of the market and are offered with market rates in mind. These programs typically benefit individuals or specific groups.

In the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy, these programs are found in the higher tiers (predominantly 5 and 4) and are financially supported by the beneficiaries of the service.

Desirable Set

Many programs and services could be labeled as desirable and this categorization is often the subject of debate. In part, the Reset Strategy labels categories of programs and services as “desirable” if they simply do not fall into either the social/public good core or the business sustainability core.



In the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy, desirable programs are largely clustered in the middle tiers of the pyramid. Desirable programs offered by the City should meet these criteria:

- The program is likely to generate sufficient revenues to offset its costs and meet cost recovery targets.
- Hosting the program at a City facility will not adversely affect the City’s ability to offer social/public good or business sustainability core services.
- High demand exists
- The program will serve a large population or significant, identified community need.

Community Input on Resource Allocation

The City conducted a survey in early 2021 to gather input from community members about which types of programs should be offered, what types of users should be prioritized, and which types of programs should receive the greatest share of tax dollar support. Over 550 people participated in the survey. The survey responses provided valuable insight for the Reset planning project and validated the City’s initial work on the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy. (See Appendix D for the survey report.) Some of the highlights from the results include:

- **Use of tax dollars:** Respondents placed the greatest value in the types of programs and services found in Tier 1, 2 and 3. This is where the community investment should be placed (i.e., tax dollars). When asked which programs and services should receive the greatest share of tax support, respondents replied that “programs or services where there is a balance between individual and community benefit (example: providing summer camp opportunities for Mercer Island youth)” and “programs or services where the community benefits considerably, in addition to specific individuals (examples: safety programs for youths, or programs that provide fee-waivers or scholarships to increase accessibility to programs)” should receive the greatest share of community investment. “Programs or services where the individual participating benefits the most (examples: a resident taking an art or

fitness class)” had the least support for tax subsidy. Approximately half of the respondents were neutral or stated that little or no tax support should be given to a “few special events during the year, available to all community members.”

- **Choosing programs or services to offer:** One of the two strongest opinions on the delivery of programs spoke to how the MICEC should be used. Over 40% of respondents said that maximizing private evening and weekend use to support public programs and services was “really important.” Leveraging the facility in this way was “somewhat important” or “really important” to 74% of respondents. The second strong opinion about the facility’s use was that the MICEC should offer “something for everyone” (74% of respondents rated this as “somewhat important” or “really important”). It is also important to note that, although it had the lowest combined positive score (“somewhat important” + “really important”), over 60% of respondents said that offering services to under-served populations or those not served by the private marketplace was important.
- **Prioritizing programmatic use of space:** Survey respondents stated that use of the facility should be prioritized for these groups or interests (in rank order, from highest priority)
 1. Activities for seniors
 2. Activities for youth
 3. Programs for residents with special or adaptive recreation needs
 4. After-school and school break programs
 5. Fitness programs

Drop-in (no instructor) recreation/fitness opportunities (approximate tie with “Fitness programs”)

Survey respondents stated that the following groups or interests’ use of the facility were the lowest priorities (in ranked order, from lowest priority):



1. Other lifestyle, social or personal improvement programs
2. Activities for adults
3. Art programs
4. Special events open to the public
5. Organized athletics

Key take-aways from the survey include that respondents value that recreation programs and the MICEC serve a diversity of ages and interests. There is community support for private use of the facility that provides the means for public programs and services. Respondents felt the MICEC's space should be prioritized for seniors, youth, adaptive recreation, school break/after school, fitness and drop-in use. Many respondents advocated for avoiding competition with other Mercer Island entities and for the City to complement what is offered elsewhere. Many people expressed pride in the facility and the City's programs; they shared a desire to grow awareness and use of these assets and opportunities.

"The community center is a great space and efforts should be made to expand use but keep it financially viable."

"I love that the Community Center can be a place for physical, mental and cultural activities for all."

"This is an amazing facility that should be used to engage the community with programming as well as generate operating revenue."

"MICEC is a beautiful facility and should be seen as a hub of gathering for our community. Thanks for giving residents the opportunity to complete this survey and share our ideas!"

“(There are) many ways to increase revenue going forward which in turn will increase the value you can bring to the community and offer more low cost/subsidized programs for our multi generation population.”

“It's a valuable resource to us and well worth our tax dollars for its accessibility!”

Quotations from survey respondents

Building and Maintaining the City’s Portfolio of Programs and Services

The cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy coupled with an understanding of the community’s values, priorities and needs provides the basis for designing the City’s recreation portfolio. Adhering to those parameters will require commitment and diligence, and a willingness to reassess from time to time.

The City’s initial portfolio should:

- Focus on delivering core and essential programs and services first (i.e., the social and public good core plus the business sustainability core). These are categories found in Tier 1 and possibly some Tier 2 plus those found in Tier 5 and possibly some in Tier 4 of the cost recovery pyramid.
- Focus on doing a few things well before starting more. The complete Reset will take time. At the outset, staffing, budget and other resources are limited. The community will benefit more from the City offering fewer, high-quality services rather than many, low-quality services.
- Put resources into enhancing City staff’s role as stewards (of public funds and facilities) by:



- Creating program development and evaluation tools
- Ensuring maintenance of building and equipment
- Building and tracking program-level budgets
- Reporting on cost recovery, access equity and other goals.

The following should also be considered as the City begins offering programs or as the City seeks to increase offerings:

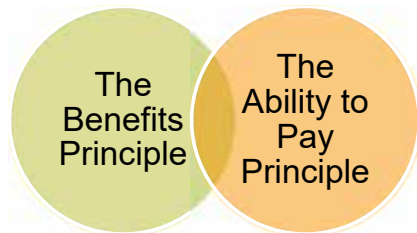
- As a group, Tier 1 services are a priority, but the City should evaluate the need for and the City's ability to provide the human services category and the volunteer program. The City should purposefully design offerings in these categories.
- Programs and services in Tiers 2 and some Tier 3 (including drop-in activities), should be added slowly and as properly resourced or as can be efficiently delivered.
- Additional Tiers 3, 4 and 5 services, could be added as they are able to be resourced, as they can be efficiently delivered, as any related fees and policies are established or updated, and as they are needed to subsidize the programs and services in Tiers 1, 2 and 3.
- The Reset Team recommends that the implementation strategy provide strong support for marketing, development of a volunteer program, and the successful operation of facility rentals and daytime uses of the MICEC.

To aid Staff in making decisions about what programs to offer in subsequent phases of the Reset and beyond, a consistent assessment and decision-making process is needed. The development of a new program evaluation tool is included as a future task in the Reset Roadmap. This tool may include utilizing a matrix to evaluate the need, the potential benefit, the resource demand, the consistency with the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy, and other factors prior to authorizing development and marketing of a new or pilot program.

Additionally, proper maintenance of the City's recreation and MICEC portfolio will require ongoing program management to ensure designs target desired outcomes, and program assessment to stay in-tune with program life cycles and their abilities to meet cost recovery targets.

PRICING

The City's pricing strategy is the method for establishing and charging fees for recreation and MICEC services. The chosen method reflects both the Benefits Principle and the Ability to Pay Principle, where taxpayers or users' contributions for a service reflect the benefits received from it, and where the price for the service reflects an individual's ability to pay for the service such that an individual is not excluded from receiving that service. The City's pricing strategy reflects the City's desire to promote equity and inclusion.



There are typically four types of pricing strategies in the realm of recreation services:

1. Arbitrary (prices are set to reach an overall revenue target)
2. Market-based (prices are a product of demand for services or what the target market is willing to pay; in many cases this strategy results in setting fees at the midpoint or higher)



3. Competitor-based (prices are established to match, beat or exceed other providers; in many cases this strategy results in setting fees at the midpoint or lower)
4. Cost recovery pricing (prices are designed to reach cost recovery goals, within the range allowable by market and other conditions)

In addition, all of the strategies above could include a second strategy called “differential pricing,” where different fees are charged for the same service when there is no real difference in the cost of providing the service. (Differential pricing is explained in a subsequent section of this report.)

MICEC and Recreation Pricing Strategy

The City’s strategy reflects market-based, competitor-based, cost recovery and differential pricing.

The goal of the pricing strategy is to set reasonable fees that are responsive to demand, market realities and minimum cost recovery goals, such that the overall operation is financially sustainable and Mercer Island residents of all income levels can participate.

The method for determining pricing includes conducting market and competitor research, employing established cost recovery targets, and applying policies and procedures related to differential pricing.

Fee study

The City conducted a fee study to review the market and competition prices for benchmarked programs and services. The study helped the City understand what other providers are charging for similar services and how they are structuring those charges (e.g., as part of a membership fee, an ala cart fee, or a package). The City gathered information from area municipalities and private and non-profit providers for a sampling

of programs and services. Here are a few examples of the programs or services that were benchmarked:

- Meeting room rental
- Special events facility rental and related services
- Youth martial arts classes
- Fitness center use
- Drop-in activities

Collecting the fee study data was only one part of establishing the City's prices. Fees were also a product of the cost recovery targets and differential pricing.

Fee Schedule

Fees will be set and maintained by the department director, per the municipal code. The list of fees, called a fee schedule, will be publicly posted annually as a reference for all potential users and participants.

A systematic approach to fee revisions is necessary to be thoughtful of customer tolerance for revisions, to give participants and users time to adjust, and to successfully communicate and demonstrate the value of the service or program. The fees should be evaluated every two years through a fee study and through an evaluation of the cost performance of each category and aggregated tier. Fees may be adjusted annually to keep up with the cost of delivering programs.

The City may establish differential pricing for some programs in the fee schedule or utilize a scholarship or financial assistance program that participants could utilize for those same programs or services.

Differential Pricing and the Scholarship Program

Differential pricing involves offering variations of the price of a service or program to a particular group, which may result in more equitable and efficient service delivery. In differential pricing, different groups are charged different prices for the same service, even though there is no direct corresponding difference in the costs of providing the



service to each of these groups. Price differentials or fee waivers can be based on resident (taxpayer)/non-resident, age of participant, location of facility, time or season, quantity of use, incentives, reciprocity benefits for affiliates, or other considerations. Differential pricing can help stimulate demand, reach an underserved population, or shift demand to another time, place or date.

The City of Mercer Island has employed some differential pricing for many years by offering discounted rates for residents versus non-residents, an occasional break on prices for households registering multiple children, and through a scholarship or financial assistance program. The Reset Strategy recommends continuing these practices but examining the policy and procedures of the scholarship program for potential improvements and contemplating other potential ways differential pricing could be offered to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion. Many area municipalities offer similar scholarship programs, setting aside a budget each year for fee waivers. One critical element of these programs is how eligible recipients are defined and authorized.

Under the City's current program, Mercer Island residents who demonstrate income-based need and who are eligible for other types of governmental financial assistance (such as SNAP food benefits) can qualify for a scholarship of up to \$300 per year for an individual or up to \$500 per year for a household. Potential beneficiaries must apply for the scholarship for each program in which they wish to participate during the upcoming quarter, as Staff currently awards funds on a quarterly basis. Applications are screened by Youth and Family Services and then approved for the applicant's desired programs by Recreation's administration. In the future, the City may be able to accept applications for eligibility that continues for the entire year, and the City's financial management or recreation information system may be able to proactively apply the approved level of differential pricing or scholarship balance to each registration.

Alternative Sources of Funding and Support

In general, there has been a decrease in the amount of tax support available to public parks and recreation departments across the nation. Mercer Island is no exception. As such, the need to seek alternative sources to financially support services has become

increasingly important. Alternative funding and support sources could include gifts, grants, donations, sponsorships, collaborations and volunteer contributions.

During the Immediate Action Phase (a period corresponding to the second half of 2021) of this Reset project, the City was able to pilot offering summer camps through a partnership. This was a good way to begin testing the City's ability to deliver programs through enhanced collaborations. It is quite likely that many other creative opportunities for partnerships exist, which could enable the City to meet community demand in the most efficient and effective way possible. Simply put, the City need not provide every service, nor does it need to be the direct provider for every program it offers.

Relatedly, the City could grow its capacity to utilize volunteers to deliver programs and services. This would help the City contain the costs of providing services and assist certain categories of programs or tier groups of services in meeting cost recovery targets. Volunteer programs certainly also require effective management and offer a wide range of other individual and community benefits.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE ADJUSTMENTS

There are several program development tasks, policies and procedures that will require attention over the next few years to ensure consistency with the Reset Strategy. An initial list (shown by implementation phase) is included in Appendix E.

RESET ROADMAP AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Implementation of the Reset Strategy will take a few years and will require ongoing collaboration between Staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the City Council and the public. A Reset Roadmap is provided in Appendix F. The phases of the Reset were designed in response to the stipulations in the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy, community input on values and priorities, and the near-term uncertainties of the pandemic.

While the Reset Team placed all the "past and potential" categories of programs and services that were listed in the cost recovery model in the phasing plan, **the City may not**



offer every specific program nor every category of program in the future. The Reset Strategy is not designed to simply restart everything that once was. This is a strategy designed to improve outcomes and align offerings to an overall community investment and prioritization structure. Individual program offerings will be determined as each phase is further developed. Actual program offerings will be the result of several factors, including an assessment of trends and program life cycle stage, competition and duplication in the community or area, desired program outcomes, partnership and cooperation possibilities, commitment level of potential participants, availability of resources, and consistency with the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy. Implementation of the Reset Strategy not only involves shaping supply (i.e., what services and programs are available), but may also serve to shape demand to a degree. Residents, patrons, and customers may develop a different and better sense of what they can receive from the City's recreation and MICEC.

The Reset Strategy should be reassessed for alignment with the in-progress Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan or as community needs and priorities change.

A tall, thin, abstract sculpture made of metal plates, standing in a grassy field with trees in the background. The sculpture consists of a central vertical pole with several curved, rusted metal plates attached to it. The background shows a dense line of green trees under a clear blue sky.

APPENDIX G: COMPREHENSIVE ARTS & CULTURE PLAN

Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery (Aubrey Davis Park)



CITY OF MERCER ISLAND COMPREHENSIVE ARTS AND CULTURE PLAN



** Photo courtesy of Sandy Glass*



** Photo courtesy of Mercer Island Reporter*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>PREFACE</u>	4
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	4
<u>BACKGROUND</u>	5
Mercer Island has a Historic Tradition of Public Support for Art.	5
Mercer Island Supports a Diverse Series of Arts Programming.	6
Mercer Island is Home to an Array of Arts Organizations and Activities.	10
<u>CULTURAL VITALITY AND THE ISLAND'S ART GAPS</u>	11
Mercer Island Embraces Cultural Vitality.	11
The Island Lacks Adequate Arts Space.	12
Coordinated Arts Cooperation Will Benefit the Island.	12
<u>VISION AND GOALS</u>	13
<i>Vision: To assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members</i>	14
Mercer Island Aims for Deliberate, Focused Support for the Arts.	14
Arts add Vitality to the Economy	14
Approach	15
<u>Goal 1:</u> Support the arts on Mercer Island	15
<u>Goal 2:</u> Nurture public art on Mercer Island	16
<u>Goal 3:</u> Preserve Mercer Island's Heritage	17
<u>ACTION AND ACHIEVEMENT</u>	17



PREFACE

The Mercer Island Arts Council recognizes the importance of art as an enhancing event, occasion, and activity on Mercer Island. Including a culture component in the city comprehensive plan reflects this community value. The council is committed to assimilating positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members and removing two basic barriers to advancement: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation and (2) a lack of space. Our community has a historic tradition of public support for art, a value engendered in this cultural plan. Our objectives - aligned with those of the city council - are to embrace cultural vitality, identify and create adequate arts spaces, and collaborate with our unique and diverse community partners on Mercer Island.

INTRODUCTION

The city of Mercer Island is committed to supporting and sustaining its rich and diverse cultural and arts identity. The arts play an integral role in the vitality and connectedness of a community. Indeed, the arts, culture, and heritage of a community are its heart.

Mercer Island is a town unique in its geographical character: it is a small town with distinct borders etched of lake water. Yet it is the most populated island situated in a lake in the country, comprised of a diverse population with rich cultural variety that nurtures and incubates creativity and invention from within its tight boundaries. Its identity was forged of ancient myth – of a lake that sank into the water at night and resurfaced each dawn. Not unlike a more famous mythical island that is shrouded in mist and magic. But unlike Avalon, Mercer Island’s magic is real. It is home to innovators, intellects, and artists all deeply committed to shaping an enchanted quality of living for its community.

It is this drive, and a commitment to lacing the arts into a shared ethos, that led a sizeable effort in the early 1990s to build art into public life on the Island. It was a vision born then that remains: ***to assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members.***

Yet more recently, division and process have weighted cultural and artistic progress on Mercer Island. Public input reveals ***two basic barriers to advancement: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation and (2) a lack of space.*** The city now aspires to resurface its cultural code, to bridge the gaps serving as barriers to progress, and to recommit to the preservation and cultivation of its heritage and arts identity.

By establishing this arts and culture comprehensive plan, the city formalizes its dedication to advancing the enrichment and unification of the whole community

through the arts. By delineating Mercer Island’s vision, challenges, and goals, this plan serves as a city blueprint to build upon existing arts capital and ensure arts are an essential support for Mercer Island’s present and future.

BACKGROUND

Mercer Island has a Historic Tradition of Public Support for Art.

Mercer Island is a community deeply committed to enriching its quality of life through the arts. In 1985, the Mercer Island City Council passed ordinances establishing the Mercer Island Arts Council (MIAC) and the Municipal Art Fund. MIAC consists of 11 “working” board members who strive to nurture, promote, and support quality cultural art activities for the community. In 1985, MIAC won the National Parks and Recreation Association Dorothy Mullen Arts and Humanities award for its region. Its programs have won the award four additional times, and the national award in 1987.

In the early 1990s, Mercer Island experienced a dramatic reconfiguration of its landscape due to the widening of Interstate 90 and construction of Aubrey Davis Park (formerly “The Lid” park). In this change, the city saw opportunity. It envisioned enhancing the open space created by the corridor and complementing this unique landscape by providing positive public art experiences for a broad audience. To accomplish this, the city aimed to cover the entire two-and-a-half mile strip of I90 running through the city with sculptures, water parks, and trees. In this process, Mercer Island became the first community in the state to adopt a comprehensive plan that included the incorporation of artwork into parkland, natural open spaces, trails, and public life.¹

Building on this innovative foundation and a vision to bring art to all, Mercer Island has continued to support arts and culture through its own programming and in associations with local arts organizations.

A small snapshot of recent arts activity includes the following:

In 2009, the City approved a one-time emergency grant (funds moved from the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund for this purpose) to support Youth Theater Northwest.² In 2013, the city commissioned and installed a replacement play sculpture titled *Kenton’s Dragon* in Deane’s Children Park.³ The city has partnered for twenty-five consecutive years with Wooden O/Seattle Shakespeare Company to present annual

¹ Mercer Island 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

² Mercer Island City Council Meeting Minutes, June 15, 2009, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?AMID=1647>.

³ See Mercer Island Arts Council Archive of Minutes, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?SectionID=-1&CCBID=2>.



Shakespeare in the Park performances at Luther Burbank Park. Each year, the productions draw more than five thousand local attendees.⁴ Either by acquisition or donation, the city has added at least eight works to its public art collection in the past five years, including two murals at Luther Burbank park and a sculpture installation at Fire Station 92 on the south end commemorating 9/11.⁵ The city maintains its indoor and outdoor galleries, which produce thousands of dollars of revenue for the city yearly.⁶ The city supports local and regional musicians through its Mostly Music in the Park program, which produces live music performances for thousands of attendees yearly.⁷

Mercer Island Supports a Diverse Series of Arts Programming.

The city provides art experiences that complement and celebrate its unique history, culture, and landscape. Mercer Island encourages positive art engagement for the broadest possible audience by offering regular music concerts, film series, outdoor Shakespeare performances, and community dances. It houses a rotating indoor art gallery, maintains an outdoor sculpture gallery, and sustains a large public art collection comprised of indoor and outdoor pieces, including paintings, sculpture, murals, and a town center streetscape project that embeds symbolic historical artwork into city infrastructure.

Highlights:

Mostly Music in the Park: Mercer Island Arts Council’s annual summer concert series. Concerts feature various bands and artists from around the region, performing a wide variety of music.



⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, (In 2016, artists Sandy Glass and Jose Orantes completed a mosaic mural located in the Luther Burbank park playground incorporating student artwork. Fire Station 92 artwork “Gateway of Service” installed in 2015.).

⁶ See Mercer Island Arts Council Archive of Minutes, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?SectionID=-1&CCBID=2>.

⁷ Ibid.

Mercer Island Gallery: Artwork by regional artists on display and for sale at this public gallery. Exhibits are updated approximately every two months.



The Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery: Located along the I-90 Corridor on Sunset Highway between 77th Ave SE and 80th Ave SE, the gallery displays sculptures for at least one year, on a rotating basis. The gallery was the first of its kind in the state. In 1997, in recognition of the gallery, the Arts Council received the Pacific Northwest Regional Arts and Humanities Award, given by the National Recreation & Park Association.



Public Art Collection: In addition to public outdoor sculpture, the city has a collection of small sculpture, paintings, murals, and other two-dimensional work in various public buildings, including the library, city hall, and the Mercer Island Community & Event Center.



Sponsoring Community Building Art Events: A community dance event is offered once a year incorporating live music, a dance lesson, and social dance time. Rock painting activities are sponsored at events to promote the community building “MI Rocks” movement. Interactive art installations are sponsored for the annual Summer Celebration event. MIAC hosted Washington State Poet Laureate, Todd Marshall, in 2015 for readings, writing events, and workshops.



** Photo courtesy of Ari Levitt*





Mercer Island is Home to an Array of Arts Organizations and Activities.

A sizable number of organizations support and house arts-focused programs on Mercer Island. The Island is home to hundreds of artists. It is the decades long home of an acclaimed youth theater group. It supports a world-renowned dance program for individuals with Parkinson’s disease as well as several quality youth dance programs. It is home to a visual arts league as well as many art galleries. The arts play a central role in Mercer Island life and culture.

Highlights:

Carrucio’s: Culinary arts event space.

Children’s Youth Conservatory/Island Youth Ballet: Youth ballet instruction and performances.

Clarke and Clarke Art + Artifacts: Art and objects of art gallery.

Dance for PD®: World acclaimed Dance for Parkinson’s program is offered in conjunction with Seattle Theater Group, Mercer Island Parks and Recreation, and the Mercer Island Arts Council. The program provides adapted dance classes for people with Parkinson’s disease and their caregivers.

Fine Arts Advisory Council: Nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting K-12 fine arts education in the Mercer Island School District.

Island Books: Bookseller hosting author events, book clubs, and children’s programs.

Island Choral Experience: Community-based youth choral and performing arts company.

Mercer Island Art Uncorked: Annual music, art, food, and wine tasting festival held in the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery.

Mercer Island Center for the Arts: Organization founded in 2013 with the goal of building a community arts facility on Mercer Island.

Mercer Island Historic Society: Established in 1954, the Mercer Island Historical Society collects, preserves, researches, records, and makes available the heritage of Mercer Island.

Mercer Island School District: Provides diverse art instruction and opportunity for students and includes the arts in its “Vision 2020” mission.

Mercer Island Sister City Association: Nonprofit community organization that promotes educational, cultural, and other exchanges between the citizens of Thonon-les-Bains, France, and Mercer Island.

Mercer Island Visual Arts League: Founded in 1961, MIVAL supports the visual arts of its members and the community. Members show their work throughout the year in local businesses and at MIVAL Gallery in the Town Center.

Musical Mind Studio: Youth musical education featuring conventional and adaptive training techniques.

Nancy Stewart: In conjunction with her pilot project, Sing with Our Kids, Nancy provides music resources and events in the community.

Russian Chamber Music Foundation: Organization providing Russian music performances, programs, and education.

Stroum Jewish Community Center: Community center hosting a wide array of arts events, including a film festival, films, music, speaker events, comedy, theater, and culinary arts events.

SZ Gallery: Art gallery offering monthly art walks and events.

Youth Theatre Northwest: Educational arts organization founded in 1984, providing drama education, performing opportunities, and live theater experiences for children and young adults.

CULTURAL VITALITY AND THE ISLAND'S ARTS GAPS

Despite Mercer Island's rich tapestry of art and cultural offerings, there are gaps to be bridged. ***Mercer Island needs community art and heritage space and coordinated cooperation directing its art and culture activities.***

Numerous comments expressing the need for art space and cooperation amongst arts groups were collected at the Mercer Island Arts Council public engagement meeting on March 14, 2018.⁸ It is not the first time the public has conveyed these challenges – they are long-standing issues that have been voiced in a variety of forums and engagement processes.

⁸ Mercer Island Arts Council Meeting, March 14, 2018, *Public Comment to the Draft Comprehensive Art Plan*, <http://www.mercergov.org/files/PublicEngagementDraftResponses.pdf>.



Mercer Island Embraces Cultural Vitality.

A sparkling feature of input received through these public engagement processes is the confirmation that Mercer Islanders embrace the integration of arts and culture into the concept of quality of life. A belief that arts are integral to the sustenance of a good community is prevalent.⁹ Indeed, cultural vitality is “the evidence of creating, disseminating, validating, and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities.”¹⁰ It is comprised of three chief domains: presence of opportunity for participation, cultural participation, and support.¹¹ Island community input demonstrates the need for further growth in the first domain: opportunity for participation, which flows from space availability and cooperation. Addressing these two unique Island needs will provide better opportunity for the fusion of art into the daily life of Islanders.

The Island Lacks Adequate Arts Space.

Island children’s theater group, Youth Theatre Northwest (YTN), lost its permanent home when the school district reclaimed its district-owned theater for construction of a new elementary school in 2011. Between 2011 and 2013, the city began addressing the impending need for a new home for YTN. This process revealed a larger community need for art space.¹² Demand for art activity space has only compounded since this time.

In 2014, a “for-profit business” displaced the community center art room.¹³ Schedules at the two available performing art venues on the island, Mercer Island High School Performing Arts Center and the Stroum Jewish Community Center auditorium, are consistently full. Rents and fees for these spaces are rising. Churches on the island have historically provided space for art activities; however, changes in tax implications for these arrangements are leading to constraints on availability. The Historical Society has run out of space for storage of important historical documentation.

A multidisciplinary-oriented, centralized arts facility will serve not only to improve availability for arts on the Island but also act as a magnet for collaborative force.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/50676/311392-Cultural-Vitality-in-Communities-Interpretation-and-Indicators.PDF>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² City of Mercer Island City Council Meeting and Study Session Agenda and Packet, February 6, 2018, <https://sirepub.mercergov.org/meetings/cache/108/1xvxwb55umwiz145ykh02k55/45220504102018113531804.PDF>.

¹³ Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, February June 11, 2014, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2266> (describing need for art space and better collaboration).

Coordinated Arts Cooperation Will Benefit the Island.

A lack of coordination among arts groups on the island is a long-standing issue and a distinct barrier to opportunity and rich cultural development. Island art groups have made regular appearances at Mercer Island Arts Council meetings expressing the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of arts collaboration resources in the community.¹⁴

Indeed, there is a long-standing perception in the community that the arts operate insularly on Mercer Island. Community art organizations have called for increased cooperation through resource development and focus on collaboration.¹⁵

Leadership at the Mercer Island Fine Arts Advisory Council has recently recognized this deficit and is working to improve island arts organizations' relationships by forming the "All for Arts" initiative.¹⁶ Mercer Island is a small, robust, and tight-knit community. Communication among the arts organizations on the island should reflect this same sense of solidarity. Enhancing alliances of the local arts community will improve availability of resources and encourage healthier flow of information.

Building vision and goals into the city comprehensive plan that address the Island's arts and cultural needs operates as a first step in forging a thriving future for Mercer Island. By adopting this plan, the city welcomes the opportunity to address its gaps and to commit to enhancing the vitality and economic vibrancy of Mercer Island life.

¹⁴ Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, February 14, 2018, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2656> (describing need for collaboration); Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, April 13, 2016, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2472> (documenting local organization request for collaboration); Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, September 9, 2015, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2391> (documenting need for space update); Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, June 11, 2014, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2266> (describing need for art space and better collaboration).

¹⁵ Shirley Qiu, *Mercer Island Gets in Touch with its Artsy Side*, March 13, 2016 Crosscut, <https://crosscut.com/2016/03/mercer-island-gets-in-touch-with-its-artsy-side>, (The need for better cooperation is historic and could be addressed through a community arts facility. Community arts advocates believe that arts organizations have "operated in different silos" and a central facility could act as a focal point for local organizations, improving cooperation challenges on the island.).

¹⁶ Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, February 14, 2018, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2656> (documenting "All for Arts" presentation on the need for collaboration.)



VISION AND GOALS

Vision: To assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members.

Mercer Island Aims for Deliberate, Focused Support for the Arts.

To realize its vision Mercer Island will build on its foundational support for the arts to help foster economic and cultural sustainability in the years ahead. Through creative placemaking and innovative approaches to town center planning and community development, Mercer Island looks to leverage the power of arts and culture to advance livability, sustainability, and equity. Using strategies that honor Mercer Island's unique arts traditions and integrate innovative approaches to economic and cultural stimulation, Mercer Island will centralize and celebrate the role of art in our community as it crafts a vibrant future.

Broadly defined goals uphold the vision through targeted policies to guide the city in its planning processes. Mercer Island's arts and culture comprehensive plan goals are: (1) to support the arts on Mercer Island; (2) to nurture public art on Mercer Island; and (3) to preserve Mercer Island's heritage.

These goals aim not only to foster community connection and improved quality of life but also to promote economic development. Direct and indirect economic impacts of investment in the arts are real and measurable. Using an input-output economic analysis model, Americans for the Arts' Economic Impact Study documents the cultural and economic benefits of the arts.¹⁷ On a national level in 2015, the nation's nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$166.3 billion in commerce represented by \$63.8 billion in spending by arts organizations. This activity leveraged an additional \$102.5 billion in event-related spending by audiences. This economic activity supported 4.6 million jobs and generated \$27.5 billion in government revenue. The impact of this market is significant. Promoting increased arts investment and activity at a local level in the Mercer Island community would likewise drive substantial economic stimulus and revenue.

Arts Add Vitality to the Economy.

The city's commitment to prioritizing the arts in its forecasting and visioning occurs simultaneous to a greater Washington state concept to build a network of arts driven communities that intentionally foster economic growth through the arts and creative industries.

In May 2017, governor Inslee signed into law HB 1183 which, "[a]uthoriz[es] specified local governments, including municipalities . . . to designate a portion of

¹⁷ American for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: Summary Report*, 2015, https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/ARTS_AEPsummary_loRes.pdf

their territory as a creative district subject to certification by the Washington state arts commission.”¹⁸ As a result of this legislation, the state arts commission, ArtsWA, launched an implementation program to develop certified creative districts in the state. Certified creative districts are community defined geographic areas that are devoted to developing and promoting arts, culture, and creativity for the purpose of building and supporting a robust creative economy.

Indeed, the impact arts and culture have on economic vitality are well-documented. In the United States, the arts and artists are drivers of innovation, help shape and direct economic achievement, and give the United States relevance in the global economy. Nationally, the arts have a remarkable presence. More than 670,000 or 4.01% of all businesses are involved in the creation or distribution of the arts, and they employ 3.48 million people (2.04% of all U.S. employees).¹⁹ The vitality of Washington State’s creative economy reflects national statistics. In 2014, creative industries in Washington State represented \$19.2 billion in total industry earnings and employed more than 147,000 people.²⁰ Mercer Island’s Creative Vitality Index surpasses the state value of .97. With a Creative Vitality Index value of 1.31 and a population of more than 23,000 people in 2016, more than 1,100 were employed in creative jobs.²¹ Supporting the arts is not just good press or simply for the kids; it’s business best practice.

Through implementation of this arts and culture plan and leveraging its existing and potential arts and culture assets, the city seeks to expand opportunities to unite the community and address financial challenges.

Approach.

Goal 1: Support the arts on Mercer Island.

- Policy: Support implementation of and encourage community involvement in accessible, high quality performing, visual and literary arts programs, projects, and events.
- Policy: Provide educational art opportunities through Parks & Recreation curriculum.

¹⁸ HB 1183 – 2017-18,
<http://apps2.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary?Year=2017&BillNumber=1183&Year=2017&BillNumber=1183>.

¹⁹ Americans for the Arts, *The Creative Industries in the United States*, 2017,
https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/by_program/reports_and_data/creative/2017_UnitedStates_NationalOnePager_Color.pdf.

²⁰ Creative Vitality Suite, *Snapshot of the Arts in Washington State*, 2014,
https://www.arts.wa.gov/media/dynamic/docs/Washington_Page_1.jpg.

²¹ Creative Vitality Suite, *Snapshot of the Arts in 98040*, 2016, [See Attachment A].



- Policy: Maintain a citizen Arts Council, which is advisory to the City Council and that spearheads arts programming and partnerships.
- Policy: Promote cooperation and local partnerships between the City of Mercer Island and artists, arts providers, nonprofit organizations, urban designers, architects, developers, and others to help improve the quality of the built environment.
- Policy: Coordinate and collaborate with the local school district to broaden accessibility and awareness of local art opportunities and to further art education.
- Policy: Coordinate and collaborate with local, regional, and national arts organizations, and through public and private partners to integrate art into the community via permanent installations and special events.
- Policy: Assess community art needs through community engagement and public involvement.
- Policy: Implement a creative district and accountability strategy to complement and enhance overall city economic development strategy and to foster a thriving creative economy.
- Policy: Support:
 - Efforts to secure space for art and cultural activities;
 - The establishment of a community maker space;
 - Opportunities for housing and/or live/work space for artists; and,
 - A multidiscipline-oriented community arts facility.
- Policy: Maintain a parity of public space for art and cultural activities when existing public art and cultural activity space is modified or eliminated.

Goal 2: Nurture public art on Mercer Island.

- Policy: Encourage diversity in public art.
- Policy: Maintain current and encourage new spaces for public art placement.
- Policy: Maintain and preserve the current collection and encourage the acquisition of additional public art.
- Policy: Incorporate public art in town center development design and site features.

- Policy: Maintain requirement that at least 1% of qualifying capital improvement projects' costs are set aside for public art acquisition, repair, and maintenance.
- Policy: Make an effort to incorporate public art into and surrounding transportation projects.
- Policy: Welcome and support community involvement in public art processes.

Goal 3: Preserve Mercer Island's Heritage.

- Policy: Promote awareness and appreciation of Mercer Island's history and historic resources.
- Policy: Support efforts to secure space for the preservation of Mercer Island's historical and cultural heritage and related archival materials.
- Policy: Promote public engagement with culture and heritage organizations.
- Policy: Support the curation of historical exhibits in the community.

ACTION AND ACHIEVEMENT

Adoption of this arts and culture comprehensive plan is the first step in supporting and directing action to sustain and implement the policies to achieve Mercer Island's stated vision and goals. The city and public are eager to move forward together, as a unified body, to further enrich and enhance the community via arts and culture investment.

Art brings people together; it builds community. Mercer Island is a community accessed only via bridges. It is fortunate to have bridges linking to world-class art opportunities and facilities. However, bridges are needed not only to access art across a lake; bridges must be built within Mercer Island's community, to facilitate cooperation, solidify vision, and embolden a future flourishing with art opportunities of its own right.



The Bridge Builder

An old man going a lone highway,
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast, and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fear for him;
But he turned, when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near,
"You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again will pass this way;
You've crossed the chasm, deep and wide-
Why build you this bridge at the evening tide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today,
A youth, whose feet must pass this way.

This chasm, that has been naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."

- Will Allen Dromgoole

ATTACHMENT A

Snapshot of the Arts in 98040 2016



Creative Vitality Index

1.31
CVI Value

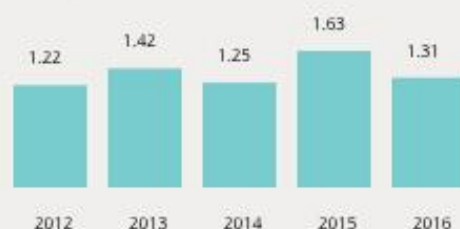
United States CVI = 1.0

This regional snapshot report gives the big picture of a region's creative landscape. It provides an overview of creative jobs, industry earnings, FDR grants, and Nonprofit revenues.

Total Population

23,429

Past 5 years of CVI Performance



GAIN

▲ 3%
since 2015

2016 Creative Jobs



1,105

Total Creative Jobs

There are 30 more creative jobs in the region since 2015

Occupations with greatest number of jobs



GAIN

▲ 6%
since 2015

2016 Creative Industries



\$34.9M

Total Industry Earnings

There is a gain of \$2.0 million in creative industry earnings in the region since 2015

Industries with greatest earnings



LOSS

▼ 59%
since 2015

2016 Cultural Nonprofit



\$2.2M

Nonprofit Revenues

There are \$3.1 million less in revenues in the region since 2015

CVSuite does not have grant data for 2016.



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

APPENDIX H: SUMMARY OF PAST PLANS





Citywide Plan Summaries

City Comprehensive Plan 2015-2035

The adopted City Comprehensive Plan identifies several community values related to the provision of a parks and recreation system on Mercer Island:

- “Livability is Paramount,” which translates into the feeling that Mercer Island is “the nicest of places for everyone to live.”
- “Cherish the Environment” recognizes that residents are “stewards” of the island environment, and environmentally sensitive lands will be prioritized.
- Maintain Environmental Value through implementing policies aimed at preserving and enhancing the Island’s physical characteristics.

The preservation of open space (trees and green spaces) continues to be a primary means to attain the community’s quality-of-life vision and is reinforced through stated goals in the Comprehensive Plan. Land Use policies (under Goal 19) and Parks and Open Space policies (under Goal 20) outline steps to continue Mercer Island’s unique quality of life through open space preservation, park and trail development, and well-designed public facilities. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that a more specific policy direction for parks and open space shall be identified in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Plan.

Parks and Open Space-related comprehensive plan amendments:

- 2017: 19.13 Pursue a trail lease agreement from the Washington State Department of Transportation to allow for the development of an I-90 Connector Trail to establish a pedestrian connection between Luther Burbank and Town Center.
- 2018: 20.13 Support the conservation of private property on Mercer Island through the use of conservation tools and programs including, but not limited to, the King County Public Benefit Rating System and Transfer of Development Rights programs.

The next update to the City Comprehensive Plan will be adopted by 2024, and the revised PROS Plan will likely be incorporated as an appendix.

Parks and Recreation Plan 2014-2019

The six-year Parks and Recreation Plan (now known as the Parks, Recreation and Open Space or PROS Plan) was adopted in 2014 and outlined a blueprint for maintaining and enhancing the quality of life on Mercer Island. At the time of adoption, the Parks and Recreation Department was responsible for operating and maintaining over 460 acres of parks and open space, 30 miles of trails, over 150 annual recreation programs and events, and a 42,000 square foot community center. The Plan identified a six-year list of proposed capital projects through a comprehensive conditions and assessment process combined with the recommendations from adopted master plans for Mercedale Park, Pioneer Park, Homestead Field, and Luther Burbank Park, as well as the Open Space Vegetation Plan and Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan.

The Parks and Recreation Plan focused on maintaining current levels of service, upgrading and maintaining parks and facilities, developing new recreational opportunities, implementing master plans and vegetation management plans, balancing usage priorities at the community center, and developing new trail connections. The proposed capital project list included over \$20 million of improvements, repairs, and renovations to the Mercer Island parks and open space system.

Open Space Vegetation Plan

The Open Space Vegetation Plan was adopted in 2004 and updated in 2015. This plan series has guided the management of 300+ acres of public open space. It established levels of service and prioritized certain landscape types that have high value or unique functions. The 2015 update added a goal to foster climate-resilient plant communities that can recover from disturbances and adapt to climate change. It also changed the levels of service from the 2004 plan to define objectives that better meet these revised goals.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan

The 2010 Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities (PBF) Plan updated key policies and prioritized future improvements for alternative transportation opportunities in the City. The PBF Plan sought to expand the flexibility of the non-motorized system and introduced new design concepts to continue to increase the mobility needs of persons of varying ages and abilities. The PBF Plan acknowledged the increase in public support for non-motorized facilities and the strong relationship between community health and higher levels of walkability. The PBF Plan emphasized key corridor projects that would provide greater connectivity and safety improvements for routes to and from elementary schools. The concept of routine accommodation was recognized for ensuring that pedestrian and bicycle needs should be factored into all transportation projects, both new construction and reconstruction. The PBF Plan lists project priorities for inclusion in the six-year transportation improvement program (TIP) and a 20-year project list to achieve connectivity, safety, and mobility goals.

Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan

The Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan for Mercer Island, adopted in 2018 and incorporated into the Citywide Comprehensive Plan, acknowledged the importance of arts, culture, and heritage in enhancing the quality of life on Mercer Island. The Arts and Culture Plan describes the history of arts and culture on Mercer Island and the commitment to supporting arts, culture, and heritage in the community.

Public input during plan development revealed two fundamental barriers to the advancement of arts and culture progress in the community: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation among community arts, culture, and heritage groups, and (2) a lack of space for creating and participating in arts, culture, and heritage opportunities. The Plan's vision for Mercer Island is "to assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members." The Plan's goals are to support the arts on Mercer Island; to nurture public art on Mercer Island, and to preserve Mercer Island's heritage. The Arts and Culture Plan proposed a framework for future progress with specific emphasis on more effective collaboration across organizations, programs, and activities, and the creation of a shared physical arts space.

Shoreline Master Plan Policies

The City's adopted Shoreline Master Plan addresses public access to increase and enhance access to waterfront recreational opportunities along the Mercer Island Shoreline, and, where appropriate, street-end facilities. The planning work acknowledges that universal/ADA access needs to be considered when developing public access to shoreline areas. As required by the State program, the resources and amenities of Lake Washington are to be protected and preserved for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services Strategy

In the fall of 2020, amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, a consultant-led staff team began developing a "reset" plan to deliver recreation programs and re-open the Mercer Island Community & Event Center (MICEC). While the impacts of the pandemic were the primary cause of this action, the City had been working to strengthen the fiscal sustainability of the Recreation Division for several years.

Along with the Parks & Recreation Commission, the project team analyzed past programs and services, revenues and costs, community needs, and identified opportunities and challenges. The work developed program assessment tools, focused services to best support the community, and established a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy and a pricing strategy, among other project outcomes. The result of the project was the Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services Strategy, adopted by the City Council in July of 2021. This strategy will help guide future recreation services and the use of the MICEC and the parks system.

Master Plan Summaries

Audrey Davis Park Master Plan

Adopted in December 2019, the Audrey Davis Park (ADP) Master Plan established the vision and recommendations for the 2.8 -mile park along I-90, including the Park on the Lid, the Mountains to Sound Trail, the Boat Launch, and the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery. The master plan is organized into four main categories: vegetation management, trails improvements, park improvements, and arts, culture & placemaking. The master plan is also intended as a platform to renegotiate the maintenance agreement with WSDOT, the primary owner of the park.



City of Mercer Island park staff maintain Aubrey Davis Park based on agreements with WSDOT from 1987 and 1989. The final master plan proposed vegetation management strategies to improve the landscape and open space, including soil amendments, infill plantings, and lawn modification to reduce maintenance and water use. Trail recommendations include improved safety through clear sightlines, re-established shoulders, potential targeted trail realignment near the Lid A restrooms, integrated wayfinding, and new ADA access.

The ADP Master Plan recommendations proposed improved ADA accessibility where facilities would be upgraded. New facility projects include a restroom near West Mercer Way, an off-leash dog area and enhanced shoreline access at the boat launch.

The ADP Master Plan arts, culture, and placemaking recommendations propose creating and strengthening community connections through arts and culture with direct ties to the City's public art process. The implementation of the ADP Master Plan recommendations prioritized the projects using criteria that mirror the City's Capital Improvements Program, with public safety as the highest priority.

Homestead Field (Park) Master Plan

Potential future developments of Homestead Field were explored in a public process from 2001 to 2003 that provided a consensus on desired future park improvements. Improvements included hooded backstops, baseball viewing area pavement, pathway improvements, picnic tables, drinking fountain, batting cage, and an ADA ramp from parking to play areas.

Luther Burbank Park Master Plan

In 2006, the Luther Burbank Park Master Plan identified a long-term vision for operations and future improvements to the park. The goals of the master plan were to retain and enhance the park's value, identity, uses, and facility needs. The Luther Burbank Park Master Plan identified proposed improvements following guiding principles to embrace natural systems, maintain park character, manage vegetation, improve park infrastructure, and improve the park arrival experience. The Master Plan divided the park into zones, related to uses, location, and character to better describe the variety and uniqueness of targeted improvements.

Luther Burbank Boiler Building Study

The 2017 Boiler Building Study evaluated the existing structures for safety and identified options for public use through renovations and estimated project construction costs. The Study also reviewed options for expanding building uses in supporting summer boating programs. The Boiler Building currently supports paddle camps as a restroom and storage facility. The 2006 Luther Burbank Park Master Plan envisioned this building to be occupied, offering classes and rentals in addition to summer camps. It would provide the operational facilities to support these programs.

The 2017 Study recommended two phases of improvements to the site. Phase I includes general repairs to address aging infrastructure needs and seismic reinforcement. Bathrooms would be remodeled for accessibility, and new roofing would be installed for both structures. Phase II includes accessibility improvements to the site from the main campus area of the Park, a remodeled concession area, and additional classroom and office spaces to support expanded programming.

Mercerdale Park Master Plan

Adopted in 1998, the Mercerdale Park Master Plan called for a public plaza, play spaces for children, walking pathways, natural area trails, and future use for elderly housing, a senior/community center, a Thrift Shop, and a Recycling Center. Much of the proposed park development was completed.

Mercerdale Park includes a sewer line running north to south through the middle of the park. Some of the amenities at Mercerdale Park are aging and are due for renovation or replacement, which includes the Skate Park and the Recycling Center/Restroom building. An updated Master Plan may be warranted to address these needs.

Pioneer Park Master Plan

The Pioneer Park Master Plan, prepared in 2001, addressed the overall vision for this vital asset and identified key issues related to open space management. Themes included natural resource management, acceptable levels of public use, trail system design and layout, and the character of the open space.

The Plan was built on previous studies relating to invasive plant species, forest health conditions, soils, and slopes. The City's Parks and Recreation Department and the Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust collaborated on the master planning process to

guide the management and proposed improvements to Pioneer Park as an open space public land. The preparation of the property's forest/vegetation management planning was recognized as equally important to the master plan and was conducted concurrently. The Master Plan recommendations included trail hierarchy improvements, viewpoints, street crossings, interpretive signage, boundary marking and landscape enhancements.

Other Planning and Policy Studies

Parks Impact Fees Ordinance 15C-22 (2015)

The City of Mercer Island adopted Ordinance 15C-22 establishing park impact fees for new development consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Parks Capital Facilities Plan. The impact fees created a mechanism to ensure that new development paid its share of new capital costs. This program ensures that there are adequate park facilities at the time that new development occurs.

Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan (2003, 2009) and Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey (2008)

2003 & 2009 - Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan

For over a year in late 2002 and into 2003, the Open Space Conservancy Trust developed a forest management plan that provided direction for management and intervention within Pioneer Park to maintain the native forest ecosystem, protect public safety, and enhance positive uses of the park over the long-term. The Forest Management Plan focused on the 118-acre Pioneer Park and its three 39-acre blocks of second-growth western-hemlock forest and one of the largest relatively unfragmented forest habitats remaining on the Island. Laminated root rot was killing Douglas fir trees while age claimed many alders and maples in the park.

As these trees were dying, they left "gaps" in the tree canopy of the park. Invasive, non-native plants, notably ivy, holly, and blackberry, were widespread in the park and taking over wherever trees were dying. They were preventing the regrowth or "regeneration" of canopy trees. As a result, the Plan was developed to guide future vegetation and forest work priorities and was subsequently adopted by the City Council on December 15, 2003.

2008 - Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey and Forest Health Work Plan

Following the December 2006 Hanukkah Eve storm, the Mercer Island City Council considered whether enough was being done to restore the tree canopy in Pioneer Park. The City Council commissioned a Forest Health Survey to quantify prescribed forest health factors. The study discovered several conditions that the existing Forest Management Plan was not adequately addressing. The work plan changed the focus of the restoration work in Pioneer Park from a site-based approach to a systemic approach. For example, the Forest Health Survey found that canopy regeneration, invasive trees and ivy were of particular concern. A Forest Health Work Plan proposed new projects designed to address these critical issues park-wide while holding the line where site-based comprehensive restoration was already underway. Together, the Forest Health Survey and the Forest Health Work Plan were appended to the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan by the Open Space Conservancy Trust in 2009.

Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report

This staff-prepared assessment, completed in 2018, provides a comprehensive evaluation of current and future trail upkeep and safety needs to ensure the best management practices for the City's extensive trail network. It included a complete inventory of trail assets in public parklands. Regular maintenance has kept most of the trail system in good condition. The more complex infrastructure of the trail network, primarily stairs and retaining walls, was in various stages of disrepair or advanced rot. The Report prioritizes addressing these structural conditions and recommends the timing for repair or replacement. In specific situations, certain sets of stairs were identified for possible decommissioning.

Tree Canopy Assessment

Mercer Island's urban forest is a valuable asset that provides residents and visitors with many ecological, environmental, and community benefits. This assessment analyzed the City's urban tree canopy (UTC), possible planting area (PPA), and change in UTC over 10 years (aerial imagery from 2007-2017). The results provide baseline data to develop strategies to protect and expand Mercer Island's trees and natural areas during planning and development. The maps and projects report help to concentrate efforts in areas where needs are greatest, tree planting space is available, and benefits can be realized.



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



APPENDIX I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Historical Background

Mercer Island began settlement in 1876 and early speculation led to claiming of all land by 1890. In 1924, a bridge was built over the East Channel, connecting Mercer Island with the eastern mainland. Until 1940, when the first floating bridge to the west was built, this was the only vehicle access to the Island. As the population grew in the 1950s, Islanders looked for local government to provide for the type of lifestyle they desired. In 1960, the Town of Mercer Island and the City of Mercer Island were created. As growth slowed in the early 1970s, the Town and City were merged.

In the 1970s, residents were growing concerned about their environment, resulting in the passage of the Steep Slope, Land Clearing, and Watercourse Ordinances providing firm policy on the preservation of open spaces. During this time, residents also passed several bond issues to purchase park and open space land or improve existing holdings.

The provision of adequate park and recreational facilities, and the conservation of natural areas are important to Mercer Island residents. The following inventory of selected studies, plans, events, and bond issues demonstrates the extent of the community's efforts to preserve open space and fulfill recreational and community facility needs.

1961 - Park and Community Activities Board

The Park and Community Activities Board were created in 1961 to oversee park uses, development, and recreation programming. Lands were being considered for park use and resources for recreational programming. King County and the City of Seattle were the primary providers of recreation activities until the Board hired a part-time Recreation Director in 1961. The new Director was employed on a part-time basis, also working as the School District Athletic Director. A full-time director was hired for the first time in 1965. The Parks and Recreation Department moved into the Luther Burbank Park Administration Building, then called the Luther Burbank Community Center in 1971, and the Mercer View Elementary School was first leased to the City as a Community Center in 1980.

1962 - Dragon Park

The Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) actively fundraised to help develop a children's park as part of Island Crest Park, originally owned and operated by King County. MIPA solicited support from service organizations to help purchase equipment and develop what became known as Dragon Park, due to a 50' long plaster and metal dragon feature. After taking a lead stewardship role in the maintenance and care of the area, MIPA handed over park responsibilities to the City of Mercer Island in August of 1965. The park was later named Deane's Children's Park in honor of Lola and Phil Deane, who were active in developing the park and other youth and civic activities. The City and MIPA have partnered in subsequent improvements over the years, including a significant renovation in 2005.

1963 - A Preliminary Park and Recreational Plan

The Preliminary Park and Recreational Plan was the City of Mercer Island's first attempt to comprehensively plan for the Island's recreational needs. The plan introduced an open space classification for unbuildable areas and recommended such sites for acquisition by the City. The plan also proposed a trail system through designated open space along East Mercer Way, across the University of Washington properties (Pioneer Park), and up to Island Crest Park.

1963 - Circulation and Recreation Planning

John Graham and Company

The John Graham Study was the first significant report dealing with the recreational needs of the Island. The report noted that the Mercer Island lacked public recreational facilities primarily because most residents could provide for their own recreational needs. It was found that Mercer Island residents would be willing to spend money to acquire "just plain old open space" in order to preserve the natural features of the Island.

1964 - Park Bond Issue

In 1964, Islanders approved an \$890,000 bond issue for acquisition and minor development of the University of Washington & Catholic Archdiocese properties (Pioneer Park).

1966 - Park and Open Space Plan

The Planning Commission, Park Board, and City of Mercer Island staff drafted the Park and Open Space Plan. It was the first parks plan to be officially adopted. The plan emphasized parkland acquisition to serve projected population levels. Recreational standards were adopted as goals that could be modified in the future, if necessary, to meet the particular characteristics of the Island. An open space system was introduced, which combined individual parks into one system, provided safe access, and utilized ravines and other unbuildable areas for paths and trails.

1968 - Parks Master Plan

The Parks Master Plan, prepared by the Parks and Recreation Department and adopted by the City Council in 1968, was a further step by the City toward developing a workable parks and recreation plan. It provided guidelines for parkland acquisition and development of existing park sites, along with a six-year capital improvement program. The Master Plan continued the City's efforts to develop the concepts in the 1966 Park and Open Space Plan.

1969 - Mercer Island Planning Phase I Population Land Use Economics

The Phase I Planning Study prepared by Harstad Associates, Inc. clarified, for the first time, the amount of developed and undeveloped land on the Island. In 1968, out of a total of 4,127 acres of land on the Island, 3,062 acres were developed, and 1,065 acres were undeveloped. It was found that most of the undeveloped land was in areas of 25 percent slope or more (the areas previously considered unbuildable).

1969 - Golf Course Advisory Ballot

In 1969, an advisory ballot to build a golf course on the eastern 80 acres of Pioneer Park was presented to and defeated by the voters. This was the first in a series of attempts to build a golf course on Mercer Island.

1970 - A Proposal for Planned Saturation for Mercer Island

A proposal prepared by Moss-Ralston introduced the much-debated concept of limiting the Island's population growth by utilizing "trading dollars" to purchase open space land. Open space land would be purchased with the money taxpayers would save by not extending the services required to support a saturation population. The report recommended that the City acquire and establish use restrictions on approximately 670 acres of undeveloped land to obtain paths, greenbelts, and open space land.

A follow-up analysis of the Moss-Ralston proposal proved that the cost of purchasing the 670 undeveloped acres was beyond the City's budget and introduced other methods short of outright purchase to acquire some or all of the undeveloped land for public use. The study also inventoried undeveloped land areas, and derived cost per acre figures for each of the Island's major geographic areas. An analysis of the cost per acre figures revealed that it would be more cost-effective for the Island to buy steeply sloping, unplatted areas rather than platted sites.

A second follow-up study of the Moss-Ralston proposal by a "Greenbelt Steering Committee" concluded that although the dollars saved by not extending services offset the cost of land acquisition, there were other equally important intangibles that would be provided by the acquisition of open space. It was recognized that the preservation of open space to protect the Island's natural drainage areas and hillsides was a justifiable end in itself. The Greenbelt Steering Committee recommended a priority land acquisition schedule based on the probability of land being lost to development. A \$5,000,000 bond issue (see below) was recommended to purchase approximately 400 acres.

1971 & 1972 - Bond Issues

In 1971, a \$2,000,000 bond issue was presented to Mercer Island voters. The bond issue was the first phase of a \$5,000,000 plan to purchase approximately 400 acres of wooded ravines and hillsides. All parcels to be purchased were two or more acres in size. The proposed levy would have increased property taxes by approximately three percent. The proposal was endorsed by the voters but did not receive the voter turnout necessary for implementation.

Following a strong positive indication of support from a sample survey, a \$2,900,000 bond issue was presented to the voters in September 1972. One part of the issue proposed \$1,200,000 for open space. Other parts proposed \$500,000 for parks, and \$300,000 for trails. The open space and parks issues failed by a significant margin. The trails issue passed with 64 percent of the vote.

1972 - Natural History of Pioneer Park

Citizens recognized that the 113.95-acre Pioneer Park represented a valuable natural resource to Mercer Island. To better indicate the general uses for which Pioneer Park would be suited, the Mercer Island Environmental Council prepared an inventory and analysis of the park's wildlife, vegetation, hydrology, climate, and aesthetic qualities. The City published a revised edition in January 1990.



1972 - Mercer Island Capital Improvements Program

The Mercer Island Capital Improvements Program, developed in 1972 by Harstad Associates, Inc., identified goals for capital improvements and nominated capital improvement and community facilities projects for completion over a year time frame.

1972 - Mercer Island Comprehensive Planning Study

The Mercer Island Comprehensive Planning Study, also prepared by Harstad Associates, Inc., discussed the need to incorporate environmental considerations into the land development process. The study also included an urban design program, a discussion of community facilities, an arterial plan proposal, and a draft Planned Unit Development ordinance. The document was used to adopt the Design Commission and Land Clearing Ordinances in 1972, the Watercourse Ordinance in 1974, and the Steep Slope Ordinance in 1978. The 1973 Community Facilities Plan and the 1976 Arterial Plan were additional outgrowths of the study.

1973 - Pioneer Park Concept Plan

The City of Mercer Island prepared a concept plan for the uses of Pioneer Park. This plan proposed various recreational improvements in the Park. The northwest section would be designed for family use and would contain pedestrian/ bicycle trails, benches, trash receptacles, a picnic area, and a perimeter equestrian trail. The southeast section would be for pedestrians, bicycles, and horses, and have pedestrian/bicycle trails and some equestrian trails. The northeast section would be used for environmental education and contain trails, interpretive markers, portable toilets, and safety improvements. This plan also called for the acquisition of property or easements to allow access to the northeast ravine from East Mercer Way. Some of these improvements have been installed; others have been funded through the 1983 Bond Issue.

1975 - Outdoor Education. Athletic Facility Study

In a study performed by Hogan and jointly funded by the City of Mercer Island and the Mercer Island School District, school facilities were evaluated in terms of their educational and park and recreational potential to maximize the use of available facilities for educational and recreational purposes.

1976 - Golf Course Feasibility Study

The Golf Course Feasibility Study, prepared by the Windscott Company, recommended that the City develop a nine -hole golf course, a driving range,

clubhouse, and indoor tennis facility on the School District's "South 40" property (now, "The Lakes" subdivision). This recommendation was supported by the City Council and included as part of a \$2.5 million 1976 Bond Issue for parks improvement.

1976 - Bond Issue

Voters rejected this ballot issue, which included the "South 40" improvements discussed above, along with improvement of the Middle School athletic fields, renovation of Island Crest Park, and improvements at Homestead, Groveland, and Clarke Beach parks. The bond issue was supported by a majority of the voters but failed to receive the voter turnout necessary for implementation.

1979 - Bond Issue

\$1.4 million was requested in 1979 to acquire 17 hillside acres adjacent to the Mercerdale property, between the business district and surrounding single-family residential area. If passed, the wooded character of the property would be preserved, and development would consist of trails and trail appurtenances. The proposal received 85 percent voter approval. Trails within the 1.3-mile-long greenbelt between SE 40th and SE 27th and between the business district and First Hill were completed in 1981.

1980 - Mercerview Elementary School – Community Center Lease Agreement

A lease agreement was established with the Mercer Island School District for the Mercer View Elementary School and property, which was approximately 8.4 acres. Originally built in 1960, the school was closed because of declining enrollment. The first year lease was set at \$84,000 and \$21,000 annually thereafter. In 1985, the annual payment of \$21,000 was eliminated as the City agreed to maintain 17 acres of School District athletic fields at South Mercer Playfields.

Subsequently in 2002, the property was finally purchased from the Mercer Island School District. The 4-building facility served approximately 120,000 residents and visitors each year. The 27,000 sq. ft. Center provided office space for the Parks and Recreation Department and Youth and Family Services Department, as well as rooms for recreation programs serving youths, teens, adults, families, and seniors and for rentals (i.e., Weight Watchers, ski clubs, Chamber of Commerce luncheons, business and community meetings, etc.). A small gymnasium, weight room, and a public art gallery were also included in this facility. This facility served as the City's community center until 2004 when a new facility was built.

1983 - Bond Issue

A \$2 million bond issue for general parks improvement received 62% voter approval in 1983. Improvement plans included installing sports fields with appropriate lighting, restrooms, parking areas, and landscaping on 17 acres of semi-developed property at Islander Middle School (now South Mercer Playfields) and Island Crest Park. Other improvements would occur at the City's street ends, Clarke Beach, Groveland Beach, Pioneer, and Homestead Field Parks.

1984 - Bond Issue

In 1984, a \$2.4 million bond issue was presented to the voters to acquire three surplus school district properties, including 17 acres of the "South 40" property, west of Islander Middle school, the "Secret Park" property, and the East Seattle School property. Development funds would also have been provided for the improvement of East Seattle School. The issue was supported by 52% of the voters, but failed to receive the voter turnout necessary for implementation.

1987 - Secret Park Purchase

In 1987, the City Council agreed to purchase Secret Park, which was being surplus by the School District. Voters approved using the unallocated funds from the 1979 Bond Issue for this transaction.

1988 - Bond Issue

In May 1988, Mercer Island voters passed a \$1.7 million bond issue to purchase 7 acres of vacant property between I-90 and Gallagher Hill Road, east of Shorewood. This land consisted of two parcels - 1.3 acres owned by an insurance company, zoned Commercial Office, and 5.67 acres (zoned multi-family R-2) for which permits had been submitted for the development of 122 apartment units.

1988 - Mercerdale Task Force Report

Following the establishment of a new City Hall on the old "Farmers" site at 9611 SE 36th St., a community task force was appointed to study the future use of Mercerdale Field. A passive use plan was adopted in June 1988, which included a plaza, water feature, paths, lawns, and benches.

1989 - King County Bond Issue

In November 1989, King County voters approved a county-wide bond issue for the purchase of open space. Two Mercer Island projects were included in the list of land to be purchased: 21 acres along SE 53rd Place, and 15,000 square feet adjacent to the Mercerdale Hillside open space.

The City purchased the Mercerdale site, but unfortunately the SE 53rd Place land was put on the market and sold to a private developer for \$3.5 million (significantly more than the \$1 million authorized by the bond issue). After negotiations with the developer, the City was able to secure the purchase of the land. Bridge financing was used until October 1991.

1990 - Hebert Studies

In late 1989 and early 1990, the City commissioned Hebert Research Inc. to perform two different surveys. The first addressed human service needs, including recreational programming, support for improvements and Community Center use. The second study was designed to survey Mercer Island attitudes toward the size of single-family housing.

1990 - Golf Sub-Committee Report

In March 1989, a group of residents asked the Park and Community Activities Board (PCAB) to consider using a portion of Pioneer Park for a 9-hole executive golf course. Following a series of public meetings, the PCAB voted to establish a golf sub-committee. This sub-committee met bi-weekly between November 1989 and June 1990. The majority report (subsequently accepted by the PCAB and sent to the City Council for action) recommended placing the golf course issue on the November 1990 ballot. A public hearing on the recommendation was held before the City Council in August 1990. In September 1990, the City Council rejected the committee's recommendation, effectively halting the proposal. Staff was also directed to research methods to designate Pioneer Park as a natural area.

1990 - Pioneer Park General Master Plan

As an update to the 1973 concept plan previously adopted by the City Council, the new plan was presented to the Park and Community Activities Board in June 1990. The Plan was not ever adopted by the City Council.

1991 - Ballfield User Group (BUG)

A group of community sports organizations, known as the Ballfield User Group (BUG), came together in 1991 to address growing demands on athletic facilities and reduce the number of conflicts occurring between teams, organizations, and officials. With the demand on fields growing each year, field conditions were deteriorating, and safety was a concern. Bringing together the main youth and adult athletic agencies provided the City with better communication channels and the ability to instill the priority of ongoing maintenance.

The role of the Ballfield User Group was to provide



feedback to the Parks and Recreation Department and to support Department policies and operations. Participating organizations were the Parks and Recreation Department, Parks Maintenance, School District Maintenance, the High School, the Middle School, the Boys and Girls Club, the Soccer Association, and the Jewish Community Center. The Island Baseball Club and the Lacrosse Club were added in 2000.

1992 - Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust

City Council established the Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust in response to the many needs and strong desire to maintain, protect, and preserve open space on the Island. The Trust's role is to receive and hold title to real property, or interest in real property and to ensure the development and use of the Open Space Properties are consistent and compatible with the intent and purposes of the Trust and guidelines and policies enacted by the City Council.

1994 to 2001 - Skate Park at Mercerdale Park

The original 50' X 70' skate facility at Mercerdale Park was constructed in 1994 as the first unsupervised skate facility in the region. Members of the Park and Community Activities Board (PCAB), local youth and their parents, staff, and representatives from the City Council worked for over a year to develop a safe area for skateboarding activities.

Due to the immense popularity of skating and the demand for public skating facilities, the Washington State Legislature adopted SSB 5254 in 1997, which amended the recreational user statute to include skateboarding. This change meant that the cities would not be held responsible for injuries sustained by skateboarders or inline skaters at skateboard parks operated by the city as long as: (1) a fee is not charged for the use of the skateboard park; and (2) conspicuous signs are posted to warn of any known dangerous, artificial, latent conditions. On December 3, 2001, the City Council authorized the expansion of the skate park to almost double in size. The expansion of the skate park was the result of meetings held with skaters and parents. The construction was completed on the addition and reopened in 2002.

1995 - I-90 Lid Sculpture Park

In 1995, the City of Mercer Island reached an agreement with the Washington State Department of Transportation to install outdoor sculptures on a portion of the I-90 property between 77th Ave SE and 80th Ave SE. The first year Primavera II was installed at the 80th Ave end. Since then, three other permanent pieces have been acquired by the City.

The idea for an outdoor gallery began in 1992 with a task force of over 35 volunteers. The vision for the gallery was to humanize and enhance the open space created by the I-90 corridor, complement and celebrate the unique landscape opportunity, and provide positive public art experiences for the broadest possible audience. The sculpture gallery also displays other sculptures on an annual rotation, typically hosting up to eight additional sculptures along the pedestrian walkway. This program won the Dorothy Mullens Arts and Humanities Award from the National Recreation and Parks Association in 1997.

1996 - Hebert Park Usage Assessment Focus Groups

The City again commissioned Hebert Research, Inc. to host two focus groups of residents with children under the age of 18 and residents without children. The focus groups considered what parks are used, what programs are used, the level of awareness of programs, participation at the Community Center, perceived needs, program strengths and weaknesses, Recreation Guide use, Senior Newsletter use, and what improvements residents felt were necessary for programs, services, or facilities.

1996 - Park and Community Activities Board Eliminated

During 1994-1996, the City Council systematically studied the mission and effectiveness of boards and commissions. A comprehensive review, the Glaser Report, was delivered in March of 1995. A Special Meeting of the City Council and board/commission members was held in May 1995. Subsequently, the City Council formed a sub-committee to draft a new policy on City boards and commissions. At the same time, each board was asked to describe their current statement of work and value to the community. A study session was held in October 1995, where additional public and City Council input was solicited.

In December 1995, the Council passed a motion to eliminate specific boards and restructure others. The Park and Community Activity Board was eliminated in 1996 in order to reduce costs and streamline the Cities board system.

1998 - Bond Issue

A \$19.1 million Bond Issue was presented to the voters to construct a new community center at the current Community Center at Mercer View site. Because the land was still owned by the Mercer Island School District, \$3 million was to be used to purchase the land. Miller/Hull Architects were contracted to design the community center.

With strong opposition from a community group, the bond was defeated by a 2 to 1 margin. The same year, a follow-up study by Hebert Research, Inc. indicated that the residents were not willing to support a \$19.1 million bond measure but may be willing to pay a lesser amount for a community facility.

1998 - Mercerdale Park Master Plan

The Mercerdale Park Master Plan, developed by MacLeod Reckord, was approved by the City Council in 1998. The plan retained Mercerdale as public land for development as a naturally landscaped park with open space trails, quiet areas, play areas for children, a public plaza and future use for elderly housing, a senior/community center, a thrift shop, and a recycling center.

2000 - Financing of Youth and Family Services & Parks and Recreation Departments

City Council reviewed the financing, sources of funds, and fiscal management of the services provided by the Parks and Recreation Department and the Youth and Family Services Department.

2000 - Park Services District Analysis, Youth & Family Services Governance and Financing

As a result of the passage of I-695 and with concerns about revenue loss, the City explored the possibility of implementing a voted park district and the possibility of transitioning the Youth and Family Services Department to a private non-profit.

2000 - City Council/School Board Joint Resolution on Cooperation and Collaboration

The City of Mercer Island and the Mercer Island School District adopted a resolution supporting cooperation and collaboration in the delivery of services. Given that both entities shared the same boundaries, served the same community, and derived funding from the same tax base, the commitment to shared principles and goals was timely and important.

2000 - Parks Maintenance Level of Service

In the early 1980s, the Maintenance Department assumed responsibility for maintaining park and open space properties. In 1999, a City Council study session provided a venue to discuss park maintenance standards. As part of the 2001-2002 budget development process, the City Council reviewed the level of service (LOS) standards to determine whether the level of service was too high in all parks, too high in a few parks, too low in some parks, or at an appropriate level in all parks. The City Council concurred with the staff's recommended level of service.

2000 - Class (Escom) Facility Booking and Activity Scheduling Software

In September 1997, a committee was formed to explore the computer scheduling software available on the market. After two years of consideration, on November 1, 1999, the City Council approved purchasing the new software for \$58,796 for scheduling, registration, cash receipting, reporting, training, and a server upgrade. The facility scheduling software was implemented in July 2000 and the Registration Module was implemented in September 2000.

2001 - Pioneer Park Master Plan

In Fall 2000, the Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust and the City of Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department initiated the development of a long-term Master Plan for improvements to Pioneer Park. MacLeod Reckord provided consulting services in the development of the plan. The purpose of the plan was to address physical improvements that would improve access and enhance public use of the park. The plan was approved by the Trust in October 2001, and the City Council allocated funding to implement the plan in 2002.

2001 to 2002 - Community Facilities Planning Process

Over a two-year period, the City worked cooperatively with the principal owners and suppliers of community facilities. The Community Facilities Planning Process was created to assess the potential of shared use and joint development of community facilities, primarily of a recreational/educational nature on Mercer Island. The key players included the City, the School District, the Boys and Girls Club, the Stroum Jewish Community Center, and the French American School.

During the planning process, Beckwith Consulting was hired to facilitate the development of a Master Plan involving all participating agencies. In December 2002, the Evans/McDonough Company conducted a telephone survey on the most critical issues facing the residents of Mercer Island. The survey found that voters were optimistic about the way things were going on Mercer Island. The Community Center was not among the top four issues of concern. Police and firefighting were the top voter priorities for city tax dollars. It was found that even though there was positive support for the job the Parks and Recreation Department was doing, there was not enough support to meet a 60% vote and pass a bond issue.



2002 - Mercerdale Park Master Plan Improvements

The Mercerdale Park Master Plan was developed in 1989 and revised in 2000 ("Plan 2000"). A skate park was installed on the east side of the park just south of the nature garden in 1992. A major expansion of the skate park and the addition of a children's play area was completed in the fall of 2002. The Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) partnered with the City in fundraising for the new children's park, now known as "Train Park". Two public art pieces were located along the south end of the park. The Recycling Center and restrooms on the northwest corner are adjacent to Bicentennial Park. Recent additions to the park have expanded the natural forested area on the west side with winding pathways.

2002 - Bounce Foundation

At a May 2002 City Council Meeting, several young teens addressed the Council about a teen center initiative they had launched "to provide a safe, fun and educational gathering place operated by and for teenagers." City Council supported the idea of providing some financial support for a teen-oriented café. A \$35,000 grant was awarded to the Bounce Foundation on a 50% matching basis. The "Bounce Cyber Café" opened in a vacant mall facility but struggled to find volunteers, financial support, and willing teen users. The Café closed after six months of operations.

2002 - Council Parks and Recreation Committee

On August 5, 2002, the City Council established a sub-committee of the Council to consider Parks and Recreation issues. The City Council was dealing with increasing numbers of parks and recreation projects and issues. The City Council decided that a sub-committee of the Council could provide a valuable source of information and, in some cases, recommendations to the full City Council. Three City Council members were appointed to the committee by the Mayor to work with the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department to bring this committee into action. The first meeting of the committee occurred on March 13, 2003.

2002 - Cost of Service and Fee Study

Based on concerns about revenues and the growing cost of providing services, the City of Mercer Island initiated a study to analyze the cost of service and fees for the Parks and Recreation Department. The overall objectives of the study were to: (1) Identify the cost of service for the Department's activities and services; (2) Determine the amount of cost recovered through fees; (3) Review parks and recreation fees in

comparable jurisdictions; and (4) Assist the Department in developing fee recommendations for its 2003-2004 proposed budget. Financial Consulting Solutions Group, Inc. (FCSG) submitted its final report on November 20, 2002.

2002 - Transfer of 1.57 acres to City

In 2002, Margaret and Kenneth Quarles transferred 1.57 acres of property in the 6500 block of East Mercer Way to the City for \$200,000. This acquisition was financed equally from City Capital Improvement Plan funds dedicated to open space acquisition and King County Conservation Futures. Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) levy funds are collected from property taxes levied throughout King County and its cities to purchase open space lands. This addition, in conjunction with a pedestrian trail easement on an adjacent property (James Altman), allowed a trail and bridge connection from Pioneer Park to East Mercer Way in 2003.

2002 - Mary Wayte Pool Transfer

To alleviate budget problems, King County offered to transition the ownership of many of its pools and parks to local municipalities. The proposed property transfers included Mary Wayte Pool and Luther Burbank Park to the City of Mercer Island. After many months of negotiation and meetings, the City of Mercer Island decided that the acceptance of the pool would be a financial burden to the City and declined the offer.

Luther Burbank Park, however, was accepted with specific provisions and the details are further described in a subsequent section. After deciding not to accept the pool, the City Council met with many citizens asking for another plan. King County planned to close the pool at the end of 2002 if no other solution was found.

On December 12, 2002, the City Council authorized the allocation of \$100,000 toward the support of the Northwest Center to operate the pool for the year 2003 and \$100,000 annually for five years thereafter. The Northwest Center was a non-profit organization that supports special needs populations and was willing to take on the pool as an income source. The Northwest Center also took on three other pools in cities throughout King County.

2002 - Wireless Communication Facilities (WCF's) in Parks

In December of 2002, the Mercer Island City Code section that regulates wireless communications facilities (19.06.040) was modified to provide more placement options for these facilities. In residential zones, the placement of WCFs was restricted to Island Crest Way between SE 40th Street and SE 68th Street, the South Mercer Island Fire Station, Puget Power Substation,

and the Mercer Island Water Reservoir. Residents along Island Crest Way felt that they were unfairly targeted by the City when permitting these facilities. Therefore, City Council decided to limit the placement of WFCs to Island Crest Way between SE 40th Street and SE 53rd Place and SE 63rd Street to SE 68th Street and allow these facilities to be placed in Island Crest Park and adjacent to Clise Park under certain conditions.

2002 - Historical Designation of Luther Burbank Park Administration Building

The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 02-16 (Historical Designation Ordinance), providing a process for the designation of historical buildings. The Historical Designation Ordinance requires that the City Council review a staff recommendation regarding the mandatory criteria to determine whether or not a nominated building should receive a historical designation. The City agreed to adopt a historical designation for the Luther Burbank Park Administration Building on December 2, 2002.

2003 - Luther Burbank Park Transfer

During the summer of 2001, representatives from the King County Executive's Office contacted the City concerning the status of Luther Burbank Park. Facing a \$52 million deficit for 2002 with growing deficits in 2003 and beyond, King County approached several cities containing regional parks to gauge local interest in long-term ownership and operation of the facilities. Mercer Island, Kirkland, Tukwila, and Bellevue were the first cities contacted. Following eight months of negotiations, the City and the County negotiated an Intergovernmental Land Transfer Agreement providing for the transfer of the Luther Burbank Park to the City of Mercer Island effective January 1, 2003.

2003 - New Park Fee Increases

Based on the results of the Cost of Service and Fee Study conducted by Financial Consultant Solutions Group, Inc. (FCSG), to determine the cost of all parks and recreation programs and services and identify the level of cost recovery for each program, it was necessary to implement increased fees for recreation programs and services beginning January 1, 2003. The study recommended, and the City Council concurred, that the Department adjust their recovery goal to an average of 51% of overall costs.

2003 - Community Center Summary Report

Three hundred interviews were conducted by Evans/McDonough Company, Inc., using a random sample of registered voters, to determine awareness/knowledge of the City's current plans for a new community center and assess support for various possible bond measures.

The results of the interviews were provided to the City Council to inform the development of a financial strategy for a future Community Center.

2003 - Mercer Island Recreation Services Foundation Eliminated

Having been inactive for a number of years, a decision was made to dissolve the Mercer Island Recreation Services Foundation and its board of officers and directors. In January 2004, the Department joined the Northwest Parks Foundation, a 501(C)3 corporation, as a community partner in establishing a Parks Safety Net Fund which acts as a donor intermediary for directed donations to the Department. The Northwest Parks Foundation, founded in 2002, is a private, non-profit organization created to support park and recreation facilities throughout Western Washington through financial endowments, organizational grants, and capital projects.

2003 - New Community Center Plan

After the defeat of the 1998 Bond Issue, a Hebert Research Inc. survey concluded that another bond issue would probably fail. The construction of a new community center was made a high priority issue at the 2002 City Council retreat. On November 18, 2002, the City Council received a presentation on a range of Community Center project proposals and costs. The City Council then authorized the funding for the development of schematic drawings and a voter survey to be implemented to poll the residents of Mercer Island on their level of support for various community center scenarios.

The survey reflected some negative feelings carried over from the 1998 Community Center, but also a high level of support for the City. At the 2003 City Council retreat in January, the City Council decided to use Capital Reserve Funds and Capital Improvement Program Reserves (REET) to fund the construction of a new Community Center. The City Council looked at the cost options of either a remodel of the current Center or the construction of a totally new center.

On July 7, 2003, the City Council voted to fund new construction at the existing Community Center at Mercer View site for \$13.1 million dollars (later amended to \$12.4 million). Parks and Recreation offices were relocated to the Luther Burbank Administration Building in June 2004, and recreational programs were temporarily relocated to other community facilities on Mercer Island. The new 42,000 sq. ft. community center opened in December 2005.



2003 - Homestead Field Master Plan

As part of the City's 2001-2002 Capital Investment Program (CIP), City Council authorized and set aside funds for the Homestead Field drainage improvement project. In coordination with the renovation project, City staff engaged regular users of the park as well as residents of the Homestead neighborhood in a public involvement process that related to potential future developments at Homestead Field. Bruce Dees and Associates facilitated and formulated the plan. This process was intended to provide a forum for considering a number of facility improvements that had been requested by various park users over the last few years. Because not all park user interests could be met (some too costly, some contradictory), an advisory committee including representatives of the park users and City staff was formed to develop a consensus plan for potential future improvements. The "master plan" presented to the City Council reflected that consensus.

On May 6, 2002, upon further consideration of the drainage project and other proposed improvements, the City Council authorized staff to move forward with the drainage project but chose not to endorse any of the proposed future improvements for the park. On August 4, 2003, on subsequent consideration, the City Council approved the revised Plan.

2003 - Mercer Island School District Stadium Interlocal Agreement

Voters approved a bond issue for the renovation of the Mercer Island High School stadium field surface and track. At the joint meeting of the School Board and the City Council, the City agreed to a \$500,000 payment to the District in exchange for (1) community use of the field during specified hours, and (2) the City control of the scheduling of all field use through its CLASS software program. The Agreement was finalized in October 2003 by both entities, and scheduling began in January 2004. The Agreement was sunsetted in 2014.

2003 - Luther Burbank Park Bond Issue

During the first year of park ownership, the City Council chose to finance the maintenance of Luther Burbank Park through a capital reserve account – a "one-time" revenue source. The City Council authorized \$240,000 to maintain the park for just the one year. At the September 2, 2003, City Council meeting, the Council directed the City Manager to submit the question to the voters of Mercer Island as part of the General Election ballot, of new revenue in the annual amount of \$415,000 for the specific purpose of paying for existing and future expenses to maintain and operate Luther Burbank Park for a period of six years. The Bond Issue passed, and funding was established for 2004 through 2010. During the six-year period, a planning

process and a park master plan were developed to guide operations and future improvements at the park.

2003 - Recreation Services Report

MIG (Moore, Iacofano, Goltsman, Inc.) completed a comprehensive recreation services study that defined the Parks and Recreation Department's role as a major provider and coordinator of recreation programs and special events. The study provided a snapshot of classes offered during the 2002 calendar year. It identified staff, facilities, and partnerships that will be needed in order to provide future programs and services.

2003 - Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan

For over a year in late 2002 and into 2003, a forest management plan was developed by the Open Space Conservancy Trust that provided direction for management and intervention within Pioneer Park to maintain the native forest ecosystem, protect public safety, and enhance positive uses of the park over the long-term. The Forest Management Plan focused on the 118-acre Pioneer Park and its three 39-acre blocks of second-growth western-hemlock forest and one of the largest relatively unfragmented forest habitats remaining on the Mercer Island. Laminated root rot was killing Douglas fir trees while age was claiming many alders and maples in the park.

As these trees were dying, they left "gaps" in the tree canopy of the park. Invasive, non-native plants, notably ivy, holly, and blackberry, were widespread in the park and taking over wherever trees were dying. They were preventing the regrowth or "regeneration" of canopy trees. As a result, the Plan was developed to guide future vegetation and forest work priorities and was subsequently adopted by the City Council on December 15, 2003.

2003 - Boys and Girls Club Shared Use Agreement

The 'Community Facilities Planning Process' was created to assess the potential of shared use and joint development of community facilities, primarily of a recreational/educational nature on Mercer Island. On October 30, 2001, the Boys and Girls Club submitted a proposal to the City for joint financing and use of the Club's facilities. The original proposal included plans to renovate and make additions to the larger portion of the Club. The final Agreement designated the joint use by the City of the renovated gym facility only. City Council's final approval of the Agreement was made at the December 15, 2003, City Council Meeting. The City agreed to commit \$1,000,000 to the Club for shared use of the renovated gym facility for a minimum of 2,746 hours a year. The Club was required to fundraise 70% of the entire project budget

prior to December 31, 2004, and the remaining 30% by June 30, 2005, in order to receive the City's \$1,000,000 matching funds.

2003 - Park Improvement, Gift and Donation Policy

The City Council adopted a park improvement, gift, and donation policy to guide the consideration of gifts and donations to the Parks and Recreation Department. The policy clarified the roles and responsibilities of the donor, staff, advisory boards, and the City Council and provided criteria in which to evaluate potential improvements.

2004 - Ivy Initiative

In early March 2003, several residents pursued placing an initiative on the ballot to raise property taxes in order to provide funding for the removal of non-native, invasive plant material (i.e., English ivy, Himalayan and Evergreen blackberry, English laurel, English holly, and Japanese knotweed, etc.) from all city- owned parks, open spaces, street ends and public rights of way. The effort called for increasing the regular property tax levy to generate \$1,250,000 in tax revenue per year for a period of ten (10) consecutive years. The City Council passed a resolution opposing the initiative. Subsequently, King County Elections certified 2,466 signatures and the matter was placed before the voters at a special election on March 9, 2004. The initiative was defeated with an 82% "no" vote. The City Council then directed staff to propose an independent scope of work to address the condition of parks and open space.

2004 - Open Space Vegetation Plan

After the Ivy Initiative, the City Council directed staff and consultants to assess the current condition of park properties, host public meetings to ascertain the values/benefits of vegetation and to prioritize various management methods and costs that would result in several investment options for City Council consideration. In early October, the City Council received the Open Space Vegetation Plan and indicated an initial willingness to fund a moderate level of vegetation control work for \$79,000 per year in 2005-06 from the City's Capital Improvement Fund. Subsequently, the City Council increased the level of vegetation management by appropriating an additional \$56,000 per year in 2005-06 from the City's Beautification Fund.

2004 - Community Center Operations Report

As a result of the City Council's decision to construct a new community center, staff retained Warren Cooley/EdCon to update and recalculate the 1998 operational assessment of the then proposed 52,753 square foot

community center complex. In April 2004, a Final Report was prepared and issued to staff for budget planning.

2004 - City Budgeting Survey Summary Report

A telephone survey of 401 randomly chosen registered voters of Mercer Island was performed by Evans/McDonough Company, Inc. to help the City understand voter priorities, evaluate the City's performance in a variety of service areas, and establish baseline measurements to track changes in these figures over time. The Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department received the most favorable ratings (91%) when analyzed with other external and internal organizations (King County Council, City Council, Police Department, etc.) Summer Celebration (84%) and other community events (86%) were given favorable ratings. Strong positive ratings were given to the City's maintenance of parks, trails, and open space (85% positive) and "providing recreation programs for families with children" (71%). A third (32%) of voters didn't know enough about the City's senior recreation programs to rate them. However, voters over 50 years old gave positive ratings to these services. Two-thirds (64% vs. 58% overall) gave positive ratings to the program while 13% gave a negative rating. A quarter (23% vs. 32%) of voters over 50 years old did not know enough to rate the program.

2004 - Community Center at Mercer View demolished

The major portions of the Community Center at Mercer View began to be demolished (with the exception of "Building D"- and three day care spaces) in the summer of 2004 to make way for a new 42,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art community center offering program meeting rooms, a large multi-purpose room, a senior/program room, health room, fitness, dance and games areas, a large gymnasium, public art gallery, lounge, and library area, serving kitchen, arts and crafts room and administrative offices. By the time the original community center closed its doors on May 28, 2004, the building was 40 years old.

2004 - Northwest Parks Foundation

In January 2004, the Parks and Recreation Department collaborated with the Northwest Parks Foundation, a 501(C)3 corporation, as a community partner to establish a Parks Safety Net Fund which served as a donor intermediary for directed donations to the Department. On January 14, 2004, the Foundation Board President approved the Parks Safety Net Fund for the City of Mercer Island. The fund provided for a flexible pool of donations entrusted to the Northwest



Parks Foundation that enabled donors to direct their charitable contributions to a desired park improvement or acquisition project.

2004 to 2005 - Luther Burbank Park Public Visioning Process

Planning for Luther Burbank Park began in November 2004 with a Community Visioning Process. Community visioning was completed in January 2005, at which time the City Council reviewed the design guidelines that were created during three community workshops. At their annual planning retreat in April 2005, the City Council determined to move ahead with a park master planning process for Luther Burbank Park. The master plan was developed over approximately five months, beginning in September 2005, and included numerous opportunities for community involvement.

2005- to 2006 - Luther Burbank Park Master Planning Process

The City Council initiated a Master Planning Process for Luther Burbank Park on September 6, 2005. Guided by the results of the Community Visioning Process, three discrete planning phases were developed: 1) Information Gathering/Concept Design Development, 2) Review of Concept Designs, and 3) Review of Preferred Concept Design. The eight-month long master planning process included 15 opportunities for public involvement. A series of five small group sessions were conducted regarding the Off-Leash Dog area, the dock area and Small Boat Facility, shoreline restoration, connections to Upper Luther Burbank, and children's opportunities in the Park. Based on this inventory and analysis, three preliminary master plan concepts were developed for the site and then consolidated into a preferred Master Plan concept based on public feedback. The master plan was adopted by the City Council on April 17, 2006.

2005 - eCitygov.net and www.myparksandrecreation.com Online Activity Registration

In the fall of 2000, several cities began to collaborate and develop an online activity/program registration process that would enable citizens to search, select, and pay for recreation programs across several cities in one, single, easy transaction. Nine Eastside cities participated in developing the technical, operational, and financial capacity to create a website portal that would provide the needed features and functions. The launch of the website portal, www.myparksandrecreation.com, happened in early February 2005 with the cities of Bellevue, Kirkland, and Mercer Island. The Cities of Issaquah, Woodinville, and Bothell joined in the spring

of 2005, with Sammamish, Snoqualmie, and Kenmore joining later in the year. The online portal functioned for over two decades and then was sunsetted.

2005 - Community Center at Mercer View Opens

Designed by the architectural firm of Miller & Hull, the Community Center at Mercer View opened its doors to the public on December 10, 2005, as a modern, state-of-the-art center serving as both a primary civic and business meeting place and a multi-generational facility.

The new center was constructed with a 3,335 square foot multi-purpose room, a full-service kitchen, five meeting rooms, a fitness center, locker and shower rooms, and an outdoor terraced patio. It also has a 10,500 square foot gymnasium that supports a wide array of fitness programs and rentals, and it has added a number of enhanced programs that were not able to be offered at the old facility, such as Open Gym and Indoor Playground. The North Annex is the only remaining building from the former facility.

2005 - Upper Luther BMX Course formalized

An informal BMX Course in Upper Luther Burbank Park existed prior to the City's acquisition of Luther Burbank Park. In 2005, Parks and Recreation staff met with course users and established a set of rules about ramp, jump, and course modifications. The rules were developed to ensure that user-built features met certain industry standards.

2005 - Pioneer Park Encroachment Policy

In order to clarify boundaries and promote proper use of Open Space Conservancy Trust properties, the Trust and the Parks and Recreation Department established a policy addressing existing private property encroachments, including requirements, criteria, guidelines, and procedures for remedying them and limiting authorized encroachments.

2006 - City Budgeting Summary Report

A tracking survey, based on the content of a similar 2004 survey, was conducted by Evans/McDonough Company, Inc. to help the City understand voter priorities, evaluate the City's performance in a variety of service areas, and establish baseline measurements to track changes in figures over time. Four hundred and two interviews were conducted among registered voters. The Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department received a 91% favorable rating, other community events an 86% rating, and Summer Celebration an 86% favorable rating. The maintenance of parks, trails,

and open space received an 87% favorable rating, while recreation programs for families with children and (79%), recreation programs for seniors received 79% and 64% favorable ratings respectively.

2006 - Revisions to Animal Code

The revisions to Mercer Island's Animal Code were adopted by the Council on July 24, 2006, and became effective that September. The adoption of the revisions represented a culmination of nine months of public input and discussion about Mercer Island's leash law. The old leash law permitted dogs to be under voice control in certain types of parks and open space yet required dogs to be on a leash in other types of park areas. On-leash and off-leash areas were not clearly defined, so park users were often confused about where it was permissible to let their dogs roam without a leash and where it was not. Additionally, terms such as "under control" were vague and difficult to enforce.

2006 - Transfer of Engstrom Open Space to City

Margaret and Kenneth Quarles, 6610 East Mercer Way, agreed to transfer nearly 7 acres of rare open space property to the City of Mercer Island for \$300,000. The three properties, totaling 6.93 acres are located immediately west of East Mercer Way and abut the northeast quadrant of Pioneer Park. The acquisition was made possible from a fund balance in the City's 2005-2006 Capital Improvement Plan.

The property, permanently dedicated for park and recreation purposes, is managed as open space by the City's Parks and Recreation Department. The Quarles were residents of Mercer Island since 1925, where Margaret was born and raised on the surrounding properties owned by her father, the late Mr. Oscar Engstrom. The significant gift to the City serves as a lasting legacy to the Mercer Island community and represents their strong desire to preserve the property from potential development while providing recreational trail opportunities for future generations. This was the second such property transfer made by the Quarles (1.57 acres purchased by the City for \$200,000 in 2002). Together, all properties were named the Engstrom Open Space.

2007 - King County Proposition 2 Open Space and Regional Trails Levy

In 2007, King County voters approved two property tax levy lid lifts to support park operations and open space and trails for the period of 2008 to 2013. The Open Space and Trails Levy was a five-cent levy that included one-cent for open space and trails for each of the 39 cities within King County, distributed by population

and assessed value. King County voters approved this levy by 59 percent.

2007 - South Mercer Playfield Synthetic Turf

The South Mercer Playfields All-Weather Field Renovation project was funded in the 2007 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It was the first synthetic turf field on Mercer Island. The total approved budget for the project was \$755,830. A separately funded field lighting project was completed in the spring of 2008.

2006 to 2007 - Ballfield Use Study

In 2007 the City completed a Ballfield Use Analysis using Beckwith Consulting, which involved an exhaustive look at then-current field inventory and field conditions, a review of scheduling protocols, and direct feedback from users. It was determined that on a per capita basis, Mercer Island had sufficient fields to meet demand, but that field upgrades and revised scheduling practices would maximize the fields more efficiently.

2008 - Leap for Green

The first Leap for Green event started in 2008 as a fun interactive event for children, their families, and others in the community to promote responsible human impacts on the environment. The conception of this event began with Island Vision, a non-profit Mercer Island group whose mission is to encourage and support sustainable practices on Mercer Island. The target audience was kids, but the event was for "kids of all ages" with the intention that kids come with parents and grandparents and those without kids would feel comfortable attending. Leap for Green was held during April as close to Earth Day as possible. This special event ran until 2019.

2008 - Island Crest Way Trail

The half-mile-long trail along Island Crest Way from SE 71st Street to SE 78th Street formally opened at the end of July 2008. The construction was completed by Parks Maintenance staff under the approved \$90,000 budget. Staff also applied for and received funding from the King Conservation District for landscaping along the Trail. City staff and neighbors worked on the landscaping design. Landscaping was installed by neighborhood volunteers and Parks and Recreation staff in October 2008. This trail added 0.5 miles of trail to the right-of-way system.

2008 - Cost of Service and Fee Study

The City hired PMC, a planning and municipal consulting firm, to determine the City's cost of providing fee-generating recreation services, review comparable fees from other jurisdictions, and assist in



developing fee recommendations. Costs included direct and indirect costs. The plan recommended cost recovery goals for different categories of activities. These goals were used for over a decade to establish revenue targets for recreation programs and services.

2008 - Playful City USA

Mercer Island was first recognized in 2008 as a Playful City USA, a program of KaBoom!, a national non-profit that promotes local access to playgrounds to ensure every kid has a great place to play. The Playful City USA program was sponsored by the Humana Foundation. It was a national recognition program honoring cities and towns investing in children through play.

2008 - Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey and Forest Health Work Plan

Following the December 2006 Hanukkah Eve storm, the Mercer Island City Council considered whether enough was being done to restore the tree canopy in Pioneer Park. The City Council commissioned a Forest Health Survey to quantify prescribed forest health factors. The study discovered several conditions that were not being adequately addressed by the existing Forest Management Plan. The work plan that resulted from the study changed the focus of the restoration work in Pioneer Park from a site-based approach to a systemic approach. For example, the Forest Health Survey found that canopy regeneration, invasive trees, and ivy were of particular concern. A Forest Health Work Plan proposed new projects designed to address these critical issues park-wide while holding the line where site-based comprehensive restoration was already underway. Together, the Forest Health Survey and Forest Health Work Plan were appended to the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan in 2009 by the Open Space Conservancy Trust.

2008 - Mercer Island Park Bond and Park Operation and Maintenance Levy

Mercer Island voters approved a 15-year Parks Operations & Maintenance Levy for \$900,000 per year with 53.13% of the vote. The Parks Operations & Maintenance Levy replaced the previous levy which paid for operations and maintenance of Luther Burbank Park and expired in 2009. It also funded open space and forest restoration and school-related park and recreation activities.

Included in the total amount were costs associated with new parks capital projects that were to be funded by a separate bond levy. The bond levy was approved by 53.86% of voters, however, it required a "supermajority" of 60% of the votes and therefore did not pass. On November 17, 2008, the City Council approved levying

\$882,000 rather than the full amount of \$900,000, backing out \$128,000 in maintenance and operations related to the bond levy that failed and levying only \$110,000 from the 2003 Luther Burbank Park lid lift for small capital projects.

2008 - Luther Burbank Parks Shoreline Restoration Phase I

Approved by the City Council in July 2008, the first phase of shoreline restoration at Luther Burbank Park included adding woody debris and spawning gravel along the shoreline for bank stabilization, removing non-native plants, planting native trees, shrubs, and groundcovers, installation of a split rail fence (between the protected shore and the trail), building rock steps that direct park patrons to small recreation beaches, and construction of a new ADA accessible gravel path.

2008 - Luther Burbank Park Off-Leash Area Renovation

Following input from the off-leash area users, this renovation project at Luther Burbank Park included non-native plant and vegetation removal, surface grading, installation of under drainage, adding sand surfacing material, wetland enhancements, minor landscaping improvements, construction of gravel and asphalt paths, installation of 4' high split rail fencing with mesh on all perimeters, installation of chain link gates at all entrances and exits, and relocation of the kiosk, benches and garbage cans.

2010 - Boys and Girls Club PEAK

A new home for the Boys and Girls Club was completed on 86th Ave SE in August 2010. The new three-story, 41,000 square foot facility included sports facilities, a teen center, a tech and learning center, preschool, and multi-purpose rooms. In exchange for its financial contribution, the City receives six hours per week of recreational programming at the PEAK facility.

2010 - Community Center at Mercer View name changed to Mercer Island Community & Event Center (MICEC)

In May of 2010, the Community Center at Mercer View changed its name to The Mercer Island Community & Event Center (MICEC) in an effort to build awareness with the public via a variety of online media including: website, online advertising, online directories, email marketing, print, trade shows, social media, video, and more. This new name leveraged the existing brand equity of the Mercer Island name and helped position the MICEC as a premier event facility.

2010 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan Update

In June 2010, MacLeod Reckord Landscape Architects, Dugan Planning Services, and KPG completed a comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan, which updated the previous plan from 1996. The Plan identified specific projects that work together to improve walking and bicycling and encourage them as an attractive alternative form of transportation. The Plan has been used since then to guide decisions about pedestrian and bicycle facilities. It is an essential part of the Transportation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

2010 - Engstrom Loop Trail, Upper Luther 84th Bypass Trail and Connector Trails, and Island Crest Park – Island Park Elementary Connector Trail

A series of new trails were completed in-house and with Mountains to Sound Greenway volunteers using King County Proposition 2 Levy funding in the first year of trail construction, adding one mile of trail to the park system.

2010 - South Mercer Playfield Improvements (Synthetic Turf, Batting Cage and Concession Stands)

In September 2009, the City and the Mercer Island School District entered into an Interlocal Agreement for improvements, maintenance, and operations of District sports fields at Island Park, Lakeridge, and West Mercer Elementary Schools, as well as capital improvements to the sports fields at the South Mercer Playfield complex. The City issued Councilmanic Bonds in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,114, including bond issuance costs of \$12,092, to fund the South Mercer Playfields approved improvements. These bonds were approved by the City Council and issued in October 2009.

Phase I of the improvements included replacing the dirt infields with synthetic turf on Fields #1, #2, and #3, as well as two bullpen areas. Phase I was completed in March 2010. Phase II was completed in March 2011, using the remaining funds, and consisted of a remodel to the existing restroom building with the inclusion of a concession function, a new batting cage, and an electronic scoreboard on Field 1.

2010 - Playground added to MICEC

A new playground was installed in the previously open grass area behind the Mercer Island Community and Event Center. The new structure, comprised of unique climbing pieces and cables, was installed by Parks Maintenance crews in the summer of 2010.

2011 - Mercer Island Community & Event Center Technology & Equipment Sinking Fund Established

In 2011, a facility-wide technology and equipment replacement cycle was established with contributions from the community center's annual operating budget to address the various replacement needs of this facility.

2011 - Transfer of Right-of-Way trails to Parks and Recreation

Starting in the 2011-2012 biennium, Right-of-Way trails that were previously maintained by the Maintenance Department were transferred to Parks and Recreation.

2011 - Upper Luther Ravine Trail

A new trail was completed in-house and with Mountains to Sound Greenway volunteers using King County Proposition 2 Levy funding. The trail extended into the main ravine in Upper Luther Burbank Park and featured a suspended wooden staircase to access the ravine. This added 0.2 miles of trail to the park system.

2012 - Shorewood Trail and Access Easements

Shorewood Apartments parent company granted pedestrian trail easements to allow the construction of the Gallagher Hill Trail and an extension of the Upper Luther Ravine Trail. The company also granted a public access easement across the Shorewood Apartments property to connect these trails into a regional trail system. These new connections added 0.9 miles of trail to the park system.

2012 - Island Crest Park Synthetic Turf

The Island Crest Park Synthetic Turf project was funded in the 2012 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It was the first regulation-sized baseball synthetic turf infield on Mercer Island. The total project budget was \$328,706. The project was completed in February 2013.

2012 - Electric Vehicle Charging Station addition to MICEC

The City installed three new electric vehicle charging stations on Mercer Island, one located at the MICEC. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant funds covered the total cost of \$75,000 for the charging units, the necessary infrastructure, and installation. The locations for the stations were identified so as to compliment the regional charging network. They will benefit electric vehicle drivers in the community as well as those traveling the I-90 corridor.



2013 - Gallagher Hill Trail and Island Crest Park South Trail

Two trails were completed with King County Proposition 2 Levy funding using in-house crews and Mountains to Sound Greenway volunteers. The Gallagher Hill Trail provided a connection between Shorewood and the East Mercer commercial area. The Island Crest South Trail provided park users a bypass around the south field and access for residents of SE 60th to the ravine. These new connections added 0.3 miles of trail to the park system.

2013 - Luther Burbank Park Playground Improvement

The Luther Burbank Park Playground project was funded in the 2013 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The final design of the new playground included public input from two community meetings as well as stakeholder participation in the design of the project. A joint partnership between the Mercer Island Preschool Association and the City contributed to the funding of this project. The project was completed in September 2013 and included a new zip line, climbing web, accessible surfacing, and new embankment slides.

2013 - Lid Park Renamed to Aubrey Davis Park

In July 2013, the Park on the Lid was renamed Aubrey Davis Park in honor of former Mercer Island Mayor and City Councilmember Aubrey Davis. Among his many achievements, Mr. Davis served as the principal negotiator in the 1976 redesign of Interstate 90, demanding the State take into account the impact of the interstate on the Mercer Island Community.

2013 - Solar Panel Array added to Community Center

On July 23, 2013, the first City-owned solar array on the Island was activated at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center. Built with grant money from Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and citizen donations, the 22-panel installation is estimated to produce approximately 4468-kilowatt hours of electricity per year, using solar panels and electrical inverters made in Washington State.

Mercer Island's success in meeting Puget Sound Energy's Green Power Challenge, to encourage the adoption of renewable energy, led to a \$30,000 challenge grant for the solar project. Area residents supportive of solar power donated an additional \$5,500 towards the project. The installation earns credit on the Community Center's electric bill.

2013 – Second Electric Vehicle Charging Station added to MICEC

The City designated a second electric vehicle charging station at MICEC.

2013 – New Dragon at Deane's Children's Park

A reinforced concrete dragon sculpture was created in 1965 at Deane's Children's Park by artist Kenton Pies. Numerous coats of paint brightened the 50-foot, sit-on dragon through the decades, but exposure to the elements had taken a toll on the dragon and the concrete was disintegrating. The Parks and Recreation Department contacted the 81-year old original artist, who was living in Montana, to inquire about repairing the dragon. The artist built a new dragon with a welded frame and high-strength concrete that was installed in 2013.

2014 – Mercer Island Parks & Recreation Plan (2014-2019) adopted by City Council

The City of Mercer Island completed an update of its Parks and Recreation Plan in early 2014. The plan contained an updated inventory of parks and recreation facilities, the demographic profile of the community, needs assessment, goals and objectives, and a capital facilities plan. It qualified the City to apply for state recreation and conservation funding through the state Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

2014 – Mercer Island Parks Overwater Structures Assessment

The City commissioned an engineering analysis performed by OAC Services of the docks, bulkheads, and other in-water structures at Luther Burbank Park, Clarke Beach, and Groveland Beach. The study found the need for major renovation and repair at all three parks and outlined a schedule of short-term and long-term repairs that would be necessary to maintain the existing facilities.

2014 – Luther Burbank North Wetland Boardwalk

A 200-foot section of new boardwalk through the north wetland at Luther Burbank Park provided the missing link between the existing boardwalk trail and Calkins Point. The project protected vegetation buffers for the known bald eagle nesting site. An innovative design of fiberglass grating suspended on pin piles minimized impacts to the wetland.

2015 – Open Space Vegetation Plan 10-Year Evaluation & Update

This study by City staff measured the results of ten years of open space management that started with the 2004 Open Space Vegetation Plan. It found that invasive plant cover had decreased from 58% to 32% while native conifer regeneration had increased from near zero to 78 stems per acres. However, the persistence of invasive holly remained a troubling observation. The plan revised the goals and strategies to anticipate the need for climate adaptation and to transition sites to a more stable condition.

2015 – Luther Burbank 84th Ave Entry Trail

A new entry into Luther Burbank Park provided access to the meadow from 84th Ave SE. This entry created an additional access point along a long stretch of 84th Ave SE and provided park users a more accessible grade than at the other entry points.

2015 – Island Glen Bridge Replacement

A new steel bridge replaced a decaying timber span on a trail connecting Island Crest Park with the 5700 block of West Mercer Way, maintaining access to Groveland Beach. This trail is located on a public pedestrian easement in a private community tract for the Island Glen subdivision. Innovative lightweight beam construction was employed to create a strong, long-lasting structure.

2015 – Park Impact Fees

The City of Mercer Island adopted Ordinance 15C-22, establishing park impact fees for new development that were consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Parks Capital Facilities Plan. The impact fees created a new mechanism to ensure that new development pays its share of new capital costs related to new development. This program ensures that there are adequate park facilities at the time that new development occurs.

2016 – Calkins Landing Street End Improvements

The watercourse and outfall at Calkins Landing were reconstructed to stabilize the stream channel. Park facilities were also upgraded. The project included a stormwater vault to buffer storm flow, a new gravel beach, path, picnic table, and landscaping.

2016 – Luther Burbank Shoreline Phase 2: Calkins Point

Calkins Point at Luther Burbank was reconstructed to reduce shoreline erosion and improve public access to the water. A new gravel beach was installed with habitat plantings, and an in-ground sheet piling system provided protection against future shoreline recession. The project included the installation of an accessible path and park furnishings, and interpretive signage.

2017 – Luther Burbank Hawthorn Trail

A new trail connecting the access road on the backside of the amphitheater to the P-Patch provided a quiet stroll through a unique stand of hawthorn forest in Luther Burbank Park. The trail was constructed with accessible grades.

2017 – Luther Burbank Park Boiler Building Study

The 2017 Boiler Building Study evaluated the existing structures for safety and identified options for public use through renovations and estimated project construction costs. The Study also reviewed options for expanding building uses in supporting summer boating programs. The Boiler Building currently supports paddle camps as a restroom and storage facility. The 2006 Luther Burbank Park Master Plan envisioned this building to be occupied, offering classes and rentals in addition to summer camps. It would provide the operational facilities to support these programs.

The 2017 Study recommended two phases of improvements to the site. Phase I includes general repairs to address aging infrastructure needs and seismic reinforcement. Bathrooms would be remodeled for accessibility and new roofing would be installed for both structures. Phase II includes accessibility improvements to the site from the main campus area of the Park, a remodeled concession area, and additional classroom and office spaces to support expanded programming.

2017 – Luther Burbank Lid Connector Trail Comprehensive Plan Amendment

The City's Comprehensive Plan was amended to include a statement supporting the construction of a pedestrian trail connecting Luther Burbank Park to the "Luther Lid" portion of Aubrey Davis Park. This amendment provided the Washington State Department of Transportation the policy support it needed to approve the construction of this trail. This trail has previously been supported in the Luther Burbank Park Master Plan.



2018 – Island Crest Park North Field Synthetic Turf and LED Lights

A new synthetic turf outfield was installed on the north field of Island Crest Park and included a shock pad underlayment and cork infill. A new LED lighting system provided complete lighting coverage with significant energy savings. The drainage system was reconstructed, and a new scoreboard was donated by the Mercer Island Baseball Booster Club.

2018 – Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan

The Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan for Mercer Island, adopted in 2018, was appended to the Citywide Comprehensive Plan, acknowledging the importance of arts, culture, and heritage in enhancing the quality of life on Mercer Island. The Arts and Culture Plan describes the history of arts and culture on Mercer Island and the community’s ongoing commitment to supporting arts, culture, and heritage in the community.

Public input during plan development revealed two basic barriers to the advancement of arts and culture progress in the community: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation among community arts, culture, and heritage groups, and (2) a lack of space creating and participating in arts, culture, and heritage opportunities.

The Plan’s vision for Mercer Island is “to assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members.” The Plan’s goals are to support the arts on Mercer Island, to nurture public art on Mercer Island, and to preserve Mercer Island’s heritage. The Arts and Culture Plan proposed a framework for future progress with specific emphasis on more effective collaboration across organizations, programs, and activities and the creation of a shared physical art space.

2018 – Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report

Parks staff completed a comprehensive assessment of the City’s trail structures and surfaces rating each element for action needed. The report found that wooden structures were decaying and needing repair at a rate that exceeded the current maintenance capacity. This holistic analysis of the trail system allowed parks staff to look at critical needs in a systematic way and estimate the resources needed to address them.

2018 – South Mercer Playfields playground replacement

A new series of features with a naturalistic play theme was installed at the South Mercer Playfields in consultation with the Mercer Island Preschool Association. New drainage and fencing were part of this project.

2018 – Current Use Taxation Comprehensive Plan Amendment

The City’s Comprehensive Plan was amended to include a statement supporting the use of King County’s Current Use Taxation program to promote the conservation of privately-owned open space.

2019 – Groveland Beach Pier Repairs and Shoreline Improvements

The large swimming pier at Groveland Beach was substantially repaired to extend its useful life by 10 to 15 years. Wave attenuators were installed outboard of the pier to replace wave skirting that was no longer permitted. A small dock was removed, and the shoreline to the north of the swim area was regraded. Shoreline plantings were installed.

2019 – Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan Adopted

Mercer Island City Council adopted the Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan after a 16-month development process. The Master Plan addressed the aging infrastructure and landscaping in the park. It called for modest new facilities, including a restroom near West Mercer Way, shoreline access at the boat launch, and an off-leash area at the stacks. The Plan contains a substantial program of landscape renovation to perpetuate the extensive landscaping in the park and provides guidance for arts, culture, and placemaking.

2019 – Cityworks Enterprise Asset Management Initiated for Parks

Parks and Recreation maintenance staff began using the Cityworks enterprise asset management software in 2019. This followed the introduction of Cityworks in 2017 to the Public Works department. This comprehensive, geographically-driven, app-based package allows each staff member to track actions and resources at all levels of maintenance.

2020 – The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic/Recreation Reset Strategy

The onset of a global pandemic in early 2020 impacted the entire world, resulting in an unprecedented public health emergency response and significant changes to the City of Mercer Island as an organization. Anticipating severely reduced General Fund revenues, City leadership implemented staff reductions and scaled back to essential services only for more than a year.

Field and administrative staff operated in modified or fully remote workspaces for more than eighteen months. The Parks Maintenance division was brought under the Public Works Department, and many recreation staff

served in temporary Emergency Operations capacities. Parks and open spaces were one of the recreational opportunity areas deemed safe and were utilized to a high degree.

Recreation services were suspended completely for over a year and the Mercer Island Community & Event Center closed to the public for nearly 14 months.

The City Emergency Operations team planned the reopening of Parks and Recreation services. It utilized the opportunity to examine and, in some cases, restructure the way it organizes and offers recreation and park services to the community, culminating in the Recreation Reset Strategy adopted by the City Council in July of 2021. This strategy was used to guide the recovery of recreation services on Mercer Island. In the summer of 2021, limited recreation services resumed, Parks Maintenance launched work on various “catch up” projects, and City staff prepared to return to modified in-person operations.



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

APPENDIX J: RECREATION TRENDS





The following summaries from recognized park and recreation resources provide background on national, state and local park and recreation trends. Examining current recreation trends may inform potential park and recreation improvements and opportunities to enhance programs and services.

2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

The 2020 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Agency Performance Review summarizes the key findings from their Park Metrics benchmarking tool and is intended to assist park and recreation professionals in effectively managing and planning their operating resources and capital facilities. The report offers a comprehensive collection of park- and recreation-related benchmarks and insights to inform professionals, key stakeholders, and the public about the state of the park and recreation industry. The 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review contains data from 1,053 unique park and recreation agencies across the United States as reported between 2017 and 2019.

Key Findings and Characteristics

Park facilities and operations vary greatly across the nation. The typical agency participating in the NRPA park metric survey serves a jurisdiction of approximately 42,500 people, but population size varies widely across all responding jurisdictions. The typical park and recreation agency has jurisdiction over 20 parks comprising over 430 acres. Park facilities also have a range of service levels in terms of acres of parkland per population and residents per park. These metrics are categorized by the agency’s population size.

Park Facilities

Nearly all (96%) of park and recreation agencies operate parks and related facilities. The typical park and recreation agency has:

- One park for every 2,281 residents
- 9.9 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents in its jurisdiction
- 11 miles of trails for walking, hiking, running and/or biking

Figure J1. Median Residents per Park Based On Population Size

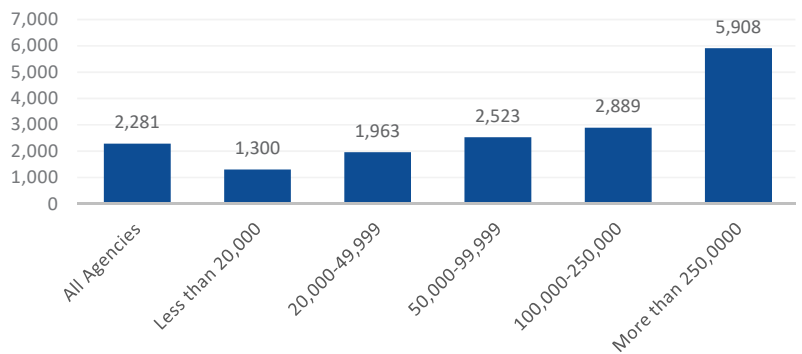
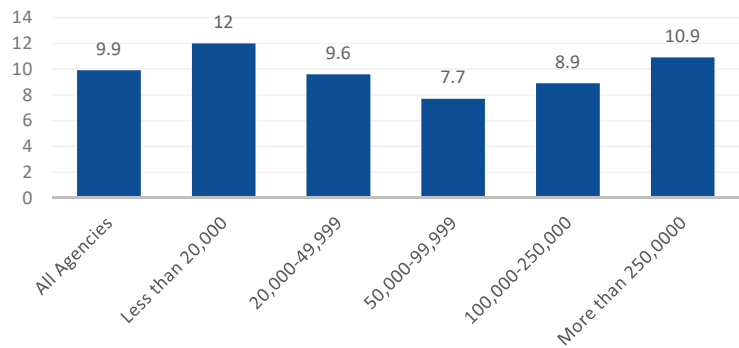


Figure J2. Acres of Parkland per 1,000 Residents based on Population Size



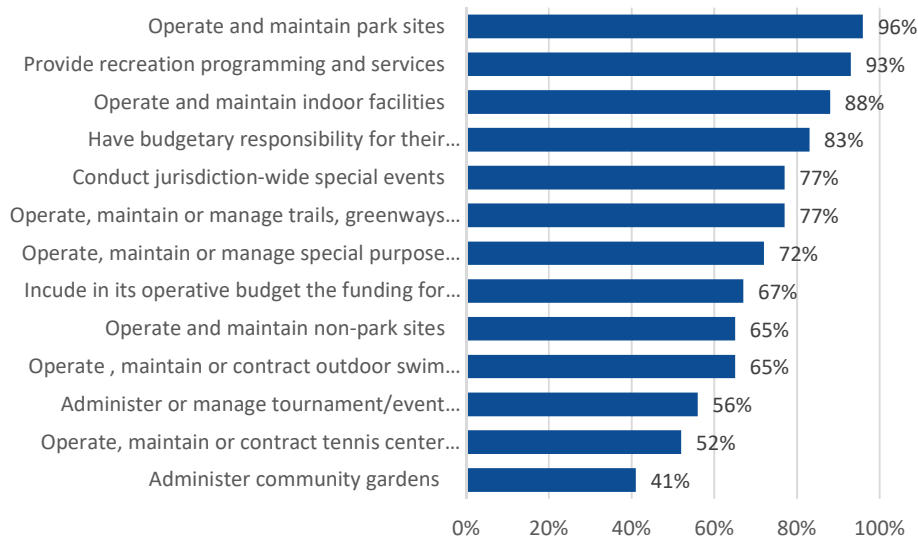
A large majority of park and recreation agencies provide playgrounds (93.9%) and basketball courts (86.5%) in their portfolio of outdoor assets. Most agencies offer community and/or recreation centers (60%) while two in five offer senior centers.

The typical park and recreation agency that manages or maintains trails for walking, hiking, running and/or biking has 11.0 miles of trails. Agencies serving more than 250,000 residents have a median of 84.5 miles of trails under their care.

Park and recreation agencies often take on responsibilities beyond their core functions of operating parks and providing recreational programs. Other responsibilities may include tourist attractions, golf courses, outdoor amphitheaters, indoor swim facilities, farmer’s markets, indoor sports complexes,

campgrounds, performing arts centers, stadiums/arenas/ racetracks, fairgrounds and/or marinas.

Figure J3. Key Responsibilities of Park and Recreation Agencies



Programming

Nearly all (93%) of park and recreation agencies provide recreation programs and services. More than eight in ten agencies provide themed special events (88% of agencies), team sports (87%), social recreation events (87%), youth summer camps (83%), fitness enhancement classes (82%), and health and wellness education (81%).

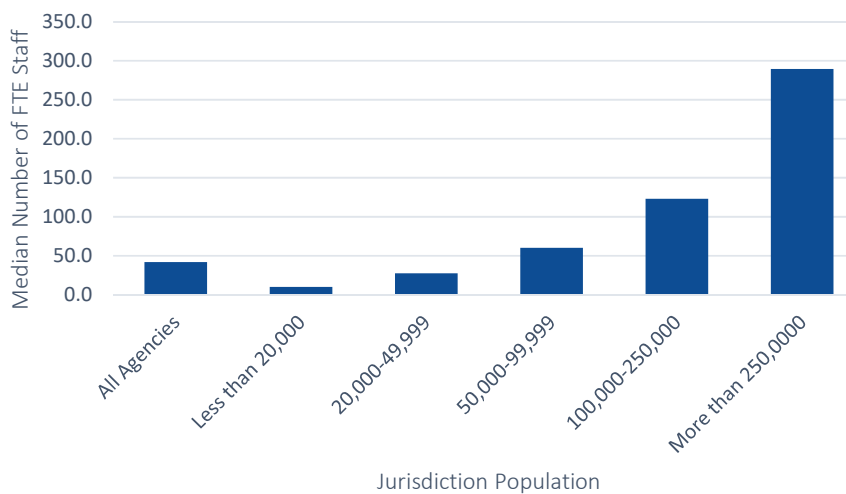
Staffing

Park and recreation employees are responsible for operations and maintenance, programming and administration. The typical park and recreation agency

has:

- 41.9 full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) on payroll
- 8.1 FTEs on staff for every 10,000 residents in its jurisdiction
- Median FTE counts also positively correlate with the number of acres maintained, the number of parks maintained, operating expenditures, and the population served. For example, agencies that serve populations between 20,000 and 49,999 residents employ an average of 27.3 FTE, while agencies that serve 50,000 to 99,000 people employ an average of 60 FTE.

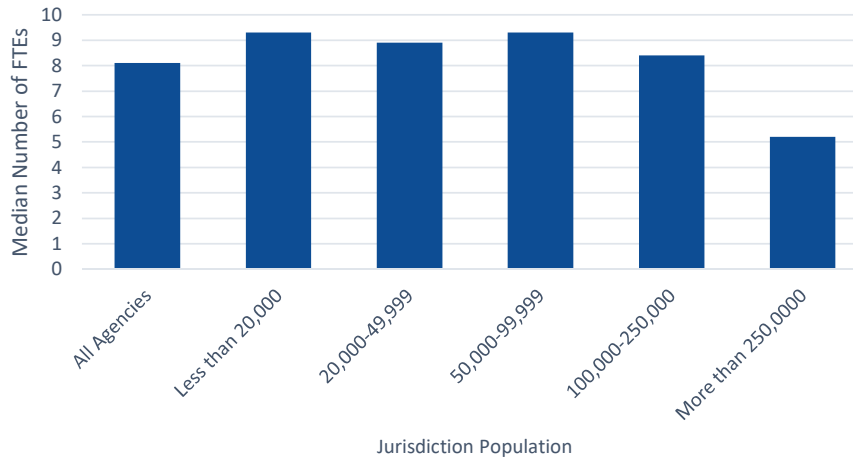
Figure J4. Park and Recreation Agency Staffing: Full-Time Equivalents (By Jurisdiction Population)





Another way of comparing agency staffing across different park and recreation agencies examines number of staff per 10,000 residents. These comparative numbers hold fairly steady across population sizes with the median for all agencies at 8.1 FTEs.

Figure J5. Park and Recreation Agency FTEs Per 10,000 Residents



Capital and Operating Expenses

For capital expenses, the typical park agency:

- Dedicates about 55% to renovation projects and 32% to new development projects.
- Plans to spend about \$5,000,000 million on capital expenditures over the next five years.
- For operations, the typical park agency spends:
 - \$4.3 million per year on total operating expenses
 - \$7,000 on annual operating expenses per acre of park and non-park sites managed by the agency
 - \$81.00 on annual operating expenses per capita
 - \$97,000 in annual operating expenditures per employee
- 54% of the annual operating budget on personnel costs, 38% on operating expenses, and 5% on capital expenses not included in the agency’s capital improvement plan (CIP)
- 44% of its operating budget on park management and maintenance, 43% on recreation, and 13% on other activities

Agency Funding

The typical park and recreation agency:

- Derives 60% of their operating expenditures from general fund tax support, 26% from generated

revenues, 11% from dedicated taxes or levies, and 5% from grants, sponsorships and other sources

- Generates \$21.00 in revenue annually for each resident in the jurisdiction

2020 State of the Industry Report

Recreation Management magazine’s 2020 Report on the State of the Managed Recreation Industry summarizes the opinions and information provided by a wide range of professionals (with an average 22.3 years of experience) working in the recreation, sports, and fitness industry. Given the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, Recreation Management also conducted a supplemental survey in May 2020 to learn about both the impacts to the industry and what mitigation steps organizations were taking in response.

Partnerships

The 2020 report indicated that most (89%) recreation, sports, and fitness facility owners form partnerships with other organizations as a means of expanding their reach, offering additional programming opportunities or as a way to share resources and increase funding. Local schools are shown as the most common partner (64%) for all facility types. Youth-serving organizations (Ys, JCC, Boys & Girls Clubs) and park and recreation organizations were the most likely to report that they had partnered with outside organizations, at 100% and 95% respectively.

Revenue Outlook

In January 2020, half of respondents expected revenues to increase in both 2020 and 2021. Survey respondents from urban communities are more optimistic about revenue increases as compared to rural respondents.

In last year's report, parks respondents had reported increases in their average operating expenditures with operating costs that grew by 14% between fiscal year 2018 and 2019. Respondents generally expected their operating expenses to continue to increase between 2019 and 2021, with camps expecting a 10% increase, recreation centers at 8%, and parks at 6%.

Relative to costs and revenues, few facilities covered by the survey reported that they cover more than 75 percent of their operating costs via revenue. The percentage recovered varied with type of organization with the average percentage of costs recovered for all respondents hovering near 50% and private for-profit organizations achieving the highest cost recovery rates. For parks, the cost recovery rate remained steady at 44%.

Over the past decades, public parks and recreation departments and districts have faced a growing expectation that facilities can be run like businesses. Many local facilities are expected to recover much of their operating costs via revenues. While this is the business model of for-profit facilities like health clubs, it is a relatively recent development for publicly owned facilities, which have typically been subsidized via tax dollars and other funding sources. Most recreation providers (81%) have been taking actions to reduce expenditures. Cost recovery actions typically involve reduction in expenses with improving energy efficiency as the most common action (51% of respondents). Increased fees and staffing cost reductions and putting off construction or renovation plans were reported as other common methods for reducing operating costs.

As of May 2020, nearly 90% of respondents anticipated that total revenues would decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most anticipated a revenue drop of 30-50%, though one in seven expected a decline of more than 50%. In general, respondents are split on when they expect that revenues will begin to recover – 44% believe revenues will begin to rebound in 2021 while 40% expect further revenue declines.

Facility Use

The majority of respondents reported an increase in use of their recreational facilities as of January 2020. Looking forward, more than half of respondents (53%), including 60-65% of parks and recreation centers, were expecting to see further increases in the number of people using their facilities over the next two years.

In 2020, 22% of respondents said they were planning to add more staff at their facilities, 75% were planning to maintain existing staffing levels, and 3% were planning to reduce staffing. The May 2020 survey found, however, that nearly half of responding organizations had laid off or furloughed staff due to the impacts of COVID-19 and nearly two-thirds had suspended hiring plans.

Facilities and Improvements

Respondents from parks were more likely than other respondents to include: park shelters (83.3% of park respondents had shelters); playgrounds (82.7%); park restroom structures (79%); open spaces (73.9%); outdoor sports courts (71.9%); bike trails (48.3%); outdoor aquatic facilities (42.1%); dog parks (40.4%); skateparks (39.9%); fitness trails and outdoor fitness equipment (34.5%); disc golf courses (33.7%); splash play areas (33.3%); community gardens (32.3%); golf courses (29.2%); bike and BMX parks (14.2%); and ice rinks (13.9%).

Over the past seven years, the percentage of respondents who indicate that they have plans for construction, whether new facilities or additions or renovations to their existing facilities, has grown steadily, from 62.7 percent in 2013 to 72.9 percent in 2020. Construction budgets have also risen. The average amount respondents were planning to spend on their construction plans was up 10.8% in 2020, after an 18.4% increase in 2019. On average, respondents to the 2020 survey were planning to spend \$5.6 million on construction.

A majority of park respondents (54%) reported plans to add features at their facilities and were also the most likely to be planning to construct new facilities in the next three years (39%).

The top 10 planned features for all facility types include:

1. Splash play areas (25.4% of those with plans to add features were planning to add splash play)
2. Playgrounds (20.3%)
3. Park shelters (17.3%)
4. Dog parks (17.1%)
5. Park restrooms (16.1%)
6. Synthetic turf sports fields (14.8%)
7. Walking and hiking trails (14.8%)
8. Fitness trails and outdoor fitness equipment (14.8%)
9. Disc golf courses (12.9%)
10. Outdoor sports courts (11.3%)

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on construction plans. As of May 2020, over



one-third (34%) of respondents had put construction on hold due to the impacts of the pandemic, rising costs, and supply shortages.

Programming

Nearly all respondents (97%) offer programming of some kind. The top 10 most commonly offered programs include: holiday events and other special events (provided by 65.3% of respondents); educational programs (59%); group exercise programs (58.8%); fitness programs (57.6%); day camps and summer camps (57.3%); youth sports teams (55.2%); mind-body balance programs such as yoga and tai chi (51.2%); adult sports teams (46%); arts and crafts programs (45.8%); and programs for active older adults (45.4%).

Respondents from community centers, parks and health clubs were the most likely to report that they had plans to add programs at their facilities over the next few years. The ten most commonly planned program additions were:

1. Fitness programs (24% of those who have plans to add programs)
2. Group exercise programs (22.4%)
3. Teen programs (22%)
4. Environmental education (21.8%)
5. Day camps and summer camps (20.9%)
6. Mind-body balance programs (20.5%)
7. Programs for active older adults (18.1%)
8. Special needs programs (17.9%)
9. Holidays and other special events (17.4%)
10. Arts and crafts (17%)

Addressing the COVID-19 pandemic required many respondents to either put programs or services on hold (82%) or cut programs or services entirely (34%). Additionally, many respondents have had to rethink their programming portfolios. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) had added online fitness and wellness programming as of May 2020, 39% were involved in programs to address food insecurity, and one in four was involved in programs to provide educational support to out-of-school children.

General Challenges

In January 2020, facility managers were asked about the challenges they anticipated impacting their facilities in the future. Generally, overall budgets are the top concern for most respondents including their ability to support equipment and facility maintenance needs (58%) and staffing (54%). Marketing, safety/ risk management, and creating new and innovative programming also remain continuing challenges for facility managers. Facility managers also report that environmental and conservation issues (13%) and social equity and access (10%) are posing increasing challenges. However, as of May 2020, many respondents concerns had shifted to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic impacts described in the sections above.

2020 Outdoor Participation Report

Overall Participation

According to the 2020 Outdoor Participation Report, published by the Outdoor Foundation, just over half of Americans ages 6 and older participated in outdoor recreation at least once in 2019, the highest participation rate in five years. This increase was not universal, however, and there was significant variation in participation between age, gender, and racial groups.

Despite the overall increase in the percentage of Americans engaging in outdoor recreation, the total number of recreational outings declined in 2019. Outdoor participants went on a total of 10.9 billion outdoor outings in 2019 – a 12% drop from the 2012 high-water mark of 12.4 billion outings. In addition, the number of outings per participant declined 17% in the past five years, from 85 outings per participant in 2014 to 71 in 2019.

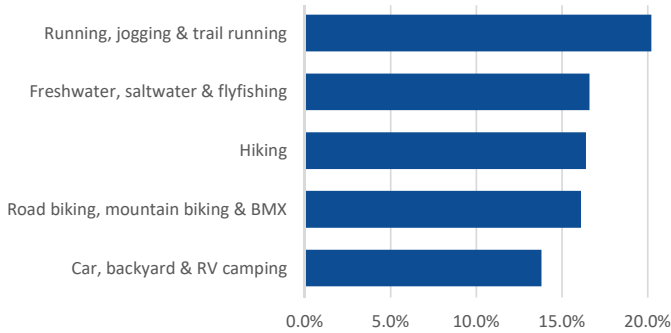
This drop mirrors a decline in the total number of outings per participant. Each year for over a decade, participants have engaged less often in outdoor activities. As a result, the percentage of ‘casual’ participants in outdoor recreation (i.e. those who participate one to 11 times per year) has grown by about 4% over the past 15 years, which the percentage of ‘core’ participants (i.e. weekly participants) has declined.

Figure J6. Frequency of Outdoor Outings: Trending Over Many Years

Frequency of Outdoor Outings	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019
Casual (1 to 11 times)	28.2%	27.9%	28.4%	31.7%	32.6%
Moderate (12 to 51 times)	32.5%	31.8%	33.1%	32.5%	32.6%
Core (52+ times)	39.3%	40.4%	38.5%	35.8%	34.9%

Running, jogging and trail running in the most popular outdoor activity by levels of participation, as shown in the chart below, followed by fishing, hiking biking and camping.

Figure J7. Most Popular Outdoor Activities by Participants, Nationwide



Youth Participation Declines

The youngest participants, children 6 to 17, were outdoors far less than in previous years. Their average outings fell from a high of 91 in 2012 to just 77 per child in 2019. Youth participation declined across the board in 2019, with the biggest declines seen in girls aged 18 to 24 (-5%) and boys ages 13 to 17 (-4%). Households with children, however, continue to drive growth in participation. Adults with children had much higher outdoor recreation participation rates (57%) than adults without children (44.4%).

Female Participation Continues to Grow

In 2019, women made up 46% of participants in outdoor recreation while men made up 53.8%, representing the smallest gender gap measured in the report's history. Women's participation has increased from 43% of all participants in 2009 to 46% in 2019.

Diversity Gap Remains

Despite increases in participation, Black/African American and Hispanic Americans continue to be significantly underrepresented in outdoor recreation. Hispanics made up 11.6% of outdoor recreation participants, a 35 percent shortfall relative to their proportion of the population ages 6 and over (17.9%). Similarly, Black/African Americans represented 12.4% of the U.S. population ages 6 and over in 2019, but just 9.4 percent of outdoor participants, a 24 percent participation deficit. Black youth were the least likely to participate in outdoor recreation as compared to Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian youth – signaling a potential future gap in outdoor participants. However, those Black and Hispanic Americans who do participate in outdoor recreation do so frequently – more often, on average, than members of other racial groups.

In 2019, 62% of Asian Americans participated in outdoor recreation, followed by 53% of White, 48% of Hispanic, and 40% of Black/African Americans.

Impacts of COVID-19

An August 2020 report from the Outdoor Industry Association indicated that COVID-19 impacted recreation participation in April, May and June as Americans flocked to outdoor recreation amid COVID restrictions. Americans took up new activities in significant numbers with the biggest gains in running, cycling, and hiking given that these activities were widely considered the safest activities during pandemic shutdowns. The hardest hit activity segments during COVID shutdowns were team sports (down 69%) and racquet sports (down 55%). Reviewing just April, May and June 2020, participation rates for day hiking rose more than any other activity, up 8.4%.

2020 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report

Prepared by a partnership of the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) and the Physical Activity Council (PAC), this February 2020 participation report summarizes levels of activity and identifies key trends in sports, fitness, and recreation in the US. The report is based on over 18,000 online interviews of a nationwide sample that provides a high degree of statistical accuracy using strict quotas for gender, age, income, region, and ethnicity. The study looked at 122 different team and individual sports and outdoor activities.

Compared to 2014, eight million more Americans were casually active in 2019 indicating a positive movement toward an increasingly active population. Sports that made great strides in the last six years include trail running, cardio tennis, BMX biking, and day hiking. Over the last year, only 2.1 million additional people reported participating in an activity that raises their heart rate for more than 30 minutes. Participation in active high calorie activities has remained flat for the last four years.

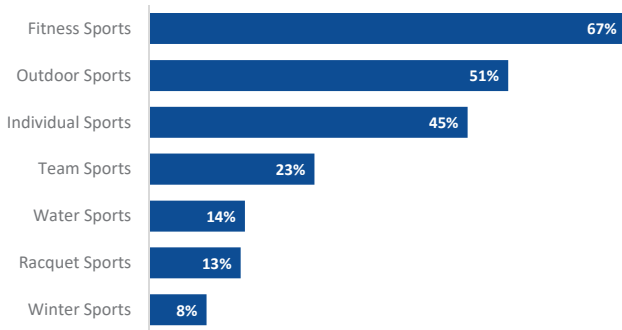
The percentage of people reporting no physical activity during the past year declined to 27% in 2019 - its lowest point in six years – continuing an increasing trend in activity. Rates of inactivity continue to be linked to household income levels, with lower income households having higher rates of inactivity. However, in 2019, households across the income spectrum saw declines in inactivity.

Fitness sports continue to be the most popular activity type for the 5th consecutive year. Other sports activities, including individual sports, racquet sports, and water



sports have seen a modest decline in participation since 2018. Team sports experienced a slight increase in participation, driven by the increasing popularity of basketball and outdoor soccer. While racquet sports lost about 2% of participants since 2018, mostly due to declines in squash and badminton participation, the rising popularity of pickleball and cardio tennis may reverse this declining trend.

Figure J8. Total Participation Rate by Activity Category



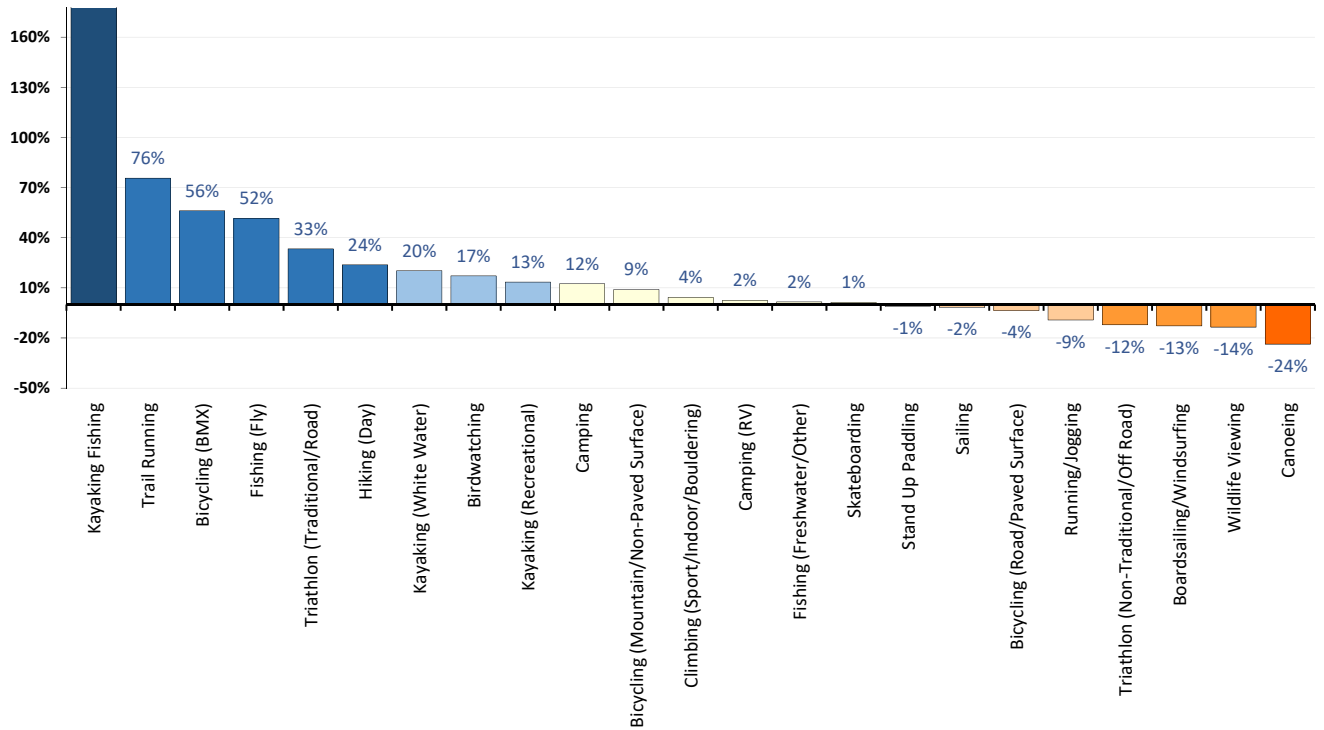
When asked which activities they aspire to do, all age-groups and income levels tend to show interest in outdoor activities like fishing, camping, hiking, biking, bicycling, and swimming. Younger age groups are more interested in participating in team sports, such as soccer, basketball and volleyball, while older adults are more likely to aspire to individual activities like swimming for fitness, bird/nature viewing, and canoeing.

Physical education (PE) participation shows 96% of 6 to 12-year old youth and 82% of 13-17 year olds participated in PE in 2019. While younger children were more likely to participate in PE, older youth had higher average days of participation. Children were more than twice as likely to be inactive if they did not attend PE. Overall, all ages saw an increase in PE 2019. Participation in PE is thought to lead to an increase of active healthy lifestyles in adulthood.

Figure J9. Sports with the highest 5-year increase in participation



Figure J10. 5-Year Change in Outdoor Sports Participation



Americans Engagement with Parks Survey

This annual study from the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) probes Americans’ usage of parks, the key reasons that drive their use, and the greatest challenges preventing greater usage. Each year, the study examines the importance of public parks in Americans’ lives, including how parks compare to other services and offerings of local governments. The survey of 1,000 American adults looks at frequency and drivers of parks/recreation facilities visits and the barriers to that prevent greater enjoyment. Survey respondents also indicate the importance of park and recreation plays in their decisions at the voting booth and their level of support for greater funding.

In 2020, NRPA conducted a shorter-than-typical Engagement survey because of the dynamic nature of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Study focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on park and recreation usage, whether residents see public parks as an essential public service, and whether people vote for political leaders based on their support for parks and recreation funding.

Key findings include:

- Eighty-two percent of U.S. adults agree that parks and recreation is essential.
- Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents indicate that having a high-quality park,

playground, public open space or recreation center nearby is an important factor in deciding where they want to live.

- U.S. residents visit local park and recreation facilities more than twice a month on average.
- Three in five U.S. residents — more than 190 million people — visited a park, trail, public open space or other recreation facility at least once during the first three months of the pandemic (mid-March through mid-June 2020). Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the Americans Engagement with Parks report,

“In many communities across the nation, parks, trails and other public open spaces have been crucial resources available to people seeking a brief respite from the public health crisis. As businesses shut down operations during the spring, many parks and trails remained open, providing people with opportunities to safely enjoy outdoor physical activity with its many attendant physical and mental health benefits. According to NRPA Parks Snapshot Survey data (nrpa.org/ParksSnapshot), 83 percent of park and recreation agencies kept some/all of their parks open during the initial wave of COVID-19 infections in April 2020, while 93 percent did the same with some/all of their trail networks.



Consequently, people flocked to their local parks, trails and other public open spaces. Three in five U.S. residents — more than 190 million people — visited a park, trail, public open space or other recreation facility at least once during the first three months of the pandemic — from mid-March through mid-June 2020. Parks and recreation usage was particularly strong among GenZers, Millennials, Gen Xers, parents, people who identify as Hispanic/Latinx and those who identify as nonwhite.

As has been the case with virtually every aspect of life, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the frequency with which most people engage with their local park and recreation amenities. Still, slightly more than half of people have been visiting parks, trails and other public open space amenities as often — if not more often — since the start of the pandemic than they had during the same period in 2019. Twenty-seven percent of U.S. residents report that their use of parks, trails and other public open spaces increased during the first three months of the pandemic relative to the same period in 2019. A quarter of survey respondents indicates their parks and recreation usage during the period from mid-March to mid-June 2020 matched that of the same three months in 2019. Forty-eight percent of people report that their usage of parks, trails and public open spaces declined during the early months of the pandemic.”

Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan

The 2018-2022 Recreation and Conservation Plan for Washington State provides a strategic direction to help assure the effective and adequate provision of outdoor recreation and conservation to meet the needs of Washington State residents. The plan identifies the following five near and long-term priority areas and establishes specific actions within each priority to help meet the outdoor recreation and conservation needs within the state:

1. Sustain and Grow the Legacy of Parks, Trails, and Conservation Lands
2. Improve Equity of Parks, Trails, and Conservation Lands
3. Meet the Needs of Youth
4. Plan for Culturally Relevant Parks and Trails to Meet Changing Demographics
5. Assert Recreation and Conservation as a Vital Public Service

Sustain & Grow the Legacy

A wealth of existing recreation and conservation areas and facilities should be kept open, safe, and enjoyable for all. Some modifications to meet the interests of today’s population may be needed at some facilities. Sustaining existing areas while expanding and building new facilities to keep up with a growing population is one of the five priority goals.

Improve Equity

The National Recreation and Park Association’s position on social equity states:

“Our nation’s public parks and recreation services should be equally accessible and available to all people regardless of income level, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age. Public parks, recreation services and recreation programs including the maintenance, safety, and accessibility of parks and facilities, should be provided on an equitable basis to all citizens of communities served by public agencies.”

The Washington plan restates that equity goal for all its citizens. Improving equity is also a strategy for improving a community’s health. Current statewide participation rates in outdoor activities were surveyed as part of the plan.

Figure J11. Participation Rates for Washington Residents in Outdoor Activities

Participation Rates for Top 12 Categories	
Activity	%
Walking	94%
Nature activities	89%
Leisure activities at parks	82%
Swimming	68%
Sightseeing activities	67%
Hiking	61%
Outdoor sports	48%
Water-based activities (freshwater)	46%
Camping	45%
Trending activities	33%
Snow and ice activities	30%
Bicycling	28%

Get Youth Outside

Washington State youth participate in outdoor activities to a greater extent than youth nationally. Park and recreation providers are urged to offer a variety of outdoor activities for youth and to support youth programs. Most youth are walking, playing at a park, trying new or trending activities, fishing in freshwater,

exploring nature, and riding bikes. Other activities of interest to youth are activities in freshwater such as boating and paddling, fishing in saltwater, and target shooting, hiking, outdoor sports, and riding off-road vehicles.

Figure J12. Youth Participation Rates for Washington Residents in Outdoor Activities

Youth Participation Rates	
Activity	%
Walking	88%
Leisure in parks	78%
Trending activities	77%
Fishing in freshwater	77%
Nature-based activities	75%
Bicycling	74%
Freshwater-based activities*	66%
Target shooting	62%
Hiking	57%
Outdoor sports	57%
Off-road vehicle riding	57%
Fishing in saltwater	53%

*(not swimming)

Plan for Culturally Relevant parks and Trails to Meet Changing Demographics

Washington’s population is expected to grow by 2 million people by 2040 leading to more congestion and competition for recreation resources. Between 2010-2040, the percent of people of color are expected to increase from 27 percent to 44 percent. With the cultural change in the population, preferred recreational activities also will change. By 2030, more than one of every five Washingtonians will be 65 years old or older. By 2040, there will be more seniors than youth. Park and recreation providers should be prepared to create new and diverse opportunities and accommodate the active senior population.

Assert Recreation and Conservation as a Vital Public Service

The plan recognizes that outdoor recreation contributes to a strong economy and is a public investment like other public services and infrastructure. The report cites the Outdoor Industry Association and other economic studies that reinforce the importance of park and recreation services locally, regionally and statewide.

2019 Special Report on Paddlesports & Safety

In 2019, the Outdoor Foundation produced a report focused on paddlesports data based on a participation survey (over 20,000 online interviews with a nationwide sample of individuals and households). In 2018, 22.9 million Americans (approximately 7.4% of the population) participated in paddle sports. This represents an increase of more than 4 million participants since the study began in 2010. Over the last five years, there continues to be an increase in paddlesports popularity among outdoor enthusiasts, with significant portions of the nationwide growth occurring in the Pacific region.

Recreational kayaking continues to grow in popularity but may be driving some of the decline in canoeing. The popularity of stand-up paddling has soared, increasing by 1.5 million participants over the past five years, though it does not have nearly as high a participation rate as either recreational kayaking or canoeing.

Most paddlers are Caucasian, other racial and ethnic groups are largely under-represented. However, Caucasian participation has remained relatively flat while participation by people identifying as Hispanic or Black/African American has grown by 0.5% to 1% per year since 2013. This growth has led to more than 773,000 new Hispanic paddlers in just six years, signaling the importance and potential of engaging minority groups in paddlesports.

One in eight paddlers have been participating in the sport for 21 years or more. However, many participants – between thirty and sixty percent, depending on the discipline – tried a paddlesport for the first time in 2018. Such high levels of first-time participation may produce longer term growth in paddling, assuming participants continue to enjoy the sport.

Among adult paddlers, most participate for excitement and adventure, for exercise, or to be close to nature. Kayakers, rafters, canoers and stand-up paddlers often enjoy, or would be willing to try, other paddlesports. Many also enjoy similar outdoor “crossover” activities such as hiking, camping, walking, and nature viewing.



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



APPENDIX K: IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS & TACTICS



LOCAL FUNDING OPTIONS

The City of Mercer Island possesses a range of local funding tools that may be used for the benefit of growing, developing, and maintaining its parks and recreation facilities and programs. The sources listed below represent potential funding sources. Funding may also be dedicated for other local purposes, which limit applicability and usage.

Councilmanic Bonds

Councilmanic general obligation bonds and other forms of debt may be issued by cities without public vote. The principal and interest bonds are paid from and secured by the city's regular property taxes and full faith and credit. These types of bonds may also be secured by a pledge of other legally available revenue. Debt service payments are from existing city revenue or new general tax revenue, such as additional sales tax or real estate excise tax. Issuance of general obligation bonds is subject to the State constitutional and statutory limitations on debt that may be incurred without a vote of the electorate. As discussed below, cities may issue general obligation debt for general municipal purposes up to 2.5% of the assessed valuation of taxable property in the city at the time of calculation. Up to 1.5% of the 2.5% allowable capacity may be issued as councilmanic bonds without a vote of the electorate.

Voted General Obligation Bonds

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.52.056>

Cities may issue unlimited tax general obligation bonds payable from and secured by excess property taxes to fund capital projects such as construction, expansion, or replacement or renovation of an existing facility or facilities. Subject to a 60% supermajority voter approval requirement, these types of bonds are issued for general purposes up to 2.5% of assessed valuation, up to 2.5% of assessed valuation for certain utility purposes, and up to 2.5% of assessed valuation for open space, park facilities, and facilities for economic development. As previously noted, within the 2.5% of allowable debt capacity for general purposes, up to 1.5% of the bond amount may

be issued without voter approval. The combination of voter-approved and non-voter approved general obligation debt for general purposes may not exceed 2.5% of the city's assessed valuation at the time the debt is incurred. For all purposes, the total of all general obligation debt may not exceed 7.0% of the city's assessed valuation. (Article VIII, Section 6).

Unlimited tax general obligation bonds are also subject to validation requirements. The minimum turnout at the election must be at least 40% of the city voters who voted at the last preceding state general election. If the ballot proposition approving the issuance of voter-approved debt is approved by a supermajority of voters, and the validation requirements are met, the bonds will be payable from and secured by an excess property tax levy that is unlimited in rate/amount. The levy will be set at a rate that matches the debt payment schedule on the bonds.

Property Tax Excess Levy for Operations and Maintenance - One Year Only

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.52.052>

Cities also have the authority to ask the voters to approve a one-year excess property tax levy for any lawful purpose (RCW 84.52.052). This one-year excess property tax levy requires supermajority (60%) voter approval and must be re-approved by the voters each year. As this action increases revenue for one year, it is wise to request this type of funding for one-time uses only or to address a short-term funding gap.

Regular Property Tax - Lid Lift

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.55.050>

Cities are authorized to impose ad valorem taxes upon real and personal property. A city's maximum regular property levy rate for general purposes is limited to \$3.375 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. This amount may not increase in excess of \$3.60 per \$1,000 of assessed value if the city is annexed into a library district, a regional fire service protection authority, and/or a fire protection district, less the actual regular levy

made as a result of the annexation. Furthermore, a city may impose an additional \$0.225 per \$1,000 of assessed value beyond the \$3.375 or \$3.60 (for annexed cities) if the city has a fire pension fund, which must be used to the extent necessary for firefighters' pension funding purposes. Otherwise, this tax may be levied and used for any other municipal purpose.

State law also limits the amount of a regular levy for any particular year to the highest amount that could have been levied in any prior year, multiplied by a specified percentage (the "limit factor"), plus an adjustment for new construction, annexations, certain improvements, and state assessed property. The limit factor is the lesser of 101% or 100% plus inflation. Cities can exceed this limit factor if such an increase is approved by a majority (50% plus one) of voters. Receiving voter approval to exceed the limit factor is known as a lid lift. A lid lift may be permanent or for a specific purpose and time period.

A levy lid lift is an instrument for increasing the amount of regular property taxes for operating and/or capital purposes. Because a levy lid lift increases the amount of regular property taxes a city may collect, the corresponding regular property tax rate to generate such an amount must be less than the city's authorized statutory maximum rate. A simple majority vote of the electorate is required, and there are no validation requirements.

Cities have two "levy lid lift" options available: Single-year(basic) or Multi-year.

Single-year Lid Lift:

The single-year lift refers to receiving voter approval to exceed the limit factor in the first year after the lift is approved. It is a one-time bump over the 101% limit factor. This change increases the city's base levy (in the first year) from which subsequent levies are calculated. Following the first year, levies are calculated using the limit factor described above. The single-year lift does not mean that the lift goes away after one year; after the one-time bump occurs, the city may levy regular property taxes based on its increased base for any amount of time, including permanently, as discussed below. The exception is that if a stated purpose in the ballot measure is for the levy lid lift to pay debt service on bonds, the maximum period is nine years.

The election to implement a single-year lift may take place on any election date listed in RCW 29A.04.321.

Multi-year Lid Lift:

The multi-year lift allows a city to lift the levy lid or enables its levy to be "bumped up" each year, for up to a maximum of six years. Unlike a one-year levy lid lift, which increases the city's regular property levy amount

over the limit factor for one year only, a multi-levy lid lift may increase the city's regular property tax levy over the limit factor for up to six successive years. The methodology used by the municipality for calculating the increase (such as a dollar amount or percentage increase tied to an index) must be stated in the ballot measure. The voters may approve multi-year lifts at either the August primary or the November general election.

Term of Levy Lid Lift:

Single-year and multi-year lid lifts can be temporary or permanent. The lift term refers to the length of time the city will benefit from (e.g., receive property tax revenue from) the increased tax levy base. After the city's base is increased, which can happen after the first year in the case of a one-time bump, or at the end of successive years (not to exceed six years), the resulting outcome is the possibility of additional tax revenues. If the levy lid lift is temporary, the incremental increase will continue for a specified number of years. The time frame will be stated in the ballot title. In the case of a temporary levy, after the expiration of the lift term, the city will reduce the levy base to what it would have been had the increase never occurred (assuming that the city would have increased its levy to the maximum amount of the limit factor in the intervening years). Should the intention be that the levy lid lift is permanent, then the ballot measure will state that the levy in the final year will serve as the basis for the calculation of all future levy increases (in other words, be made permanent).

Ballot Measure Requirements and Supplanting:

When considering a levy lid lift, the city will be attentive to the ballot measure requirements unique to single-year and multi-year increases. Both options require the city to state what the aggregate regular property tax levy rate will be in the first year. When determining the maximum aggregate standard property tax levy rate, the city will consider potential shifts in assessed valuation and other factors to give flexibility as needed. Single-year lifts can be for any purpose, and the ballot title does not need to state the purpose. Alternatively, the city must state the intended purpose of a multi-year lift in the ballot measure. State law also requires the city to specify whether certain exemptions will apply to the lift.

The single-year lift allows supplanting of expenditures within the lift period; however, the multi-year lift does not make expenditure allowances for jurisdictions in King County. State law currently provides an exemption from the supplanting limitations due to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.



The State Constitution and statutes limit the aggregate of all regular property taxes on any parcel of land (except levies of port districts and public utility districts) to 1% of the true and fair value of the property. Within the 1%, the total regular levy rate (other than certain excluded levies) of senior taxing districts (counties and cities) and junior taxing districts (fire districts, library districts, park districts, etc.) may not exceed the limits of 1% or \$5.90/\$1,000 of assessed value. If this limit is exceeded, levies are reduced or eliminated according to the statute until the maximum levy rate is achieved.

Sales Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.14>
Cities have the authority to impose a sales and use tax without voter approval, and specific sales and use taxes with voter approval, subject to various limitations. Paid by the consumer, sales tax is a percentage of the retail price paid for specific classifications of goods and services within the State.

Governing bodies of cities and counties may impose sales taxes within their boundaries without voter approval at a rate set by state statute and local ordinances, subject to referendum.

Various taxing districts impose sales taxes within the City of Mercer Island, including the State (6.5%), King County (1.25%, of which 0.10% is for criminal justice purposes), and Regional Transit (1.40%). The State collects an additional 0.30% sales tax on vehicle sales and leases to fund transportation improvements. The City imposes a 1.0% basic option sales and use tax (of which 0.85% goes to the city and the remainder goes to the County per state law). Revenue from this tax is accounted for in the General Fund and may be used for any city governmental purpose.

Sales taxes applicable to Parks and Recreation include: counties may ask voters to approve a sales tax of up to 0.3 percent, which is shared with cities. At least one-third of the revenue must be used for criminal justice purposes.

Counties and cities may also form public facilities districts. These districts may ask the voters to approve a sales tax of up to 0.2 percent. The proceeds may be used for financing, designing, acquisition, construction, equipping, operating, maintaining, remodeling, repairing, and re-equipping its public facilities.

If a jurisdiction intends to change a sales tax rate or levy a new sales tax, it must pass an ordinance to that effect and submit it to the Department of Revenue at least 75 days before the effective date. The effective date must be the first day of a quarter: January 1, April 1, July 1, or October 1.

Business and Occupation Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=35.102>
Business and occupation (B&O) taxes are excise taxes levied on different business classes to raise revenue. Taxes are levied as a percentage of the gross receipts of a business, less some deductions. Businesses are put in various classifications such as manufacturing, wholesaling, retailing, and services. The B&O tax rate may differ by classification.

Cities can impose this tax for the first time or raise rates following the referendum procedure.

B&O taxes are limited to a maximum tax rate that can be imposed by a city's legislative body at 0.2% (0.002) but grandfathered in any higher rates that existed on January 1, 1982. Any city may levy a rate higher than 0.2% if approved by a majority of voters (RCW 35.21.711). As of January 1, 2008, cities that impose the B&O tax must allow for allocation and apportionment, as set out in RCW 35.102.130.

Admissions Tax

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=35.21.280>

An admissions tax is a use tax for entertainment. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Cities and counties may levy an admission tax in an amount no greater than 5% of the admission charge, as is authorized by statute (cities: RCW 35.21.280; counties: RCW 35.57.100). This tax can be levied on admission charges (including season tickets) to places such as theaters, dance halls, circuses, clubs that have cover charges, observation towers, stadiums, and any other activity where an admission charge is made to enter the facility.

If a city imposes an admissions tax, the county may not levy a tax within city boundaries.

The statutes provide an exception for admission to elementary or secondary school activities. Generally, certain events sponsored by non-profits are exempted from the tax; however, this is not a requirement. Counties also exempt any public facility of a public facility district for which admission is imposed. There are no statutory restrictions on the use of revenue.

Impact Fees

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.02.050>

Development impact fees are charges placed on new development. These fees are charged in unimproved areas to help pay for various public facilities that serve the new development or for other impacts associated with such development. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Counties and cities that plan under the GMA may impose impact fees on residential and commercial development activity to help pay for certain public facility improvements, including parks, open space, and recreation facilities identified in the county's capital facilities plan. The improvements financed from impact fees must be reasonably related to the new development and must reasonably benefit the new development. The fees must be spent or encumbered within ten years of collection. Mercer Island currently assesses a parks' impact fee.

Real Estate Excise Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.46.010>

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) is a tax levied on the sale of all real estate unless a specific exemption is claimed. Measured by the total selling price, the tax may include the amount of any liens, mortgages, and other debts given to secure the purchase. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Counties and cities may levy a quarter percent tax known as REET 1 or "first quarter percent". First quarter percent REET (REET 1) revenues are restricted under the Growth Management Act (GMA) and must be spent on capital projects listed in the city's capital facilities plan element of their comprehensive plan. Revenue may also be spent on certain maintenance and operation expenses if specified conditions are satisfied. Capital projects include planning, acquisition, construction, reconstruction, repair, replacement, rehabilitation, or improvement of parks, recreational facilities, and trails.

In addition to REET 1, cities may also impose a second quarter percent or REET 2. Similar to REET 1, the revenue obtained from REET 2 must also be spent on capital projects, including planning, construction, reconstruction, repair, rehabilitation, or improvement of parks, and certain maintenance and operation expenses if specified conditions are satisfied. Acquisition of land for parks is not a permitted use of REET 2. Both REET 1 and REET 2 may be used to make debt service payments on bonds or other debt issued for

qualifying projects. The City of Mercer Island currently assesses both REETs and uses this funding for various capital project needs.

Lodging Tax

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?Cite=67.28.180>

The lodging tax is a user fee for hotel/motel occupation. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Cities and/or counties may impose a "basic" 2% tax under RCW 67.28.180 on all charges for furnishing lodging at hotels, motels, and similar establishments for a continuous period of less than one month.

This tax is taken as a credit against the 6.5% state sales tax, so that the total tax that a patron pays in retail sales tax and hotel-motel tax combined is equal to the retail sales tax in the jurisdiction. In addition, jurisdictions may levy an additional tax of up to 2%, or a total rate of 4%, under RCW 67.28.181(1). This is not credited against the state sales tax. Therefore, if this tax is levied, the total tax on the lodging bill will increase by 2%.

If both a city and the county are levying this tax, the county must allow a credit for any tax imposed by a city so that no two taxes are set on the same taxable event. These revenues must be used solely for paying for tourism promotion and for the acquisition or operation of tourism-related facilities. "Tourism" is defined as economic activity resulting from tourists, which may include sales of overnight lodging, meals, tours, gifts, or souvenirs; there is no requirement that a tourist must stay overnight.

Conservation Futures Tax (King County)

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.34>

The Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) is provided for in RCW 84.34. King County imposes a Conservation Futures levy at a rate of \$0.0625 per \$1,000 assessed value to acquire open space lands, including green spaces, greenbelts, wildlife habitat, and trail rights-of-way proposed for preservation for public use by either the county or the cities within the county. Funds are allocated annually, and cities within the county, citizen groups, and citizens may apply for funds through the county's process. The CFT program provides grants to cities to support open space priorities in local plans and requires a 100% match from other sources.



FEDERAL & STATE GRANTS AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

<http://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, also known as the Rivers & Trails Program or RTCA, is a technical assistance resource for communities. The program is administered by the National Park Service and federal government agencies to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The RTCA program implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of NPS in communities across America.

Recreation and Conservation Office Grant Programs

www.rco.wa.gov

The Recreation and Conservation Office was created in 1964 as part of the Marine Recreation Land Act. The RCO grants money to state and local agencies, generally on a matching basis, to acquire, develop, and enhance wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation properties. Some money is also distributed for planning grants. RCO grant programs utilize funds from various sources. Historically, these have included the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, state bonds, Initiative 215 monies (derived from un-reclaimed marine fuel taxes), off-road vehicle funds, Youth Athletic Facilities Account, and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)

This program, managed through the RCO, provides matching grants to state and local agencies to protect and enhance salmon habitat and to provide public access and recreation opportunities on aquatic lands. In 1998, DNR refocused the ALEA program to emphasize salmon habitat preservation and enhancement. However, the program is still open to traditional water access proposals. Any project must be located on navigable portions of waterways. ALEA funds are derived from the leasing of state-owned aquatic lands and from the sale of harvest rights for shellfish and other aquatic resources.

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)

Funding sources managed by the RCO include the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The

WWRP is divided into Habitat Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Accounts; these are further divided into several project categories. Cities, counties, and other local sponsors may apply for funding in urban wildlife habitat, local parks, trails, and water access categories. Funds for local agencies are awarded on a matching basis. Grant applications are evaluated once each year, and the State Legislature must authorize funding for the WWRP project lists.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides grants to buy land and develop public outdoor facilities, including parks, trails, and wildlife lands. Grant recipients must provide at least 50% matching funds in either cash or in-kind contributions. Grant program revenue is from a portion of Federal revenue derived from selling or leasing off-shore oil and gas resources.

National Recreational Trails Program

The National Recreational Trails Program (N RTP) provides funds to maintain trails and facilities that provide a backcountry experience for a range of activities, including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, motorcycling, and snowmobiling. Eligible projects include the maintenance and re-routing of recreational trails, development of trail-side and trail-head facilities, and operation of environmental education and trail safety programs. A local match of 20% is required. This program is funded through Federal gasoline taxes attributed to recreational non-highway uses.

Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) Program

The YAF provides grants to develop, equip, maintain, and improve youth and community athletic facilities. Cities, counties, and qualified non-profit organizations may apply for funding, and grant recipients must provide at least 50% matching funds in either cash or in-kind contributions.

Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund

Grants are awarded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for acquisition or restoration of lands directly correlating to salmon habitat protection or recovery. Projects must demonstrate a direct benefit to fish habitat. There is no match requirement for design-only projects; acquisition and restoration projects require a 15% match. The funding source includes the sale of state general obligation bonds, the federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, and the state Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund.

STP Regional Competition - Puget Sound Regional Council

<https://www.psrc.org/our-work/funding/project-selection>

Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds are considered the most “flexible” funding source provided through federal transportation funding. Every two years, the Puget Sound Regional Council conducts a competitive grant program to award FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. For the Countywide STP/CMAQ competitions, the policy focuses on providing transportation improvements to a center or centers and the corridors that serve them. Centers are defined as regional growth and regional manufacturing/industrial centers, centers designated through countywide processes, town centers, and other local centers. Program set-asides include funding for priority non-motorized projects within King County.

King County Grants

King County Youth and Amateur Sports Grants (YASG)

Youth and Amateur Sports Grants (YASG) support fit and healthy communities by investing in programs and capital projects that increase access to physical activity. Program grants range from \$15,000-\$75,000, while capital grants range from \$25,000-\$250,000. Funding is only available to organizations serving residents of King County, including non-profit organizations, public schools, park districts, public agencies, tribes and tribal organizations. A small or emerging community organization without 501c3 status is eligible through a partnership with a fiscal agent. The program is funded and sustained through a 1 percent car-rental tax authorized by the Legislature in 1993. Funds can only be used for programs or capital projects that increase access to health-enhancing physical activities.

WaterWorks Grants

Approximately \$2 million are awarded every two years for organizations carrying out a variety of projects. Non-profits, schools, educational institutions, cities, counties, tribes, and special purpose districts are eligible to apply, and partnerships are encouraged. Projects must have a demonstrable positive impact on the waters of King County and provide opportunities for stewardship. In addition to the WaterWorks competitive grants, water quality project funding is available through King County Council allocated funding.

King County Cultural Heritage Grants through 4Culture

As the cultural funding agency for King County, 4Culture offers grants and cultural support in three program areas: arts, heritage, and preservation. Program guidelines and grant award amounts vary between the three program areas.

OTHER METHODS & FUNDING SOURCES

Metropolitan Park District

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=35.61>

Metropolitan park districts may be formed to manage, control, improve, maintain, and acquire parks, parkways, and boulevards. In addition to acquiring and managing their own lands, metropolitan districts may accept and manage park and recreation lands and equipment turned over by any city within the district or by the county. Formation of a metropolitan park district may be initiated in cities of five thousand population or more by city council ordinance, or by petition, and requires majority approval by voters for creation.

Park and Recreation District

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.69>

Park and recreation districts may be formed to provide leisure-time activities and recreation facilities (parks, playgrounds, pools, golf courses, paths, community centers, arboretums, campgrounds, boat launches, etc.). They must be initiated by petition of at least 15% percent of the registered voters within the proposed district. Upon completing the petition process and review by county commissioners, a proposition for district formation and election of five district commissioners is submitted to the voters of the proposed district at the next general election. Once formed, park and recreation districts retain the authority to propose a regular property tax levy, annual excess property tax levies, and general obligation bonds. All three of these funding types require 60% percent voter approval and 40% percent voter turnout. With voter approval, the district may levy a regular property tax not to exceed sixty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for up to six consecutive years.



Park and Recreation Service Area (PRSA)

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.68.400>

A quasi-municipal corporation with independent taxing authority whose purpose is to finance, acquire, construct, improve, maintain or operate any park, senior citizen activities center, zoo, aquarium, or recreation facilities; and provide a higher level of park service.

Business Sponsorships/Donations

Business sponsorships for programs may be available throughout the year. In-kind contributions are often received, including food, door prizes, and equipment/material.

Interagency Agreements

State law provides for interagency cooperative efforts between units of government. Joint acquisition, development, and use of park and open space facilities may be provided between Parks, Public Works, and utility providers.

Private Grants, Donations & Gifts

Many trusts and private foundations provide funding for park, recreation, and open space projects. Grants from these sources are typically allocated through a competitive application process and vary dramatically in size based on the organization's financial resources and funding criteria. Philanthropic giving is another source of project funding. Efforts in this area may involve cash gifts and include donations through other mechanisms such as wills or insurance policies. Community fundraising efforts can also support park, recreation, or open space facilities and projects.

ACQUISITION TOOLS & METHODS

Direct Purchase Methods

Market Value Purchase

The City purchases land at the present market value based on an independent appraisal through a written purchase and sale agreement. Timing, payment of real estate taxes and other contingencies are negotiable.

Partial Value Purchase (or Bargain Sale)

In a bargain sale, the landowner agrees to sell for less than the property's fair market value. A landowner's decision to proceed with a bargain sale is unique and personal; landowners with a strong sense of civic pride, long community history or concerns about capital gains are possible candidates for this approach. In addition to cash proceeds upon closing, the landowner may be entitled to a charitable income tax deduction based on the difference between the land's fair market value and its sale price.

Life Estates & Bequests

If a landowner wishes to remain on the property for an extended period of time or until death, several variations on a sale agreement exist. In a life estate agreement, the landowner may continue to live on the land by donating a remainder interest and retaining a "reserved life estate." Specifically, the landowner donates or sells the property to the city but reserves the right for the seller or any other named person to continue to live on and use the property. When the owner or other specified person dies or releases their life interest, full title and control over the property will be transferred to the city. The landowner may be eligible for a tax deduction when the gift is made by donating a remainder interest. In a bequest, the landowner designates in a will or trust document that the property will be transferred to the city upon death. While a life estate offers the city some degree of title control during the landowner's life, a bequest does not. Unless the intent to bequest is disclosed to and known by the city in advance, no guarantees exist concerning the property's condition upon transfer or to any liabilities that may exist.

Gift Deed

When a landowner wishes to bequeath their property to a public or private entity upon their death, they can record a gift deed with the county assessors office to ensure their stated desire to transfer their property to the targeted beneficiary as part of their estate. The recording of the gift deed usually involves the tacit agreement of the receiving party.

Option to Purchase Agreement

This type of agreement is a binding contract between a landowner and the city that would only apply according to the conditions of the option and limits the seller's power to revoke an offer. Once in place and signed, the Option Agreement may be triggered at a future, specified date or upon completing designated conditions. Option Agreements can be made for any time duration and can include all of the language pertinent to closing a property sale.

Right of First Refusal

In this agreement, the landowner grants the city the first chance to purchase the property once the landowner wishes to sell. The agreement does not establish the sale price for the property, and the landowner is free to refuse to sell it for the price offered by the city. This is the weakest form of agreement between an owner and a prospective buyer.

Conservation and/or Access Easements

Through a conservation easement, a landowner voluntarily agrees to sell or donate certain rights associated with their property (often the right to subdivide or develop), and a private organization or public agency agrees to hold the right to enforce the landowner's promise not to exercise those rights. In essence, the rights are forfeited and no longer exist. This type of easement is a legal agreement between the landowner and the city that permanently limits land uses to conserve a portion of the property for public use or protection. The landowner still owns the property, but the use of the land is restricted. Conservation easements may result in an income tax deduction and reduced property taxes and estate taxes. Typically, this approach provides trail corridors where only a small portion of the land is needed or for the strategic protection of natural resources and habitat. The city purchases land at the present market value based on an independent appraisal through a written purchase and sale agreement. Timing, payment of real estate taxes, and other contingencies are negotiable.

Park or Open Space Dedication Requirements

Local governments have the option to require developers to dedicate land for parks under the State Subdivision Law (Ch. 58.17 RCW) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Ch. 43.21C RCW). Under the subdivision law, developers can be required to provide the parks/recreation improvements or pay a fee in lieu of the dedicated land and its improvements. Under the SEPA requirements, land dedication may occur as part of mitigation for a proposed development's impact.

Landowner Incentive Measures

Density Bonuses

Density bonuses are a planning tool used to encourage a variety of public land use objectives, usually in urban areas. They offer the incentive of being able to develop at densities beyond current regulations in one area, in return for concessions in another. Density bonuses are applied to a single parcel or development. An example is allowing developers of multi-family units to build at higher densities if they provide a certain number of low-income units or public open space. For density bonuses to work, market forces must support densities at a higher level than current regulations.

Transfer of Development Rights

The transfer of development rights (TDR) is an incentive-based planning tool that allows landowners to trade the right to develop a property to its fullest extent in one area for the right to develop beyond existing regulations in another area. Local governments may establish the specific areas in which development may be limited or restricted and where development beyond regulation may be allowed. Usually, but not always, the "sending" and "receiving" property are under common ownership. Some programs allow for different ownership, which, in effect, establishes a market for development rights to be bought and sold.

IRC 1031 Exchange

If the landowner owns a business or investment property, an IRC Section 1031 Exchange can facilitate the exchange of like-kind property solely for business or investment purposes. No capital gain or loss is recognized under Internal Revenue Code Section 1031 (see www.irc.gov for more details). This option may be a useful tool in negotiations with an owner of an investment property, especially if the tax savings offset to the owner can translate to a sale price discount for the City.

Current (Open Space) Use Taxation Programs

Property owners whose current lands are in open space, agricultural, or timber uses may have that land valued at their current use rather than their "highest and best" use assessment. This differential assessed value, allowed under the Washington Open Space Taxation Act (Ch. 84.34 RCW), helps to preserve private properties as open space, farm, or timberlands. If the land is converted to other non-open space uses, the landowner is required to pay the difference between the current use annual taxes and the highest/best taxes for the previous seven years. When properties are sold to a local government or conservation organization for



land conservation/preservation purposes, the required payment of seven years' worth of differential tax rates is waived. The amount of this tax liability can be part of the negotiated land acquisition from private to public or quasi-public conservation purposes. King County has four current use taxation programs that offer this property tax reduction to incentivize landowners to voluntarily preserve open space, farmland, or timberland on their property.

OTHER LAND PROTECTION OPTIONS

Land Trusts and Conservancies

Land trusts are private non-profit organizations that acquire and protect unique open spaces and are traditionally not associated with any government agency. Forterra (formerly called the Cascade Land Conservancy) is the regional land trust serving the Mercer Island area. Its efforts have led to the conservation of more than 234,000 acres of forests, farms, shorelines, parks, and natural areas in the region (www.forterra.org). Other national organizations with local representation include the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and the Wetlands Conservancy.

Regulatory Measures

A variety of regulatory measures are available to local agencies and jurisdictions. Available programs and regulations include Critical Areas Ordinance, Mercer Island; State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA); Shorelines Management Program; and Hydraulic Code, and Washington State Department of Fisheries and Department of Wildlife.

Public/Private Utility Corridors

Utility corridors can be managed to maximize the protection or enhancement of open space lands. Utilities maintain corridors to provide services such as electricity, gas, oil, and rail travel. Some utility companies have cooperated with local governments to develop public programs such as parks and trails within utility corridors.

CONSULTANT FIELD NOTES & OBSERVATIONS OF MERCER ISLAND PARK SYSTEM

Consultant field visits to all Mercer Island parks, trails and open space areas were completed in 2019 prior to the PROS Plan project being suspended in early 2020. Review of this document is still underway to ensure changes that have occurred since 2019 are accounted for and reflected in the final PROS Plan.



PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



AUBREY DAVIS PARK (ADP)

91.81 acres

72nd SE & SE 22nd

Regional Park

Amenities

- Baseball fields (2)
- Basketball courts (2 full court)
- BBQs
- Benches
- Bike racks
- Bleachers
- Boat launch
- Bocce/petanque courts (2)
- Drinking fountains
- Formal landscaping
- Formal plaza
- Local trails
- Mountains to Sound Regional Trail
- Open grass areas
- Paved pathways
- Picnic shelter
- Picnic tables
- Picnic tables with chess-checkers boards
- Play structures (2)
- Public art
- Restrooms (1)
- Soccer/lacrosse field (1)
- Tennis courts (4)
- Water Trail trailhead



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- ADP Master Plan was adopted in 2019. Recommendations from the adopted Master Plan should be assimilated into capital planning.
- Owned primarily by WSDOT. Decision-making is a joint effort for operational considerations.
- Three primary vegetation management strategies from the Master Plan include 1.) Intensive soil amendments and replanting for high visibility areas; 2.) Infill plantings in lower visibility areas; and, 3.) Modification of non-active recreation lawn areas to capture reduced maintenance and lower water use needs.
- Trail improvements through ADP focus on re-establishing sight lines and clear zones along the existing Mountains to Sound Trail, renovating the trail in conjunction with the sewer upgrade project, improving trail safety for all trail users, and integrating wayfinding along the corridor. New trail connections for ADA access to existing amenities is also recommended.
- Two new amenities are proposed in the Master Plan: an off-leash dog area (in the open space around the stacks) and a second restroom (near the soccer fields and



(cont.)



playground along West Mercer Way). An improved shoreline access area on the east end of ADP is also recommended.

- In addition to the Master Plan recommendations, consider working with WSDOT to paint the exhaust stacks and massive concrete wall at the basketball courts.
- The boat launch at the east end of ADP is a water trailhead, so consider park signage that is oriented to the water in conjunction with Master Plan recommendations for shoreline access development at this location.
- A rowing facility opportunity could be included at the boat launch.
- Implement trail safety projects per the Master Plan.



Maintenance Considerations

- Owned primarily WSDOT. Decision-making is a joint effort for operational consideration. Current agreements do not address capital needs.
- All natural grass areas look excellent.
- Tennis courts have minor cracks that likely do not affect play yet.
- A few of the benches at the Lid C playfield are degraded.
- All of the bike racks are “wheel benders” and should be replaced according to the Master Plan’s recommendations.
- The playground at Lid B should be replaced.
- Drainage issues exist where catch basins need to be reset or regraded.
- Irrigation is showing wear and tear. Valve clusters and supply lines fail periodically. Irrigation is not as effective as it could be. Consider a better system for heads that don’t break.
- The Master Plan revealed long-term needs for managing tree health and cover and the urban forest canopy in ADP. These needs should be addressed more in-depth than the Master Plan covers.
- Bollards on trails should be removed and replacement traffic control installed as recommended by a traffic engineer and approved by WSDOT.
- Trail safety projects should be designed and implemented per the Master Plan.
- Pavement heaving and roots are a concern on the trails.
- Median on Island Crest Way needs full renovation.
- Pay to park (phone app) at the boat launch is being instituted this year, remove ticket machine.
- Implement a loaner program for life jackets at the boat launch.





BICENTENNIAL PARK

0.10 acres

Corner of 77th Ave SE and SE 32nd Street

Mini Park

Amenities

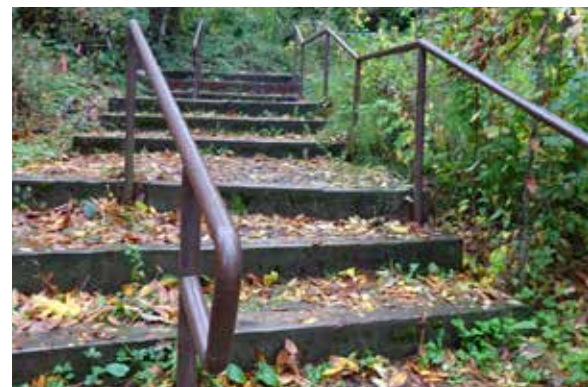
- Drinking fountain
- Flagpole
- Landscape beds
- Open grass area
- Restroom
- Park identification sign
- Plaza
- Trail connection to stairway to Mercerdale Park & Hillside

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- An updated Master Plan for Bicentennial Park and Mercerdale Park should be done jointly.
- Irrigation for grass areas would improve natural turf management.

Maintenance Considerations

- Install wayfinding sign at base of stairway leading into Mercerdale Hillside to provide directional information.
- Ornamental shrub plantings at base of flagpole are outgrowing their planting bed. Replacement of planting area with new planting design could enhance the sense of place.





CLARKE BEACH PARK

9.05 acres

Community Park

E. Mercer Way at SE 77th Pl

Amenities

- Benches
- Certified wildlife habitat (and restoration area)
- Dog waste bag dispensers
- Drinking fountain
- Fishing pier
- Lighting
- Natural forested slopes
- Open grass area
- Parking
- Paved pathways
- Picnic tables
- Public swimming area
- Public waterfront access
- Restrooms
- Sand play area
- Swimming pier
- Trash receptacles
- Water trailhead



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Armored waterfront swim area could be redesigned (The swim pier will soon need to be removed or replaced). A redesigned shoreline could become a more naturalized waterfront with a restored shoreline.
- Restrooms (1974) are showing their age and should be evaluated for eventual replacement. If shoreline of park is reconfigured for more natural waterfront, lower impact restroom facilities may be more appropriate.
- Provide a bike rack at the parking lot.
- Additional BBQs could be installed if warranted by demand.
- Opportunity to repurpose the round sand pit at the north end of the site into additional picnic tables and grass.
- Consider replacing the concrete steps along the swimming area with beach material.
- Evaluate ADA accessibility to both picnic areas and docks by eliminating lips and paving the path to the fishing dock.
- Install directional signs at trail intersections.





- Clarke Beach Park is a water trailhead, so consider wayfinding signage that is oriented to the water.
- Swimming pier rail is patched and disintegrating. Likely the entire pier structure is compromised and should be replaced. Swim enclosure is falling apart, does not qualify for permits to repair because of salmon habitat issues.

Maintenance Considerations

- Second ADA parking stall does not have marked travel lane to access pathway entry. One ADA parking sign missing.
- Numerous pavement cracks along pathway from swim pier to fishing pier need repair.
- The parking lot has two older globe lights that may not provide adequate illumination and need cleaning. Consider replacing the globe lights with cut-off type lighting fixtures to reduce light pollution.
- Sandy alluvium that appears to have come from the bank below E Mercer Way was present on the west side of parking lot.
- The drinking fountain at the upper picnic area does not work, so should be replaced or removed.
- The drinking fountain at the restroom is damaged and needs to be replaced.
- Much of the site is still covered in English ivy and blackberry. Restoration efforts should continue.
- Native plant management was observed at the south and north ends of the site. Entire site has received vegetation management.
- Both asphalt trails from the parking lot have excessive cross slopes due to slumping of the downhill edge subgrade. Relocation/replacement strategies should be considered.
- One of the three timber picnic tables in the upper picnic area has excessive longitudinal pitch and should be replaced.
- If restrooms stay, they should be renovated and fitted with automatic locks on timers.
- Install raw water irrigation intake in the lake to irrigate shoreline lawn and future restoration plantings.





DEANE'S CHILDREN'S PARK

3.04 acres

Neighborhood Park

5500 Island Crest Way

Amenities

- Bathroom
- Benches
- Bike rack
- Climbing rock
- Dragon play structure
- Excavator
- Paved pathways
- Peace pole
- Picnic shelter
- Picnic tables (5, plus 1 ADA)
- Play structures (3)
- Swings (toddler and child)
- Trails
- Xylophones (2)
- Storage building



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Children access Island Park Elementary School by foot and bike through the site, so consider opportunities to improve pedestrian and bike routes.
- The excavator should be moved to a more visible location and set in soil that is conducive to digging. Its current location is somewhat obscured by vegetation and the soil appears to be too compacted for kids to excavate.
- Many of the thresholds into the play structures have lips that preclude ADA access.
- The storage building next to the picnic shelter is unsightly and should be replaced.

Maintenance Considerations

- There is a short concrete path around the trees south of the main play structure that is partially obscured by vegetation, which could be cleared.
- The play structures are in good condition, but many of the wood borders surrounding them are leaning outward or in disrepair.
- The roof and skylights of the picnic shelter should be cleaned.
- Swings should be replaced.



FIRST HILL PARK

0.83 acres

Neighborhood Park

SE 32nd & 72nd SE

Amenities

- Backstop
- Half-court basketball court
- Picnic table
- Play structure
- Public art (sculpture)
- Slide
- Small grass field
- Swings (2)

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- This is a flat site, so ADA access could be improved relatively easily.
- The asphalt surface of the half-court basketball court is mildly wavy and should be replaced.

Maintenance Considerations

- The top bar on the backstop needs adjusting and the chain link fence is curling at the base. Consider removing backstop.
- The wood headers around the play structure are broken in places.
- The picnic table is not ADA compliant, is rotting and should be replaced.
- The planting around the edges of the park could be thinned and cleaned up.
- Grass is worn under trees and around play structures.
- Douglas fir trees need periodic assessment. Some evidence of latent root disease.
- Big slide needs a stairway and better fall protection, prevent access under slide.
- The rim on the basketball hoop is slightly askew and needs a new net.





GROVELAND BEACH PARK

3.07 acres

SE 58th & 80th Ave SE

Community Park

Amenities

- BBQ (1)
- Benches (3)
- Bulkhead
- Dock
- Drinking fountains (2)
- Grass area
- Paved parking
- Picnic tables (4)
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Shower
- Staircase to shoreline
- Swimming beach
- Volleyball court with two backless benches
- Water trailhead



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to replace play structure with something interesting and inspiring, such as a pyramidal rope structure affording better water views and/or a zip line.
- Consider adding additional BBQs.
- Consider installing a bike rack at the parking lot.
- Groveland Beach Park is a water trailhead, so consider park signage that is oriented to the water.
- The trail to the north upper picnic area is steep and moderately eroded; consider improvement opportunities.
- The main asphalt path to the beach is steep (28% slope). The downhill edge of the path is beginning to slump in places. Repair as needed.
- The concrete slabs comprising the dock surface are uneven in places resulting in lips between panels that may exceed ADA thresholds. Long-term dock replacement strategy is needed.
- Install raw water irrigation intake in the lake.

Maintenance Considerations

- The two upper picnic tables are in poor condition and should be replaced. Assess usage and consider removal if not needed.
- The chain gate at the top of the asphalt path is closed, forcing foot traffic over a curb and grass area and prohibiting wheeled access. Replace with bollard.
- The sand from the volleyball court has migrated beyond the frame of the court down the bank toward the water, which is not a problem per se but may require more frequent replacement of sand.
- A clay subsurface drainpipe is exposed by the concrete wall at the beach and should be repaired.



HOMESTEAD PARK

11.09 acres

SE 40th & 82nd

Community Park

Amenities

- Baseball fields (2)/Soccer field, seasonal (1)
- Basketball courts (1 half courts)
- Bathrooms
- Benches
- Bike rack
- Drinking fountain (ADA)
- Paved Parking
- Play structure
- Public art (sculpture)
- Tennis courts (4)
- Trails



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Consider reduction of the asphalt pad at the basketball courts, to allow for new amenities and provide space for ADA access.
- The top of the hill at the parking lot offers great prospect, but only has one bench. Consider providing additional seating overlooking the park.
- Provide additional bike racks at the baseball fields.
- Install park signage at northwest entry.
- 2002 Master Plan (by Bruce Dees) recommendations included additional circulation through ADA-compliant paved pathways and a picnic area along the edge of the paved pathway at the woodland edge.

Maintenance Considerations

- The brick pad at the two half benches near the northeast corner of the park needs repair. This seating arrangement works nice for ADA accommodation, with a space between the two benches for a wheelchair, but the adjacent shrubs limit access around the benches.
- The parking lot has ADA spaces; however, the access aisles lead to a gravel path that has moderate lips at asphalt path edges. The curb ramp is abrupt and does not have a detectable warning. Consider paving the path along the west edge of the parking lot.
- Both asphalt paths leading down the bank from the parking lot have some cracks and root heave.
- The play structure edging has lips that preclude ADA access.
- Ponding was observed on the southwest baseball field (foul territory, third base side).
- Some cracking and root heave observed on the asphalt path on the west side of the park.



ISLAND CREST PARK

38.91 acres

5500 Island Crest Way

Community Park

Amenities

- Baseball fields (seasonal soccer & football)
- Batting cage (structure)
- BBQ(1)
- Benches (2 at tennis)
- Bike rack
- Bleachers
- Bull pen facilities (3)
- Concession stand
- Wireless cellular facilities (3)
- Dog waste bag dispensers (2)
- Drinking fountains
- Parking
- Paved pathways
- Picnic tables (5)
- Restroom with maintenance shed
- Synthetic turf field
- Tennis courts (2)
- Trails
- Storage building

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to convert the south baseball field infield and outfield to synthetic turf. Lighting to be replaced.
- Some of the passages between and behind the ball field bleachers may not meet ADA minimum clearances. Consider new seating / ADA approach.
- The walking trails access several higher quality forest environments that could benefit from benches and branding (e.g. “The Fern Garden” or “Ravine Vista”).
- The picnic tables at the baseball fields would benefit from a couple of BBQs and ADA access from the concrete walkway.
- Grades are relatively mild on the walking trails, so an ADA accessible trail or loop should be considered.
- No dedicated pedestrian or bicycle access exists between the Island Crest Way trail and the sidewalk within the park. Consider creating shoulders along the entrance drive for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Resurface tennis courts to repair cracking.
- Add safety railings to existing open bleachers or replace with newer bleachers that comply with International Building Code for safety.





Maintenance Considerations

- The low bridge in the walking trail area is in good condition, but one of the railings is leaning moderately. The bridge is also not ADA accessible due to excessive gap width between the planks.
- Vegetation management occurring in the natural areas. Over 30 acres of parkland is managed as open space.





LUTHER BURBANK PARK

54.52 acres

72nd SE & SE 22nd

Regional Park

Amenities

- Waterfront access & swim beach
- Administration building
- Parking (2 lots)
- Restrooms (3)
- Amphitheater
- Tennis courts (3)
- Playgrounds (2)
- Paved pathways
- Picnic tables some with umbrellas
- BBQ grills
- Benches
- Trash & recycling receptacles
- Dog waste bag dispensers
- Flagpole
- Lighting
- Drinking fountains
- Steamplant building
- Concession stand
- Boating docks
- Waterfront plaza
- Off-leash dog areas (large & small)
- Dairy barn ruins
- Open grass lawns
- Shade trees
- Natural areas
- Boardwalk
- Observation platform
- Interpretive signs
- Wayfinding maps
- Kiosk
- Public art
- Peace pole
- Main entry pergola walkway
- Water trailhead



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Restrooms appear like concrete bomb shelters – not very inviting. As restroom facility ages and dictates replacement, consider building designs with more natural light.
- Pier replacements could provide opportunity to design for better ADA compliance. Dock re-design project underway.
- The bulk of picnic tables and picnic groves are not universally accessible. Provide some additional pathways to ADA-compliant tables (cited as need in 2006 Master Plan).
- 2006 Master Plan recommendations yet to be completed:
 - South entry improvements - kayak/canoe boat launch with path & dock
 - Source Area - pathway, irrigation & drainage improvements
 - Expanded Swim Beach - with new restroom/lifeguard building, added sand play area and volleyball court
 - Main Entry improvements – pavement treatment and overlook addition
 - Campus Area – new recreational amenities, covered group picnic shelter, maintenance yard upgrades, entry road enhancements



- Dock/Boiler Building Area – pier restoration, improved access, rowing/boating facility ‘shell’ house, improved shoreline beach access, security & utilities upgrades
- Shoreline – improved vegetation management, environmental learning & wayfinding components
- Amphitheater – replacement of aging infrastructure and terracing
- Off-Leash Areas – addition of covered shelter and benches
- Dairy Barn – addition of covered shelter & art installations
- Proposed 2006 Master Plan spatial layout of the West Hill P-patch gardens should be modified to accommodate the current (working) garden plot alignments. Buffer planting enhancements and loop pathways could remain as future improvements but with modified alignments.
- Fishing pier is not universally accessible. Planned trail/pathway improvements will improve better ADA access. Piers have been evaluated by marine engineer for safety and timing of needed replacement (reported in 2014 Overwater Structures Assessment).
- Moorage was built in 1974. Over 40 years old, the piers and entire structures should be scheduled for replacement. Re-design project is underway.
- Tennis court is uneven. DA Hogan report indicates need for full repaving. Consider whether other recreational amenities could share or replace the tennis courts which currently have chronic drainage problems due to elevation.
- Boiler Building study (2017) calls for seismic retrofits and a new roof as Phase 1. Phase 2 is conversion to office and classroom for small boat facility.



Maintenance Considerations

- ADA parking at south parking lot lacks striped travel aisle for second stall.
- Pavement cracks along pathway to south parking lot.
- ADA access barrier at entry into swim beach playground.
- Erosion at south beach area where waves hit edges of armored walls, paths and steps.
- Shoreline between the docks and the swim beach is eroding and needs restoration. Relocate the shoreline trail away from bank to reduce erosion and improve native vegetation.
- Restroom signs are not ADA-compliant. Add uniform gender designations with ADA signs.
- Beavers have gnawed at Lombardy poplar trunks, weakening tree structure. Plan for removal and replacement with native Pacific NW tree species.
- Playground needs two new pieces to replace removed spinner equipment.
- Fencing at shoreline of the off-leash dog area does not exclude dogs well due to the change in lake water level. Fencing can't go lower than the ordinary high water mark, and dogs can circumvent it at lower lake levels.
- Source landform sculpture needs restoration and new intake/pump system to enable intended water flow through rock channel.
- Add raw water irrigation intake to water Calkins Point, south shoreline restoration, and swim beach lawn and landscaping.
- Continue restoration of 84th slope and wetlands and Hawthorn Hill forest.
- Split rail fences have short lifespans because of rot. Consider alternatives to extend life.



MERCERDALE PARK

12.17 acres

Community Park

SE 32nd St & 78th Ave SE

Amenities

- Benches
- Bike rack
- Drinking fountain
- Exercise stations
- Memorials (Trees, pavers, etc.)
- Native garden
- Natural area
- Open grass lawn
- Ornamental landscapes
- Park signs
- Paved loop pathway
- Peace pole
- Pergola
- Picnic tables with umbrellas
- Playground
- Plaza
- Public art
- Recycling center
- Restrooms (Bicentennial Park)
- Shade trees
- Sizzling Water garden
- Skate park
- Trash receptacles



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Side entrance pathways into park would benefit from park identification signage (smaller signs).
- Playground equipment should be replaced. Project is underway.
- Plan for replacement of Callery pear trees in 'Bosque' arrangement in plaza. When tree species is selected for replacement, alternative tree species should be chosen. If opportunity arises, soil-root zone for planting pit should be expanded underneath the pavement to support longer life for trees and reduce root-pavement conflicts.
- Opportunity for stormwater enhancement planting in drainage swale near Thrift Shop parking.
- Recycling Center and Native Plant Garden need integrated plan. Native plant garden is planted on Groco biosolids over native glacially-compacted fine textured strata. Plant performance is inadequate for a representative native plant garden as a result. Adjacent hillside shows similar low performance in native vegetation.
- Consider upgrade to skate park when replaced. New skills area.





- Original Master Plan done in 2001 and should be updated. Integrate planning with Bicentennial Park and plans for sewer line replacement.
- Loop path has ongoing tree root heaving and cracking. The width is substandard for a multi-use path. Consider options to increase capacity that do not increase impervious surface.
- Restroom building at Bicentennial Park is due for replacement.

Maintenance Considerations

- Plantings should consider heavily impacted soils from excavation and grading. Dense glacially-compacted fine textured soils without organic matter or profile development.
- Sweetgum tree stump that is suckering could be trained to a multi-stemmed tree if suckers are thinned.
- Hedge of strawberry trees should be pruned away from backs of benches in plaza area – or benches should be shifted away from hedge encroachment. Hedge is also beginning to encroach into side entrance walkway.
- Callery (Bradford) pears are beginning to outgrow iron grates. Plan for grate replacement to allow tree trunk growth (or eventual replacement with preferred tree species). Uneven grate edges present tripping hazard.
- Exercise stations are not ADA compliant due to uneven paved surfaces and edging.
- Storage building showing signs of age. Downspouts need repair. Fixtures in restrooms replaced in 2010. Bathroom roof was replaced 2020.
- Park and skate park signage needs updating.





ROANOKE PARK

1.46 acres

Neighborhood Park

70th Ave SE & W Mercer Way

Amenities

- Art piece totem
- Benches
- Drinking fountain
- Gravel parking (2 spaces)
- Native trees
- Open grass area
- Play structures (Climbing, rope, swing)
- Tennis court (1)

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Install a park sign (none exists) and a bike rack
- Installation of a timber rail along the top of the slope along W Mercer Way would help define the west edge of the lower portion of the park and help prevent young children from venturing too close to the road.
- The shrubs along the east side of the tennis court could be removed and replaced with grass to create a more open feel and forgiving edge for errant tennis balls and provide a place for people to watch or wait. New backed benches could be located near the tennis court.
- Install new stairs leading to the tennis court.
- In the lower part of the park, a maple and a fir tree are conjoined at the base, which is an interesting natural feature that could be celebrated with signage or ground plane design.
- The wood frames around the play structures are coming apart and leaning outward in places. The playground should be evaluated for replacement.
- There is no ADA access.

Maintenance Considerations

- The tennis court has a lot of cracks, but all are narrow.
- The top tape on the tennis net is frayed needs to be replaced.
- The steps leading to the tennis court are degraded and should be replaced.
- The grass has a few bald spots but is generally fine.





ROTARY PARK

4.83 acres

88th SE & SE 44th

Neighborhood Park

Amenities

- Benches
- Emergency well
- Open grass areas
- Park ID sign
- Paved pathways
- Peace pole
- Perimeter loop trail
- Picnic table
- Rock garden
- Landform features with tree circles (2)
- Shade trees
- Trails
- Trash receptacles

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- The park has a central 'plaza' area with two benches facing the 'rock garden'. The picnic table is outside the central area and open to the street. Some picnic tables or small picnic shelter could be added to the central open area in the park to create a place that's more comfortable to gather.
- The isolated picnic table is not connected to the paved pathway and does not meet ADA guidelines. A paved path could be added to the table or another picnic table (within a small shelter) could be added to the central open area to meet the 50% minimum for ADA site furnishings.
- Replace benches with the same style bench so that they match.

Maintenance Considerations

- None noted.





SE 28TH STREET MINI PARK

0.06 acres

SE 28th Street

Mini Park

Amenities

- Bench
- Open grass area



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Consider the future opportunity to provide ADA access to bench with a paved trail.
- This site might benefit from a design for a more functional park.
- Opportunity to reestablish the view that may have existed from this park.
- The Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan calls for a staircase to connect from the Lid to somewhere near this location.



Maintenance Considerations

- Slab stairs are uneven and likely do not meet code. Remove stairs and develop a paved path that connects to the sidewalk at the far southeast corner of the site.
- This site may have afforded a nice view of the water and mountains at one point, but the trees have grown and blocked the view. Consider selectively thinning to open up the view.





SECRET PARK

0.86 acres

SE 27th &W Mercer Way

Amenities

- Play structure
- Swings
- Picnic table (not ADA)
- Small grass area

Mini Park



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Install a park sign at the north, open end of the site.
- Trails need some design. Entire park should undergo site design (mini-master plan) to determine what recreational amenities could be added and how trails or pathways should be configured.
- There is no parking for this park. Add ADA parking.

Maintenance Considerations

- The one trail is primitive and overgrown.
- The site is thick with underbrush.
- Big fir trees need monitoring.





SLATER PARK

0.68 acres

2835 60th Place SE

Mini Park

Amenities

- Benches
- Bike rack
- Dog waste bag dispenser
- Interpretive signs
- Open grass area
- Paved Parking (2 regular, 2 ADA)
- Public art (moss sculpture)



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Remove hedge between the upper and lower grass terraces for safety and to improve views of the water from the upper terrace.
- Opportunity to improve access to the water by sectioning the existing log breakwater to create openings along the beach and repositioning the log sections the closer to the bank to increase the beach area and create pocket beaches.
- Needs a landscape plan and renovation planting.



Maintenance Considerations

- The bench closest to the water is missing a slat.
- The bike rack is bent slightly.
- The parking lot has two ADA spaces but there is not a curb cut at the end of the aisle and the adjacent walkway pavement has a lip that precludes ADA access.
- Stamped asphalt walkway surface is rough in places and not ADA friendly. Consider replacing with a smooth walkway material, such as concrete.
- ADA picnic table, but inadequate path access.
- Cut back hedge at concrete stairway.
- Border plantings are leftover from the estate that existed here previously. They do not function well and have become overgrown.





SOUTH MERCER PLAYFIELDS

17.31 acres

SE 78th & 84th SE

School / Park

Amenities

- Baseball/softball fields: (three 60' fields with synthetic turf infield, one 90' (?) field with dirt infield)
- BBQ (1)
- Benches (2)
- Bike rack (1)
- Bleachers
- Bull pen
- Concession stand
- Indoor batting cage (structure)
- Parking
- Paved pathways
- Picnic tables (2)
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Seasonal soccer and lacrosse fields



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- If the school district is willing to increase the recreational amenities on the site, the open area in the southeast corner of the site can accommodate additional program elements, such as: a half or full court basketball court, skate spot, bike skills area, P-patch, expansion of the playground, or expanded picnic area with BBQs and a shelter.
- Opportunity to upgrade the northwest baseball field (Field #4) by constructing covered dugouts and installing synthetic turf in the infield.
- Currently the only pedestrian access from the sidewalk/path along SE 78th Street to the site is through the parking lot. Consider installing a sidewalk connection around southwest corner of the parking lot.
- Small park signs could be installed at each entrance.
- Islander Middle School could use more bike parking, as bikes are spilling out onto the track.
- Cottonwoods are not an appropriate tree for this site. Replacement should be planted via a landscape plan.

Maintenance Considerations

- The Interlocal Agreement between the City and the Mercer Island School District is being renegotiated. The future operational responsibility of the site may be different than the historical arrangement.
- The playground is not ADA accessible due to a lip at the entry gate and unsuitable surfacing.
- The northwest baseball field (Field #4) spectator area is not ADA accessible.
- The foul poles on Field #1 should be integrated with the outfield fence, not behind it.
- One of the two aluminum bleachers at the synthetic field south of Islander Middle School is badly dented.



WILDWOOD PARK

2.84 acres

7400 86th Ave SE

Neighborhood Park

Amenities

- Bench (1)
- Book exchange box
- Dog waste bag dispenser
- Natural areas
- Open grass area
- Peace Pole
- Picnic table (1)
- Trails
- Trash receptacles (2)
- Off-leash dog area

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Amenity area could be more defined, with crushed rock surface in lieu of spotty grass.
- Opportunity for an ADA accessible soft surface perimeter path along 86th Ave SE and around the grass area connecting to the amenities.
- Consider an ADA trail connection from Island Crest Way to 86th Ave SE.
- Consider ADA access to picnic table or other parts of the park.
- Consider park sign on Island Crest Way frontage.
- Consider a fence along 86th Avenue SE for an off-leash dog area.

Maintenance Considerations

- Grass is spotty by picnic area.
- Evidence of moles digging holes in the grass near the picnic table.
- Short, 30" wide boardwalk is in good condition.
- Many off-leash dog walking/play/fetching observed (weekday morning).
- All amenities in good condition.
- Soft surface trails are relatively smooth except for a few locations with roots.
- Two trash receptacles, but no recycling.



CAYHILL OPEN SPACE

1.08 acres

5400 Mercer Way

Open Space

Amenities

- None

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- None.

Maintenance Considerations

- The site is steep and overgrown. Trash has been dumped into the ravine along the south edge of the site.
- Managed as open space.



CLISE PARK

1.47 acres

SE 40th & Island Crest Way

Open Space

Amenities

- Trail
- Wireless cellular facility in adjacent ROW

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- The site is centrally located and has high visibility from Island Crest Way and SE 40th Street. As an open space, more amenities may not be warranted. If the demand for more developed park spaces should grow, this site could be developed into a higher profile park.
- Potential for an art installation or earthwork.

Maintenance Considerations

- The park sign is at the intersection of Island Crest Way and SE 40th Street has lots of clutter around it. Consider moving the sign away from the intersection toward the SE 40th Street path junction.





ELLIS POND PARK

4.04 acres

90th Avenue SE

Open Space

Amenities

- Benches
- Boardwalk
- 'Don't feed ducks' signs
- Natural area/ certified wildlife habitat
- Park Sign
- Pond
- Trails
- Trash receptacles

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity for environmental interpretation signs about habitat and water treatment.
- Wayfinding trail signs could help identify location and directional information.

Maintenance Considerations

- Connection to boardwalk from path has barrier to ADA access. Trail needs more crushed rock surfacing to remove grade difference.
- Root intrusions occurring along trail.
- Boundary definition with adjacent residences may be an issue. Encroachment should be evaluated.



ENGSTROM OPEN SPACE

8.5 acres

E. Mercer Way

Open Space

Amenities

- Benches
- Bridge
- Map sign
- Restoration areas
- Trail network
- Trail signs
- Watercourse

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Trail network, which connects to Pioneer Park, could benefit from wayfinding signage system by providing locational and directional information to trail users.
- Interpretive signage about restoration efforts and the value of management of healthy forests could be added in key locations.

Maintenance Considerations

- Timber stairs, retaining walls, bridge, turnpike, and other trail structures require regular monitoring to repair settling, shifting, rotting wood, etc.



GALLAGHER HILL OPEN SPACE

11.29 acres

3701 SE Gallagher Hill Rd

Open Space

Amenities

- Bridges
- Pea Patch (unofficial)
- Park sign
- Trail
- Watercourse

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Explore the feasibility of developing a trail connection up the ravine to the top of SE Gallagher Hill Road or through the SE 36th Street ROW on the west side of the site.

Maintenance Considerations

- The trail crosses two small drainages. One crossing has a small culvert, the capacity of which has recently been exceeded, as the trail at this location has been slightly washed out.
- The two bridges are in good condition but have a slight lip where they meet grade.



HOLLERBACH OPEN SPACE

5.23 acres

Open Space

SE 45th St & 91st Ave SE

Amenities

- None

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Potential trail system has had scoping and geotechnical evaluation. Easement exists at SE 45th Street entrances.

Maintenance Considerations

- Managed as open space.



MERCERDALE HILLSIDE OPEN SPACE

18.59 acres

Open Space

Amenities

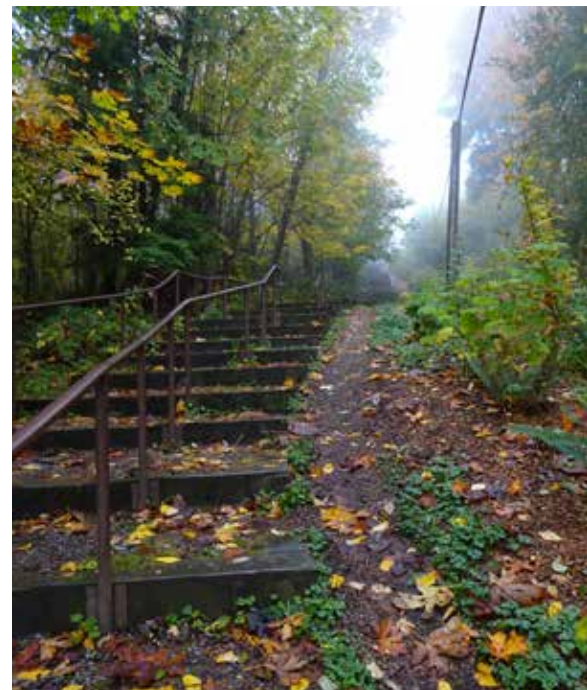
- Trail system
- Natural area
- Timber stairways
- Handrails
- Restoration areas
- Bike rack
- Benches
- Bollards
- Signs
- Certified wildlife habitat

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Trail network could benefit from wayfinding signage system by providing locational and directional information to trail users.

Maintenance Considerations

- Extensive sets of timber stairways require regular inspection and monitoring to ensure adequate tread stability. Some stair sections could be evaluated to be unnecessary where trail gradient does not require built steps. Removal of unnecessary stairways could help reduce burden of constant monitoring, repair and replacement. Some timber stairways should have crushed stone tread areas filled to compensate for settling.
- Managed as open space.



NORTH MERCERDALE HILLSIDE OPEN SPACE

5.11 acres

Open Space

7415 SE 27th St

Amenities

- Benches
- Bridge
- Handrails
- Timber stairways
- Trails
- Pond / watercourse



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to develop additional trails at the north end of the site.
- Consider installing additional benches.
- Only one of the four entrances to this site has a park sign. Park signs should be added to each entrance.
- Internal wayfinding signs would be beneficial.

Maintenance Considerations

- Many of the stairways need replacing due to extremely slippery treads, settling of interior tread fill.
- Many of the posts for stair handrails are split and/or rotting; handrails may not meet code.
- Vegetation is thick and has invasive plants in many locations.
- No dedicated parking apparent at this site.
- Trails are in good condition, but in some locations have excessive cross slope (e.g. 75th Ave SE trail intersection with SE 29th Street stairs).

PARKWOOD RIDGE OPEN SPACE

3.79 acres

Open Space

9165 Parkwood Ridge Rd

Amenities

- Trail
- Park signs at top and bottom



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- This open space could be part of a loop with SE 53rd Open Space through the use of on-street wayfinding system.
- The trail could use a bench or two for resting and enjoying the natural setting.

Maintenance Considerations

- The lower park sign is split horizontally and separated from the bottom two lag screws.
- The trail is well built and in excellent condition.
- Managed as open space.



PIONEER PARK

188.85 acres

Island Crest Way & SE 68th St

Open Space

Amenities

- Benches
- Dog waste bag dispensers
- Interpretive signs
- Kiosk
- Limited on-street parking
- Park signage with maps
- Picnic tables
- Port-a-potty
- Public art
- Restoration areas
- Trail network consists of gravel trails, natural surface trails, and one paved trail parallel to Island Crest Way
- Trash receptacles
- Wayfinding signs



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Trail network could benefit from additional wayfinding signage system by providing locational and directional information to trail users.
- Consider trail lighting on the paved trail (access for all).
- Signs within Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space maps provide some directional information, but numerous trail intersections are unmarked. Small metal map signs at some intersections are not intuitive since the “you are here” marker is the same screw top as the corner screws.
- Master Plan 2001 recommendations also included trail improvements, viewpoints, street crossings, interpretive signage, boundary marking and landscape enhancements.
- Laminated root rot (*Armillaria*) management plan needed.

Maintenance Considerations

- Aging interpretive signs should be scheduled for replacement.
- Some timber stairways require regular inspection and monitoring to ensure adequate tread stability. Some stair sections could be evaluated to be unnecessary where trail gradient does not require built steps. Removal of unnecessary stairways could help reduce burden of constant monitoring, repair and replacement.
- Address erosion around ravine bridge.
- Periodic, temporary fencing of restoration areas may be needed adjacent to restoration work to prevent damage by trail users.
- Conflicts between roots and trails create ongoing maintenance. Trail decommission/reroutes based on ongoing trail assessments.
- Periodic replacement of log furniture in kiosk area.
- Donation benches plan/policy. 2001 Master Plan recommended a standard bench type.
- Remove parking above (east of) curb on 84th.

SALEM WOODS OPEN SPACE

0.32 acres

6300 90th Ave SE

Open Space

Amenities

- None

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Potential trailhead to Pioneer Park/Engstrom with easements on adjacent property.

Maintenance Considerations

- Steep slope covered in ivy.



SE 47TH STREET OPEN SPACE

1.27 acres

4701 E Mercer Way

Open Space

Amenities

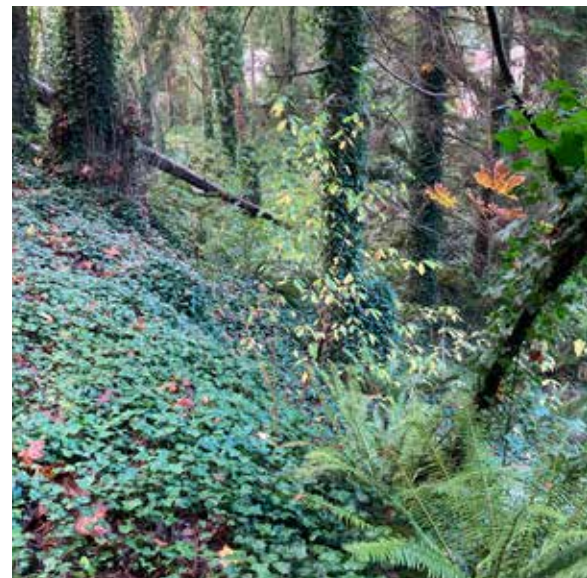
- None

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Potential trail connecting to 91st Ave SE identified in 2010 Bike-Ped Plan (Project C12).

Maintenance Considerations

- Managed as open space.



SE 50TH STREET OPEN SPACE

1.78 acres

Open Space

SE 50th Street and Island Crest Way

Amenities

- None

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- A trail connection from 88th Avenue SE at the north end of the side to Island Crest Way may be possible, but this ravine is steep and overgrown.

Maintenance Considerations

- A rogue trail appears to access the south end of this open space below the residence at 5030 88th Ave SE.
- Managed as open space.



SE 53RD STREET OPEN SPACE

24.01 acres

Open Space

9100 SE 53rd Pl

Amenities

- Trails
- Benches
- Gravel parking (on road shoulder)

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to install additional benches at scenic locations.
- Trail intersections would benefit from wayfinding signs.
- Create a protected walkway from the parking area at the bottom of SE 53rd Street to the trailhead on E Mercer Way.
- The trail could be part of a loop with Parkwood Ridge Open Space through the use of on-street wayfinding system.

Maintenance Considerations

- Existing stairs are in good condition.
- Existing bench is worn and spartan. Consider replacing with a more rustic timber bench.
- Managed as open space.





UPPER LUTHER BURBANK PARK

18.07 acres

Open Space

84th Ave SE & SE 33rd St

Amenities

- BMX Track
- Dog waste bag dispensers
- Staircase and timber steps
- Trail network
- Trash receptacle

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to create a loop trail by connecting the two dead-end trails above the creek and stormwater pond.
- Opportunity to reconnect the Upper Luther Ravine Trail in Upper Luther Burbank Park to Gallagher Hill Open Space through the Shorewood Apartments.
- Install a few benches at the BMX course and along the trail that parallels 84th Ave SE.
- Could use another park sign at the southern entrance and wayfinding signage with branded loops on the interior trails.
- The BMX course would benefit from edge definition and drainage improvements.

Maintenance Considerations

- The northern most dead-end trail is narrow and becomes overgrown near its terminus, making it ambiguous.
- The two dead-end trails present safety concerns.
- Most stairs are in good condition. A few stairs on the south dead-end trail are comprised of round timbers and have excessive riser heights. Transition these stairs to dimensional timbers consistent with the adjacent stairs.
- The 84th Avenue SE trail width and surface are excellent, but the other trail surfaces comprise compacted soil and could use gravel for traction.
- Managed as open space.



CALKINS LANDING

0.31 acres

Street End

SE 28th St & 60th Ave SE

Amenities

- Benches
- Paved parking (3, but no ADA spaces)
- Stair access to shoreline
- Picnic table (ADA)
- Open grass area
- Restored watercourse and beach area

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Install a bike rack near the west end of the parking lot.
- This is one of the few parks with excellent ADA accommodation, however it lacks ADA parking spaces. Consider converting one parking space in the parking lot into an ADA space. Nearby on-street parking appears adequate.

Maintenance Considerations

- Park looks great.



FOREST LANDING

0.03 acres

Street End

SE 43rd St & Forest Ave SE

Amenities

- Bench

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Fixed concrete pump station vaults and poor water access preclude additional design opportunities.

Maintenance Considerations

- The site could be signed.



FRANKLIN LANDING

0.03 acres

78th Ave SE & SE 42nd St

Street End

Amenities

- Bench
- Gravel beach
- Informal parking at street end (2 spaces)
- Moveable armchairs
- Open grass area
- Park sign
- Trash receptacle
- Water Trail trailhead

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- ADA access is possible here, though no ADA parking space.

Maintenance Considerations

- Nice street end with great stone steps to small gravel beach.
- Gravel bench pad is becoming overgrown with grass.



FRUITLAND LANDING

0.15 acres

97th Ave SE & SE 34th St

Street End

Amenities

- Bench
- Picnic table (not ADA)
- Park sign
- Small grass area
- Water trailhead

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- This site has a gentle grade down to the water's edge, so can easily be made ADA accessible, although there is no dedicated parking, only on-street parking nearby.
- This site is getting totally reconstructed with a new pump station LS11. Any considered future improvements should be deferred until pump station is completed.

Maintenance Considerations

- Nice landing with relatively open view north.
- The park sign is slightly weathered.



GARFIELD LANDING

0.34 acres

Street End

SE 30th St & 60th Ave SE

Amenities

- Bench
- Water Trail trailhead
- Open grass area



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Consider installing a bike rack near the edge of the asphalt drive aisle.
- Opportunity to install one or two new benches that provide better views of the water.
- Vegetation along the bank could be cleared to provide better access to the water.
- Garfield Landing is a water trailhead, so consider park signage that is oriented to the water.

Maintenance Considerations

- The bench is weathered, worn and outdated.
- The bank is overgrown with shrubs and constrains access to the beach and water. These shrubs could be removed to some extent to provide better access.
- A “doggydock” (portable mat to create easy dog access to the water) has been placed on the beach and may be a user-placed amenity.
- This site has no parking.
- White poplars are weak wooded, need to be managed for replacement with more reliably sturdy native canopy trees species.

LINCOLN LANDING

0.23 acres

Street End

76th Ave SE & SE 22nd St

Amenities

- Picnic tables (2, none ADA)
- Small grass area
- Concrete steps leading to gravel beach
- Watercourse
- Overhead shoebox light (1)



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- This site has a gentle grade down to the water’s edge, so can easily be made ADA accessible, although there is no dedicated parking, only on-street parking nearby.
- Improvements to the drainage that flows along the west side of this site (like Calkins Landing) are planned through King County Flood Control funding

Maintenance Considerations

- No park sign installed.
- The drainage that flows along the west side of this site is overgrown and contains trash that will be totally redone.
- Watercourse will be reconfigured to reduce the erosion and improve habitat.

MILLER LANDING

0.30 acres

Forest Ave SE & SE 48th St

Street End



Amenities

- Wooden steps and trail to shore

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to install a sign, improve the path at the bottom of the staircase, and install a bench at the concrete utility vault.
- Design the access across the driveway to feel more inviting.

Maintenance Considerations

- Lower portion of site at water is overgrown with ivy. The “cable crossing” sign adds character to the site but is faded and overgrown with ivy.

PROCTOR LANDING

0.30 acres

SE 32nd St & 60th Ave SE

Street End



Amenities

- Paved parking (12, no ADA)
- Dock
- Small grass area
- Water trailhead

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- One or two benches could be added near the beach.
- If this site is mainly used for “cartop boat launching,” consider replacing the elevated dock with a low floating dock to accommodate watercraft with low freeboards.
- Proctor Landing is a water trail trailhead, so consider park signage that is oriented to the water.
- Install a bike rack at the west end of the parking lot.

Maintenance Considerations

- The south end of the parking area is illuminated by a single Cobra head light.
- The grass near the beach is well worn, likely due to watercraft launching activity.

ROANOKE LANDING

0.18 acres

West Mercer Way & Roanoke Way

Street End



Amenities

- Bench
- Interpretive sign

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- The old concrete roadway extending all the way to the concrete breakwater could be removed to create a landscaped park/street end containing additional amenities, such as picnic tables. It may also be possible to provide a couple of parking spaces within the street end. A natural drainage feature running the length of site could be integrated in the design and possibly qualify for stormwater LID funding.
- This site has a gentle grade down to the breakwater so can easily be made ADA accessible, although there is no dedicated parking, only on-street parking nearby.
- The water's edge comprises a 3-4' high concrete wall (former ferry landing) with no water access or formal parking. The site offers expansive water views, has historic significance, and could accommodate additional amenities.

Maintenance Considerations

- Although an interpretive sign exists, there is no park sign.

72ND AVE SE LANDING

0.17 acres

1605 72nd Ave SE

Street End



Amenities

- None

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Minimal parking.
- Opportunity to install a bench or two.
- Install a sign to identify public access (feels private).

Maintenance Considerations

- No amenities, but very nice grass open space to gravel beach.
- Great trees and nice landscaping!
- Good view to the north.
- ADA accessibility is prohibitive.

74TH AVE SE STREET END

0.05 acres

Street End

Amenities

- No amenities but intimate grass area at small gravel beach.

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to install a bench.
- Sign to identify public access (feels very private).
- No parking.
- No true path.
- Not ADA accessible.

Maintenance Considerations

- None noted.



SE 56TH STREET LANDING

0.21 acres

Street End

5495 W Mercer Way

Amenities

- Bench
- Nice trees!

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Relatively open and expansive site.
- Install sign at the end of Brook Bay Road to identify public access (feels private).
- Could easily be made ADA accessible.
- Develop and sign the steep, primitive trail connection up to 80th Avenue SE.
- This is a relatively generous site with a concrete sewer vault at the water and a small fenced enclosure.
- Limited parking along Brook Bay Road.

Maintenance Considerations

- Replace existing bench.



SE 72ND STREET LANDING

0.12 acres

9603 SE 72nd Place

Street End

Amenities

- None

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- No design opportunities. The site is comprised entirely of the Metro pump station.

Maintenance Considerations

- This site is supposed to provide shoreline access via stairs on the south side. Signage installed by King County appears to them off-limits. Consider new approach.



SOUTH POINT LANDING

0.03 acres

8790 85th Ave SE

Street End

Amenities

- Tether Ball (rogue)

Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- Opportunity to install a bench or two.
- Install park signs.
- No parking.
- Not ADA accessible.
- The short trail from the street down to the vault could be improved by adding steps.

Maintenance Considerations

- Sewer vault comprises the lower portion of the site.
- The site has great south aspect and expansive views of Lake Washington to the south, but beach access is rocky.
- Existing bench is worn and spartan. Consider replacing with a more rustic timber bench.
- Adjacent property is using part of the public right of way at the site for parking.
- Existing plants could be supplemented with low-maintenance native plants.



77TH AVE SE LANDING

0.29 acres

7670 SE 22nd St

Street End

Amenities

- Arbor with wisteria
- Bench
- Open grass area
- Park sign
- Trash receptacle
- Water trailhead



Capital Improvement & Planning Opportunities

- This site has a moderate grade down to the concrete breakwater so could possibly be made ADA accessible, although there is no dedicated parking, only on-street parking nearby.
- No water access due to low concrete breakwater.

Maintenance Considerations

- The primitive timber steps are worn and rotting in places. The grade to the water is moderate and could be turned into a gravel path.

CITY OF MERCER ISLAND
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT