

Luther Burbank Community Visioning Parameters, Nov. 2004

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. The City Council will determine whether or not to move ahead with additional planning, which will most likely be a new master plan for Luther Burbank Park at their annual planning retreat in early April 2005. The master plan will be developed over approximately six months, and will include numerous opportunities for community involvement.

To set the stage for the community effort, the City Council has established the following planning parameters. These parameters will remain as firm guidelines throughout the planning process.

1) New housing will not be considered for the entire park.

Several years ago there was a proposal considered to construct new housing units in the southern portion of the park. The City Council rejected the idea at that time, and will continue to reinforce that decision; housing will not be considered in either the north or south portions of the park.

2) The city is exploring opportunities for revenue generation.

Although Mercer Island residents approved a bond levy in 2003 to fund the park for the next six years, longer-term funding for Luther Burbank remains in question. The City Council wants to explore possible opportunities for revenue generation at the park. The park will remain under city ownership, but public-private partnerships could be useful in generating park funding.

3) New recreational facilities will be considered, but Luther Burbank will remain a multi-use area, and will not be developed for a single exclusive use.

The park will remain a place that accommodates a range of both active and passive recreational opportunities. While a sports field may ultimately become a part of the master plan, for example, the City Council does not envision a sportsfield complex at Luther Burbank. The park will be developed in a way that allows users of all ages and inclinations to enjoy the park.

4) The new plan will not be “pie in the sky”.

This community planning effort will undoubtedly generate a number of great ideas, and these will eventually be melded into a cohesive master plan. However, the City Council is committed to making sure that the final plan is both *reasonable* and *feasible*. Funding mechanisms must be fully identified before any new development in the park will be allowed.

5) The city will strive for a balance of interests at the park.

A range of ideas will be considered during community visioning and master plan efforts. Decisions about final actions will not be decided by “vote.” Rather, ideas will be implemented based on their ability to represent a balance at the park.

6) Significant new development will be concentrated in the central campus area.

During this planning process, ideas will be generated about new activities – and potentially new buildings – at the park. The City Council will consider all of these ideas, but any significant new development will be concentrated only in the existing central campus area.

Community Design Guidelines

13) Ensure that support facilities are adequate.

If new activities are added at the park, supporting facilities, including parking, utilities and restrooms must be adequately sized to handle the number of anticipated park users.

Create Stronger Connections

14) Create a greater ease of connection with Upper Luther Burbank.

Like the northern area of the park, this upper area is a place of peaceful contemplation. Although the freeway lid provides a strongly-constructed path between the two, this area of the park is not well-connected to the lower area. New signage, pathways, or other connection opportunities should be explored.

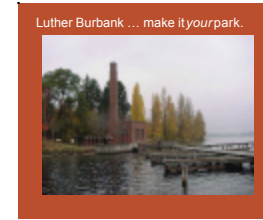


15) Create a greater ease of connection with the new community center.

The new community center will be a place of high activity and will serve as a gathering spot for the Island's residents. Stronger connections between the community center and Luther Burbank would enable Island residents to enjoy the contemplative space of the park either before or after a scheduled event at the center. New signage and pathways should be considered in order to create a more seamless connection.

How these guidelines were developed.

The Mercer Island community created these design guidelines over a three-month period from November 2004 - January 2005. The process included three public workshops, as well as numerous written and emailed responses. The guidelines were presented to the Mercer Island City Council on February 7, 2005. To learn more about the process and the project visit the website at: <http://www.ci.mercer-island.wa.us>.



Luther Burbank Park Community Design Guidelines February 2005



Vision Overview

Luther Burbank Park is a treasured resource for the Mercer Island community. It offers a place of respite and serenity. Especially as the population density of the Island increases, Luther Burbank will continue to be a vital, open space resource that provides residents with access to the Lake Washington waterfront, as well as recreational opportunities for all ages.

It is important to the residents of Mercer Island that the basic character of the existing park remain as it is. At the same time, they recognize that some of the park's facilities could be revitalized and some of the more natural areas can be enhanced and improved.

In general, this vision divides the park into zones that reflect different natural and programmed qualities. Upper Luther Burbank can become a more integrated part of the park experience with trails and environmental education opportunities, while bringing little change to the area. The northern and southern ends of the park should remain in a character similar to their current state, areas of quiet contemplation, with some program elements and activities interspersed. Walking paths, stands of trees, and wetlands viewing are a part of this peaceful experience. Higher intensity activities are located in the central area of the park, including the playground, small-craft boating, and the amphitheatre.

While maintaining the current character of the park, these design guidelines provide for a set of activities that will encourage users of all ages to enjoy this treasured facility that is owned by *all* who call Mercer Island their home. The guidelines provide a framework for a sustainable Luther Burbank Legacy – moving far beyond the next few years and creating a vision for many future generations of park users.

Community Design Guidelines

Preserve and Protect

1) Preserve the existing serenity of the park.

Luther Burbank is a treasured respite for a changing community. Open spaces, natural areas, and the experience of peaceful contemplation must be preserved.



2) Protect and enhance the shoreline experience.

The shoreline is steadily eroding and must be protected and enhanced. Especially in the northern portion of the park, the paths along the shoreline are ill-defined and should be rehabilitated.

3) Protect and enhance wetland areas.

There are three wetland areas within the park, and all must be preserved. All three can become more integrated into the park experience. While visitors should be allowed to view nature at work in these wetland areas, the experience should not be so intrusive that it diminishes the habitat value for wildlife.

4) Preserve existing historical and cultural resources.

The central campus building is an important slice of history for Mercer Island. It, as well as all other resources of historical or cultural significance, should be preserved and highlighted.

Revitalize Existing Features

5) Rehabilitate the swimming beach.

The swimming beach is a popular summer activity, but has suffered from wear and tear over the years. New sand, a redefined swimming area, and other amenities should be pursued.



6) Expand court usage.

The tennis courts can currently be used only during dry weather months. The construction of a cover for these courts -- whether it be in place permanently or seasonally -- should be considered. Likewise, it may be possible to add one or two basketball courts in this area, and the feasibility of this idea should be explored.

7) Maintain and improve the existing meadow.

One meadow in the park currently offers a space for informal games, special events, and festivals. The turf, grading, and slope of this meadow should be reviewed for its suitability. An improved turf and drainage system should be explored in order to make this area as useful as possible for a wide range of programmed and informal activities.

8) Provide for an off-leash dog area.

The current area should be reviewed in terms of its size and sufficiency for users. Dogs are currently off leash throughout the park; this practice should be reviewed to determine if it is appropriate.

Explore New Opportunities

A variety of new opportunities in the park will be explored. Extensive analysis will take place regarding the feasibility of these options. It is likely that some of these ideas, but not all of them, will be put into place.

9) Revitalize the dock area.

Although it provides an easy access to Lake Washington, this area of the park is underused. Small-craft boating activities should be encouraged here, for example a place to put in and/or rent kayaks and canoes. A sailboat rental/instruction facility could be considered. Rowing facilities might be another possibility. Temporary moorage for motorized boats that access the area only from the water might also be explored.

10) Expand and enhance activities for children.

It is critical to not only view the park through the eyes of adult participants, but to also think about activities for children and youth. The existing playground should be reviewed for the fun it provides for children of all ages. New playground equipment and other activities should be explored, including a water spray park, a climbing wall, and other ideas.



11) Consider new picnic facilities.

Picnic tables in appropriate areas of the park could encourage greater use by families. This possibility should be explored.

12) Explore opportunities for new seasonal food vendors and special events.

During the summer the central campus area could be enlivened by temporary food vendors, a farmers' market, craft shows, and other activities. These uses would enhance and complement the plays and other cultural events that already take place at the park. Any proposed commercial enterprises (food and craft vendors, boat rentals) must pass a "burden of proof" – a) they are a licensed, viable operation; b) they will readily blend with both the character and the other activities in the park – before they will be permitted to operate in Luther Burbank.