



FAQS

DEANE'S CHILDREN'S PARK SITE PLAN

1. What is the purpose of the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan?

The Deane's Children's Park Site Plan is a long-range planning document that establishes a clear vision and roadmap for how the park can be improved and enhanced over time. These types of plans typically guide improvements over a 10 to 20-year horizon, allowing the City to take a thoughtful, cohesive approach rather than making piecemeal decisions. Elements included in the Site Plan help define future capital reinvestment needs and will be programmed within the City's Capital Improvement Program over time.

The Site Plan also reflects direction from the City Council to take a more comprehensive approach to this project. While originally scoped as a playground replacement, staff identified the need to broaden the effort to address aging infrastructure, accessibility barriers, and overall site functionality - including play areas, the Bike Skills area, restrooms, picnic shelter, and circulation throughout the park. This ensures the park is modernized to meet universal play standards and provide a more cohesive and accessible experience (see [AB 6641](#)).

A key benefit of having a Site Plan is that it allows improvements to be implemented in phases, aligned with available funding, and supported by grants and partnerships over time. The plan will include a phasing strategy, preliminary cost estimates, and a funding approach to guide implementation. This approach has been successfully used in Mercer Island - for example, the Luther Burbank Park Master Plan has guided phased investments over many years, resulting in a cohesive, well-integrated park that is highly valued by the community.

The Site Plan for Deane's serves a similar purpose by:

- Advancing inclusive design principles to create a park experience that is welcoming and usable for people of all ages and abilities
- Replacing aging infrastructure, including outdated playground equipment and amenities
- Improving accessibility by removing barriers and enhancing connectivity throughout the park
- Establishing a cohesive vision that integrates play areas, pathways, gathering spaces, and natural features
- Reflecting extensive community input gathered through the planning process
- Guiding phased implementation over time as funding becomes available

Rather than representing a single project, the Site Plan provides a flexible, long-term framework to ensure future improvements are coordinated, efficient, and aligned with community priorities.

2. What was included for Deane's Children's Park in the PROS Plan Capital Project List, and why has it changed?

The 2022 PROS Plan identified \$281,000 for improvements at Deane's Children's Park, focused on replacing the aging castle, swings, and climbing rock playground structures and providing basic ADA access from parking to the play area. This scope was based on a narrow set of improvements and did not account for the broader range of park amenities that are also nearing the end of their useful lives. As a result, it reflected a limited, lifecycle replacement effort rather than a comprehensive park redesign.

Since then, the City's approach has evolved based on a stronger understanding of accessibility needs and requirements. The PROS Plan itself acknowledges that many parks have ADA barriers and that a more comprehensive ADA Transition Plan would be needed to address them. It also reflects that when park improvements are made, they must meet broader ADA standards, which extend beyond a single feature to include routes, amenities, and overall usability. Given the unique topography of the island and locations of other park playgrounds, Deane's Children's Park provides a unique opportunity to address a larger number of ADA barriers compared to other park facilities.

In response, the Site Plan adopts a more integrated approach - moving beyond isolated equipment replacement to deliver connected, park-wide accessibility, reflect extensive community input, and define a cohesive, phased vision for the park's evolution. This ensures improvements are made strategically and efficiently, rather than in a piecemeal way.

In short, the PROS Plan assumed a smaller, targeted replacement project, while the Site Plan reflects a more comprehensive approach driven by ADA requirements, community priorities, and the need to plan the park as a whole.

3. How was the Site Plan developed and what are the next steps?

The Site Plan reflects a thoughtful, multi-step process that combines community input, expert design, and public review.

Over the course of more than a year, the City conducted comprehensive outreach through events, surveys, and school engagement to understand community priorities. A summary of these efforts is included in [Question 5](#). The City also used a Request of Qualification (RFQ) process and selected Berger Partnership and inclusive design expert Ingrid Kanics to help shape the design.

The Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC) completed its review and recommended the Site Plan to City Council, with a review scheduled for April 7, 2026.

At this stage, the Site Plan serves as a long-term roadmap. The City Council will determine phasing and funding, and each phase will undergo further design, review, and approval before construction begins.

4. Is the City Council approving construction of the park at the April 7 meeting?

No. The City Council is being asked to review and consider adoption of the Site Plan as a long-term vision.

If adopted, improvements would occur over time in phases and will be included in the City's Capital Improvement Plan. Each phase would include additional design work, funding decisions, and City Council approval before construction moves forward.

5. How was the community involved, and what impact did that input have?

Community engagement was a central part of developing the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan. Between April and September of 2025, the City conducted a robust outreach effort to ensure the plan reflects the ideas and priorities of the Mercer Island community. Participation included:

- Hosting project booths at two community events (Leap for Green and Mercer Island Preschool Association Circus) to introduce the project and share survey information
- Outreach to more than 1,200 students across 54 K–5 classes at the four island elementary schools, where students voted on preferred play equipment and park themes
- Collecting nearly 160 "Design Your Own Park" submissions from students, offering creative insight into how children envision the park
- Hosting an open house at Island Park Elementary, attended by approximately 20 community members
- Conducting two online surveys with a total of 174 responses:
 - Survey #1 (April 21 – May 23, 2025): 102 responses
 - Survey #2 (July 12 – August 12, 2025): 72 responses
- Hosting project booths at four community events (Summer Celebration, Mostly Music in the Park, Pride in the Park, and National Night Out), engaging more than 500 attendees to gather input and feedback on design concepts and equipment aesthetic

Community input consistently emphasized the importance of inclusive and accessible play for all ages and abilities, along with a strong desire for nature-based experiences, a mix of active and quiet spaces, and preservation of the park's unique character. This feedback directly shaped the Site Plan by prioritizing inclusive design, accessible pathways, interconnected play zones, and a range of amenities that support diverse users and play styles. The result is a

plan that balances enhanced play opportunities with the park's natural setting—reflecting what we heard from children, families, and community members - and providing a thoughtful, inclusive vision for the park's future.

In addition to community events, this project was discussed at the following City Council, Arts Council, and Parks & Recreation Commission meetings:

- City Council
 - [March 18, 2025](#): City Council authorized staff to develop a Site Plan and approved the community engagement plan
- Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC)
 - [September 4, 2025](#): park tour; PRC recommended refining *Woodsy Wonders* into preferred plan.
 - [November 6, 2025](#): Refined preferred plan presented to PRC, highlighting inclusive design, play features, parking improvements, and phasing. PRC affirmed plan direction.
 - [February 5, 2026](#): Site Plan presented to PRC; PRC voted to recommend the Site Plan, as presented, to City Council for adoption and directed the Chair and Vice Chair to develop a hand-off memo.
 - [March 5, 2026](#): Hand-off memo finalized and approved.
- Arts Council
 - [October 15, 2025](#): Arts Council review; supported Treehouse Adventure theme and recommended student engagement for art elements.

6. Why develop a full Site Plan instead of just replacing the playground?

Replacing the existing playground equipment alone would not address broader challenges such as layout, accessibility, limited play variety, and aging park amenities.

A Site Plan allows improvements to be considered holistically - ensuring that play areas, pathways, amenities, and accessibility are coordinated within a clear, long-term vision rather than addressed piecemeal. This cohesive approach supports more integrated play experiences, improves sightlines and connectivity for caregivers, and creates a safer, more intuitive park layout.

Most importantly, it creates a park where children and caregivers of all abilities can play, connect, and share experiences together - setting a foundation for more inclusive improvements across the park system over time.

7. Why is accessibility a primary focus of this project?

Accessibility is a key priority identified in the City's adopted [2022 Parks, Recreation & Open Space \(PROS\) Plan](#), which calls for reducing barriers and creating a more inclusive park

system for people of all ages and abilities. Community input reinforced this need, highlighting that many existing playgrounds do not fully support inclusive play experiences.

Focusing on accessibility at Deane's Children's Park helps advance these goals by creating a space where children and caregivers of all abilities can play, connect, and share experiences together - setting a foundation for more inclusive improvements across the park system.

8. Why was Deane's Children's Park selected for accessibility improvements instead of another park?

While the City is committed to improving accessibility across the entire park system, not all parks can be enhanced to the same level due to site constraints such as steep terrain, limited space, or lack of supporting amenities, such as parking.

Deane's Children's Park was identified as a priority because it is particularly well-suited for inclusive play improvements. Its relatively flat layout, central location, and existing amenities - such as restrooms, a picnic shelter, and parking—provide a strong foundation for creating a more accessible and connected park experience.

These conditions also make it a more cost-effective location to implement accessibility improvements compared to parks with steeper slopes or more complex site constraints that would require significantly greater construction effort to achieve similar outcomes. As a result, the City can maximize its investment at this site - delivering a more fully accessible park experience while also creating a model for how accessibility can be thoughtfully integrated into other parks over time.

9. Why are impervious surfaces increasing in the Site Plan?

The current playground area is characterized by numerous natural and informal trails that limit accessibility across the site. An accessible play environment requires stable, durable surfaces.

- The park is 3.04 acres (132,400 SF)
- The impacted project area remains the same at 62,300 SF under both existing and proposed conditions
- The woodland area also remains at 70,100 SF, with no net loss of natural space, and will include restoration planting in the understory as well as targeted removal of invasive species to support ecological health
- Impervious surface increases from about 6,200 SF today to ~21,000 SF proposed (about 16% of the park)
- Most of this (~18,700 SF) is non-pollution generating and is designed to support accessibility and safety (accessible paths and playground safety surfacing)

Impervious surfaces in the plan include portions of pathways, play safety surfacing, and improvements to amenities such as the picnic shelter, restrooms, and parking area. These

elements are necessary to provide safe, stable, and ADA-compliant access for people of all abilities.

These improvements are consistent with the City's adopted Parks Zone code, which allows for recreational facilities, trails, parking, and park amenities such as restrooms and picnic shelters. The code also regulates impervious surfaces but provides specific allowances and exemptions for park-related improvements.

Under the Parks Zone regulations ([Ordinance 25C-16](#)), impervious surfaces are permitted when included in an adopted planning document - such as this Site Plan - and several elements included in the plan are explicitly exempt from impervious surface limitations. These include public trails, ADA accessibility improvements, and required surfaces for playground equipment.

A key feature is the accessible pathway through the park, which connects the parking lot to Island Park Elementary. This provides a safe, direct route that avoids travel along Island Crest Way and ensures all visitors can move through the park and share in the same inclusive play experience and woodland setting.

While some increase in impervious surface is necessary to support accessibility and connectivity, the design intentionally limits and strategically locates these areas to balance access with preservation of the park's natural character. Pour-in-place surfacing is used selectively to provide access to play equipment and transfer points for individuals using mobility devices. In other areas, pervious materials - such as engineered wood fiber - are used beneath play structures to reduce overall impervious coverage while still meeting safety standards.

Overall, the proposed improvements align with the Parks Zone regulations by supporting recreation, accessibility, and safe use of the park, while ensuring that impervious surfaces are limited, intentional, and consistent with adopted City standards.

10. Will the Site Plan impact the park's natural woodland character?

Preserving the park's natural character has been a top priority throughout the project.

- The overall footprint of the developed area does not change
- The woodland area remains the same—there is no net loss of natural space
- Improvements are carefully placed within the existing footprint to minimize impacts
- Trails and features are designed to reduce disturbance and maintain the forested setting

This plan reflects the community's priorities by preserving the park's woodland character while enhancing accessibility - demonstrating that both goals can be achieved together. The park will remain a wooded, natural space while becoming more accessible for all users. City staff remain confident and committed to achieving both at Deane's Children's Park.

11. Will the Site Plan change the classification of this park to a “Regional Park”?

No. The Site Plan does not change the park's classification.

Chapter 5 of the 2022 Parks Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan provides a list of park classifications, which defines sites' function and expected level of service within the system. These classifications help guide how the parks are planned and used but are not changed through individual site planning efforts.

The Deane's Children's Park Site Plan focuses on improving the existing park - updating aging infrastructure, enhancing accessibility, and expanding play opportunities - while maintaining its role within the broader park system. The planning effort was initiated to address site-specific needs such as accessibility, aging equipment, and overall park layout, not to redefine the park's classification.

While the Site Plan may enhance the park's features and usability, it does not change its classification. Any change to park classification would require a broader policy decision and update to the PROS Plan, not a site-specific plan.

In short, the Site Plan improves how the park functions—it does not change what the park is within the City's park system.

12. How many trees in the park could be removed?

The Site Plan is currently at a conceptual level and does not identify specific trees for removal. Minimizing impacts and preserving the park's forested character has been a priority throughout the process.

Tree impacts will be limited and targeted, primarily related to accessibility improvements, safety, and necessary infrastructure. Specific trees will be identified during the 30% design for each project phase, with evaluations guided by a professional arborist and based on a site-specific analysis.

Any tree removal and replacement must comply with the City's tree ordinance as part of the permitting process. The overall goal is to balance improvements with preservation - enhancing accessibility while maintaining the natural setting that defines Deane's Children's Park.

Each phase will also include coordination with the City's Natural Resources team to develop restoration plans for trees and native understory plantings. Project improvements will provide opportunities to remove invasive species, such as ivy, to prevent overgrowth on trees and support the establishment of healthy understory vegetation.

13. What if I don't support the proposed play equipment in the Site Plan?

The proposed play equipment reflects a balanced, community-informed approach shaped heavily by input from children and designed to create a fun, inclusive, and engaging play environment for all ages and abilities. While individual preferences may vary, the plan is intended to serve a wide range of users - especially children, who are the primary audience for this park.

Throughout the engagement process, the City heard directly from more than 1,200 elementary school students, along with families and community members, about the types of play experiences they value. That input played a major role in shaping how the play equipment was selected and organized within the park.

- The current park includes eight pieces of play equipment, four of which primarily serve the 5–12+ age range
- The Site Plan expands this to 32 pieces of play equipment, distributed throughout the park, to provide a broader range of play opportunities
- The equipment is intentionally designed to support age progression, with increasing levels of challenge and complexity as children grow
- The plan is organized into three types of play zones:
 - 2–5 focus areas (Critter Corner and Discovery Path) with low-lying, developmentally appropriate equipment that supports early strength, balance, and coordination
 - 5–12 focus areas with more challenging play opportunities
 - Blended 2–12+ areas that allow children of different ages to play together
- Overall distribution on play features include:
 - 62%(18 of 29) serving a broad age range (2–12+, including 5–12)
 - 38% (11 of 29) focused on ages 2–5

As children move through the park, play opportunities evolve - from introductory elements to more complex features in the Central Play Zone, supporting balancing, sliding, climbing, spinning, sensory, and social play for a wide range of ages and abilities. Importantly, age labels on equipment do not fully reflect how children use the space, as many elements are intentionally designed for overlapping use, sibling play, and shared experiences.

This approach reflects consistent community feedback supporting:

- Play opportunities for both younger and older children
- Blended, multi-generational play rather than strict separation by age
- Clear lines of sight for caregivers

The Site Plan also incorporates inclusive design principles, ensuring play opportunities support a wide range of physical, sensory, and social experiences for children of all abilities.

14. Why does the Site Plan include a large climbing tower?

The large climbing tower is a key feature of the Site Plan and reflects both community input and PRC direction. It was selected as a signature play element for the 5–12+ play zone based on its ability to provide challenge, creativity, and a unique experience within the park.

Why is it included:

- Selected through PRC review: The PRC was presented with two options for a signature play feature for the 5-12 play zone and ultimately preferred the tower. The proposed tower is approximately 30 feet tall, with a slide starting at about 17 feet
- Reflects community preferences: During voting exercises across the four community events, the tower-style structure closely aligned with one of the top preferred equipment aesthetics
- Strong interest from children: Feedback from the engagement process—including input from more than 1,200 elementary school students—showed that children were excited about taller, more adventurous play elements, and the tower was a favorite
- Provides age-appropriate challenge: The tower helps meet the needs of older children (5–12+), offering a level of challenge that is currently limited in the park
- Creates a unique experience: The tower allows children to experience the park's woodland setting from a different vantage point, reinforcing the nature-based design theme
- Serves as a landmark feature: Its forest-inspired design also helps create a sense of place and identity within the park
- Reflects the park's history: The tower also pays tribute to the park's past Adventure Playground program - a grant-funded initiative where children constructed forts and elevated structures using natural and loose materials - carrying forward a spirit of creativity, exploration, and imaginative play

Part of a balanced play environment:

- The tower is just one element within a broader system of play that includes accessible, lower-height, and sensory-focused features for younger children and users of all abilities
- The plan includes multiple play zones to support a wide range of ages and play styles

Design will continue to be refined:

- Play equipment selection and details will continue to be refined during the 30% design stage for each phase of improvements

The tower was selected because it responds to strong community interest- especially from children - and adds a unique, challenging, and memorable play experience, while still being part of a diverse and inclusive park design.

15. Why include an accessible pathway through the park instead of using the sidewalk along Island Crest Way?

The internal pathway provides a safe and direct connection within the park, allowing people to move between key areas without needing to travel along the street.

While the sidewalk along Island Crest Way is designed as a multimodal transportation route that accommodates pedestrians and bicycles, it is not intended to support the way young children and families move through a park environment. The internal pathway is designed specifically for park use, creating a more comfortable, intuitive, and age-appropriate experience for children - particularly those moving between play areas.

It supports a more comfortable, accessible experience and helps ensure that all visitors can navigate the park in a way that is consistent with its design and setting.

16. Will there be opportunities to refine the design?

Yes. The Site Plan establishes an overall vision, but details will continue to be refined as the project moves forward.

Each phase will include additional design development, technical review, and standard permitting processes before construction occurs.

17. Why is the park designed for a wide range of ages?

The park serves the broader community, not just nearby schools.

The design reflects input supporting play for multiple age groups, shared family experiences, and a park that functions as a community destination.

It is also intentionally designed to complement - not replicate - the play equipment at Island Park Elementary School. The goal is to provide a diverse range of play opportunities and experiences that expand what is available in the immediate area.

18. Why include designed play features instead of only natural elements?

The plan incorporates play structures made from natural materials, selected to complement the park's natural setting. It includes both designed and nature-based elements to provide a balanced, inclusive play environment. Design features help ensure accessibility, safety, and a wider range of play experiences for children of all ages and abilities.

Natural elements remain an important part of the park and are incorporated where appropriate. However, relying solely on natural play features can present challenges related

to durability, maintenance, and long-term usability. In addition, heavily shaded, forested environments can limit the effectiveness and longevity of certain natural materials.

By combining designed play equipment with nature-based elements, the plan creates a more resilient and sustainable play environment - one that supports accessibility, provides diverse play opportunities, and responds to the park's woodland setting.

19. How much will the project cost?

The Site Plan includes preliminary cost estimates to guide future investment decisions. The phased approach allows improvements to be implemented incrementally, providing flexibility to align with available funding, partnerships, and grant opportunities over time.

Four phases have been identified to implement the Site Plan. The phasing approach is driven by constructability and site logistics, with initial phases focused on areas furthest from the anticipated staging and construction access point (the parking lot). This sequencing minimizes conflicts and is also intended to maintain a no-net loss of park amenities between phases. This approach provides flexibility to advance elements from later phases or implement individual features as funding becomes available, without compromising previously completed improvements.

A summary of preliminary construction costs is provided below. These estimates include escalation, design contingency, and contractor mark-ups. Soft costs are not included, as they may vary by phase and depend on whether phases are combined. Soft costs are generally anticipated to account for 25% of construction costs.

- Phase 1: \$2.2M
 - 5-12+ play zone, central pathway construction, ADA parking upgrades, park fencing, and identification of a path connection to the Island Crest Park parking lot.
- Phase 2: \$3.81M
 - Central play zone, picnic shelter, utility infrastructure, central pathway improvements, and parking lot improvements
- Phase 3: \$1.16M
 - 2 – 5 play area (critter corner) and discovery path, new restroom, and secondary entry to Bike Skills Area
- Phase 4: \$100k allowance
 - *Kenton's Dragon* accessibility improvements

Total: \$7,270,000 (not including extra opportunities)

Extra Opportunities: \$650k

- Play components along trails, a play structure within the glen, and natural features like boulders and logs along accessible and adaptive routes.

- These components may be implemented independently (such as through donations and grants) or integrated into construction phases

20. Why is the estimated cost for this park so high?

The estimated cost reflects current construction pricing and the long-term nature of the Site Plan. It is important to remember that this is not a single near-term construction project, but a long-range plan that identifies potential improvements that could be implemented in phases over time.

Construction costs have risen significantly in recent years due to inflation, supply chain disruptions, tariffs, and uncertainty in construction markets, contributing to significant increases in materials and labor costs. Like many public projects, park improvements are more expensive today than they were just a few years ago, and those rising costs are reflected in current planning-level estimates.

As a public agency, the City is also required to follow state procurement laws ([RCW 39.04.010](#)), which require a competitive bidding process that awards the construction work to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder. This ensures fairness and transparency but limits the ability to negotiate pricing in the same way as private projects.

These estimates are intended to help the City understand the potential scale of investment, plan responsibly, and pursue funding over time. As the project advances into future phases, costs will be refined based on the specific scope, timing, design, and available funding.

21. How will this project be funded?

This project will be funded through a combination of sources, including the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fund, the 2022 City of Mercer Island Parks Levy (which includes \$426,490 for playground replacement at Deane's), the 2025 King County Parks Levy, as well as grants and private donations.

As a long-range plan, implementation will occur over time, with funding assembled in phases as the project advances.

Grant funding is an important part of this strategy. The City regularly pursues funding through programs such as the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), which provides competitive grants for park and recreation projects. Mercer Island has a strong track record of success - most recently, more than 30% of the Luther Burbank Park Waterfront Improvements project was funded through RCO grants.

Many grant programs require matching funds, which may come from City funds, levy dollars, or community contributions. Having an adopted Site Plan is also critical to securing grants, as it demonstrates a clear vision, strong community engagement and support, and readiness to



move forward. Community partnerships and donations can further strengthen grant applications and help advance specific phases of the project.

This phased, multi-source approach allows the City to deliver improvements over time while leveraging outside funding wherever possible.