



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR HYBRID MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, November 7, 2024 at 5:00 PM

COMMISSIONERS

Chair Peter Struck
Vice Chair Paul Burstein
Commissioners: Jodi McCarthy, Don Cohen
Sara Marxen, Rory Westberg, and Ashley Hay

LOCATION

MICEC – Slater Room Council Chambers
and via Zoom
8236 SE 24th Street | Mercer Island, WA 98040
Phone: 206.275.7600 | www.mercerisland.gov

We strive to create an inclusive and accessible experience. Those requiring accommodation for meetings should notify the Staff Liaison's Office 3 days prior to the meeting at 206.275.7870 or by emailing ryan.daly@mercerisland.gov.

The virtual meeting will be broadcast live on Zoom and recorded and saved on the City Council's [YouTube Channel](#)

Registering to Speak: Individuals wishing to speak live during Appearances will need to register their request with the staff liaison at **206.275.7861** or [email](#) and leave a message before 4 PM on the day of the Commission meeting. Each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

Join by Telephone at 5:00 PM: Call **253.215.8782** and enter Webinar ID **825 9108 6996** and Password **896196**.

Join by Internet at 5:00 PM:

- 1) Click [this link](#)
- 2) If the Zoom app is not installed on your computer, you will be prompted to download it.
- 3) If prompted for Webinar ID, enter **825 9108 6996** and Password **896196**

Join in person at 5:00 PM: Mercer Island Community & Event Center - 8236 SE 24th Street, Mercer Island

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL – 5:00 PM

APPEARANCES

This is the opportunity for anyone to speak to the Commission about issues of concern.

STAFF LIAISON REPORT

1. **Staff Liaison Report and Planning Schedule**

REGULAR BUSINESS

2. **Approve the minutes of the October 8, 2024 Special Hybrid Meeting**

Recommended Action: Approve minutes.

3. **PRC 24-13: Parks Zone Development Discussion**

Recommended Action: Review and provide feedback on the draft Parks Zone purpose, designation requirements, uses permitted, and definitions. Discussion and idea sharing on the Parks Zone development standards.

4. **PRC 24-14: P-Patch Program Operational Update**

Recommended Action: No action. Receive Report

OTHER BUSINESS

5. **Absences and Commissioner Reports**

ADJOURNMENT



City of Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Commission

Department Report November 7, 2024



Project Updates



Clarke & Groveland Beach Joint Planning Process

- The City received more than **220 responses** to our background survey on current park uses. Thank you to the community for providing input!
- Now the Berger team is analyzing the results, which will be combined with other background assessments to develop an existing conditions report for the parks.
- In February 2025, staff plan to hold a **special PRC meeting** with the Berger team to review the existing conditions and collect PRC input on the draft public engagement plan for the joint planning process. (More details coming soon!)
- The planning process scope and draft public engagement plan will then be presented to the City Council for approval. Staff anticipate kicking off the joint park planning process with the community by early Q2 2025.



Updates at:

www.mercerisland.gov/cgmp



LBP Pickleball Courts

- Get your paddles out – the courts are almost ready!
- Northwest Asphalt completed paving corrections at the end of October, and Beynon Sports has installed the temporary court markings, pickleball nets, and court fencing.
- FieldTurf is finishing up grading the south hill and preparing to pour the new concrete access path.
- Once staff and D.A. Hogan sign off on the work, FieldTurf will demobilize, and the City will make final preparations to open the courts to the community.
- The City will host a ribbon cutting event next year after the permanent acrylic surfacing is installed.



Updates at:

www.mercerisland.gov/lbpcourts



Playground Replacements

- Work continues for the 2025 construction of the Roanoke and First Hill Park playground replacements.
- Progress includes ordering play equipment and completing the pre-app meeting with CPD for First Hill Park, and staff continue working with Berger to wrap up permitting for Roanoke Park.
- Construction of both parks is planned for early 2025. Both playgrounds have been inspected recently and will remain open until construction begins.
- Staff are also finalizing the project scope for a vision plan and design concept for the Deane’s Children’s Park play area. We anticipate reviewing the draft public engagement plan with the PRC at the **special meeting in February 2025**.
- **Updates at:** www.mercerisland.gov/playgroundreplacements



Mercerdale Playground Repairs

Item 1.

- In August, vandalism damaged the train structure and playground surfacing. Staff promptly notified Police, filed a report, and began cleanup and repairs.
- NW Playground and our Parks Maintenance team have collaborated with the manufacturer to repair the poured-in-place surfacing, repair and repaint the train's interior, and complete warranty repair on the cone spinner.
- Most repairs are finished, and the playground is functionally back in service.
- Parks Maintenance staff will continue the repair to the train interior.



Good News



Halloween Roundup



Item 1.



Upcoming Programs and Events



Illuminate MI Is Back!

- The holiday lights are up in Town Center and work on the Mercerdale tree is almost complete!
- The Town Center lights will be shining bright beginning in mid-November and the tree lighting event will be held on Thursday, December 5.
- The calendar is brimming with holiday happenings and festive events! Check out the full lineup of events and more details mercerisland.gov/parksrec/page/city-special-events

Item 1.



Holiday Tree Lighting

DECEMBER 5, 2024
5:30PM

MERCERDALE PARK

JOIN THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND LIGHTING OUR HOLIDAY TREE. BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY OUT AND ENJOY THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR AND CREATION DANCE STUDIO PERFORMANCES. COCOA PROVIDED BY JOHN L. SCOTT!

Sponsored By:



Parks and Recreation Planning Schedule

December 12 (Special Meeting)

- Park Zone Planning

January 9 (Special Meeting)

- Park Zone Planning

February 6

- Park Zone Planning

February (TBD- Special Meeting)

- Groveland/Clarke Joint Planning
- Deane's Children's Park

March 6

- Park Zone Recommendation
- Athletic Fields Allocation & Use Policy





Thank You



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

2024 PLANNING SCHEDULE

Items are not listed in any particular order.
Agenda items & meeting dates are subject to change.

NOVEMBER 7, 5:00 PM		STAFF WORK	AGENDA GO LIVE 11/1
Absences:			
TIME/TOPIC		STAFF	
	PRC 24-13: Park Zone planning	Jessi Bon	
	PRC 24-14: P-Patch Operational Update	Ryan Daly	

DECEMBER 12, 5:00 PM (SPECIAL MEETING)		STAFF WORK	AGENDA GO LIVE 11/27
Absences:			
TIME/TOPIC		STAFF	
	PRC 24-XX Groveland/Clarke Master Plan – Public Engagement	Sarah Bluvas	
	PRC 24-XX: Park Zone planning	Jessi Bon	
	PRC 24-XX: Work Plan Progress and CIP Progress Update	Ryan Daly/ Jason Kintner	



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING MINUTES October 8, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

The Parks & Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Struck at 5:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Chair Peter Struck, Vice Chair Paul Burstein, and Commissioners, Don Cohen, Ashley Hay, and Sara Marxen were present for the Parks & Recreation Commission. Council Liaison Craig Reynolds was present.

Commissioners Jodi McCarthy and Rory Westberg were absent.

City Manager Jessi Bon, Management Analyst II Carson Hornsby, Recreation Manager Ryan Daly, Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb, and Recreation Specialist Raven Gillis were present.

APPEARANCES

Sue Stewart, Mercer Island, addressed the Parks & Recreation Commission regarding the P-Patch

STAFF LIAISON REPORT

1. Recreation Manager Ryan Daly reported on the following items:

- Project Updates:
 - Public Input on Clarke & Groveland Beaches
 - Luther Burbank Boiler Building
 - Pickleball Courts at LBP
- Good News:
 - Family Movie Night Fun
 - Mid-Autumn Festival
 - Winter Web-Special for Athletic Fields
- Upcoming Programs and Events
 - Arbor Day
 - Urban Sketching Class with MIVAL
 - Friday Pre Ballet classes
 - Hallo-Weekend! Town Center Trick or Treating & Pumkin Walk
- Planning Schedule

SPECIAL BUSINESS

2. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the September 5, 2024 Regular Meeting were presented.

It was moved by Hay; seconded by Marxen to:

Approve the minutes from the September 5, 2024 Regular Meeting

Passed: 5 – 0

3. PRC 24-12: Parks Zone Development Discussion

City Manager Jessi Bon presented and led the Commissioners in discussion. Commissioners engaged in discussion, asked questions, and provided input.

OTHER BUSINESS

4. Absences and Commissioner Reports

Chair Struck asked for a motion to excuse Commissioner McCarthy's & Commissioner Westberg's absences from tonight's meeting.

It was moved by Hay; seconded by Vice Chair Burstein to:

Excuse Commissioner McCarthy's and Commissioner Westberg's absences from tonight's meeting

Passed: 5 – 0

Commissioner Cohen reported on photographs he had shared with select City Staff from his recent visit to a Boston suburb to share his impression of their well-manicured trail system as it reminded him of discussions had related to the acquisition of property and/or the rights to use property.

Councilmember Reynolds reported that he will be traveling during the next PRC meeting, and it is unlikely that he will be able to attend.

Commissioner Hay reported that she has noticed a lot of motorized bicycles on the roads, in the parks, and on the trails – traveling at high speeds and destroying some areas of the parks. She's happy to see that City Staff is taking action to ensure the safe and responsible usage of e-bikes and e-scooters and asks that the Commission remember to align the Parks code with the City code while reviewing following the Parks Zone.

ADJOURNMENT at 6:40 PM



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 24-13
November 7, 2024
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PRC 24-13: Parks Zone Development Discussion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Review and provide feedback on the draft Parks Zone purpose, designation requirements, uses permitted, and definitions. Discussion and idea sharing on the Parks Zone development standards.	

STAFF:	Jessi Bon, City Manager Carson Hornsby, Management Analyst II Alison Van Gorp, Deputy CPD Director Ryan Daly, Recreation Manager Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager Alaine Sommargren, Deputy Public Works Director
EXHIBITS:	1. Draft Parks Zone 2. Ordinance No. 24C-15 (Open Space Zone development regulations)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks Zone is a proposed new zoning district that will establish regulations for most City-owned and/or managed parks. The purpose of the new zone is to ensure park lands are preserved and managed appropriately, in alignment with the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan, City code, master plans, and similar guiding documents.

- During the November 7, 2024, Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) meeting, the PRC will review and provide feedback on the draft of the Parks Zone purpose statement, designation requirements, uses permitted, and definitions (see Exhibit 1). The PRC will also begin discussions on the Parks Zone development standards (details about these topics are provided in the Issue/Discussion section below).
- Crafting regulations that balance the built environment with the preservation and protection of parks will be particularly complex given the unique features in the park system. For now, staff suggests setting aside the specific nuances of each individual park and focusing on drafting code language that aligns with stewardship and management plans, preservation goals, community feedback and desires, best practices, current and future uses, and other practical considerations.
- Over the course of several meetings, staff and the PRC will collaborate on the draft text for the new Parks Zone, ensuring it meets all regulatory requirements. This work is anticipated to continue through March 2025.
- It is currently anticipated that the PRC will hand-off a recommendation to the Planning Commission (PC) in Q2 2025 and the City Council will undertake review and adoption of the new Parks Zone by the end of 2025.

BACKGROUND

Parks Zone/Open Space Zone Background

The scope of work for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, adopted by the City Council in 2022 with [Resolution No. 1621](#), included the creation of a new Parks Zone. In January 2024, a preliminary Parks Zone draft was presented to the PRC and PC. Following community and commission feedback, the legislative review was paused, and the draft returned to the PRC for further review. In March 2024, the PRC recommended dividing the Parks Zone planning into two phases: creating a zone for City-owned Open Space Lands and another for public park properties.

The PRC and OSCT Board then held joint meetings to develop legislation for the Open Space Zone. On May 8, 2024, PRC and OSCT Chairs presented a joint recommendation to the PC, which completed its review in June 2024 as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update. On September 25, 2024, the PC approved a recommendation for the Open Space Zone code amendment, with City Council review of these recommendations currently underway.

Now that the PRC's first phase of work is complete on the Open Space Zone, the PRC is shifting focus to the development of the new Parks Zone with the goal of presenting a recommendation to the PC in Q2 2025.

Establishment of the Parks Zone will require amendments to the MICC and Comprehensive Plan:

- Development Regulations – create a new subsection or subsection(s) under MICC 19.05, amend [MICC 19.01.040](#) to establish the Parks Zone, and amend [MICC 19.16.010](#) to establish new definitions (as needed).
- Zoning Map – amend the Zoning Map in the MICC to reflect where the Parks Zone applies.
- Land Use Designations – amend the Land Use Designation table in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan (if needed).

Legislative Review Process

Once the PRC makes its recommendation to the PC, the PC will commence the formal legislative review process to gather public input and provide a recommendation to the City Council, as established in [Chapter 19.15 MICC](#).

The legislative review process includes the following steps:

- The Planning Commission holds a public hearing ([MICC 19.15.020](#)).
- The Planning Commission makes a written recommendation to the City Council following the public hearing ([MICC 19.15.260\(B\)\(2\)](#)).
- The City Council considers the Planning Commission recommendation during a public meeting, deciding to adopt, reject, or amend the recommendation ([MICC 19.15.260\(B\)\(3\)](#)).

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan

The PROS Plan is a six-year plan that 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 City Council adopted the [Parks, Recreation and Open Space \(PROS\) Plan](#) on March 1, 2022.

The PRC served as the lead advisory board on the PROS Plan update with support provided by the Arts Council and OSCT. The 2022 PROS Plan community engagement process included two statistically significant mail-in surveys with concurrent surveys available online, virtual open houses, a dedicated project webpage, and numerous board and commission meetings.

Chapter 4 of the PROS Plan establishes goals and objectives that serve as the policy framework for the provision of parks and recreation services by the City of Mercer Island. Development of master plans, policies, codes, and other work products should align with this policy framework, which includes development of the Parks Zone.

Zoning Code, Parks Code, and Park Operating Policies

As the PRC provides input on the draft Parks Zone development regulations, staff recommend commissioners consider the various tools used by the City to regulate development, operations, and allowed uses and activities in parks. The City's zoning code, park rules, and park operating policies and procedures each have a distinct purpose and consist of specific types of rules and regulations regarding parks. Rules and regulations that are recorded in areas other than the proposed new zone are outside the scope of the Parks Zone project. However, the PRC may wish to provide recommendations to the City Council to address other items in future work plans. The purpose and type of regulations included in the zoning code, park rules, and park operating policies and procedures are summarized below.

Zoning Code

The Mercer Island Zoning Code is established in [MICC Title 19 - Unified Land Development Code](#). The Zoning Code classifies land within the City into zones and regulates land uses and development permitted within each zone. The Zoning Code plays a role in the establishment of other of other regulations, however, the Zoning Code is not the appropriate place for the City to codify other rules that regulate permitted uses in the Zoning Code. For example, if the Parks Zone includes cycling as a permitted use, the City may develop rules or regulations separately from the Zoning Code for speed limits or designated cycling areas. Similarly, picnic shelters may be included as a permitted use in the Parks Zone, but the Zoning Code would not include policies or rules regarding shelter use, rentals, or maintenance.

Parks Code

The Mercer Island Parks Code (aka "Parks Rules") is established in [MICC Chapter 9.30 - Park Rules](#). The Parks Code is part of the Criminal Code, which is a collection of laws that define crimes and their punishments within the City's jurisdiction. The Parks Code consists of laws that apply to the City's public parks and are enforced by the Mercer Island Police Department. The Parks Code is where unlawful acts are codified, such as building fires in undesignated areas (MICC 9.30.170), posting unauthorized signs and posters (MICC 9.30.040), and riding horses in undesignated areas (MICC 9.30.060). The Parks Code is on the City's work plan to be updated in 2025-2026. Staff will assist the PRC in identifying and logging items for follow-up that are best suited for consideration as part of the Parks Code update.

Park Operating Policies and Procedures

Operating policies and procedures are established to guide citywide operations, including the City's parks and recreation facilities and programs. Operating policies and procedures include operational processes, activities, tasks, decision-making structures, levels of delegation, and responsibilities of staff. Some operating policies and procedures are intended for internal use, such as roles and responsibilities of parks and recreation staff or equipment repair and maintenance schedules. Some operating policies and procedures are public facing, such as facility rental or recreation program policies. Examples of operating policies and procedures can be found on the [Parks Information & Policies webpage](#).

Parks Zone Materials from Prior PRC Meetings

- [Tuesday, October 8, 2024](#)

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Parks Zone – Purpose Statement, Designation Requirements, Uses Permitted, and Definitions

At the November 7, 2024, PRC meeting, the commission will continue discussing the development of the Parks Zone. This will include reviewing the draft purpose statement, designation requirements, uses permitted, and definitions, which were drafted by staff based on the feedback provided at the October 8, 2024, PRC meeting (see Exhibit 1). Staff are seeking feedback on this draft text and will prepare revisions based on direction provided by the PRC.

Buildings

The staff have been working with legal counsel to address the existing buildings in parks, notably, the three buildings in Luther Burbank Park (the Administration Building, the Boiler Building, and the Caretaker’s House). These buildings are anticipated to continue to operate for several decades to meet citywide needs and preferably will operate as “conforming” buildings. The term “conforming” means that the structure and associated uses align with the zoning code and do not require special exceptions or variations to be legally established or maintained.

Staff are working with the legal team on the best approach to “carve” these buildings out in the new Parks Zone, which will allow them to operate in a conforming status within the existing footprint. The PRC will note that these three buildings have been identified in the “Uses Permitted” section of the draft Parks Zone in Exhibit 1. Staff are still working on the accompanying development standards for these buildings and will present that recommendation to the PRC at the next meeting.

Note, while this practice of “carving out” specific facilities in a zoning code is not a standard practice, there is precedent for this in the Mercer Island Zoning Code (see Public Institution Zone - [MICC 19.05.010](#)) as this is how the unique needs of each public school facility were addressed.

Parks Zone – Development Standards

The PRC will also begin discussing the Parks Zone development standards (setbacks, signs and kiosks, trail standards, public art, lighting, and parking). The framework for this discussion is provided below.

Zoning Code Framework

Zoning in the MICC generally consists of the five components summarized below, which were used to guide the development of the draft Open Space Zone and also serve as the framework for the development of the draft Parks Zone.

1. Purpose (initial draft text prepared – see Exhibit 1)
 - What is the goal of the Parks Zone?
 - Review PROS Plan goals and objectives (Chapter 4).
2. Designation Requirements (initial draft text prepared – see Exhibit 1)
 - What criteria is used to determine if land is included in the Parks Zone?
 - Review PROS Plan classifications and inventory (Chapter 5).
3. Uses Permitted (initial draft text prepared – see Exhibit 1)
 - What are the allowed uses in the Parks Zone?
4. Development Standards (Begin discussion - see additional information below.)
 - What are the regulations for physical modification and structures in the Parks Zone?

5. Definitions (initial draft text prepared – see Exhibit 1)

- What terms require further definition?
- Are the terms used elsewhere in the code? If yes, do the existing definitions meet the needs of the Parks Zone? If not, what revisions are proposed?
- Staff will develop a definitions list for key terms based on the draft code.

Development Standards

Staff have compiled a list of topics for discussion related to the draft Parks Zone development standards. The full list is below along with more information about six topics for discussion at the November 7, 2024, PRC meeting including setbacks, signs and kiosks, trail standards, public art, lighting, and parking. Staff will draft these sections of code based on input from the PRC. Topics that are not covered at the November 7, 2024, meeting will be addressed in subsequent meetings.

- Setbacks
- Signs and Kiosks
- Trail Standards
- Recreational Facilities
- Public Art
- Parking
- Park Buildings and Structures
- Impervious Surface
- Lighting

Setbacks

Setbacks are the minimum distance that a given development must be from the property lines. Setbacks may be different for different types of development and depending on the zoning of adjacent properties. Specific types of development may also be exempt from setback regulations depending on the primary needs and uses of the property.

- How many feet should development be set back from the property line when the adjacent zone is residential or multifamily?
- What types of development should be exempt from setback regulations in the Parks Zone?

In the Open Space Zone, zero feet setbacks are allowed if adjacent to property that is zoned PI, TC, PBZ, C-O or B (see Exhibit 2). In addition, fences, gates, culverts, trails, landscaping, and furnishings were exempted from the setback requirements.

Signs and Kiosks

Signs and kiosks are used to provide information to park users. Signs and kiosks include a variety of content related to park rules, maps, wayfinding, health and safety, and interpretive information. Regulations and design standards for signs are established in the citywide sign code ([MICC 19.12.080](#)).

- Does the citywide sign code satisfy the needs of the Parks Zone?
- Should the height and/or surface area of kiosks and signs be regulated in the Parks Zone?

In the Open Space Zone, size limits were placed on signage (see Exhibit 2). In addition, lit signs are prohibited in the Open Space Zone and natural colors are required except when necessary to meet public health, safety, or maintenance requirements.

Trail Standards

Trail standards outline regulations related to the design and development of trails. Similar to the City's Open Space Lands, the park system includes a variety of trail uses that are unique to each park. In addition, the City employs a variety of trail design and construction standards throughout the park system to meet the specific needs of each park. For example, Luther Burbank Park has a raised boardwalk through a wetland area, paved trails for multi-purpose uses, and dirt and gravel trails that are primarily used for walking and jogging.

- What trail standards are appropriate to include in the Parks Zone?
- What trail standards are better suited for the Pedestrian and Bike Plan (update will begin in 2026) or site-specific master plans?

In the Open Space Zone, trail width is limited to eight feet (see Exhibit 2). No other development standards for trails were included in the Open Space Zone.

Trail width in parks has been a topic of considerable debate over the years, primarily related to concerns over widening trails and increasing impervious surface. This topic was also discussed at great length during the PROS Plan update process (see PROS Plan Goal 4 "Trails," page 25, and Chapter 8 "Trails & Pathways," page 84 to 95). The PROS Plan did not specify preferred trail widths or surfacing materials given the wide variety of trail types in the Mercer Island parks system.

Public Art

Public art installations are incorporated into the City's park system for the purpose of community enjoyment and enrichment, and typically embody public or universal concepts as opposed to commercial, partisan, or personal interests. The [Arts Council](#) serves as the City's advisory body for arts and culture, which includes establishing guidelines for the commissioning, selection, and placement of permanent and temporary works of art in the City. The [Public Art webpage](#) on the City website has more information about the City's public art collection, including a link to the [Public Art Story Map](#) with photos and details about each work of art.

- What development standards related to art should be included in the new Parks Zone?

Note, the Open Space Zone does not allow for public art installations (see Exhibit 2).

When considering development standards related to art in the Parks Zone, keep in mind that including size limitations may be challenging. Traditional art installations in the Mercer Island parks system include items such as murals. Staff are seeking an opportunity to engage with the Arts Council on the draft Parks Zone as it relates to art installations.

Lighting

Regulations for exterior lighting are typically adopted to minimize light pollution as well as light trespass onto neighboring properties while accommodating permitted land uses. Lighting regulations may cover types of lighting, light placement and/or directional requirements, and light shielding requirements. Some types of exterior lighting may be exempt from lighting regulations such as lighting within a public right-of-way or easement for the purpose of illuminating roads and trails, emergency lighting, or other lighting required by state or federal law. Lighting regulations for all zones except Town Center are established in [MICC 19.12.070](#), however, this chapter does not apply to property owned or controlled by the City.

- Are lighting development standards desired for parks?

Note, the Open Space Zone does not include lighting standards (see Exhibit 2).

Parking

Parking areas are provided at most of the City's parks to accommodate park users who travel to and from parks in vehicles. Provision of adequate parking is an important consideration to encourage use of public land while discouraging parking of vehicles in the street, within the right-of-way, or on private land. The City must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires parking lots to provide accessible parking spaces with specific features that make it easier for people with disabilities to access parks.

- Does [MICC Title 19 Appendix A – Parking Lot Dimensions](#) satisfy parking design standards for the Parks Zone?
- Should the Parks Zone development standards include minimum and/or maximum parking requirements?
- Are there other standards related to parking that belong in the Parks Zone?

Staff will incorporate the feedback from the development standards discussion and prepare an initial draft for PRC consideration at the next meeting.

NEXT STEPS

The PRC will continue to provide input on the draft Parks Zone over the course of several meetings. It is currently anticipated that the PRC will provide a recommendation on the draft Parks Zone to the PC in Q2 2025. The PC will then conduct the legislative review process and provide a final recommendation to the City Council regarding amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and MICC. The anticipated PRC meeting schedule for this work is provided below.

- Thursday, November 7, 2024
 - Review Draft Text: Purpose Statement, Designation Requirements, Uses Permitted, and Definitions
 - Discussion and Idea Sharing: Development Standards
- Thursday, December 5, 2024*
 - Continue discussion on Development Standards and Review Draft Text
 - Discussion and Review: Definitions

*Note: This meeting date conflicts with a Recreation event. The meeting will either be rescheduled for later in December, or the discussion topics will be moved to the January 2025 meeting.

- Thursday, January 2, 2025**
 - Review Draft Text: Full Code Review
 - Test Fit Analysis – Review Applicability of Draft Parks Zone to Existing Parks

**Note: This meeting date is close to the New Year's Holiday. The meeting will likely be rescheduled for later in January.

- January 2025 - Potential Joint Meeting with City Council (tentative)
- Thursday, February 6, 2025
 - Follow-up Discussion on Test-Fit Analysis and Feedback from City Council (tentative), revisions to draft Parks Zone if necessary
 - Review draft Hand-Off Memo to PC

- Thursday, March 6, 2025
 - Finalize All Materials
 - Discussion: Next Steps (hand-off to PC, legislative review process, timelines of the Comprehensive Plan annual update and code amendment)

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Review and provide feedback on the draft Parks Zone purpose, designation requirements, uses permitted, and definitions. Discussion and idea sharing on the Parks Zone development standards.

DRAFT PARKS ZONE

MICC 19.05.XXX – Parks Zone. [New Subsection]

- A. *Purpose.* The purpose of the Parks Zone is to preserve and maintain parks which provide recreational and social opportunities and access to green space. Parks enhance community quality of life by promoting healthy lifestyles, conservation, and social connections.
- B. *Parks Zone Designation Requirements.* In addition to the requirements established in Section [19.15.240 MICC](#), Parks must be owned, leased, or managed by the City of Mercer Island and fulfill the purpose provided in subsection (A) above to qualify for classification as Parks Zone.
- C. *Uses Permitted.* The following land uses are permitted in the Parks Zone. A use not permitted by this section is prohibited.
1. Recreational uses.
 2. Recreational facilities and recreational amenities.
 3. Parks maintenance facilities.
 4. Luther Burbank Administrative Building, Boiler Building, and Caretakers House.
 5. Public art.
 6. Trails.
 7. Habitat restoration and enhancement as authorized by [chapter 19.07 MICC](#).
 8. Parking.
 9. Temporary uses and structures compatible with the purpose of the Parks Zone, as authorized by the City Manager or designee.
 10. Wireless communications facilities. (If otherwise permitted by [MICC 19.06.040](#), [MICC 19.06.070](#), or [MICC 19.06.075](#)).
 11. Utilities.

MICC 19.05.XXX – Parks Zone Development Standards. [New Subsection]

(Section to be drafted based on input from PRC at 11/07/2024 meeting.)

MICC 19.16.010 – Definitions (additional definitions will be added as work continues)

[...]

Community Garden. A shared plot of land where individuals or groups collectively grow fruits, vegetables, flowers, and plants.

[...]

Park. Public land that is available for recreational, ecological, educational, or cultural uses. Parks are accessible to the public and typically feature natural landscapes, open spaces, and facilities designed to support leisure, community gatherings, conservation, and outdoor activities.

[...]

Park Maintenance Facilities. Park developments that serve operational or park maintenance purposes such as buildings and sheds.

[...]

Public Art. Art that is installed in public spaces for the purpose of community enjoyment and enrichment. Public Art is visually and physically accessible to the public and embodies public or universal concepts rather than commercial, partisan, or personal interests.

[...]

Park Maintenance. Activities performed to ensure parks are clean, safe, and operational. Park maintenance includes activities such as infrastructure repair, cleaning, landscaping, and litter removal.

[...]

Recreational Amenities. Furnishings or developments that are provided to supplement recreational uses or enhance recreational facilities, including but not limited to picnic tables, benches, bleachers, barbecues, outdoor exercise equipment, lighting, and waste receptacles. Recreational Amenities also include all amenities addressed by the definition of Passive Recreational Amenities.

[...]

Recreational Facilities. Buildings, structures or developments that are provided specifically for recreational uses such as restrooms, playgrounds, picnic shelters, concession stands, athletic fields, sport courts, playgrounds, batting cages, bullpens, skateparks, bike skills areas, community gardens, spray parks, amphitheaters, swimming areas, docks, piers, and boat launches.

[...]

Recreational Uses. In the Parks Zone, land uses that provide opportunities for entertainment, athletic, ecological, and/or other leisure activities. Recreational uses include activities such as sports,

cycling, skating, swimming, and use of play and exercise equipment. Recreational uses include all uses addressed by the definition of passive recreational uses.

[...]

MICC 19.01.040 – Zone Establishment

A. Zones.

Zone	Symbol
Single-Family	R-8.4
Single-Family	R-9.6
Single-Family	R-12
Single-Family	R-15
Multiple-Family	MF-2L
Multiple-Family	MF-2
Multiple-Family	MF-3
Business	B
Planned Business	PBZ
Commercial Offices	C-O
Public Institution	PI
<u>Parks</u>	<u>P</u>
Open Space	OS
Town Center	TC

- B. The location and boundaries of the various zones of the city are shown and delineated on the city of Mercer Island Zoning Map which is included in appendix D of this development code and is incorporated herein by reference.
- C. The location and boundaries of the various zones as hereafter determined by the city council shall be shown and delineated on zone maps covering portions of the city, each of which shall be a part of this Code either by adoption as a part hereof or by amendment hereto.
- D. Each zone map and all notations and other information shown therein shall become part of this Code.
- E. A zone map may be divided into parts and each part may, for purposes of identification, be subdivided into units. Such parts may be separately and successively adopted by means of an amendment of this Code and, as adopted, such zone map, or its parts, shall become a part of this Code.
- F. Changes in the boundaries of a zone shall be made by ordinance adopting an amended map, or part of said zone map.
- G. When uncertainty exists as to the boundaries of any zones shown on any zone map, the following rules shall apply:

1. Boundaries shown on a map as approximately following street lines or lot lines shall be construed as actually following such lines.
2. Where a boundary between zones divides a lot into two or more pieces, the entire lot shall be deemed to be located in the first zone on the following list in which any part of the lot is located: R-15, R-12, R-9.6, R-8.4, MF-2L, MF-3, MF-2, P, OS, PI, PBZ, C-O, TC, and B. The location of the zone boundary shall be determined by use of the scale appearing on the zone map unless the location of the boundary is indicated by dimensions.
3. Where property abuts Lake Washington, the land use classification of the upland property extends waterward across the abutting shorelands and beds to the line of navigability/inner harbor line as established in 1984 by the board of natural resources by Resolution No. 461.
4. In case any uncertainty exists, the planning commission shall recommend and the city council shall determine the location of boundaries.
5. Where a public street is officially vacated or abandoned, the land use classification applicable to the abutting property shall apply to such vacated or abandoned street. If a vacated street forms the boundary between two or more zones, the land use classifications of each abutting zone shall extend to the mid-point of the vacated street unless the planning commission recommends and the city council decides otherwise.

H. Except as hereinafter provided:

1. No land, building, structure or premises shall be used for any purpose or in any manner other than a use listed in this Code, or amendments thereto, for the zone in which such land, building, structure or premises is located.
2. No building or structure shall be erected nor shall any building or structure be moved, altered, enlarged or rebuilt, nor shall any open spaces surrounding any building or structure be encroached upon or reduced in any manner, except in conformity with the requirements of this development code or amendments thereto.
3. No yard or other open spaces provided about any building or structure, for the purpose of complying with the regulations of this Code or amendments thereto shall be considered as providing a yard or open space for any other building or structure.

**CITY OF MERCER ISLAND
ORDINANCE NO. 24C-15**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON,
RELATING TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OPEN SPACE ZONE; PROVIDING
FOR SEVERABILITY; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

WHEREAS, the adoption of land use and zoning regulations is a valid exercise of the City's police power and is specifically authorized by RCW 35A.63.100; and

WHEREAS, through the annual development code and comprehensive plan docket and the adoption of Resolution No. 1621 in 2022, the City added the task of developing legislation to establish a new Parks Zone; and

WHEREAS, in March 2024, the Parks and Recreation Commission and Open Space Conservancy Trust Board made the recommendation to split the original Parks Zone code development project into two phases: first, an Open Space Zone, and subsequently, the development of a Parks Zone; and

WHEREAS, on May 8, 2024, the Parks and Recreation Commission and Open Space Conservancy Trust Board provided an initial joint recommendation to the Planning Commission on proposed legislation establishing a new Open Space Zone; and

WHEREAS, on September 25, 2024, the Planning Commission held a duly advertised public hearing and provided a recommendation regarding the proposed legislation to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, establishment of the Open Space Zone requires an update to the Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan, which was addressed in a separate duly advertised public hearing on May 29, 2024, related to the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update; and

WHEREAS, the proposed update to the Land Use Map as part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update must be adopted to be effective concurrently with the code amendments; and

WHEREAS, on August 7, 2024, the City notified the Washington State Department of Commerce of the City's intent to adopt development code amendments; and

WHEREAS, on August 7, 2024, the City issued a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) threshold determination of non-significance (DNS) consistent with the procedures established in Chapter 19.21 MICC; and

WHEREAS, on October 15, 2024, the City Council was briefed on the Planning Commission recommendation and had its first reading of this ordinance, and on November 4, 2024, the City Council had its second reading of this ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON, DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Whereas Clauses Adopted. The “Whereas Clauses” set forth in the recital of this ordinance are hereby adopted as the findings and conclusions of the City Council for passing this ordinance.

Section 2. New MICC 19.05.030 Open Space - OS Adopted. The City Council adopts, effective December 31, 2024, a new section MICC 19.05.030, Open Space Zone, to read as follows;

MICC 19.05.030 – Open Space Zone.

- A. *Purpose.* The purpose of the Open Space Zone is to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance Open Space Lands, which provide habitat for native plants and animals and ecological services including stormwater management and carbon sequestration. Open Space Lands provide access to nature for passive recreation and relaxation and educational and stewardship opportunities.
- B. *Open Space Zone Designation Requirements.* In addition to the requirements established in Section [19.15.240 MICC](#), Open Space Lands must be owned, leased, or managed by the City of Mercer Island and fulfill the purpose provided in subsection (A) above to qualify for classification as Open Space Zone.
- C. *Uses Permitted.* The following land uses are permitted in the Open Space Zone. A use not permitted by this section is prohibited.
1. Trails.
 2. Passive recreational uses.
 3. Passive recreational amenities.
 4. Habitat restoration and enhancement.
 5. Temporary uses compatible with the purpose of the Open Space Zone, as authorized by the City Manager or designee.
 6. Wireless communications facilities. (Only if otherwise permitted by [MICC 19.06.040](#) – Wireless communications and/or [MICC 19.06.070](#) – Small wireless facilities deployment and as subject to design and concealment standards as otherwise provided in the MICC).
 7. Utilities, only where necessary for public safety or protection of the natural environment and no reasonable alternative location exists. Utilities should be underground, if feasible.

Section 3. New MICC 19.05.040 Open Space Zone Development Standards, Adopted. The City Council adopts, effective December 31, 2024, a new section MICC 19.05.040, Open Space Zone Development Standards, to read as follows;

MICC 19.05.040 – Open Space Zone Development Standards.

A. *Applicability.* The provisions of this section shall apply to all development proposals in the Open Space zoning designation.

B. *Setbacks.*

1. The following minimum setbacks apply:
 - a. Zero (0) feet if adjacent property is zoned PI, TC, PBZ, C-O, or B; and
 - b. Twenty (20) feet if adjacent property is zoned R-8.4, R-9.6, R-12, R-15, MF-2L, MF-2, or MF-3.
2. Setbacks are measured from the adjacent property line or the edge of adjacent public rights-of-way.
3. The following developments are exempt from setback requirements: fences, gates, culverts, trails, landscaping, and furnishings.

C. *Restrooms.*

1. Restrooms are only permitted on properties larger than 100 acres. Restrooms shall not be larger than 300 square feet.

D. *Signs and Kiosks.*

1. Signs shall be governed by [MICC 19.12.080](#), except as follows:
 - a. No sign shall be larger than three square feet, other than at an entrance to Open Space Lands, where a sign shall not be larger than ten square feet in size.
 - b. Exterior lighted signs are prohibited.
 - c. Natural colors shall be required unless necessary for public health, safety, or maintenance.
2. The surface area of kiosks shall not exceed 15 square feet and kiosks shall not exceed ten feet in height; except, for Open Space Land larger than 100 acres, the surface area of kiosks shall not exceed 22 square feet and kiosks shall not exceed ten feet in height. Surface area shall be measured as the portion of the kiosk used/usable for providing information.

E. *Trail Standards.*

1. Trails shall not exceed eight feet in width.

Section 4. MICC 19.16.010 Definitions, Amended. Effective December 31, 2024, MICC 19.16.010 is amended as follows.

MICC 19.16.010 – Definitions

[...]

Kiosk. A small structure in a public area used for providing information.

[...]

Natural Colors. Muted colors that are consistent with the natural landscape of Open Space lands.

[...]

Open Space Land(s). A parcel of land that is largely undeveloped and is suitable as a natural habitat.

[...]

Passive Recreational Amenities. Structures, furnishings, or developments that are specifically provided for passive recreational uses, such as signs, trails, restrooms, kiosks, benches, bike racks, etc.

Passive Recreational Uses. Passive recreational uses have a low impact on the natural and built environment, and include activities such as hiking, wildlife viewing, walking, jogging, or picnicking.

[...]

Temporary Structures, Uses, and Activities. A land use, structure, or activity that will only be in place for a limited period of time not to exceed 180 days in duration.

[...]

Trail. An off-street path for passive recreational uses. Trails may include structural components such as boardwalks, bridges, and stairs.

[...]

Section 5. MICC 19.01.040 Zone Establishment, Amended. Effective December 31, 2024, MICC 19.01.040, Zone Establishment, is amended as follows.

MICC 19.01.040 – Zone Establishment

A. Zones.

Zone	Symbol
Single-Family	R-8.4
Single-Family	R-9.6
Single-Family	R-12
Single-Family	R-15
Multiple-Family	MF-2L
Multiple-Family	MF-2

Multiple-Family	MF-3
Business	B
Planned Business	PBZ
Commercial Offices	C-O
Public Institution	PI
<u>Open Space</u>	<u>OS</u>
Town Center	TC

- B. The location and boundaries of the various zones of the city are shown and delineated on the city of Mercer Island Zoning Map which is included in appendix D of this development code and is incorporated herein by reference.
- C. The location and boundaries of the various zones as hereafter determined by the city council shall be shown and delineated on zone maps covering portions of the city, each of which shall be a part of this Code either by adoption as a part hereof or by amendment hereto.
- D. Each zone map and all notations and other information shown therein shall become part of this Code.
- E. A zone map may be divided into parts and each part may, for purposes of identification, be subdivided into units. Such parts may be separately and successively adopted by means of an amendment of this Code and, as adopted, such zone map, or its parts, shall become a part of this Code.
- F. Changes in the boundaries of a zone shall be made by ordinance adopting an amended map, or part of said zone map.
- G. When uncertainty exists as to the boundaries of any zones shown on any zone map, the following rules shall apply:
 - 1. Boundaries shown on a map as approximately following street lines or lot lines shall be construed as actually following such lines.
 - 2. Where a boundary between zones divides a lot into two or more pieces, the entire lot shall be deemed to be located in the first zone on the following list in which any part of the lot is located: R-15, R-12, R-9.6, R-8.4, MF-2L, MF-3, MF-2, OS, PI, PBZ, C-O, TC, and B. The location of the zone boundary shall be determined by use of the scale appearing on the zone map unless the location of the boundary is indicated by dimensions.
 - 3. Where property abuts Lake Washington, the land use classification of the upland property extends waterward across the abutting shorelands and beds to the line of navigability/inner harbor line as established in 1984 by the board of natural resources by Resolution No. 461.
 - 4. In case any uncertainty exists, the planning commission shall recommend and the city council shall determine the location of boundaries.

5. Where a public street is officially vacated or abandoned, the land use classification applicable to the abutting property shall apply to such vacated or abandoned street. If a vacated street forms the boundary between two or more zones, the land use classifications of each abutting zone shall extend to the mid-point of the vacated street unless the planning commission recommends and the city council decides otherwise.

H. Except as hereinafter provided:

1. No land, building, structure or premises shall be used for any purpose or in any manner other than a use listed in this Code, or amendments thereto, for the zone in which such land, building, structure or premises is located.
2. No building or structure shall be erected nor shall any building or structure be moved, altered, enlarged or rebuilt, nor shall any open spaces surrounding any building or structure be encroached upon or reduced in any manner, except in conformity with the requirements of this development code or amendments thereto.
3. No yard or other open spaces provided about any building or structure, for the purpose of complying with the regulations of this Code or amendments thereto shall be considered as providing a yard or open space for any other building or structure.

Section 6. MICC Title 19, Appendix D – Zoning Map, Amended. Effective December 31, 2024, Appendix D, Zoning Map, to Title 19, is repealed and replaced with the map attached hereto as Exhibit A.

Section 7. Severability. If any section, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance should be held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, or its application held inapplicable to any person, property, or circumstance, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect the validity of any other section, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance or its application to any other person, property, or circumstance.

Section 8. Publication and Effective Date. A summary of this ordinance consisting of its title shall be published in the official newspaper of the City. This ordinance shall take effect and be in full force on December 31, 2024, provided said date is at least five days after the date of publication.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON, AT ITS MEETING ON NOVEMBER _____, 2024.

ATTEST:

CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

Andrea Larson, City Clerk

Salim Nice, Mayor

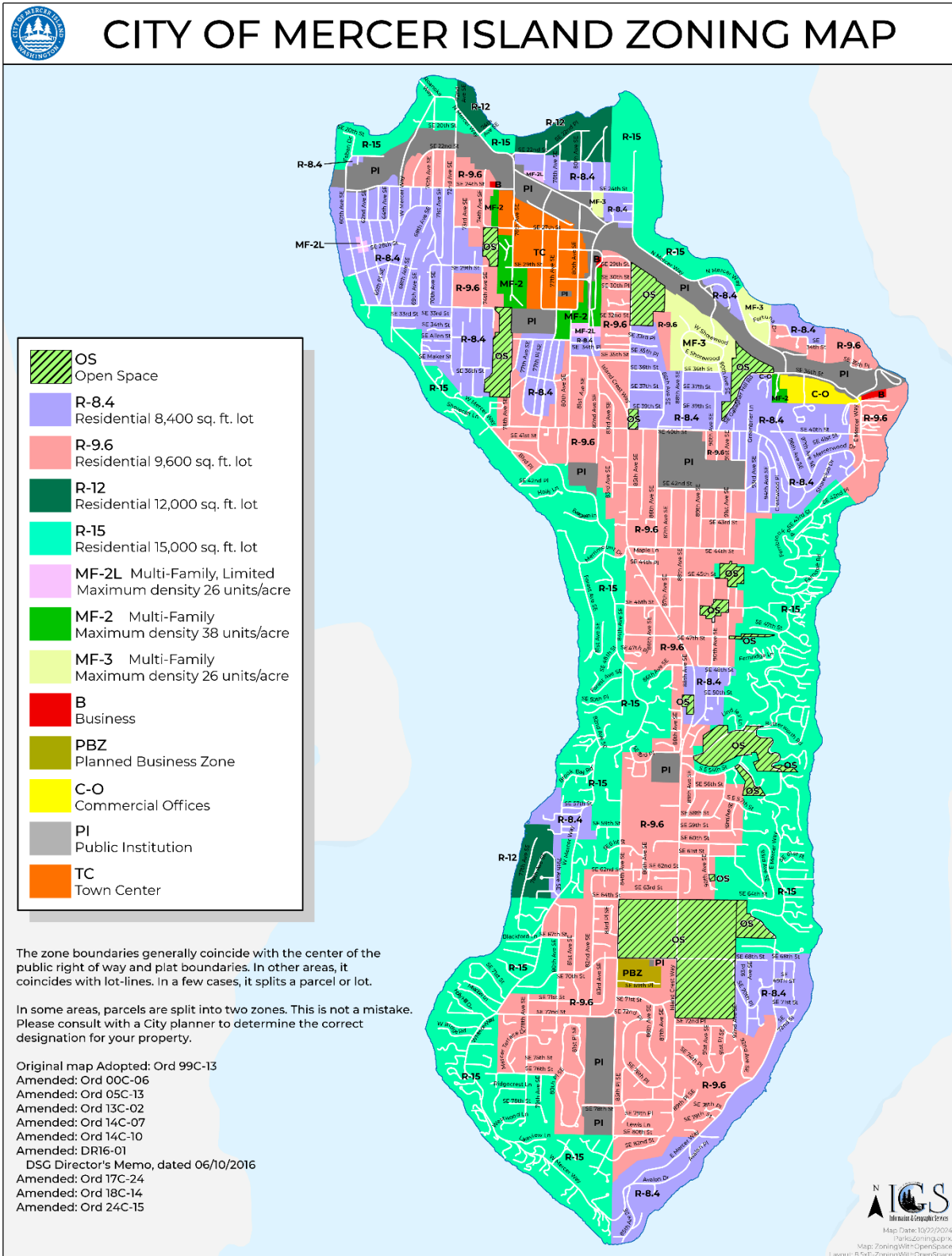
APPROVED AS TO FORM

Bio Park, City Attorney

Date of publication:

Exhibit A

Appendix D – ZONING MAP





PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 24-14
November 7, 2024
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PRC 24-14: P-Patch Program Operational Update	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	No action. Receive Report	

STAFF:	Ryan Daly, Recreation Manager Katie Herzog, Recreation Supervisor
EXHIBITS:	1. P-Patch Rules

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this staff report is to provide the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) with an update on the operational status of the Mercer Island P-Patch Community Garden Program and staffs operational intentions following the adoption of the P-Patch Rules (Exhibit 1) on October 5, 2023.

- City of Mercer Island staff are responsible for the coordination and management of the P-Patch program. In spring and summer 2023, staff initiated a review to evaluate the program, identify areas where participation required clarification, and establish clear guidelines.
- Staff sought the PRC’s advisory capacity to assist in the development and establishment of the P-Patch program purpose and objectives, and to align those with the goals identified in the 2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
- Staff engaged and actively solicited participant input ahead of PRC review and encouraged public comment at PRC Meetings.
- Deliberation and input on the P-Patch Rules took place over (2) public PRC Meetings: [September 7, 2023](#) and [October 5, 2023](#). These meetings culminated in a PRC vote to endorse the P-Patch Rules, including a program purpose statement and objectives.
- Following endorsement, staff began informing program participants on plans to align participation with the P-Patch Rules and continued that coordination throughout the year.
- Staff have scheduled a participant meeting for November 13 to provide program guidance and address participant questions leading in to the following season. Following this meeting, staff will meet individually with participants to help evaluate their plots, confirm locations and dimensions, and discuss any items that may require attention.
- Staff developed a series of objectives leading into 2025 with a goal of aligning participation with program rules and expanding access for new participants.

BACKGROUND

The City of Mercer Island P-Patch was established behind the former Mercer View Elementary School in conjunction with the Earth Day Movement of 1977. Now located behind the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC), within Luther Burbank Park, the current P-Patch occupies approximately 49,000 sq. ft.

(1.1 acre) of park space. The P-Patch includes approximately 50 - 60 plots that vary in size, slope, and visual appearance which are cultivated by participants. Mercer Island Parks and Recreation staff are responsible for the coordination and management of the P-Patch program, which includes establishing guidelines, assigning plots, communicating with participants, collecting program fees, and performing routine area maintenance such as delivering wood chips, providing access to irrigation, trash and debris removal, and maintaining pathways.

In the spring of 2023, staff began to identify challenges with the program which included:

- Environmental impacts of plastic fencing, paint, and impervious ground coverings.
- Plots expanding beyond established boundaries.
- Individuals utilizing multiple plots.
- Construction of large structures and fences.
- A lack of consistency in program administration.
- Inability to move waitlist participants into the program.

The challenges experienced with the program were attributed to inadequate program guidelines and staff failing to consistently and actively manage and coordinate the program. These issues were compounded by limited communication through staff turnover during the Recreation Division reset following the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Developing Program Rules

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Commission is to serve in a policy advisory capacity to the City Council and any other board or commission of the city on matters involving the Mercer Island parks system, recreation programming, and the Mercer Island Community & Event Center and to provide a forum for the community to express their views on parks and recreation programs, services, and facilities.

Establishing program rules and guidelines is a function of staff. In the fall of 2023 staff began a process to re-establish the program in a more consistent manner, reflective of the goals and values within the 2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (PROS). As an initial step, staff sought to engage the PRC in an advisory capacity and to utilize its meetings as a forum to transparently and collaboratively develop a program purpose statement, program objectives, and program rules to guide program administration and participation.

The PRC accepted public comments and input over the course of (2) regular meetings and collaborated with staff to develop a new set of program rules that aligned with community goals and values for parks as well as with guidance provided by the Washington Cities Insurance Authority. Those rules were endorsed on October 5, 2023. Following the establishment of the new P-Patch Rules, staff began informing participants that following the 2024 season participation in the program would align with those requirements.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Throughout the past 5 years the Parks and Recreation divisions have experienced significant staff turnover, changes to operations, and at times shifting priorities which have impacted the consistency at which the P-Patch program has been administered. The loss of historical knowledge in program administration, compounded by inadequate documentation and differing standards for individual participants created a situation which requires staff to coordinate the program in a more effective and efficient manner.

Staff recognize that many participants have been involved with the program for several years and that the process of change can be challenging. During the past year staff have focused efforts on engaging participants, educating on the program rules and expectations, reviewing the program area, and evaluating

current participant practices. Staff intends to work collaboratively with participants to align participation with the rules, and to engage in a transparent process which provides equitable access to the program and designated park space for eligible Mercer Island residents.

P-Patch Plots:

Staff have identified 58 individual plots, with some of these having been combined, divided, and/or allowed to become overgrown. Individual plot sizes range from approximately 400 sq. ft. – 4,000 sq. ft. Plot size and allocation are determined by staff, though over time some plots have expanded or encroached on neighboring vacant plots or areas of park land without staff knowledge or approval.

Staff have begun a process to document current plot designations and is working with plot holders (and the Parks Maintenance Team) to define appropriate dimensional plot allotments in line with the established rules and program objectives. This process includes updating the plot inventory maps and registration documentation, as well as reviewing the program waitlist for accuracy.

Initial review has found that at least (5) participants hold multiple plots, have plots which have been combined with adjacent plots, or have plots that greatly exceed original dimensions. Staff will be reviewing these situations on an individual basis to determine the appropriate amount of park space that should be allotted to the individual plot holder.

In the last year some misunderstandings have arisen regarding the size allotment for plots being a required 10ft x 40ft (or half plots being 10x20) footprint, this has created concern with some plot holders that they would be forced to this standard. Staff does not intend to create a uniform standard, but will utilize the program rules, purpose, and objectives to determine how to address unique situations. Additionally, staff will seek to provide designated plot space that is appropriate in relation to the typical size of other users and which accounts for topographical inconsistencies. Options will include combining smaller plots, dividing extremely large plots into multiple plots, and/or holding a participant accountable to a single appropriately sized plot.

P-Patch Registration and Waitlist

In 2023, several vacant plots were divided into smaller sections to expand access for those on the waitlist. The P-Patch program will conclude the 2024 season with 49 registered participants and a documented waitlist of 47 households, with some on the waitlist since March 2021. Previous reports indicated approximately 20 households on the waitlist however that is now believed to be inaccurate. Staff will confirm and update the waitlist prior to the 2025 season to ensure accuracy moving forward.

The registration process over the past year has not captured adequate information and the plot maps used for the program have not been appropriately updated to show plot dimensions and changes that have occurred over the past 2 years.

During the Water Emergency in spring of 2024, staff suspended the addition of new participants to the program to conserve water resources.

Available Plots

Current maps show 58 plot sites, though this number is approximate due to recent plot divisions, some participants using multiple plots, and certain plots becoming overgrown. Staff estimate that 10 – 12 plots are currently vacant and could potentially be available for participation, pending necessary maintenance and preparation. However, further review is required to determine whether these plots are suitable for assignment.

Promotion and Marketing of Program

As staff progress on documenting and enhancing procedures for the P-Patch program, including managing and confirming current participation, the waitlist, and plot availability, it is anticipated that participation opportunities will be more broadly communicated in conjunction with other city coordinated recreational offerings.

Staff contend that the P-Patch Rules provide a tool for equitable access for the Mercer Island Community to participate in the program, and that these rules align with community expectations for the management of park spaces and recreation program participation.

NEXT STEPS

Staff's primary objective is to establish consistent operational and maintenance processes, including defining and mapping an inventory of plots within the program to ensure equitable access for the Mercer Island community. Staff are dedicated to collaborating with and actively engaging both current and prospective participants to provide an optimal experience that aligns with the program's purpose, objectives, and guidelines.

Initial work has begun in preparation for the 2025 season. Staff is taking steps to align participation with the program rules by confirming eligibility, documenting plot inventory, addressing safety issues, and establishing a process and timeline for participant alignment with program rules.

Below, staff has provided a timeline of objectives leading into 2025 season.

- Host informational meeting (November 13) with current and prospective participants
- Meet individually with current participants to document and establish plot dimensions for 2025
- Update annual program registration process
- Accept applications for 2025
- Confirm participation, accept program fees, establish and document participant timelines for aligning participation with program rules
- Identify vacant plots and prepare spaces for participation
- Transition waitlist participants into vacant plots
- Evaluate and communicate with participants throughout the year to assist in plot alterations.

Most current participants will not have their experience adversely affected by aligning participation with the program rules, other than addressing certain aspects of their plots like size, height, and the use of plastic fencing or tarps. The full alignment with program rules will be a documented process over a period of time.

Staff are prioritizing safety enhancements, program eligibility, and space allotment to immediately enable additional participation and efficiency of program delivery. Issues pertaining to established fencing, structures, impervious coverings, and height restrictions will be documented and staff will collaborate with participants on an appropriate timeline based on circumstance and the program purpose and objectives.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

No action. Receive report.

City of Mercer Island

P-PATCH COMMUNITY GARDEN RULES

Endorsed by the Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Commission- October 5, 2023

Purpose Statement:

The Mercer Island P-Patch is a community garden program coordinated by the City of Mercer Island and cultivated by Mercer Island residents through environmentally sustainable practices. The P-Patch program provides the opportunity for participants to grow food and ornamental plantings within individual plots enabling opportunities for connections within the community, increased food security, and improved physical and mental health for visitors and participants alike.

Program Objectives:

- Provide and allocate designated plot areas for community gardening activities.
- Enable gardening and gathering opportunities which improve both mental and physical health.
- Align participation with maintaining the natural character of the park and minimize unnatural physical and visual impacts to the surrounding park and neighborhood area.
- Provide an environment that enables participants of different ages and demographics to come together, interact, and cultivate meaningful relationships through gardening.
- Utilize garden plots and the surrounding area to enhance biodiversity and contribute to the preservation of the environment.

GENERAL:

1. Plot holders must be Mercer Island residents, at least 18 years of age, and registered annually by February 1 to be eligible for participation.
2. Priority for plot allocation will be given to the previous year's plot holders, with available remaining plots distributed to those on the waitlist, then on a first-come, first-serve basis.
3. There is a maximum of one plot per household.
4. Plot holders may not transfer their garden space to others.
5. Children are welcome and encouraged to garden, those under the age of twelve (12) must be supervised by the plot holder. Do not allow children to run in the patch area or play in/on other plots.
6. Dogs, cats, and other animals are not allowed in the garden at any time (except service animals).
7. Plot holders and guests shall conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful manner at all times. Plot holders and guests shall refrain from profanity, harassment, disruptive behavior, or abuse of any kind.
8. Smoking, vaping, and alcohol are prohibited in the P-Patch area.
9. Do not enter other plot spaces without the permission of the plot holder.
10. Motorized equipment is not allowed in the P-Patch area, except for battery powered garden tools. Only City vehicles are permitted to drive to the P-Patch area.

11. Plot holders are responsible for cultivating, weeding, fertilizing, watering, end-of-season clean up, and all other care for their plots.
12. Tools, equipment, materials, and supplies must be neatly stacked and stored or discarded of. Plots may not exhibit signs of abandonment, neglect, safety hazards, or be overrun by weeds.
13. Plants on the State's Noxious Weed List as well as illegal, controlled, or invasive plants are prohibited.
14. The P-Patch program is an organic gardening program. Use of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides made from synthetic materials as well as use of chemical fertilizers is prohibited. Fully composted manures such as steer and chicken manure are allowed.
15. Plantings, materials, fencing, and equipment must be kept within the borders of your identified plot. Allow space for vining or spreading crops within the plot boundaries.
16. Sale of harvests and/or use of a plot for commercial purposes is prohibited.
17. Plot holders will have seasonal access to hose spigots and must be present at their plots while watering. Drip irrigation may not be left on or unattended. Hoses must be disconnected when not in use and must be neatly stored within plot holder's plot.
18. Tarps, plastic sheeting, gravel, stone, concrete, and other non-permeable ground coverings are prohibited. Porous landscape/weed barrier fabric, wood chips, and burlap are allowed.
19. Plot holders are responsible for keeping pathways and fence lines adjacent to their plot clear and free of rocks, tools, plantings, and other obstacles.
20. Permanent structures and non-planting related installations are prohibited.
21. With prior approval from the Recreation Coordinator, plot holders may install raised bed structures and storage units (up to 30 inches in height). These installations will be allowed as long as they do not disrupt adjacent plots and do not obstruct pathways.
22. Temporary trellises must not exceed 6 ft in height or disrupt adjacent plots.
23. The following items are prohibited in plots: Painted/stained building materials, overhead netting or covers, yard art/decor, signage, displayed verbiage, lighting, and electric deterrent noise devices. Plant identification markers or tags no bigger than 20 square inches are permitted.
24. Plot Fencing:
 - a. May be a maximum of 6' in height including all posts and gates (measured from lowest point).
 - b. Only steel/wire fencing is permitted and must not be coated or painted.
 - c. Posts may not be set in concrete, must be no larger than 4" x 4", and have a separation of no less than 8' between posts. A single gate may be placed with a shorter distance between posts.
 - d. All metal stakes must have caps.
25. City staff may prohibit installations, plantings, or behaviors that do not align with the P-Patch program's objectives, violate the anti-harassment policy, or which negatively impact others.

WARNING:

Those who do not follow P-Patch Community Garden Rules will be notified with one written warning. Non-compliance and/or lack of communication within 2 weeks of that notification will result in dismissal from the P-Patch Community Garden program. All fees are non-refundable. Any plot that remains unattended or uncultivated by May 1st of each year will be cleaned out and reassigned without refund or access to crops. Repeated failures to abide by the P-Patch Program rules will result in dismissal from the P-patch Community Garden program and will void future eligibility.

SECURITY NOTICE:

If you witness or experience garden theft or vandalism, please notify the police by calling (206) 275.7610 to file a report. Please also call the Parks and Recreation office at (206) 275-7609. Due to the open nature of parks and garden sites, The City of Mercer Island is not responsible for loss of garden products or personal items left on site.



P-Patch Operational Update

Parks & Recreation Commission

November 7, 2024

Tonight's Discussion

PRC Role in Policy/Rule Development

Background of Program

2024 Progress

Staffs Next Steps



PRC Role -Rule Development

- Developing and administering program rules (operational policies) and implementing programming is a function of staff.
- The PRC serves in an advisory capacity.
- Provides a forum for the community.
- Utilized to support policy development and may be requested to endorse a policy or rules.



Background

- The Mercer Island P-Patch was established in 1977, behind the former Mercer View Elementary School.
- Located behind the MICEC, it currently occupies approx. 49,000 square feet (1.1 acre) of park space.
- Includes approximately 50-60 plots, varying in size, slop, and visual appearance. Most plots are surrounded by participant-constructed fencing.



Background (cont.)

- Spring 2023 staff identified a need to re-develop program rules and to establish a purpose and objectives for the program.
 - The rules provide a tool for fair and equitable access to the program and hold all participants accountable to the same requirements.
- Staff utilized the PRC in an advisory capacity to assist in re-developing program rules and to establish a program purpose and objectives.
- Participants were informed of opportunities to provide input.
- Following (2) public meetings and after reviewing public comments, the PRC endorsed the new P-Patch Rules on Oct. 5, 2023.



P-Patch Purpose & Objectives

Purpose Statement:

The Mercer Island P-Patch is a community garden program coordinated by the City of Mercer Island and cultivated by Mercer Island residents through environmentally sustainable practices. The P-Patch program provides the opportunity for participants to grow food and ornamental plantings within individual plots enabling opportunities for connections within the community, increased food security, and improved physical and mental health for visitors and participants alike.

Program Objectives:

- Provide and allocate designated plot areas for community gardening activities.
- Enable gardening and gathering opportunities which improve both mental and physical health.
- Align participation with maintaining the natural character of the park and minimize unnatural physical and visual impacts to the surrounding park and neighborhood area.
- Provide an environment that enables participants of different ages and demographics to come together, interact, and cultivate meaningful relationships through gardening.
- Utilize garden plots and the surrounding area to enhance biodiversity and contribute to the preservation of the environment.



2024 Program Stats

- **P-Patch Plots:** 58 plots ranging in size and appearance.
 - 5 participants with multiple plots
- **Registration:** 49 registrants
- **Waitlist:** 47 participants (unverified)
- **Vacant Plots:** 10-12
- **Promotion/Marketing:**
 - This program has not been actively promoted.



2024 Progress

- Focused work on aligning participation with program purpose and objectives.
- Established communications with participants.
- Identified a need to update the registration process and documentation for plot maps and assignments.
- Determining participation desires for 2025- who is active and plans to return vs. inactive.
- Identified a waitlist of 47 individuals*
- Established Park Maintenance support and levels of service for the program.



Prominent Issues

- Staff follow-through / documentation
- A need to define plots and assign appropriately/accurately.
- Individuals with multiple plots/ “Super Plots”
- Vacant or unutilized plots
- The Waitlist
- Loose plastics- hoses- fencing issues

***A need to enhance consistency and efficiency.**



Staff Decision Making

- Act in the best interest of the program and community.
- Utilize the program purpose and objectives.
- Steward access to public park space in a way that is beneficial to the community and aligned with community values for parks.
- Provide equitable opportunities.
- Establish reasonable and consistent expectations.



Next Steps

- P-Patch Participant Meeting- Nov. 13
 - Address confusion – provide clear information
 - Address safety related issues
- Confirm waitlist & meet individually with participants.
- Prepare vacant plots for new participants
- Accept applications and registration
- Collect fees/ assign plots/document and commit to timelines.
- Assign waitlist participants.
- Evaluate and maintain communication.



Questions?

