



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**AB 6902  
April 7, 2026  
Regular Business**

**AGENDA BILL INFORMATION**

<b>TITLE:</b>	AB 6902: Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Approve Resolution No. 1692 adopting the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan (see Exhibit 2).	

<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Public Works
<b>STAFF:</b>	Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations Kellye Hilde, Deputy Public Works Director Shelby Perrault, Capital Parks Manager
<b>COUNCIL LIAISON:</b>	Craig Reynolds
<b>EXHIBITS:</b>	1. Deane’s Children’s Park Location Map 2. Resolution No. 1692 (Includes Site Plan Graphic and Site Plan Report) 3. Parks and Recreation Commission Hand-Off Memo 4. FAQ Document
<b>CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:</b>	3. Make once-in-a-generation investments to update and modernize aging infrastructure, capital facilities, and parks.

<b>AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE</b>	\$ 195,300
<b>AMOUNT BUDGETED</b>	\$ 1,500,000
<b>APPROPRIATION REQUIRED</b>	\$ n/a

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide an overview of the planning process for the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan and to present the Site Plan for review and approval by the City Council (Capital Project 90.25.0015).

- On March 18, 2025, the City Council authorized staff to proceed with developing a Site Plan for Deane’s Children’s Park ([AB6641](#)). Deane’s Children’s Park is located next to Island Crest Park (see Exhibit 1).
- The decision to pursue a Site Plan (which is similar to a Park Master Plan) was made to comprehensively plan for replacement of aging equipment, meet ADA accessibility requirements, and to improve circulation and overall park functionality.
- Work on the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan commenced at the end of 2024 and the planning process will conclude upon adoption of the Site Plan by the City Council. Resolution No. 1692 is presented as Exhibit 2 and includes the Site Plan and the Site Plan Report for City Council review and approval.

- The Parks and Recreation Commission stewarded the planning process for Deane’s Children’s Park and has prepared a recommendation for City Council consideration (see Exhibit 3).
- The Site Plan provides a long-term vision to address improvements at the park over the next 10 to 20 years. The Site Plan includes a new layout and play area design, a recommended phasing plan, preliminary cost estimates, and a recommended funding strategy. Importantly, the Site Plan addresses ADA accessibility through an inclusive design focused on serving all ages and abilities. The City Council allocated \$1,500,000 in the 2025-2026 Biennial Budget and Capital Improvement Program for the planning, design, and construction of the improvements at Deane’s Children’s Park, including the development of the new Site Plan. A portion of these funds come from the Parks Levy for playground equipment replacement. The final scope of work for the first phase of construction at will be determined upon adoption of the Site Plan.
- The staff prepared a FAQ Document in response to a number of questions received about the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan (see Exhibit 4)

## BACKGROUND

### PARK FORMATION

In 1962, the Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) proposed a children’s park at Island Crest Park, which was owned and operated by King County. After the plan was approved, MIPA solicited support from local organizations to purchase equipment and enlisted community volunteers to build the children’s play area. The City acquired Island Crest Park in 1968 and renamed the play area Deane’s Children’s Park in 1985, in honor of Lola and Phil Deane, Mercer Island residents who were instrumental in the park’s creation. MIPA has continued to partner with the City to improve Deane’s, including a major park renovation that was completed in 2005.

### 2022 PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE (PROS) PLAN

The [2022 PROS Plan](#) established a long-term vision and goals and objectives to guide investment in parks, facilities, and recreation services based on community input and system needs. The PROS Plan also ensures alignment with state requirements, maintaining eligibility for future grant funding opportunities.

Within the PROS Plan is a systemwide conditions assessment of park infrastructure and amenities, which informs development and prioritization of the 6-year Parks Capital Improvement Program (Parks CIP), which is updated every two years to ensure the plan reflects current financial realities and community needs.

The conditions assessment revealed that most playgrounds on Mercer Island do not meet ADA or universal accessibility standards, and that much of the existing equipment lacks accessible features. Accessibility was identified as a primary goal for enhancing all parks, here are two excerpts from the PROS Plan:

**Goal #1** of the PROS Plan (page 20) Provide a high quality, welcoming, and inclusive parks and recreation system that meets community needs now and in the future.

**Objective 1.6** (page 20) Design and maintain parks and facilities to offer universal accessibility for residents of all physical capabilities, skill levels, and ages as appropriate and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design. Seek opportunities to eliminate barriers at existing facilities and address goals identified in the Citywide ADA Transition Plan.

Additionally, during the development of the PROS Plan, 10 of the City's 18 playgrounds were identified as approaching the end of their useful life, including play equipment at Deane's Children's Park. The plan further noted that most playground equipment systemwide would need to be replaced over a 20-year period. These findings informed development of the 2022 Parks Levy, covered in detail in a following section.

## **2022 ADA TRANSITION PLAN**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law enacted to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities and to ensure equal access to public facilities, programs, and services. Title II of the ADA applies to state and local governments and requires public agencies to evaluate their services, policies, and practices to ensure accessibility. As part of this requirement, agencies must complete a Self-Evaluation and develop an ADA Transition Plan identifying physical barriers and outlining a strategy to achieve compliance.

The ADA Standards for Accessible Design, originally adopted in 1991 and updated in 2010, established minimum requirements for accessibility in newly constructed and altered public facilities. These standards guide the design and construction of City-owned infrastructure, including public rights-of-way, buildings, parks, and recreation facilities.

The City adopted its [ADA Transition Plan](#) in May 2022. The plan provides a comprehensive inventory of barriers across City-owned properties, including sidewalks and curb ramps within the public right-of-way, public buildings, and park facilities. It identifies priorities and includes cost estimates for improvements needed to remove barriers and improve accessibility over time. The ADA Transition Plan is intended to be a living document that guides ongoing and future capital projects, maintenance activities, and operations to ensure compliance with federal requirements and to improve access for all community members.

The City's ADA Transition Plan outlines several upgrades for Deane's Children's Park existing conditions, such as adding ramp access to all play areas and upgrading restrooms with ADA-compliant signage, grab bars, and maneuvering clearances. A comprehensive list of all barriers recorded in facilities and parks can be found in Appendix D of the plan.

## **ADA STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE DESIGN - PLAYGROUNDS**

Accessibility in playgrounds is not optional, it is required under federal law through the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. These standards establish minimum requirements for newly designed, constructed, or altered public facilities, including playgrounds, to ensure they are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

In a playground setting, the ADA Standards focus on providing a continuous accessible route connecting entry points to and within the play area, along with access to a minimum required number and variety of ground-level and elevated play components. The standards do not require that all surfacing be the same material; rather, they emphasize functional accessibility and usability. Key standards include:

- Accessible routes (the paths that allow someone using a mobility device to enter and move through the play area) must be firm, stable, and slip resistant. This includes routes approaching the playground (such as from sidewalks or parking areas) as well as routes within the play area, which must connect accessible elements. Within play areas, accessible routes are commonly provided using unitary surfacing, such as poured-in-place rubber or artificial turf.

- Access to play components must be provided. This may include ramped access or transfer systems that allow someone to move from a mobility device onto play equipment. Ramps or transfer systems must be provided in accordance with ADA requirements for elevated play components. Beyond these transfer points, the surfacing does not need to be unitary, as the user is no longer in their mobility device.
- Fall zones (the safety surfacing around and beneath equipment) may be either unitary or pervious materials (such as engineered wood fiber), provided they meet applicable safety standards and do not interrupt required accessible routes within the play area.

Compliance is achieved by ensuring that individuals using mobility devices can access the playground, navigate within it via a continuous accessible route, and engage with a representative range of play opportunities. Accessible routes and surfaces must also be maintained over time to ensure continued compliance.

## **2022 PARKS LEVY**

In November 2022, the Mercer Island community voted to renew the parks levy that was set to expire at the end of 2023. The renewed 16-year levy provides continued funding to operate and maintain City open spaces, parks, and recreation facilities, and funds operations at Luther Burbank Park. Funds were also included in the Parks Levy to address playground equipment replacements and forest restoration in Pioneer Park.

The levy generates approximately \$415,000 annually to support playground equipment replacements across the City. Note that the levy funds were intended to address replacement of the play equipment/playground structures, with resources for other park improvements intended to be funded through other means (grants, capital funding, donations, etc.)

The playground equipment at Deane’s Children’s Park was included in the 2022 Parks Levy and anticipated for replacement on a phased schedule. The Dragon playground structure was not in scope of the 16-year timeframe of the levy.

At the time the Parks Levy was prepared, the staff developed a preliminary timeline for playground equipment replacement to illustrate potential phasing (See [AB 6105 Exhibit 2](#)). The “Castle Playground” was intended to be replaced in 2022/2023 and the “Platform Playground” was intended to be replaced in 2037. The timing for replacement was estimated based on the age of the equipment and when the staff estimated the equipment would be due for replacement but is subject to revision.

Upon passage of the 2022 Parks Levy, the staff began working with a consultant on the playground equipment replacements and identified that the approach to Deane’s Children’s Park would greatly benefit from a new vision and layout to address a myriad of issues at the site. This included planning for required ADA improvements.

## **SITE PLANS & MASTER PLANS AND WHY THEY ARE NEEDED**

A park site plan (similar to a “master plan”) provides a clear, strategic roadmap for how a park will be developed, maintained, and improved over time. It ensures that facilities are thoughtfully organized to meet community needs while balancing functionality, accessibility, safety, and environmental stewardship. By identifying priorities and phasing improvements, a site plan supports more efficient use of limited funding and helps avoid piecemeal or reactive decision-making. It also strengthens grant competitiveness by demonstrating a well-conceived, long-term vision for the park.

An alternative approach to develop a site plan or a master plan is to address each capital project independently, with separate public engagement for each project. This method is not recommended, as it increases overall planning costs, creates inefficiencies, and can lead to fragmented decision-making. Without a coordinated vision, individual projects may not align well with one another, resulting in a disjointed park layout, missed opportunities for shared infrastructure/design efficiencies, and a less cohesive user experience.

The City has a history of pursuing comprehensive planning for its major parks, reflecting the value of a coordinated, long-term approach. The [Master Plan for Luther Burbank Park](#) was adopted in 2006, and the [Master Plan for Aubrey Davis Park](#) was adopted in 2019.

A site plan is similar to a master plan, differing primarily in scale. Because the planning effort for Deane's Children's Park focused on the play area only, rather than the entirety of Island Crest Park, staff have referred to this effort as a "Site Plan."

It is important to note that a site plan or master plan is not a capital budget and does not guarantee funding for the plan. Rather, it is a long-term framework that guides the development of a park over time, helping to align future investments and positioning the City to pursue grants, donations, and other funding opportunities in a coordinated fashion.

#### **DEANE'S SITE PLAN – OVERVIEW, NEED, AND SCOPE OF WORK**

The City initiated development of a Site Plan for Deane's Children's Park to establish a long-term vision and strategic planning framework for improvements over a 10 to 20-year horizon. Informed by existing site conditions and community input, the Site Plan identifies desired park amenities, the general layout, and relationships between features, and guides phased implementation over time. It is not a detailed design or construction document, but rather a planning tool to inform future decision-making, funding, and project sequencing. Adoption of a Site Plan, as mentioned previously, also supports grant eligibility and coordinated investment as resources become available.

While Deane's Children's Park was initially prioritized for playground equipment replacement, further evaluation indicated broader park improvements were needed. A 2024 assessment found that key amenities, including the restroom, picnic shelter, furnishings, paths and parking are outdated, in disrepair, or do not meet current accessibility standards. In addition to these deficiencies, the park's relatively flat layout presents a unique opportunity to create a more inclusive and accessible play environment. The assessment also highlighted opportunities to better integrate the nearby Bike Skills Area and improve overall circulation, amenities, and park functionality.

Given these findings, the City Manager recommended pausing the standalone playground replacement project to pursue the development of a comprehensive Site Plan for Deane's Children's Park. The scope of work, approved by the City Council on March 18, 2025, included evaluating existing conditions; community engagement; and development of a long-term plan that integrates park features, addresses accessibility requirements, improves circulation, and identifies phased improvements, cost estimates, and a long-term funding strategy.

The planning, design, and construction of Deane's Children's Park is anticipated to occur in multiple phases, generally broken down as follows:

- Phase I - Planning: Develop a Site Plan through a community engagement process that will address universal play standards including a new park layout and phasing plan for the replacement of equipment and amenities. The Site Plan will also include cost estimates and a funding strategy. The Parks and Recreation Commission will review the proposed alternatives and present a recommendation to the City Council for adoption.
- Phase II – Design, Permitting & Construction: The Site Plan will identify the first phase of capital improvement work, including anticipated replacement of one or more playground structures. The project will advance through detailed design, permitting, and phased construction that is anticipated to take place from 2026-2027.
- Future Phases: The full scope of improvements exceeds the initial budget allocation. Future capital improvements will be recommended for implementation in phases, to include continued opportunities for grant funding and community fundraising.

Since phasing has recently been raised as a concern, it is important to understand that the initial phases were proposed to ensure improvements to Deane’s are implemented in a logical, sequential manner. The phasing framework was also designed to position the City to pursue grant funding across multiple, distinct phases of work. However, phasing is not fixed and will likely evolve over time. Improvements could ultimately be delivered in many smaller phases or consolidated into a single phase if significant funding - such as a major donation - becomes available.

Staff will use Site Plan, once adopted, to develop and refine recommendations to the City Council on how and when to implement improvements over the next 10 to 20 years. This includes bringing forward specific projects identified in the Site Plan for funding consideration through the City’s biennial budget process, ensuring that investments are aligned with priorities and available resources.

## **PLANNING VERSUS DESIGN**

Planning and design serve distinct but complementary roles in delivering successful capital projects. Planning is a broad, strategic process that incorporates public engagement, community input, and policy considerations to establish a long-term vision and set of goals priorities. Deane’s Children’s Park is currently in this planning phase and once the Site Plan is adopted, the planning phase will conclude.

Design, on the other hand, is a more technical and detailed phase of work that translates the adopted Site Plan into capital projects, often broken down into multiple phases. The design phase, sometimes referred to as “design development” includes architecture, engineering analysis, site-specific studies, and the development of detailed drawings and specifications that define materials, dimensions, and construction methods. During the design phase, projects are refined to address permitting requirements, code compliance, constructability, cost estimates, and long-term maintenance considerations. The design phase is led and managed by professional City staff, supported by consultants, who work to advance projects identified in the adopted Site Plan. The work culminates in a complete set of construction documents that are used to solicit bids from contractors and ultimately deliver the project as intended.

Following design, projects move into the bidding and construction phase. During bidding, the City solicits competitive proposals from qualified contractors based on the completed construction documents. Once a contractor is selected and a contract is awarded, construction begins. This phase includes site preparation, installation of improvements, inspections, and ongoing project management to ensure the work is completed in accordance with plans, specifications, and budget. City staff oversee construction to maintain quality, manage timelines, and address any unforeseen conditions, ultimately delivering the project for public use.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The community engagement plan for the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan was approved by the City Council on March 18, 2025. The engagement plan focused on identifying the needs and priorities of the project, gathering input on various play elements to inform the development of the design concept alternatives, and gathering feedback on concept alternatives to inform the final recommendation.

Opportunities were promoted through all City channels, including the MI weekly e-newsletter, social media, and on-site signage, as well as shared through outlets such as the Mercer Island Reporter, the Mercer Island School District, and Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA).

## PLANNING PROCESS – SUMMARY

The Site Plan was developed through a four-phase planning process. The process began with a detailed analysis of existing site conditions, including an evaluation of the existing playground structures, picnic shelter, and restroom, as well as an assessment of accessibility, stormwater conditions, and available utilities. Existing trails were documented, and the overall condition of the park was evaluated to identify opportunities and constraints for future improvements. This work formed the foundation for development of the Site Plan.

### Planning Phase I: Initial Input Gathering

From April to May 2025, the project team conducted a multi-faceted community engagement effort to gather input on park experiences, priorities, and future improvements. Outreach included an online survey, an in-person open house, project booths at two community events (MIPA Circus and Leap for Green), and school-based engagement across four elementary schools. These efforts were designed to reach a broad cross-section of the community, including families, children, and longtime park users. A detailed summary is provided in the Site Plan Report (see Exhibit 2).

### Planning Phase II: Design Concepts

From July to August 2025, the project team developed and presented two design concepts—*The Quest* and *Woodsy Wonders*— based on initial community input. Engagement included an online survey, a focused discussion with the Friends of Dragon Park, and project booths at four City events: Summer Celebration, Mostly Music in the Park, National Night Out, and Pride in the Park. These efforts were designed to solicit input on the overall look, feel, and character of the concepts, with particular emphasis on play equipment and different types and categories of play. Community feedback expressed a clear preference for *Woodsy Wonders*, citing its alignment with the park’s natural setting and its support for imaginative, inclusive play. A detailed summary is provided in the Site Plan Report (see Exhibit 2).

### Planning Phase III: Preferred Site Plan Development

From September to October 2025, the preferred design was refined based on community input and Commission feedback. On September 4, 2025, the Parks and Recreation Commission participated in a site tour and expressed support for advancing the *Woodsy Wonders* concept, while identifying areas for additional exploration.

Public art integration was reviewed with the Arts Council on October 15, 2025, including sculptural entry features, integrated graphic media, and functional art elements such as seating and wayfinding. These elements will be informed by student input and funded by the City’s 1% for Public Art fund during each phase of improvements.

The resulting preferred plan builds on the *Woodsy Wonders* concept while incorporating select elements from *The Quest*, including a reoriented restroom and picnic shelter improve sightlines, as well as a sensory pathway connecting to Kenton’s Dragon. Additional design elements reference Kenton’s Dragon through subtle details, while fitting into the broader treehouse theme.

#### Planning Phase IV: Site Plan Adoption

The Site Plan was presented to the Commission at its February 5, 2026, Regular Meeting. At that meeting, the Commission recommended the Site Plan (included in Exhibit 2) to City Council for adoption. The Commission also directed the Chair and Vice Chair to prepare a hand-off memo. At the March 5, 2026, Regular Meeting, the Commission reviewed, finalized, and approved the hand-off memo, thereby concluding the planning process (see Exhibit 3).

Following Commission action, a State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) non-project checklist was submitted on February 27, 2026, and deemed complete on March 11, 2026. The City of Mercer Island issued a Determination of Non-Significance on March 23, 2026. The Site Plan is now before the City Council for review and consideration.

#### **PLANNING PROCESS – DATA COLLECTED**

The following summarizes community engagement and data collected that informed development of the Site Plan:

- Hosted project booths at two community events to introduce the project and share initial survey information.
- Engaged more than 1,200 students across 54 K – 5 classes at four elementary schools to vote on preferred play features and park themes.
- Collected nearly 160 ‘Design Your Own Park’ submissions from elementary students providing insight into students’ park ideas and vision.
- Hosted an Open House at Island Park Elementary, attended by approximately 20 community members.
- Conducted two online community surveys, receiving a total of 174 responses:
  - Survey #1 (April 21 – May 23, 2025): 102 responses
  - Survey #2 (July 12 – August 12, 2025): 72 responses
- Hosted project booths at four community events to gather input and vote on design concepts and play equipment themes, engaging over 500 attendees.
- Engaged an inclusive design consultant to inform Site Plan development using universal design principles and evidence-based best practices for inclusive playgrounds, applying key design considerations and inclusive design principles throughout equipment selection and site layout refinement to remove barriers to participation and support development across physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communicative domains for a variety of ages and abilities.

#### **PROJECT TIMELINE**

The Site Plan development process was expected to take about one year and was divided into five major steps:

- Project Kickoff and Site Assessment: Q4 2024 – Q1 2025 (complete)
- Pre-Design and Pre-Engagement: Q1 2025 (complete)
- Concept Development: Q2 – Q3 2025 (complete)

- Identify gaps, needs, and priorities of project, and gather input on play elements
- Develop concept alternatives
- Final Design Recommendation: Q4 2025 (complete)
  - Refine concept alternatives into one final design as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Site Plan Adoption: Q1 - Q2 2026 (we are here)**
  - Parks and Recreation Commission to provide the Site Plan recommendation to the City Council for review and adoption.
  - City Council to review and adopt Site Plan

## ISSUE/DISCUSSION

### SITE PLAN ADOPTION

Deane’s Children’s Park is located next to Island Crest Park (see Exhibit 1) and the Site Plan is presented to the City Council for review and adoption (see Exhibit 2). A Site Plan Graphic and Site Plan Report are included as part of Exhibit 2. The draft Site Plan Report summarizes the project background, planning process, and design considerations that informed the development of the Site Plan. It includes an overview of inclusive design principles, a detailed summary of the Site Plan, proposed phasing, maintenance considerations, and implementation strategies. The draft Site Plan Report serves as a robust reference document for the topics summarized in this agenda bill and once adopted, will serve as the guiding policy for future capital investments at Deane’s Children’s Park.

### INCLUSIVE DESIGN

The development of the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan is guided by inclusive playground design, using universal design principles as they relate to the playground environment and evidence-based best practices. Inclusive playgrounds aim to remove physical and social barriers to participation through thoughtful design and programming, supporting the developmental needs of all children across physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communicative domains.

Inclusive playgrounds go beyond minimum accessibility standards. Successful inclusive playgrounds are equitable, flexible, and intuitive, while offering a variety of activities that allow children to be independent, active, and engaged in a safe and welcoming environment. The goal is to create a space where children of all abilities can play, explore, and connect.

Achieving true inclusivity requires a carefully balanced approach to play design. Accessibility is the foundational requirement, ensuring that children can reach and use play equipment regardless of mobility. Building on this foundation, adaptive play features are incorporated to support a wider range of abilities and needs. Beyond accessibility and adaptability, a truly inclusive environment intentionally supports comprehensive human development across all five developmental domains (physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communication).

#### Seven Inclusive Design Principles

To guide the selection and arrangement of play elements, the Site Plan was informed by seven inclusive design principles. Together, these principles shape how the playground supports a wide range of abilities, interests, and play styles.

1. Accessibility: everyone can reach and use the play equipment, regardless of ability or mobility.

2. **Equitable Play:** play opportunities support multiple ways to engage, allowing children to choose how they participate.
3. **Flexibility:** play spaces and equipment support multiple ways to engage, allowing children to choose how they participate.
4. **Readability:** spaces, equipment, and supporting amenities, such as clear wayfinding and communication boards, are easy to understand and navigate for all users.
5. **Sensory Engagement:** activities create rich, multi-sensory experiences, including tactile, auditory, visual, vestibular, and proprioceptive opportunities.
6. **Degrees of Social Interaction:** spaces to support solo, small-group, and large-group play, accommodating different social needs and comfort levels.
7. **Multi-Generational Considerations:** spaces accommodate a range of ages and abilities, encouraging intergenerational play and family participation.

The inclusive design principles are applied across a variety of play experiences, including adaptive and accessible equipment, social and cooperative play, sensory-rich activities, cognitive challenges, and opportunities for physical movement and motor planning. Together, these elements form a broad range of features, challenges, and experiences that support meaningful play for children of all abilities.

#### **SITE PLAN – DESIGN SUMMARY**

The Site Plan presents a cohesive vision for reimagining Deane’s Children’s Park over the next 10 to 20 years. By integrating inclusive design strategies within a forest adventure theme, the plan creates a play environment that supports children of all abilities, caregivers, and visitors of all ages. The layout reflects an iterative design process that considered multiple options for circulation, sightlines, play experiences, and accessibility. This approach ensures the plan responds to community input while creating a safe, engaging, and inclusive play environment for all users. An accompanying FAQ document provides additional background on the Site Plan, including its purpose, accessibility improvements, community input, and design details (Exhibit 4).

The park is organized around a clear circulation system that safely connects playground users, Bike Skills Area (BSA) users, and caregivers. A central “Forest Path” acts as the central spine, guiding visitors through the park and linking major play zones, gathering areas, and amenities. Visual landmarks – most notably a tree snag-inspired climbing tower – support intuitive wayfinding and draw users toward the heart of the park.

Primary and secondary entrances include grounding zones to pause, orient, and transition into the sensory-rich play environment. Clear wayfinding elements located at both entrances support inclusive, versatile communication and shared interaction.

Play experiences are organized into a series of connected zones that support the progression of ages, abilities, and play styles. Younger children are welcomed with low-lying play near the primary entrance, including the ages 2-5 Discovery Path, an accessible, forest-inspired trail layered with whimsical elements that guide exploration and sensory engagement. The central play zone offers a diverse mix of inclusive and adaptive equipment that encourages sensory exploration, social interaction, and imaginative play. Key features include adaptive swings, inclusive spinning and rocking elements, a large fallen-log climber inspired by natural forms, and musical and creek-inspired play components that support parallel and cooperative play. Improved sightlines and seating throughout the playground enhance caregiver comfort and supervision. An elevated, accessible route leads to a focused play area for ages 5-12+, while smaller “forest surprise” play elements distributed throughout the site invite discovery and exploration.

At the center of the park, a shared gathering and amenity zone brings together key features that support social connection. This area includes a picnic shelter, a restroom, informal seating opportunities, and an accessible, looped pathway that surrounds the play zone, allowing for comfortable circulation around its perimeter. Play berms integrated into this space provide sensory engagement and casual seating while also serving as a natural strategy to slow cyclists as they exit the Bike Skills Area. A centrally located communication board reinforces inclusive, versatile communication and shared interaction among users of varying ages and abilities.

The Site Plan also reinforces the park's sense of place and legacy. *Kenton's Dragon* remains a cherished amenity, with opportunities identified to preserve and enhance its accessibility. Throughout the park, natural materials, forest-inspired forms, and opportunities for art and sensory features contribute to an immersive, nature-based experience that reflects the forested character of Deane's Children's Park.

Overall, the Site Plan provides a thoughtful balance of programming, inclusivity, safety, and environmental context. By integrating a diverse range of play opportunities with supportive amenities and clear circulation, the plan establishes a flexible framework that supports meaningful play, learning, and community connection.

#### Circulation and Accessibility

Ground-level circulation is a key component of the Site Plan and plays an important role in balancing the project's accessibility goals with the park's natural, heavily wooded setting. A variety of path materials, widths, and slopes respond to terrain, tree impacts, and stormwater management, creating a layered network of routes that allows visitors to choose paths based on comfort level, mobility needs, and desired level of challenge. ADA-accessible routes connect all formal play zones and key amenities, meeting applicable slope and surfacing requirements while maintaining the park's forested character. Adaptive routes are also provided to support exploration and free play; while these paths may include slightly steeper slopes, they are designed to meet applicable playground and trail accessibility standards and offer additional movement options that encourage active play.

#### Play Area Surfacing

Play area surfacing uses a blended approach that combines unitary surfacing - such as poured-in-place rubber and synthetic turf—with engineered wood fiber. Priority is given to unitary surfacing at key locations where it directly interfaces with play equipment, including inclusive play features, transfer points, connected play routes, and ground-level play access, to ensure ease of movement and inclusive use. This hybrid surfacing strategy balances accessibility, cost considerations, stormwater management objectives, and long-term tree health, with the potential to expand unitary surfacing in the future should funding and environmental conditions allow.

#### Parking and Site Access

Parking and access to Deane's Children's Park were identified as priorities during the community outreach process. Through discussions with the P&R Commission, parking layout alternatives were evaluated to explore ways to enhance access to the Park. The analysis focused on increasing both standard and accessible (ADA) parking to better meet community needs. After reviewing the alternatives, the preferred option expands the parking lot footprint to accommodate approximately 17 parking stalls, including four accessible spaces, better supporting park use while remaining responsive to existing site constraints.

This exploration also highlighted the importance of providing a safe, accessible connection to the Island Crest Park Ballfield parking lot. As part of the first phase of improvements, this connection will be explored to ensure visitors have a safe route to the park when the Deane’s Children’s Park lot is at capacity.

### Park Amenities

Park amenities are designed to support inclusive, comfortable, and extended visits while reinforcing the park’s overall character and play experience. The proposed restroom building will include two gender-neutral restrooms, with one featuring a universal changing table to support visitors of all ages and abilities. The building’s architectural character will complement the proposed picnic shelter, reinforcing a cohesive aesthetic within the park’s central zone. The existing restroom near the parking lot will remain in place to provide continued convenience and expanded access.

Seating and gathering areas are thoughtfully distributed throughout the park. Strategically placed seating provides comfort, opportunities for rest or decompression, and clear sightlines into play areas, allowing caregivers to remain engaged and participate in play as desired.

Wayfinding elements are incorporated throughout the site to support navigation, with “grounding zones” at primary and secondary entrances providing spaces to pause, review wayfinding information, and transition into the park’s sensory-rich play environment. These zones also offer opportunities to reinforce the park’s theme and incorporate artistic or community-driven elements.

### Play Equipment

The Site Plan components provide a variety of inclusive play features that allow users to engage in multiple ways. The park’s play areas are designed to support a range of ages, abilities, and play experiences, while integrating with the natural forested setting:

- **Ages 2-5 Critter Corner:** Features signature animal structures and natural play elements with low, unenclosed components and connected circuits that encourage imaginative, sequential, and unstructured play.
- **Ages 2-5 Discovery Path:** An accessible, meandering path with ground-level play elements that promote social, sensory, and nature-based exploration.
- **Central Play Zone:** Serves as a hub near amenities, offering swinging, climbing, balancing, musical, and lounging elements for multi-ability interaction and shared play.
- **Ages 5-12+ Play Zone:** Anchored by a tree-inspired climbing structure with graduated challenges, a spiral net, slide, rope bridge, and ground-level elements for both structured and unstructured play.
- **Forest Surprises:** Scattered play components and natural features like boulders and logs along accessible and adaptive routes encourage exploration, discovery, and learning through the park.

### Striking the Balance

The Site Plan for Deane’s Children’s Park reflects a robust and diverse approach to programming and amenities, intentionally designed to support users of all abilities. The plan prioritizes strong support heard for a park that balances unstructured (informal) play to preserve the site’s existing character, while also incorporating more formal play zones that support appropriate age separation with shared, multi-generational experiences. The result is a Site Plan that offers ample opportunity for forest discovery, with thoughtfully placed equipment that also encourages blended, multi-generational experiences. Inclusive design strategies guided equipment placement, circulation, and amenities, creating opportunities for meaningful play, learning, and connection across all ages and abilities.

## PHASING STRATEGY & COSTS

The Site Plan includes preliminary cost estimates to inform future investment decisions. Implementation is organized into four construction phases, allowing improvements to be completed incrementally and aligned with available funding, partnerships, and grant opportunities over time. A detailed summary is provided in the Site Plan Report (see Exhibit 2).

The phasing strategy is based on constructability and site logistics, with initial work focused on areas furthest from the staging and construction access point (the parking lot). This sequencing minimizes construction conflicts and is intended to maintain no net loss of park amenities between phases. The approach also 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; however, they are generally expected to account for 25% of construction costs.

- Construction Phase 1: \$2.2 million  
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.
- Construction Phase 2: \$3.81 million  
Central play zone, new picnic shelter, utility infrastructure, central pathway improvements, and parking lot improvements
- Construction Phase 3: \$1.16 million  
2 – 5 play area (“Critter Corner” and “Discovery Path”), new restroom, and secondary entry to Bike Skills Area
- Construction Phase 4: \$100,000 allowance  
Kenton’s *Dragon* accessibility improvements
- Total Preliminary Construction Cost: \$7,270,000 (excluding extra opportunities\*)

*\*Extra Opportunities (\$650,000):*

*Play components along trails, a play structure within the glen, and natural features like boulders and logs along accessible and adaptive routes. These elements may be implemented independently, such as through donations and grants, or incorporated into construction phases, as funding allows.*

It is important to note that the higher-than-expected costs reflect trends seen across many public works projects in recent years. Inflation, supply chain disruptions, tariffs, and uncertainty in construction markets have all contributed to significant increases in materials and labor costs. These factors have affected not only playground improvements but infrastructure and park projects nationwide.

While the estimated cost is significant, the Site Plan establishes a clear, long-term vision to guide future investments as resources become available. The Parks Levy provides initial funding to support playground equipment replacement, and completing the Site Plan ensures these early improvements are thoughtfully sited to maximize ADA accessibility and support a cohesive, inclusive park experience.

Implementation will be phased and scaled to available funding, beginning with levy-funded equipment replacement. As demonstrated in other parks, such as Luther Burbank Park, an adopted plan enables phased

implementation while maintaining a consistent vision. In addition, adoption of the Site Plan positions the City to pursue grant funding and align potential donor contributions, many of which require an approved plan as a prerequisite.

## **FUNDING APPROACH**

The City Council allocated \$1,500,000 in the 2025-2026 Biennial Budget and Capital Improvement Program for the planning, design, and construction of the improvements at Deane's Children's Park, including the development of the new Site Plan. Following completion of the Site Plan, approximately \$1,300,000 will remain to support the first phase of improvements.

The project will be funded through a combination of sources, including the Parks Capital Improvement Fund, the 2022 Parks Levy, the King County Parks Levy, grants, and private donations. Grant funding is a key component of this strategy. The City regularly pursues competitive grants through programs such as the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), which oversees grants for park and recreation projects. Mercer Island has a strong track record of success - most recently, more than \$5 million of the Luther Burbank Park Waterfront Improvements project was funded through RCO grants and the King County Flood Control Subregional Opportunity Fund.

Many grant programs require matching funds, which may come from City funds, levy dollars, or community contributions. Adoption of the Site Plan is critical for securing grant funding, as it demonstrates a clear vision, strong community engagement and support, and readiness to proceed with implementation. Community partnerships and donations can further strengthen grant applications and help advance specific phases of the project.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION HAND-OFF MEMO**

During its March 5, 2026, meeting, the P&R Commission revised and approved a hand-off memo to the City Council (see Exhibit 4). The Hand-Off Memo is intended to provide the City Council with more detail about the planning process, including how the P&R Commission developed their recommendation. The P&R Commission Chair and Vice Chair will be attending the City Council meeting on April 7 to present their recommendation to the City Council. The staff thank the P&R Commission for their engagement, leadership, and commitment to this extensive planning process.

## **CITY MANAGER RESPONSE TO HAND-OFF MEMO**

The City Manager is highlighting three concerns in the P&R Commission Hand-Off Memo for Council awareness and welcomes further discussion on these topics at the upcoming Council meeting.

The Hand-Off Memo suggests considering use of the shared-use path along Island Crest Way, rather than constructing the internal paved accessible pathway identified in the Site Plan, which would connect through Deane's Children's Park to Island Park Elementary. The City Manager does not recommend this change and does not believe this will meet ADA accessibility requirements.

The Commission also discussed reducing the proposed sensory play elements, referred to as "Forest Surprises," in favor of organic or "found" features such as logs or boulders. The City Manager is concerned about this revision, as it would reduce dedicated sensory play opportunities and conflict with the project's goal of providing inclusive play experiences for children of varying abilities.

Finally, the memo requests that the P&R Commission be provided an opportunity to review and provide input to the City Council at approximately the 30 percent design stage of each phase to confirm alignment with the Hand-Off Memo, rather than the adopted Site Plan. The background section of this agenda bill explains the different phases of project development (planning, design, bidding, and construction) and once the Site Plan is adopted the subsequent phases of design, bidding, and construction are handled by professional staff. Further the Site Plan, not the Hand-Off Memo, guides capital project development at Deane's Children's Park. The City Manager does not support this recommendation as it would be highly inefficient to manage capital project design and implementation in this manner.

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **DRAFT RESOLUTION**

The Deane's Children's Park Site Plan will be adopted by resolution. Resolution No. 1692 has been prepared in anticipation of adoption and is included as Exhibit 2.

At the April 7, 2026, City Council meeting, the Council may elect to adopt the Site Plan at that time if no further input or modifications are requested. If the City Council requires additional information or requests changes to the Site Plan, staff will return at a future City Council meeting to present the revised Site Plan for review and adoption.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Approve Resolution No. 1692 (Exhibit 2) to adopt the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan.

Or, alternatively,

Direct the City Manager to Revise the Site Plan [insert details for revisions] and return to the City Council at a future meeting for review and adoption.