



Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House Meeting Summary

March 23, 2021 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. | Zoom Meeting

Presenters

- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Chris Hoffman, PRR

Breakout Room Facilitators

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Jessi Bon, City of Mercer Island | • Jason Kinter, City of Mercer Island |
| • Ryan Daly, City of Mercer Island | • Alaine Sommargren, City of Mercer Island |
| • Brian Hartvigson, City of Mercer Island | • Merrill Thomas-Schadt, City of Mercer Island |
| • Katie Herzog, City of Mercer Island | • Jean Akers, Conservation Technix |
| • Zachary Houvener, City of Mercer Island | • Nancy Thai, PRR |
| • Allen Hunter, City of Mercer Island | • Lauren Wheeler, PR |

Introduction and Background

The City of Mercer Island began the process to update the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan in September 2019, but paused the planning work in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PROS Plan update process was restarted in December 2020.

Since restarting the planning process, several meetings have occurred including a joint meeting with the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 19, 2021 to formally re-start the planning process. This was followed by a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on February 4, 2021 to gather input to help inform the first Virtual Open House.

The first Virtual Open House was held on March 23, 2021 using the Zoom platform. The virtual public meeting provided an opportunity to share information about the PROS Plan update and gather feedback from community members to help inform further development the Plan.



Notifications

The project team used a variety of methods to spread the word about the Virtual Open House . These included:

- An article in the [MI Weekly newsletter](#)
- [Social media posts](#)
- Posting flyers at park kiosks, the P-Patch, and the Boat Launch
- Email notification sent to a variety of Parks and Recreation distribution lists.
- Inclusion in the City Manager's Report at City Council meetings
- Posting information about the public meeting on the City website and [Let's Talk page](#)



City of Mercer Island Facebook post reminding people to attend the Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House on March 23.

Meeting overview

PROS Plan consultant Steve Duh described the Mercer Island PROS plan process and provided an overview of the survey results. The survey was conducted in in early 2020 and prior to pausing the project in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The presentation also included an overview of the important role the community plays in the planning process including helping to shape the community's vision for Mercer Island parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces.

Seventy-three participants attended the meeting. The meeting was recorded, and the video is available on the Let's Talk Page.

What we heard

The project team used polling questions and facilitated breakout room discussions to gather input from meeting participants.

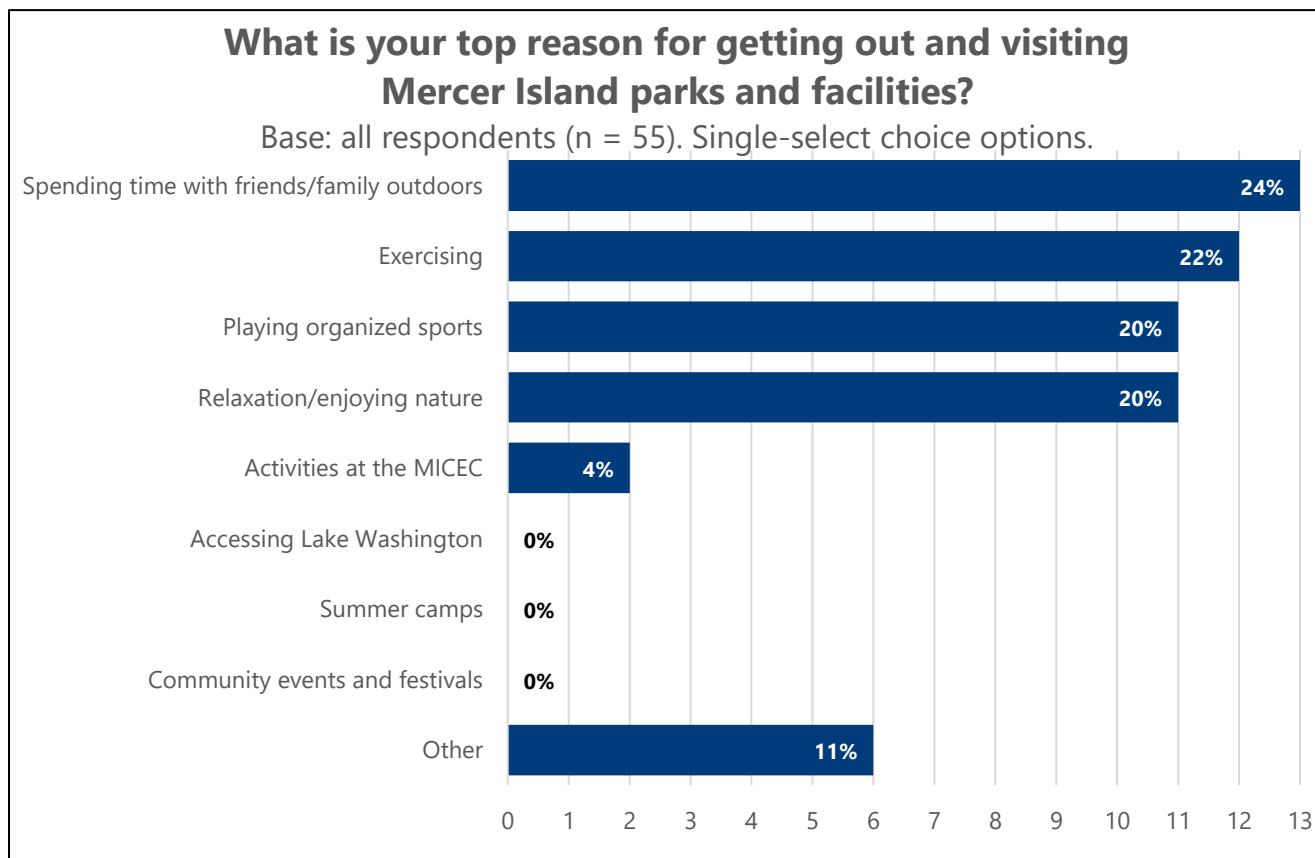
Polling

The project team asked the following questions using the polling function in Zoom. Attendees could share answers in the chat box if they selected “Other” as an answer.

1. What is your top reason for getting out and visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities? (Single choice)

- a. Exercising
- b. Spending time with friends/family outdoors
- c. Accessing Lake Washington
- d. Playing organized sports
- e. Activities at the MICEC
- f. Relaxation/enjoying nature
- g. Summer camps
- h. Community events and festivals
- i. Other

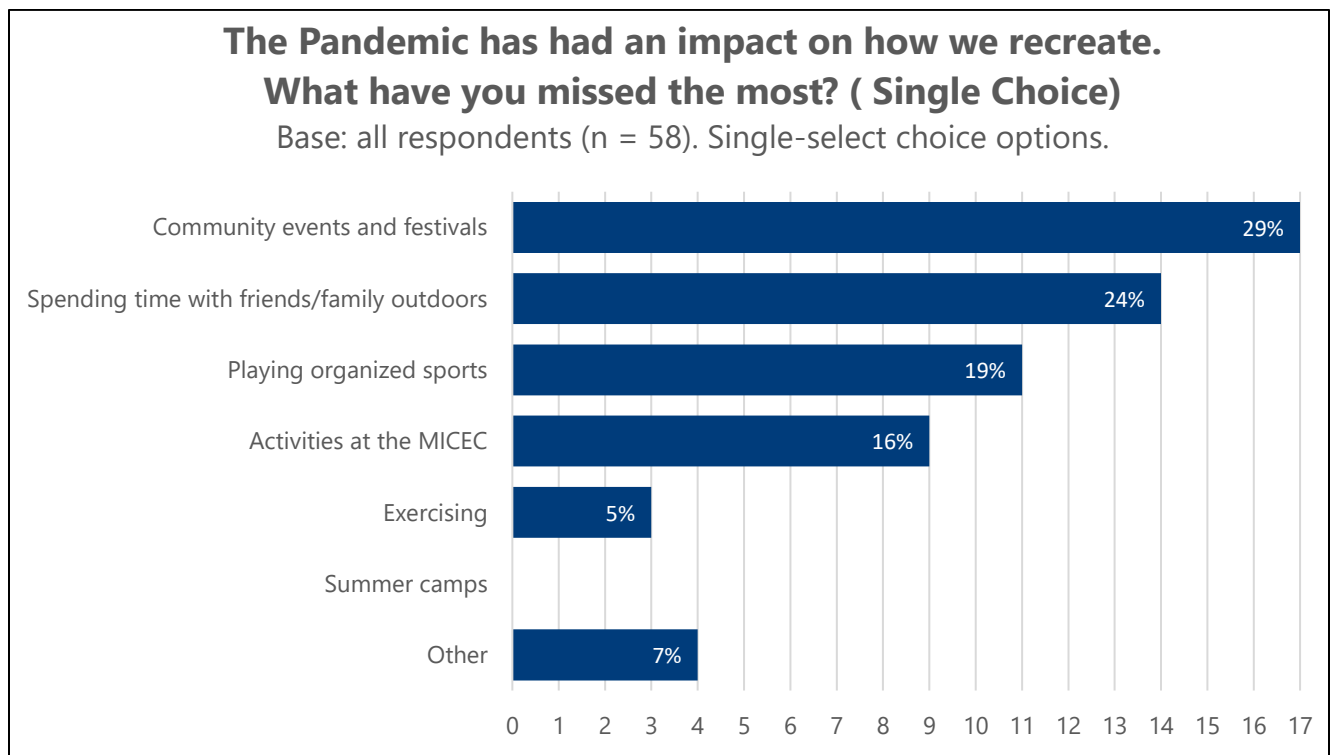
The top two reasons for getting out and visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities were to spend time with friends/family outdoors and exercising. Playing organized sports and relaxation were tied for the number three spot. People who selected “Other” shared their top reason as walking their dog(s), mountain biking, and forest stewardship.



2. The Pandemic has had an impact on how we recreate. What have you missed the most? (Single choice)

- a. Exercising
- b. Spending time with friends/family outdoors
- c. Playing organized sports
- d. Activities at the MICEC
- e. Summer camps
- f. Community events and festivals
- g. Other

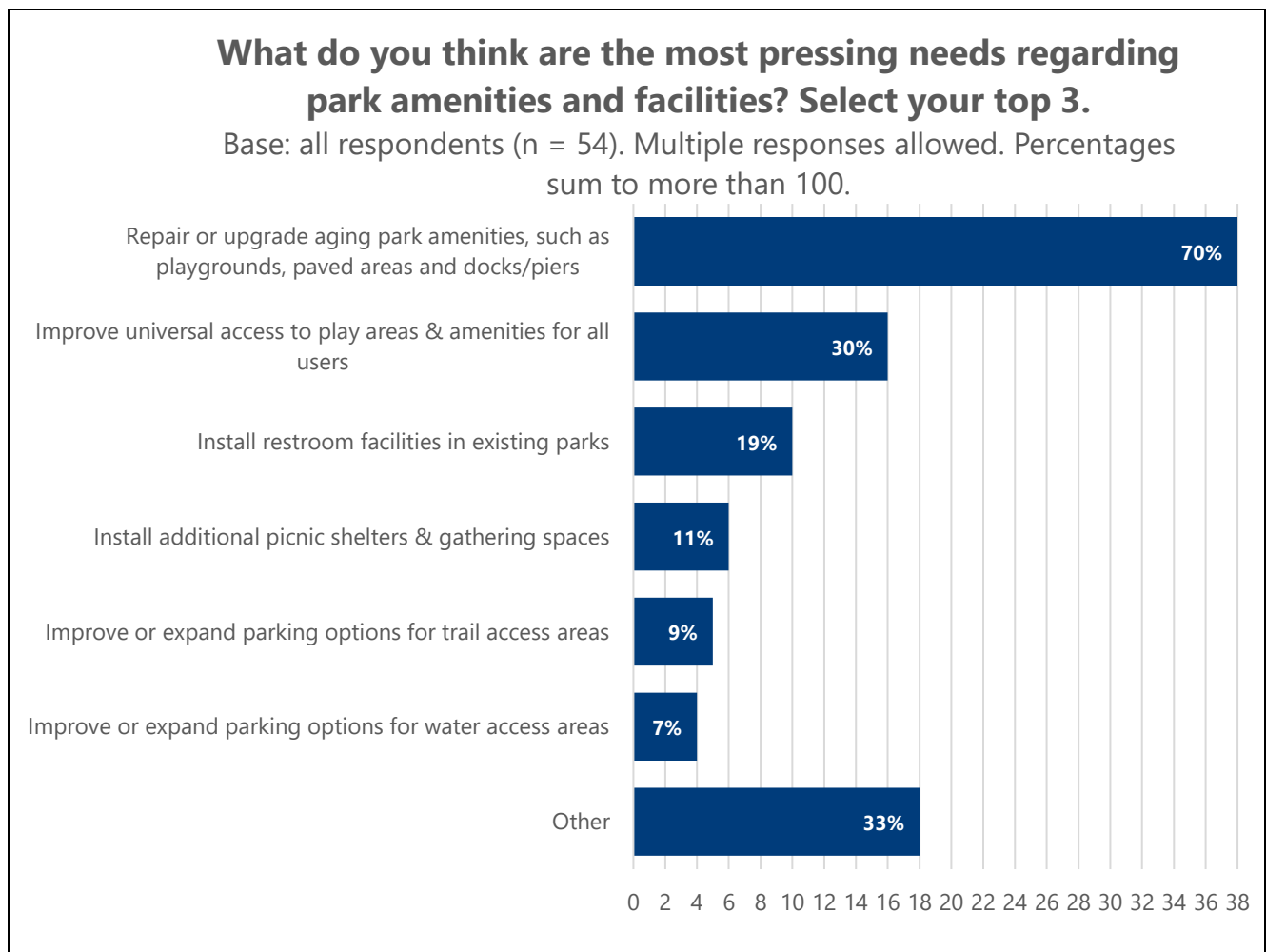
The majority of respondents selected they missed community events and festivals the most during the Pandemic. Spending time with friends/family outdoors was second. People who selected “Other” shared they most missed mountain biking and going to the beach.



3. What do you think are the most pressing needs regarding park amenities and facilities? Select your top 3.

- a. Improve universal access to play areas & amenities for all users
- b. Install additional picnic shelters & gathering spaces
- c. Improve or expand parking options for water access areas
- d. Improve or expand parking options for trail access areas
- e. Repair or upgrade aging park amenities, such as playgrounds, paved areas and docks/piers
- f. Install restroom facilities in existing parks
- g. Other

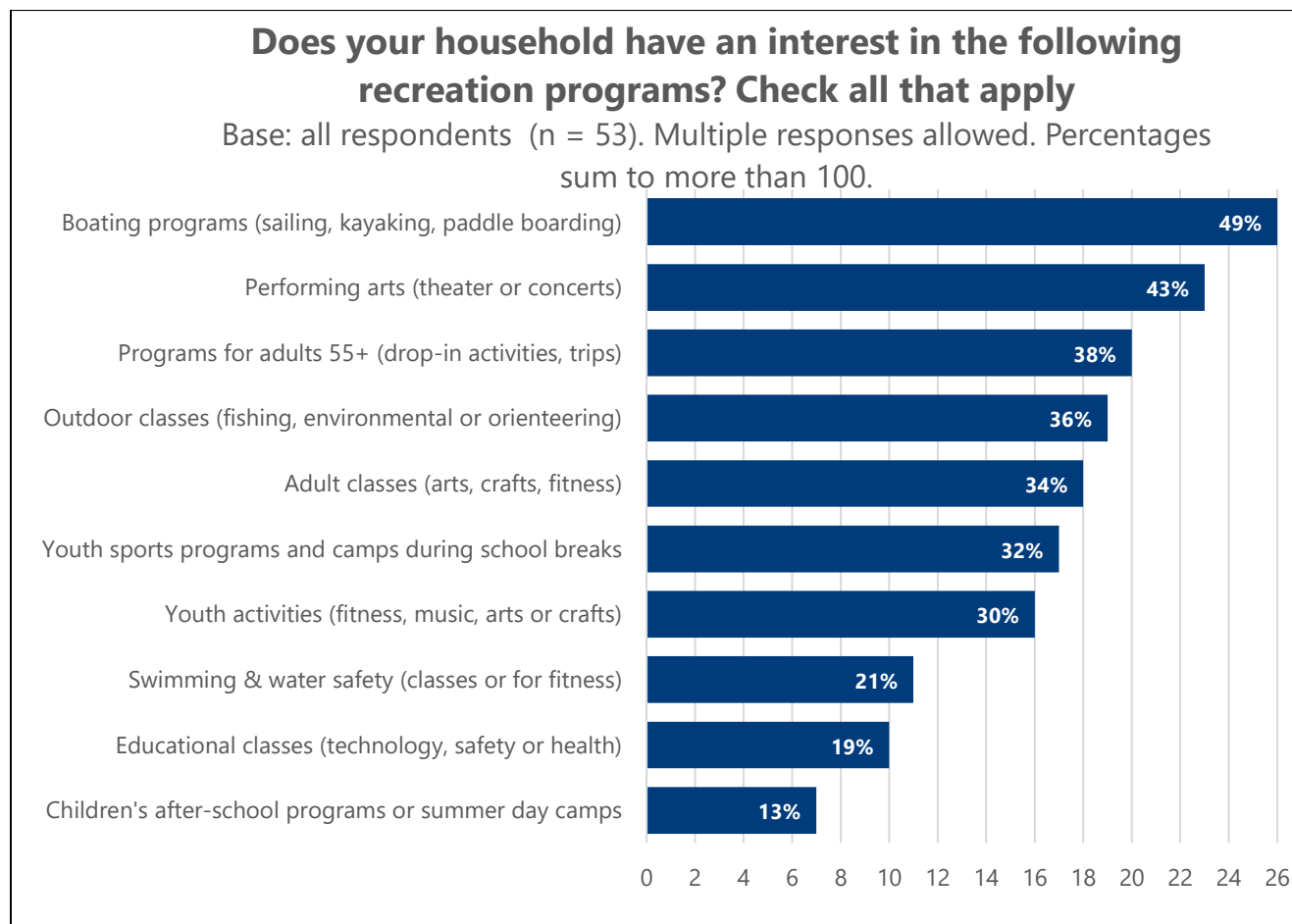
Over two-thirds of the 54 respondents thought repairing or upgrading aging park amenities is one of the most pressing needs regarding park amenities and facilities. People who selected “Other” shared they thought the most pressing needs were more mountain bike specific trails and bike parks, indoor and outdoor pickleball courts, allocating more funds for trail maintenance and forest restoration efforts, improving and expanding trails, and synthetic turf fields at schools or public parks.



4. Does your household have an interest in the following recreation programs? Check all that apply.

- a. Swimming & water safety (classes or for fitness)
- b. Boating programs (sailing, kayaking, paddle boarding)
- c. Outdoor classes (fishing, environmental or orienteering)
- d. Educational classes (technology, safety or health)
- e. Performing arts (theater or concerts)
- f. Programs for adults 55+ (drop-in activities, trips)
- g. Adult classes (arts, crafts, fitness)
- h. Children's after-school programs or summer day camps
- i. Youth activities (fitness, music, arts or crafts)
- j. Youth sports programs and camps during school breaks

Nearly half of the 53 respondents had an interest in boating programs followed by 43 percent of respondents having an interest in performing arts. Four of the top five responses (boating programs, performing arts, outdoor classes, and adult classes) were also in the top five responses to the same question that was part of the first community survey conducted in early 2020. People who selected "Other" share they have an interest in bicycle safety and maintenance programs, inclusive activities for adults and children with disabilities, and first aid and CPR classes.



Breakout Room Discussions and Key Themes

The project team hosted three breakout room sessions to provide attendees an opportunity to share feedback and ideas in small group settings. All breakout room sessions and questions are listed below and organized by key themes as summarized by the project team.

#1 Beaches, Waterfront & Water-oriented experiences

- What's working well at our waterfronts?
 - Appreciation for the street end parks
 - Appreciation for waterfront beaches (especially Groveland and Proctor Landing), parks, and access
- What could we do better?
 - Improve water safety by having lifeguards on duty
 - Improve infrastructure such as repairing docks and cement that is aging and providing seating and more trash cans
 - Increased and safer access to the water for hand-carry watercraft, such as kayaks, and for people with accessibility needs
- If you had to pick one area to focus on for water-oriented recreation experiences, what would it be?
 - Improve accessibility of street end parks and provide clearer signage to find them
 - Provide boating classes, facilities, and rentals

#2 Trails:

- What's working well with the Mercer Island trail system?
 - Appreciation for the variety of rustic and paved trails that connect around the Island that can be used in a variety of ways
 - Appreciation for well-maintained trails
 - Appreciation for space to ride bicycles and for mountain biking
- What could we be doing better?
 - Clearer signage and education about the trails available on Mercer Island
 - Provide clearer signage about dogs on trails or in off-leash parks
 - Expand trails available for bicycles
 - Improve infrastructure and accessibility on the trails
 - Repair paved trails that need it
 - Consider designating parts of trails for certain use to promote walking and bicycle safety
 - Improve safety at street crossings
 - Balance trails for active and passive uses
 - Expand BMX trails
 - Protect and repair walking and hiking trails
- What's one new idea for the trail system?
 - A centralized location to learn about the trail system, whether that is a website or smartphone application
 - Expand mountain biking opportunities
 - Provide opportunities for community members to participate in maintenance

#3 Balancing access to nature with active park uses

- What are your thoughts on our current mix of active and passive uses of open space and parks?
 - Mix of community members who feel there is a good balance between passive and active uses of space and those who would like more passive use space and more active use space. Wide range of responses.
- What would you do differently?
 - Make Mercer Island spaces more accessible
 - Make spaces usable all year round, for example adding lighting and turf grass to some spaces
 - Update some spaces to have multiple uses
 - Provide independent oversight at Snake Hill
 - Would like to see more opportunities to play pickleball, for example updating the old tennis courts at Luther Burbank Park to pickleball courts
- Should the City invest in acquisition of new park land and/or open space?
 - Interest in strategic land acquisition, but acknowledgement that cost and availability may be prohibitive
 - Interest in improving what Mercer Island already has and using those spaces effectively
- What's one new idea?
 - A lot of interest to update some tennis courts to provide space to play pickleball
 - Add new opportunities such as bouldering or a museum
 - Provide more signage and wayfinding to help people find the space for the activity they are seeking

Next Steps

The project team will use the feedback from this public meeting to inform the next community survey, future community engagement opportunities, and the PROS plan itself. Please send any questions or comments related to the Mercer Island PROS plan to PROS@mercercisland.gov.