



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 25-04
April 9, 2025
Special Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PRC 25-04: Parks Zone Development Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Move to approve the draft Parks Zone development regulations, draft Zoning Map, draft Land Use Map, and draft hand-off memo, and authorize the PRC Chair and Vice Chair to present the recommendation to the City Council and the Planning Commission.	
STAFF:	Jessi Bon, City Manager Carson Hornsby, Management Analyst II Alison Van Gorp, Deputy CPD Director Kellye Hilde, Deputy Public Works Director Ryan Daly, Recreation Manager Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager Alaine Sommargren, Deputy Public Works Director	
EXHIBITS:	1. Draft Parks Zone Development Regulations 2. Draft Zoning Map 3. Draft Land Use Map 4. Draft Hand-Off Memo	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks Zone is a proposed new zone that will establish development 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 April 9, 2025 Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) meeting, the PRC will review and provide feedback on the final revisions to the draft Parks Zone development regulations (Exhibit 1), draft Zoning Map (Exhibit 2), draft Land Use Map (Exhibit 3), and draft hand-off memo (Exhibit 4), and approve a final recommendation to the City Council and the Planning Commission (PC).
- A summary of the discussion and direction received from the PRC during the January, February, and March 2025 PRC meetings is provided in the background section below.
- A study session has been scheduled for April 15 to brief the City Council on the PRC's Parks Zone recommendation prior to transmitting the recommendation to the PC for legislative review. The PC is scheduled to commence the legislative review process at their meeting on April 23, and the City Council will undertake review and adoption of the 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 and development regulations for the new zone. In January 2024, a preliminary draft of the Parks Zone development regulations was presented to

the PRC and PC. Following community and commission feedback, the legislative review was paused, and the draft was 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 Open Space Conservancy Trust (OSCT) Board held several 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. The City Council adopted the [Open Space Zone](#) on November 4, 2024 with an effective date of December 31, 2024.

Now that the PRC's first phase of work is complete on the Open Space Zone, the PRC has shifted focus to the development of the new Parks Zone with the goal of providing a recommendation to the PC in Q2 2025. Establishment of the Parks Zone will require the following 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 adopt 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\(B\)\(3\)](#)).
- If the Comprehensive Plan requires an amendment for the Parks Zone, the City Council will consider the Parks Zone amendments with the City's annual comprehensive plan amendments, which are limited to once a year by the Growth Management Act ([RCW 36.70A.130\(2\)](#)).

Parks Zone Materials from Prior PRC Meetings

- [Tuesday, October 8, 2024](#)
- [Thursday, November 7, 2024](#)
- [Thursday, January 9, 2025](#)
- [Thursday, February 6, 2025](#)
- [Thursday, March 6, 2025](#)

Re-Cap of Direction Received at the January 9, 2025 PRC Meeting

The PRC reached consensus on the following topics:

- Public art is recommended to be included as a permitted use without additional development standards, based on the Arts Council's recommendation. The hand-off memo will include a recommendation to identify opportunities for collaboration between the PRC and the Arts Council.
- Island Crest Park is recommended for inclusion in the Parks Zone. The hand-off memo will include a recommendation to the City Council to consider subdividing Island Crest Park as part of a future

project to include the critical and forested areas in the Open Space Zone, and the developed areas in the Parks Zone.

- Landings and street ends are not recommended for inclusion in the Parks Zone due to their primary use of utilities.

Materials from the January 9 PRC meeting are available [here](#).

Re-Cap of Direction Received at the February 6, 2025 PRC Meeting

The PRC reached consensus on the following topics:

- Wireless communications facilities are recommended as a permitted use in the Parks Zone with language similar to the Open Space Zone. The hand-off memo will include a recommendation to the City Council to limit wireless communication facilities in parks to the extent allowed in the MICC.
- Aubrey Davis Park is not recommended for inclusion in the Parks Zone due to WSDOT's preemptive authority over I-90 ROW, which has a primary use of transportation. The hand-off memo will include a recommendation to the City Council to prioritize renegotiation of the agreements with WSDOT to ensure the continued preservation and use of Aubrey Davis Park for recreation purposes.
- The Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC) is not recommended for inclusion in the Parks Zone because it is a large multi-purpose facility that serves many uses in addition to recreation.
- Setbacks are recommended at zero feet if the adjacent property is zoned PI, OS, TC, PBZ, C-O, or B, and 20 feet if the adjacent property is zoned R-8.4, R-9.6, R12, R-15, MF-2L, MF-2, or MF-3. Fences, gates, culverts, trails, landscaping, furnishings, bollards, signs, kiosks, parking areas, and utilities are recommended to be exempt from setback requirements.
- Kiosks are recommended to be limited to 22 square feet in surface area and 10 feet in height.
- Trail width is recommended to be limited to 12 feet.
- Picnic shelters are recommended to be limited to 16 feet in height and 1,200 square feet of gross floor area.
- Parking standards are recommended to address design, ingress and egress, and minimum parking requirements only if a proposed use is expected to create demand for additional parking spaces beyond existing capacity.

Materials from the February 6 PRC meeting are available [here](#).

Re-Cap of Direction Received at the March 6, 2025 PRC Meeting

The PRC reached consensus on the following topics:

- Signs are recommended to be limited to 16 square feet in surface area. Externally lit signs are prohibited except for park entry signs and signs required for public health, safety, or maintenance purposes.
- Scoreboards are recommended to be limited to 250 square feet of surface area. Electronic and externally lit scoreboards are permitted.
- Building Size standards are recommended as follows:
 - Restrooms shall not exceed 500 square feet in gross floor area.
 - Park maintenance facilities shall not exceed 500 square feet in gross floor area.
 - Recreational facilities shall not exceed 500 square feet in gross floor area.
 - Multipurpose facilities shall not exceed 3,500 square feet in gross floor area.
 - Picnic shelters shall not exceed 1,200 square feet in gross floor area and 16 feet in height.
- Exemptions from the Building Size standards are recommended for the Luther Burbank Administrative Building, Luther Burbank Boiler Building, Luther Burbank Caretakers House, and emergency well buildings.

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- Additional recommended exemptions to the impervious surface standard include small park amenities under 100 square feet, and emergency maintenance and repairs. If the City acquires new park land, a separate planning process is recommended to determine the initial amenities and impervious surface coverage of the new park land.
 - The proposed lighting standards are recommended with the removal of the exemption for lighting within a public right-of-way or easement.
 - New definitions are recommended for multipurpose facility, playground, and restroom.
 - The draft Zoning Map and list of park properties proposed to be included in the Parks Zone were reviewed and approved by the PRC.
 - The draft hand off memo was reviewed, and several live edits were approved by the PRC during the meeting. Follow up items for the April 9 PRC meeting are identified in the Issue/Discussion below.

Materials from the March 6 PRC meeting are available [here](#).

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Draft Parks Zone Development Regulations (Exhibit 1)

Staff have prepared an updated draft of the Parks Zone development regulations. Follow-up items from the March 6 PRC meeting are outlined below. The PRC will be asked to review and approve the final revisions to the draft development regulations at the April 9 meeting.

Uses Permitted

“City government services” was added as a replacement for “government services” as the permitted use of the Luther Burbank Administrative Building, Luther Burbank Boiler Building, and Luther Burbank Caretakers House. This will allow the current uses of these buildings to continue. The permitted use of City government services is limited to government services provided by, or on behalf of, the City of Mercer Island. The Luther Burbank Buildings serve a variety of important City government administrative uses and are a vital part of the City’s long-term facilities plans.

Signs

The use of “natural colors” as a requirement for signs was removed. This change was briefly discussed at the March 6 PRC meeting. Recent state legislation (HB 1293) severely limits the City's ability to include this kind of flexibility in development regulations. Starting June 30, 2025, all development regulations must be "clear and objective." Terms like "natural colors" would be considered subjective and will no longer be allowed.

Building Size

The building size standards were transferred into a table with new additions redlined in the draft. The PRC asked staff to propose height limits for buildings at the last meeting. A height limit of 20 feet is suggested for restrooms, park maintenance facilities, recreational facilities, and multipurpose facilities. The proposed height limit is based on the tallest existing buildings in the park system, several of which are between 17 and 18 feet tall. Flagpoles, antennas, chimneys, mechanical equipment, and rooftop appurtenances are not suggested to count toward building height in the Parks Zone.

The Luther Burbank Pergola (covered walkway) was added to the building size standards with a limit of 2,000 square feet in gross floor area and 16 feet in height. This is the only covered walkway in the park system and there are no plans to add additional covered walkways.

Impervious Surface

“Required surfaces for playground equipment” was added as an exemption to the impervious surface standard based on PRC discussion at the March 6 meeting. The exemption for ADA parking was revised to read “ADA parking and accessibility.”

Definitions

A definition of “City Government Services” was added to specify the permitted use of the Luther Burbank Administrative Building, Luther Burbank Boiler Building, and Luther Burbank Caretakers House. This definition is the same as the definition for “government services” except it is limited to government services provided by, or on behalf of, the City of Mercer Island.

Draft Zoning Map (Exhibit 2)

The draft Zoning Map was reviewed and approved by the PRC at the March 6 PRC meeting. The draft Zoning Map will be included as part of the PRC’s recommendation to the PC. The draft Zoning Map includes the following parks in the Parks Zone:

- Bicentennial Park
- Clarke Beach Park
- Deane’s Children’s Park
- First Hill Park
- Groveland Beach Park
- Homestead Park
- Island Crest Park
- Luther Burbank Park
- Mercerdale Park
- Roanoke Park
- Rotary Park
- SE 28th Street Mini Park
- Secret Park
- Slater Park
- Wildwood Park

Draft Land Use Map (Exhibit 3)

The Land Use Map adopted as part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update was intended to implement all revisions necessary to adopt the Parks Zone and Open Space Zone. Upon further review, staff discovered that additional changes are necessary to adopt the Parks Zone and ensure consistency between the Land Use Map and Zoning Map.

The draft Land Use Map includes the following changes compared to the current adopted Land Use Map:

1. SE 28th St. Mini Park changed from Single Family Residential to Park.
2. Rotary Park changed from Open Space to Park.
3. Title changed from “City of Mercer Island Land Use” to “City of Mercer Island Land Use Map”
4. Black diagonal lines removed from Open Space in the legend and on the map.
5. Legend organized in alphabetical order.
6. “Land Use Plan” changed to “Land Use Map” in the text under the legend.
7. Park and Open Space labels removed except for park properties with new changes proposed.

Draft Hand-Off Memo (Exhibit 4)

The draft hand-off memo summarizes the draft Parks Zone development regulations, draft Zoning Map, and draft Land Use Map, supported by references to applicable PROS Plan goals and objectives. The draft hand-off memo includes additional recommendations for consideration by the City Council. Several live edits were accepted into the draft during the March 6 meeting in addition to other small changes discussed during the meeting. Follow up items identified at the March 6 PRC meeting include:

- Additional context for the recommendation to subdivide Island Crest Park.
- A recommendation to include a goal in the City’s long-term facilities plans to relocate city government services from the Luther Burbank buildings so that all park facilities can be dedicated to serving parks and recreation uses.

The follow up items and several other changes based on updates to the draft development regulations are redlined in the draft hand-off memo. The PRC will be asked to review and approve the final hand-off memo at the April 9 meeting. If any further revisions are necessary after the April 9 meeting, staff will coordinate with the PRC Chair and Vice Chair to review and approve final revisions.

NEXT STEPS

A study session has been scheduled for April 15 to brief the City Council on the PRC's Parks Zone recommendation prior to transmitting the recommendation to the PC for legislative review. The PC is scheduled to commence the legislative review process at their meeting on April 23, and the City Council will undertake review and adoption of the Parks Zone by the end of 2025.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Motion #1: Move to approve the draft Parks Zone development regulations, draft Zoning Map, and draft Land Use Map in substantially the form provided to submit to the Planning Commission for consideration during the legislative review process.

Motion #2: Move to approve the hand-off memo and authorize the Chair and Vice Chair of the PRC to present the recommendation to the City Council and the Planning Commission.