

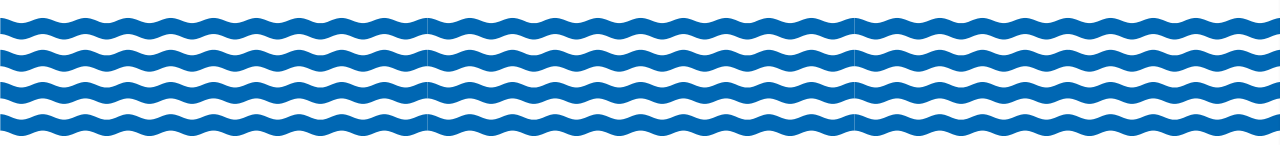


2023 Parks Levy Annual Progress Report

AB 6395 | January 16, 2024

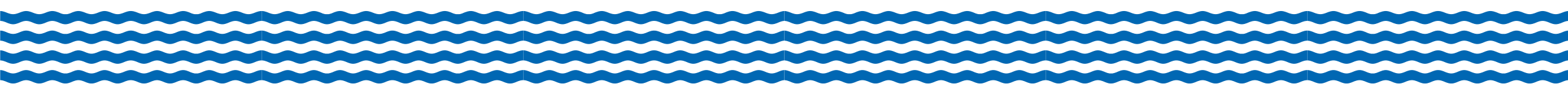
Presentation Overview

- Park Levy Background
- 2023 Progress Report for:
 - Base Levy
 - Playground Replacement
 - Forest Management at Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space
- Next Steps in 2024



Parks Levy Background

- The 16-year renewal of the parks levy was on the November 8, 2022, General Election ballot for voter consideration, which passed by a 64.27% majority
- The renewed parks levy continues funding for parks operations and maintenance while adding funding for playground replacements and Pioneer Park forest management.



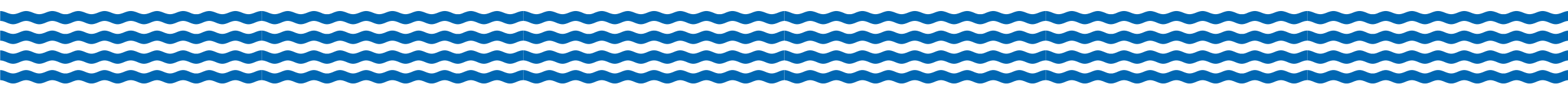
Park Levy Background

- Annual parks levy funding increased from \$980,122 in 2022 to \$1,629,332 in 2023.
- City staff committed to annual reports to the City Council on progress and impacts of the parks levy

2023 Parks Levy Funding		
	2022 (Previous Levy)	2023 (Current Levy)
Luther Burbank Park (O&M)	\$373,007	\$376,737
Parks Maintenance (O&M)	\$355,115	\$358,666
Luther Burbank Small Capital Projects (Capital)	\$110,000	\$111,100
Pioneer Park Forest Management (Capital)	\$77,000	\$77,770
Open Space/Vegetation Management (Capital)	\$65,000	\$65,650
Fund 100% of Playground Replacement Costs	-	\$414,355
Fund all Forest Management projects except for the second phase of tree planting	-	\$225,054
Total	\$980,122	\$1,629,262

Base Levy

- The base levy continued several funding priorities of the previous parks levy, including
 - Covering the full cost of operation and maintenance of Luther Burbank Park
 - Partially support operations and capital projects in other developed parks, open spaces, and athletic fields
- The 2023 levy includes \$989,923 for these purposes.



Luther Burbank Park



- Staffed daily during 2023 spring and summer peak season.
- Daily tasks included emptying waste receptacles, cleaning three restrooms, and removing litter throughout the park.
- Regular landscape maintenance included mowing, leaf blowing, line trimming, and hedge & tree trimming, as well as brushing trail edges and maintaining gravel trail surfaces.

Luther Burbank Park



- Two high-use playgrounds, inspected regularly by staff. New engineered wood fiber chips installed around the playground structures and a slide was replaced.
- In 2023, staff put extra work into maintaining the swim beach area, including installing swim lines and servicing seasonal restroom.
- Unusually high number of wasp nests throughout the park required additional staff intervention.
- Large rainstorms in the later part of the year necessitated additional maintenance of the stormwater system in the park, and the repair of several trails that were damaged during these rain events.



Open Space Vegetation Management



- Funds from the levy, in combination with capital funding, were used to continue forest management across the City's twenty-one public open space properties (separate from Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space)
- Ivy removal from trees across 5 acres
- 2,490 trees and shrubs planted
- Maintenance of 1,100 previously installed native plants
- Expansion of the City's volunteer program, which held 61 events across 13 of the City's open spaces

Park Maintenance and Operations

- Maintenance on more than 200 acres of park lands, including upkeep of sport courts, landscaping and lawns, restrooms, trails, and playgrounds in the Island's many developed parks.
- These funds, in conjunction with user fees, also supported the maintenance of several athletic fields, including Island Crest Park and Homestead Field.



Playground Replacement

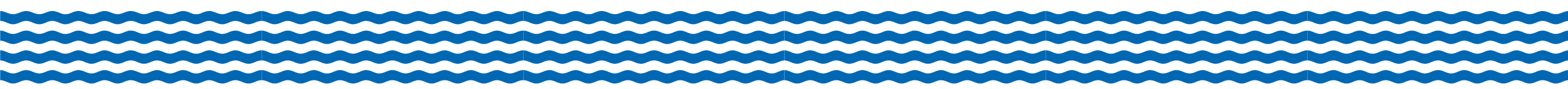
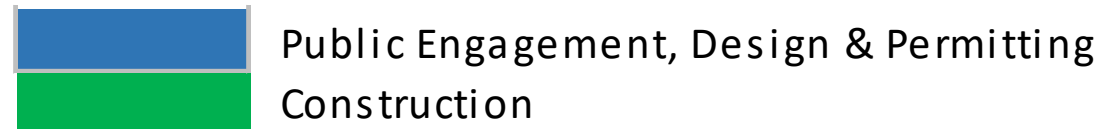
- The Mercer Island parks system includes 18 playground structures
- 15 of these structures require replacement through the life of the parks levy.
- The parks levy funds the replacement of all playground structures in need of replacement.
- \$414,355 was budgeted for this portion of the parks levy in 2023.



Playground Replacement

- The 2023-2028 Parks Capital Improvement Plan identified five playground structures for replacement over the first six years.

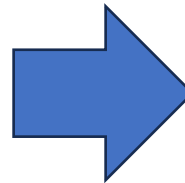
Playground	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Aubrey Davis				Public Engagement, Design & Permitting	Construction	
Deane's Children's	Construction					
First Hill			Public Engagement, Design & Permitting	Construction		
Roanoke	Public Engagement, Design & Permitting	Construction				
Secret Park					Public Engagement, Design & Permitting	Construction





Playground Replacement

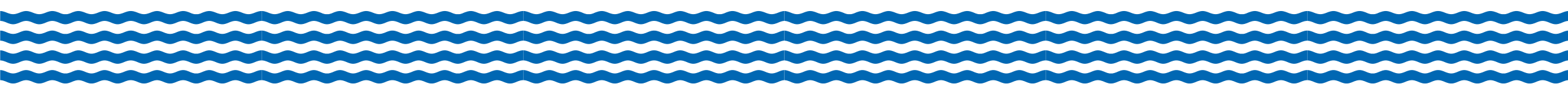
- The addition of the Bike Skills Area in Deane's Children's Park led staff to take a more comprehensive approach to the playground re-design.
- Staff have implemented a revised timeline to allow for larger public engagement on Deane's Children's Park playground replacement.
- Accelerated the timeline for First Hill playground replacement.

Playground	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
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Deane's Children's	Construction					
First Hill			Public Engagement, Design & Permitting	Construction		
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 Public Engagement, Design & Permitting
 Construction



Roanoke Park Playground

- Playground at Roanoke Park is the first slated for replacement in 2024.
- In 2023, Berger Partnership began developing a concept that will include site improvements for access and fencing in addition to play equipment replacement.
- A community survey to collect input on playground equipment options launched on December 20, 2023, and received 158 responses.
- Survey results will inform a virtual public meeting scheduled for January 30, 2024 (register on Let's Talk!).



Deane's Children's Park Playground

- A portion of the playground was scheduled for replacement in 2023.
- With construction of Bike Skills Area in 2023, there is a need to evaluate the entire site in the re-design process.
- Opportunity for comprehensive approach to the playground design for this park, to include:
 - ADA and access improvements
 - Site layout and connectivity
 - Updated amenities
- Robust public engagement process will begin in 2024. Will inform 2025-2026 budget planning.



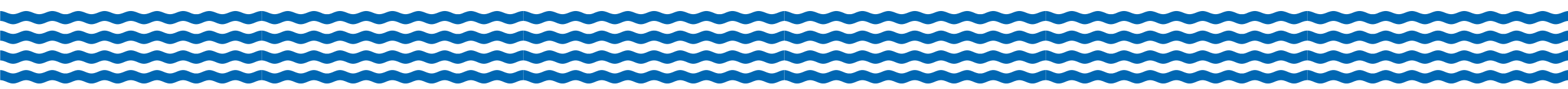
First Hill Park Playground

- The First Hill Park playground replacement was originally planned for design in 2025 and construction in 2026.
- Since the Deane's replacement has been pushed out, the replacement of First Hill playground is being accelerated.
- Berger began evaluating the site in 2023, and staff anticipate that public engagement for this replacement will take place in early 2024.
- Like Roanoke, construction at First Hill will depend on equipment lead times; staff expect to complete construction by the end of 2024.



Forest Management at Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space

- Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space provide 122 acres of forested park land, comprising 43% of the open space in the city.
- The parks levy supports the following tasks identified in the Forest Management Plan, with \$225,054 budgeted for this portion of the parks levy in 2023:
 - Managing invasive tree species in the understory
 - Removing ivy from the base of existing canopy trees, to promote the longevity of older forest trees
 - Phase 1 of tree planting and maintenance
 - Removing English ivy and other invasive plants from the forest understory





Forest Management

- In 2023 in Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space, the City conducted:
 - 1st year comprehensive weed removal on 10.5 acres
 - 2nd year comprehensive weed removal on 9.2 acres
 - Planted 617 native trees and shrubs.
- This exceeds the 6.5 acres of 1st year removal planned as an annual goal in the parks levy for 2023.



Forest Management

- Comprehensive weed removal includes:
 - removal of ivy from around trees (ivy rings)
 - invasive tree removal and treatment
 - ground ivy and herbaceous weed removal.
- This work was in addition to maintaining the parks' trail system with:
 - regular brushing
 - leaf blowing
 - culvert maintenance
 - re-gravelling muddy sections of trail to improve access.

Forest Management Volunteers

- In Pioneer Park, the City's Volunteer Coordinator and Forest Stewards hosted:
 - 22 events
 - 343 volunteers
 - 717 total volunteer hours
- Almost double the number of volunteers and volunteer hours in 2022.
- In 2023, volunteers:
 - removed ivy from 84 trees and 15,528 ft² of the forest floor
 - planted 242 trees and shrubs
 - repaired trails



New Strategies for Restoration Work

- Staff surveyed restoration contractors that have successfully completed past projects with the City, to better understand challenges and barriers for bidding on these restoration projects.
- The City is piloting a new hourly-rate approach to restoration contracting, in addition to the previous lump-sum approach.



Washington Conservation Corps

- The City won a contract with the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to hire a crew for 50 days in the fall and winter of 2023-2024.
- In fall of 2023, WCC crews worked to
 - re-gravel muddy trails
 - maintain ivy rings
 - decommission a redundant section of trail
 - plant 75 trees
 - perform first year comprehensive weed removal on 1.9 acres in the Pioneer Park SE



Next Steps in 2024

- Public engagement regarding the design of Roanoke Park, First Hill Park, and Deane's Children's Park playgrounds.
- Staff are planning additional volunteer events for open space management
- Add additional project development/design elements as a part of the upcoming capital improvement plan process.

