

Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy

City of Mercer Island

Purpose

The City of Mercer Island uses the following allocation and use policy to provide access to City-managed Athletic Facilities, including the South Mercer Playfields, and the Mercer Island School District elementary school fields.

Scope/Background

Athletic Field space is a finite resource, but the range of potential users and uses are expansive. This policy guides the purposeful allocation of Athletic Facilities to ensure that access to facilities is maximized and used to achieve City of Mercer Island, Recreation Division, and community goals, with consistency to stated principles.

Definitions

1. **Athletic Facility:** A sports field used for, but not limited to, baseball, softball, soccer, football, and/or lacrosse, including concession stands, batting cages, and athletic storage facilities. (Sports Courts are not considered Athletic Facilities under this policy)
2. **City:** The City of Mercer Island, including staff, elected officials, appointed officials, or volunteers where applicable.
3. **City-Coordinated Uses:** Activities, programs, events, or reservations that are organized or directly facilitated by the City.
4. **Cost Recovery:** the degree to which operational and maintenance costs of providing a program or service are supported by user fees and/or other funding mechanisms such as grants, partnerships, donations, sponsorships, or other alternative (non-tax) funding sources.
5. **Division:** Mercer Island Recreation Division.
6. **Director:** The Recreation and Facilities Director, or designee.
7. **Resident Organization:** An individual or business located within Mercer Island city limits, or a group, league, or team in which at least 75% of participants listed on each roster are Mercer Island residents.
8. **Non-Resident Organization:** An individual or business located outside Mercer Island city limits, or a group, league, or team in which fewer than 75% of participants listed on each roster are Mercer Island residents.

1. Policy Principles

Athletic Facility allocation and use will be guided by the following principles:

- Promote community access.
- Enable diverse and inclusive use.
- Maximize field capacity to achieve Cost Recovery goals.
- Support responsible stewardship.

Exhibit 1- Draft Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy
(Updated 3/19/2026)

2. Policy

- a) The Director makes the final decision regarding Athletic Facility allocation.
- b) Athletic Facility scheduling and availability are determined by the Director. Users may request preferences such as dates, facilities, or times.
- c) Reservation requests may be limited or adapted to ensure fair and equitable access for Mercer Island Residents.
- d) Prior use and priority access does not guarantee any aspect of allocation.
- e) Facilities may be closed or subject to limited availability at any time due to safety concerns, inclement weather, risk of damage, seasonality, or other reasons determined by the Director.
- f) Private reservations require a facility use permit for use of Athletic Facilities and the permit holder must comply with all City of Mercer Island guidelines and conditions of use.
- g) Reservations are prioritized over drop-in access.
- h) Requests by the Mercer Island School District (MISD) and City-Coordinated Uses are exempt from this policy and reviewed separately by the Director.
- i) An applicant/organization receiving a permit from the City for use of a City Athletic Facility for a community athletics program may not discriminate against any person based on sex in the operation, conduct, or administration of community athletics programs for youths or adults.

3. Facility Allocation Criteria

The Recreation Division will use the following tiers to prioritize booking access when allocating Athletic Facilities:

Primary Criteria (Residency):

- Tier 1-Resident Organizations.
- Tier 2-Non-Resident Organizations.

In recognition that reservation requests may exceed available athletic field capacity, the Recreation Division shall apply the following criteria to determine equitable allocation of athletic field use within the priority tiers established above:

- **Community Benefit:** Consideration may be given to programs, events, or organizations that demonstrate a measurable benefit to the community. Consideration may also be given to events that provide broad public access, support community health and wellness, or align with City goals and initiatives.
- **Age Group:** Preference may be given to programs serving youth participants, particularly those who are residents.
- **Time Allocation:** Scheduling shall consider the appropriateness of the requested time slot relative to the age group served, in order to promote safe, practical, and effective use of facilities.
- **Historical Use:** Consideration shall be given to applicants with demonstrated historical use of specific facilities or time allocations, in order to support program continuity and effective scheduling practices.
- **Seasonality of Sport:** Field use shall be allocated in a manner consistent with the determined season of play for each sport:
 - **Spring/Summer Season:** baseball, softball, lacrosse, track, and ultimate frisbee
 - **Fall/Winter Season:** football and soccer

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- **Non-Profit Status:** Consideration may be given to organizations that are recognized as non-profit entities, particularly those that provide community-based recreational programming and public benefit.
- **Duration of Use:** The length and frequency of requested use shall be evaluated to balance ongoing program needs with equitable access for a broad range of users.
- **Compatibility of Use:** Proposed activities may be prioritized based on compatibility with the intended use, design, and condition of the requested field, and shall not adversely impact other permitted users or scheduled activities.

The Recreation Division retains the authority to apply these criteria in a manner that ensures fair, consistent, and efficient allocation of limited athletic field resources.

4. Disqualifying Criteria

Requests or reservations may be limited, altered, reduced, declined, or canceled if:

- a) The requested use is not compatible with the facility type or intended use.
- b) The request is made outside of established booking periods.
- c) Facilities are unavailable, not in suitable condition, or if adjacent facilities have incompatible uses.
- d) Request impacts access or operations of the park, other scheduled activities, or adjacent facilities or residences.
- e) Permit holder fails to follow payment deadlines or permit terms.
- f) The requestor previously failed to comply with permit terms, regulations, park rules, and/or applicable policies.
- g) Requestor demonstrates a pattern of booking Athletic Facilities and fails to utilize the time requested.
- h) Applicants/Organizations who fail to comply with the Fair Play in Community Sports Act.

5. Procedures

- a) Procedures will be established and communicated broadly by the Director.