



CLARKE & GROVELAND BEACH PARKS JOINT INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Developed in the 1960s and 1970s, Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks are two of three major public waterfronts located on Mercer Island. These parks offer amenities such as docks, swimming areas, concrete bulkheads, walking paths, picnic and barbeque areas, restroom facilities, and more. However, many of these features are at or nearing the end of their useful life and will need to be replaced or removed soon. Waterfront access at both parks is located at the bottom of steep hills, and accessibility improvements must be evaluated where feasible.

The 2022 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS Plan) identified the need for a joint planning effort to efficiently prioritize capital projects for these parks and to navigate the challenging regulatory environment for implementing shoreline improvements. From August 2023 to December 2024, the project team conducted site assessments and community engagement to learn about the existing conditions and current uses of each park. On March 18, 2025, the City Council authorized staff to move forward with developing the Joint Infrastructure Plan for Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks. When adopted, the infrastructure plan may address the following areas:

1. Dock and beachfront improvements
2. Shoreline erosion control and stabilization
3. ADA accessibility
4. Other amenities, such as restrooms, wayfinding/signage, and parking

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Technical assessments and preliminary community engagement informed the development of three design concepts for each park that were shared with the community in fall 2025. Concepts reflected a different level of investment for various park features, including dock/pier configurations, beach improvements, and upland improvements, and features within each concept were designed to be interchangeable, providing a “mix-and-match” approach for community members to determine their preferences for each park. For example, a community member may have favored the pier configuration in concept 1 for Clarke Beach and preferred the beach improvements identified in concept 2 for the park. Community engagement opportunities were designed to collect feedback on individual park features as well as overall input to inform the preferred plan for each park.

From October to December 2025, the project team shared virtual open house presentations and digital concept boards as well as conducted a community-wide survey on Let’s Talk; hosted project booths at the Mercer Island Chinese Association’s Mid-Autumn Festival and the City’s Town Center Trick-or-Treat; and met with park neighbors and students at Islander Middle School to solicit feedback on the concepts.

Opportunities for engagement were promoted through a variety of channels, including:

- Mailer to park neighbors (1,000 ft mailing radius, 400+ mailers sent)
- Let’s Talk and social media posts
- MI Weekly e-newsletter articles
- Direct outreach to community partners such as the Mercer Island School District, the Mercer Island Preschool Association, and the Rotary Club of Mercer Island
- A-frame posters staged at Clarke Beach, Groveland Beach, Mercerdale, and Luther Burbank parks

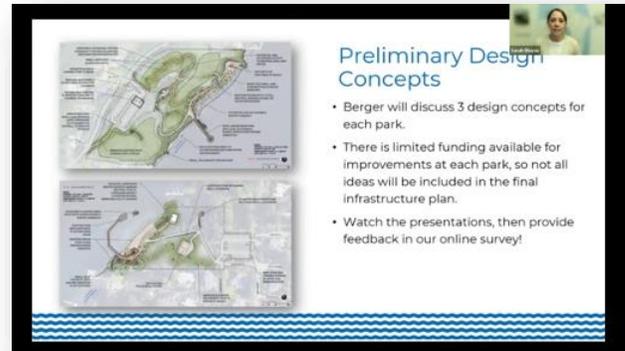
Unique URL links and QR codes were set up for the various promotional channels to track the effectiveness of each outreach effort. Channels that received the most engagement were the MI Weekly e-newsletter (146 clicks), social media posts (92 clicks), and posters at the parks (6 QR code scans).

The following sections summarize key themes and findings from these engagement activities.

Virtual Open House Presentations & Digital Concept Boards

The project team recorded presentations to share the existing conditions and walk through the design concepts for each park. Community members were invited to learn about the project and concepts through the “virtual open house,” then take the accompanying survey.

Each concept was also presented on digital boards on Let's Talk. Boards included overall designs and shoreline enlargements to provide greater detail on proposed waterfront features. Community members could review these boards in advance and reference them while completing the survey.



During the community engagement period from October 3 to November 3, 2025, the presentations were viewed 124 total times, the concept boards were downloaded a total of 653 times, and the Let's Talk page was visited more than 1,000 times.

Design Concepts Survey

An online survey was open from October 3 to November 3, 2025, and received 180 total responses. It asked about preferences for waterfront amenities, pier/dock configurations, and upland improvements at each park, as well as park-specific questions regarding accessibility and recreation priorities. Respondents could provide input for one or both parks.

Survey Demographics

Approximately 58% of survey respondents provided input for Clarke Beach, and 62% for Groveland Beach. Visitors to both parks primarily arrive by car or walking, with nearly half of respondents for each park reporting that they visit on a weekly or monthly basis.

More than half of respondents resided in the central part of the island, between SE 40th and SE 68th Street, while 29% live south of SE 68th Street and 17% live north of SE 40th Street. Most survey respondents (60%) are between the ages of 20 and 54, and over half of respondents have at least one child under 18 living at home.

Clarke Beach Park Survey Results

- ADA Accessibility
 - 62% of respondents said an accessible path from the parking lot to the waterfront is very or somewhat important.
- North Waterfront: Three concepts were presented, varying in beach size, seating type, and play opportunities.
 - 50% preferred Concept 1: terraced seating and a large natural beach at the north end
 - Respondents emphasized maintaining swimming access, noting Clarke Beach as one of the “few safe, uncrowded swimming areas” on Mercer Island.
- Central Waterfront: Three options focused on the area near the picnic tables and the central pier.
 - 44% preferred Concept 2: a mix of large flat grass areas, tiered concrete seating, and natural waterfront
- Pier Configuration: Two concepts included two piers, and one concept included a single long pier.
 - 68% preferred two piers, either repaired or replaced.
- Upland Improvements

- Respondents favored small-scale, individual, or small-group experiences, including individual picnic tables and benches.
- Overall Amenities Prioritization
 1. Dock/pier enhancements
 2. Restroom upgrades
 3. Accessible paths to beach/beach amenities
 4. Gathering spaces/seating amenities
 5. New play opportunities
- Other Comments/Suggestions
 - Support for maintaining a natural character with minimal changes.
 - Mixed opinions on sandy beaches – some prefer it for swimming, others noted “dirty” sand beach.
 - Support for garbage cans, bike racks, outdoor showers, non-gender single stall restrooms, and more picnic tables.
 - Interest in motorboat-friendly design and temporary docking, plus support for kayak/small craft access.
 - Requests for more lighting and safety monitoring, especially at the small fishing pier area.
 - Deep personal/sentimental connection to the park.
 - Preference for lower investment at Clarke Beach, suggesting funds be focused on improvements at Groveland Beach.

Groveland Beach Park Survey Results

- Waterfront Amenities: Survey questions for Groveland Beach asked about a few different waterfront amenities.
 - Sand volleyball court: 32% had no preference; removing it slightly more popular than improving it (27% vs. 25%). Additional youth outreach conducted from December 2025 to March 2026 will inform final recommendations.
 - Restroom facility: outdoor rinse-off station rated high priority (127 responses). Changing rooms and small lockers were less important.
 - Beach and gathering area: respondents preferred large grass terraces and picnic pockets, though interest across all three concepts was fairly evenly split.
- Dock Configuration: Three options were presented for the swim dock.
 - While descriptions for concepts 2 and 3 were initially swapped, 80% preferred a dock with an expanded swim platform.
 - 54% prioritized adding a detached floating dock based on the survey images.
- Upland Improvements:
 - Play area & seating: 42% preferred upgrading the existing play area and adding more upland seating (Concept 3). Concepts 1 (pollinator garden + seating) and 2 (relocated volleyball court) each received approximately 28%.
 - Tree canopy boardwalk vs. viewing deck: 63% preferred prioritizing other upland improvements before adding either feature, with slightly more preference for a tree canopy boardwalk.
- Overall Amenities Prioritization
 1. Dock/pier enhancements
 2. Restroom upgrades
 3. Gathering spaces/seating amenities
 4. New play opportunities and accessible paths to beach/beach amenities
- Other Comments/Suggestions
 - Support for maintaining a natural character with minimal change.
 - Emphasis on ADA-friendly access where feasible, acknowledging topography challenges.
 - Mixed opinions on sand volleyball court: popular with some, but disagreement on opinions on relocating or removing.
 - Support for maintaining swimming access, a defining feature of the park.
 - Interest in better access for hand-powered watercraft.

Pop-Ups at Community Events

In October 2025, City staff promoted the planning process, shared the design concepts, and invited community members to complete the survey during three community events.

On October 5, 2025, staff engaged with more than 100 multi-generational attendees of the Mid-Autumn Festival hosted by the Mercer Island Chinese Association at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center. Attendees were invited to ask questions about the concepts and participated in a “vote with your own dollars” exercise for each park. Each participant received stickers representing a quarter, dime, nickel, and penny for each park, which they could use to prioritize investment across five categories for each park:

- Dock/pier enhancements
- Restroom upgrades
- New play opportunities
- Accessible paths to beach/beach amenities
- Gathering spaces/seating amenities

At Clarke, most participants “funded” restroom upgrades and new play opportunities with some or all their investment, while investment primarily went to new play opportunities at Groveland. These results are likely attributed to the large number of families with young children in attendance at the event.

On October 31, 2025, staff also hosted a project booth at the Town Center Trick-or-Treat event. Although it was a very rainy afternoon, more than 100 community members visited the booth to learn more about the project. Given the weather conditions, staff decided not to host the voting exercise and instead focused on promoting the survey and answering questions about the concepts for each park.

Additionally, project materials were shared with volunteers at the Arbor Day event at Clarke Beach on October 25, 2026.

Park Neighbor Engagement

To encourage park neighbors to participate in the engagement process, a mailer with project information and survey link/QR code was sent to residents living within a 1,000-ft radius of each park, resulting in more than 400 mailers to park neighbors. The mailer included an invitation to meet City staff at either park to discuss the planning process and specific neighborhood concerns and needs. One neighbor of Groveland accepted the offer to meet, and staff joined them for a park walk on October 16, 2025. Primary topics of discussion included:

- Plans for the sand volleyball court
- Potential direct impacts to neighbors on the property line, including noise issues
- Concerns about dock design and neighboring waterfront properties

Public comment provided by this community member is attached as Appendix A.

Mercer Island Student Engagement

Following preliminary discussions with the Parks & Recreation Commission about early engagement results, staff also conducted additional outreach to Islander Middle School (IMS) and Mercer Island High School to solicit student feedback about the volleyball court at Groveland Beach and other park needs. On December 11, 2025, staff met with 15 students



in grades 6-8 through the IMS Principal's Student Advisory and received feedback about play and hangout opportunities at the parks. Additional engagement with high school students is underway, and outcomes will be incorporated into the final report for the joint infrastructure plan.

NEXT STEPS

From December 2025 to March 2026, the project team used feedback from this engagement process to refine the design alternatives into a preferred plan for each park. The preferred plan will be shared with the community on March 20, 2026, through Let's Talk at www.mercerisland.gov/cgip, and the Mercer Island Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC) will begin discussions of the preferred plan on March 26, 2026. It is anticipated that the PRC's recommendation of the Joint Infrastructure Plan for Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks will be transmitted to the Mercer Island City Council for review and adoption in fall 2026.

APPENDIX

Appendix A – Public Comment Provided by Groveland Beach Park Neighbor

1. **Noise Impact** – Volleyball play generates consistent yelling, cheering, swearing and ball impacts, and use of boom boxes especially during evenings and weekends, which disturbs nearby residents and lowers the quality of life.
2. **Attractive Nuisance** – The court attracts unsupervised teens and off-island groups after hours, creating liability risks and potential for vandalism or trespassing.
3. **Lack of Restroom Facilities** – With no restrooms nearby, players and spectators will use adjacent landscaping or residential areas, creating sanitation and hygiene issues.
4. **Parking Congestion** – Increased court accessibility will further overwhelm existing parking spaces.
5. **Increased Foot Traffic** – A court close to homes increases through-traffic by non-residents, potentially compromising neighborhood privacy and security.
6. **Late-Night Activity** – Even without lighting, some players may use the court after dark, leading to loitering, noise, and potential safety or law enforcement concerns.
7. **Property Value Impact** – Proximity to active recreational features like a volleyball court can negatively affect property values due to noise, traffic, and reduced privacy.
8. **Incompatibility with Residential Zoning Intent** – Active recreational use is better suited for center of the park areas and near restrooms, not near property lines or homes, where passive recreation is typically planned.
9. **Increased Litter and Debris** – Without nearby adequate trash facilities or restrooms, players will leave bottles, cups, diapers, food and other litter, creating maintenance and visual blight.
10. **Better Alternative Locations Exist** – Placing the court in a more central or buffered area of the park can still meet recreation goals without negatively affecting residents. A far better location is the 98 acre Luther Burbank park has ample space and ample rest room facilities.

Joe