



# ARTS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

**AC26-05**  
**April 15, 2026**  
**Regular Business**

## AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

<b>TITLE:</b>	AC26-05: Clarke and Groveland Joint Infrastructure Plan – Public Art Opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Discuss opportunities for public art integration as part of the Clarke and Groveland Joint Infrastructure Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

<b>STAFF:</b>	Sarah Bluvas, CIP Project Manager	
<b>COUNCIL LIAISON:</b>	n/a	
<b>EXHIBITS:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project Location Map</li> <li>2. Concept Alternatives Engagement Summary</li> <li>3. Preferred Plan – Clarke Beach Park</li> <li>4. Preferred Plan – Groveland Beach Park</li> <li>5. Guidelines for Administering the Mercer Island Public Art Program</li> </ol>	

## SUMMARY

### PROJECT INITIATION

Developed in the 1960s and 1970s, Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks (Exhibit 1) 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. The City Council approved this joint planning effort with the 2023-2024 Biennial Budget and Capital Improvement Program, and, in July 2023, the City engaged Berger Partnership as the design consultant to facilitate this planning work.

### ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

An analysis of existing conditions at both beach parks was conducted from August 2023 to December 2024 and included:

- Topographic surveys, bathymetric (underwater topography) surveys, and delineation of the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM)
- Condition assessments of the in-water structures, including docks, swim enclosures, and concrete bulkheads
- Accessibility audit of the existing restroom facilities
- Critical area reconnaissance
- Geotechnical review to inform future study and permitting

- Background survey to gather information on current community uses, access challenges, recreational opportunities, and other needs to be considered in the planning process (229 responses)

A high-level summary of findings from the existing conditions assessment is provided below.

***Condition of Overwater Structures***

The overwater structures at Clarke have reached the end of their useful lives, and immediate repairs are recommended to prevent further deterioration. Overwater structures at Groveland are in fair to good condition and should be monitored with routine inspections to minimize further deterioration.

***Geotechnical Review***

Both sites show signs of soil settling, including under asphalt footpaths, at beach areas, and near the playground at Groveland. Specific issues at Clarke Beach include a sink hole beneath the concrete steps, which was repaired by Parks Maintenance staff in fall 2023 but may worsen due to continual erosion. Chronic settlement at Groveland Beach is causing a stormwater outfall pipe to fracture. Further geotechnical investigation will be required during the design and construction of improvements at both parks to address ongoing soil settling.

***Restroom Accessibility***

Restroom facilities at both parks do not comply with federal and local accessibility standards. Non-compliant conditions include inadequate maneuvering clearances and turning space, lack of wheelchair-accessible stalls, inaccessible reach heights and amenities, and inadequate accessible paths to the buildings. Some issues could be resolved with little impact on the existing structures, while others require significant alterations to the buildings and plumbing systems.

***Background Survey on Community Uses and Needs***

Currently, the most common reason for visiting both parks is beach access, followed by strolling/walking at Clarke and swimming at Groveland. The community’s primary concerns include accessibility, park maintenance, amenities (such as picnic tables and trash receptacles), and park safety.

Staff presented the existing conditions to the City Council on March 18, 2025, and received authorization to move forward with developing a Joint Infrastructure Plan for Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks. The City Council identified the following priorities for the plan:

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

The joint infrastructure plan will include preferred plans and cost estimates for both parks that will be further developed and implemented through future capital improvement programs as resources allow.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY – DESIGN CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES**

From October to December 2025, the project team conducted in-person and virtual engagement to collect community input on three design concept alternatives developed for each park. Each concept generally represented a different level of investment in park features, with individual elements designed to be interchangeable. For example, a dock configuration from one Clarke Beach concept and a picnic area design from another could be combined in the preferred plan. Community members were encouraged to “mix and match” their preferred elements as they participated in outreach opportunities.

Key themes from this community engagement effort included:

**Clarke Beach Park**

- Strong support for accessibility overall
- Preference for a combination of grass areas, tiered seating, and natural features at the waterfront
- Strong preference for two pier structures (either repaired or replaced) over a single pier
- Support for amenities (picnic areas, benches, etc.) that facilitate individual rather than group experiences
- Overall, improving dock/pier amenities is most important for the infrastructure plan, while providing new play opportunities is least important.

**Groveland Beach Park**

- Preference for grass seating areas and picnic pockets at the waterfront
- Strong support for a new floating dock with an expanded platform and/or detached floating dock
- Preference for upgrades to the play area in the existing location, including adding seating
- Interest in a boardwalk and/or viewing deck, but priority should be given to making improvements to existing infrastructure first
- Overall, improving dock/pier amenities is most important for the infrastructure plan, while improving play opportunities and enhancing accessible pathways are least important.

A detailed summary of this engagement is provided in Exhibit 2.

**PREFERRED INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

The project team refined the design concepts into a preferred plan for each park (Exhibits 3 and 4). The preferred plans reflect input received during the community engagement process, feedback from the Parks and Recreation Commission, considerations of site constraints, and City staff input. A summary of elements included in each preferred plan is provided below. Staff will review the preferred plans during the Arts Council meeting.

**Clarke Beach Park**

- **Waterfront Amenities:** The preferred plan removes the concrete bulkheads to support shoreline restoration and replaces them with gradual beach transitions, a gravel mix for fish habitat, and natural beach elements such as logs, boulders, and plantings. The enclosed swim area, including the sheet pile wall, would be removed and replaced with a rope-delineated swim area to maintain informal swimming opportunities. A flat grass area near the existing picnic area, along with concrete seat steps, provides additional space for lounging. The restroom would be replaced with a gender-neutral facility.
- **Pier Configuration:** Both existing piers would be restored in their current configuration. Shoreline vegetation between the piers would be enhanced, and the trail leading to the secondary pier at the south end of the park would be improved.
- **Upland Improvements:** The preferred plan maintains and renovates the existing picnic area as well as improves existing pedestrian connections to East Mercer Way.
- **ADA Accessibility:** An ADA-accessible path would connect the parking lot to the waterfront. Existing ADA parking stalls would be improved and expanded.

**Groveland Beach Park**

- **Waterfront Amenities:** The preferred plan removes the concrete bulkhead and replaces it with a gradual transition from sand beach to gravel mix to support fish habitat while maintaining a sandy swim beach. A wide grass terrace with oversized seat steps offers additional space for lounging, and new paths

provide accessible routes from the restroom to the dock and the beach. The restroom would be updated and/or replaced with a gender-neutral stall facility.

- **Dock Configuration:** The existing swim dock would be replaced with a new pier structure that includes a floating swim dock, a fixed pier platform with a diving board and hammock, and two gangway connectors.
- **Upland Improvements:** The preferred plan replaces the existing playground with a nature-inspired play area for ages 2-12+. Improvements to the trail and stairs at the south end of the parking lot enhance access to the beach. The preferred plan also identifies a future opportunity for an ADA-accessible boardwalk extending from the north end of the parking lot to a new overlook seating area and connection to the play area.
- **Teen Hangout Space:** A designated teen hangout space is identified on the beach that would be refined with Mercer Island youth/teens during future design efforts.

### **PUBLIC ART INTEGRATION – OPPORTUNITIES**

During the presentation, staff will provide the Arts Council with an overview of the project and seek input on opportunities to integrate public art and/or placemaking elements using the 1% for Art in Public Places funding generated by future capital projects that will result from the final plan. Capital projects for each park may be implemented in phases; at this stage, staff are presenting a selection of potential public art opportunities to consider incorporating into the final Joint Infrastructure Plan. Identified projects would be implemented using the Guidelines for Administering the Mercer Island Public Art Program as outlined in the 6-Year Work Plan for Art in Public Places (Exhibit 5).

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will compile Arts Council input on preferred public art opportunities and document them in the final Joint Infrastructure Plan. Review and adoption of the plan is expected to conclude by the end of 2026. The Arts Council will be reengaged on specific public art projects as future capital projects for Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks are developed.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Discuss opportunities for public art integration as part of the Clarke and Groveland Joint Infrastructure Plan.