



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 25-05  
May 1, 2025  
Regular Business

### AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

<b>TITLE:</b>	PRC 25-05: Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks Joint Park Infrastructure Plan Update	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Receive report. No action necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
<b>STAFF:</b>	Kellye Hilde, Deputy Public Works Director Shelby Perrault, Capital Parks Manager Sarah Bluvas, CIP Project Manager	
<b>EXHIBITS:</b>	1. Project Location Map	

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 18, 2025, the Mercer Island City Council approved the scope of work for the Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks Joint Infrastructure Plan (Capital Project 90.25.0013). The purpose of this agenda bill is to provide an overview of the scope of work and summary of the community engagement plan to the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC).

- Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks were both developed in the 1960s/70s, and their overwater structures and other amenities are aging and in need of replacement.
- The [2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan \(PROS Plan\)](#) identified the need for a joint planning effort to efficiently prioritize capital projects at Clarke and Groveland. Given that both parks are on the waterfront and face similar infrastructure challenges, the decision was made to combine the planning work.
- From August 2023 to December 2024, the Project Team performed an assessment at both parks and collected preliminary feedback from the Mercer Island community about their current uses and future needs for these parks.
- On March 18, 2025, staff debriefed the City Council on the assessment findings at both parks. City Council authorized staff to move forward with developing a Joint Infrastructure Plan that prioritizes repair and/or replacement of overwater structures and shoreline infrastructure. Improvements for uplands infrastructure and amenities such as restrooms, trails, and parking will also be considered for renovation in the future as resources allow. Additionally, City Council authorized staff to proceed with the proposed community engagement plan. ([AB 6642](#))
- During the May 1, 2025, PRC meeting, staff will present the background assessments, discuss the planning approach, and summarize the community engagement plan, including expected PRC touchpoints in the process.
- This planning effort is anticipated to conclude by the end of Q2 2026. Project information, upcoming outreach events, and more details will continue to be available on Let's Talk at [www.mercerisland.gov/cgip](http://www.mercerisland.gov/cgip).

### BACKGROUND

#### 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 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. To begin this planning effort, the City Council approved the Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks Joint Master Plan (PA0157) with the 2023-2024 Biennial Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP). 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)

During the May 1, 2025, PRC meeting, City staff will share key findings from the existing conditions assessment, including input from the background survey. A high-level summary 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***

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.

### **CHALLENGES OF RENOVATING WATERFRONTS**

The City is undertaking a major design process to renovate the Luther Burbank Park docks and waterfront, which will greatly inform future waterfront projects of a similar scale and complexity. Here are some of the issues that should be considered when preparing the Joint Infrastructure Plan for Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks:

1. **Diversifying Recreational Offerings/Evaluating Intensity of Beach Park Use** – Beach parks experience high intensity use during the peak summer season. Exploring the potential to diversify waterfront activities across the three major beach parks should be evaluated.
2. **Strict Regulatory Environment** – Permitting for the Luther Burbank dock and waterfront project has been a multi-year process, and staff anticipate similar permitting timelines for future projects at Clarke and Groveland. Early planning work to strategize on the timing and phasing of projects is necessary.
3. **Costs to Reinvest in Waterfront Infrastructure** – Reinvestment in waterfront infrastructure is expensive and can take many years to design and construct, resulting in multi-year capital funding needs. A strategy for funding capital improvements at Clarke and Groveland will need to be developed as part of this joint planning effort.

### **RECOMMENDATION TO PURSUE FOCUSED INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

Based on the analysis of existing conditions and specifically the condition of the waterfront infrastructure at both parks, staff recommended shifting from developing a joint park "Master Plan" to developing a joint park "Infrastructure Plan" for Clarke and Groveland. The primary reason for this shift is to determine the future of the in-water structures, which include docks, swimming piers, concrete bulkheads, and an enclosed swimming area.

There is significant value and efficiency in continuing a joint planning effort for Clarke and Groveland, including keeping the City competitive for grants and other outside funding. For example, shoreline restoration at Clarke Beach has been previously identified as a priority for the Water Resource Inventory Area 8 (WRIA 8) work plan and is a strong candidate for WRIA 8 grant funds. Planning for and designing improvements concurrently will enable the City to take advantage of potential mitigation credits earned for shoreline restoration at Clarke Beach.

On March 18, 2025, the City Council authorized staff to move forward with developing a Joint Infrastructure Plan. City staff are finalizing the contract with Berger now to complete the planning process. The scope of work may address the following items:

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

Early concepts for dock and shoreline improvements may proceed through preliminary design during the joint planning effort to fast-track grant applications, fundraising, permitting, and construction, with approval of the City Council. Renovations of upland infrastructure and amenities, such as restrooms, trails, and parking, would likely be designed and constructed in the future as resources allow.

## ISSUE/DISCUSSION

### ANTICIPATED PROJECT TIMELINE

Work to develop the Clarke and Groveland Beach Parks Joint Infrastructure Plan is expected to take 12-15 months and is divided into three major phases:

- **Pre-Design and Pre-Engagement: Q1-Q2 2025 (current)**
- Draft Plan Development: Q2 – Q4 2025
  - Develop and refine design alternatives based on community feedback and PRC input
  - Identify preferred Infrastructure Plan for each park
- Plan Review and Adoption: Q1 – Q2 2026
  - PRC recommends preferred Joint Infrastructure Plan to the City Council for review and adoption

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Community engagement for the Joint Infrastructure Plan will focus on evaluating recreational offerings at each park, exploring alternatives to improve the shoreline and dock areas, and addressing accessibility. Design alternatives will be developed and shared with the community to inform the preferred design for each park. Specific engagement opportunities will include:

- One Open House to provide information about the project and present design alternatives for community input.
- Up to two online surveys to gather additional community feedback on design alternatives and preferred options.
- Two staff-led PRC meetings to gather feedback on design alternatives and prepare a final recommendation on the preferred Infrastructure Plan for review and adoption by the City Council. (Additional PRC updates will be provided as part of the Department Report.)
- Regular updates posted on Let's Talk, including key dates, surveys, and other project information, as well as tools such as quick polls for ongoing engagement outside of the open house and surveys.
- Engagement with park neighbors and community groups to share project information, promote events, and seek feedback on the Infrastructure Plan.

Opportunities will be promoted through all City channels, including the MI weekly e-newsletter, social media, on-site signage, and at upcoming City events, as well as shared through outlets such as the Mercer Island Reporter and the Mercer Island School District.

## NEXT STEPS

Staff are finalizing the contract with the consultant and expect to kick off work to develop the draft plan later this month. Upcoming community engagement opportunities, such as the Open House date, survey links, and other information, will be shared on Let's Talk ([www.mercerisland.gov/cgip](http://www.mercerisland.gov/cgip)) as soon as they are available.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive Report. No action necessary.