



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 25-10
September 4, 2025
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PRC 25-10: Deane's Children's Park Site Plan Update	☒ Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Participate in the site walk and provide input to help staff refine the concepts into a preferred plan, which will be presented to the Commission in November.	☐ Action Needed: ☐ Motion ☐ Recommendation

STAFF:	Kellye Hilde, Deputy Public Works Director Shelby Perrault, Capital Parks Manager
EXHIBITS:	1. Project Location Map 2. Phase I Community Engagement Summary 3. Preliminary Design Concept – The Quest 4. Preliminary Design Concept – Woodsy Wonders 5. Phase II Community Engagement Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 18, 2025, the Mercer Island City Council approved the scope of work for the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan (Capital Project 90.25.0015). The purpose of this agenda bill is to provide an overview of the scope of work and a summary of the first phase of community engagement to the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC).

- Deane's Children's Park is an expansive play area at Island Crest Park that includes multiple playground structures, the iconic "dragon", the Bike Skills area, a picnic shelter, a small restroom facility, walking paths, and limited parking.
- The [2022 Parks, Recreation, And Open Space Plan \(PROS Plan\)](#) included a conditions assessment of park infrastructure and amenities and revealed that most playgrounds in the Mercer Island parks system are not ADA accessible. In addition, the assessment indicated that all playground structures would be due for replacement over the next two decades.
- The Deane's Children's Park playground structures were identified for early replacement in the 2023-2028 Parks Capital Improvement Program (Parks CIP).
- In November 2022, Mercer Island community members voted to renew the parks levy that was set to expire at the end of 2023. The parks levy includes dedicated funding for playground replacements across the Mercer Island parks system.
- During early work on the playground replacement plan, staff identified Deane's Children's Park as a good candidate for ADA improvements and conversion to universal play equipment, similar to the approach taken at Mercedale Park. The topography of the play area is relatively flat, and the site is flexible, allowing equipment and structures to be reorganized to meet universal play standards.
- In addition to the playground equipment replacement, Deane's Children's Park includes a picnic shelter and storage shed at the end of its service life, and a small single-user restroom that is located outside the play area and is not easily accessible.
- Finally, the Bike Skills area was relocated to Deane's Children's Park in 2023.
- Given the combination of planning needs mentioned in the previous bullets, staff made the decision to pause the playground replacement project and instead pursue the development of a new Site Plan for Deane's Children's Park. The Site Plan will address universal play standards with a new layout and

will include a phasing plan, cost estimate, and recommended funding strategy for replacing equipment and amenities.

- The City Council allocated \$1,500,000 in the 2025-2026 Biennial Budget and Capital Improvement Program for the planning, design, and construction of the improvements at Deane's Children's Park, including the development of the new Site Plan. The scope of work for the first phase of construction at the park will be determined through this planning process.
- The City entered into a contract with Berger Partnership in the amount of \$195,300 to facilitate the planning process and development of the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan.
- Between April and May 2025, the project team conducted the first round of outreach through an online survey, open house, school visits, and community event booths to gather input on priorities for the Site Plan.
- Key themes from the first round of engagement included strong support for inclusive and accessible play, preserving the park's natural and wooded character, and incorporating imaginative and nature-based design elements.
- Based on this input, two early design concepts were developed: *The Quest* and *Woodsy Wonders*.
- Between July and August 2025, the project team conducted the second round of outreach through an online survey, project booths at four community events, and a discussion with the Friends of Dragon Park to gather input on preferred concept and preferences on the look, feel, and character of play equipment.
- Key themes from the second round of engagement included strong support for the *Woodsy Wonders* concept, and a focus on imaginative, inclusive play experiences that preserve the park's natural character.

BACKGROUND

PARK FORMATION

In 1962, the Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) proposed a children's park at Island Crest Park, which was owned and operated by King County. After the plan was approved, MIPA solicited support from local organizations to purchase equipment and enlisted community volunteers to build the children's play area. The City acquired Island Crest Park in 1968 and renamed the play area Deane's Children's Park in 1985, in honor of Lola and Phil Deane, Mercer Island residents who were instrumental in the park's creation. MIPA has continued to partner with the City to improve Deane's, including a major park renovation completed in 2005.

2022 PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLAN (PROS PLAN)

The 2022 PROS Plan included a conditions assessment of park infrastructure and amenities. This assessment helped guide the development and prioritization of the 6-year Parks Capital Improvement Program (Parks CIP). The assessment revealed that most playgrounds on Mercer Island do not meet ADA or universal accessibility standards, and much of the playground equipment is not accessible. Additionally, ten out of the 18 playgrounds in the park system were approaching the end of their useful life, including play structures at Deane's Children's Park and almost all of the playground equipment would need to be replaced over a twenty-year period. Deane's Children's Park was one of the five playgrounds with equipment slated for replacement in the 2023-2028 Parks CIP.

2022 PARKS LEVY

In November 2022, Mercer Island community members voted to renew the parks levy that was set to expire at the end of 2023. The renewed 16-year levy provides continued funding for parks operations and maintenance, in addition to funding Pioneer Park forest management and the replacement of 15 play structures. Deane's Children's Park was prioritized for early replacement due to the age and condition of equipment and the desire to provide universally accessible play opportunities.

DEANE'S CHILDREN'S PARK SITE CONDITIONS/EARLY ASSESSMENT

A preliminary assessment of existing conditions was conducted from 2023-2024. Key takeaways from these findings are divided into three categories:

Play Equipment

Play equipment at Deane's Children's Park was installed in 2005 and 2012. Except for the "dragon," the existing play equipment is nearing the end of its useful life. The timber curbs framing the play areas do not meet accessibility standards and the existing play equipment is not truly accessible. Additionally, the park's play equipment lacks diverse and inclusive play opportunities for all users.

Park Amenities

In addition to the play equipment, the park includes several amenities that require replacement. The original restroom that was decommissioned and converted into a storage shed is nearing the end of its useful life, as is the picnic shelter. The single-user restroom serving Deane's Children's Park and the Bike Skills area is located at the eastern edge of the property next to the parking lot, making it difficult to access. Site furnishings, including picnic tables and park benches, do not meet accessibility standards, and many are in disrepair.

Site Circulation

The park lacks clear wayfinding to the various play areas, which are spread out and do not offer clear sightlines, making overall site navigation confusing. The existing trails and pathways throughout the park require upgrades to meet accessibility standards and should be clearly defined to distinguish accessible from non-accessible paths. Furthermore, the accessible parking spaces in the parking lot do not comply with accessibility standards.

Along with the key takeaways from the preliminary assessment, it is important to note the relocation of the Bike Skills area to the northwest quadrant of the park, adjacent to the play area. The park amenities and overall site circulation will need to consider both user groups, ensuring restroom facilities and picnic shelters are centrally located, providing clearly defined paths for riders entering the Bike Skills area versus play areas, and developing amenities that meet accessibility standards. For these reasons, the scope of the playground replacement needs to be broadened to include the Bike Skills area, ensuring a cohesive plan for Deane's Children's Park.

SITE PLAN OVERVIEW AND SCOPE OF WORK

In the fall of 2024, the City engaged Berger Partnership as the design consultant to facilitate the development of a new Site Plan for Deane's Children's Park. The plan will address cohesive integration of the Bike Skills area and the playground structures, with the goal of modernizing the park area to meet universal play standards. The plan will also address improvements to pedestrian and bike circulation, restroom and picnic shelter replacement, parking, and other potential park improvements. The final Site Plan will include a cost estimate, phasing plan, and funding strategy.

The planning, design, and construction of Deane's Children's Park will include multiple phases:

- **Phase I:** Develop a Site Plan in 2025 through a community engagement process that will address universal play standards including a new park layout and phasing plan for the replacement of equipment and amenities. The Site Plan will also include cost estimates and a funding strategy. The Parks and Recreation Commission will review the proposed alternatives and present a recommendation to the City Council for adoption.

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- **Phase II:** The Site Plan will identify the first phase of capital improvement work, including anticipated replacement of one or more playground structures. The project will advance through detailed design, permitting, and phased construction that is anticipated to take place from 2026-2027.
 - **Future Phases:** The anticipated scope of improvements for Deane’s Children’s Park likely exceed the initial budget allocation. Future capital improvements will be recommended for implementation in phases, to include continued opportunities for community fundraising and grants.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND ADA ACCESSIBILITY

To ensure the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan reflects principles of accessibility and inclusivity, the designs developed will be reviewed for visitors of all abilities by Kanics Inclusive Design Services, a consulting firm that specializes in developing inclusive play opportunities. Additionally, Kanics will be completing an inclusive playground evaluation at five other playgrounds on the Island, including Aubrey Davis East and West, Luther Burbank Park, South Mercer Playfield, and Mercer Island Community and Event Center. As part of the evaluations, a comprehensive report for each playground will be created, detailing recommendations for improvements.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Community engagement for the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan will focus on identifying the needs and priorities of the project, gathering input on various play elements to inform the development of the design concept alternatives, and gathering feedback on concept alternatives to inform the final recommendation. Specific engagement opportunities include:

- Up to two public meetings/events - may be a combination of in-person and virtual opportunities.
- Up to two online surveys run concurrently with the public meetings/events to collect additional input and reach community members that are unable to attend the events.
- Check-in meetings with the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) to seek feedback on the design concept alternatives and prepare a final recommendation on the Site Plan for review and adoption by the City Council.
- 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 Site Plan.

ANTICIPATED PROJECT TIMELINE

The Site Plan development process is expected to take about one year and is divided into five major steps:

- Project Kickoff and Site Assessment: Q4 2024 – Q1 2025 (complete)
- Pre-Design and Pre-Engagement: Q1 2025 (complete)
- Concept Development: Q2 – Q3 2025 (complete)
 - Identify gaps, needs, and priorities of project, and gather input on play elements
 - Develop concept alternatives
- **Final Design Recommendation: Q4 2025 (initiating)**
 - Refine concept alternatives into one final design as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission
- Site Plan Adoption: Q1 2026
 - Parks and Recreation Commission to provide Site Plan recommendation to the City Council for review and adoption.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY – INITIAL INPUT GATHERING

From April to May 2025, the project team conducted a multi-faceted first phase of community engagement to inform Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan. Outreach efforts included an online survey, an in-person open house, project booths at two community events (MIPA Circus and Leap for Green), and school-based engagement activities across four elementary schools. These efforts were designed to gather feedback from a broad cross-section of the community – including families, children, and longtime park users – on their experiences, priorities, and ideas for the future redevelopment of the park.

Key themes and takeaways included:

- Strong support for inclusive and accessible play features, including improved paths and restrooms
- Desire to preserve the natural, wooded character of the park
- Continued enthusiasm for the park’s dragon legacy, with interest in incorporating imaginative elements
- Preference for a unified theme, with top choices including *Treehouse Adventure* and *Fairytale Kingdom*
- High interest in active and diverse play features such as swings, climbers, spinners, and ziplines
- Support for phased improvements, starting with a new restroom facility, followed by a picnic shelter and access upgrades

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

PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

Community feedback gathered during the first phase of engagement directly informed the development of two preliminary design concepts: *The Quest* and *Woodsy Wonders*. These concepts reflect the community’s priorities for inclusive, accessible play; a natural, forested setting; and imaginative elements rooted in the park’s identity. Both designs incorporate features such as improved circulation, a variety of play types for all ages and abilities, and a centrally located picnic shelter and restroom. These concepts are provided in Exhibit 3 and 4 and summarized below:

The Quest

The Quest builds on the dragon legacy and fairytale themes expressed by many children and families, featuring castle-like play structures, a sense of adventure and discovery, and playful storytelling elements.

Woodsy Wonders

Woodsy Wonders emphasizes the natural woodland character of the site, and incorporates treehouse-like play structures, quiet spaces for reflection, and nature-based play that supports creative exploration.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY – PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

The second phase of engagement focused on presenting the draft design concepts developed in response to initial community input. This phase invited community members to provide feedback on the overall look, feel, and character of the concepts – particularly the play equipment – and to respond to more specific questions related to different types and categories of play. From July to August 2025, the project team conducted a community-wide survey via the Let’s Talk Mercer Island project webpage, held a focused discussion with the Friends of Dragon Park, and hosted project booths at four City events: Summer Celebration, Mostly Music in the Park, National Night Out, and Pride in the Park.

Key themes and takeaways included:

- Broad support for *Woodsy Wonders* as the preferred concept, with appreciation for its alignment with the park's natural setting
- Desire to meaningfully integrate Kenton's Dragon into the updated design
- Continued support for unstructured, imaginative play that fosters creativity, exploration and open-ended play experiences
- Emphasis on inclusive features that support a range of ages and abilities, while preserving the park's forested character
- Climbing and sliding were the most desired play elements in larger structures, with clear support for elevated, open spaces and a unique structure that reflects the park's character

A detailed summary of this engagement is provided in Exhibit 5.

DESIGN REFINEMENT DISCUSSION - LOGISTICS

This agenda item includes a site-tour of Deane's Children's Park. The PRC and City staff will travel in City vans to the site. Discussion related to PRC business will only take place in the Slater Room of the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC) and on-site during the tour. The tour is expected to last approximately 1.5 hours. Public comment will be available at the beginning of the meeting agenda and take place via Zoom or in-person at the MICEC, provided they register with City staff prior to the meeting. Community members may attend and view the site-tour but will need to provide their own transportation and may not engage in the discussion.

Site-tour Itinerary (times are approximate):

- 5:30pm- Depart Mercer Island Community and Event Center (8236 SE 24th St.)
- 5:40pm- Arrive Deane's Children's Park (5701 Island Crest Way)
- 5:45pm- Walking of Tour of Site
- 6:45pm- Depart Arrive Deane's Children's Park
- 7:00pm- Resume PRC Meeting at Mercer Island Community and Event Center

DESIGN REFINEMENT DISCUSSION - PURPOSE

As the project team moves toward identifying a single preferred concept, a site-tour will provide an on-the-ground opportunity to help visualize how each concept would be experienced in context. This in-person perspective is intended to support a more informed decision. The questions below are provided to guide Commission feedback on how well the concepts reflect community input and long-term priorities, and to identify key areas for further refinement.

1. To what extent do you feel community input has been reflected in these two concepts?
2. Which concept better supports the community's long-term goals?
3. Are there specific aspects of either concept that need additional exploration or clarification before moving forward?
4. Are there strengths in one concept that should be carried over into the other as we move toward one refined plan?
5. Based on community outreach to date, does the preferred concept aligns with the community's priorities and values?

The Commission's feedback from this discussion, along with community input, will help guide refinement of the two design concepts into a single preferred plan. The project team will incorporate this input and return with a refined design for review and direction.

NEXT STEPS

The project team will refine the design concepts into a single preferred plan. As part of this process, the play equipment layout and features will be further developed. Staff will present the preferred plan and play equipment features to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and consideration at the November 6, 2025, Regular Meeting.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Participate in the site walk and provide input to help staff refine the concepts into a single preferred plan, which will be presented to the Commission in November.