



DEANE'S CHILDREN'S PARK SITE PLAN

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

PHASE 2 – DESIGN CONCEPTS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

A renewed 2022 Parks Levy provides continued funding for parks operations and maintenance, including replacement for play structures. Deane's Children's Park was prioritized for early replacement due to the age of equipment and the desire to provide universally accessible play opportunities. The re-imagined Deane's Children's Park will focus on inclusive play, a play-for-all approach that is rooted in universal design guidelines and goals, as well as evidence-based play space design practices. Through a community engagement process, the City is developing a Site Plan for a new layout with welcoming play spaces where all visitors can play together, regardless of age or ability.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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. The following sections summarize the key themes and insights from this outreach.

Survey #2

The survey was available online on the Let's Talk Mercer Island Deane's Children's Park Site Plan webpage from July 12 to August 12, 2025, and received a total of 72 responses. Demographics data showed that most respondents lived in households of three or more people and had at least one child under the age of 18. The majority of respondents resided in the central part of the island, between SE 40th and SE 68th.

Participants expressed strong interest in creating a park that is both inclusive and grounded in its natural setting. There was a clear emphasis on the importance of accessible trails, inclusive play features, and amenities that support a range of ages and abilities.

"The great thing about the park currently is that it is great for a wide range of ages. Please retain this feature in the redesign..."

Respondents also voiced enthusiasm for incorporating natural materials and creative elements – such as hidden surprises and opportunities for imaginative play. Adventure play remained a consistent theme, along with a desire for a unique, signature structure that reflects the character of the park. Commonly requested amenities included restrooms near the play area, shaded seating for caregivers, preservation of trees, and spaces for gathering.

Concept and Aesthetic Preferences

Survey responses showed a nearly even split between the two design concepts, with *The Quest* receiving a slight edge over *Woodsy Wonders*. In addition, 14% of respondents liked both concepts equally, and only three respondents indicated they did not like either option.

When asked to select preferred imagery to represent the look, character, and feel of play equipment for each concept, participants most often chose:

- **The Quest:** Options B and D
- **Woodsy Wonders:** Option D and B

These top selections reflect a strong preference for nature-based, adventurous aesthetics. There was continued enthusiasm for whimsical, adventurous elements – such as dragons, treehouse, hidden surprises – balanced by a desire to maintain the forested character that defines the park.

Play Features and Equipment Preferences

Participants consistently prioritized active and adventurous play experiences. Climber and slides emerged as the most desired features for large play structures, followed by balancing elements and tunnels. There was clear enthusiasm for elevated play spaces that feel open and connected to the environment – structures with nets or see-through panels were strongly favored over more enclosed options.

When asked about preferences for motion-based and sensory equipment, participants identified the following favorites:

Motion Play Equipment Preference:

- Swings: Individual swings (belt, toddler, molded seat) were the top choice
- Group Rocking: Companion See-Saw ranked highest
- Group Spinning: No Transfer Spinner was most preferred
- Individual Spinning: Stand-Up Spinner was the most popular

Sensory Features:

- Top selections: Sound play, tactile play, and table slide

“Please keep the xylophone that honors Judy Witmer, beloved pre-school teacher to so many Mercer Islanders. She passed away earlier this year, and it would be a great honor to retain the memory of her at everyone's favorite park.”

Overall, responses reflected a desire for variety, challenge, and imaginative play. Many participants also called for a unique or signature play element to help define the space and enhance the park's identity.

Community Event Booths

The project team hosted booths at four community events to share the draft design concepts and gather input from the community. At each event, staff introduced the two proposed concepts, answered questions, and invited attendees to participate in a dot voting exercise to indicate their preferences on overall design direction and play equipment character. Survey handouts were also provided to encourage more detailed feedback on specific play elements. Additional input was collected through informal conversations. These events offered a valuable opportunity to connect with a broad cross-section of the community in a casual, accessible setting.

The following summaries highlight responses and key takeaways from each event.

Summer Celebration:

Date: July 12, 2025 | 10:00am – 2:00pm

Estimated Attendance: Approximately 300 - 400 people

Preferred Concept: Woodsy Wonders

Preferred Equipment Character – Woodsy Wonders: Option D

Preferred Equipment Character – The Quest: Option B

Key Takeaways:

- Attendees responded positively, expressing appreciation for the team's presence and the opportunity to provide input
- Many children recognized the project from earlier school engagement. While some were initially confused—thinking they had already provided feedback—they were excited to learn their input had informed the current concepts and were eager to vote again
- The 'Woodsy Wonders' theme emerged as the clear favorite, though both concepts were well received. The natural aesthetic resonated with the park's character, and many suggested combining elements from both designs



Figure 1. Attendees cast votes on their preferred design concept and style of play equipment at Summer Celebration.

- Participants expressed strong interest in a distinctive feature that reflects the park’s identity and supports the chosen theme—particularly favoring the natural treehouse look and climber concepts like the tree snag/birdcage and wood castle/fort

Mostly Music in the Park:

Date: July 31, 2025 | 6:30pm – 8:30pm

Estimated Attendance: approximately 60 people

Preferred Concept: Woodsy Wonders

Preferred Equipment Character – Woodsy Wonders: Option D

Preferred Equipment Character – The Quest: Option B

Key Takeaways:

- Theme for ‘The Quest’ feels a bit more tailored to younger age groups and not adaptable for older ages
- Desire to ensure spaces support family interaction, where parents and caregivers can actively participate in play alongside children

National Night Out:

Date: August 5, 2025 | 5:00pm – 8:00pm

Estimated Attendance: Approximately 40 people

Preferred Concept: Woodsy Wonders

Preferred Equipment Character – Woodsy Wonders: Option D

Preferred Equipment Character – The Quest: Option B

Key Takeaways:

- Broad support for locating the restroom in a more central, accessible area
- Appreciation for the flexibility of *Woodsy Wonders* concept to serve a wide range of age groups
- Positive feedback on the zipline element featured in *The Quest*, particularly for its appeal to adventurous play



Figure 2. Attendees cast votes on their preferred design concept and style of play equipment at Pride in the Park.

Pride in the Park:

Date: August 7, 2025 | 4:30pm – 6:30pm

Estimated Attendance: Approximately 80 people

Preferred Concept: Woodsy Wonders

Preferred Equipment Character – Woodsy Wonders: Option D

Preferred Equipment Character – The Quest: Option B

Key Takeaways:

- Support for incorporating *The Quest* storyline and integrating Kenton’s Dragon as a central feature
- Desire to see Kenton’s Dragon more fully woven into the *Woodsy Wonders* concept, rather than as a secondary element
- Preference for a variety of path types throughout the site to create a more natural and diverse experience
- Encouragement to prioritize imaginative, open-ended play opportunities and avoid an overly structured design

Across all four events, there was strong community support for both design concepts, with many attendees expressing enthusiasm for the direction of the project. Feedback reflected a broad appreciation for the creativity, play value, and preservation of the site’s natural character in both concepts. Notably, students who had participated in the first round of engagement were excited to see how their ideas and input had been incorporated into the concepts, reinforcing a sense of ownership and connection to the park’s future.

Friends of Dragon Park

Staff met with the Friends of Dragon Park on Thursday, July 24, 2025, from 11:00am – 12:00pm to review and discuss the draft design concepts. Nine members attended the meeting. Staff began with a presentation outlining the two concepts, followed by small group discussions. Participants were divided into two breakout groups and asked to respond to a series of questions, including their preferred concept, the strengths and weaknesses of each design, and whether any elements were missing that should be considered in the preferred plan. A summary of these takeaways is provided below:

- Support for *Woodsy Wonders* as a preferred direction
 - o While there was appreciation for both concepts, the majority of participants favored *Woodsy Wonders* for its natural character and felt it represented a strong next chapter for the park. However, they encouraged it to incorporate more layered, imaginative elements – similar to the storytelling strength found in *The Quest*.
- Desire for stronger integration of Kenton's Dragon
 - o There was clear interest in making the journey to Kenton's Dragon and the dragon itself a more central and meaningful part of *Woodsy Wonders*, to better reflect the park's identity and history.
- Importance of balanced play features and accessibility
 - o Participants emphasized including a variety of play elements, such as swings (including an accessible swing), slides, and monkey bars. They also expressed concerns about the placement of the *Critter Corner* and swings in *Woodsy Wonders*, recommending layout adjustments to improve safety and function.
- Site amenities and circulation
 - o There was a preference for the restroom location shown in *The Quest*, with interest in applying that placement to *Woodsy Wonders*. The group also supported maintaining a fence between the parking lot and suggested adding a trail connection from Island Crest Park to provide safer pedestrian access. If additional entrances to the park are preferred, participants emphasized the need for gates or similar features to ensure safety.



Figure 3. 'Woodsy Wonders' preferred play equipment character



Figure 4. 'The Quest' preferred play equipment character

NEXT STEPS

Community feedback across all engagement activities reflected strong support for both concepts, with a majority expressing a preference for *Woodsy Wonders* due to its natural character, flexibility for multiple age groups, and potential for imaginative, layered experiences. Key input included a desire to better integrate Kenton's Dragon into the design, improve the location of amenities like restrooms and *Critter Corner*, and enhance safety and circulation—particularly around entrances and access points. 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, informed by community priorities around inclusivity, imagination, and site connectivity. Staff will present the preferred plan and play equipment features to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and consideration at the November 6 Regular Meeting.