



# Mercer Island PROS Plan

## Virtual Public Meeting

### DRAFT Meeting Summary

September 28, 2021 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. | Zoom Meeting

#### Presenters

- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Chris Hoffman, PRR

#### Breakout Room Facilitators

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| • Ryan Daly, City of Mercer Island             | • Steve Duh, Conservation Technix  |
| • Jason Kinter, City of Mercer Island          | • Jean Akers, Conservation Technix |
| • Merrill Thomas-Schadt, City of Mercer Island | • Nancy Thai, PRR                  |
|  | • Lauren Wheeler, PRR              |

#### Introduction and Background

The City of Mercer Island began the process to update the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan in September 2019, but paused the planning work in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PROS Plan update process was restarted in December 2020.

Since restarting the planning process, several meetings have occurred including a joint meeting with the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 19, 2021 to formally re-start the planning process. This was followed by a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on February 4, 2021 to gather input to help inform the first Virtual public Meeting.

The first Virtual Public Meeting was held on March 23, 2021 using the Zoom platform. The virtual public meeting provided an opportunity to share information about the PROS Plan update and gather feedback from community members to help inform further development of the Plan.

The second Virtual Public Meeting was held on September 28, 2021. The project team provide an update on the PROS planning process, shared the community input the City has received to date, and provided another opportunity to explore that feedback and other topics that may be featured in the PROS Plan Update.

#### Notifications

The project team used a variety of methods to promote the Virtual Open House on September 28, 2021. These included:

- An article in the [MI Weekly newsletter](#)
- Social media posts

- Email notification sent to a variety of Parks and Recreation distribution lists.
- Inclusion in the City Manager's Report at City Council meetings
- Posting information about the public meeting on the City website and [Let's Talk page](#)

## Meeting overview

PROS Plan consultant Steve Duh described the Mercer Island PROS plan process and reviewed the public planning process since the March 23, 2021 virtual open house.

The presentation included an overview of the important role the community plays in the planning process including helping to shape the community's vision for Mercer Island parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces.

Fifty-five participants attended the meeting. The meeting was recorded, and the video will be available on the Let's Talk Page.

## What We Heard

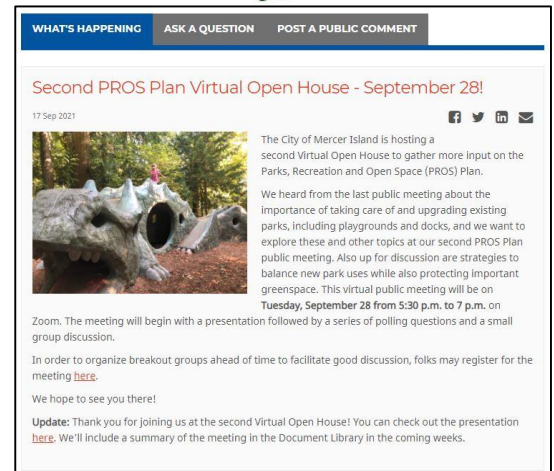
The project team used polling questions and facilitated breakout room discussions to gather input from meeting participants.

## Polling

The project team asked the following questions using the polling function in Zoom. Attendees could share answers in the chat box if they selected "Other" as an answer.

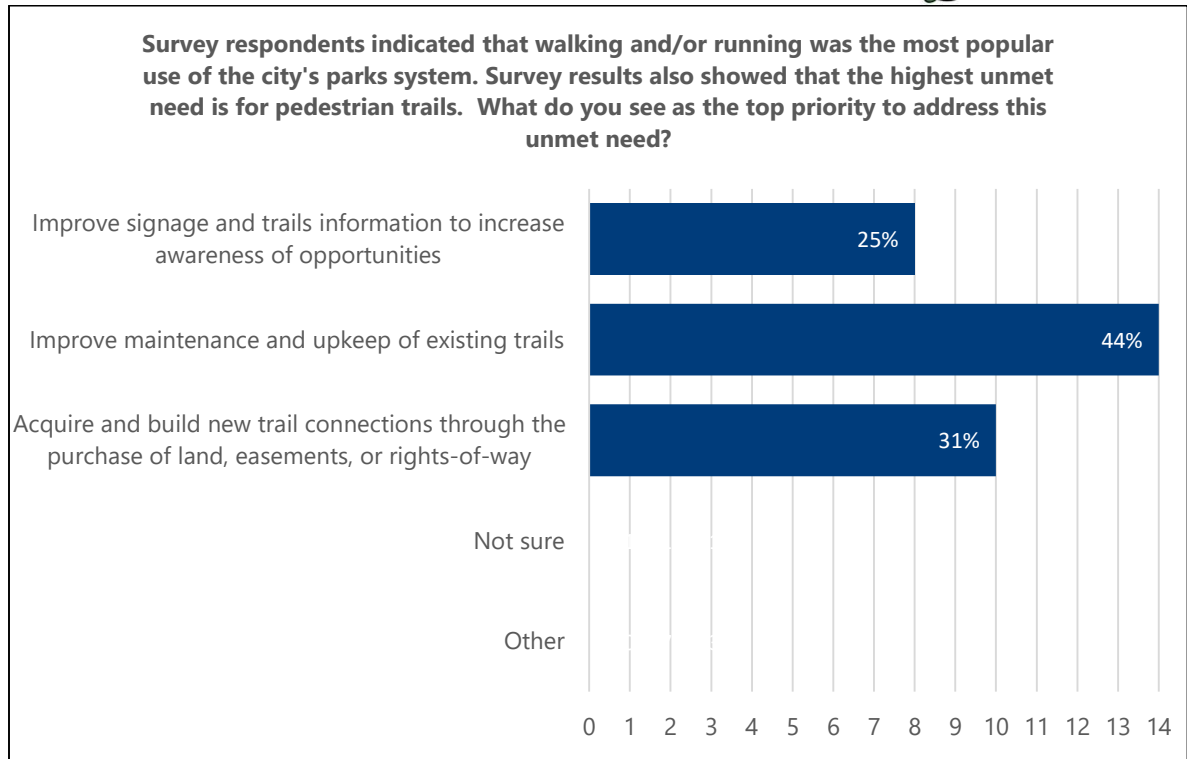
- 1. Survey respondents indicated that walking and/or running was the most popular use of the city's parks system. Survey results also showed that the highest unmet need is for pedestrian trails. What do you see as the top priority to address this unmet need?<sup>1</sup>**
  - a. Improve signage and trails information
  - b. Improve maintenance and upkeep of existing trails
  - c. Acquire and build new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or rights-of-way
  - d. Not sure
  - e. Other

The two top priorities identified by participants were to improve maintenance and upkeep of existing trails (44%) and to acquire and build new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or-right-of-way (31%).



*City of Mercer Island Let's Talk website inviting people to attend the second Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House on September 28, 2021.*

<sup>1</sup> Due to a technical issue, the question asked at the public meeting was missing one of the response options that was part of the presentation, which was "Build new connecting trails in existing parks to link walking and running routes throughout Mercer Island." This may have affected the results.



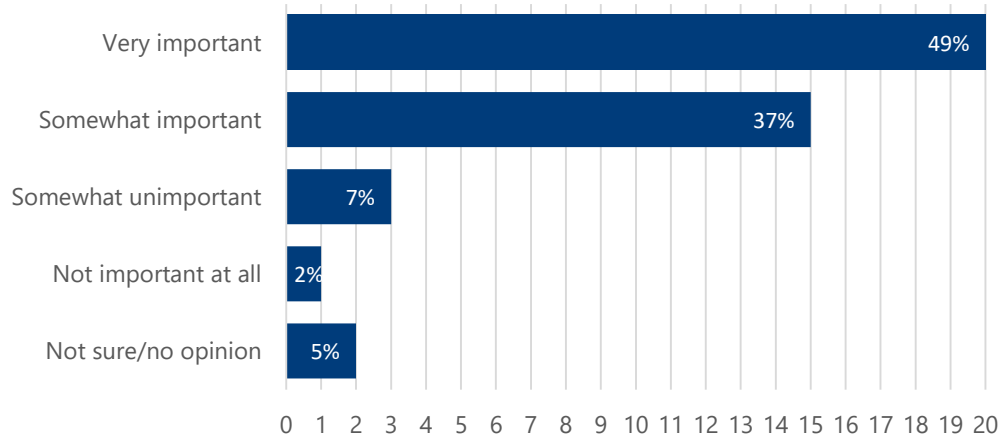
**2. Docks are challenging to repair/replace, and they get more difficult to replace as their condition deteriorates. With that said, how important is it to prioritize dock repair and replacement at parks such as Clarke Beach and Luther Burbank?**

- a. Very important
- b. Somewhat Important
- c. Somewhat unimportant
- d. Not important at all
- e. Not sure / No opinion

The majority of respondents indicated that prioritizing dock repair and replacement at parks is very important (49%) or somewhat important (37%). A few respondents didn't think dock repair and replacement was all that important and some weren't sure or had not opinion on the topic.

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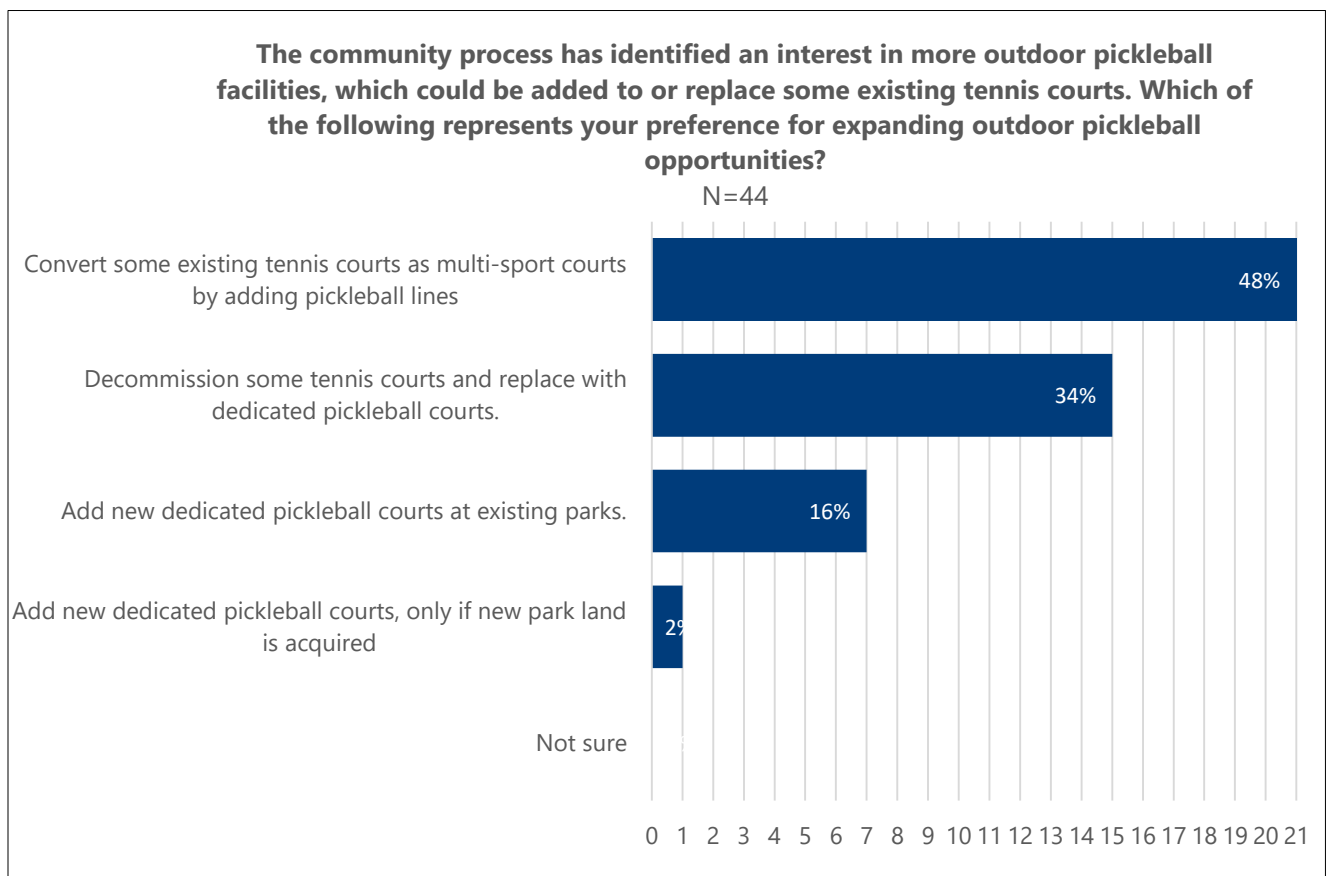
N=41



**3. The community process has identified an interest in more outdoor pickleball facilities, which could be added to or replace some existing tennis courts. Which of the following represents your preference for expanding outdoor pickleball opportunities?**

- a. Convert some existing courts as multi-sport courts by adding pickleball lines
- b. Decommission some tennis courts and replace with dedicated pickleball courts
- c. Add new dedicated pickleball courts at existing parks
- d. Add new dedicated pickleball courts, only if new park land is acquired
- e. Not sure

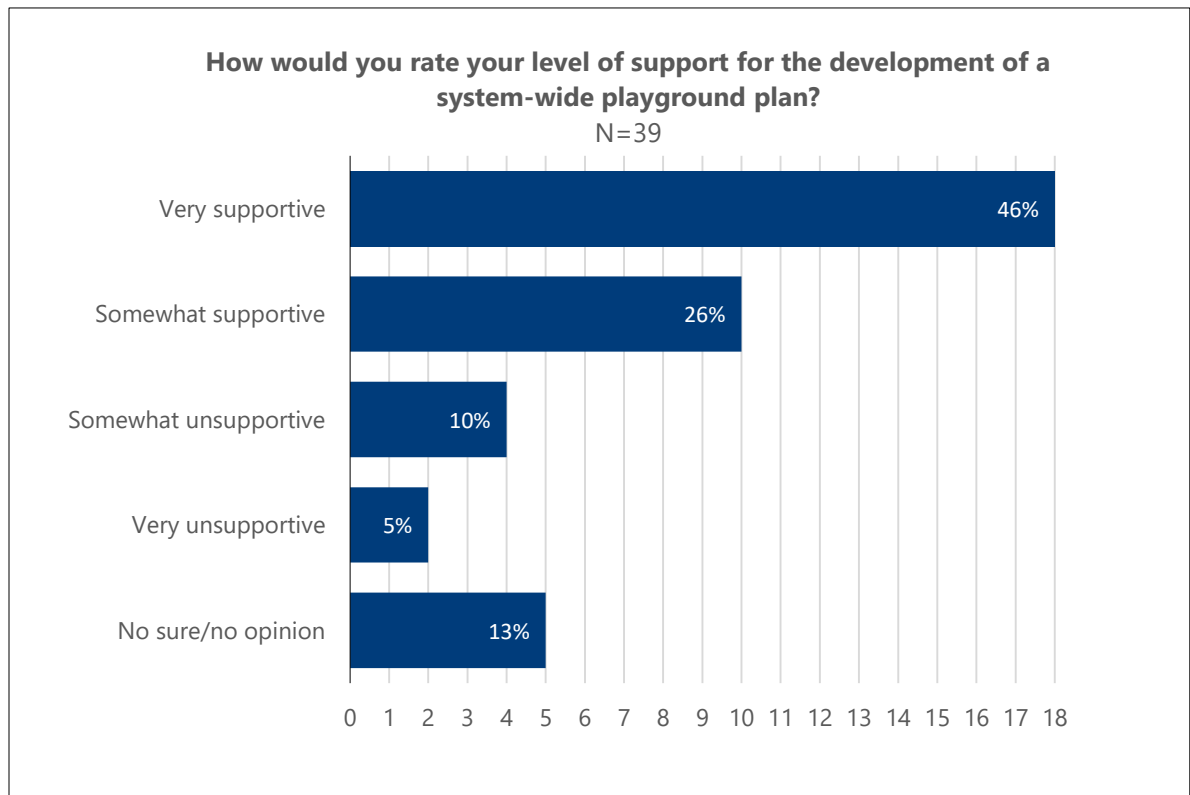
The majority of respondents desire the city to convert some existing tennis courts as multi-sport courts by adding pickleball lines (48%). The second largest number of responses want to decommission tennis courts and replace them with dedicated pickleball courts (34%).



**4. How would you rate your level of support for the development of a system-wide playground plan?**

- a. Very supportive
- b. Somewhat supportive
- c. Somewhat unsupportive
- d. Very unsupportive
- e. Not sure/no opinion

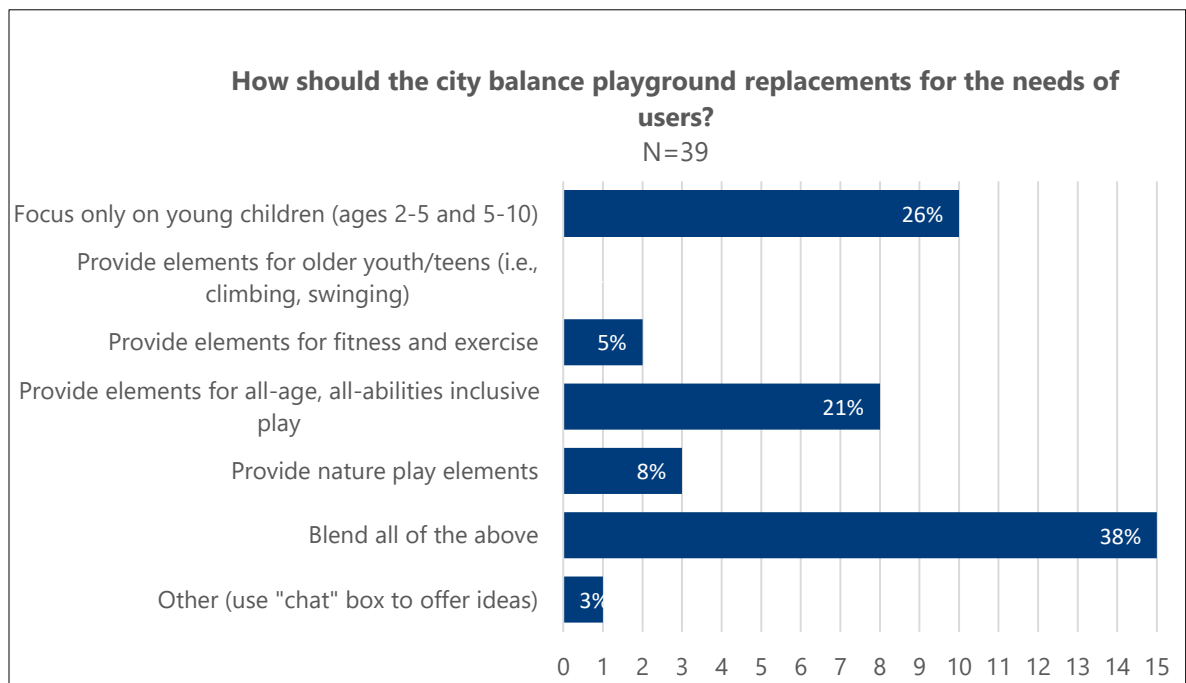
Almost half (46%) of respondents were very supportive for development of a system-wide playground plan. More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents were somewhat supportive. 15% of respondents were either somewhat unsupportive or very unsupportive.



**5. How should the city balance playground replacements for the needs of users?**

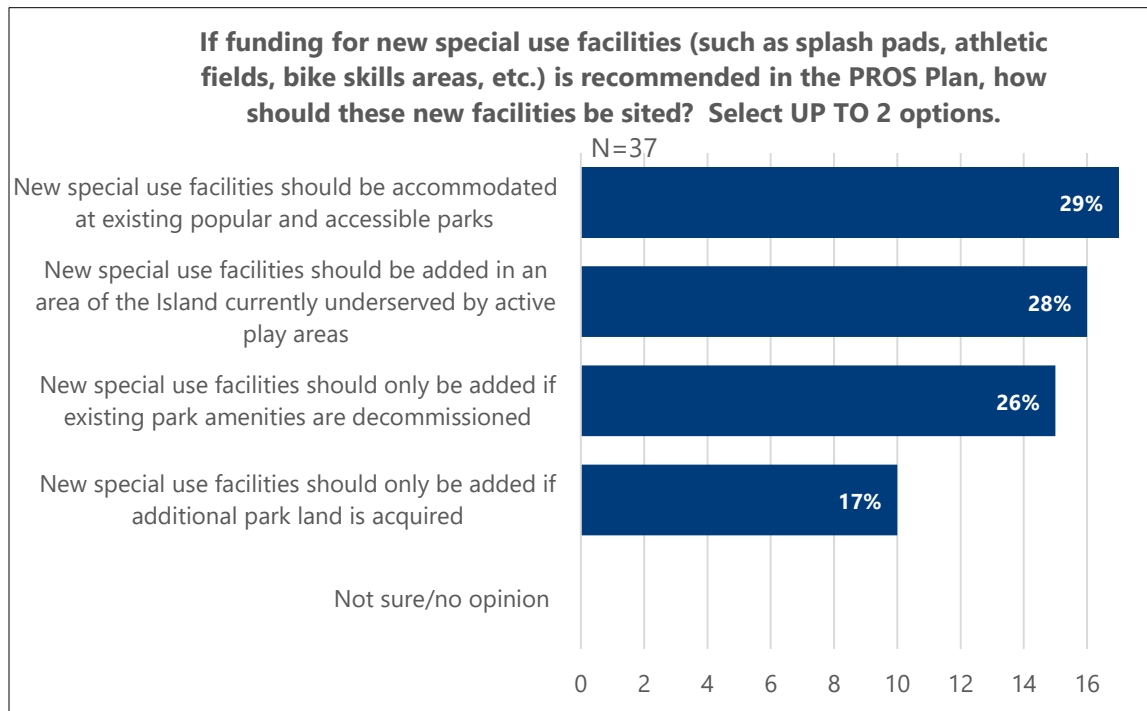
- a. Focus on young children (ages 2-5 and 5-10)
- b. Provide elements for older youth/teens (i.e., climbing, swinging)
- c. Provide elements for fitness and exercise
- d. Provide elements for all-age, all abilities inclusive play
- e. Provide nature play elements
- f. Blend all of the above
- g. Other (use "chat" box to offer ideas)

The top responses to balancing playground replacements were to blend all of the above elements (38%) and focus on young children (ages 2-5 and 5-10) (26%). About half of the respondents would like playground elements for all-age and all-abilities inclusive play. Providing nature play and fitness and exercise elements were selected collectively by 3 participants.



6. If funding for new special use facilities (such as splash pads, athletic fields, bike skills areas, etc.) is recommended in the PROS Plan, how should these new facilities be sited? Select UP TO 2 options.
- New special use facilities should be accommodated at existing popular and accessible parks
  - New special use facilities should be added in an area of the Island currently underserved by active play areas
  - New special use facilities should only be added if existing park amenities are decommissioned
  - New special use facilities should only be added if additional park land is acquired
  - Not sure/no opinion

The top two selections selected for new special use facilities were to accommodate existing popular and accessible parks (29%) and to add to the areas currently underserved by active play areas (28%). 26% of respondents said to add new special use facilities only if existing park amenities are decommissioned. A few respondents selected the option to add new special use facilities if additional park land is acquired.





## Breakout Room Discussions and Key Themes

The project team hosted one 30-minute facilitated breakout room session to provide attendees an opportunity to share feedback and ideas in small group settings. A summary of all seven breakout room sessions and questions are listed below and organized by key themes as summarized by the project team.

### #1 Exploring trail interests & connectivity

#### Questions

- Where are the gaps that need to be filled – to connect neighborhoods, to connect parks, or to link trails within parks and open space? What destinations need to be connected?
  - The trails are adequate.
  - Create connection to trails along the waterfront, e.g. Luther Burbank Park lakefront and North Mercedale hillside to Mercedale Park hillside.
  - Create connections from park to park and link important pieces, similar to Ellis Pond connections.
  - More comprehensive signage, maps and visuals are needed to show people where trails go and how they connect.
- Are you mostly interested in road-based connections or trails within parks and open space?
  - Create accessible bike paths and “off-road” pathways to provide a variety of destinations, like along Island Crest Way.
  - Concern that electric bikes may add challenges for shared trail use.
  - Look at options to separate trails from roads for safety; use plantings or vegetation to create safe zones.
  - Support for trails within parks.
  - Need additional routes on roads.
- Expanding trails within parks and open space are treated as additional impervious surface (gravel and impacted dirt are examples of this type of surface). Is that a concern for you? Should there be a tradeoff elsewhere in park development?
  - Maintenance and clearing of trails more important than building new trails; no more impervious.
  - Don’t just pave for new trails; consider decommissioning some segments based on low usage and restore to natural conditions to balance against new segments.
  - Consider pervious surfaces/limit paved trails.

### #2 Balancing Existing & New Recreational Uses

#### Questions

- What are your thoughts on accommodating a wider variety of recreational choices on Mercer Island?

- Concern that “bike skill area” may be challenging to manage and contribute to mismanaged trail systems.
  - Consider building a bike skills/pump track similar to a skate park that is in a more exposed and easier to monitor location.
  - Concern over losing green space to new amenities. If money is available, consider acquiring more land to support new recreational options.
  - Support for adding a splash pad in an existing park.
  - Support for inclusive spaces.
  - More dedicated pickleball courts are needed.
- Do you feel that additional recreational amenities to our parks system will enhance overall satisfaction and park usage?
    - Yes, but add parking if adding more amenities. Adding more activities could draw more people.
  - What should be considered when thinking about balancing the ‘where’ and ‘how’ of installing new features with maintaining existing uses? Should new features be added only if an existing feature is reduced or replaced?
    - It’s important to find a middle ground and provide a variety of recreational opportunities, especially for kids.
    - Retain play options for small children but also add opportunities for older kids.
    - Convert tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts.
    - Avoid putting too many amenities in one area (i.e., Luther Burbank Park).
    - Trade out the older elements with new ones based on levels of use/support of existing elements. Look at survey data to confirm current needs and uses.

### #3: Strategizing for Play Area Upgrades

#### Questions

- What are your thoughts on the different play area options referenced earlier?
  - Natural elements and nature play are good options; great idea to have kids move elements around and manipulate for play.
  - Support a broader range of play spaces; existing playgrounds are too similar
  - Give deference to local families with children who use playgrounds for detailed discussions about needed play experiences.
  - Consider spaces that encourage interaction among different age groups.
- When it comes time to replace playgrounds, should we replace with similar structures or consider other styles of play features?
  - Support for inclusive play areas and more shaded picnic areas/covered areas close by so people can use for more parts of the day (hot sun or rain).
  - Amphitheater at Luther Burbank Park needs to be repaired and be safe.
- Is there a feature or type of play you enjoy elsewhere, that we’re missing?



- Include some disc golf or ultimate frisbee in parks.
- Features that use motion e.g. swings sets, tire swings, slides, bucket swings for safety.
- Improve playgrounds by adding bathrooms, fences, benches, and areas with shade.

## Next Steps

The project team will use the feedback from this public meeting to inform the PROS plan as it is being finalized over the next three months. The City Council is scheduled to review and adopt the PROS Plan in early 2022.

Please send any questions or comments related to the Mercer Island PROS plan to [PROS@merceraisland.gov](mailto:PROS@merceraisland.gov).