



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**Item 3
September 7, 2023
Regular Business**

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

TITLE:	Community Garden: P-Patch Program Objectives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive presentation and provide feedback on P-Patch program purpose and objectives.	

STAFF:	Dave Setterlund, Recreation Coordinator Katie Herzog, Recreation Supervisor Ryan Daly, Recreation Manager
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Craig Reynolds
EXHIBITS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current P-Patch Guidelines 2. Draft P-Patch Objectives

SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to seek feedback from the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) on the P-Patch Guidelines (Exhibit 1) and P-Patch Purpose and Objectives (Exhibit 2). Staff will utilize this input to revise these documents and present to the PRC for review and endorsement at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND

The City of Mercer Island P-Patch was established behind the former Mercer View Elementary School in alignment with the Earth Day Movement of 1977. Now located behind the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC), the current P-Patch occupies approximately 49,000 sq. ft. (1.1 acre) of park space. The P-Patch includes 50 plots that vary in size, slope, and visual appearance.

Individual P-Patch plots are delineated by stakes in the ground. Most of the plots are surrounded by participant-constructed fencing to keep wildlife out. These fences have been created utilizing a variety of methods and materials. Participants also have access to communal water spickets, tools, and wheelbarrows.

Mercer Island Parks and Recreation staff are responsible for coordination and management of the P-Patch program, which includes establishing guidelines, assigning plots, communicating with participants, collecting program fees, and performing routine area maintenance such as delivering wood chips, providing access to irrigation, trash and debris removal, and maintaining pathways.

The P-Patch program utilizes a current set of guidelines (see Exhibit 1), which address plot allocation, maintenance responsibilities, acceptable gardening practices, and safety measures. These guidelines were developed by staff in consultation with program participants and have been revised over the years. Each season participants are provided the guidelines and new gardeners are given an introductory tour by the program coordinator.

In 2023, all fifty (50) available plots were assigned and occupied. Annually there is a waitlist of about 20 people. This year, staff were able to sub-divide some vacated spaces, making several smaller plots available to gardeners, which accommodated more individuals from the waitlist. Some of those on the waitlist had been awaiting a plot designation for five years. Participants in the program are predominantly Mercer Island residents, though there is no current requirement for residency.

Staff maintain regular communication with gardeners throughout the season, receiving feedback and input on operations and guidelines.

Gardeners received two notifications about the PRC discussion and were invited to participate. Staff will also provide the gardeners with a copy of the agenda packet.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this agenda item is to seek feedback from the PRC on the P-Patch Guidelines (Exhibit 1) and P-Patch Purpose and Objectives (Exhibit 2).

The following questions were developed to help guide the discussion:

- Should participation in the P-Patch program be: open to all, prioritized by residency, or exclusive to Mercer Island residents?
- Should participants be permitted to have multiple plots?
- Should temporary structures be permitted within plots- if so, to what degree? (Fences, sheds, cabinets, trellises, raised beds, enclosed areas)
- Should plots be permitted to display signage (messaging or verbiage)? Should decorations, or items not associated with gardening or plot cultivation be permitted?
- Should only organic-gardening products be allowed in the P-Patch area?
- Should plots be required to maintain a standard of care? (Weed free, use of standard materials, fence in upright position, etc.)

Next Steps:

Following tonight's meeting, staff will utilize the input gathered to draft revised P-Patch Guidelines which will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission at a future meeting for review and endorsement.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive presentation and provide feedback on the P-Patch Guidelines (Exhibit 1) and P-Patch Purpose and Objectives (Exhibit 2).