



P-Patch Operational Update

Parks & Recreation Commission

November 7, 2024

Tonight's Discussion

PRC Role in Policy/Rule Development

Background of Program

2024 Progress

Staffs Next Steps



PRC Role -Rule Development

- Developing and administering program rules (operational policies) and implementing programming is a function of staff.
- The PRC serves in an advisory capacity.
- Provides a forum for the community.
- Utilized to support policy development and may be requested to endorse a policy or rules.



Background

- The Mercer Island P-Patch was established in 1977, behind the former Mercer View Elementary School.
- Located behind the MICEC, it currently occupies approx. 49,000 square feet (1.1 acre) of park space.
- Includes approximately 50-60 plots, varying in size, slop, and visual appearance. Most plots are surrounded by participant-constructed fencing.



Background (cont.)

- Spring 2023 staff identified a need to re-develop program rules and to establish a purpose and objectives for the program.
 - The rules provide a tool for fair and equitable access to the program and hold all participants accountable to the same requirements.
- Staff utilized the PRC in an advisory capacity to assist in re-developing program rules and to establish a program purpose and objectives.
- Participants were informed of opportunities to provide input.
- Following (2) public meetings and after reviewing public comments, the PRC endorsed the new P-Patch Rules on Oct. 5, 2023.



P-Patch Purpose & Objectives

Purpose Statement:

The Mercer Island P-Patch is a community garden program coordinated by the City of Mercer Island and cultivated by Mercer Island residents through environmentally sustainable practices. The P-Patch program provides the opportunity for participants to grow food and ornamental plantings within individual plots enabling opportunities for connections within the community, increased food security, and improved physical and mental health for visitors and participants alike.

Program Objectives:

- Provide and allocate designated plot areas for community gardening activities.
- Enable gardening and gathering opportunities which improve both mental and physical health.
- Align participation with maintaining the natural character of the park and minimize unnatural physical and visual impacts to the surrounding park and neighborhood area.
- Provide an environment that enables participants of different ages and demographics to come together, interact, and cultivate meaningful relationships through gardening.
- Utilize garden plots and the surrounding area to enhance biodiversity and contribute to the preservation of the environment.



2024 Program Stats

- **P-Patch Plots:** 58 plots ranging in size and appearance.
 - 5 participants with multiple plots
- **Registration:** 49 registrants
- **Waitlist:** 47 participants (unverified)
- **Vacant Plots:** 10-12
- **Promotion/Marketing:**
 - This program has not been actively promoted.



2024 Progress

- Focused work on aligning participation with program purpose and objectives.
- Established communications with participants.
- Identified a need to update the registration process and documentation for plot maps and assignments.
- Determining participation desires for 2025- who is active and plans to return vs. inactive.
- Identified a waitlist of 47 individuals*
- Established Park Maintenance support and levels of service for the program.



Prominent Issues

- Staff follow-through / documentation
- A need to define plots and assign appropriately/accurately.
- Individuals with multiple plots/ “Super Plots”
- Vacant or unutilized plots
- The Waitlist
- Loose plastics- hoses- fencing issues

***A need to enhance consistency and efficiency.**



Staff Decision Making

- Act in the best interest of the program and community.
- Utilize the program purpose and objectives.
- Steward access to public park space in a way that is beneficial to the community and aligned with community values for parks.
- Provide equitable opportunities.
- Establish reasonable and consistent expectations.



Next Steps

- P-Patch Participant Meeting- Nov. 13
 - Address confusion – provide clear information
 - Address safety related issues
- Confirm waitlist & meet individually with participants.
- Prepare vacant plots for new participants
- Accept applications and registration
- Collect fees/ assign plots/document and commit to timelines.
- Assign waitlist participants.
- Evaluate and maintain communication.



Questions?

