



PLANNING COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PCB 25-09
May 28, 2025
Public Hearing

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PCB 25-09: Public Hearing: Parks Zone Code Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Approve a recommendation regarding the Parks Zone Code Amendment.	

STAFF:	Carson Hornsby, Management Analyst II Alison Van Gorp, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Development
EXHIBITS:	1. Development Code Amendment Matrix 2. Draft Parks Zone Code Amendment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks Zone is a proposed new zone that will establish development regulations for most City-owned and/or managed parks. The purpose of the Parks Zone is to ensure park lands are preserved and managed appropriately, in alignment with the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan, City code, master plans, and similar guiding documents.

- Creation of a new zone requires amendments to Title 19 of the Mercer Island City Code (MICC), the Zoning Map in MICC Title 19 Appendix D, and the Land Use Designation Table and Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) began working on the Parks Zone in October 2024 and finalized their recommendation to the City Council and Planning Commission (PC) in April 2025.
- At the April 15 City Council meeting, the PRC Chair and Vice Chair presented the PRC's Parks Zone recommendation to the City Council. The City Council approved a motion directing the PC to complete legislative review of the Parks Zone by June 2025.
- At the April 23 PC meeting, the PRC Chair and Vice Chair presented the PRC's Parks Zone recommendation to the PC.
- The PC will hold a public hearing for the Parks Zone Code Amendment on May 28, 2025, and consider approving a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council is scheduled to review the PC's Parks Zone Code Amendment recommendation in July 2025.

BACKGROUND

Parks Zone/Open Space Zone Background

The scope of work for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, adopted by the City Council in 2022 with [Resolution No. 1621](#), included the creation of a new Parks Zone and development regulations for the new zone. In January 2024, a preliminary draft of the Parks Zone development regulations was presented to the PRC and PC. Following community and commission feedback, the legislative review was paused, and the draft was returned to the PRC for further review. In March 2024, the PRC recommended dividing the Parks Zone planning into two phases: creating a zone for City-owned open space lands and another for public park properties.

The PRC and Open Space Conservancy Trust (OSCT) Board held several joint meetings to develop legislation for the Open Space Zone. On May 8, 2024, PRC and OSCT Chairs presented a joint recommendation to the PC, which completed its review in June 2024 as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update. On September 25, 2024, the PC approved a recommendation for the Open Space Zone code amendment. The City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 24C-15](#) establishing the Open Space Zone on November 4, 2024 with an effective date of December 31, 2024.

After the adoption of the Open Space Zone, the PRC shifted focus to development of the Parks Zone in October 2024. The PRC finalized their Parks Zone recommendation on April 9, 2025. The PRC Chair and Vice Chair presented the PRC's Parks Zone recommendation to the City Council on April 15, 2025, and the City Council passed a motion directing the PC to complete legislative review of the Parks Zone by June 2025. The PRC Chair and Vice Chair presented the PRC's Parks Zone recommendation to the PC at the April 23, 2025 PC meeting. The PC asked the PRC Chair, Vice-Chair, and staff questions related to the recommendation. Staff requested that the Planning Commissioners provide comments, amendments, and questions and established a deadline for these materials to be submitted prior to the May 28, 2025 public hearing.

Adoption of the Parks Zone will require amendments to the Development Code and the Comprehensive Plan. This PCB (PCB25-09) pertains to the amendments to the Development Code and PCB25-10 pertains to the Comprehensive Plan amendments.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Draft Parks Zone Code Amendment

Creation of a new zone requires amendments to the Development Code and the Zoning Map in Appendix D of the Development Code. The draft Parks Zone Code Amendment (see Exhibit 2) includes drafts of the Parks Zone Development Regulations and Zoning Map.

Draft Parks Zone Development Regulations

The draft Parks Zone Development Regulations outline how land in the Parks Zone can be used and developed, and include the following code amendments:

- Amendment to MICC Title 19 to add a new subsection MICC 19.05.05, establishing the Parks Zone purpose, designation requirements, and uses permitted.
- Amendment to MICC Title 19 to add a new subsection MICC 19.05.060, establishing the Parks Zone development standards.
- Amendment to [MICC 19.16.010 – Definitions](#) to add new definitions for key terms used in the Parks Zone development regulations.
- Amendment to [MICC 19.01.040 – Zone Establishment](#) to establish the Parks Zone.

Draft Zoning Map

The draft Zoning Map provides a visual representation of the City's zoning designations. The draft Zoning Map will replace the current adopted Zoning Map in MICC Title 19 Appendix D. The draft Zoning Map includes the following parks in the Parks Zone:

Bicentennial Park
Clarke Beach Park
Deane's Children's Park
First Hill Park
Groveland Beach Park
Homestead Park
Island Crest Park
Luther Burbank Park

Mercerdale Park
Roanoke Park
Rotary Park
SE 28th Street Mini Park
Secret Park
Slater Park
Wildwood Park

Planning Commission Proposed Amendments

Following the presentation of the PRC's recommendation on April 23, 2025, Planning Commissioners provided proposed amendments to the draft Parks Zone Development Regulations. The proposed amendments were sorted into two different categories in the Amendment Matrix: minor and major.

- **Minor.** Minor changes are those changes that are non-substantive and would not significantly change the policy direction of the development regulations. Examples of minor changes include wordsmithing, reorganization, clarifying amendments or amendments for consistency with other changes that are more substantive. The Commission may reclassify specific amendments if more detailed discussion is desired to make a recommendation, otherwise, the recommended motion will adopt all the minor amendments as a group. In a couple of cases, staff have proposed an alternative amendment; approving the minor amendments as a group will approve the staff drafted alternatives unless the commission takes separate action on that item.
- **Major.** Major changes are substantive changes are those changes that would significantly impact the policy direction of the development regulations. These changes require review or discussion by the Planning Commission and often include several proposed alternatives. The Planning Commission should focus on the Log Items categorized as "Major Amendments" in Exhibit 1, during the meeting.

The draft code amendment is provided in Exhibit 2, which includes the recommendations of the PRC along with the additional amendments proposed by the PC, as noted in brackets with green highlights that reference the log numbers in Exhibit 1.

During the May 28, 2025 meeting, staff will walk through each of the proposed substantive amendments and time will be available for questions and discussion. Staff will also provide an overview of the process for approving amendments and finalizing the PC recommendation, including proposed motions, which are detailed in the Recommended Action section below.

The PC can finalize its recommendation on this matter at the May 28 meeting, or if the PC requires an additional meeting to finalize their recommendation, deliberations can be extended to the special meeting scheduled for June 10. If deliberations are to continue at the June 10 meeting, the PC may direct staff to prepare updated amendment language for consideration at that meeting, rather than making motions with specific wording changes during the May 28 meeting. This is a good option if drafting revisions to some amendments becomes too complex to resolve during the meeting.

NEXT STEPS

After holding the public hearing on May 28, the PC will begin deliberations on the Parks Zone code amendment. The Planning Commission should finalize its recommendation by mid-June. The City Council is scheduled to review the PC's Parks Zone recommendations in July 2025.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Hold a public hearing and approve a recommendation regarding the Parks Zone Code Amendment.

Staff recommend the following motions:

Main Motion: "Move to recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed new section MICC 19.05.050 – Parks Zone; new section MICC 19.05.060 – Parks Zone Development Standards; and proposed amendments to MICC 19.16.010 – Definitions and MICC 19.01.040 – Zone Establishment."

Note: once the main motion has been made and seconded, the Planning Commission can begin making amendments by motion as it sees fit.

Secondary Motion – Minor Amendments: “Move to approve the minor amendments and amend the draft materials as presented in PCB 25-09.”

Note: This motion would make all the minor amendments outlined in Exhibit 1. If there are amendments categorized as minor that the Planning Commission would like to discuss further, the motion could be modified to: “move to approve the minor amendments except for proposed amendments [insert log numbers] and amend the draft materials as presented in PCB 25-06.” The excepted amendments can then be addressed with the same process proposed for substantive amendments.

Secondary Motion – Major Amendments: “Move to approve substantive amendment [insert log number] alternative [insert preferred alternative] as presented.”

Note: Each time a substantive amendment motion is made all the following variables will need to be inserted: (1) amendment log number and (2) the preferred alternative. The phrase “as presented” can be changed to “as amended” if the Planning Commission would like to make further changes to the alternative such as proposing specific language. If changes to an alternative are proposed the tertiary motion below would need to be made to detail the proposed change prior to voting on the secondary motion.

Tertiary Motion – Changes to a major amendment alternative: “Move to amend alternative [insert preferred alternative] as follows: [provide the proposed amendment].”