



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 26-04
February 6, 2026
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PRC 26-04: Deane's Children's Park Site Plan: Site Plan Recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Move to recommend the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan, as presented, to the City Council for adoption.Move to direct the Chair and Vice Chair to develop a hand-off memo to be approved by the Commission during the March 5, 2026, Regular Meeting.	

STAFF:	Kellye Hilde, Deputy Public Works Director Shelby Perrault, Capital Parks Manager
EXHIBITS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Deane's Children's Park Site PlanDraft Site Plan Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to review the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan as shown in Exhibit 1 with the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) and to seek a recommendation of the Site Plan to the City Council.

- On March 18, 2025, the Mercer Island City Council (City Council) authorized staff to proceed with developing a Site Plan for Deane's Children's Park ([AB6641](#)).
- The City Council allocated \$1,500,000 in the 2025-2026 Biennial Budget and Capital Improvement Program for the planning, design, and construction of the improvements at Deane's Children's Park, including the development of the new Site Plan. The scope of work for the first phase of construction at the park will be determined through this planning process.
- The Site Plan will address universal play standards with a new layout and will include a phasing plan, cost estimate, and recommended funding strategy for replacing equipment and amenities.
- Between April and May 2025, the project team conducted the first round of outreach through an online survey, open house, school visits, and community event booths to gather input on priorities for the Site Plan.
- Key themes from the first round of engagement included strong support for inclusive and accessible play, preserving the park's natural and wooded character, and incorporating imaginative and nature-based design elements.
- Based on this input, two early design concepts were developed: *The Quest* and *Woodsy Wonders*.
- Between July and August 2025, the project team conducted the second round of outreach through an online survey, project booths at four community events, and a discussion with the Friends of Dragon Park to gather input on a preferred concept and preferences on the look, feel, and character of play equipment.
- Key themes from the second round of engagement included strong support for the *Woodsy Wonders* concept, and a focus on imaginative, inclusive play experiences that preserve the park's natural character.

- On September 4, 2025, the project team facilitated a site tour with the Commission to provide an on-the-ground perspective of the two design concepts under consideration. Following the site visit, the Commission expressed support for the *Woodsy Wonders* concept and recommended moving forward with refining this option into the preferred plan ([PRC 25-10](#)).
- Staff met with the Arts Council on October 15, 2025, to review the Site Plan and discuss integrating public art and placemaking elements consistent with the Treehouse Adventure theme, utilizing the 1% for Art in Public Places funding generated by the project. The Arts Council expressed support for the theme and recommended engaging students involved in the original outreach to inform specific art elements ([AC 25-05](#)).
- On November 6, 2025, staff presented preferred Site Plan to the Commission for review and direction. The presentation highlighted the inclusive design principles guiding the project, key play features, proposed parking improvements, and a preliminary phasing plan. The discussion confirmed that the Site Plan reflects community input and is moving in the right direction ([PRC25-15](#)).

BACKGROUND

SITE PLAN OVERVIEW AND SCOPE OF WORK

In the fall of 2024, the City engaged Berger Partnership as the design consultant to facilitate the development of a new Site Plan for Deane's Children's Park. The plan will address cohesive integration of the Bike Skills area and the playground structures, with the goal of modernizing the park area to meet universal play standards. The plan will also address improvements to pedestrian and bike circulation, restroom and picnic shelter replacement, parking, and other potential park improvements. The final Site Plan will include a cost estimate, phasing plan, and funding strategy.

The planning, design, and construction of Deane's Children's Park will occur in multiple phases:

- Phase I: Develop a Site Plan through a community engagement process that will address universal play standards including a new park layout and phasing plan for the replacement of equipment and amenities. The Site Plan will also include cost estimates and a funding strategy. The Parks and Recreation Commission will review the proposed alternatives and present a recommendation to the City Council for adoption.
- Phase II: The Site Plan will identify the first phase of capital improvement work, including anticipated replacement of one or more playground structures. The project will advance through detailed design, permitting, and phased construction that is anticipated to take place from 2026-2027.
- Future Phases: The anticipated scope of improvements for Deane's Children's Park as a whole will exceed the initial budget allocation. Future capital improvements will be recommended for implementation in phases, to include continued opportunities for community fundraising and grants.

PROJECT TIMELINE

The Site Plan development process is expected to take about one year and is divided into five major steps:

- Project Kickoff and Site Assessment: Q4 2024 – Q1 2025 (complete)
- Pre-Design and Pre-Engagement: Q1 2025 (complete)
- Concept Development: Q2 – Q3 2025 (complete)
 - Identify gaps, needs, and priorities of project, and gather input on play elements
 - Develop concept alternatives
- Final Design Recommendation: Q4 2025 (complete)

- Refine concept alternatives into one final design as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Site Plan Adoption: Q1 - Q2 2026 (we are here)**
 - Parks and Recreation Commission to provide the Site Plan recommendation to the City Council for review and adoption.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

SITE PLAN REPORT

A site plan report is being developed as part of the site planning effort. The draft Site Plan Report (Exhibit 2) is provided for Commission reference and summarizes the project background, planning process, and design considerations that informed the development of the Site Plan. It includes an overview of inclusive design principles, a detailed summary of the Site Plan, proposed phasing, maintenance considerations, and implementation strategies. The draft Site Plan Report serves as a comprehensive reference document for the topics summarized in this agenda bill.

PLANNING PROCESS – SUMMARY

The Site Plan was developed through a four-phase planning process. Community outreach occurred primarily during the planning and design concepts phases, while coordination with the Parks and Recreation Commission, Arts Council, and City Council generally took place from the design concepts phase through plan adoption.

The process began with a detailed analysis of existing site conditions, including an evaluation of the existing playground structures, picnic shelter, and restroom, as well as an assessment of accessibility, stormwater conditions, and available utilities. Existing trails were documented, and the overall condition of the park was evaluated to identify opportunities and constraints for future improvements. This work formed the foundation for development of the Site Plan.

Phase I: Initial Input Gathering

From April to May 2025, the project team conducted a multi-faceted first phase of community engagement to inform Deane's Children's Park Site Plan. Outreach efforts included an online survey, an in-person open house, project booths at two community events (MIPA Circus and Leap for Green), and school-based engagement activities across four elementary schools. These efforts were designed to gather feedback from a broad cross-section of the community – including families, children, and longtime park users – on their experiences, priorities, and ideas for the future redevelopment of the park. A detailed summary of this engagement is provided in the September 4, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting agenda. ([PRC 25-10](#)).

Phase II: Design Concepts

From July to August 2025, the project team conducted the second phase of community engagement to gather feedback on two distinct design concepts—*The Quest* and *Woodsy Wonders*—developed in response to initial community input. Outreach efforts included an online survey, a focused discussion with the Friends of Dragon Park, and project booths at four City events: Summer Celebration, Mostly Music in the Park, National Night Out, and Pride in the Park. These efforts were designed to solicit input on the overall look, feel, and character of the concepts, with particular emphasis on play equipment and different types and categories of play. Community feedback expressed a clear preference for *Woodsy Wonders*, citing its alignment with the park's natural setting and its support for imaginative, inclusive play. A detailed summary of this engagement is provided in the September 4, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting agenda. ([PRC 25-10](#)).

Phase III: Preferred Site Plan Development

From September to October 2025, the project team conducted the third phase of the planning process, focusing on refining a preferred design based on earlier community input and design concept review. On September 4, 2025, the project team led a site tour with the Parks and Recreation Commission to provide an on-the-ground perspective of the two draft concepts. The Commission expressed support for the *Woodsy Wonders* concept and recommended advancing it for further refinement, while identifying areas for additional exploration to inform development of the preferred plan.

Public art integration was discussed with the Arts Council on October 15, 2025, and included opportunities for sculptural entry features, integrated graphic media, and functional art elements such as benches and wayfinding. These elements will be informed by student input and designed to align with the treehouse adventure theme. This work will be funded by the 1% for Public Art fund generated by each phase of development.

The resulting preferred plan builds on the *Woodsy Wonders* framework while retaining select elements from *The Quest*, including the restroom and picnic shelter (reoriented to improve sightlines) and a sensory pathway connecting to Kenton's Dragon. References to Kenton's Dragon are incorporated through subtle thematic details, such as play nodes and a dragon's egg, within the broader treehouse concept.

Phase IV: Site Plan Adoption

The Site Plan will be reviewed with the Parks and Recreation Commission at the February 5, 2026, Regular Meeting. Staff will request the Commission's review and confirmation that the Site Plan accurately reflects prior direction and community input and will ask the Commission to prepare a memorandum recommending that the City Council adopt the Site Plan, thereby concluding the planning process.

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

The development of the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan is guided by inclusive playground design, using universal design principles as they relate to the playground environment and evidence-based best practices. Inclusive playgrounds aim to remove physical and social barriers to participation through thoughtful design and programming, supporting the developmental needs of all children across physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communicative domains.

Inclusive playgrounds go beyond minimum accessibility standards. Successful inclusive playgrounds are equitable, flexible, and intuitive, while offering a variety of activities that allow children to be independent, active, and engaged in a safe and welcoming environment. The goal is to create a space where children of all abilities can play, explore, and connect.

Achieving true inclusivity requires a carefully balanced approach to play design. Accessibility is the foundational requirement, ensuring that children can reach and use play equipment regardless of mobility. Building on this foundation, adaptive play features are incorporated to support a wider range of abilities and needs.

Beyond accessibility and adaptability, a truly inclusive environment intentionally supports comprehensive human development across all five developmental domains (physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communication). Additional play features are selected to reinforce these domains and provide meaningful, engaging experiences for all users. As play elements are reviewed and selected, these layered strategies guide decision-making and help ensure inclusive play opportunities throughout the site.

Seven Inclusive Design Principles

To guide the selection and arrangement of play elements, the Site Plan is informed by seven inclusive design principles. Together, these principles shape how the playground supports a wide range of abilities, interests, and play styles.

1. Accessibility: everyone can reach and use the play equipment, regardless of ability or mobility.
2. Equitable Play: play opportunities support multiple ways to engage, allowing children to choose how they participate.
3. Flexibility: play spaces and equipment support multiple ways to engage, allowing children to choose how they participate.
4. Readability: spaces, equipment, and supporting amenities – such as clear wayfinding and communication boards – are easy to understand and navigate for all users.
5. Sensory Engagement: activities create rich, multi-sensory experiences, including tactile, auditory, visual, vestibular, and proprioceptive opportunities.
6. Degrees of Social Interaction: spaces to support solo, small-group, and large-group play, accommodating different social needs and comfort levels.
7. Multi-Generational Considerations: spaces accommodate a range of ages and abilities, encouraging intergenerational play and family participation.

The inclusive design principles are applied across a variety of play experiences, including adaptive and accessible equipment, social and cooperative play, sensory-rich activities, cognitive challenges, and opportunities for physical movement and motor planning. Together, these elements create a comprehensive foundation of features, challenges, and experiences that support meaningful play for children of all abilities.

SITE PLAN – DESIGN SUMMARY

The Site Plan presents a cohesive vision for reimagining Deane's Children's Park. By integrating inclusive design strategies within a forest adventure theme, the plan creates a play environment that supports children of all abilities, caregivers, and visitors of all ages. The layout reflects an iterative design process that considered multiple options for circulation, sightlines, play experiences, and accessibility. This approach ensures the plan responds to community input while creating a safe, engaging, and inclusive play environment for all users.

The park is organized around a clear circulation system that safely connects playground users, Bike Skills Area (BSA) users, and caregivers. A central "Forest Path" acts as the central spine, guiding visitors through the park and linking major play zones, gathering areas, and amenities. Visual landmarks – most notably a tree snag-inspired climbing tower – support intuitive wayfinding and draw users toward the heart of the park.

Primary and secondary entrances include grounding zones to pause, orient, and transition into the sensory-rich play environment. Clear wayfinding elements located at both entrances support inclusive, versatile communication and shared interaction.

Play experiences are organized into a series of connected zones that support a progression of ages, abilities, and play styles. Younger children are welcomed with low-lying play near the primary entrance, including the 2-5 Discovery Path, an accessible, forest-inspired trail layered with whimsical elements that guide exploration and sensory engagement. The central play zone offers a diverse mix of inclusive and adaptive equipment that encourages sensory exploration, social interaction, and imaginative play. Key features include adaptive swings, inclusive spinning and rocking elements, a large fallen-log climber inspired by natural forms, and musical and creek-inspired play components that support parallel and cooperative play. Improved sightlines and seating amenities throughout the playground enhance caregiver comfort and supervision. An elevated, accessible route leads to a focused play area for ages 5-12+, while smaller "forest surprise" play elements distributed throughout the site invite discovery and exploration.

At the center of the park, a shared gathering and amenity zone brings together key features that support social connection. This area includes a picnic shelter, a restroom, informal seating opportunities, and an accessible, looped pathway that surrounds the play zone, allowing for comfortable circulation around its perimeter. Play berms integrated into this space provide sensory engagement and casual seating while also serving as a natural strategy to slow cyclists as they exit the Bike Skills Area. A centrally located communication board reinforces inclusive, versatile communication and shared interaction among users of varying ages and abilities.

The Site Plan also reinforces the park's sense of place and legacy. *Kenton's Dragon* remains a cherished amenity, with opportunities identified to preserve and enhance its accessibility for future generations. Throughout the park, natural materials, forest-inspired forms, and opportunities for art and sensory features contribute to an immersive, nature-based experience that reflects the forested character of Deane's Children's Park.

Overall, the Site Plan provides a thoughtful balance of programming, inclusivity, safety, and environmental context. By integrating a diverse range of play opportunities with supportive amenities and clear circulation, the plan establishes a flexible framework that supports meaningful play, learning, and community connection.

Circulation and Accessibility

Ground-level circulation is a key component of the Site Plan and plays an important role in balancing the project's accessibility goals with the park's natural, heavily wooded setting. A variety of path materials, widths, and slopes respond to topography, tree impacts, and stormwater management, creating a layered network of routes that allows visitors to choose paths based on comfort level, mobility needs, and desired level of challenge. ADA-accessible routes connect all formal play zones and key amenities, meeting applicable slope and surfacing requirements while maintaining the park's forested character. Adaptive routes are also provided to support exploration and free play; while these paths may include slightly steeper slopes, they are designed to meet applicable playground and trail accessibility standards and offer additional movement options that encourage active play.

Play Area Surfacing

Play area surfacing uses a blended approach that combines unitary surfacing—such as poured-in-place rubber and synthetic turf—with engineered wood fiber. Priority is given to unitary surfacing at key locations where it directly interfaces with play equipment, including inclusive play features, transfer points, connected play routes, and ground-level play access, to ensure ease of movement and inclusive use. This hybrid surfacing strategy balances accessibility, cost considerations, stormwater management objectives, and long-term tree health, with the potential to expand unitary surfacing in the future should funding and environmental conditions allow.

Parking and Site Access

Parking and access were identified as priorities during the community outreach process. Through discussions with the Parks and Recreation Commission, parking layout alternatives were evaluated to explore ways to enhance access to Deane's Children's Park. The analysis focused on increasing both standard and accessible (ADA) parking to better meet community needs. After reviewing the alternatives, the preferred option increases the parking lot footprint to accommodate approximately 17 parking stalls, including 4 accessible stalls, to better support park use, while working with existing site limitations.

This exploration also highlighted the importance of providing a safe, accessible connection to the Island Crest Park Ballfield parking lot. As part of the first phase of improvements, this connection will be explored to ensure visitors have a safe route to the park when the Deane's Children's Park lot is at capacity.

Park Amenities

Park amenities are designed to support inclusive, comfortable, and extended visits while reinforcing the park's overall character and play experience. The proposed restroom building will include two gender-neutral restrooms, with one featuring a universal changing table to support visitors of all ages and abilities. The building's architectural character will complement the adjacent picnic shelter, reinforcing a cohesive aesthetic within the park's central zone.

Seating and gathering areas are thoughtfully distributed throughout the park to support caregivers, families, and multi-generational use. Strategically placed seating provides comfort, opportunities for rest or decompression, and clear sightlines into play areas, allowing caregivers to remain engaged and participate in play as desired.

Wayfinding elements are incorporated throughout the site to support navigation and exploration, with integrated "grounding zones" at primary and secondary entrances providing spaces to pause, review wayfinding information, and transition into the park's sensory-rich play environment. These zones also offer opportunities to reinforce the park's theme and incorporate artistic or community-driven elements.

Play Equipment

The Site Plan components provide a variety of inclusive play features that allow users of all abilities to engage in multiple ways. The park's play areas are designed to support a range of ages, abilities, and play experiences, while integrating with the natural forested setting:

- **2-5 Critter Corner:** Features signature animal structures and natural play elements with low, unenclosed components and connected circuits that encourage imaginative, sequential, and unstructured play.
- **2-5 Discovery Path:** An accessible, meandering path with ground-level play elements that promote social, sensory, and nature-based exploration.
- **Central Play Zone:** Serves as a hub near amenities, offering swinging, climbing, balancing, musical, and lounging elements for multi-ability interaction and shared play.
- **5-12+ Play Zone:** Anchored by a tree-inspired climbing structure with graduated challenges, a spiral net, slides, rope bridge connections, and ground-level elements for both structured and unstructured play.
- **Forest Surprises:** Scattered play components and natural features like boulders and logs along accessible and adaptive routes encourage exploration, discovery, and active learning throughout the park.

Striking the Balance

The Site Plan for Deane's Children's Park reflects a robust and diverse approach to programming and amenities, intentionally designed to support users of all abilities. The plan prioritizes strong support heard for a park that balances unstructured (informal) play to preserve the site's existing character, while also incorporating more formal play zones that support appropriate age separation with shared, multi-generational experiences. The result is a park that offers ample opportunity for forest discovery, with thoughtfully placed equipment that also encourages blended, multi-generational experiences. Inclusive design strategies guided equipment placement, circulation, and amenities, creating opportunities for meaningful play, learning, and connection across all ages and abilities.

SITE PLAN – PHASING APPROACH

The Deane's Children's Park Site Plan is the result of a robust community engagement process and establishes a clear design program that provides the framework for future park improvements. The Site Plan is intended as a long-range planning document, offering flexibility over time rather than committing the City to

immediate construction. Implementation is anticipated to occur incrementally over a 10–20-year horizon, as funding, partnerships, and community priorities evolve. By articulating a cohesive vision and a phased approach to investment, the Site Plan positions the City to pursue grant funding and other external resources to advance improvements over time and ultimately realize the full vision for the park. Project phases are outlined in Chapter Eight of the draft Site Plan Report (see Exhibit 2), and staff will discuss the recommended phasing strategy with the Commission at the February 5, 2026, meeting.

HAND-OFF MEMO CONSIDERATIONS

As part of the February 5, 2026, meeting, staff will seek Commission input on a set of key considerations to be incorporated into the hand-off memorandum to City Council. These considerations include the recommended phasing approach, support for pursuing outside funding to assist with implementation, initiating design work for Phases 1 and 2 while grant applications and fundraising efforts are underway, and whether the Commission is supportive of donor recognition as part of the project.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Commission recommendation of the Site Plan to the City Council, staff will proceed with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process, including preparation of a non-project SEPA checklist.

The project team will work with the Chair and Vice Chair to prepare a hand-off memo recommending City Council adoption of the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan. The memorandum will summarize the Site Plan and document Commission feedback for City Council's consideration.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Move to recommend the Deane's Children's Park Site Plan, as presented, to the City Council for adoption.
2. Move to direct the Chair and Vice Chair to develop a hand-off memo to be approved by the Commission during the March 5, 2026, Regular Meeting.