



## BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 5613  
October 15, 2019  
Study Session

### AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

<b>TITLE:</b>	AB 5613: Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Discussion Only</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Discuss revisions presented and provide staff direction for a final version of the master plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Action Needed:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Motion</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Ordinance</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Resolution</b>

<b>DEPARTMENT OF COUNCIL LIAISON</b>	Parks and Recreation n/a	Ryan Daly, Interim Parks & Recreation Director
<b>EXHIBITS</b>	1. Draft Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan (Available electronically only) 2. ADMP SEPA checklist 3. Open House #3 Meeting Notes and Survey Analysis	
<b>CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY</b>	2. Prepare for Light Rail and Improve Mobility	

<b>AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE</b>	\$ n/a
<b>AMOUNT BUDGETED</b>	\$ n/a
<b>APPROPRIATION REQUIRED</b>	\$ n/a

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to discuss the content of the draft Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan ("ADMP") (see Exhibit 1) and recommend revisions based on public input and additional analysis by the planning team. For purposes of this agenda bill, the "planning team" refers to staff from multiple City departments, members from the Washington State Department of Transportation ("WSDOT"), and the project consultant team HBB Landscape Architecture. Adjustments or modifications proposed by the City Council tonight will be incorporated into a revised draft ADMP that City Council will consider for adoption on November 19.

### NOTE ON VERSIONING

The versions of the ADMP discussed in this agenda bill are as follows:

- **Preliminary draft ADMP:** the plan sheets submitted for SEPA Review and shown at Open House #3 on Monday, September 23.
- **Draft ADMP:** the current work product in this Agenda Bill. This contains the same essential content as the preliminary draft ADMP with all the contextual material included in a graphic format.
- **Revised draft ADMP:** the version of the plan to be included in the agenda bill for the November 19 City Council meeting with revisions from City Council input.
- **Adopted ADMP:** Final version as adopted by City Council.

## **PRIOR COUNCIL REVIEW**

- November 21, 2017: Discussed the scope and process of the ADMP (see [AB 5357](#)).
- October 23, 2018: Reviewed preliminary trail sections for the portion of the Mountains to Sound Trail affected by the King County North Mercer Sewer Interceptor Project (see [AB 5489](#)).
- January 15, 2019: Previewed the preliminary site analysis, draft planning goals, and a summary of community input, which involved the first Online Survey, prior to Open House #1 (see [AB 5525](#)).
- July 16, 2019: Provided staff direction on preferred alternatives to be included in the draft ADMP (See [AB 5563](#)).

## **PRELIMINARY DRAFT ADMP SUBMITTED FOR SEPA REVIEW**

The preliminary draft ADMP was submitted with a SEPA Checklist (see Exhibit 2) to Mercer Island Community Planning and Development (“CPD”) for SEPA Review. The SEPA review process identifies and analyzes environmental impacts of the proposed plan and is a state requirement for a master plan. The SEPA package was posted on September 9 and remained open for comment until October 9. Mercer Island CPD is expected to issue a determination shortly thereafter. The SEPA determination must be issued prior to City Council adoption of the ADMP.

The ADMP is considered a “non-project” action. Projects in the ADMP are proposed as concepts; limited details are known about specific projects. It is difficult to precisely calculate their impacts. The planning team has provided estimated figures of impacts where possible. Further project design and permitting will be necessary to move forward with projects once the ADMP is adopted.

Non-project SEPA review at this level typically happens simultaneously with ongoing public input and finalization of the ADMP. This review process allows for minor changes in the plan to occur (e.g. location of a bathroom) without impacting the SEPA determination. If changes to the ADMP are requested that will result in an additional environmental impact, the plan will be resubmitted and will require an additional 30-day review and comment period.

## **PRELIMINARY DRAFT ADMP PRESENTED AT OPEN HOUSE #3**

ADMP Open House #3 was held on Monday, September 23 at the Mercer Island Community and Events Center and over 50 people attended. The planning team presented the preliminary draft ADMP in large poster format and team members engaged with attendees. Participants provided written comments, placed dots on preferred (“favorite”) projects and answered a brief survey. The survey included specific questions on vegetation and trails (See Exhibit 3 for a sample survey card and summary of the input received). The planning team posted the same graphics online with a link to identical survey questions. The Let’s Talk project page was also available for comment on the preliminary draft ADMP.

## **ADDITION OF ARTS/PLACEMAKING ELEMENT TO THE ADMP**

Since April 2019, the Mercer Island Arts Council has worked to identify a new vision for using arts and culture to deepen community connections to Aubrey Davis Park and further enhance the park as a place where community members want to spend their time. City Council received a preliminary report from Arts Council Chair Erin Vivion regarding this work at the July 16 ADMP Study Session.

Subsequently, the Arts Council drafted a vision and four tenets to guide how art will be used to create and maintain a sense of place in Aubrey Davis Park. It was included in the preliminary draft ADMP:

Draft Vision: ***Create and strengthen community connections through arts and culture.***

- Provide welcoming and inclusive spaces to express and experience creativity.
- Experience nature and art through all seasons.
- Cultivate an art-inspired environment.
- Celebrate our Island – past, present, and future.

In addition, a graphic plan sheet was developed to provide examples of how this vision could be implemented. These are only suggestions of the types of projects that could be developed in the future. Further discussions with the community are needed and anticipated to define more in-depth locations and art opportunities as part of future phases.

Arts/Placemaking concepts received entirely positive feedback at the Open House #3. A total of 18 “favorite” dots were placed on that board, with “interactive art installations” leading second with six dots. As such, the addition of the arts vision, the tenets and the graphic plan sheet have been included in the draft ADMP.

## **RECOMMENDED REVISIONS TO THE DRAFT ADMP**

The following sections include specific elements of the draft ADMP that have been revised and recommended for Council consideration as part of the draft plan.

### **Planting Character**

The draft ADMP includes three plant palettes as options for park areas that are to be replanted: Northwest feel, Ornamental and Sensory. Public input was sought to help identify a preferred plant palette. Input received included the following:

- The natural character of the park remains a strong community value.
- Open House #3 input was varied regarding the three plant palettes presented. No particular palette was identified as a clear preferred option.

**Staff recommends specifying the “Northwest feel” palette as primary for the park and that ornamental and sensory plant palettes can be incorporated into specific project designs (e.g. playground accent plantings) or in conjunction with arts/placemaking initiatives.**

### **Water Conservation**

The draft ADMP includes two recommended options for conserving water in passive use lawn areas (non-athletic fields): 1) letting grass “brown out” in late summer and 2) converting lawn to a meadow plant mix and watering infrequently. Input received included:

- Lower maintenance meadows: almost half of Open House #3 survey respondents (21) identified lower maintenance meadows as preferred. Some comments questioned whether this would work long-term.
- Brown out lawns: Thirteen (13) Open House #3 survey respondents preferred simply shutting off water and letting lawns go brown during the summer. However, some comments received did not favor this approach.

A third option is to continue watering existing lawn areas (current practice) at current service levels. Ten (10) Open House #3 survey respondents preferred to be maintained to the current levels. **Staff’s recommendation is to include all strategies in the ADMP.** Operationally, a brown out lawn strategy is recommended to be implemented on a trial basis in one or two of the water conservation areas identified in the plan. This will

consist of turning off specific zones and/or sprinklers mid-summer. Following the trial, staff will evaluate results and solicit public input. This method will be implemented in 2020 following adoption of the plan.

The draft Plan also recommends the installation of lower maintenance meadows in one or two of the water conservation areas. Implementation of this recommendation will require capital funding. Water conservation trials will include temporary signage explaining the project and request public input regarding the results.

### **Trail Width (Revision of Label Only)**

The draft ADMP has placeholders for two schematic trail cross sections which specify the width of the paved trail and the adjacent shoulders. The sketches used in earlier plan versions will be replaced by photographic representations in the revised version of the ADMP. The following input was incorporated into the draft Plan recommendation:

- Public opinion is split on preferred trail width of the Mountains to Sound Trail. Many comments in Open House #3 expressed support for a 14-foot trail width in anticipation of potential changes to AASHTO (American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials) standards. This balances input received at previous open houses in support of keeping the trail at its current width through the Lid Park.
- The trail east of Island Crest Way would be widened by one foot to a 12-foot width (where possible) as proposed in the King County Sewer project to incorporate WSDOT's recommended trail width standards. The trail through the Lid Park is currently 12 feet wide and would remain this width going forward. Early in the planning process, this trail section was incorrectly identified as 10 feet wide. A Parks and Recreation Department survey confirmed that the trail is 12 feet wide through the entire Lid Park, varying only by inches.
- In both cross sections, the plan calls for two-foot clear zones or shoulders to be constructed or reestablished. The area of the trail rebuilt by the King County Sewer project will include two-foot-wide crushed rock shoulders on both sides of the trail. These shoulders will be allowed to grow grass, moss, or groundcovers to create a transitional edge on the sides of the trail that is walkable, does not impact necessary sight lines, and is free of overhanging vegetation.
- The majority of the trail is a WSDOT facility. If it is ever rebuilt, the trail will need to adhere to WSDOT standards at the time of design. WSDOT retains final approval authority over any trail reconstruction on its property.

**Staff recommends maintaining the current trail cross sections as presented in the preliminary draft ADMP. In addition, change the width label for the Lid Park from "existing width" to "12 feet" to be factually correct and consistent with the width on the eastern section of trail.**

### **Trail Ballfield Conflict Zone**

The area directly east of 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SE near the restroom was identified repeatedly as a congestion area for trail and ballfield users. The draft ADMP proposes two solutions: 1) a multimodal plaza and 2) a cycling bypass trail behind the restroom.

- The trail behind the restroom received overwhelming support. This new trail option would channel cyclists behind the restroom. Twenty-six (26) respondents voted in favor through the Open House #3 survey.

- The multimodal plaza received limited support. This option would separate trails but provide a mixing zone in a plaza near the restroom. Six (6) respondents favored this through the Open House #3 survey.
- It is important to note that a trail behind the restroom would displace the maintenance facility currently used for the park. The feasibility, cost, and operational impact of relocating that facility have not been evaluated. Loss of this facility would significantly impact operational efficiency.

**Staff's recommendation is to keep both options in the final draft plan as further analysis of the two options, including updated costs, and impacts to park maintenance operations are needed.**

### **Soft Surface Trails (No Revision)**

Separating cyclists and pedestrians is a consistent request of the ADMP. Two sections of soft surface trail will tie together the proposed ADA access routes and create an accessible pedestrian through-route in the center of the Lid Park. These trails will provide an alternate ADA accessible walking route in high-speed sections of the trail and increase separation of walkers and cyclists. Input regarding these soft surface trails include:

- The pedestrian path to tennis courts (from the basketball courts) was supported by seventeen (17) Open House #3 survey respondents.
- The pedestrian path along the trail (from ballfield area to underneath 72nd) was strongly supported by twenty-five (25) Open House #3 survey respondents.
- Six (6) Open House #3 survey respondents chose "neither" as their preference.

**Staff's recommendation is to retain the Soft Surface Trails in the ADMP.**

### **New Restroom**

The draft ADMP includes a restroom at the playground off West Mercer Way. It was sited in this location because utilities needs are more challenging to acquire near the Lid C field. Input regarding the new restroom includes:

- The new restroom location near West Mercer Way received support and no opposition at the Open House.
- Some commenters prefer a restroom location at the Lid C soccer/lacrosse field across West Mercer Way.
- While more people use the Lid C area in general, water and sewer utilities are particularly challenging in this area. A restroom in the Lid C location may require pumping of sewage to connect with the sewer utility infrastructure in this area.

**Staff recommends amending the ADMP to consider the feasibility of both locations in early design.** Staff proposes that the final location of the restroom be developed concurrently or subsequent to a new West Mercer Way crosswalk between the field and the playground.

### **Dog Off-Leash Area**

The draft ADMP includes a fenced off-leash area at "The Stacks" east of the tennis courts. Currently off-leash dogs run at "The Stacks" regularly. This activity in the vicinity of a multi-use trail presents a safety concern that needs to be addressed. Appropriate fencing along this area of the trail would help restrict dogs from wandering onto the trail and allow dogs who don't respond to the owners' voice control the opportunity to use this area of the Park while off leash. Input received regarding this project include several comments from

the Open House that were critical of a fenced off-leash area, while other dog owners have previously expressed a desire to have a fenced area for dogs.

**As proposed, the recommendation is to retain this project in the final draft plan.** This project would include extensive public input in early design phase.

#### **COST ESTIMATING AND PRIORITIZATION**

The draft ADMP includes cost estimates and prioritization (Exhibit 1). Planning level cost estimating at this conceptual stage requires many assumptions and robust contingency for unanticipated details. Working on a lidded structure and the requirement for WSDOT project review add potential costs. It is likely that construction costs may be reduced through the design process.

Criteria for prioritization of these projects essentially mirrors the criteria used in the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), reiterated here:

- (1) Highest Priority – Projects that are **critical** to be done right away in order to maintain existing infrastructure. Postponing this project would require a higher level of effort and would be at an overall greater cost to the City in future years.
- (2) Second Level of Priority – If funding is available, it is recommended that this project be done in the biennium. However, it is not critical and, if need be, could be postponed to a later year.
- (3) Third Level of Priority – Projects for which there is strong support from the City Council or a group of citizens. However, the project is not critical to the maintenance of the City's infrastructure.

In the City's regular biennial budget process, projects in the ADMP will be considered by City Council alongside any other capital needs that the City's staff may identify for the available funding. Inclusion in the ADMP does not imply that a project will be funded.

In addition, the City expects to receive a Washington State Department of Commerce grant in 2019-2020 for Aubrey Davis Park trail safety and accessibility improvements. The ADMP will be used to propose the use of that funding as well as for the development of future CIP budgets. The allocation of those funds will be considered by City Council in conjunction with the budget adjustment needed to expend the grant.

#### **LOOKING AHEAD - ADOPTION OF THE PLAN**

With City Council's direction, staff will revise the preliminary draft ADMP. If revisions do not result in new impacts, no additional environmental reviews should be needed. The planning team will return on November 19 with a revised draft ADMP and a resolution for adoption. Meanwhile, the planning team will be in conversation with WSDOT Northwest Region about that agency's process for approval of the ADMP.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

No formal action required. Receive report and provide direction to staff for final plan development.