



**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON**

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DATE: July 11, 2022

TO: Mercer Island City Council

FROM: Parks and Recreation Commission  
Jodi McCarthy, Chair, Peter Struck, Vice Chair, Don Cohen, Paul Burstein, Sara Marxen,  
Rory Westberg, Ashley Hay

SUBJECT: Recommendation on Bike Skills Area Location and Improvements

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The Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Commission is pleased to present our recommendation on the preferred location for the Bike Skills Area and recommend the City Council appropriate funding to begin project design and community engagement.

**Summary Recommendation:**

The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) commenced review of this matter on April 26, 2022 and discussed this topic over three meetings. A PRC Subcommittee was formed, and public input was received in consideration of this recommendation.

The Parks and Recreation Commission passed a motion requesting the City Council approve the new proposed location for the Bike Skills Area at Deane’s Children’s Park and authorize staff to proceed to 30% design. Parallel to the 30% design work, we strongly recommend the Parks and Recreation Commission, with assistance from City staff, be directed to solicit public input on the 30% design and prepare a final recommendation to the City Council.

To prioritize making a permanent home for a bike skills area in a timely manner the Parks and Recreation Commission also passed a motion to rescind the motion made April 26, 2022 to ‘establish an interim Bike Skills Area in Upper Luther Burbank Park pending identification of a permanent alternative site.’

**Background:**

On October 7, 2021, the Bike Skills Area in Upper Luther Burbank Park was temporarily closed due to significant operating challenges and safety concerns. Challenges included repeated unauthorized expansion of the course, damage to soils and established vegetation, and construction of jumps that exceeded park rules.

Due to circumstances beyond City staff's control, the report commissioned in fall 2021 of the Upper Luther Burbank bike skills area was delayed for several months. On [April 26<sup>th</sup>](#) the Parks and Recreation Commission held a Special Meeting to review the final Bike Skills Area Report, discuss staff recommendations and next steps. During the meeting, the Commission received public comment from 13 individuals and engaged in discussion around both long- and short-term options for reopening the BSA, including relocating the BSA to an alternative location at Deane's Children's Park.

The Commission voted (4-0-1) to support Short-Term Option 2 (referenced in [staff report](#)) which would temporarily reopen the current Bike Skills Area in Upper Luther Burbank Park in a limited fashion (e.g., a more simplified design) predicated on the City finding an alternative location that could be brought online within 2-3 years.

Following the Special Meeting, various Commissioners submitted questions to staff regarding the option of utilizing space at Deane's Children's Park, what other alternative locations had been evaluated, and what engagement had taken place with the community and stakeholders. Staff compiled these questions into a matrix and provided responses (Exhibit 1).

Given the Commission's interest in evaluating the full range of park sites that may be suitable for the siting of a future Bike Skills Area facility, staff created a matrix of primary park and open space properties and rated each on fifteen criteria, including site amenities, safety considerations, and impacts on current park uses (Exhibit 2).

During the regular meeting on [June 2](#), City staff presented the BSA Site Matrix and solicited feedback from the Commission on the analysis. Following the discussion, the Commission voted (3-1-1) to create a Bike Skills Area Subcommittee to meet, identify and evaluate a preferred long-term location. The Subcommittee, comprised of Chair McCarthy, Vice-Chair Struck, and Commissioner Burstein, was also asked to obtain input from impacted user groups and report back to the full Commission.

The Subcommittee met several times over the past month and developed a scoring matrix to help evaluate the 24 sites previously identified by City staff. The Subcommittee reduced the sites to 8 based upon their feasibility to be developed as a bike skills area. Each member of the Subcommittee was diligent in visiting each of these sites, as were several other commissioners. Two sites, Deane's Children's Park and a strip of parkland along SE 24th St immediately south of the West Mercer Way freeway exit in Aubrey Davis Park were identified as the top two preliminary candidates.

At their July 7 meeting, the Commission voted (6-1) "that the City staff request funding from the City Council for a bike skills area 30% design project, to be located at Deane's Children's Park in the general area previously used as Adventure Playground", identifying Deane's Children's Park as the preferred long-term option for the Bike Skills Area. Additionally, the PRC voted (4-1-2) "to rescind the previous recommendation made to City Council (during the 4/26/22 PRC meeting) to establish an interim Bike Skills Area in Upper Luther Burbank Park pending identification of a permanent alternative site" in order to prioritize making a permanent home for a bike skills area in a timely manner.

### **Proposed New Location at Deane's Children's Park:**

The proposed location along the western portion of Deane's Children's Park is a re-purposing of a former recreational area known as Adventure Playground, and thus not a reduction of existing open space or general parkland.

The location at the previously known Adventure Playground is adjacent to the existing footprint of Deane's Children's Park, Island Park Elementary, and the tennis courts at the Island Crest Park. It is a wooded area with a high canopy, and today has no structures, paths, or amenities on the specific site. There is an uneven forested terrain, sloping towards the west with significantly compacted soil. There is an existing fence barrier to the trails to the west, as well as a fence barrier to Island Crest Elementary and Island Crest Way to the east.

The site is advantageous for several reasons:

- It is centrally located within the island, giving broad access to our residents.
- There is an existing bathroom.
- There is parking, although it is anticipated that almost all users of the BSA will ride their bikes there rather than drive.
- Park maintenance is more frequent at the Island Crest Park complex overall, unlike other sites considered.
- The space is not as narrow as the previous Upper Luther Burbank BSA site, allowing for a safer "return" route on the track with less risk of collision with other riders.

It should be noted that the replacement of aging playground equipment and structures at Deane's Children's Park is a priority capital improvement project, which will create opportunities for greater integration and safety in the space.

The trees in the area will be inventoried and inspected to determine their health and resilience within the space. It is expected that several deciduous trees will be removed regardless of the disposition of the BSA, and no conifers will be removed unless deemed diseased and at risk of failure.

Public opinion will be essential and impactful to the design as we move through the 30% phase.

It is the PRC's belief that this area is the most practical and best option for a Bike Skills Area on Mercer Island, as evident by the motion passing on July 7th.