



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**AB 6120
July 19, 2022
Regular Business**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6120: Bike Skills Area Update & Appropriation Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	1. Receive update on the Bike Skills Area. 2. Appropriate \$75,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund to begin the design of a new Bike Skills Area at Deane’s Children’s Park.	

DEPARTMENT:	Public Works
STAFF:	Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations Alaine Sommargren, Deputy Public Works Director
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Craig Reynolds
EXHIBITS:	1. Upper Luther Burbank Park Bike Skills Area Assessment Report 2. Bike Skills Area Site Analysis Matrix 3. PRC Recommendation Memo
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ 75,000
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ 0
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ 75,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to provide an update on the Bike Skills Area (BSA) and to appropriate funding to begin project design at Deane’s Children’s Park. Specifically, this agenda item will:

- Provide background information on the Bike Skills Area.
- Provide a summary of the Parks & Recreation Commission’s discussions to date and convey the Commission’s recommendation regarding the future site of the BSA.
- Request an appropriation of \$75,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund balance and enter into a professional service agreement to begin community engagement and commence 30% design of a Bike Skills Area in Deane’s Children’s Park.

BACKGROUND

The Bike Skills Area (BSA), formerly known as the BMX park, was originally created by neighborhood riders in the 1970s. At the time, the area was owned and managed by King County. Use of the area continued over the years, with users creating and shaping jumps and trails within the ravine area. The name of this location was

changed in 2021 to reflect changes in the use of the facility over the past five decades to include other biking styles.

Bike Skills Area Closure

Over the years, increased use and unauthorized expansion of the Bike Skills Area caused damage and degradation to the surrounding hillsides and vegetation. 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. The closure allowed the City to restore vegetation and to evaluate whether the park area could operate safely and sustainably as a Bike Skills Area location.

Bike Skills Area Assessment Report

Recognizing the need for professional consultation, the City retained Action Sports Design, LLC (ASD) in October 2021 to perform a full assessment of the site and make recommendations to improve the operations and safety of the Bike Skills Area while minimizing environmental impacts. The final report was completed (April 2022) and is attached as Exhibit 1.

The Bike Skills Area Assessment Report provides several recommendations for the re-design of the BSA in Upper Luther Burbank Park. However, due to the complexity of the site (topography, lack of existing stormwater infrastructure) and anticipated permitting requirements, reopening the BSA in Upper Luther Burbank Park will require significant engineering and design, likely taking up to two years to complete design, environmental review, and construction.

Restoration Work Completed at Upper Luther Burbank park

During the closure of the BSA, staff also completed necessary work on the site including:

- Removing unauthorized jumps and regrading the site.
- Backfilling and stabilizing undermined slopes.
- Hiring a professional surveyor to record site topography and document the area of Upper Luther Burbank Park impacted by the BSA.
- Completing a tree risk assessment within and surrounding the BSA and addressing degrading trees.
- Holding two volunteer events to plant and mulch new native trees and shrubs along the BSA boundary areas.

Public Engagement

Since the closure of the BSA, public comment and discussion regarding the facility has been impassioned and divisive. Concerns about the abrupt closure, length of the closure, and potential reopening of the facility have been well voiced.

The City invited public comment on the future of the BSA and provided project updates on a dedicated Let's Talk page, which included two surveys on the BSA. The community was also invited to participate in a public meeting held on November 15, 2021, in addition to providing comment and feedback at three Parks and Recreation Commission meetings.

Parks and Recreation Commission Review & Recommendation

The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) discussed the BSA facility over the course of three meetings. At their April 26 meeting, the PRC discussed short- and long-term options for a BSA facility, ultimately voting to re-open the BSA in Upper Luther Burbank Park in a limited fashion while the City pursued alternative long-

term locations for the BSA.

At the Commission's request, staff evaluated 24 park and open space properties for suitability as a BSA site. Each park site was evaluated on fifteen criteria, including site amenities, safety considerations, and impacts on current park uses and entered into a site analysis matrix, which was presented to the PRC at their June 2 meeting (see Exhibit 2).

A PRC Subcommittee was formed to evaluate these sites, and public input was received. Consideration of alternative site locations included whether a bike area would negatively impact active use of park spaces or the ecological health of open spaces, and whether a park could provide users with similar characteristics as the BSA established in Upper Luther Burbank Park, including terrain and overall size. The PRC Subcommittee narrowed the list of suitable sites to two parks: Deane's Children's Park and Aubrey Davis Park.

After deliberation on the merits of the two sites at their July 7, 2022 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 for the 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 to establish an interim Bike Skills Area in Upper Luther Burbank Park pending identification of a permanent alternative site." The PRC's recommendation is attached (see Exhibit 3).

For many years, Deane's Children's Park was home to the City's Adventure Playground. The park provided an environment for kids to imagine, build, and create their own adventure in a forested area. The Adventure Playground operated between 3-5 days per week in the summer and fall as both a drop-in activity and organized summer camp program, averaging between 30-60 children at a given time. Although the site has many trees, the site lacks healthy understory vegetation and has already been significantly impacted by active recreation. The City no longer offers the Adventure Playground program. Construction of a new BSA in this location would not adversely or negatively impact the site.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

The recommendation from the PRC is to 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 for the Adventure Playground.

While the Deane's Children's Playground site presents many opportunities for a new BSA, additional design work is necessary to ensure proper access, including consideration of the surrounding park amenities such as the nearby playgrounds; active and passive park uses; and the connection to Island Park Elementary and Island Crest Way trails. The Commission discussed many of these considerations before making their formal recommendation.

This new BSA is intended to be professionally designed and there will not be opportunities for jumps to be constructed or modified by users. There will, however, be opportunities for volunteers to participate in the construction of the new BSA, once approved, under the professional guidance of the engineer and project team.

Due to the timing of the project, no funding for the BSA facility was included in the City's adopted 2021-2022 Capital Improvement Plan. An appropriation of \$75,000 from available fund balance in the Capital Improvement Fund is required to procure design and engineering services for this project at the Deane's Children's park location. The total project cost is currently estimated at \$350,000.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval by the City Council, staff will retain a consultant to engage with the community on design of a new BSA at Deane's Children's Park and prepare a 30% design concept to the PRC for review. A final recommendation on the 30% design will be presented to the City Council for review and approval in early 2023.

Staff anticipates the design process will begin in the early fall with 30% design completed by late November. A capital funding placeholder for construction of this facility will be included as part of the City's 2023-2024 biennial budget, with project construction anticipated to begin in spring 2023.

No additional decommissioning or restoration work will be performed on the Upper Luther Burbank Park Bike Skills Area while the City pursues the development of a new BSA at Deane's Children's Park. The new plantings are vital to the stability of surrounding slopes at the site, and they will be maintained to ensure their continued growth. Full restoration of the site will be considered once a plan for a permanent BSA has been finalized.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Appropriate \$75,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund balance to enter into a professional service agreement to begin 30% design of a Bike Skills Area in Deane's Children's Park to include a community engagement process and review of the 30% design by the Parks and Recreation Commission.