



PLANNING COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PCB 25-08
April 23, 2025
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PCB 25-08: Parks and Recreation Commission Parks Zone Recommendation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive Report. No action necessary.	

STAFF:	Carson Hornsby, Management Analyst II Alison Van Gorp, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Development
EXHIBITS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PRC Memo to City Council, dated April 9, 2025 2. Draft Parks Zone Development Regulations 3. Draft Zoning Map 4. Draft Land Use Map

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.

- The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) began working on the Parks Zone in October 2024 after finishing their work on the Open Space Zone, which was adopted by the City Council and took effect December 31, 2024.
- The PRC held several meetings to finalize their Parks Zone recommendations, which are summarized in a hand-off memo to the City Council and Planning Commission (Exhibit 1).
- The PRC’s recommendations include proposed drafts of the Parks Zone development regulations (Exhibit 2), Zoning Map (Exhibit 3), and Land Use Map (Exhibit 4).
- The City Council received a briefing of the PRC’s Parks Zone recommendation on April 15 and passed a motion directing the Planning Commission (PC) to complete the legislative review of the proposed Parks Zone by June 2025.
- The PRC Chair and Vice Chair will present their recommendation to the PC at the April 23 meeting. The PC will then begin the legislative review of the Parks Zone. Public hearings for the amendments to the Development Code and Comprehensive Plan are scheduled for the May 28 PC meeting. It is anticipated that the PC will complete the legislative review process by June 2025 and the City Council will commence their review of the Parks Zone 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 the development of the new Parks Zone with the goal of providing a recommendation to the PC in Q2 2025. Establishment of the Parks Zone will require the following amendments to the MICC and Comprehensive Plan:

- Development Regulations – create a new subsection or subsection(s) under MICC 19.05, amend [MICC 19.01.040](#) to establish the Parks Zone, and amend [MICC 19.16.010](#) to adopt new definitions as needed.
- Zoning Map – amend the Zoning Map in the MICC to reflect where the Parks Zone applies.
- Land Use Map and Designations – amend the Land Use Map and Land Use Designation table in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Legislative Review Process

Once the PRC’s Parks Zone recommendation has been transmitted to the PC, the PC will commence the formal legislative review process to gather public input and provide a recommendation to the City Council, as established in [Chapter 19.15 MICC](#). The legislative review process includes the following steps:

- The Planning Commission holds a public hearing ([MICC 19.15.020](#)).
- The Planning Commission makes a written recommendation to the City Council following the public hearing ([MICC 19.15.260\(B\)\(2\)](#)).
- The City Council considers the Planning Commission recommendation during a public meeting, deciding to adopt, reject, or amend the recommendation ([MICC 19.15.260\(B\)\(3\)](#)).

The Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan will need to be updated in 2025 to adopt the Parks Zone. The City Council will review the Parks Zone amendments with the City’s annual Comprehensive Plan amendments, which are limited to once a year by the Growth Management Act ([RCW 36.70A.130\(2\)](#)).

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

PRC Hand-Off Memo

The hand-off memo in Exhibit 1 summarizes the PRC’s recommendation on the Parks Zone development regulations, the Zoning Map, and the Land Use Map. The PRC’s recommendations are supported by references to applicable PROS Plan goals and objectives. A section is included at the end of the hand-off memo with additional recommendations to the City Council that fall outside the scope of the Parks Zone project.

Draft Parks Zone Development Regulations

The proposed draft of the Parks Zone development regulations is provided in Exhibit 2. Zoning designations in the Mercer Island Development Code ([MICC Title 19](#)) each have specific development regulations that outline permitted uses and development standards in the zone. An amendment to the MICC will be required to adopt the Parks Zone development regulations, which include the following components:

- Purpose: a statement that summarizes the goals and objectives of the zone.
- Designation Requirements: the criteria land must meet to be included in the zone.

- Uses Permitted: the uses and activities allowed in the zone.
- Development Standards: the rules that dictate how land in the zone can be developed.
- Definitions: the definitions for key terms used in the Parks Zone development regulations that will be added to the definitions section of the Development Code.
- Zone Establishment: adding the Parks Zone to the list of zones in the Development Code.

Additional context on the PRC’s proposed draft of the Parks Zone development regulations is included in the PRC hand-off memo (Exhibit 1).

Draft Zoning Map

The proposed draft of the Mercer Island Zoning Map with the addition of the new Parks Zone is provided in Exhibit 3. The Zoning Map is a visual representation of zoning designations in the City, which is established in [MICC Title 19 Appendix D](#). Once approved, the proposed Zoning Map will replace the current adopted Zoning Map in the MICC. The draft Zoning Map includes the following parks in the Parks Zone:

Bicentennial Park	Mercerdale Park
Clarke Beach Park	Roanoke Park
Deane's Children's Park	Rotary Park
First Hill Park	SE 28th Street Mini Park
Groveland Beach Park	Secret Park
Homestead Park	Slater Park
Island Crest Park	Wildwood Park
Luther Burbank Park	

The PRC provided additional explanation in the hand-off memo (Exhibit 1) regarding other properties that were considered but are not recommended for inclusion in the Parks Zone.

Draft Land Use Map

The proposed draft of the Mercer Island Land Use Map is provided in Exhibit 4. The Land Use Map is a visual representation of land use designations in the City that serves as a foundation for the Zoning Map in the MICC. The Land Use Map is established in the Land Use Element of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, which will require an amendment in 2025 to adopt the Parks Zone. The draft Land Use Map includes the following updates from the current adopted Land Use Map:

- SE 28th St. Mini Park changed from Single Family Residential to Park.
- Rotary Park changed from Open Space to Park.
- Title changed from “City of Mercer Island Land Use” to “City of Mercer Island Land Use Map”
- Black diagonal lines removed from Open Space in the legend and on the map.
- Legend organized in alphabetical order.
- “Land Use Plan” changed to “Land Use Map” in the text under the legend.
- Park and Open Space labels were removed except for park properties with new changes proposed.

NEXT STEPS

The PC will begin the legislative review of the Parks Zone at the April 23 meeting after receiving the PRC recommendation. The meeting will include time for Q&A and discussion with staff and the Chair and Vice Chair of the PRC. With the PC’s initial feedback, staff will prepare the draft development code and Comprehensive Plan amendments for consideration. Public hearings for each of these amendments are scheduled for the May 28 PC meeting. The PC is expected to complete its review and make a recommendation to the City Council by early June and the City Council will review the Parks Zone in July 2025.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive Report. No action necessary.