



Parks Zone Development Process

PCB24-02 | February 8, 2024



Agenda

- Facilities Overview & Update
- 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update
- Overview of 2022 PROS Plan
 - Integration into the Comprehensive Plan
 - Other Plans
- Future Parks Zone
- Timeline/PRC and PC Coordination Strategies



Facilities Overview & Update



Permanent Closure of City Hall

- **The City Council voted to permanently close City Hall in October 2023 after the unexpected discovery of asbestos in the HVAC system.**
- City staff and outside experts worked extensively to identify solutions to address the asbestos contamination, but in all scenarios the costs to re-occupy the building exceeded the benefit given the age and condition of the building.
- In July 2023 it became clear that re-occupancy of City Hall was unlikely, and the staff focus shifted to re-housing staff teams to ensure continuity of services.
- Many teams are impacted, but the highest impact and greatest challenge has been re-housing the Police Department and the Municipal Court.



Long-Range Facility Planning

- **In early 2023, the City began a planning process to complete Facilities Conditions Assessments for various municipal buildings and to develop a Long-Range Facilities Plan for select City facilities.**
- Had the planning process gone forward as anticipated, in 2023 the City would have completed the assessments for six facilities, setting the stage for the long-range facility planning work this year.
- The City Hall closure, unfortunately, derailed the long-range facilities planning process. Work was paused on the facility conditions assessments, with the exception of the Public Works Building.



Public Works Building

- On Tuesday, staff presented the Facilities Conditions Assessment for the Public Works Building to the City Council.
- Similar to City Hall, the Public Works building is aging and in need of replacement.
- **The City Manager recommendation to the City Council is to plan for replacement of both City Hall and the Public Works Building.**
- In the meantime, we have to keep the Public Works Building, and our other buildings operational to sustain City operations.



Facilities Planning – Next Steps

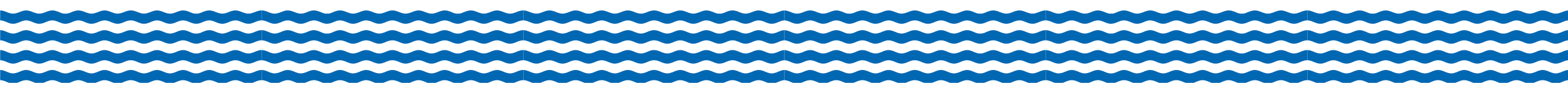
The City Council will hold their Annual Planning Session on March 1 and continue the facilities planning discussion. Topics will likely include:

- Preliminary assessment of workspace needs – what type of spaces do we need to accommodate current and future City services? Opportunities to re-locate teams? Co-locate teams?
- What is the planning and construction timeline? There is real urgency to address building needs for Police, Maintenance, and the Emergency Operations Center.
- What about locating some City services in Town Center?
- The community engagement plan? Costs, financing, alternative bidding, and much more.



Parks are Not Under Consideration for a new City Hall

- There is no conversation happening about building a City Hall in a park.



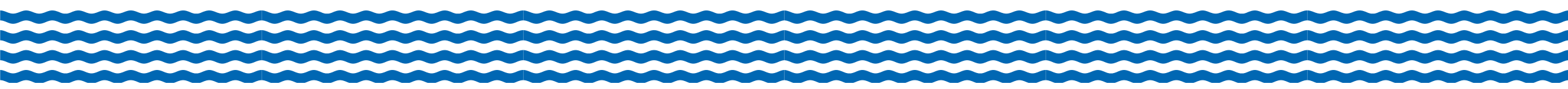


2024 Comprehensive Plan Update



Comprehensive Plan/Parks Zone - Background

- The Growth Management Act requires cities in King County to complete the comprehensive plan periodic review (aka as the “update”) by December 31, 2024.



DATA ANALYSES

REGIONAL PLANNING
DOCUMENTS

INVENTORIES

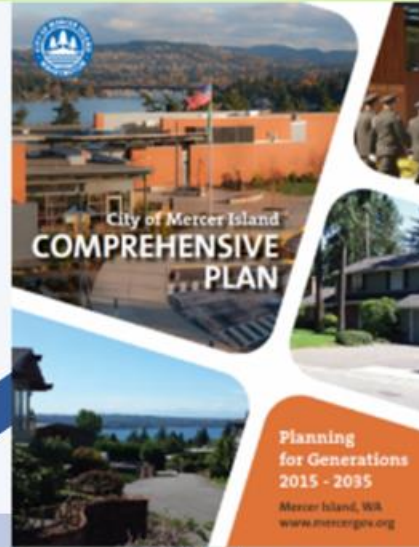
HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT
NEEDS

GROWTH
PROJECTIONS

PUBLIC FACILITY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

TECHNICAL REPORTS

**Comprehensive Plan
Technical Reports:
Inform Goal and Policy
Decisions**

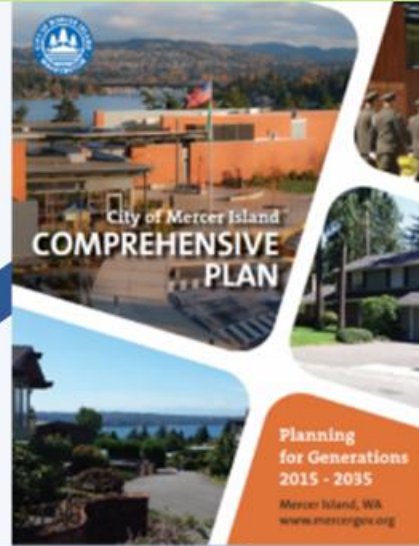


Comprehensive Plan
Elements
Vision
Goals
Policies

IMPLEMENTATION

TECHNICAL REPORTS

**Comprehensive Plan
Implementation:
Making Goals and
Policies Real**



Comprehensive Plan
Elements
Vision
Goals
Policies

IMPLEMENTATION

OTHER PLANNING ACTIVITIES

REGULATIONS

CAPITAL BUDGET DECISIONS

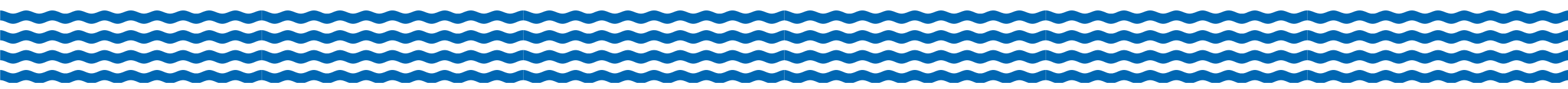
PLANS & PROGRAMS

DEVELOPMENT PERMITS

CAPITAL PROJECTS

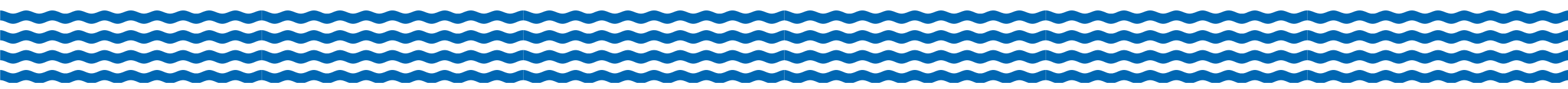
Comp Plan Updates related to Parks and Recreation

- The scope of work for the Comprehensive Plan was set by the City Council in 2022 and supplemented in 2023 ([Resolution No. 1621](#) and [Resolution No. 1646](#)).
- The scope of work for the Comp Plan Update includes development of a **new Parks and Recreation Element** and a **new Parks Zone**.
- “Elements” are chapters or sections of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Parks and Recreation Element will incorporate the 2022 PROS Plan, substantially by reference, into the Comprehensive Plan. This is the same approach that will be used for the recently adopted Climate Action Plan.
- The Parks Zone will be adopted in Title 19 Mercer Island City Code (MICC), which requires a specific legislative review process



Parks Zone Legislative Review Paused

- A preliminary draft of the parks zoning code was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 4 and to the Planning Commission on January 24.
- After receiving extensive feedback from both commissions and the community, the City Manager directed staff to **pause the legislative review process** and return the draft Parks Zone to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review, comment, and revision.
- Upon completion of their work, the Parks and Recreation Commission will hand off their recommendation to the Planning Commission on May 8.





2022 PROS Plan



Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

- The prior PROS Plan expired in 2019 and the decision was made to undertake a wholesale rewrite of the plan. Work on the new plan began in 2019.
- The PROS Plan work was paused in early 2020 due to the Pandemic and then resumed later that year.
- Extensive community engagement process, spanning two+ years – two surveys, open houses, and meetings the Arts Council and the Open Space Conservancy Trust.
- **The PROS Plan was adopted in March 2022.**



Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

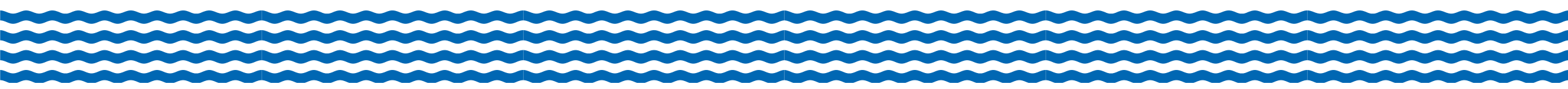
- The PROS Plan established goals and objectives (Chapter 4), which serve as the policy framework for the provision of parks and recreation services on Mercer Island.
- PROS Plan Objective 1.1 (see Chapter 4, page 20) includes the following:

*Retain publicly owned parks and open spaces in perpetuity. Actively pursue options to permanently protect parks and open space through conservation easements, **zoning changes**, or other strategies. Evaluate the transfer of some or all open space to the Open Space Conservancy Trust.*



PROS Plan – Goals (Chapter 4)

- 1. Planning, Acquisition & Access:** Provide a high quality, welcoming, and inclusive parks and recreation system that meets community needs now and in the future.
- 2. Maintenance & Operations:** Provide the Mercer Island community with safe, well-maintained parks and recreation facilities.
- 3. Environment & Sustainability:** Provide a high quality, diversified open space system that preserves and enhances urban forests, critical habitat, and other environmental resources. Incorporate sustainability practices into operations, maintenance, and planning.
- 4. Trails:** Develop and promote an interconnected community through safe, accessible, and attractive trails and pathways easily accessed by a variety of trail users.
- 5. Recreation Facilities & Programming:** Provide a variety of recreation programs, services, and facilities that promote the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and abilities.
- 6. Arts & Culture:** Facilitate and promote comprehensive and engaging arts and culture experiences.
- 7. Community Engagement & Partnerships:** Encourage and support community engagement and pursue collaborative partnerships to strengthen and grow parks and recreation programs and services.
- 8. Administration & Fiscal Sustainability:** Provide leadership and sufficient resources to maintain and operate a welcoming, efficient, safe, and sustainable parks and recreation system.



PROS Plan – Future Initiatives

- Many of the PROS Plan chapters include a section called “Future Initiatives.” Example to the right is from the Open Space Chapter (Chapter 9).
- These are work items that align with the goals and objectives in Chapter 4.

Determine the most effective strategy for protecting open space lands in perpetuity. Explore various mechanisms for such protection, **including zoning changes**, conservation easements, deed restrictions, and transfer of these lands to the Open Space Conservancy Trust’s governance.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

A number of future initiatives were identified and recommended for incorporation into the City’s work plan over the next six to ten years and are summarized below.

Land Conservation

- Develop a Land Acquisition Strategy to proactively acquire high-quality natural areas and parklands, to expand the existing network of parks, trails, and open space systems.
- Determine the most effective strategy for protecting open space lands in perpetuity. Explore various mechanisms for such protection, including zoning changes, conservation easements, deed restrictions, and transfer of these lands to the Open Space Conservancy Trust’s governance.

Open Space Studies and Management Plans

- Continue studies of open space health, collecting vegetation data that can be used to illustrate restoration progress and guide adjustments to management plans.
- Develop a citywide urban forest management plan to define goals for local forested ecosystems and outline the best management tactics to sustain forest canopy. This plan could include a citywide tree inventory, tree preservation and protection code amendments, and considerations for climate resiliency. A more broadly defined urban forestry plan can also be a means to engage the community in tree-related activities and facilitate community conversations about the overall health and diversity of Mercer Island’s urban forest.

Habitat Restoration

- Continue restoration work in open space to ensure that progress to date is not lost and ecosystems remain healthy, diverse, and functional.
- Practice adaptive management by regularly evaluating the successes and failures of restoration activities and modify practices accordingly.
- Stay current with evolving best management practices in the field of restoration ecology.
- Collaborate with regional partners to share resources and knowledge. Participate in regional research opportunities.
- Pursue opportunities to contract grow or purchase plants from southern seed zones.

Community Partnerships & Volunteers

- Foster new partnerships that support the conservation and restoration of Mercer Island’s open space properties.

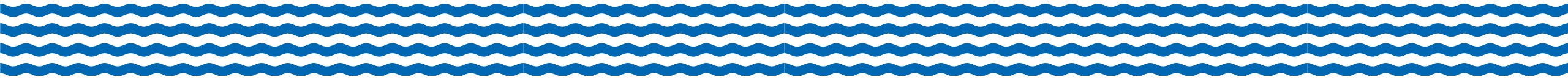
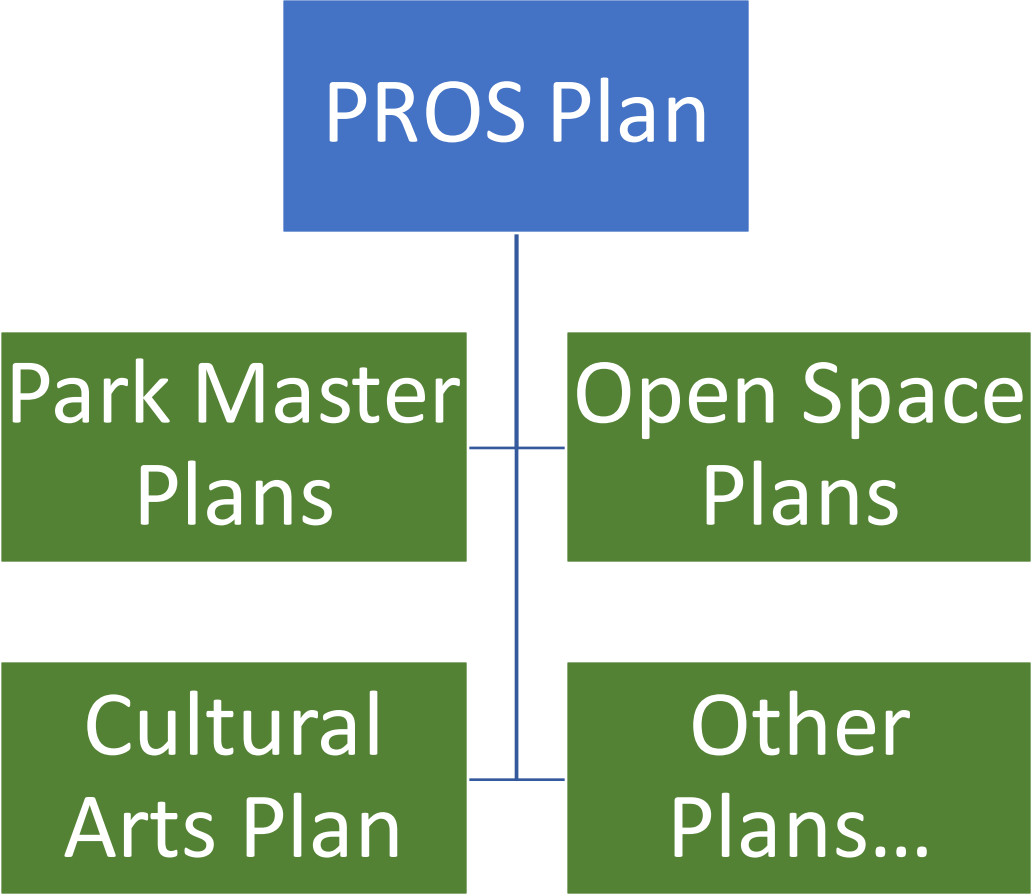
Sustainable Stewardship Practices

- Explore the use of non-gas-powered landscape equipment to reduce emissions.
- Continue to adjust landscape maintenance practices in favor of techniques that contribute to the health of the land and lake environments.



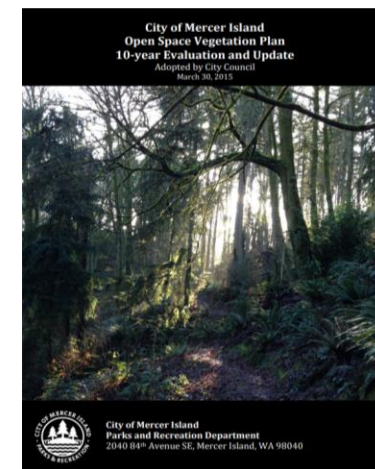
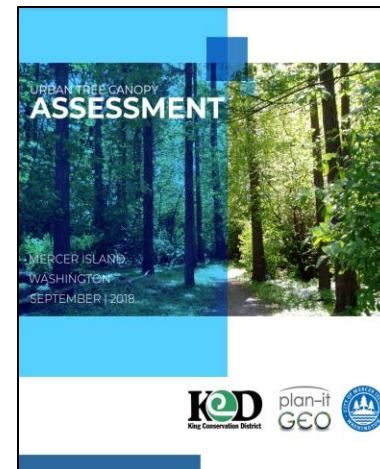
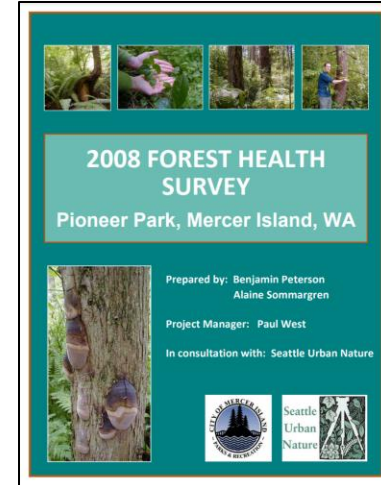
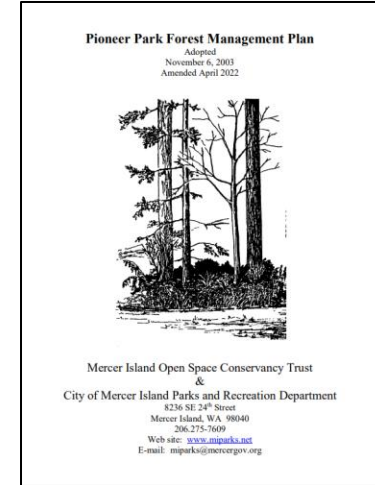
Other Parks and Recreation Plans

- The 2022 PROS Plan is intended to align with and incorporate all of the other parks and recreation related plans, of which there are many.



Example: Pioneer Park

- We like our plans!
- As an example, the management of Pioneer Park is guided by at least six different planning documents:
 - 2022 PROS Plan
 - Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan
 - Forest Health Survey
 - Urban Tree Canopy Assessment
 - Open Space Vegetation Mgmt Plan
 - Pioneer Park Master Plan



Is the PROS Plan policy or operational?

- Both.
- The PROS Plan provides a foundation to guide decisions related to planning, acquiring, developing, and maintaining parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities.
- It also identifies priorities for recreation programs, special events, arts and cultural activities.
- **Development of master plans, policies, codes, and other work products should align with this policy framework.**



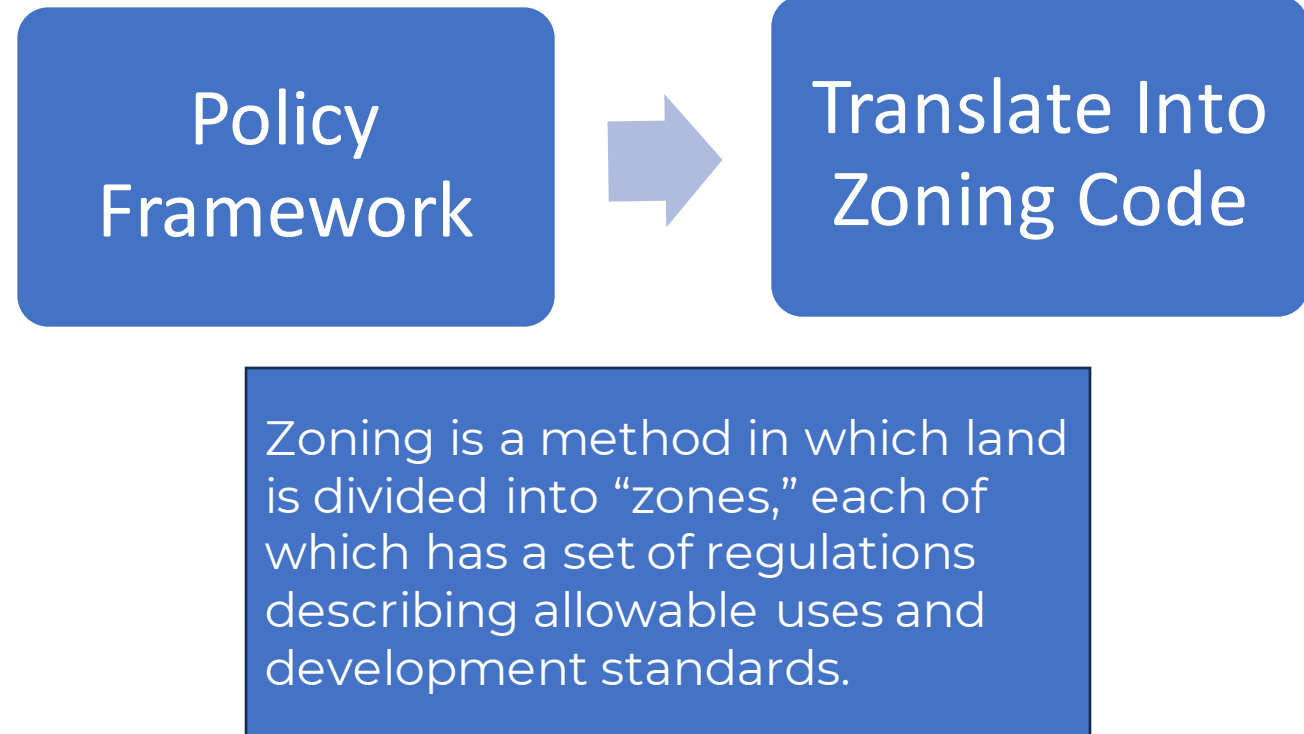


Future Parks Zone



Future Parks Zone

- Creation of a new parks zone requires an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and revisions to the Mercer Island Municipal Code.
- **The 2022 PROS Plan is the guiding policy document for development of the parks zone.**
- Most of the properties the City manages as parks, open space, or trails are currently zoned as “residential.” Some exceptions:
 - Example: Aubrey Davis Park is zoned as Public Institution





Future Parks Zone: Some Examples



Drafting Code: Parking Example

- There have been concerns expressed about parking in the parks zone, including how much parking, where, no new impervious surface, etc.?
- **What policy guidance does the PROS Plan provide related to parking to inform development of the parks zone?**
Samples included in the text boxes to the right:
 - Goal 1: Planning, Acquisition & Access
 - Goal 2: Maintenance & Operations
 - Goal 3: Environment & Sustainability
- **What development regulations, restrictions and/or requirements do we need to include in the draft parks zoning code to address parking?**

Objective 1.6: Design and maintain parks and facilities to offer universal accessibility for residents of all physical capabilities, skill levels, and ages as appropriate and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design. Seek opportunities to eliminate barriers at existing facilities and address goals identified in the Citywide ADA Transition Plan.

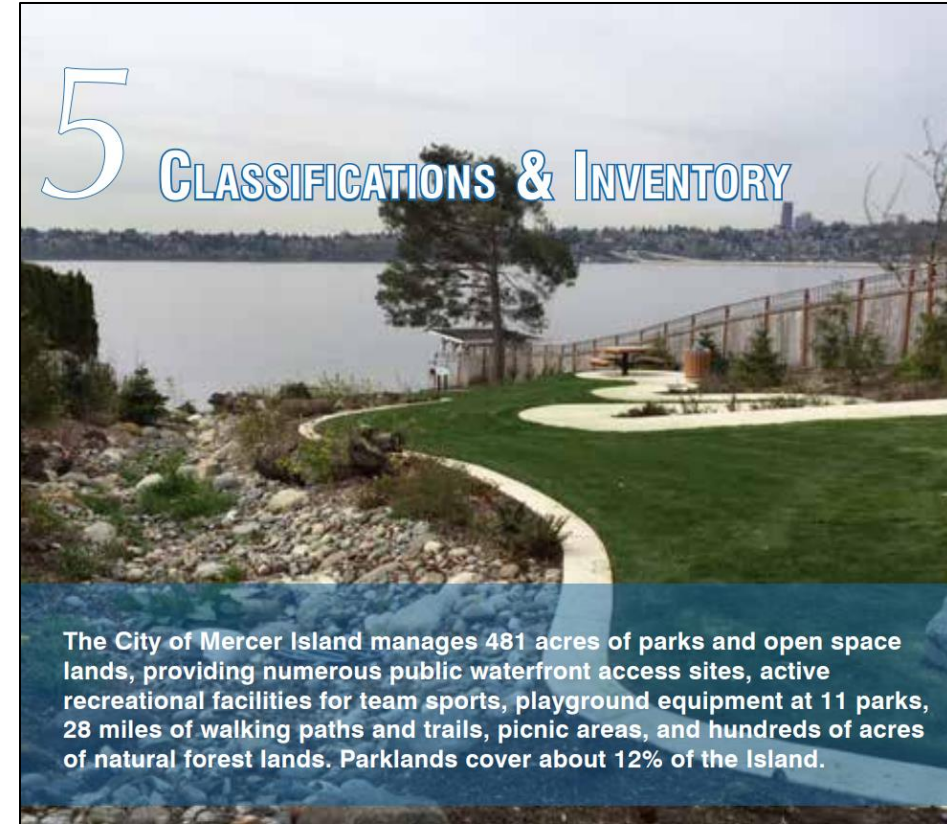
Objective 1.14: Improve and upgrade developed, and undeveloped street ends where appropriate to enhance public access to waterfront facilities. Identify opportunities where achieving ADA access is feasible and improve parking options.

Objective 2.5: Provide amenities at parks, trails, open space, and facilities where appropriate and when feasible to improve the user experience and access.

Objective 3.2: Provide appropriate public access (e.g. trails, viewpoints, and wildlife viewing areas) within open space to support passive recreation, and parking, where appropriate and feasible. ...

Drafting Code: Classification Example

- At the last Planning Commission meeting, a tiered approach was suggested to address the various uses in the Mercer Island Parks system.
- Chapter 5 of the PROS Plan includes parks classifications:
 - Regional Parks
 - Community Parks
 - Neighborhood Parks
 - Mini Parks
 - Special Facilities
 - Open Space
- Trails are part of the parks and recreation system and the transportation system and are addressed separately in Chapter 8 of the PROS Plan.



Drafting Code: Classification Example

Luther Burbank Park

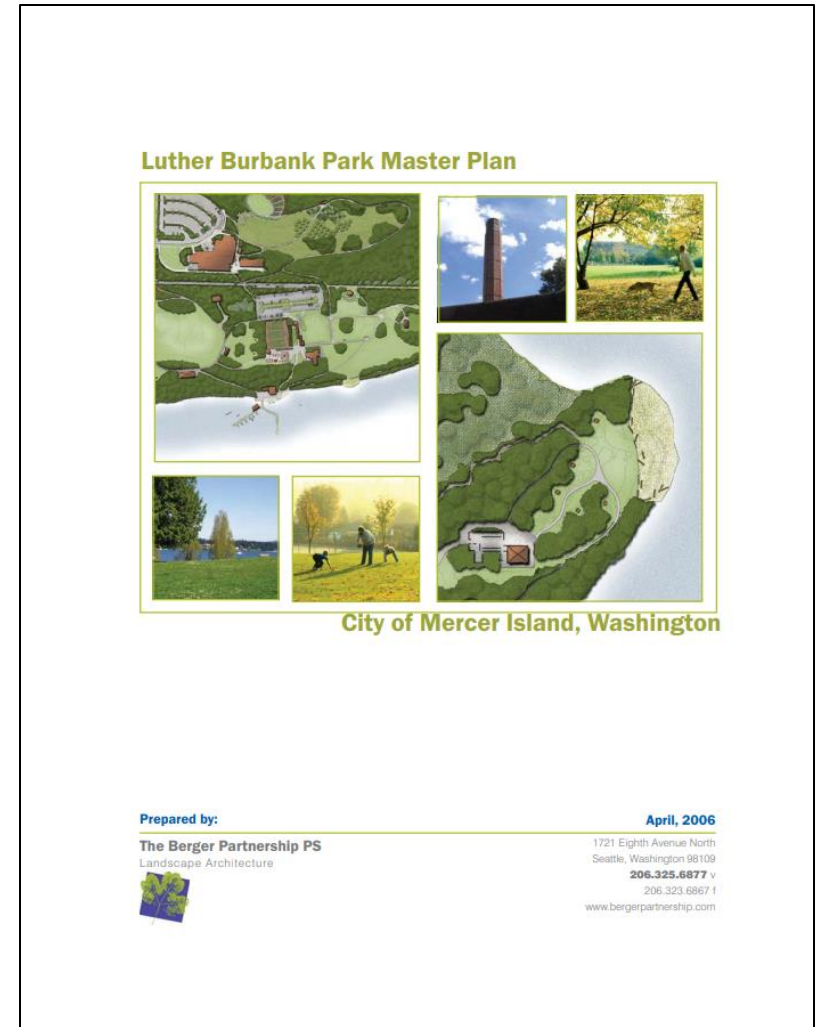
- Classified as a regional park, nearly 55-acres.
- Buildings
- Shoreline and docks
- Swimming Beach
- Playgrounds
- Trails
- Open space
- Park
- (Future) Pickleball Courts
- And more!



Drafting Code: Classification Example

Luther Burbank Park – Master Planned

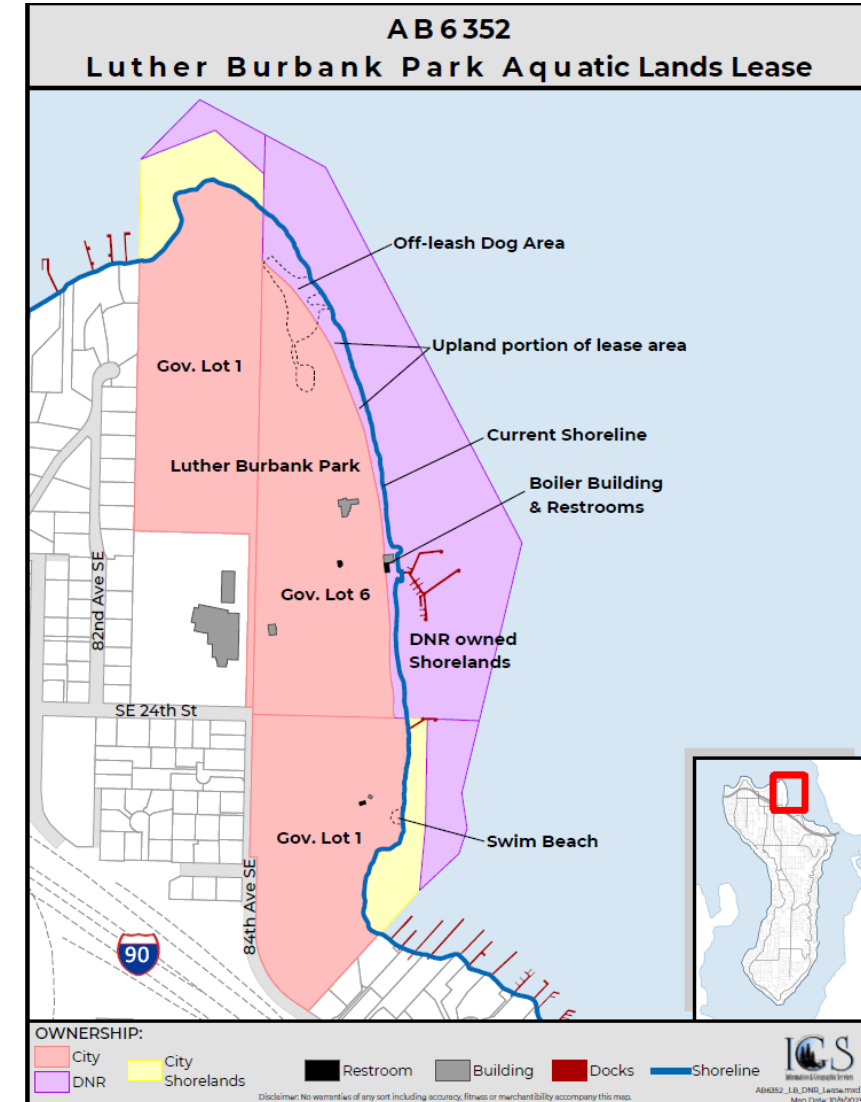
- Adopted Master Plan in 2006 that guides planning and operations.
- Identifies proposed improvements and capital projects.
- Guides maintenance, vegetation management, and informs other operational needs.
- **What is the appropriate interaction between the parks zone and master plans?**



Drafting Code: Classification Example

Luther Burbank Park - Ownership

- Luther Burbank Park is not owned entirely by the City of Mercer Island, much of the shoreline is owned by the Department of Natural Resources. Other examples where this is the case:
 - Pioneer Park: Open Space Conservancy Trust
 - Aubrey Davis Park: Washington State Department of Transportation
- Luther Burbank was transferred to the City from King County effective January 1, 2003.
- Park was originally purchased with Forward Thrust Funding and developed with State RCO Funding in the 1970s. Both funding sources include numerous restrictions and property must remain park.
 - Restrictions reflected in the Deed and other documents.



Drafting Code: Classification Example

Luther Burbank Park – Other Codes

- Other code and regulations apply to Luther Burbank Park (and other park and open space properties), such as:
 - Parks Code
 - Shoreline Management Code
 - Critical Areas Code
 - Tree Code
 - Land Development Code
 - Others
- Park development often falls under the jurisdiction of other regulatory agencies:
 - Army Corp of Engineers
 - Department of Fish & Wildlife
 - Department of Ecology
 - Others



Drafting Code: Classification Example

Street Ends & Landings

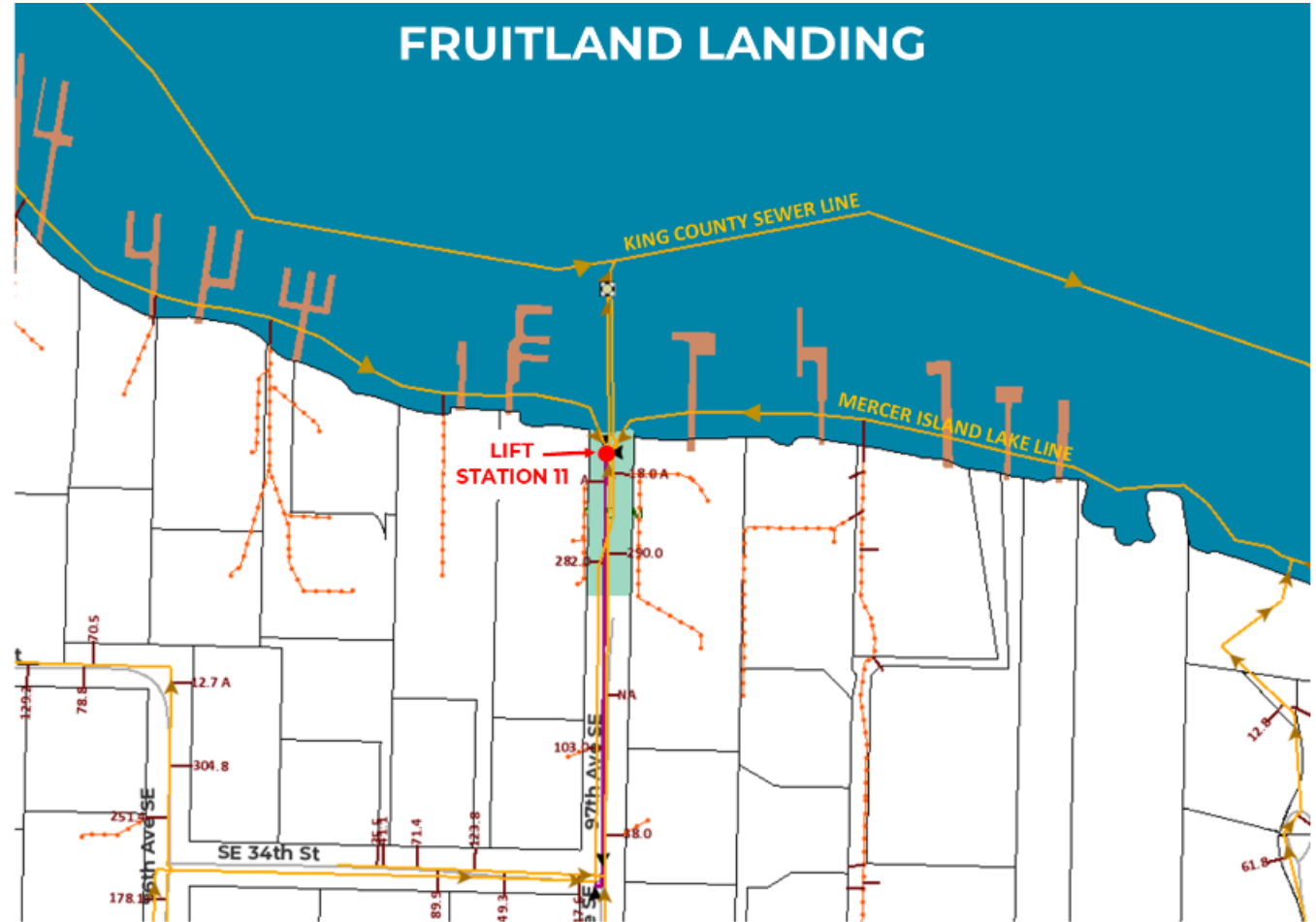
- Although many street ends and landings are classified as parks in the PROS Plan, their primary purpose/use is utilities.
- The secondary and complementary use is a mini-park with lake access.
- Using Fruitland Landing as an example, it is a major sewer facility where City and King County sewer infrastructure connects.
 - One City pump station, mostly underground.
 - Above ground generator which ensures facilities continue to operate when we have a power outage.
 - Also includes a stormwater outfall.



Drafting Code: Classification Example

Street Ends & Landings

- As properties are evaluated for inclusion in the parks zone, we want to ensure that the zoning aligns with the primary purpose.
- Staff do not recommend including utility infrastructure in the parks zone.
- There are other tools, however, such as the PROS Plan that guide use, planning, and operations of the parks component of this property.



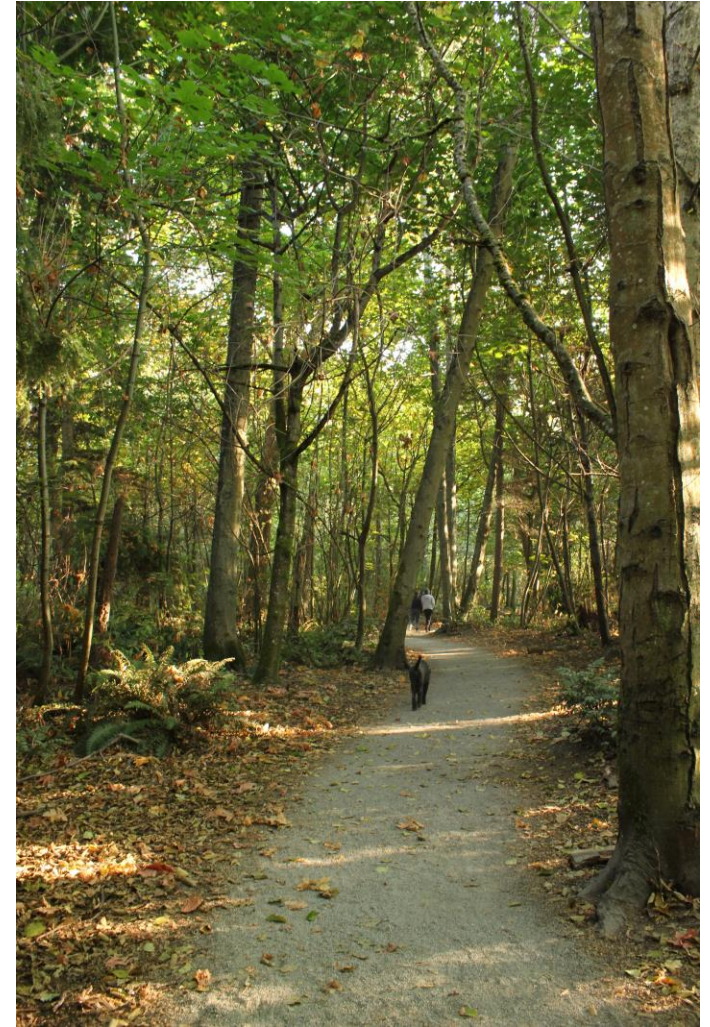


PRC and PC Coordination



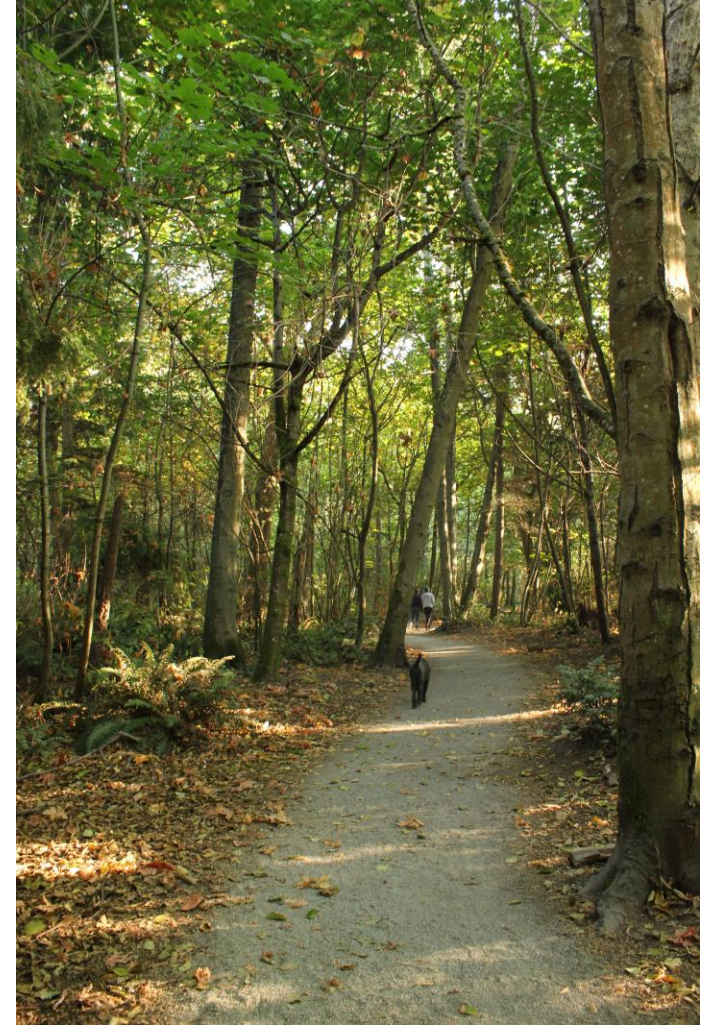
Parks Zone Development Timeline

- The Parks and Recreation Commission will undertake a review and work on revisions to the parks code in March and April.
 - Anticipating multiple meetings, likely three or four to complete the work.
 - The Parks and Recreation Commission will prepare a revised recommendation on a parks zoning code.
- Anticipated hand-off to the Planning Commission is May 8.
- Let's talk hand-off-logistics, coordination, and how we can best work together.



PRC and PC Coordination/Hand-Off

- What does the Planning Commission need from the Parks and Recreation Commission to facilitate the legislative review of the parks zone?
- What background information is useful?
- What about the hand-off meeting itself? How can we make best use of that time? Staff are currently anticipating a hand-off meeting on May 8.
- How can the PRC support the PC as they complete their legislative review of the parks zone, amidst a very full schedule?
- Other considerations?





Thank you.

