



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

**AB 5876
May 18, 2021
Regular Business**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 5876: Mercerdale Park Playground Renovation Appropriation Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Appropriate \$333,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund Balance to complete the Mercerdale Park Playground Renovation project.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

DEPARTMENT:	Public Works
STAFF:	Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations Paul West, CIP Project Manager
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Jake Jacobson
EXHIBITS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mercerdale Playground Preferred Design 2. Public Meeting #2 Polling and Q&A Chat, dated April 14, 2021 3. Let Kids Play, Inclusivity Analysis of Final Design Options, dated May 3, 2021 4. Northwest Playground Quote Option 2, dated May 3, 2021
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	2. Articulate, confirm, and communicate a vision for effective and efficient city services. Stabilize the organization, optimize resources, and develop a long-term plan for fiscal sustainability.

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ 843,000
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ 490,000
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ 333,000

SUMMARY

This agenda bill outlines the proposed project scope for the Mercerdale Park Playground Renovation Project and recommends an appropriation of funds from the Capital Improvement Fund Balance and Park Impact Fees to cover the additional project costs.

The Mercerdale Park Playground Renovation Project was originally scheduled for a “like for like” replacement, anticipating that the aging play structure would be replaced with similar equipment. Public input received throughout the design process, however, strongly favored a playground design that expands ADA accessibility and provides for a more inclusive play environment. The playground replacement proposal is included as Exhibit 1 and has been reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission. The approved project budget is \$490,000 and the current proposal is estimated at \$843,000, exceeding the project budget by \$353,000.

BACKGROUND

The Mercerdale Park Playground was built in 2002. Parks Maintenance staff, trained as Certified Playground Safety Inspectors, have conducted routine inspections of the playground equipment over the course of its life.

The inspectors have documented increasing deterioration in the condition of the equipment over the past five years. This is consistent with the industry standards that playground equipment lasts 15-20 years on average. Ultraviolet light, corrosion, and repetitive loading cause the materials to degrade over the life of the equipment.

In the winter of 2019, the playground flooded after heavy rain, requiring the facility to be closed. City staff determined the cause was a failure of the playground drainage system. Flooding and subsequent playground closures occurred repeatedly in the winters of 2020 and 2021. This drainage failure has increased the urgency to renovate the playground.

City staff proposed a playground renovation project as part of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget development process in the fall of 2020. The project included replacing the equipment, repairing the drainage, and installing a resilient rubber play surface to make the playground more accessible and easier to maintain. The initial project scope was estimated at \$490,000 and was approved in the Adopted 2021-2022 Biennial Budget.

PROJECT APPROACH

This project and the purchase of the new playground equipment will be completed using the King County Directors Association (KCDA) purchasing cooperative. Northwest Playgrounds, an approved KCDA vendor, was selected in April 2020 as the supplier for this project. This is the same playground supplier used for the Luther Burbank Park and the South Mercer playground replacement projects.

Playground renovations are public works projects and are required to adhere to public bidding requirements. For projects that have a large commodity component, such as the purchase of play equipment, competitive bidding may take place through purchasing contracts. KCDA is a purchasing cooperative for government and school district agencies that solicits competitive purchasing bids and awards purchasing contracts with vendors according to the laws of the State of Washington.

Historically, the City has used KCDA to purchase commodities and allied services for products ranging from garbage cans to the Island Crest Park synthetic turf field. Purchasing through KCDA is an efficient means of procurement when much of the project is commodities with predictable installation needs. Since the competitive bidding process is already completed, utilizing KCDA is a faster process than the phased design/bid/construct process typical with other public works projects.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Project Team conducted two virtual public meetings to seek community input on the playground replacement project. The [first meeting was held on February 8, 2021](#) to discuss the scope of the project and seek general input. Twelve citizens attended the meeting. The meeting participants strongly advocated for a more inclusive playground design and asked the City to consider the play styles of children with sensory processing and cognitive differences in the final design.

The first meeting and a subsequent draft design spurred additional community conversation. City staff received many emails expressing concerns and desires about the proposed playground design. The Project Team set up a [Let's Talk project page](#) to provide project information and collect comments and questions. The initial input can be summarized as follows:

Design the playground to be:

- Accessible to a range of users.
- Inclusive of different play styles.
- Provide several levels of challenge.
- Fun and inviting.
- Keep the train theme.

Construct the playground in a way that is:

- Expedient: get it done this summer.
- Cost effective: provide value to Mercer Island taxpayers.
- Environmentally friendly: use non-toxic materials, preserve open space, use sustainable methods.

The second meeting was held April 14, 2021 ([Meeting #2](#)) to solicit input on design choices regarding colors, surfacing, platform heights, climbing equipment, and spinning equipment. A robust question and answer session followed. More than 20 citizens, including future playground users, attended the meeting. See Exhibit 2 for meeting polling and questions and answers that were addressed in the meeting chat.

The Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) has been actively engaged in project discussions and supported the project team by advertising the community meetings to its membership. MIPA also conducted polling of their members and submitted feedback on the playground design.

All of the community feedback helped to inform the final design recommendation in Exhibit 1.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Play opportunities should be available to children and caregivers with a range of abilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines minimum standards for access routes and proportions of equipment that must be accessible.

Community Feedback on Accessible and Inclusive Design

Climbing and height are key aspects of most playground designs. Getting up high is compelling for children of all abilities. Perhaps for this reason, most (61%) participants in Virtual Meeting #2 favored a playground option with the tallest (72 inch) accessible platform structure.

The City also received input from families that the initial playground design concepts were not providing older children enough engaging options. The inclusion of the Cone Spinner feature in the final design recommendation is responsive to this feedback. The Cone Spinner was the most popular (40%) stand-alone climbing option at Virtual Meeting #2. To meet fall-zone requirements, the trade-off is a reduction in the main climbing structure to a 60-inch platform height with a proportional reduction in accessible activities.

Children have different styles of play and find enjoyment in different ways. Those with sensory processing or cognitive differences may prefer a situation with less stimulation. Solitary activity options can be offered with opportunities for social play. Sound, color, and texture stimulation should be considered in the design. At the same time, children with needs for high stimulation should also be considered.

The recommended design offers solitary as well as social play options. Two sensory panels provide engaging mirrors, puzzles, and other manipulative activities. Musical instruments provide a valuable sensory experience and are located away from the main play area to provide some acoustic separation. Play features

located underneath the main platform structure also provide a sensory and social refuge and maximize the use of space. Color choices limit bright and stimulating colors to accent features. Neutral or cool tones are the more prevalent colors in the proposed playground design.

The designs developed by Northwest Playground were analyzed for inclusivity by [Let Kids Play](#), a consulting firm that specializes in developing inclusive play opportunities (See Exhibit 3).

No playground can meet all play needs, but attention to these details ensures the play environment is welcoming to many different play styles.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REVIEW

On May 6, 2021, the Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Commission considered the proposed playground design options presented at the second public meeting and the input received to date. While the commissioners recognized the value of the accessible climbing activity, most of the commissioners preferred the additional inclusive play that the Cone Spinner and solo spinners provide. Exhibit 1 illustrates the preferred option that includes these features.

The commissioners did not favor adding the Accessible Whirl feature to the design, nor did they endorse an option to enhance the play graphics in the resilient rubber surfacing. They also provided input on color, reflecting the same desires heard at the public meeting for some degree of bright accents in the color scheme, but otherwise adhering to a more natural color scheme. This input has been incorporated and represents the recommended design presented in Exhibit 1.

BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION REQUEST

The playground equipment and the installation will be purchased through the KCDA purchasing cooperative as previously described. See Exhibit 4 for the purchasing proposal.

As noted previously, the Mercerdale Park Playground Renovation Project was originally scheduled for a “like for like” replacement, anticipating that the aging play structure would be replaced with similar equipment. Public input received throughout the design process, however, strongly favored a playground design that expands ADA accessibility and provides for a more inclusive play environment. The current project proposal is estimated at \$843,000, exceeding the current budget appropriation by \$353,000.

The summary of the proposed project budget is included below.

Playground and Installation	\$769,000
Contingency @ 5%	\$34,000
In-house site work	\$25,000
Project Management	\$15,000
TOTAL COST	\$843,000
CURRENT BUDGET	(\$490,000)
MIPA DONATION	<u>(\$20,000)</u>
APPROPRIATION REQUEST	\$333,000

Contingency is set at 5% to address minor unanticipated conditions that may be encountered during excavation and repair of the stormwater infrastructure. In-house site work includes demolition (which began in early May) of existing equipment, minor concrete paving repairs, and donor recognition features.

Project Donations

The Mercer Island Preschool Association has pledged \$20,000 towards this project and their generous donation is reflected in the project budget above. Many other community members have expressed a willingness to support a fundraising campaign for this project. While additional donations are certainly welcome, the staff do not recommend pausing the project to allow for a fundraising campaign. If additional donations are received, they will be applied to the costs of this project.

Park Impact Fees

The proposed playground design expands capacity of the play area. The “new” capacity is likely an eligible use of park impact fees, although the staff needs to analyze this further to determine the amount of the project that is eligible. Given that park impact fees are restricted and can only be used for projects that create “new” capacity, the staff recommendation is to apply the maximum amount of eligible park impact fees to this project. The current park impact fee balance is \$160,000.

Remaining Appropriation

The remaining balance, after determining eligible park impact fee use, is recommended to be appropriated from available fund balance in the Capital Improvement Fund. At the end of fiscal year 2020, the available Fund Balance in the Capital Improvement Fund was \$2.84 M. There are multiple capital funding appropriations under consideration at the May 18, 2021 City Council meeting and this available fund balance is sufficient to cover all project requests.

NEXT STEPS

Upon receiving project approval from the City Council, the staff will procure the playground equipment (there is a 6 to 8-week lead time) and plan for installation at the end of August or early September. The train play structure is a custom piece and will be installed later this fall.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept the proposed project design for the Mercerdale Park Renovation Project and approve the amended project budget of \$843,000.
2. Accept the \$20,000 donation from the Mercer Island Preschool Association and appropriate the donated funds to the Mercerdale Park Renovation Project. Authorize the City Manager to direct additional donations to the project.
3. Direct the City Manager to complete the park impact fee funding evaluation for this project and authorize the appropriation of the maximum amount of eligible park impact fees to this project.
4. Authorize the remaining project funds to be drawn from the available fund balance in the Capital Improvement Fund.