

**From:** [Dan Thompson](#)  
**To:** [Council](#); [Planning Commission](#); [Parks & Rec Commission](#); [Ryan Daly](#)  
**Cc:** [Jessi Bon](#); [Thomas Acker](#); [Mike Cero](#); [Robin Russell](#); [Ira Appelman](#); [Meg Lippert](#); [Matthew Goldbach](#); [Elizabeth Buckley](#); [Carv Zwingle](#); [Traci Granbois](#); [Doris Cassan](#); [lsarchin@aol.com](#); [Rob Dunbabin](#); [Morrene Jacobson](#); [Robert Medved](#); [Lou Glatz](#); [Mark Coen](#); [olivialippens@gmail.com](#); [Ray Akers](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comments For Feb. 8 Joint Parks/Planning Commission Meeting On Parks Zone  
**Date:** Monday, February 5, 2024 2:45:23 PM

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Below is my reply post from ND to my original post on the new parks zone.

[https://nextdoor.com/p/ZGy94r94TCsP?utm\\_source=share&extras=NDE0NTk4OQ%3D%3D&utm\\_campaign=1707171883059](https://nextdoor.com/p/ZGy94r94TCsP?utm_source=share&extras=NDE0NTk4OQ%3D%3D&utm_campaign=1707171883059). Included are all the links.

Thanks to City Manager Jessi Bon for slowing down the process and for the joint meeting.

The key IMO for Feb. 8 is to go back to the principles we want for the parks zone which I list below (and have discussed before), and an understanding of, before drafting the specific code language:

- 1. We are not revisiting the PROS plan.**
- 2. Why a limit on new net impervious surfaces is so important. Because it is about the only regulatory limit that makes sense in a park.**
- 3. The council understanding it will have to adopt a heightened standard to rezone a park in the zone or change its non-park related use, not unlike the trust for open spaces after proposals to turn Pioneer open space into a golf course. I think emotionally it will be hard for the council to accept that this process is to remove our parks from their control.**

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"The city has released the agenda packet for the Feb. 8 joint parks—planning commission meeting over the new parks zone. [ITEM-Attachment-001-f2372292114c4bcbb666c3a00f92ca64.pdf \(usgovcloudapi.net\)](#)

"There is also a Let's Talk site (set to launch Feb. 12). [Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review | Let's Talk Mercer Island \(mercergov.org\)](#)

" As expected, the agenda packet leads with an outline of the PROS plan because some on the planning commission were unfamiliar with the PROS plan that never went through the planning commission, and thought the parks zone would address new park related development and uses within the parks. Those issues were decided by the PROS plan which was a comprehensive two-year process.

"The city manager has also wisely slowed down this process, with several more meetings (6) to be scheduled before the parks commission so we can formulate the principles before the actual parks zone language. After the parks commission develops an outline and set of principles the zone will go to the planning commission for writing the code, and then to the council for approval. The city manager would still like to complete the zone in 2024 so it can be added to the update of the comprehensive plan, although I think getting it right is the most important issue.

"The only real issues for the parks zone IMO are:

"1. What parks are included in the zone.

"2. What are the limits on new and existing non-park related uses and development.

"3. What are the requirements to change the zoning or uses of parks in the zone. As I have argued, if the council can just change the use or zoning by a majority vote we haven't PERMANENTLY protected our parks any more than today or yesterday.

"I also want to address an issue or policy that has confused some: the parks commission policy of no new NET impervious surfaces that was in the original parks zone draft.

"This policy is important because right now there is no separate parks zone, and so the regulatory limits (height, lot coverage or impervious surface limits, gross floor area of buildings to lot area ratio, setbacks, etc.) are the same as the surrounding zone, which on MI is mostly the residential zone. But a zone designed to limit "development", even the residential zone, has regulatory limits that don't really apply or work in a park. For example, under the residential code 40% of a lot can be impervious surfaces, and gross floor area to lot area ratio is limited to 40%. Both are way too high for a park.

"It is the limit on impervious surfaces (along with building height) that really is the only applicable regulatory limit for a park or parks zone, and what we are trying to do is to restrict non-park related uses and development, which almost always require new impervious surfaces (i.e. a performing arts center in Mercedale or a commuter parking lot on Kite Hill or the sculpture garden for the Tully's project or a large, manufactured sorting building near the recycling center in Mercedale Park).

"So really the one regulatory limit or rule that is necessary and works for a parks zone is no new NET impervious surfaces unless approved in the PROS plan. That would basically prohibit new non-park related development because the PROS plan is all park-related development.

"If you would like to send public comments to the different parties their addresses are:"

City Clerk: Deb Estrada Deborah.Estrada@mercerisland.gov>

City Council: council@mercergov.org Parks Commission:

ParksAndRec.Commission@mercergov.org Planning Commission:

planning.commission@mercerisland.gov>

City Parks Dept. (Ryan Daly): Ryan.Daly@mercergov.org(edited)

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