

**APPENDIX A:  
COMMUNITY SURVEY #1**





**To:** Jessi Bon, City Manager  
**From:** Steve Duh, Conservation Technix, Inc.  
**Date:** March 31, 2020  
**Re:** **Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan**  
 Community Survey Summary Results

Conservation Technix is pleased to present the results of a survey of the general population of the City of Mercer Island that assesses residents’ recreational needs and priorities.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Mercer Island residents strongly value their parks and recreation facilities.

Nearly all respondents (99%) think parks and recreation are important to quality of life on Mercer Island.



#### Residents are generally very satisfied with existing parks and recreation amenities and facilities.

A large majority of respondents (94%) are somewhat to very satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation for parks, facilities and open space. The majority visit at least once a week, often to walk or run (81%), walk or exercise their dog (57%), visit beaches or waterfront (56%), and relax (56%).

#### Residents would like to see improvements made to the parks & recreation system and want to see the City preserve parks and natural areas for their wildlife and ecological values.

Respondents are generally satisfied with the number of park and recreation amenities on Mercer Island; over half of respondents said there are more than enough or about the right number of all amenities surveyed. However, between one-quarter and one-third of respondents feel like there is not enough shoreline access, community events, indoor facilities, arts and culture opportunities, and open space. Many respondents wrote about their support for enhanced boating and water sports opportunities, the restoration of the Summer Celebration, and the creation of a performing arts center on the island.

When it comes to recreational programs and activities, respondents expressed greater interest in, and need for, adult programs and activities than those geared towards youth or teens. In particular, respondents had a higher interest in seeing more performing arts, educational, and boating classes and programs.

Respondents also want the City to protect access to nature, trees, and open space for both people and wildlife.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In close collaboration with City of Mercer Island staff and the Parks & Recreation Commission, Conservation Technix developed the 17-question survey that was estimated to take less than ten minutes to complete.

The survey was mailed to a random sample of 2,500 households within the boundaries of the City of Mercer Island on February 4, 2020. An online version of the survey was posted to the City’s website several days later to allow the mail recipients to receive first notice about the survey. Reminder postcards were mailed to the 2,500 households on February 25th. Information about the survey was provided on the City’s website home page and on the Let’s Talk PROS Plan subpage. It also was promoted via multiple social media postings. The survey was closed on March 10th, and data were compiled and reviewed.

Overall, 525 responses were completed from the random-sample mail survey (21% response rate), and 1,238 responses were generated via the online link published on the City’s website. In total, 1,763 survey responses were recorded. Although households were randomly chosen to receive the mail survey, respondents were not necessarily representative of all City residents, see age demographics below.

Age group	Survey Respondents			M.I. Population	
	Mail	Online-only	Combined	Full	Over 20
Under 20	0%	1%	<b>0%</b>	25%	--
20-34	5%	5%	<b>5%</b>	12%	<b>16%</b>
35-44	12%	23%	<b>20%</b>	12%	<b>16%</b>
45-54	19%	33%	<b>28%</b>	17%	<b>23%</b>
55-64	26%	19%	<b>21%</b>	14%	<b>19%</b>
65 and older	39%	20%	<b>26%</b>	20%	<b>27%</b>
Total	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>	100%	<b>100%</b>

This report includes findings of community opinions based principally on mailed survey responses. This report includes findings on general community opinions. Data are summarized for the mail and online surveys to highlight overall community preferences, with clarifying remarks on response differences between the two datasets. The data for the mail and online versions were kept separated.

The survey data were compared against the demographic data (e.g., age, location, number of children in household) to examine if differences existed between the different respondent subgroups. The summary below identifies variations in responses per question, if such variations existed and were significant between subgroups. Percentages in the report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

## FULL RESULTS

### How much do residents value parks and recreation?

Virtually all respondents (99%) feel that local parks, recreation options and open space opportunities are important or essential to the quality of life on Mercer Island. More than nine in ten respondents feel that they are essential; while an additional 8% believe that they are important to quality of life, but not essential. Less than 1% of respondents believe parks are “Useful, but not important”.

Respondents of various ages, length of residence, and household composition, as well as those who responded to the online survey, valued parks and recreation opportunities similarly.

1. When you think about the things that contribute to the quality of life in Mercer Island, would you say that public parks and recreation opportunities are...

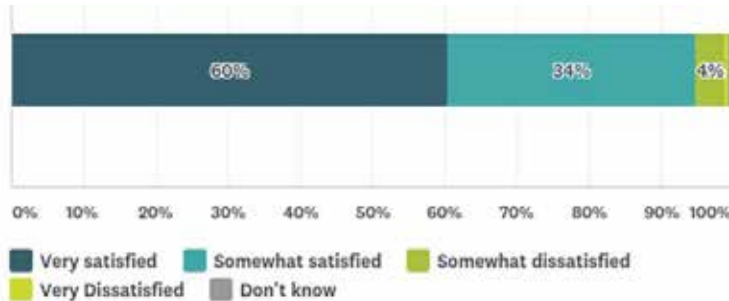
Response options	Mail	Online-only	
Essential to the quality of life here	92%	99%	90%
Important, but not really necessary	8%		8%
More of a luxury that we don't need	<1%	<1%	
Don't know	0%	<1%	

### Are residents satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation?

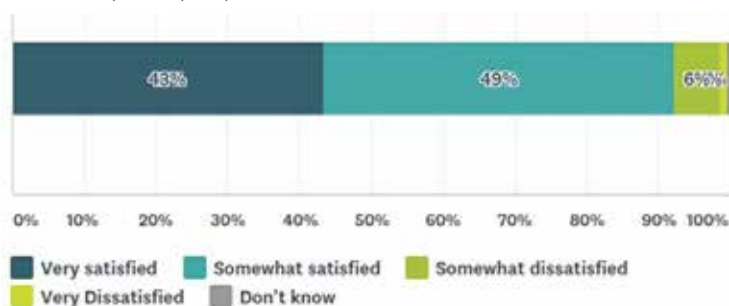
A large majority of respondents are somewhat to very satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation for parks, facilities and open space (94% for the mail survey and 92% in the online-only survey). However, one in twenty respondents (5%) is either somewhat or very dissatisfied. There were no significant differences in levels of satisfaction between subgroups.

6. Rate your household's overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks or open spaces.

Mail survey responses



Online-only survey responses



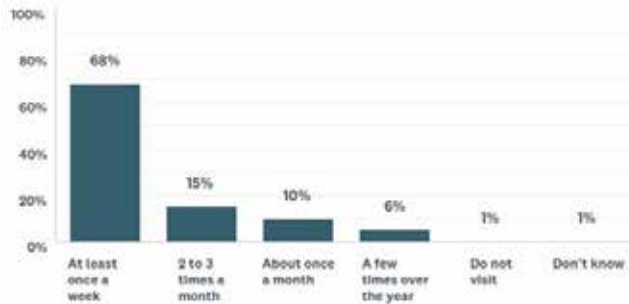
### How often do residents use Mercer Island parks & recreation facilities?

Respondents were asked how often they, or members of their household, visited a Mercer Island Parks & Recreation park, recreation facility, or open space. Visitation is high, with 68% of mail survey respondents visiting at least once a week and another 25% visiting one to three times per month. Only 6% of respondents visit just a few times per year. Very few (1%) did not visit a park last year.

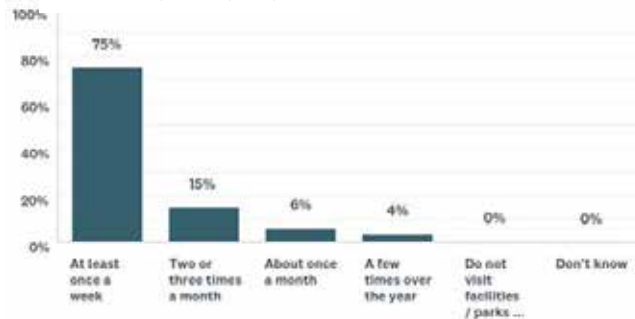
As compared to other subgroups, adults between 45 and 54 are the most frequent users of Mercer Island’s parks. Respondents of households with children also visit significantly more frequently than those without children. Online-only survey respondents tended to visit even more frequently than mail respondents, with 75% visiting at least once a week and 96% visiting at least once per month.

3. How often do you visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces?

Mail survey responses



Online-only survey responses



### Why do residents visit parks?

Respondents visit local parks and recreation facilities for a variety of reasons. The most popular activities are walking or running (81%), followed by dog walking/exercise (57%), visiting beaches or waterfront (56%), and relaxation (56%). More than one-third of respondents visited for fitness (43%), to attend a community event or concert (36%), or use a playground (33%). Between 15% and 30% of residents visited Mercer Island parks to view wildlife, gather with family, ride a bike, use a sports court, boat, or view public art. Less than one in ten respondents visit for public meetings, private events, adult sports leagues, or fishing.

Respondents between 35 and 54, and those with children in their household, were more likely than other groups to visit for playgrounds, classes and camps, biking, family gatherings, and youth sports. Respondents over 55 were more likely than younger residents to visit to view art or wildlife. Respondents with children in their home were more likely to visit for youth sports leagues, playgrounds, family gatherings, or classes and camps than those without children.

In general, respondents to the online-only survey visited Mercer Island parks and facilities for similar reasons as respondents to the mail survey. However, 40% of online-only respondents visited to attend a youth sports league event, which is a frequency that is more than twice the percentage of mail respondents.

4. What would you say are the main reasons you visited Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks or open spaces in the last year?

Reason	Mail	Online
Walking or running	81%	75%
Dog walking/exercise	57%	54%
Beach/waterfront	56%	49%
Relaxation	56%	46%
Fitness	43%	39%
Community events/concerts	36%	36%
Playgrounds	33%	40%
Wildlife viewing	27%	19%
Family gatherings/picnics	25%	29%
Biking	22%	29%
Outdoor sport courts	17%	24%
Youth sports league	16%	40%
Boating/watersports	15%	17%
Public art viewing	15%	10%
Class or camp	14%	18%
Public meeting	9%	7%
Private event/celebration	9%	10%
Adult sports league	3%	6%
Fishing	3%	4%



### Why don't residents visit more often?

When asked why they do not visit Mercer Island's parks and recreation facilities more often, many residents responded that they do visit (53%). Approximately one in eight residents responded that they do not visit more often because of lack of parking (13%) and restrooms (11%). Similar numbers use parks or facilities provided by other cities or organizations (11%) or are too busy (9%) suggesting that further improvements would not increase their use of parks.

Between 4% and 9% of respondents selected a reason that could be addressed by the City, including concerns about conflicts between users (8%), lack of information (7%), crowding (5%), distance to parks (4%), maintenance issues (4%), and safety concerns (4%). In addition, multiple respondents wrote responses regarding concerns about off-leash dogs and a desire for additional hours for recreational facilities.

In general, respondents to both the mail and online-only survey expressed similar reasons for not visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities more frequently. Respondents between 35 and 44 and those with children at home were more likely to cite that parks do not have enough restrooms as a reason why they do not visit more often.

5. Please check all the reasons why your household does not use City of Mercer Island park or recreation facilities more often.

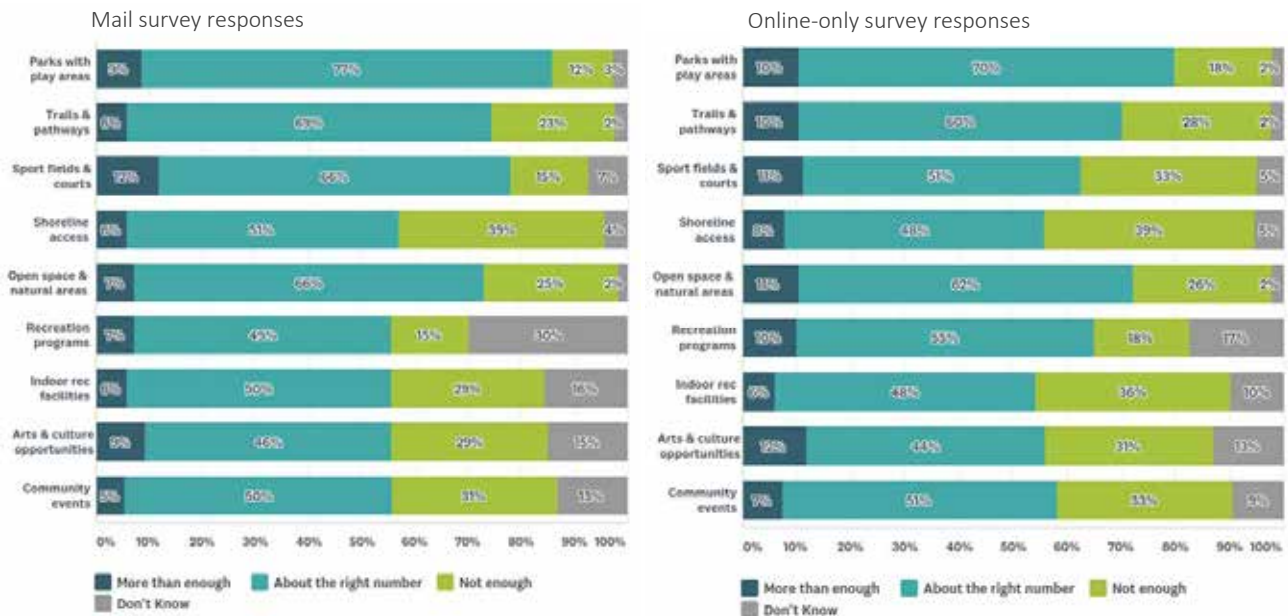
Reason	Mail	Online
None / Does not apply to me	53%	48%
Not enough parking	13%	11%
Use parks or facilities provided by another city or organization	11%	9%
Not enough restrooms	11%	11%
Too busy to go to parks and facilities	9%	8%
Concerns about conflicts with other users	8%	9%
I do not know what is offered	7%	6%
Too crowded	5%	6%
Too far from my home	4%	4%
Are not well-maintained	4%	5%
Do not feel safe	4%	3%
Do not have appropriate equipment	<1%	4%
Barriers related to accessibility	<1%	2%
Cost prohibitive	<1%	2%

### Do residents think the City of Mercer Island needs more parks and recreation opportunities?

Respondents are generally satisfied with the number of park and recreation amenities on Mercer Island; over half said there are more than enough or about the right number of all amenities listed. Respondents are most satisfied with the number of parks with playgrounds and restrooms (86% think there about the right number of more than enough), sports fields and courts (78%), trails and pathways (75%), and open space and natural areas (73%). However, between one-quarter and one-third of respondents feel like there is not enough shoreline access (39%), community events (31%), indoor facilities (29%), arts and culture opportunities (29%), and open space (25%).

Respondents to the online-only survey were more likely than respondents to the mail survey to feel there are 'not enough' parks and recreation amenities and activities. However, a majority of online-only respondents felt there are enough or more than enough of all amenities listed. Younger respondents were more likely to believe the City of Mercer Island does not have enough parks with play areas, sports fields and courts, and community events. Those with children in their household expressed a greater need for sports fields and courts, recreation programs, indoor recreation facilities, and community events than those without children. In general, respondents who are newer to the island tended to think that Mercer Island needs more park and recreation amenities.

2. When it comes to amenities provided by the City of Mercer Island... would you say there are...



**What park and recreation options do residents have a need for? Do they feel their needs are met?**

The survey asked a series of questions regarding needs for typical park and recreation facilities. The first pair of questions asked which park and recreation facilities and amenities the respondent’s household has a need for, and then, whether that need is well met, somewhat met, or unmet locally. The second set asked similar questions related to recreational programs and activities.

Respondents indicated that the highest unmet park and recreation facility need is for pedestrian trails. Respondents have a more limited need for bike trails, indoor fitness facilities, picnic shelters, and off-leash dog areas, but many feel that these needs are met by existing facilities. On the other end of the scale, respondents generally expressed little additional need for outdoor fitness equipment, boating facilities, paddle sports courts, fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and lacrosse (including lit and synthetic fields), basketball courts, all-inclusive play equipment, and skate parks. However, multiple respondents used open-ended questions to voice their desire for boating facilities, pickleball courts, off-leash dog areas and all-inclusive play equipment.

Younger respondents, especially those under 45, expressed a greater need for all-inclusive play equipment, picnic shelters, basketball courts, indoor recreation facilities, and outdoor fitness equipment than residents over 55 years of age. Respondents over 45 years of age stated a greater need for boating and watersports facilities than younger residents. Respondents with children at home were more likely than those without to have a desire for more sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, and boating areas.

Respondents to the online-only survey generally expressed similar levels of interest and need for park amenities and facilities as respondents to the mail survey. A notable exception, however, was with sports fields – between 21% and 42% of online-only survey respondents stated they need more baseball/softball, soccer/lacrosse, lighted, and synthetic fields, approximately twice rate of mail survey respondents.

7. Please indicate how well your household needs are met locally for each of type of **amenity or facility** and indicate if you have a need for more...

Higher need but well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	Moderate need and well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	Lower need and well met <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Pedestrian trails</b> Mail: 50% / 56%   Online: 55% / 51%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Bike trails</b> Mail: 39% / 59%   Online: 44% / 50%</li> <li>● <b>Indoor fitness facilities</b> Mail: 34% / 60%   Online: 34% / 53%</li> <li>● <b>Picnic shelters / gathering spaces</b> Mail: 29% / 59%   Online: 33% / 54%</li> <li>● <b>Off leash dog areas</b> Mail: 28% / 70%   Online: 28% / 69%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Outdoor fitness equipment</b> Mail: 24% / 68%   Online: 24% / 59%</li> <li>● <b>Boating/watersports facilities</b> Mail: 24% / 70%   Online: 27% / 64%</li> <li>● <b>Paddle/Racquet sports courts</b> Mail: 23% / 71%   Online: 26% / 63%</li> <li>● <b>Synthetic turf fields</b> Mail: 19% / 78%   Online: 38% / 60%</li> <li>● <b>Lighted sports fields</b> Mail: 19% / 75%   Online: 42% / 56%</li> <li>● <b>Soccer/Lacrosse fields</b> Mail: 18% / 78%   Online: 37% / 60%</li> <li>● <b>Basketball courts</b> Mail: 12% / 79%   Online: 21% / 66%</li> <li>● <b>All-inclusive equipment</b> Mail: 9% / 87%   Online: 12% / 81%</li> <li>● <b>Baseball/Softball fields</b> Mail: 8% / 85%   Online: 21% / 71%</li> <li>● <b>Skate park</b> Mail: 5% / 90%   Online: 10% / 84%</li> </ul>



When it comes to recreational programs and activities, respondents expressed greater interest in, and need for, adult programs and activities than those geared towards youth or teens. In particular, respondents had a higher interest in seeing more performing arts, educational, and boating classes and programs.

Respondents under 55 were more likely than older residents to state a need for adult sports leagues, boating programs, and children’s activities. Those over 55 years of age were more likely than younger respondents to be interested in and want more adult classes and programs for people over 55. Households with children were more likely than those without to feel like their need for children’s activities were well met but expressed a greater interest in having more teen activities, swimming and water safety programs, and youth sports programs and camps.

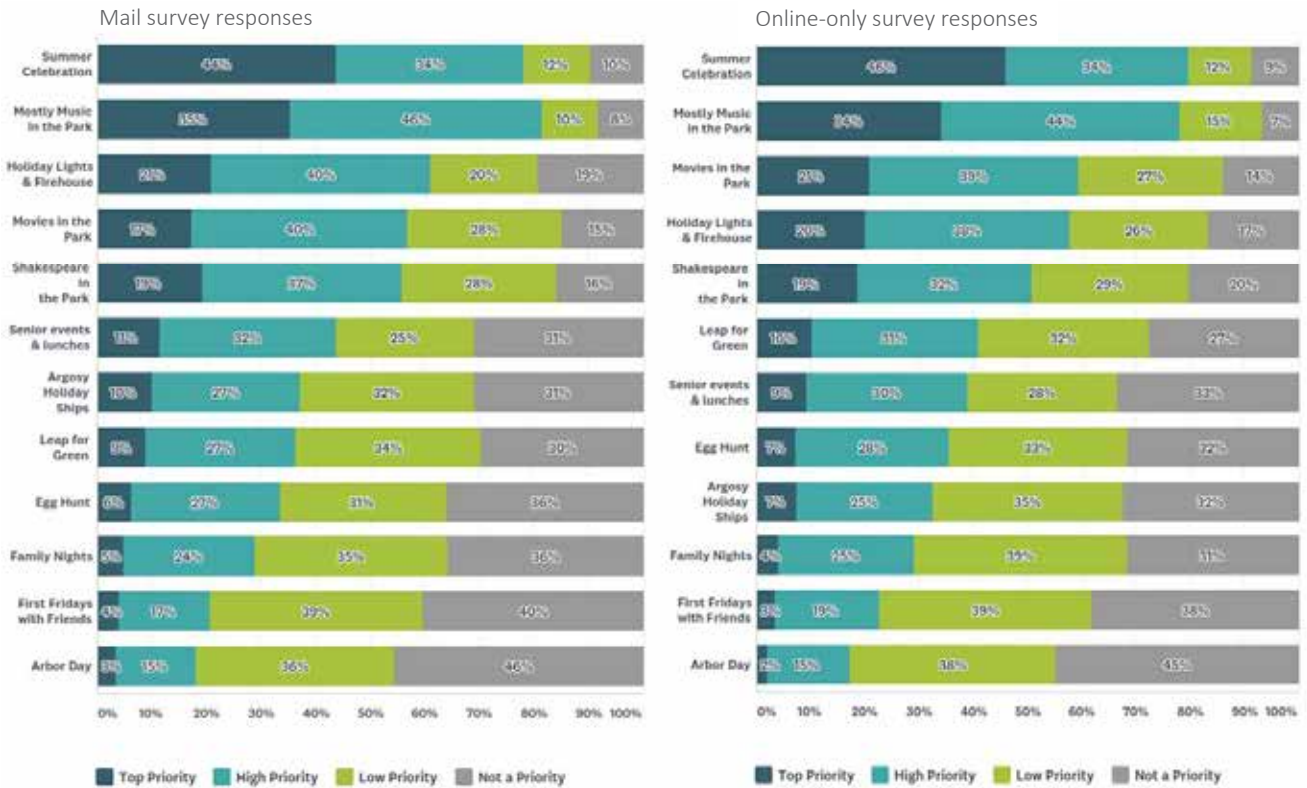
8. Please indicate how will your household needs are met locally for each of the existing **programs and activities** and indicate if you have an interest in each...

<b>Higher interest but well met</b> <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	<b>Moderate interest and well met</b> <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>	<b>Lower interest and well met</b> <i>(% who need more / % well met or n/a)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performing arts Mail: 67% / 50%   Online: 61% / 49%</li> <li>• Adult classes Mail: 65% / 58%   Online: 62% / 58%</li> <li>• Educational classes Mail: 57% / 57%   Online: 56% / 59%</li> <li>• Boating programs Mail: 56% / 62%   Online: 55% / 58%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs for adults over 55 Mail: 47% / 64%   Online: 35% / 75%</li> <li>• Swimming &amp; water safety Mail: 46% / 67%   Online: 45% / 60%</li> <li>• Outdoor classes Mail: 44% / 67%   Online: 49% / 63%</li> <li>• Youth activities Mail: 37% / 73%   Online: 48% / 61%</li> <li>• Youth sports and camps Mail: 35% / 75%   Online: 49% / 63%</li> <li>• Children’s activities Mail: 33% / 77%   Online: 44% / 65%</li> <li>• Adult sports Mail: 30% / 79%   Online: 31% / 73%</li> <li>• Teen activities Mail: 26% / 81%   Online: 36% / 73%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs for people with special needs Mail: 20% / 86%   Online: 24% / 81%</li> </ul>

### Which special events do residents prioritize?

The City of Mercer Island offers a wide variety of community special events each year. When asked which of these events they felt the City should prioritize, costs aside, respondents strongly supported the Summer Celebration (44% listed as a top and 34% as a high priority) and Mostly Music in the Park (35% and 46%, respectively). Other priority events included Holiday Lights and Firehouse Munch, Movies in the Park, and Shakespeare in the Park. Respondents listed Arbor Day, First Fridays with Friends, Family Nights at the Community Center, and the Egg Hunt as lower priorities. However, the annual Egg Hunt and Movies in the Park were a higher priority for respondents between 35 and 44 and those with children, while Shakespeare in the Park was a higher priority for adults over 55. Respondents to the online-only survey had mostly similar priorities as those who responded to the mail survey.

10. Below is a list of City community special events that have been offered in the past or are currently offered. Although there are costs associated with each event, costs aside, for each event indicate whether you think it is a High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority or Not a Priority for your household.

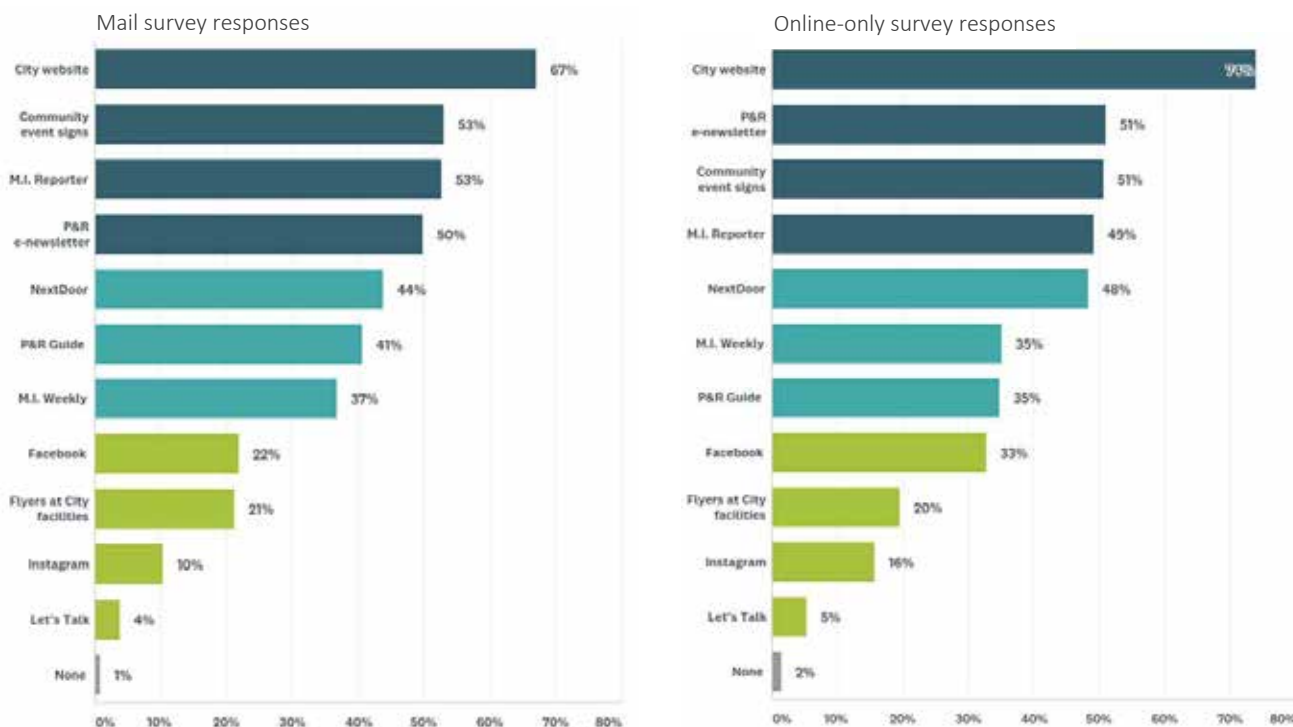


### How do residents want to hear about Mercer Island’s parks, facilities, and events?

The majority of respondents prefer to hear about Mercer Island’s parks, facilities, and events through online channels such as the City’s website (67%) and Parks & Recreation e-newsletter (50%) as well as posted event signs (53%) and the Mercer Island Reporter (53%). These sources were popular with respondents to both the mail and online-only surveys.

Fewer than one in three respondents would like to hear about park and recreation opportunities through Facebook (22%), flyers at City facilities (21%), Instagram (10%), and Let’s Talk (4%). However, social media, including Facebook and Instagram, is a more popular source of information for respondents under 44, who prefer these sources 2-to-1 over older residents, and for families with children. The Mercer Island Reporter and Parks & Recreation Guide are preferred at higher rates by older residents, though all age groups use these printed publications to get information about parks and recreation offerings.

11. Please check ALL the ways you would prefer to learn about Mercer Island’s parks, recreation facilities, programs and special events.





### Other Comments

The survey provided respondents with two opportunities to share their ideas and suggestions via open-ended responses. Common themes from these comments include:

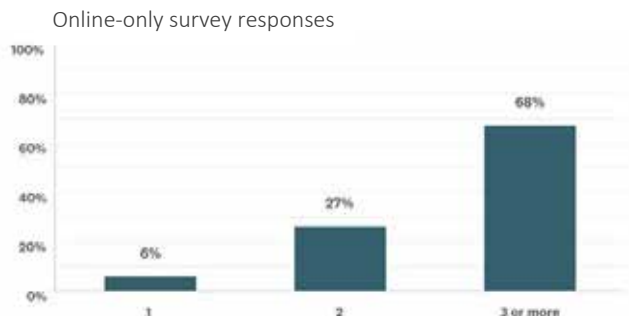
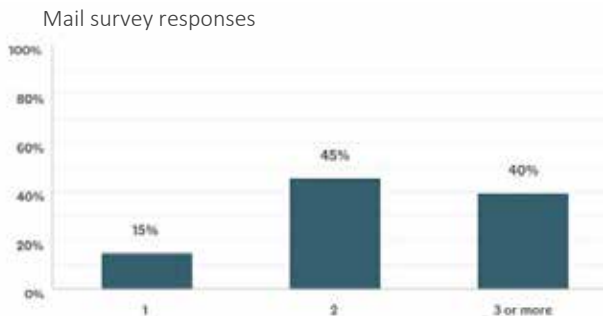
- Many respondents want to make sure the City protects access to nature, trees, and open space for both people and wildlife. Some respondents encouraged the City to permanently protect all park spaces. Others specifically encouraged the City to use of bee- and pollinator-friendly planting and landscape practices.
- Many respondents responded that they are eager to see additional off-leash dog parks in the City, either because they would use it themselves or because they hope it would lessen the number and impacts of unauthorized off-leash dogs in Mercer Island parks.
- Respondents expressed interest in, and enthusiasm for, specific park improvements, including the development of pickleball courts, sports fields, picnic shelters, and park restrooms, and additional adult programs and classes.
- Many respondents see the Summer Celebration Festival as an important tradition on the island and felt dismayed at the reductions to the Festival. They encouraged the City to restore the Summer Celebration, including the parade and fireworks.
- Many respondents comment on the need for improved swimming and boating opportunities, including renovations and expanded hours at Mary Wayte pool, additional splash pads, lifeguards at beaches, improvements to docks at Luther Burbank Park, kayak/canoe/SUP rentals, and the creation of sailing and rowing programs.
- Multiple respondents see the development of a performing arts center and venue as an important need on the island, frequently referencing the Mercer Island Center for the Arts (MICA) proposal and the desire to have a venue for Youth Theater Northwest (YTN).

A compilation of write-in comments is on file with the Mercer Island Parks & Recreation Department.

## Demographics

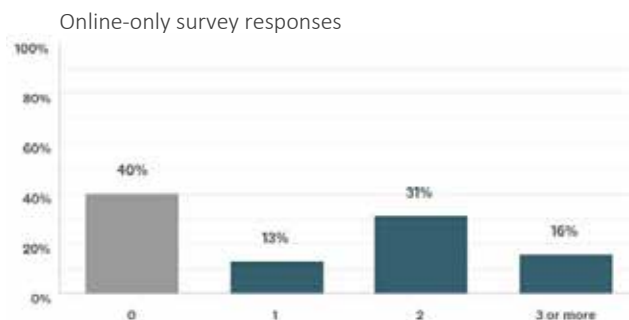
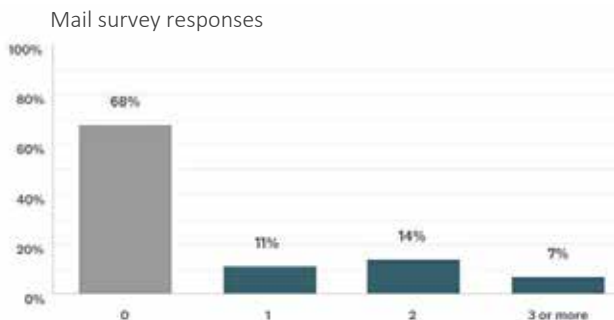
### Number of People in Household

The majority (85%) of respondents to the mail survey live in households with either two (45%) or three (40%) people, while 15% percent live in single person households. Online-only survey respondents were more likely to live in households with three or more residents.



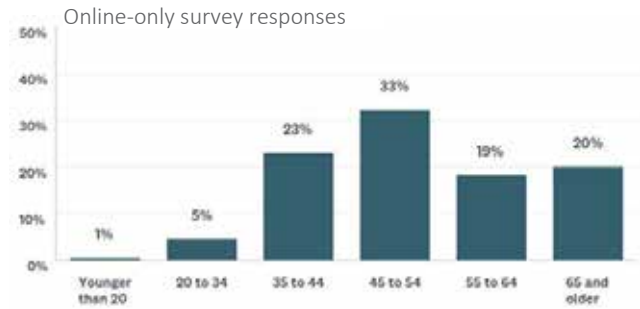
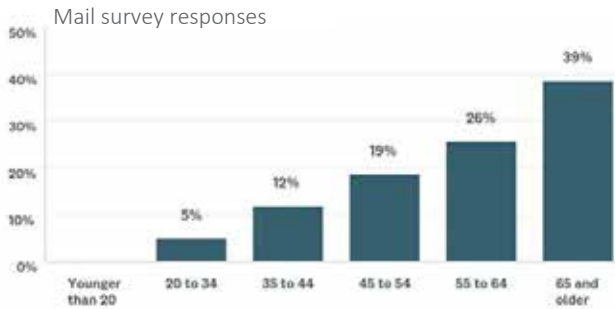
### Number of Children in Household

Nearly seven in ten respondents to the mail survey (68%) have no children in their household. These households tended to include older adults (over age 55). The remaining 32% of households have one (11%), two (14%), or three or more (7%) children in the home. Online-only respondents were more 28% likely to have children at home than mail survey respondents.



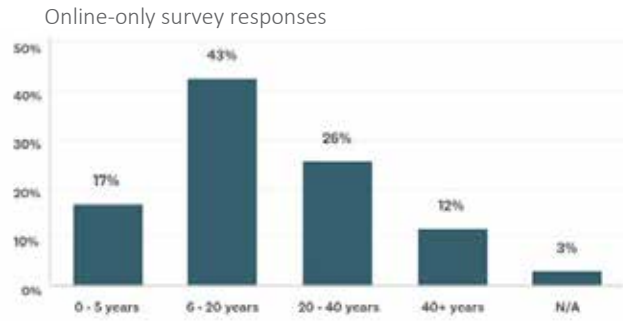
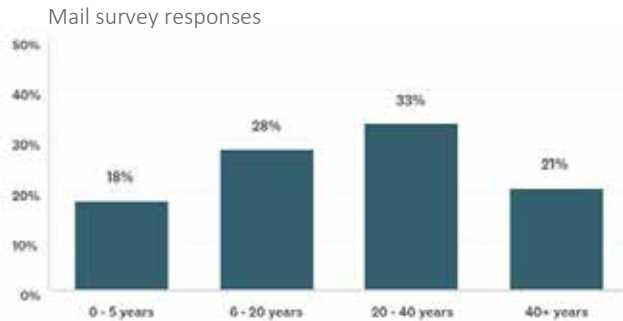
**Age**

Nearly 40% of respondents to the mail survey were over 65 years of age. Another 26% were between 55 and 64 years, while 19% were 45 to 64 years. There were few responses from younger residents, 12% of responses were from people 35 to 44 and 5% were from those 20 to 34 years of age. Respondents to the online-only survey were predominately 45-64 years old (33%), followed by 35-44 years (23%), with fewer residents over 55 responding.



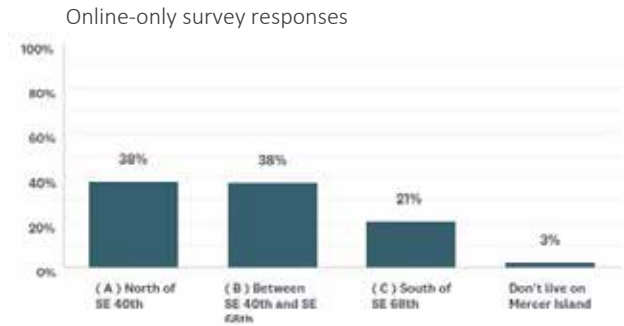
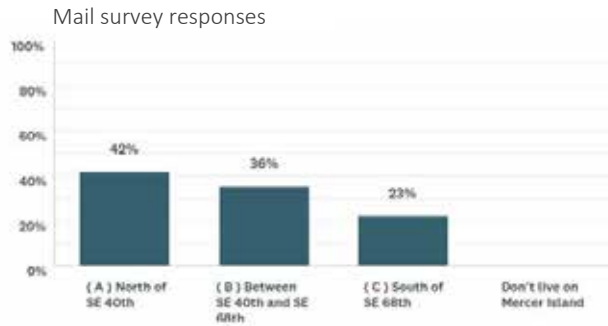
**Length of Residence**

Over half of mail survey respondents have lived on Mercer Island for decades, with 21% having lived on the island for more than 40 years and 33% having done so for 20-40 years. Approximately 28% have lived on the island for 6 to 20 years, while 18% are relative newcomers (less than 5 years). Respondents to the online-only survey were more likely to have lived on Mercer Island for between 6 and 20 years.

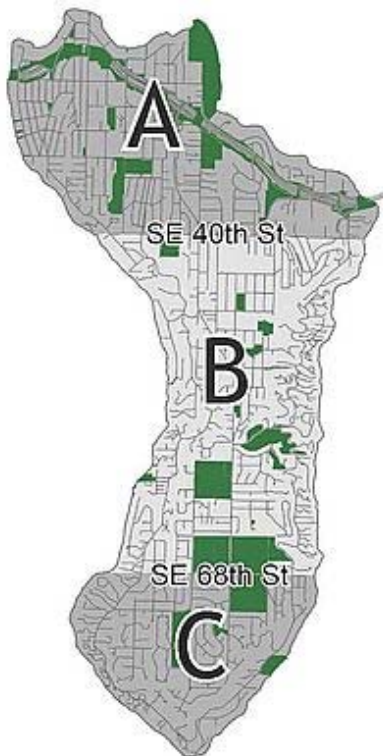


**Location of Residence**

Approximately 42% of mail survey respondents live on the northern part of the island (north of SE 40<sup>th</sup> Street). Another 36% respondents live between SE 40<sup>th</sup> and SE 68<sup>th</sup> Street. The remainder of respondents live south of SE 68<sup>th</sup> (23%). No respondents live outside of the City of Mercer Island. Respondents to the online-only survey were similarly distributed across the island. However, 3% of online-only respondents do not live on Mercer Island.



Location Map (for reference)



**ATTACHMENT 1. SURVEY INSTRUMENT**



**City of Mercer Island**  
Community Survey on Parks and Recreation

**Dear Mercer Island Resident:**

The City of Mercer Island has begun a community-driven process to update its citywide Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS Plan). We need your help to determine how to prioritize projects and where to focus to keep our parks and programs thriving. As an initial step in the process, the City is conducting this short, random-sample survey to assess the community’s recreation and facility needs. Additional public engagement will follow, and final review of the Plan is tentatively targeted for the end of 2020. Your opinions are important to the City.

The survey has 17 questions and will only take a few minutes to complete.

If you prefer to take the survey online, use the unique ID number above to access the survey at [miprosplan.com](http://miprosplan.com) or with this QR code:



1. When you think about the things that contribute to the quality of life in Mercer Island, would you say that public parks and recreation opportunities are... ( CHECK ONE OPTION )

- Essential to the quality of life here
- Important, but not really essential
- Useful, but not important
- Not Important at all

2. When it comes to amenities provided by the City of Mercer Island for meeting your needs for parks, amenities and activities, would you say there are... ( CHECK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW )

	More than Enough	About the Right Amount	Not Enough	Don't Know
Parks with playgrounds, play areas, restrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trails & pathways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sport fields & sport courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shoreline access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Open space & natural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation programs (camps & classes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor recreation facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arts & culture opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How often do you visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces?

- At least once a week
- Two or three times a month
- About once a month
- A few times over the year
- Do not visit facilities / parks / open spaces
- Don't know

4. What would you say are the main reasons you visited Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces in the past year? ( CHECK ALL THAT APPLY )

- Adult sports league
- Beach / waterfront
- Biking
- Boating / watersports
- Class or camp
- Community events / concerts
- Dog walking / exercise
- Family gatherings / picnics
- Fishing
- Fitness
- Outdoor sport courts
- Playgrounds
- Private event / celebration
- Public art viewing
- Relaxation
- Public meeting
- Walking or running
- Wildlife viewing
- Youth sports league
- N/A - I didn't go to Mercer Island parks or open spaces
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



Take this survey [online](#) or use the QR code, and enter the unique ID number on the front:  
[miprosplan.com](http://miprosplan.com)

Or send it back in the self-addressed envelope provided. **Thank you in advance for participating!**



**5. Please CHECK ALL the reasons why your household does not use City of Mercer Island parks or facilities more often.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are not well maintained<br><input type="checkbox"/> Barriers related to physical accessibility<br><input type="checkbox"/> Concerns about conflicts with other users<br><input type="checkbox"/> Cost prohibitive<br><input type="checkbox"/> Do not have the appropriate equipment<br><input type="checkbox"/> Do not feel safe in facility, park or open space<br><input type="checkbox"/> I do not know what is offered<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not enough parking | <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough restrooms<br><input type="checkbox"/> Too busy to go to facilities, parks or open spaces<br><input type="checkbox"/> Too crowded<br><input type="checkbox"/> Too far from my home<br><input type="checkbox"/> Use amenities provided by another city, organization or private club<br><input type="checkbox"/> None / Does not apply to me<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
|--|---|

**6. Rate your household's overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks or open spaces.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Satisfied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Dissatisfied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Very Dissatisfied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
|--|---|

**7. For each of the following existing park and recreation amenities, indicate how well your household needs are met locally AND if you have a need for more of each amenity.**

Type of Amenity	How well met are your needs for each?				Do you have need for more?	
	Very Well Met	Somewhat Met	Not At All Met	N / A	Yes	No
All-inclusive playground equipment (ADA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnic shelters / small gathering spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boating / watersports facilities (docks, boat launch, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paddle / racquet sport courts (tennis, pickleball)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Indoor fitness & exercise facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor fitness equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pedestrian trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Off-leash dog areas (enclosed dog parks)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skate park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport fields for baseball, softball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport fields for soccer, football, lacrosse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lighted sport fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Synthetic turf fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. For each of the following existing programs and activities, indicate how well your household needs are met locally **AND** if you have an interest in each program or activity.

Type of Program / Activity	How well met are your needs for each?				Do you have interest?	
	Very Well Met	Somewhat Met	Not At All Met	N / A	Yes	No
Adult classes, such as arts, crafts, music, fitness or wellness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adult sports leagues, such as soccer or softball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boating programs, such as sailing, kayaking, paddleboarding or rowing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's activities, such as after-school programs or summer day camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational classes, such as technology, natural history, safety or health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor classes, such as fishing, environmental or orienteering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performing arts, such as community theater or concerts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programs for adults 55 and over, such as drop-in activities, trips or health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programs for youth, teens and young adults with special needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming & water safety, such as classes or for fitness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teen activities, such as drop-in, trips or camps during school breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth activities, such as fitness, music, arts or crafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth sports programs and camps during school breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Please share additional needs for amenities, programs or activities you may have on Mercer Island.

10. Below is a list of City community special events that have been offered in the past or are currently offered. Although there are costs associated with each event, costs aside, for each event indicate whether you think it is a High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority or Not a Priority for your household.

	Top Priority	High Priority	Low Priority	Not a Priority
Arbor Day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Argosy Holiday Ships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Egg Hunt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Nights at the Community Center (Around the World, Hoedown, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Fridays with Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holiday Lights & Firehouse Munch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leap for Green Sustainability Fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mostly Music in the Park concerts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Movies in the Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior events & lunches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shakespeare in the Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summer Celebration Festival	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11. Please check ALL the ways you would prefer to learn about Mercer Island's parks, recreation facilities, programs and special events.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> City website              | <input type="checkbox"/> Mercer Island Reporter               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community event signs     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mercer Island Weekly (City e-news)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook                  | <input type="checkbox"/> NextDoor                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flyers at City facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation e-newsletter      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation Guide publication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Let's Talk                | <input type="checkbox"/> None                                 |

**12. This survey may not have addressed all of the topics important to you. Please share any other issues, policy-related items, concerns, or other information the City should consider for future planning.**

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The following questions help us understand whether we have a cross-section of the community responding to this survey. It's important that you provide a response to each question. Please remember your answers are confidential.

**13. How many people live in your household?**

- |                            |                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more |

**14. How many children under age 18 live in your household?**

- |                            |                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more |

**15. What is your age?**

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Younger than 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 to 34        | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44        | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 and older |

**16. If you are a Mercer Island resident, how long have you lived on the Island?**

- |                                       |  |                              |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 5 years  | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 - 40 years | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 - 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 40+ years     |                              |

**17. Using the map, in which section of Mercer Island do you live?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ( A ) North of SE 40th            | <input type="checkbox"/> ( C ) South of SE 68th      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ( B ) Between SE 40th and SE 68th | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't live on Mercer Island |



**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!**

Your input will help guide the development of the Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan.

Save a stamp! Take this survey online with the unique ID number on the front: [miprosplan.com](https://miprosplan.com)

Learn more about why Mercer Island needs a PROS Plan and stay informed about the process at <https://letstalk.mercisgov.org/miprosplan>



The City of Mercer Island is using the services of a consultant team who specializes in park and recreation planning. Please return your completed survey in the enclosed Return-Reply Envelope addressed to:

Conservation Technix Inc.  
PO Box 12736  
Portland, OR 97212



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# APPENDIX B: RECREATION RESET SURVEY #2



# MICEC Recovery Survey

## SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

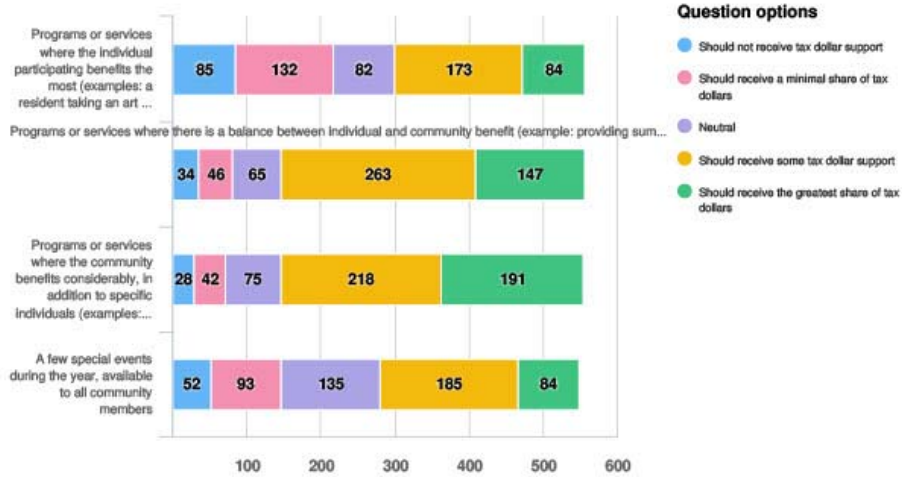
05 January 2021 - 16 February 2021

### PROJECT NAME:

Planning for the Future: Recreation and the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC)



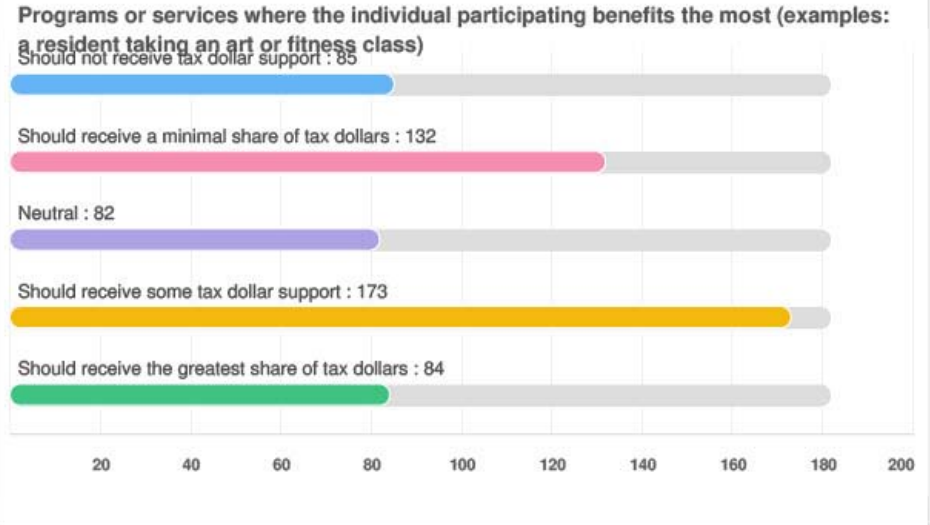
**Q1** In the past, the revenue that supported recreation operations and programs and the Mercer Island Community and Events Center...



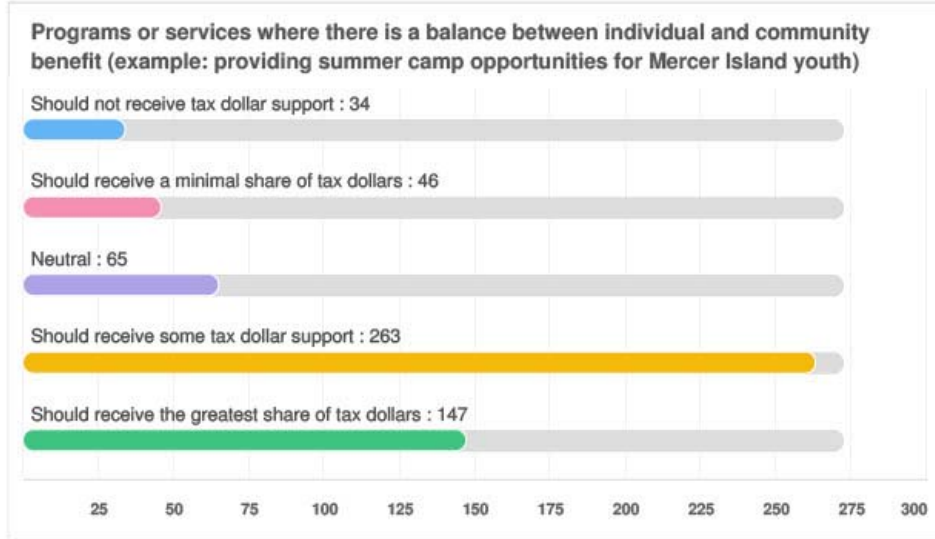
Optional question (565 response(s), 15 skipped)  
Question type: Likert Question

MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

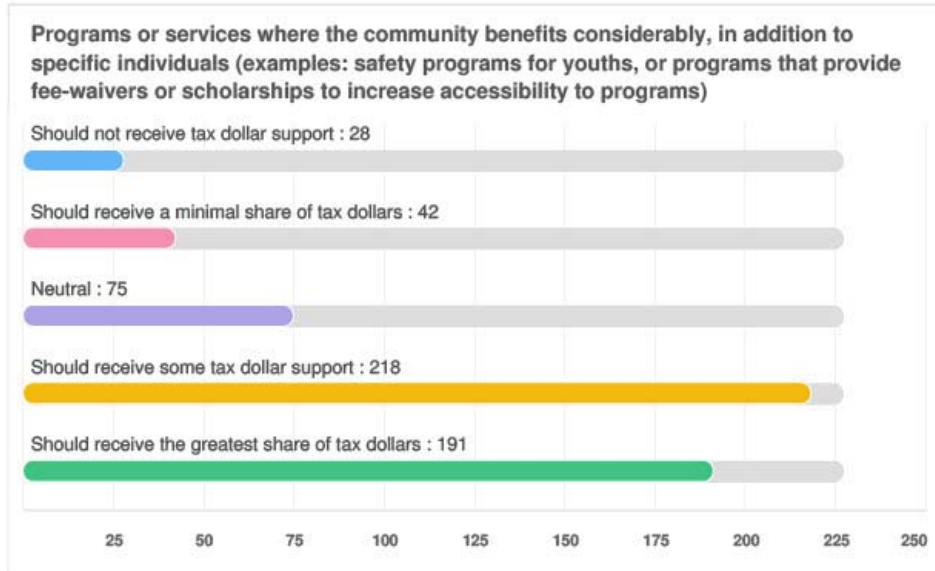
**Q1 | In the past, the revenue that supported recreation operations and programs and the Mercer Island Community and Events Cente...**

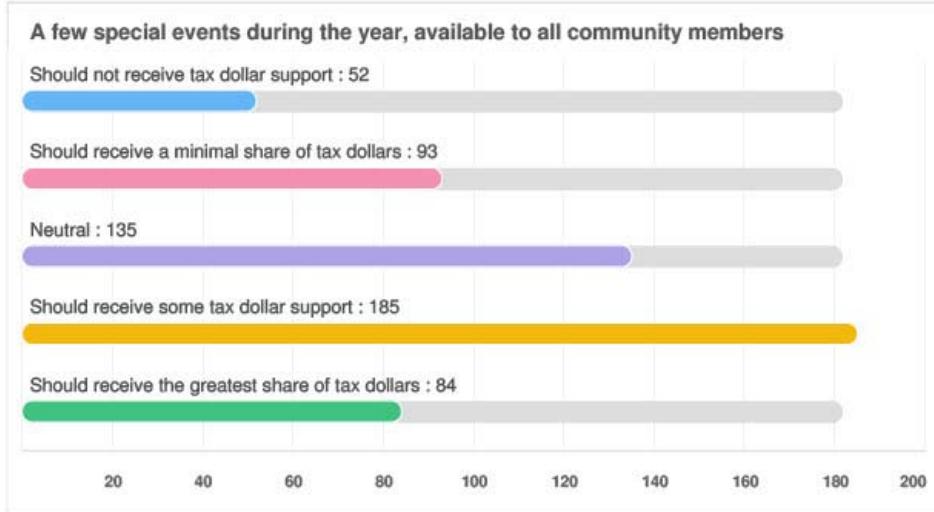






MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021





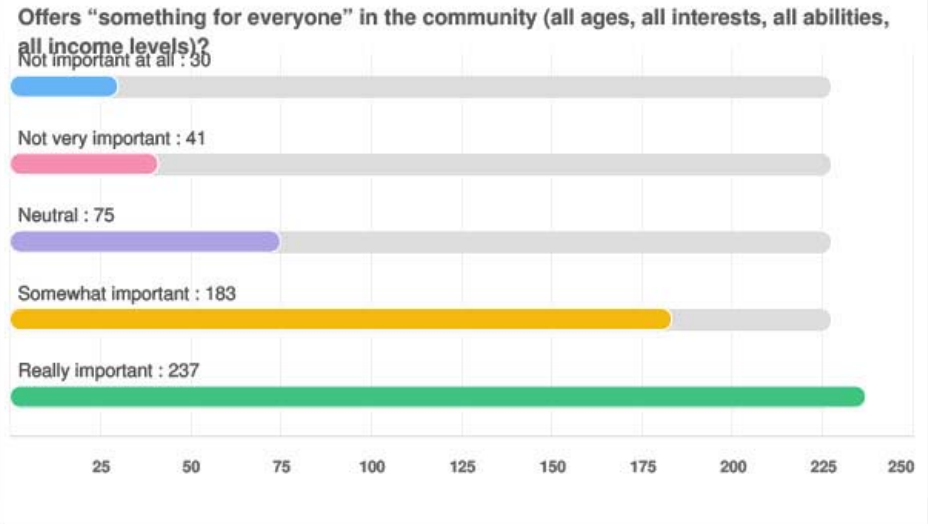
**Q2 How important is it to you personally or to your family that the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC):**

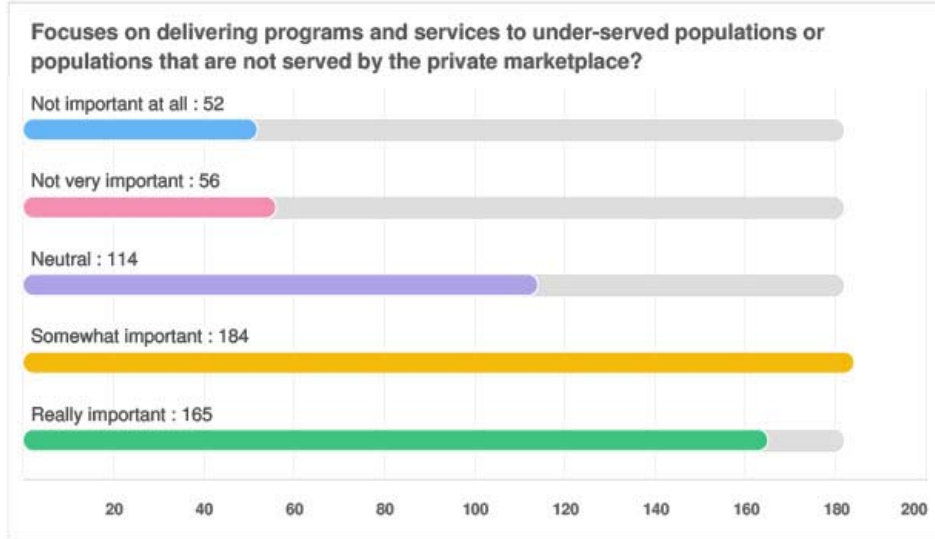


Optional question (576 response(s), 4 skipped)  
Question type: Likert Question

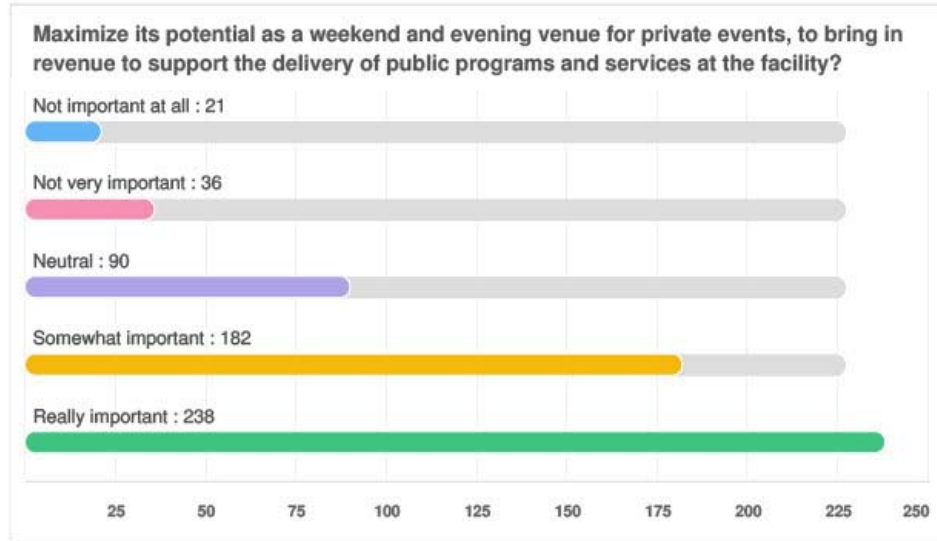
MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

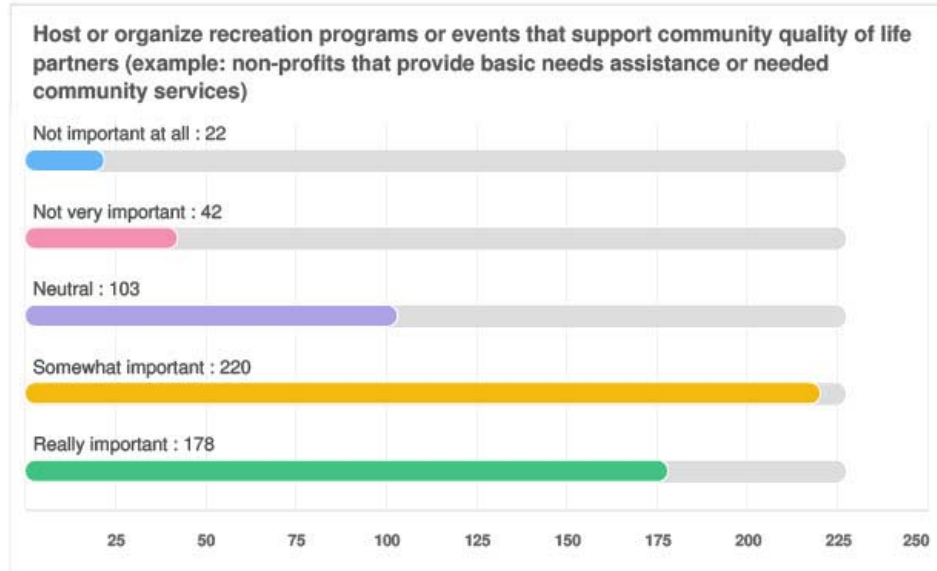
**Q2 How important is it to you personally or to your family that the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC):**



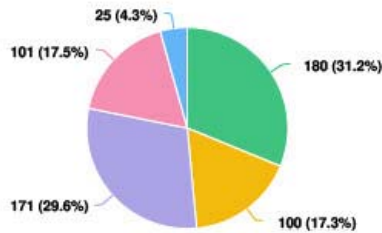


MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021





**Q3 How frequently did you or your family use or visit the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC)?**



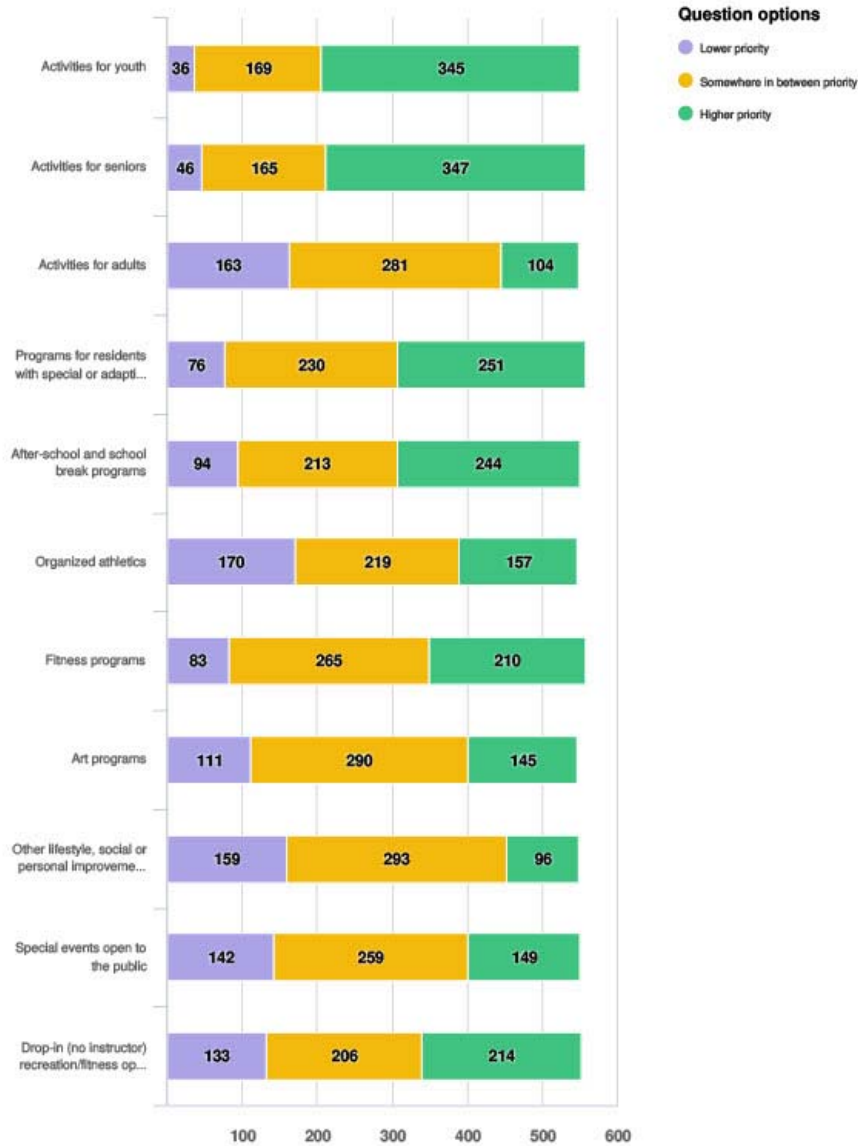
**Question options**

- Never
- Rarely (may have visited once or twice a year or every other year)
- Somewhat (attended an event, participated in a program, visited the art gallery, or went there for another reason a few times each year)
- Fairly frequently (at least once a month)
- Very frequently (often once a week)

*Optional question (577 response(s), 3 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question*

MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

**Q4** If the City were to prioritize providing space at the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC) for some types of public uses more than others, which of the following would you recommend it prioritize for the community:



Optional question (573 response(s), 7 skipped)  
Question type: Likert Question

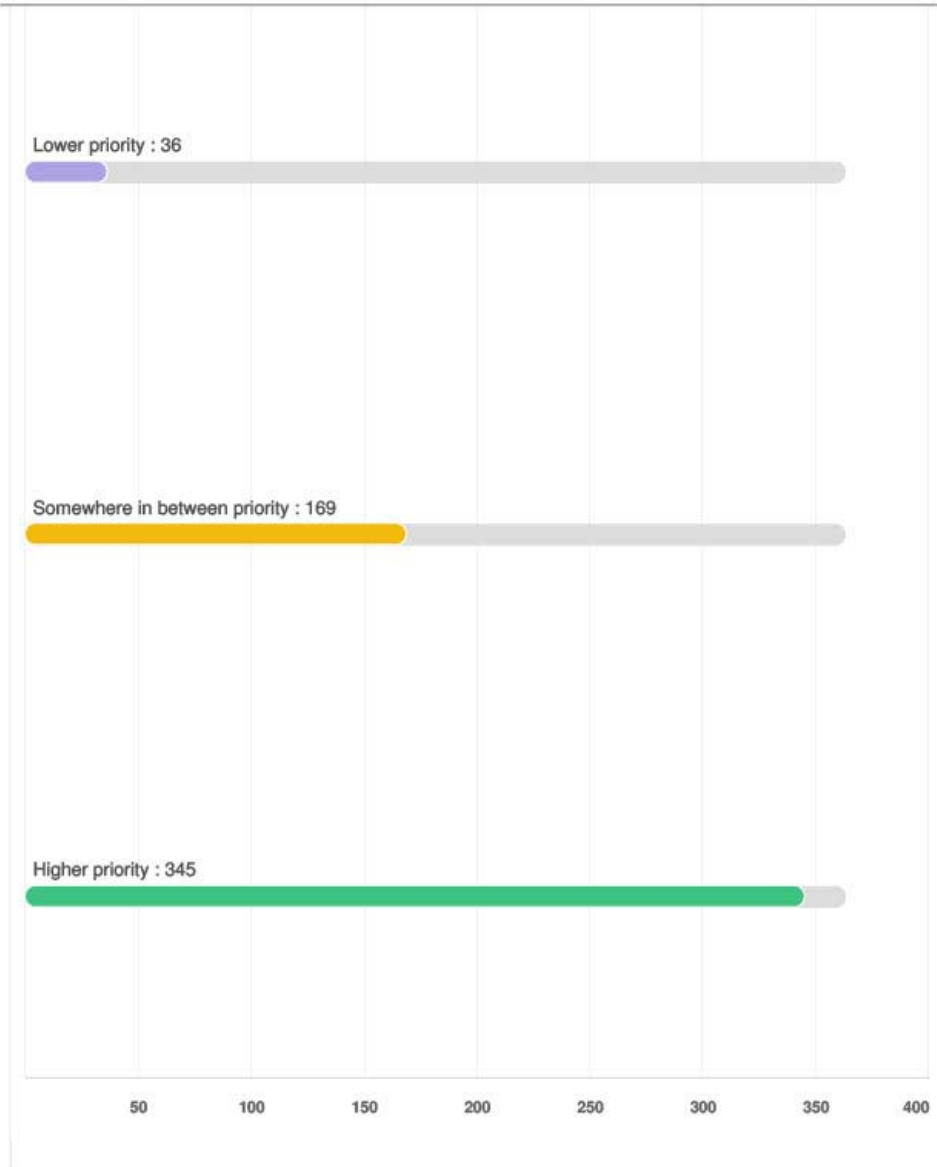




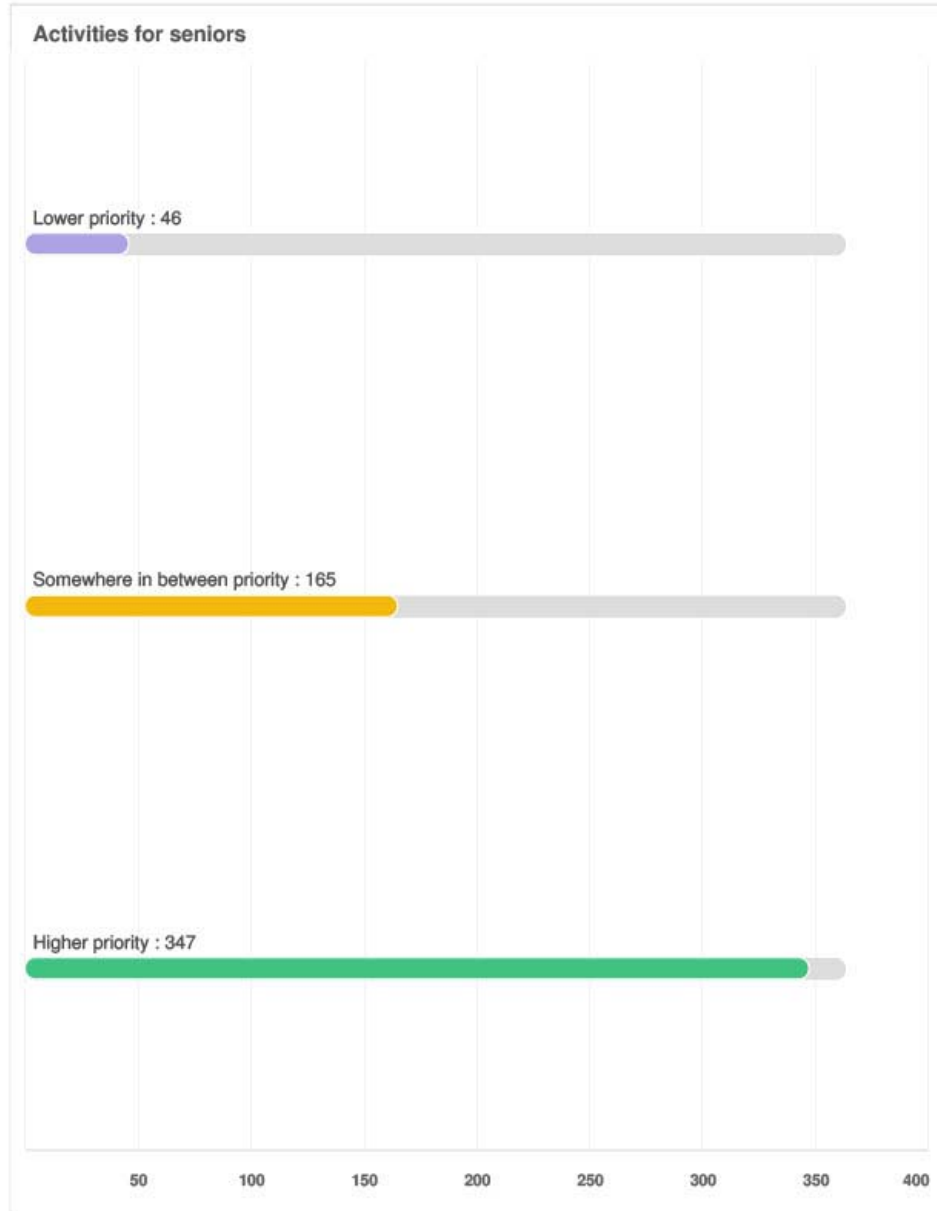


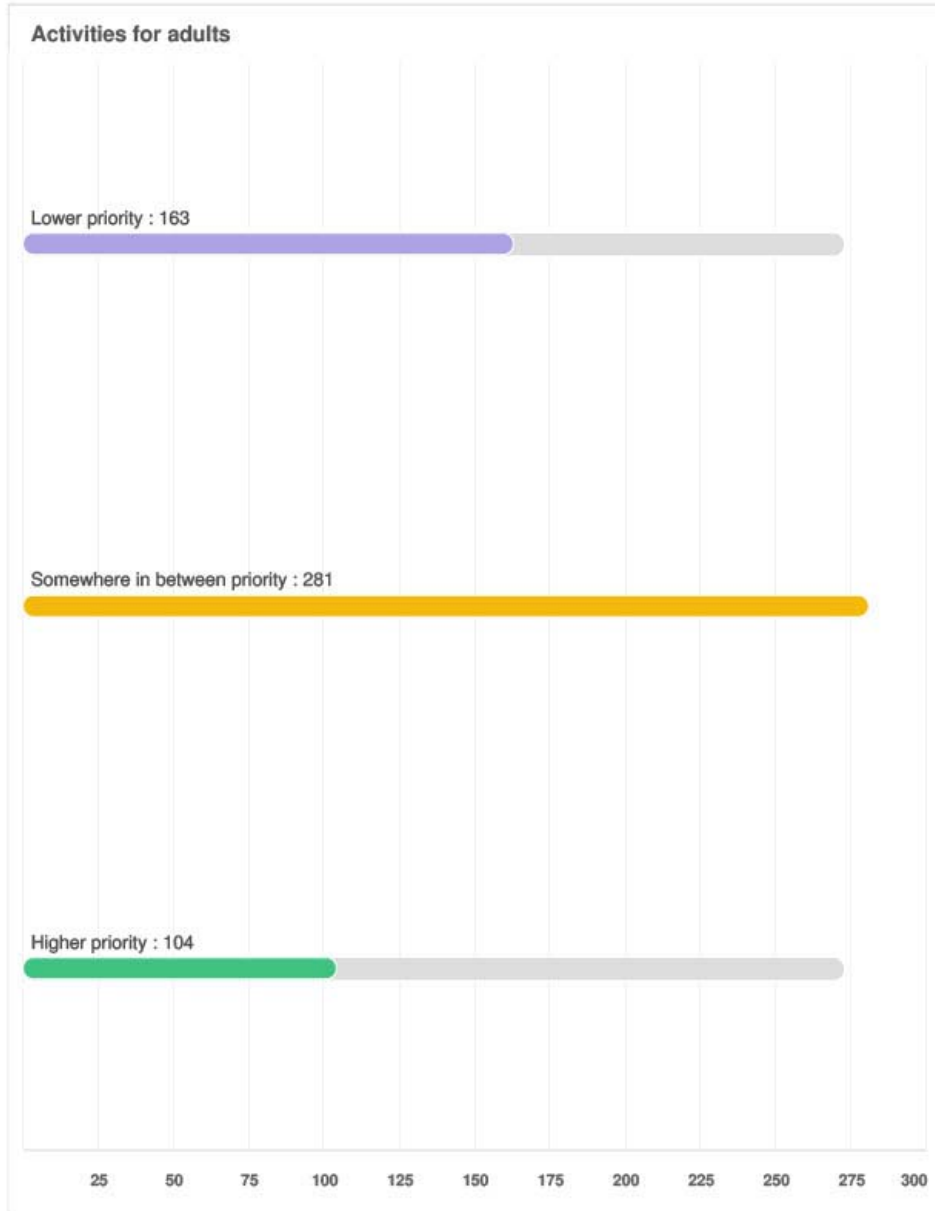
**Q4** | If the City were to prioritize providing space at the Mercer Island Community and Events Center (MICEC) for some types of public uses more than others, which of the following would you recommend it prioritize for the community:

Activities for youth

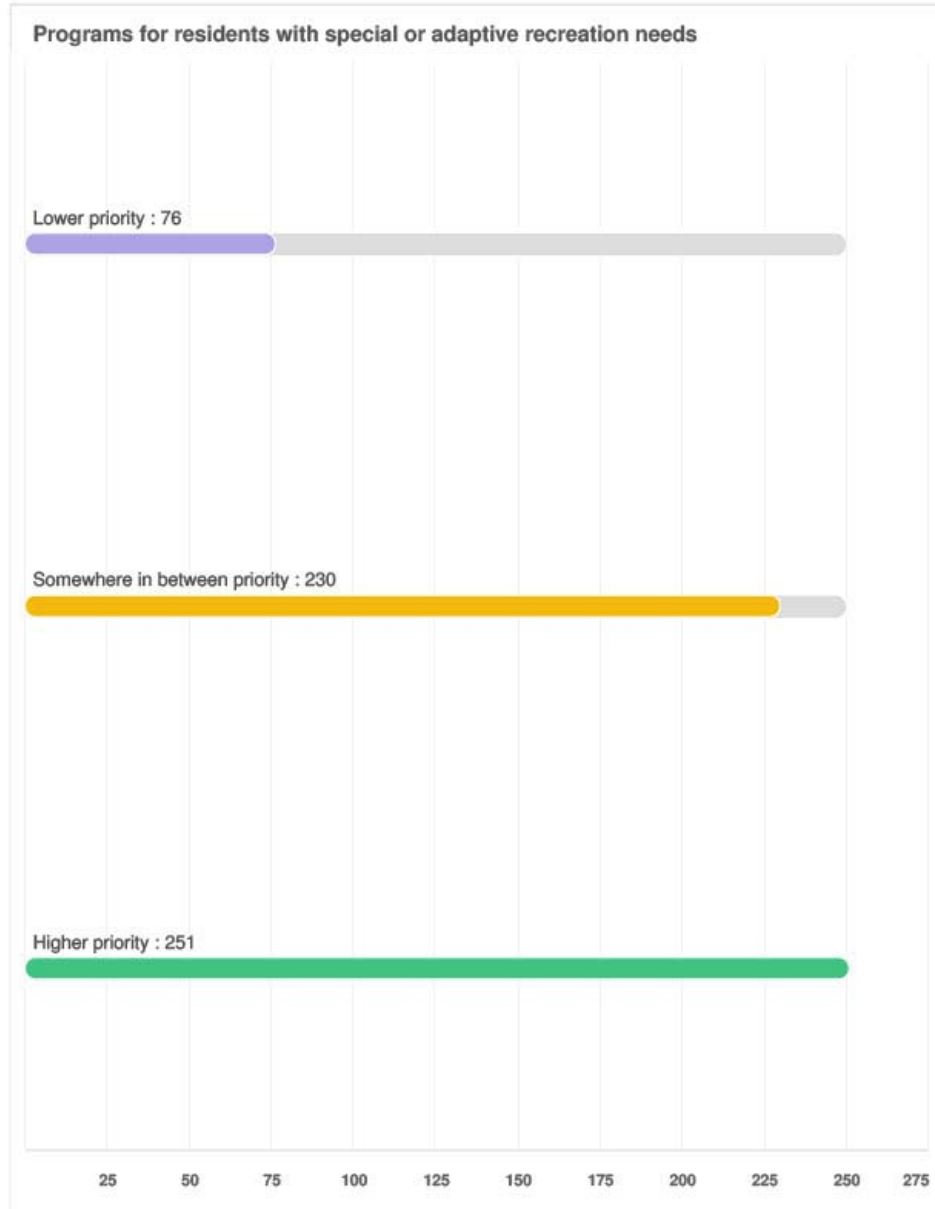


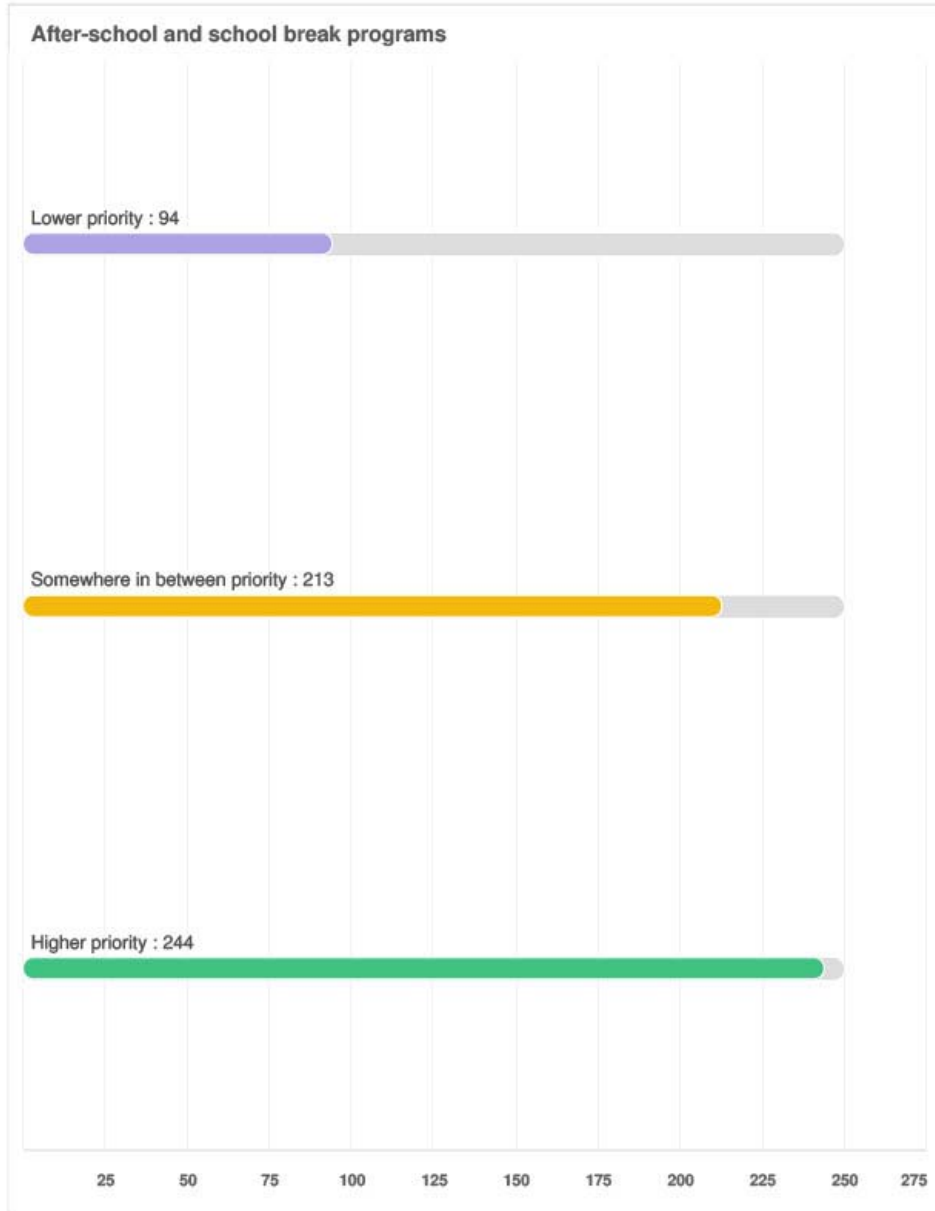
MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021



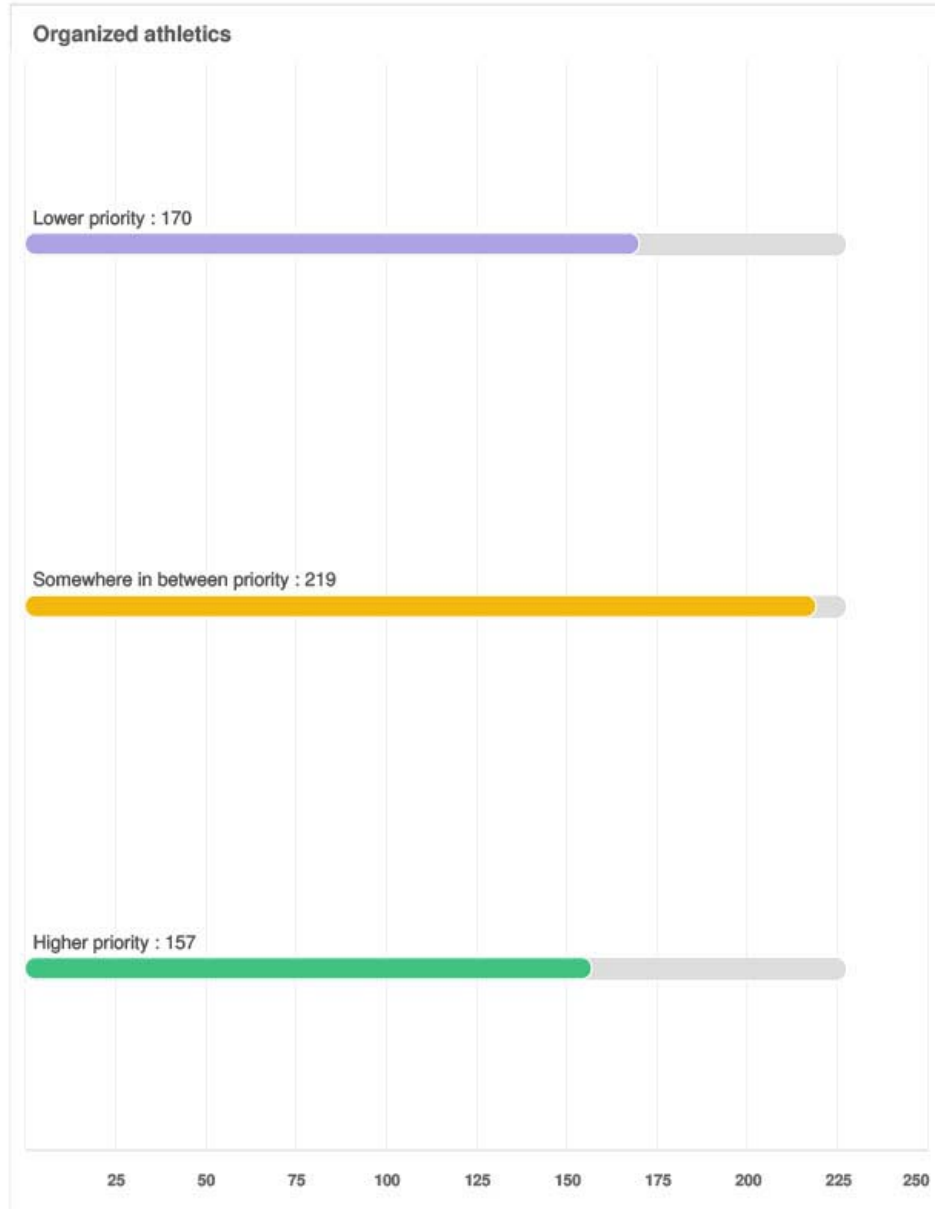


MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

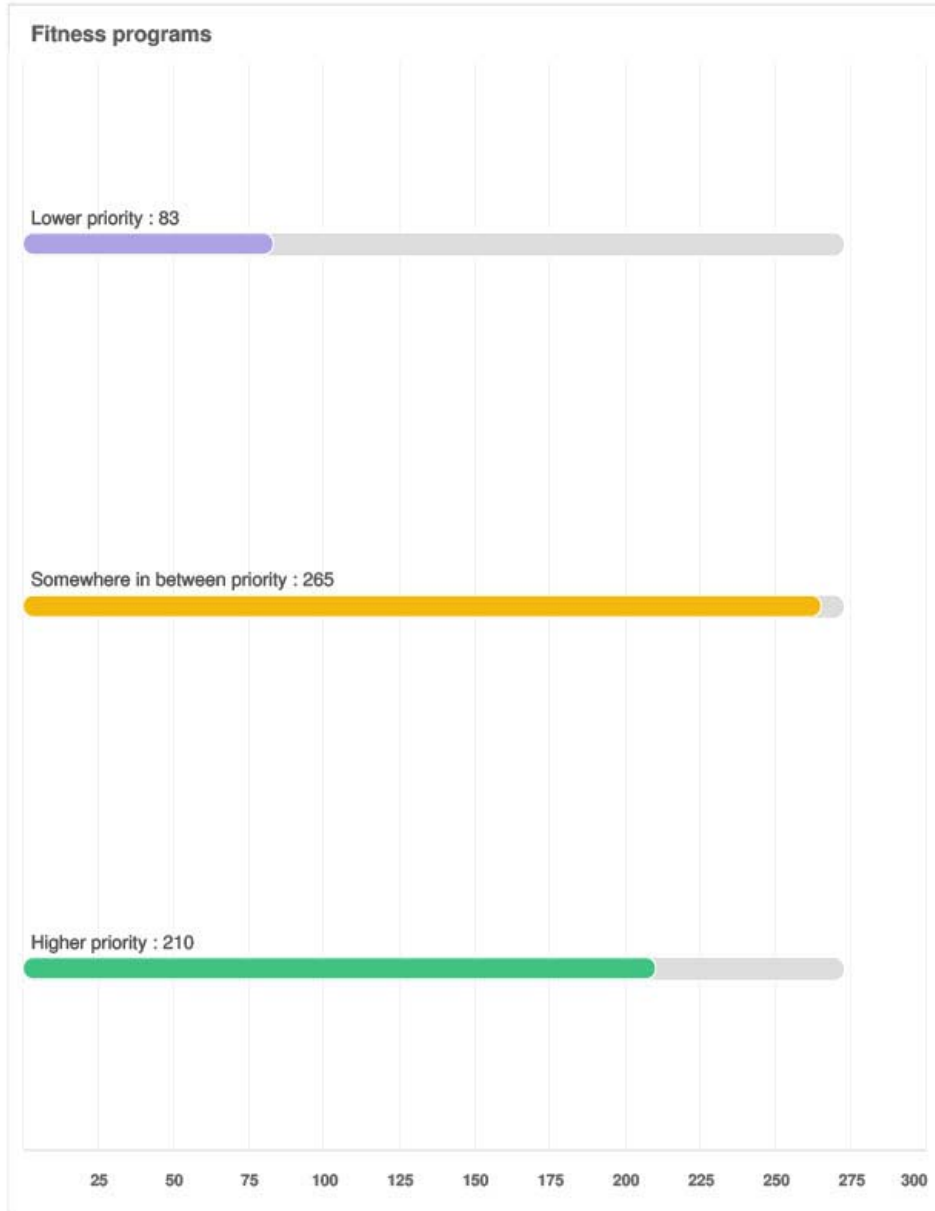




MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021

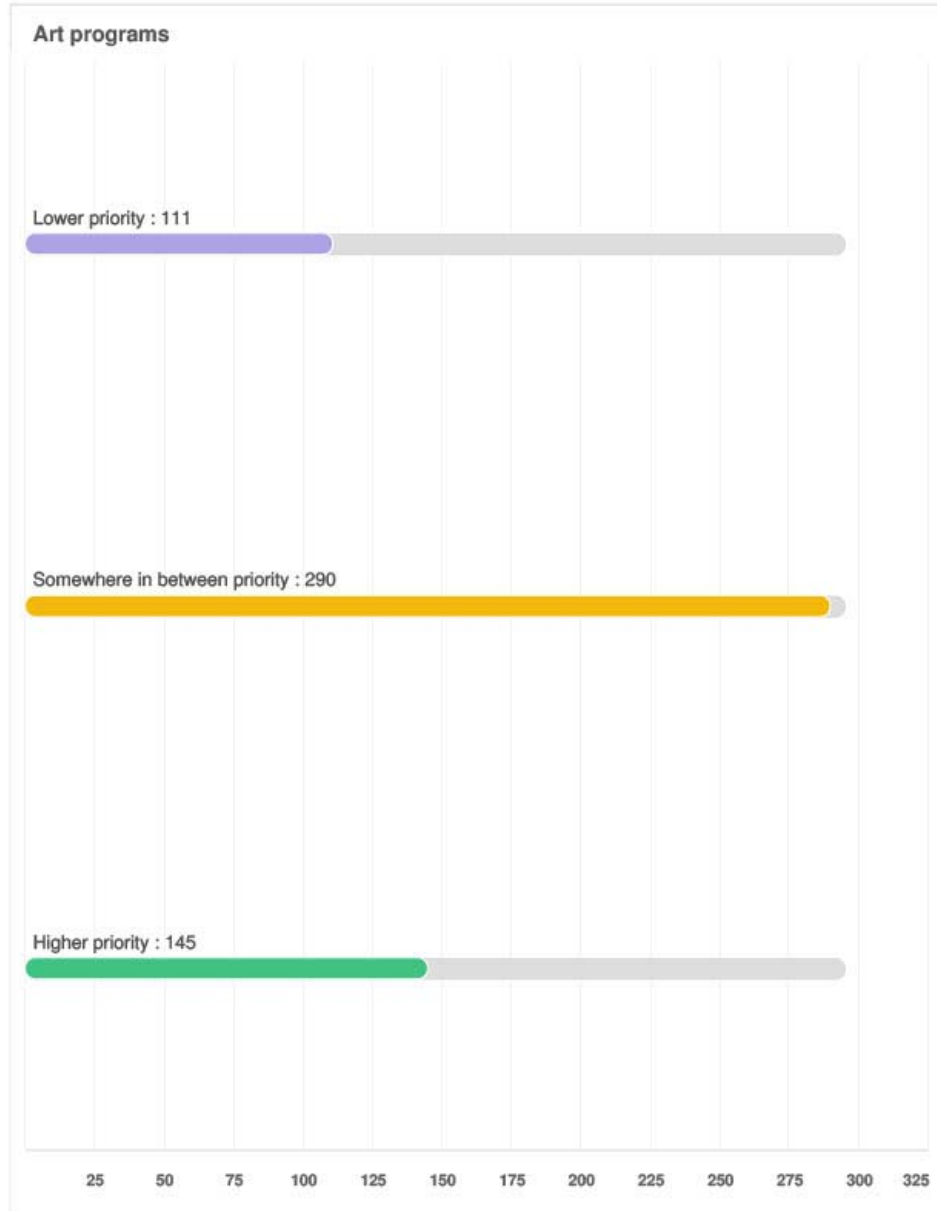


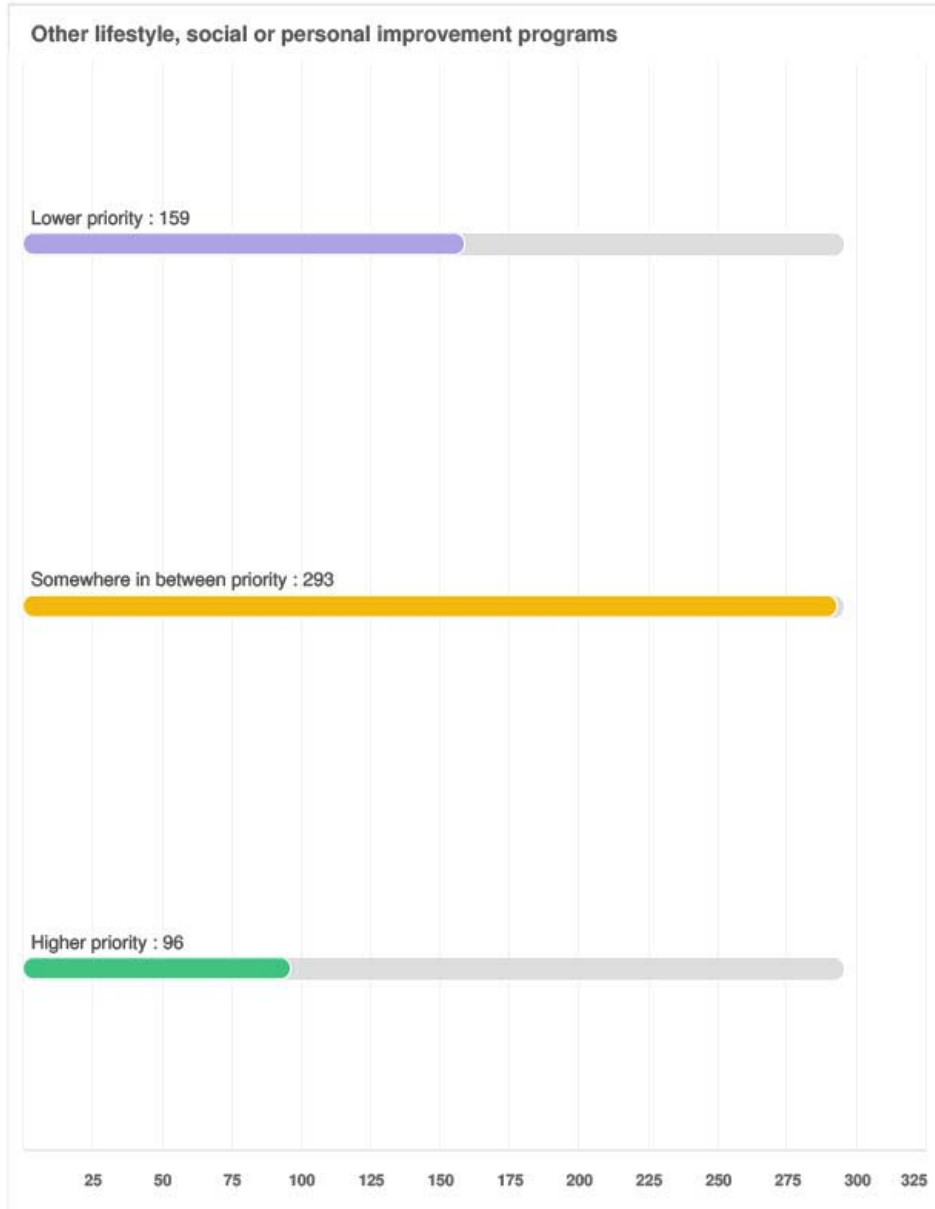






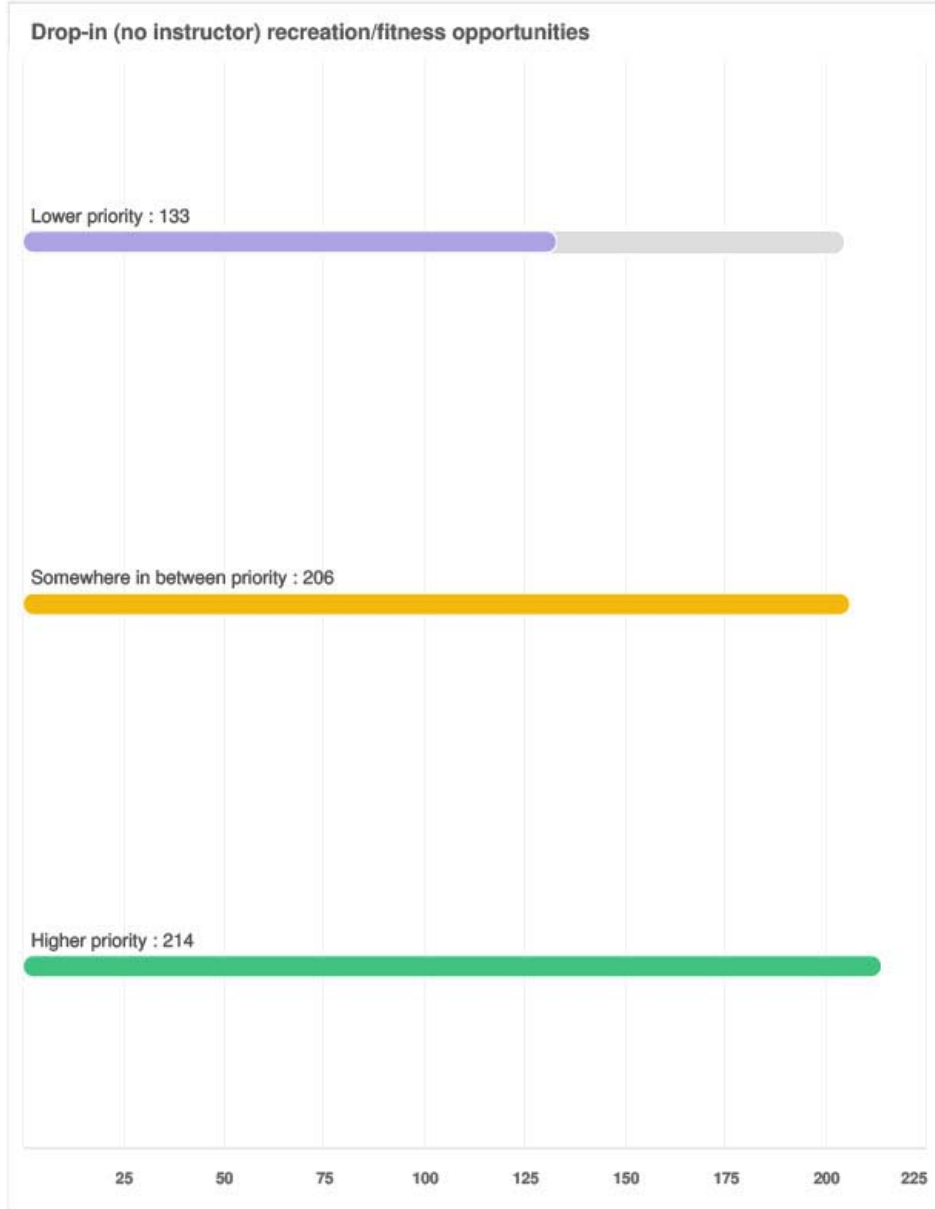
MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021





MICEC Recovery Survey : Survey Report for 05 January 2021 to 16 February 2021





**Q5** Please share with us any other ideas, considerations or input you may have concerning the future delivery of recreation and Mercer Island Community and Events Center programs



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# APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY SURVEY #2



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**To:** Jessi Bon, City Manager  
**From:** Steve Duh, Conservation Technix, Inc.  
**Date:** September 30, 2021  
**Re:** **Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan**  
Community Survey #2 Summary Results

---

Conservation Technix is pleased to present the results of the survey of the general population of the City of Mercer Island that assesses the recreational needs and priorities of the community.

### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In close collaboration with the City of Mercer Island staff and the Parks & Recreation Commission, Conservation Technix developed the 15-question survey.

The survey was mailed to a random sample of 2,500 households within the boundaries of the City of Mercer Island on August 23, 2021. The random sample of addresses was unique to this survey and not the same address list used in the PROS Plan survey from early 2020. Reminder postcards were mailed to the 2,500 households on September 1.

An online version of the survey was also available and posted to the City’s website. The online survey was posted several days after the mail survey was distributed to allow the mail recipients to receive first notice about the survey.

Information about the survey was provided on the City’s website home page and on the Let’s Talk PROS Plan page. It also was promoted via multiple social media postings. The survey was closed on September 17.

Overall, 505 responses were received from the random-sample mail survey (20% response rate), and 824 responses were generated via the online link published on the City’s website. In total, 1,329 survey responses were recorded. These may not have been unique responses given that someone completing the mail survey could also complete the online survey. The data for the mail and online surveys was kept separate.

This report includes findings of community opinions based principally on mailed survey responses. The data is summarized for the mail and online surveys to highlight overall community preferences, with clarifying remarks on response differences between the two datasets.

Although households were randomly chosen to receive the mail survey, respondents were not necessarily representative of all City residents, see age demographics in the table on the following page indicating the higher response rate (as compared to population) from people age 65 and older for the mail survey.



The survey data was compared against the demographic data (e.g., age, location, number of children in the household) to examine if differences existed between the different respondent subgroups.

Age group	Survey Respondents			M.I. Population	
	Mail	Online-only	Combined	Full	Over 20
Under 20	<1%	2%	<2%	25%	--
20-34	5%	4%	4%	12%	<b>16%</b>
35-44	14%	20%	17%	12%	<b>16%</b>
45-54	22%	28%	26%	17%	<b>23%</b>
55-64	19%	23%	21%	14%	<b>19%</b>
65 and older	40%	23%	30%	20%	<b>27%</b>
Total	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>	100%	<b>100%</b>

The survey summary on the following pages identifies variations in responses per question, if such variations existed and were significant between subgroups.

Percentages in the report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

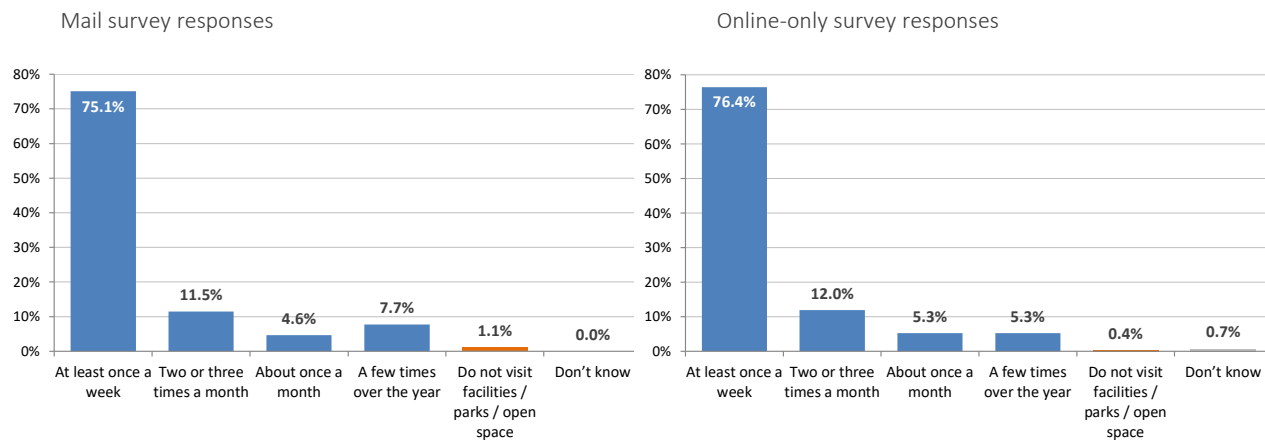
## FULL RESULTS

### How often do residents use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities?

Respondents were asked how often they, or members of their household, visited a Mercer Island Parks & Recreation park, recreation facility, or open space area. Visitation is high, with 75% of mail survey respondents visiting at least once a week and another 16% visiting one to three times per month. Only 7% of respondents visit just a few times per year. Very few (1%) did not visit a park last year. Responses about visitation were nearly identical in the online-only survey.

As compared to other subgroups, adults between 35 and 54 are the most frequent users of Mercer Island parks. Respondents of households with children also visit significantly more frequently than those without children. No significant differences in park visitation exist between respondents living in different areas of Mercer Island.

1. How often do you visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces?

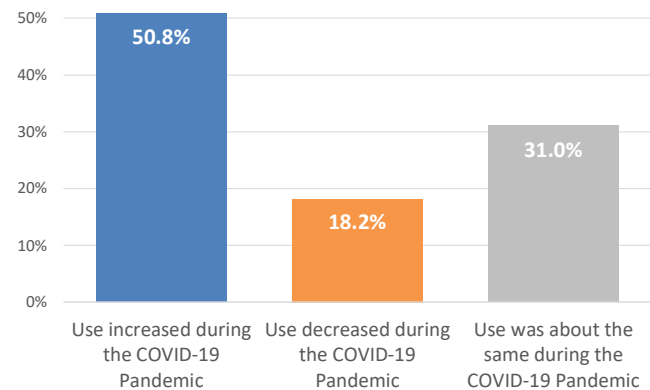


### How has resident usage changed due to the COVID pandemic?

Half of all respondents (51%) indicated an increase in usage of parks, trails, and open space areas since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately one in five respondents (18%) said their usage decreased due to the pandemic. Approximately one-third noted their usage of parks, trails and open space has been the same. The mail survey and online-only survey responses were similar.

As compared to other subgroups, respondents between 20 and 34 noted slightly increased usage of parks, trails, and open space areas during the pandemic than other age groups. Respondents of households with two children also noted slightly increased usage as compared to other household types. No significant differences in park usage due to the pandemic were noted between respondents living in different areas of Mercer Island.

3. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your use of Mercer Island parks, trails and open space?

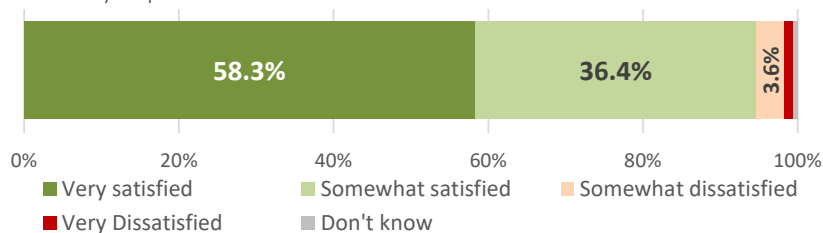


### Are residents satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation?

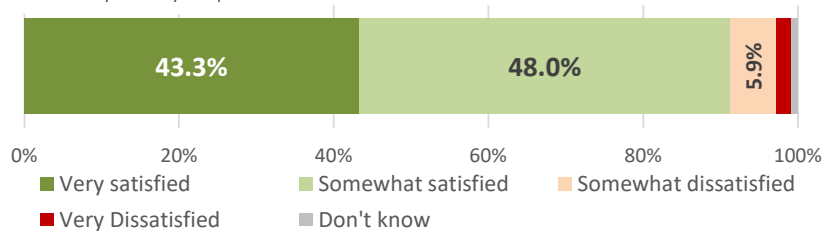
A large majority of respondents are somewhat to very satisfied with the value they receive from Mercer Island Parks & Recreation for parks, facilities, and open space areas (95% for the mail survey and 91% in the online-only survey). However, one in twenty respondents (5%) is either somewhat or very dissatisfied. This question was also re-tested from the 2020 survey to see if community sentiment has shifted over the past 18 months; the responses to both the mail survey and the online survey were nearly identical to that of the responses from the 2020 survey. Also, the online-only survey respondents were slightly less satisfied than mail survey respondents, with more than a 10 point difference in being ‘somewhat satisfied’ with the City’s facilities, parks or open spaces. There were no significant differences in levels of satisfaction between subgroups.

2. Rate your household’s overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, or open spaces.

Mail survey responses



Online-only survey responses



### What do residents see as the most needed improvements for parks, trails, and open space?

In an effort to further distinguish community priorities from those noted in the 2020 community survey, respondents were provided a range of options related to specific potential improvements to the Mercer Island park system and were asked to select their top three choices.

A strong number of respondents (44%) noted that connecting gaps in the trail system was a top priority, which was also 13 points higher than the next highest ranked option provided. Between one-quarter and one-third of respondents identified as the next top three options the following priorities: expanding maintenance and restoration of open space (31%), repairing or upgrading waterfront areas (29%), and improving restroom facilities (25%). Fewer than one in five respondents selected the remaining options. With the write-in ‘other’ option provided, 409 respondents provided comments, and the most common responses among these included:

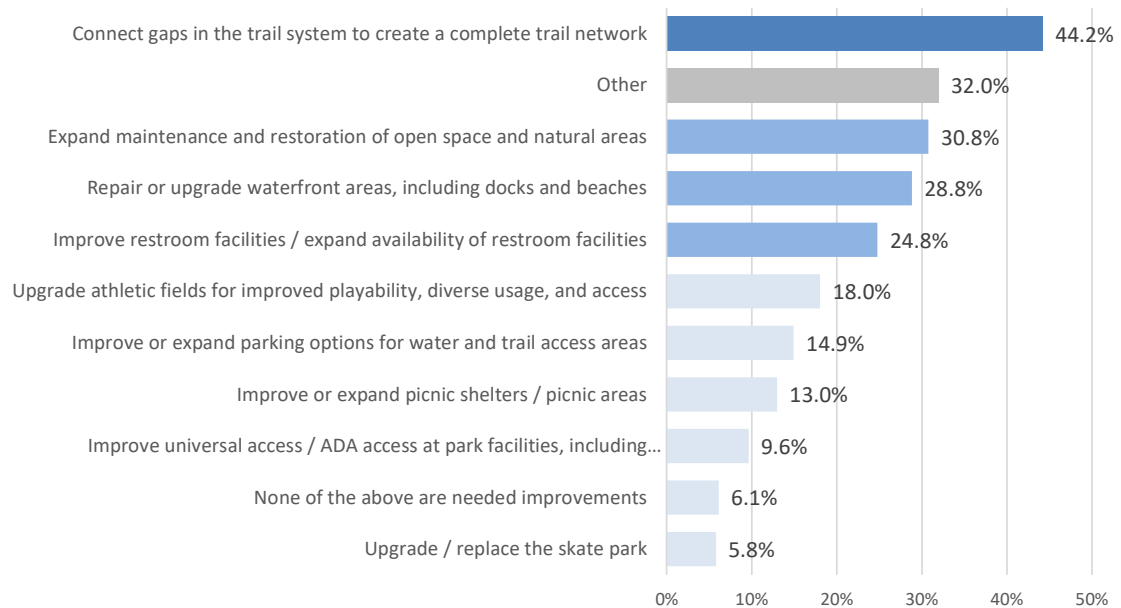
- Add pickleball courts; convert tennis and/or basketball courts to pickleball
- Enhance maintenance, to include playground replacements, trail maintenance, pathway repaving and invasive plant management
- Off-leash dog management and leash law enforcement

- Enhanced trash management, such as adding more trash cans and more frequent waste hauling
- Security and safety management, including managing for homeless encampments

Respondents to the mail survey were more favorable toward the top three most needed improvements by at least 10 points over those from the online-only survey. Respondents to the online survey were more strongly in favor of upgrading athletic fields (23% for online-only versus 10% for mail responses).

Respondents living in the southern portion of the island noted a slightly stronger interest in upgrading athletic fields. Respondents with children in the household more strongly supported the following improvements: improved picnic areas, improved restrooms, improved universal access, upgraded athletic fields, and upgraded skate park. Respondents over 65 years of age noted a stronger interest in expanded maintenance and restoration of open space, while those between 20 and 44 years of age more strongly supported improved picnic areas and improved universal access.

4. What do you think are the most needed improvements to the current City of Mercer Island parks system, including trails, and open space areas? Select UP TO 3 items.



### Which outdoor recreation amenities are important to residents' households?

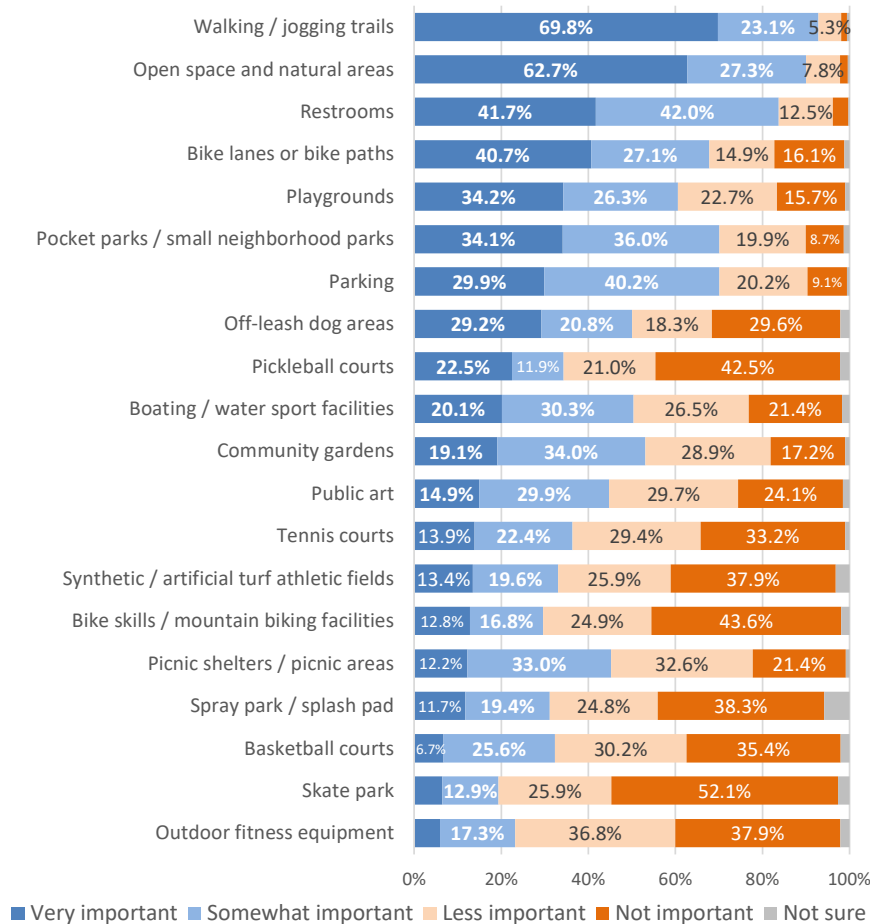
The survey provided a list of outdoor recreation amenities and asked respondents to identify those amenities that are important to their household, using a scale of very important to not important. Strong majorities of respondents indicated an interest in walking or jogging trails (93% very or somewhat important) and open space and natural areas (90% very or somewhat important). A second tier of amenities of strong interest include restrooms (84% very or somewhat important), bike lanes (68% very or somewhat important), pocket parks (70% very or somewhat important), parking (70% very or somewhat important) and playgrounds (61% very or somewhat important). Additionally, community gardens, boating and water sport facilities and off-leash dog areas were identified as either very or somewhat important by approximately half of respondents.

Respondents to the online-only survey were more likely than respondents to the mail survey to indicate pickleball courts as an important amenity (30% for online-only versus 7% for mail responses). Respondents to the mail survey noted a

strong level of importance of walking/jogging trails and open space/natural areas by more than 12 points over those from the online-only survey.

Respondents with two or more children in their household placed a slightly higher level of importance on restrooms, bike lanes, splash pad, bike skills area, and turf sport fields. In addition, respondents with children and those between 20 and 44 years of age noted a slightly higher level of importance for playgrounds and pocket parks. Respondents without children and those between 55 and 64 years of age indicated a higher level of importance for pickleball courts. Also, a substantial portion of the non-resident respondents (93%) noted the importance of pickleball courts. Respondents living in the northern portion of the island placed a higher level of importance on picnic areas than other locations.

5. How important are each of the following parks, trails or open space amenities to your household?



Respondents were asked to use the same list of amenities to also select their top three amenities, in an effort to identify community priorities. Four of the top five amenities selected aligned with the top tier responses based on the sum of very and somewhat important responses; these included walking/jogging trails (59%), open space and natural areas (33%), restrooms (27%) and playgrounds (20%). Approximately one in five respondents noted bike lanes (22%), pickleball courts (19%) and off-leash dog areas (18%) as important to their household. Also, local interest in pickleball courts outpaced support for any other field or court sport facility by at least a factor of two.

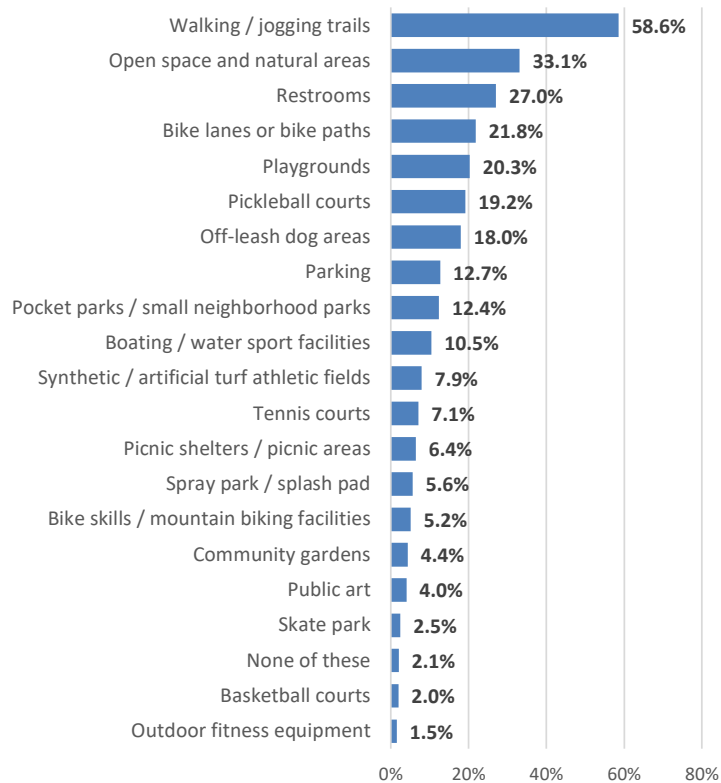
## City of Mercer Island

### PROS Plan: Survey #2 Summary Results

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In reviewing the top five amenities between the mail and online-only survey response, four of the top five amenities identified were the same. Mail survey respondents included bike lanes and paths within the grouping of top five, and online-only respondents included pickleball courts in the top five.

6. Using the same list again, select UP TO THREE amenities from the list that are the most important to you and your household.

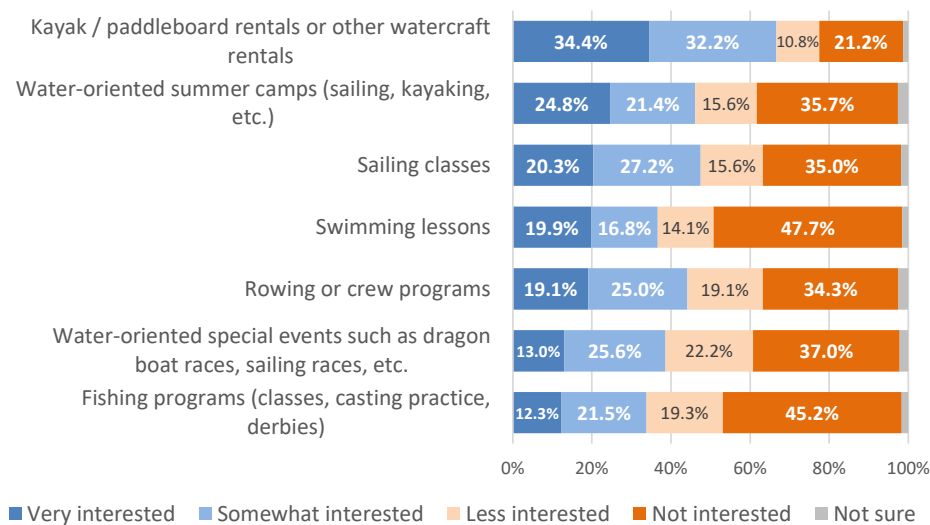


**Which water-oriented programs and activities are of interest to residents’ households?**

The survey asked respondents to identify their level of interest in a variety of water-oriented activities and programs. A majority of respondents (67%) were either very or somewhat interested in access to kayak or paddleboard rentals. None of the other options listed secured a majority of respondents’ interest; however, strong responses were noted for water-oriented summer camps (46%), sailing classes (47%), and rowing or crew programs (44%). Interest in fishing programs (33%) was the weakest of the options listed. Online-only survey respondents were ‘very interested’ in water-oriented summer camps by a larger degree than those from the mail survey (27% for online-only versus 21% for mail responses), which is likely due to the higher percentage of households with children responding to the online-only survey.

Households with children indicated stronger interest in all of the water-oriented program and activity options over households without children, with the strongest support for swimming classes (25 points higher on average) and water-oriented summer classes (13 points higher on average). Respondents living in the northern portion of the island indicated a slightly stronger interest in swimming lessons. Those living in the central portion of the island indicated a slightly higher interest for kayak and paddleboard rental opportunities.

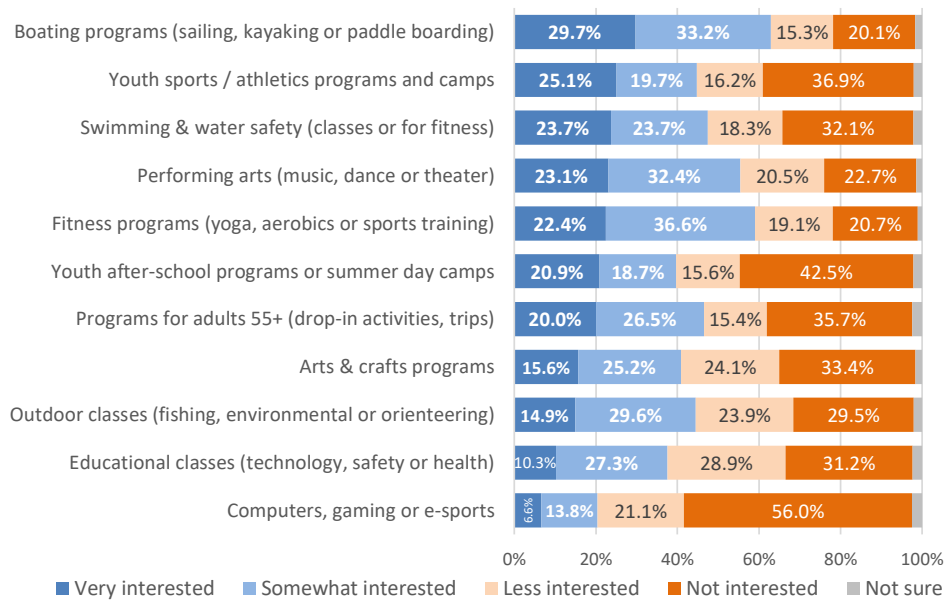
7. Indicate your household’s interest in participating in the following aquatic programs and activities.



**What recreation options are of interest to residents' households?**

The survey asked respondents which types of recreation programs, classes, and activities their household might have interest in. Similar to the responses on water-oriented recreation, a majority of respondents (63%) were either very or somewhat interested in boating programs. A majority of respondents also indicated interest in fitness programs (59%) and performing arts (55%). In addition, at least two in five respondents indicated interest in programs for adults 55+ (47%), youth sports camps (45%), outdoor classes (45%), and arts & crafts programs (41%).

8. Indicate your household's interest in participating in the following recreation programs and activities.



Online-only survey respondents were 'very interested' in outdoor classes (16%) and youth sports (28%) by a slightly larger degree than those from the mail survey. Respondents to the mail survey were 'very interested' in fitness programs (26%) to a slighter larger degree.

Respondents living in the northern portion of the island indicated slightly stronger interest for swimming classes and fitness programs. Respondents with children in the household and those between 35 and 54 years of age had more interest for youth-oriented recreation options including youth sports, after-school programs, educational programs and outdoor camps. Respondents without children noted stronger interest for fitness programs and programs for 55+ adults. Respondents to the mail survey who were over 45 years of age indicated stronger interest for performing arts.



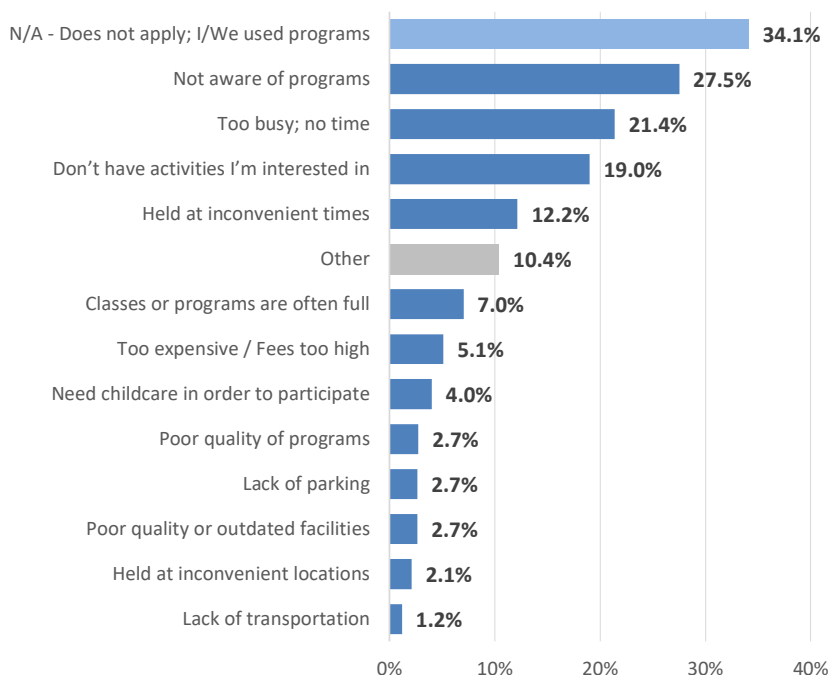
### What are residents’ reasons for not participating in City recreation programs?

A majority of respondents (34%) indicated that the question about the reasons for not participating in recreation programs does not apply and that they use recreation programs. In terms of other feedback, two of the top three responses relate to conditions the City might be able to address in the future: being not aware of programs (28%) and not having activities of interest (19%) to respondents. Approximately one in five respondents (21%) indicated that they were too busy to participate in programs. Of the other options to choose, none were noted as barriers by more than 7% of respondents, with the exception of programs being held at inconvenient times (12%). Respondents to the online-only survey indicated the lack of childcare (5%) and programs being held at inconvenient times (14%) by a slightly larger degree than those from the mail survey.

Responses to the write-in option for ‘other’ included several comments about having recently moved to Mercer Island, having a lack of interest, utilizing private facilities, or references to age or physical abilities.

Respondents with children in the household indicated that a need for childcare and classes being full as limitations to participating in programs more often. No other significant difference were noted between other subgroups.

9. Prior to COVID-19, if your household did not often participate in or utilize recreation programs or activities offered by the City of Mercer Island, what are the reasons?  
 CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

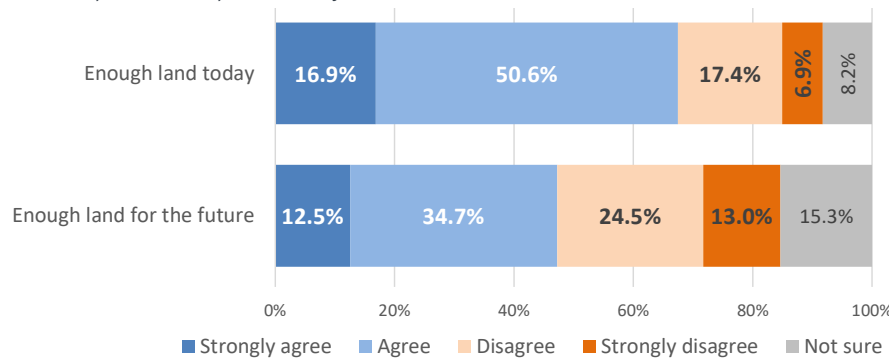


**What are residents’ sentiment and priorities regarding the supply of parkland?**

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with two statements about the supply of parks, trails, and open space areas and whether there is enough land today and enough for the future. A strong majority of respondents (68%) indicated agreement that there is enough park and open space land today on Mercer Island. Approximately one-quarter of respondents (24%) disagree that enough land exists today for parks and open space. Considering the sentiment about the supply of park and open space land for the future, fewer than half of respondents (47%) feel there is enough land, which is a 20 point decrease from sentiment about the supply of parkland today. More than two-thirds of respondents (37%) disagree that there will be enough parklands for the future. The percentage of ‘not sure’ responses regarding future sentiment doubled from that of having enough parkland today. No significant differences were noted between the mail survey and online-only survey responses.

Respondents over 55 years of age, those with three or more children, or those living in the northern portion of the city indicated a stronger sentiment about disagreeing with the statement that Mercer Island has enough parkland for the future. No other significant differences were noted between the subgroup responses.

10. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: *The City of Mercer Island has enough land for parks, trails and open space to meet community needs today and in the future.*

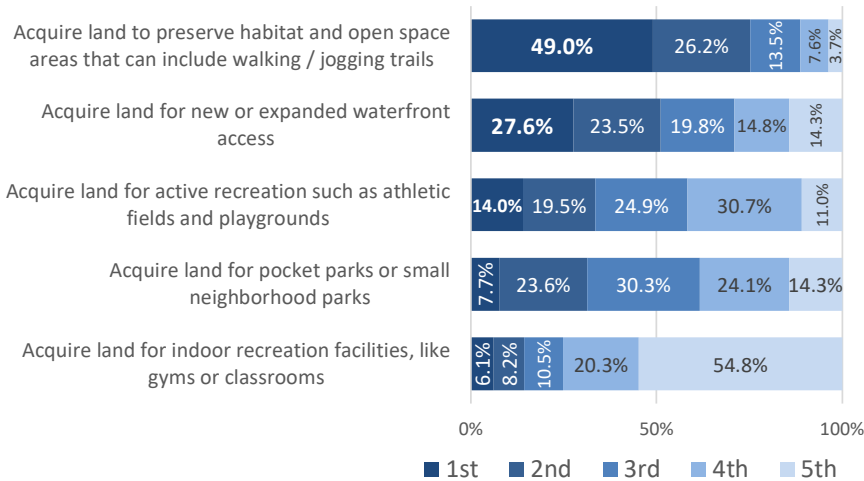


In a follow-up question, respondents were asked to prioritize in a forced-rank question which types of parkland acquisitions should be a priority if the City were to acquire additional parkland. Nearly half of respondents (49%) prioritized the acquisition of land to preserve habitat and open space as their top choice, and 75% of respondents indicated this option as either their first or second priority in rank order. Acquiring land for waterfront access was ranked as the second highest priority, with 51% of respondents indicating this option as either their first or second priority.

The priority rankings indicated by the responses to the mail survey and the online-only survey were listed in the same order; however, respondents to the mail survey indicated slightly greater strength in priority for acquiring land to preserve habitat and open space (84% for mail versus 70% for online-only responses as first choice priority).

Respondents between 35 and 44 years of age and households with two or more children indicated that acquiring land for waterfront access and for active recreation uses was a higher priority than other household types. Respondents over 55 years of age and households without children indicated that acquiring land to preserve habitat and open space was a higher priority than others.

11. If the City of Mercer Island were to acquire additional park land, please rank your land acquisition priorities from 1st (highest priority) to 5th (lowest priority). Select each priority only once.



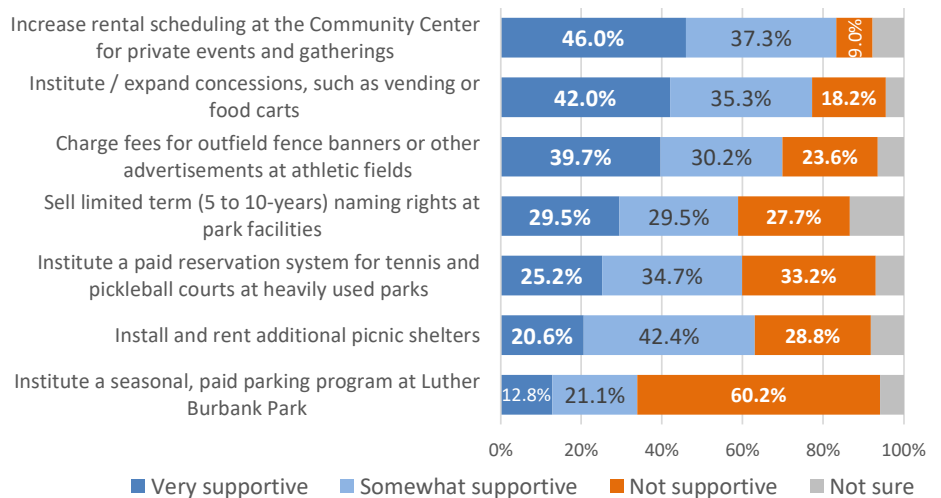
**What revenue generating options would residents support?**

The survey asked respondents their level of support from a list of potential revenue generating options. A majority of respondents were either very or somewhat supportive of every option listed, except for a paid parking program at Luther Burbank Park. A strong majority of respondents were either very or somewhat supportive of increasing rental scheduling at the Community Center (83%), instituting or expanding concessions options (77%), and charging fees for outfield fence banners or advertisements (70%). Significantly fewer respondents (34%) were supportive of implementing a paid parking program at Luther Burbank Park, with 60% of respondents being not supportive. No significant differences were noted between the mail survey and online-only survey responses.

Households with children were more supportive of all of the potential revenue options compared to households without children, with at least a 15 point difference in responses in support of outfield, selling naming rights, and concessions.

Those living in the northern portion of the city were slightly more favorable toward outfield banners than other parts of the City.

12. The City of Mercer Island is exploring options to increase revenue to support the delivery of parks and recreation services. How would you rate your level of support for each of the following potential suggestions?





### What one improvement would residents make to Mercer Island’s parks, trails or open space?

A closing question on the survey was open-ended for write-in responses, and the question asked “If you wanted the City of Mercer Island to do just one thing to improve parks, trails, and/or open space, what would it be?” In all, 802 write-in responses were provided. The most frequently noted remarks include the following:

- Improve maintenance of existing parks, trails, and open space, including more frequent trash removal, weed and invasive plant management and eliminating the use of certain pesticides/herbicides
- Create more trail connections and linkages, including improved trail safety and separating bike and pedestrian uses
- Provide pickleball
- Acquire additional open space and provide additional beach or waterfront access, including street end improvements
- Provide additional amenities, such as more/larger playgrounds, splash pads and restrooms
- Replace the Luther Burbank Park dock
- Provide additional off-leash parks and trails, and also enforce leash laws
- Upgrade sport fields

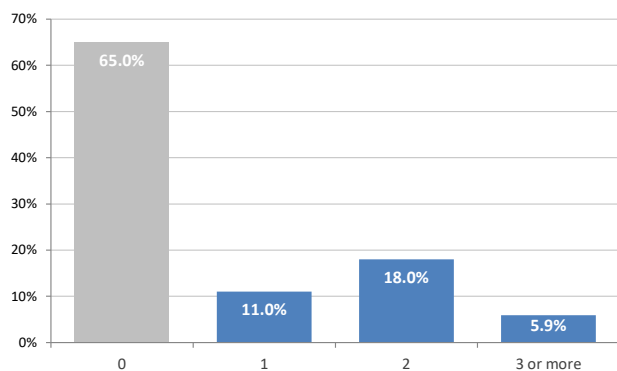
The full list of write-in comments is on file with the Parks & Recreation Department.

## Demographics

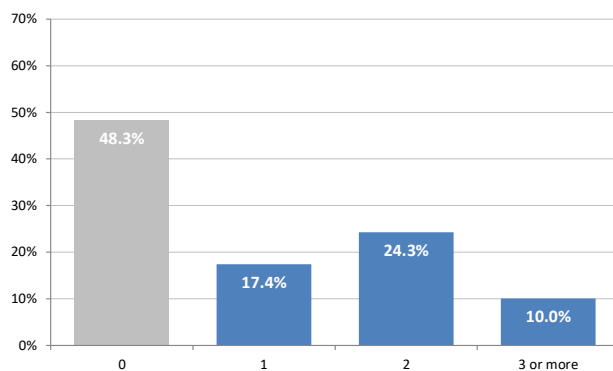
### Number of Children in Household

Nearly seven in ten respondents to the mail survey (65%) have no children in their household. These households tended to include older adults (over age 55). The remaining 35% of households have one (11%), two (18%), or three or more (6%) children in the home. These responses from the random-sample mail survey are nearly identical to that of the 2020 survey. Online-only respondents were 16% more likely to have children at home than mail survey respondents.

Mail survey responses



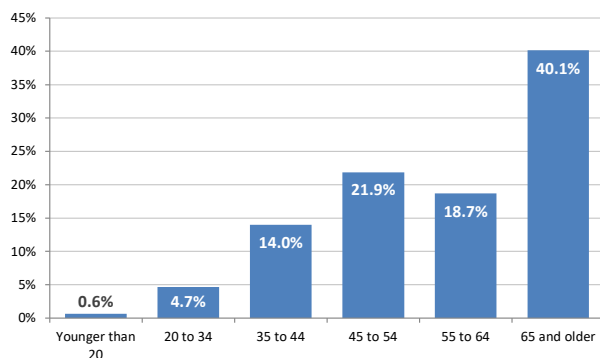
Online-only survey responses



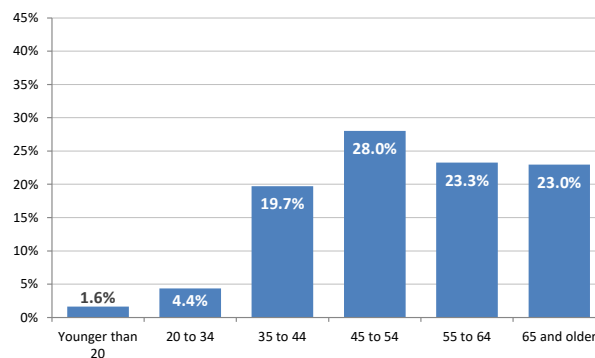
### Age

Nearly 40% of respondents to the mail survey were over 65 years of age. Another 19% were between 55 and 64, while 22% were 45 to 54. There were few responses from younger residents, 14% of responses were from people 35 to 44 and 5% were from those under 35 years of age. Respondents to the online-only survey were predominately 45-64 years old (51%), followed by 35-44 (20%), with fewer residents over 65 responding.

Mail survey responses

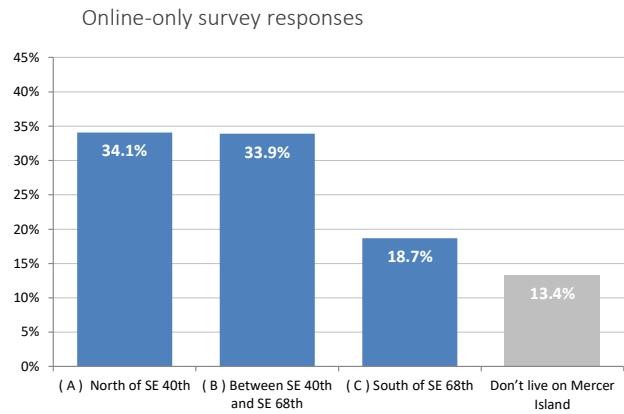
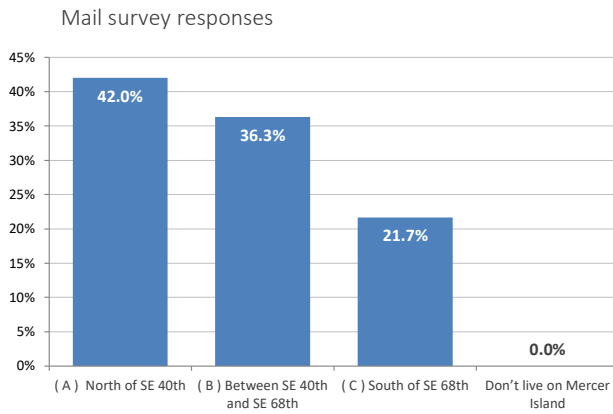


Online-only survey responses

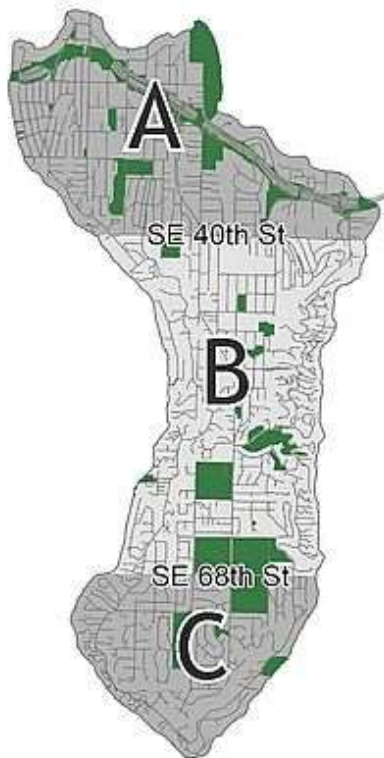


**Location of Residence**

Approximately 42% of mail survey respondents live on the northern part of the island (north of SE 40<sup>th</sup> Street). Another 36% respondents live between SE 40<sup>th</sup> and SE 68<sup>th</sup> Street. The remainder of respondents live south of SE 68<sup>th</sup> (22%). No respondents to the mail survey live outside of the City of Mercer Island. As with the household composition statistics, the random-sample mail survey responses were nearly identical to those of the 2020 survey. Respondents to the online-only survey were similarly distributed across the island. However, 13% of online-only respondents indicated that they do not live on Mercer Island.



Location Map (for reference)



## ATTACHMENT 1. SURVEY INSTRUMENT



# City of Mercer Island

## 2021 Community Survey on Parks and Recreation

### Dear Mercer Island Resident:

The City of Mercer Island began updating the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan in early 2020. The PROS Plan will help inform parks and recreation priorities for the next 6 to 10 years. Work on the PROS Plan was suspended in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and resumed in early 2021. For more information on the PROS Plan, please visit the Mercer Island Let's Talk page (<https://letstalk.mercergov.org/miprosplan>).


In early 2020, the City facilitated a community survey on parks and recreation and now is conducting a second PROS Plan survey to better understand local priorities for improvements to the parks system. We understand that COVID-19 may have impacted your ability to visit parks and trails this past year. We ask that you consider the future orientation of the parks plan as you evaluate needs and priorities for the parks and recreation system. Your opinions are important to the City.



You can return the survey in the reply-ready envelope provided or with this QR code:

1. How often do you or members of your household visit or use Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities (Community Center, parks, trails or open space)?
  - At least once a week
  - Two or three times a month
  - About once a month
  - A few times over the year
  - Do not visit facilities / parks / open space
  - Don't know
2. Rate your household's overall satisfaction with Mercer Island Parks & Recreation facilities, parks, trails and open space.
  - Very satisfied
  - Somewhat satisfied
  - Somewhat dissatisfied
  - Very dissatisfied
  - Don't know
3. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted your use of Mercer Island parks, trails and open space?
  - Use increased during the COVID-19 Pandemic
  - Use decreased during the COVID-19 Pandemic
  - Use was about the same during the COVID-19 Pandemic
4. What do you think are the most needed improvements to the current City of Mercer Island parks system, including trails and open space areas? Select UP TO 3 items. (Responses with more than three items selected will not be recorded.)
  - Improve or expand picnic shelters / picnic areas
  - Improve or expand parking options for water and trail access areas
  - Improve restroom facilities / expand availability of restroom facilities
  - Improve universal access / ADA access at park facilities, including playground upgrades
  - Repair or upgrade waterfront areas, including docks and beaches
  - Upgrade athletic fields for improved playability, diverse usage and access
  - Connect gaps in the trail system to create a complete trail network
  - Upgrade / replace the skate park
  - Expand maintenance and restoration of open space and natural areas
  - None of the above are needed improvements
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Take this survey online using the link below or the QR code:**  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MercerIslandPROS>  
 Or send it back in the reply-ready envelope provided. **Thank you in advance for participating!**



**5. How important are each of the following parks, trails or open space amenities to your household? Then, Select UP TO THREE amenities from the list that are the most important to you and your household.**

	Very important	Somewhat important	Less important	Not important	Not sure	TOP 3 Priorities
Picnic shelters / picnic areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Walking / jogging trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open space and natural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pickleball courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Synthetic / artificial turf athletic fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tennis courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pocket parks / small neighborhood parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike skills / mountain biking facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skate park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike lanes or bike paths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor fitness equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spray park / splash pad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Off-leash dog areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public art	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boating / water sport facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community gardens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**6. Indicate your household's interest in participating in the following aquatic programs and activities.**

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Less interested	Not interested	Not sure
Swimming lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sailing classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kayak / paddleboard rentals or other watercraft rentals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fishing programs (classes, casting practice, derbies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water-oriented special events such as dragon boat races, sailing races, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water-oriented summer camps (sailing, kayaking, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rowing or crew programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





## Community Survey on Parks and Recreation Preferences

7. Indicate your household's interest in participating in the following recreation programs and activities.

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Less interested	Not interested	Not sure
Swimming & water safety (classes or for fitness)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boating programs (sailing, kayaking or paddle boarding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outdoor classes (fishing, environmental or orienteering)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational classes (technology, safety or health)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performing arts (music, dance or theater)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs for adults 55+ (drop-in activities, trips)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fitness programs (yoga, aerobics or sports training)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth after-school programs or summer day camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arts & crafts programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth sports / athletics programs and camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computers, gaming or e-sports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Prior to COVID-19, if your household did not often participate in or utilize recreation programs or activities offered by the City of Mercer Island, what are the reasons? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> N/A - Does not apply; I/We used programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Classes or programs are often full     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not aware of programs                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Need childcare in order to participate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have activities I'm interested in  | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of parking                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor quality of programs                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of transportation                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor quality or outdated facilities      | <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive / Fees too high          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Held at inconvenient times               | <input type="checkbox"/> Too busy; no time                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Held at inconvenient locations           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                           |

9. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: The City of Mercer Island has enough land for parks, trails and open space to meet community needs today and in the future.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Enough land today	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enough land for the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. If the City of Mercer Island were to acquire additional park land, please rank your land acquisition priorities from 1<sup>st</sup> (highest priority) to 5<sup>th</sup> (lowest priority). Select each priority only once.

	Select each priority ONLY ONCE.					Don't know
	Highest priority → Lowest priority					
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	
Acquire land for new or expanded waterfront access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land to preserve habitat and open space that can include walking / jogging trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land for active recreation such as athletic fields and playgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land for pocket parks or small neighborhood parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acquire land for indoor recreation facilities, like gyms or classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11. The City of Mercer Island is exploring options to increase revenue to support the delivery of parks and recreation services. How would you rate your level of support for each of the following potential suggestions?**

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not supportive	Not sure
Install and rent additional picnic shelters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charge fees for outfield fence banners or other advertisements at athletic fields	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institute a seasonal, paid parking program at Luther Burbank Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institute a paid reservation system for tennis and pickleball courts at heavily used parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institute / expand concessions, such as vending or food carts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase rental scheduling at the Community Center for private events and gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sell limited term (5 to 10-years) naming rights at park facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**12. If you wanted the City of Mercer Island to do just one thing to improve parks, trails and/or open space, what would it be?**

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The following questions help us understand whether we have a cross-section of the community responding to this survey. It's important that you provide a response to each question. Please remember your answers are confidential.

**13. How many children under age 18 live in your household?**

- 0                                       2  
 1                                       3 or more

**14. What is your age?**

- Younger than 20                       45 to 54  
 20 to 34                                 55 to 64  
 35 to 44                                  65 and older

**15. Using the map, in which section of Mercer Island do you live?**

- ( A ) North of SE 40th                       ( C ) South of SE 68th  
 ( B ) Between SE 40th and SE 68th       Don't live on Mercer Island



**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!**

Your input will help guide the development of the Mercer Island Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan.

**Save a stamp! Take this survey online with the QR code or link:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MercerIslandPROS>

Learn more about why Mercer Island needs a PROS Plan and stay informed about the process at <https://letstalk.mercergov.org/miproplan>



The City of Mercer Island is using the services of a consultant team who specializes in park and recreation planning.

**Please return your completed survey in the enclosed Return-Reply Envelope addressed to:**

Conservation Technix Inc.  
 PO Box 885  
 Orinda, CA 94563



**APPENDIX D:  
VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING #1**



# Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House Meeting Summary

March 23, 2021 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. | Zoom Meeting

## Presenters

- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Chris Hoffman, PRR

## Breakout Room Facilitators

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jessi Bon, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Ryan Daly, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Brian Hartvigson, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Katie Herzog, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Zachary Houvener, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Allen Hunter, City of Mercer Island</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jason Kinter, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Alaine Sommargren, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Merrill Thomas-Schadt, City of Mercer Island</li> <li>• Jean Akers, Conservation Technix</li> <li>• Nancy Thai, PRR</li> <li>• Lauren Wheeler, PR</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

## Introduction and Background

The City of Mercer Island began the process to update the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan in September 2019, but paused the planning work in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PROS Plan update process was restarted in December 2020.

Since restarting the planning process, several meetings have occurred including a joint meeting with the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 19, 2021 to formally re-start the planning process. This was followed by a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on February 4, 2021 to gather input to help inform the first Virtual Open House.

The first Virtual Open House was held on March 23, 2021 using the Zoom platform. The virtual public meeting provided an opportunity to share information about the PROS Plan update and gather feedback from community members to help inform further development the Plan.



## Notifications

The project team used a variety of methods to spread the word about the Virtual Open House . These included:

- An article in the [MI Weekly newsletter](#)
- [Social media posts](#)
- Posting flyers at park kiosks, the P-Patch, and the Boat Launch
- Email notification sent to a variety of Parks and Recreation distribution lists.
- Inclusion in the City Manager’s Report at City Council meetings
- Posting information about the public meeting on the City website and [Let’s Talk page](#)



*City of Mercer Island Facebook post reminding people to attend the Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House on March 23.*

## Meeting overview

PROS Plan consultant Steve Duh described the Mercer Island PROS plan process and provided an overview of the survey results. The survey was conducted in in early 2020 and prior to pausing the project in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The presentation also included an overview of the important role the community plays in the planning process including helping to shape the community’s vision for Mercer Island parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces.

Seventy-three participants attended the meeting. The meeting was recorded, and the video is available on the Let’s Talk Page.

## What we heard

The project team used polling questions and facilitated breakout room discussions to gather input from meeting participants.

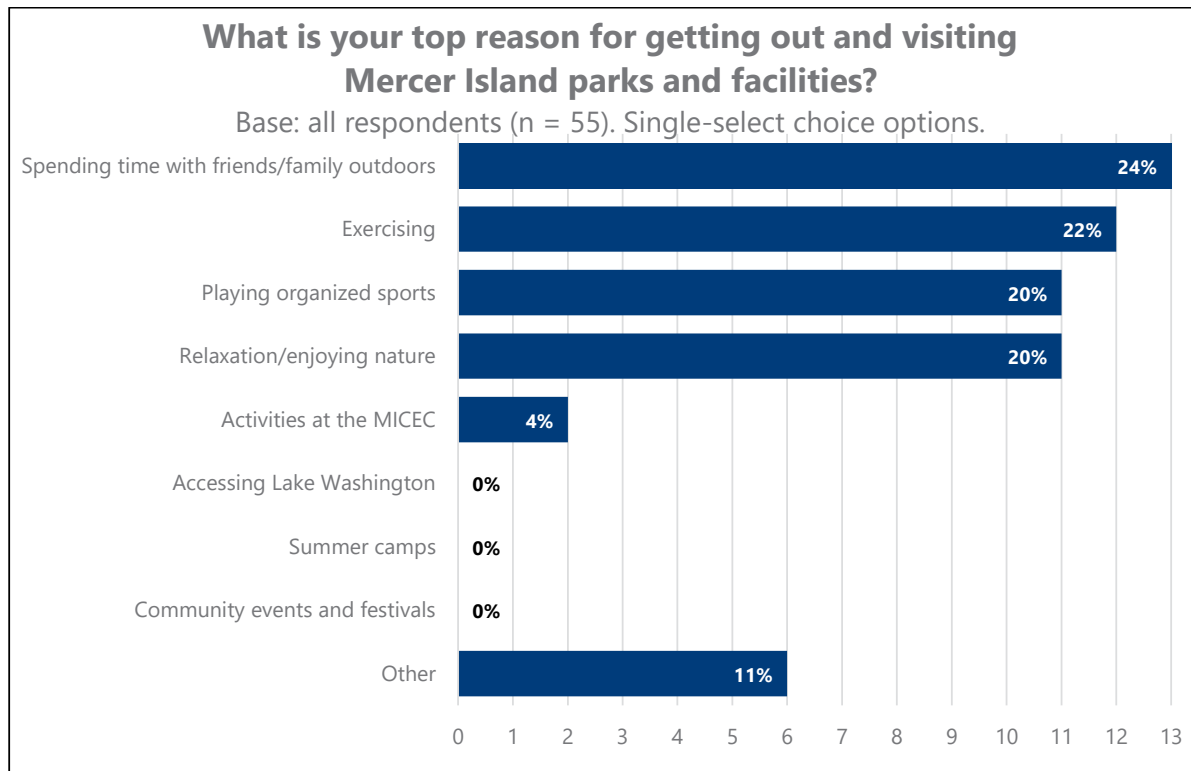


**Polling**

The project team asked the following questions using the polling function in Zoom. Attendees could share answers in the chat box if they selected “Other” as an answer.

- 1. What is your top reason for getting out and visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities? (Single choice)**
  - a. Exercising
  - b. Spending time with friends/family outdoors
  - c. Accessing Lake Washington
  - d. Playing organized sports
  - e. Activities at the MICEC
  - f. Relaxation/enjoying nature
  - g. Summer camps
  - h. Community events and festivals
  - i. Other

The top two reasons for getting out and visiting Mercer Island parks and facilities were to spend time with friends/family outdoors and exercising. Playing organized sports and relaxation were tied for the number three spot. People who selected “Other” shared their top reason as walking their dog(s), mountain biking, and forest stewardship.

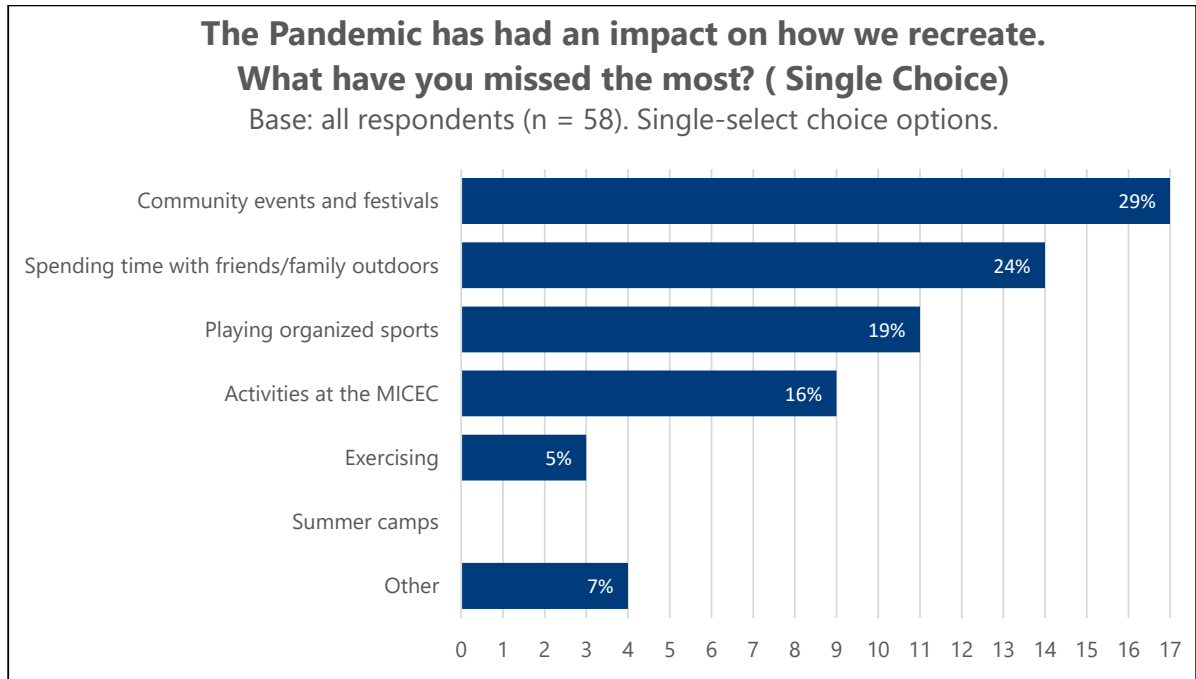




**2. The Pandemic has had an impact on how we recreate. What have you missed the most? (Single choice)**

- a. Exercising
- b. Spending time with friends/family outdoors
- c. Playing organized sports
- d. Activities at the MICEC
- e. Summer camps
- f. Community events and festivals
- g. Other

The majority of respondents selected they missed community events and festivals the most during the Pandemic. Spending time with friends/family outdoors was second. People who selected “Other” shared they most missed mountain biking and going to the beach.

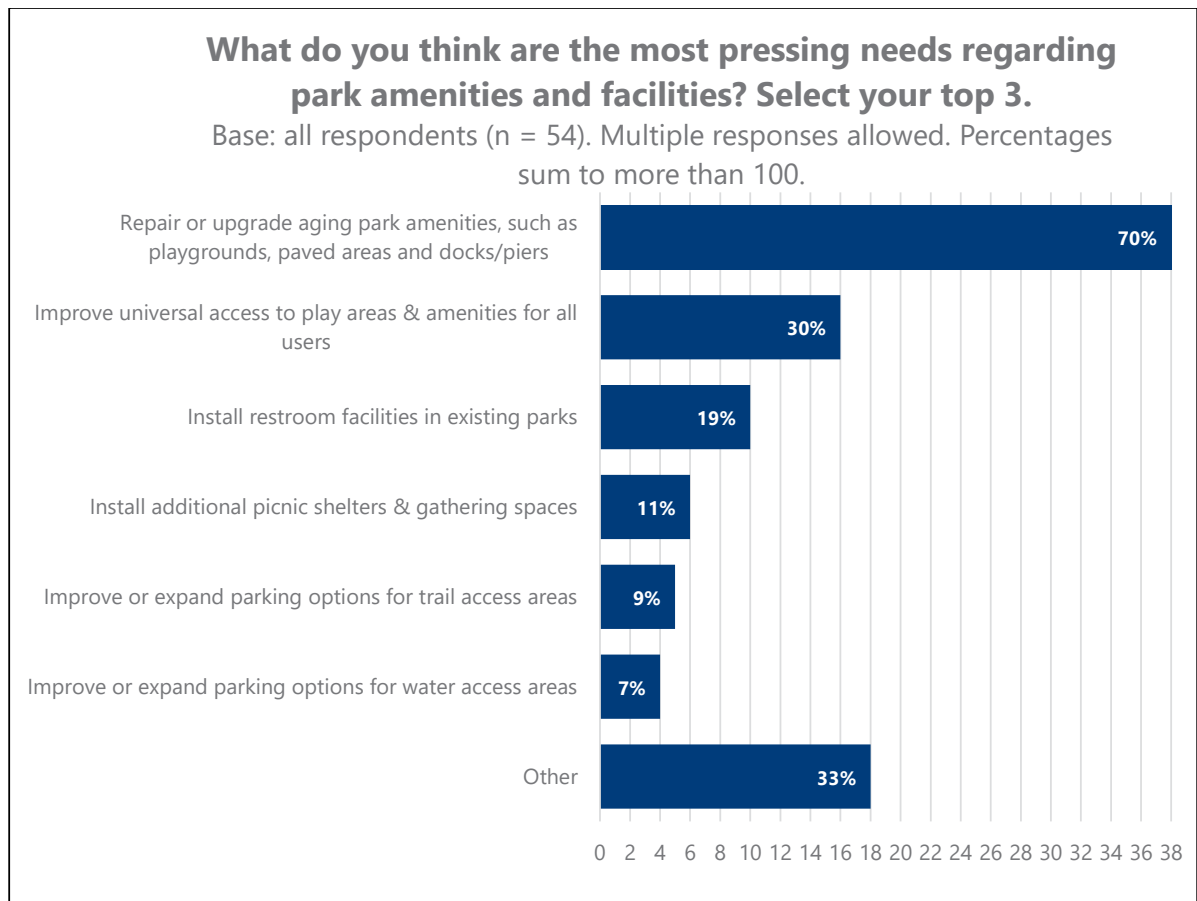




**3. What do you think are the most pressing needs regarding park amenities and facilities? Select your top 3.**

- a. Improve universal access to play areas & amenities for all users
- b. Install additional picnic shelters & gathering spaces
- c. Improve or expand parking options for water access areas
- d. Improve or expand parking options for trail access areas
- e. Repair or upgrade aging park amenities, such as playgrounds, paved areas and docks/piers
- f. Install restroom facilities in existing parks
- g. Other

Over two-thirds of the 54 respondents thought repairing or upgrading aging park amenities is one of the most pressing needs regarding park amenities and facilities. People who selected “Other” shared they thought the most pressing needs were more mountain bike specific trails and bike parks, indoor and outdoor pickleball courts, allocating more funds for trail maintenance and forest restoration efforts, improving and expanding trails, and synthetic turf fields at schools or public parks.



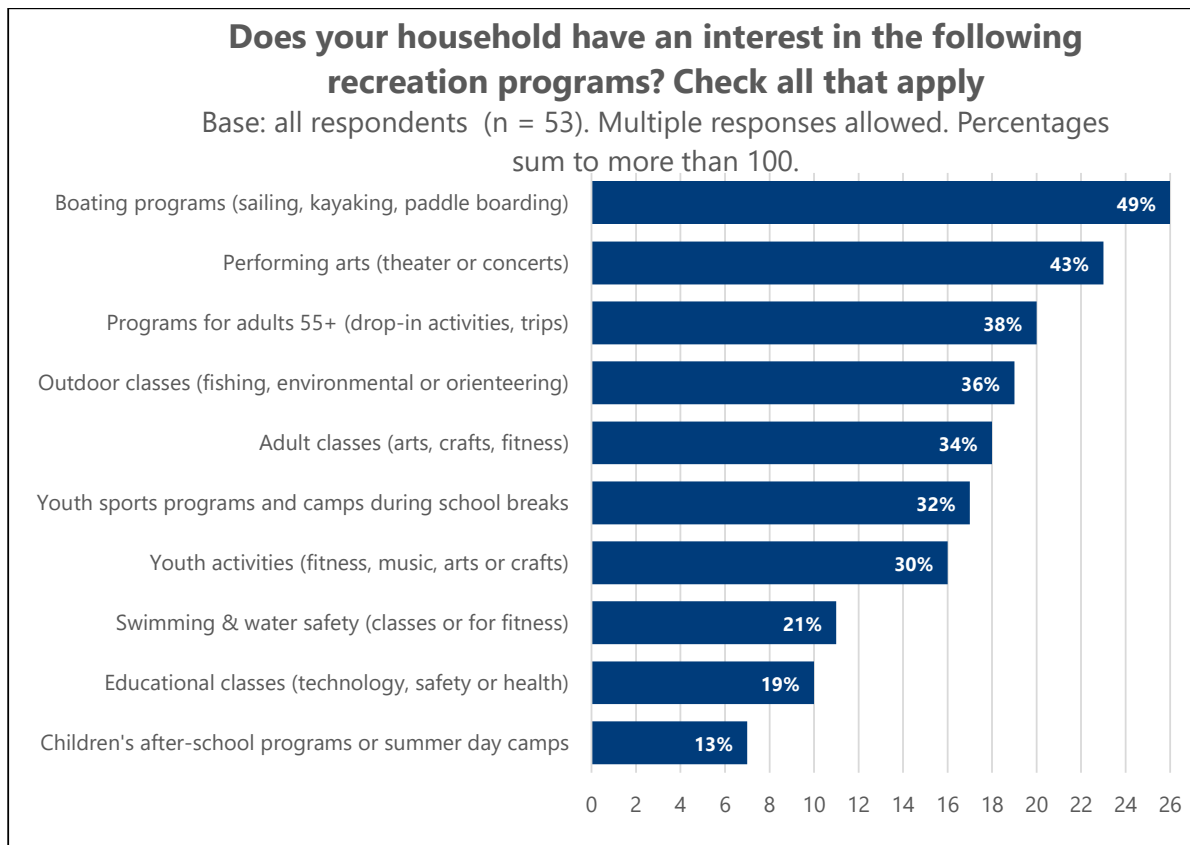




**4. Does your household have an interest in the following recreation programs? Check all that apply.**

- a. Swimming & water safety (classes or for fitness)
- b. Boating programs (sailing, kayaking, paddle boarding)
- c. Outdoor classes (fishing, environmental or orienteering)
- d. Educational classes (technology, safety or health)
- e. Performing arts (theater or concerts)
- f. Programs for adults 55+ (drop-in activities, trips)
- g. Adult classes (arts, crafts, fitness)
- h. Children's after-school programs or summer day camps
- i. Youth activities (fitness, music, arts or crafts)
- j. Youth sports programs and camps during school breaks

Nearly half of the 53 respondents had an interest in boating programs followed by 43 percent of respondents having an interest in performing arts. Four of the top five responses (boating programs, performing arts, outdoor classes, and adult classes) were also in the top five responses to the same question that was part of the first community survey conducted in early 2020. People who selected “Other” share they have an interest in bicycle safety and maintenance programs, inclusive activities for adults and children with disabilities, and first aid and CPR classes.





## Breakout Room Discussions and Key Themes

The project team hosted three breakout room sessions to provide attendees an opportunity to share feedback and ideas in small group settings. All breakout room sessions and questions are listed below and organized by key themes as summarized by the project team.

### #1 Beaches, Waterfront & Water-oriented experiences

- What's working well at our waterfronts?
  - Appreciation for the street end parks
  - Appreciation for waterfront beaches (especially Groveland and Proctor Landing), parks, and access
- What could we do better?
  - Improve water safety by having lifeguards on duty
  - Improve infrastructure such as repairing docks and cement that is aging and providing seating and more trash cans
  - Increased and safer access to the water for hand-carry watercraft, such as kayaks, and for people with accessibility needs
- If you had to pick one area to focus on for water-oriented recreation experiences, what would it be?
  - Improve accessibility of street end parks and provide clearer signage to find them
  - Provide boating classes, facilities, and rentals

### #2 Trails:

- What's working well with the Mercer Island trail system?
  - Appreciation for the variety of rustic and paved trails that connect around the Island that can be used in a variety of ways
  - Appreciation for well-maintained trails
  - Appreciation for space to ride bicycles and for mountain biking
- What could we be doing better?
  - Clearer signage and education about the trails available on Mercer Island
    - Provide clearer signage about dogs on trails or in off-leash parks
  - Expand trails available for bicycles
  - Improve infrastructure and accessibility on the trails
    - Repair paved trails that need it
    - Consider designating parts of trails for certain use to promote walking and bicycle safety
    - Improve safety at street crossings
  - Balance trails for active and passive uses
    - Expand BMX trails
    - Protect and repair walking and hiking trails
- What's one new idea for the trail system?
  - A centralized location to learn about the trail system, whether that is a website or smartphone application
  - Expand mountain biking opportunities
  - Provide opportunities for community members to participate in maintenance



### #3 Balancing access to nature with active park uses

- What are your thoughts on our current mix of active and passive uses of open space and parks?
  - Mix of community members who feel there is a good balance between passive and active uses of space and those who would like more passive use space and more active use space. Wide range of responses.
- What would you do differently?
  - Make Mercer Island spaces more accessible
  - Make spaces usable all year round, for example adding lighting and turf grass to some spaces
  - Update some spaces to have multiple uses
  - Provide independent oversight at Snake Hill
  - Would like to see more opportunities to play pickleball, for example updating the old tennis courts at Luther Burbank Park to pickleball courts
- Should the City invest in acquisition of new park land and/or open space?
  - Interest in strategic land acquisition, but acknowledgement that cost and availability may be prohibitive
  - Interest in improving what Mercer Island already has and using those spaces effectively
- What's one new idea?
  - A lot of interest to update some tennis courts to provide space to play pickleball
  - Add new opportunities such as bouldering or a museum
  - Provide more signage and wayfinding to help people find the space for the activity they are seeking

### Next Steps

The project team will use the feedback from this public meeting to inform the next community survey, future community engagement opportunities, and the PROS plan itself. Please send any questions or comments related to the Mercer Island PROS plan to [PROS@mercerisland.gov](mailto:PROS@mercerisland.gov).



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# APPENDIX E: VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING #2



# Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Public Meeting DRAFT Meeting Summary

September 28, 2021 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. | Zoom Meeting

## Presenters

- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Chris Hoffman, PRR

## Breakout Room Facilitators

- Ryan Daly, City of Mercer Island
- Jason Kinter, City of Mercer Island
- Merrill Thomas-Schadt, City of Mercer Island
- Steve Duh, Conservation Technix
- Jean Akers, Conservation Technix
- Nancy Thai, PRR
- Lauren Wheeler, PRR

## Introduction and Background

The City of Mercer Island began the process to update the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan in September 2019, but paused the planning work in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PROS Plan update process was restarted in December 2020.

Since restarting the planning process, several meetings have occurred including a joint meeting with the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 19, 2021 to formally re-start the planning process. This was followed by a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on February 4, 2021 to gather input to help inform the first Virtual public Meeting.

The first Virtual Public Meeting was held on March 23, 2021 using the Zoom platform. The virtual public meeting provided an opportunity to share information about the PROS Plan update and gather feedback from community members to help inform further development of the Plan.

The second Virtual Public Meeting was held on September 28, 2021. The project team provide an update on the PROS planning process, shared the community input the City has received to date, and provided another opportunity to explore that feedback and other topics that may be featured in the plan.

## Notifications

The project team used a variety of methods to promote the Virtual Open House on September 28, 2021. These included:

- An article in the [MI Weekly newsletter](#)
- Social media posts



- Email notification sent to a variety of Parks and Recreation distribution lists.
- Inclusion in the City Manager’s Report at City Council meetings
- Posting information about the public meeting on the City website and [Let’s Talk page](#)

### Meeting overview

PROS Plan consultant Steve Duh described the Mercer Island PROS plan process and reviewed the public planning process since the March 23, 2021 virtual open house.

The presentation included an overview of the important role the community plays in the planning process including helping to shape the community’s vision for Mercer Island parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces.

Fifty-five participants attended the meeting. The meeting was recorded, and the video will be available on the Let’s Talk Page.

### What We Heard

The project team used polling questions and facilitated breakout room discussions to gather input from meeting participants.

### Polling

The project team asked the following questions using the polling function in Zoom. Attendees could share answers in the chat box if they selected “Other” as an answer.

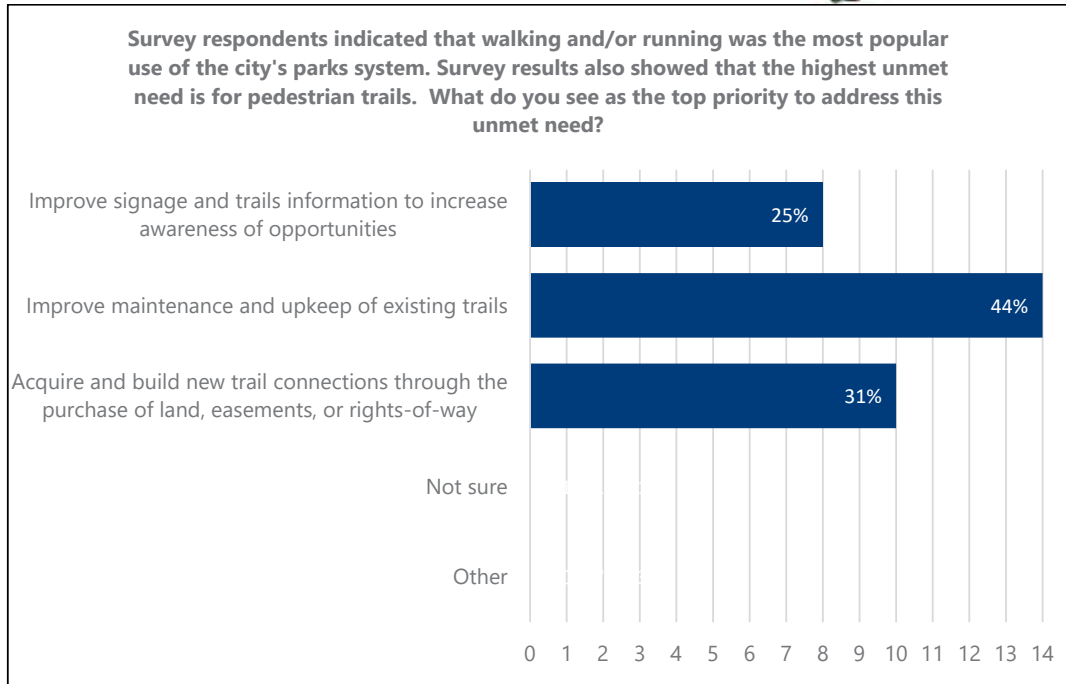
- 1. Survey respondents indicated that walking and/or running was the most popular use of the city’s parks system. Survey results also showed that the highest unmet need is for pedestrian trails. What do you see as the top priority to address this unmet need?<sup>1</sup>**
  - a. Improve signage and trails information
  - b. Improve maintenance and upkeep of existing trails
  - c. Acquire and build new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or rights-of-way
  - d. Not sure
  - e. Other

The two top priorities identified by participants were to improve maintenance and upkeep of existing trails (44%) and to acquire and build new trail connections through the purchase of land, easements, or-right-of-way (31%).



*City of Mercer Island Let’s Talk website inviting people to attend the second Mercer Island PROS Plan Virtual Open House on September 28, 2021.*

<sup>1</sup> Due to a technical issue, the question asked at the public meeting was missing one of the response options that was part of the presentation, which was “Build new connecting trails in existing parks to link walking and running routes throughout Mercer Island.” This may have affected the results.

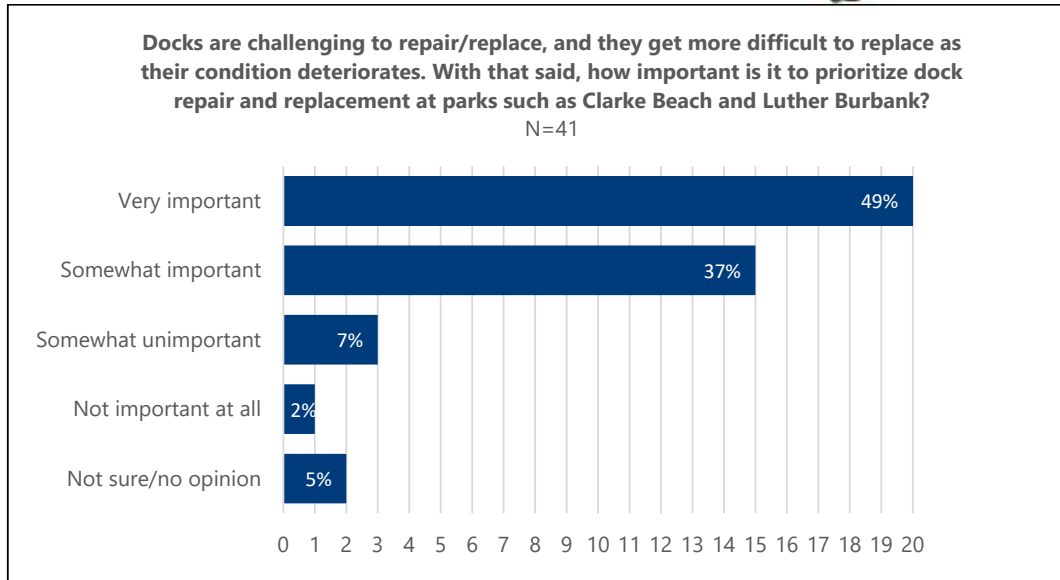


**2. Docks are challenging to repair/replace, and they get more difficult to replace as their condition deteriorates. With that said, how important is it to prioritize dock repair and replacement at parks such as Clarke Beach and Luther Burbank?**

- a. Very important
- b. Somewhat Important
- c. Somewhat unimportant
- d. Not important at all
- e. Not sure / No opinion

The majority of respondents indicated that prioritizing dock repair and replacement at parks is very important (49%) or somewhat important (37%). A few respondents didn't think dock repair and replacement was all that important and some weren't sure or had not opinion on the topic.



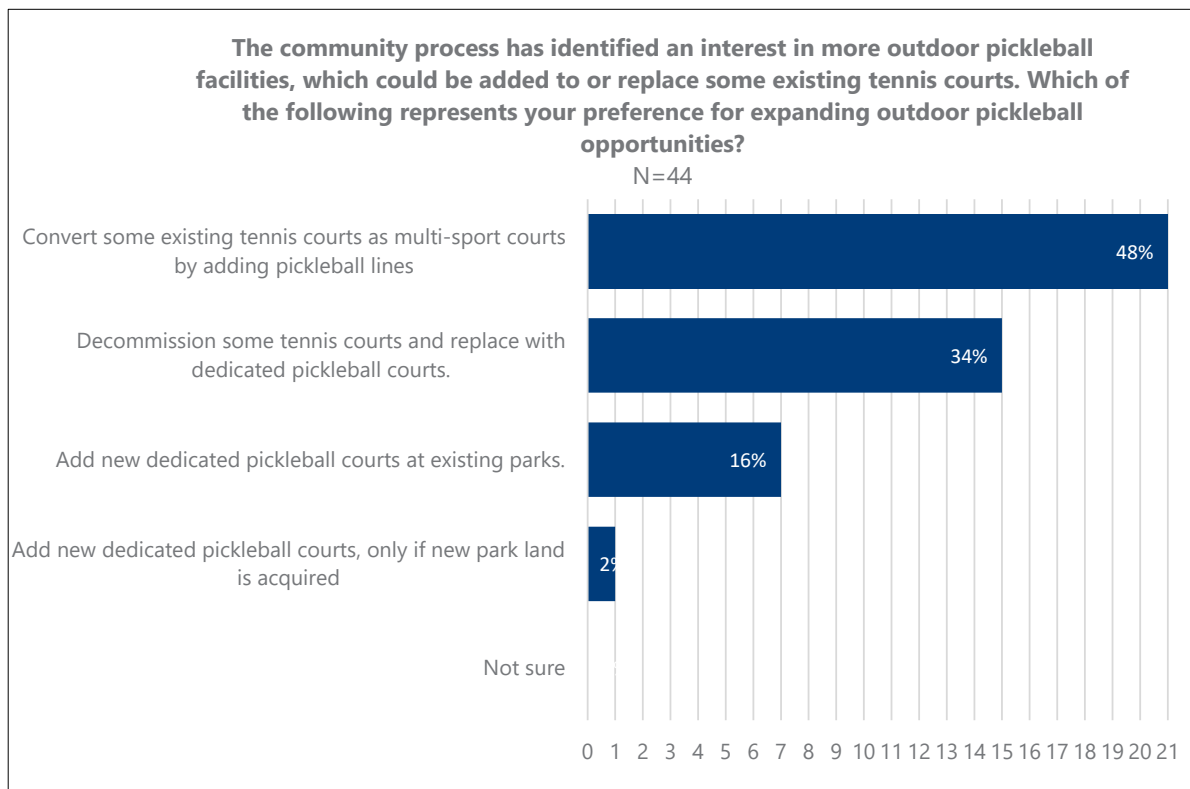




**3. The community process has identified an interest in more outdoor pickleball facilities, which could be added to or replace some existing tennis courts. Which of the following represents your preference for expanding outdoor pickleball opportunities?**

- a. Convert some existing courts as multi-sport courts by adding pickleball lines
- b. Decommission some tennis courts and replace with dedicated pickleball courts
- c. Add new dedicated pickleball courts at existing parks
- d. Add new dedicated pickleball courts, only if new park land is acquired
- e. Not sure

The majority of respondents desire the city to convert some existing tennis courts as multi-sport courts by adding pickleball lines (48%). The second largest number of responses want to decommission tennis courts and replace them with dedicated pickleball courts (34%).

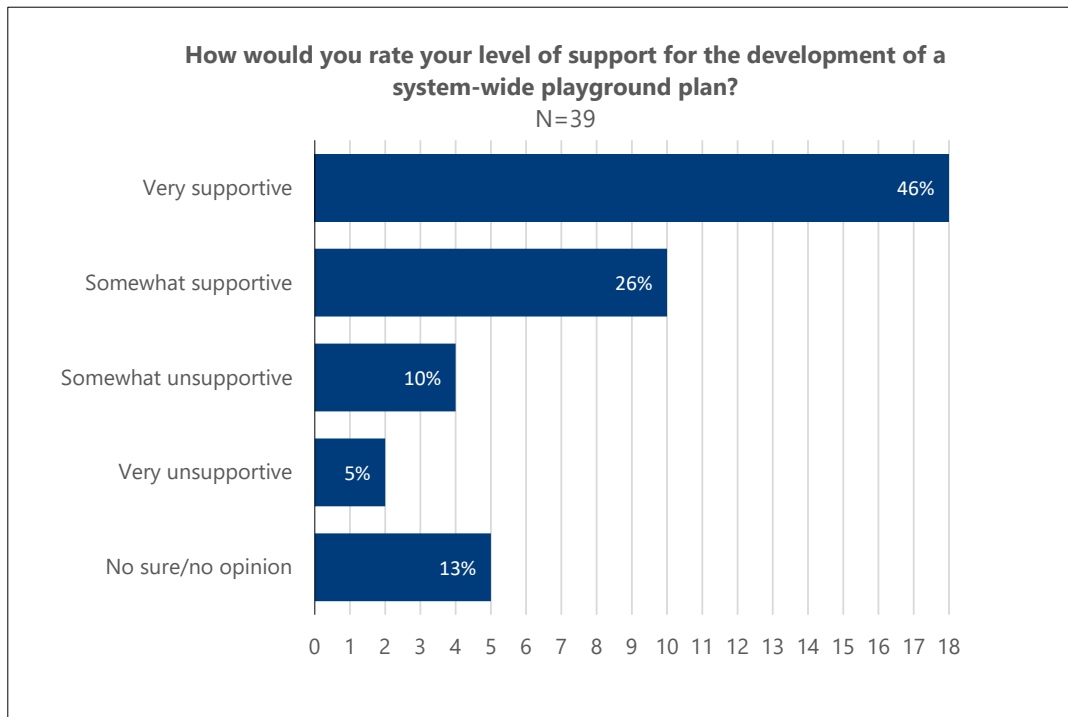




**4. How would you rate your level of support for the development of a system-wide playground plan?**

- a. Very supportive
- b. Somewhat supportive
- c. Somewhat unsupportive
- d. Very unsupportive
- e. Not sure/no opinion

Almost half (46%) of respondents were very supportive for development of a system-wide playground plan. More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents were somewhat supportive. 15% of respondents were either somewhat unsupportive or very unsupportive.

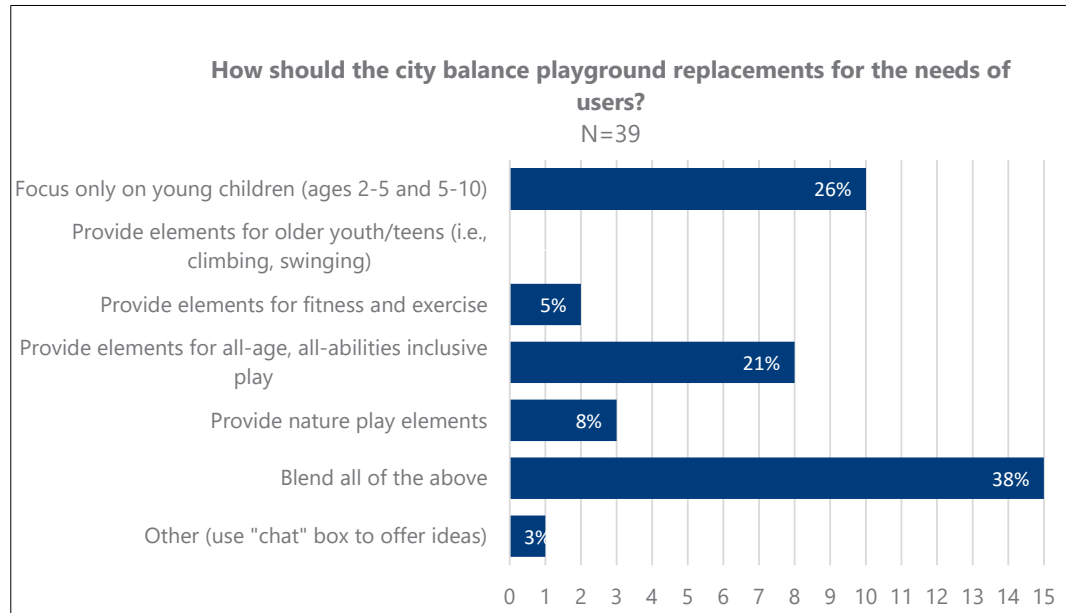




**5. How should the city balance playground replacements for the needs of users?**

- a. Focus on young children (ages 2-5 and 5-10)
- b. Provide elements for older youth/teens (i.e., climbing, swinging)
- c. Provide elements for fitness and exercise
- d. Provide elements for all-age, all-abilities inclusive play
- e. Provide nature play elements
- f. Blend all of the above
- g. Other (use "chat" box to offer ideas)

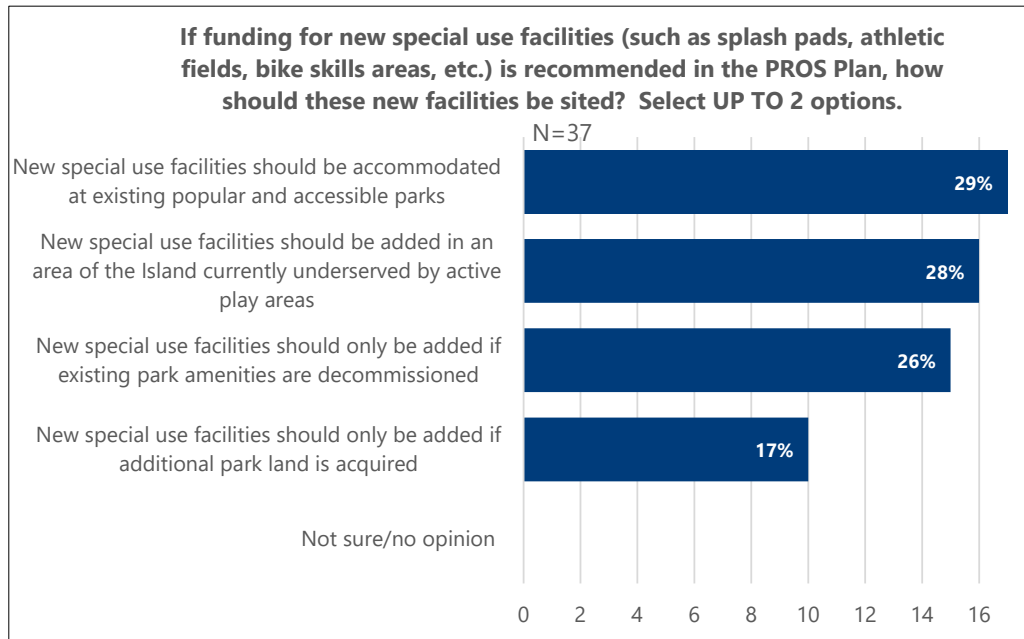
The top responses to balancing playground replacements were to blend all of the above elements (38%) and focus on young children (ages 2-5 and 5-10) (26%). About half of the respondents would like playground elements for all-age and all-abilities inclusive play. Providing nature play and fitness and exercise elements were selected collectively by 3 participants.





- 6. If funding for new special use facilities (such as splash pads, athletic fields, bike skills areas, etc.) is recommended in the PROS Plan, how should these new facilities be sited? Select UP TO 2 options.**
- a. New special use facilities should be accommodated at existing popular and accessible parks
  - b. New special use facilities should be added in an area of the Island currently underserved by active play areas
  - c. New special use facilities should only be added if existing park amenities are decommissioned
  - d. New special use facilities should only be added if additional park land is acquired
  - e. Not sure/no opinion

The top two selections selected for new special use facilities were to accommodate existing popular and accessible parks (29%) and to add to the areas currently underserved by active play areas (28%). 26% of respondents said to add new special use facilities only if existing park amenities are decommissioned. A few respondents selected the option to add new special use facilities if additional park land is acquired.





## Breakout Room Discussions and Key Themes

The project team hosted one 30-minute facilitated breakout room session to provide attendees an opportunity to share feedback and ideas in small group settings. A summary of all seven breakout room sessions and questions are listed below and organized by key themes as summarized by the project team.

### #1 Exploring trail interests & connectivity

#### Questions

- Where are the gaps that need to be filled – to connect neighborhoods, to connect parks, or to link trails within parks and open space? What destinations need to be connected?
  - The trails are adequate.
  - Create connection to trails along the waterfront, e.g. Luther Burbank Park lakefront and North Mercerdale hillside to Mercerdale Park hillside.
  - Create connections from park to park and link important pieces, similar to Ellis Pond connections.
  - More comprehensive signage, maps and visuals are needed to show people where trails go and how they connect.
- Are you mostly interested in road-based connections or trails within parks and open space?
  - Create accessible bike paths and “off-road” pathways to provide a variety of destinations, like along Island Crest Way.
  - Concern that electric bikes may add challenges for shared trail use.
  - Look at options to separate trails from roads for safety; use plantings or vegetation to create safe zones.
  - Support for trails within parks.
  - Need additional routes on roads.
- Expanding trails within parks and open space are treated as additional impervious surface (gravel and impacted dirt are examples of this type of surface). Is that a concern for you? Should there be a tradeoff elsewhere in park development?
  - Maintenance and clearing of trails more important than building new trails; no more impervious.
  - Don't just pave for new trails; consider decommissioning some segments based on low usage and restore to natural conditions to balance against new segments.
  - Consider pervious surfaces/limit paved trails.

### #2 Balancing Existing & New Recreational Uses

#### Questions

- What are your thoughts on accommodating a wider variety of recreational choices on Mercer Island?



- Concern that “bike skill area” may be challenging to manage and contribute to mismanaged trail systems.
  - Consider building a bike skills/pump track similar to a skate park that is in a more exposed and easier to monitor location.
  - Concern over losing green space to new amenities. If money is available, consider acquiring more land to support new recreational options.
  - Support for adding a splash pad in an existing park.
  - Support for inclusive spaces.
  - More dedicated pickleball courts are needed.
- Do you feel that additional recreational amenities to our parks system will enhance overall satisfaction and park usage?
    - Yes, but add parking if adding more amenities. Adding more activities could draw more people.
  - What should be considered when thinking about balancing the ‘where’ and ‘how’ of installing new features with maintaining existing uses? Should new features be added only if an existing feature is reduced or replaced?
    - It’s important to find a middle ground and provide a variety of recreational opportunities, especially for kids.
    - Retain play options for small children but also add opportunities for older kids.
    - Convert tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts.
    - Avoid putting too many amenities in one area (i.e., Luther Burbank Park).
    - Trade out the older elements with new ones based on levels of use/support of existing elements. Look at survey data to confirm current needs and uses.

### #3: Strategizing for Play Area Upgrades

#### Questions

- What are your thoughts on the different play area options referenced earlier?
  - Natural elements and nature play are good options; great idea to have kids move elements around and manipulate for play.
  - Support a broader range of play spaces; existing playgrounds are too similar
  - Give deference to local families with children who use playgrounds for detailed discussions about needed play experiences.
  - Consider spaces that encourage interaction among different age groups.
- When it comes time to replace playgrounds, should we replace with similar structures or consider other styles of play features?
  - Support for inclusive play areas and more shaded picnic areas/covered areas close by so people can use for more parts of the day (hot sun or rain).
  - Amphitheater at Luther Burbank Park needs to be repaired and be safe.
- Is there a feature or type of play you enjoy elsewhere, that we’re missing?



- Include some disc golf or ultimate frisbee in parks.
- Features that use motion e.g. swings sets, tire swings, slides, bucket swings for safety.
- Improve playgrounds by adding bathrooms, fences, benches, and areas with shade.

## Next Steps

The project team will use the feedback from this public meeting to inform the PROS plan as it is being finalized over the next three months. The City Council is scheduled to review and adopt the PROS Plan in early 2022.

Please send any questions or comments related to the Mercer Island PROS plan to [PROS@mercerisland.gov](mailto:PROS@mercerisland.gov).





# APPENDIX F: RECREATION RESET PLAN

# STRATEGY FOR MERCER ISLAND COMMUNITY AND EVENT CENTER & RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



April 20,  
2021

A Reset Roadmap for Cost Recovery,  
Resource Allocation, Pricing and  
Policies

A strategy and philosophy to help guide the selection, delivery and support of future programs and services.



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# Strategy for Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services

## A RESET ROADMAP FOR COST RECOVERY, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, PRICING AND POLICIES

### PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

Residents of the City of Mercer Island are fortunate to have a wide variety of recreation providers and opportunities within the community. The municipality’s recreation services, programs and facilities are an important portion of this abundance and can play a unique

role in ensuring equitable access and promoting community values and goals. This strategy provides guidance for the purposeful allocation or investment of City resources into recreation programs and services.

## Development of the Strategy

After the COVID-19 global pandemic caused the City to reduce staff and budget and close facilities, the City had an opportunity to reconsider important questions about the provision of programs and services. Through this “Reset Project,” the City:

- Examined its priorities, and wished to be deliberate about which programs it offered and what level of resources it would put into them;
- Considered how to leverage its assets, using its strengths and resources to improve the City’s ability to deliver more service, services that need more financial support, or higher quality services;
- Put a focus on promoting financial sustainability, thinking about how to reduce reliance on tax dollar support and how to use tax subsidy wisely;
- Contemplated how to deliver desired outcomes by providing services in a fair and equitable manner, consistent with values and goals; and
- Created greater clarity around who is benefitting from services and who is paying for them.

Answers to those areas of inquiry were woven into this new strategic approach for recreation and Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC) programs and services. This strategy includes tools such as a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy, an aligned fee structure, and identification of policies and practices that are needed or will require adjustment to implement the new strategy. The fundamental outcomes sought by this new Reset Strategy are:



*The Parks and Recreation mission is to “take pride in providing the highest quality facilities and services in partnership with the community to enhance livability on Mercer Island.”*

*The City’s vision is to “provide valued and effective municipal services in ways that are efficient, flexible, innovative, and creative, with an emphasis on sustainability. We strive to be among the best in all we do.”*

### **Reset Project Process**

The Reset Project’s timeline was an aggressive five months. The project began in earnest in November 2020 with a goal of delivering recommendations to the City Council in April 2021. The City used a variety of channels to share information with the public about the Reset Project and invited public input during meetings, via an online survey and through its “Let’s Talk” online engagement platform. Given the constantly changing nature of the

pandemic and related public health regulations, it was challenging to identify when the City could assume that the MICEC could open and operate normally and fully. The Reset Project Team, a group of City staff plus a consultant, proceeded with a goal of designing the new strategy, resourcing some initial programs and services, and delivering those offerings beginning in the Summer of 2021. Additionally, the Reset Team focused on creating a roadmap for how to restructure and gradually provide more programs and services over the next two years.

An overview of the plan development process follows:

*November – December 2020*

- A staff team facilitated by a consultant began collecting data, discussing past practices, contemplating goals for the project and identifying recommendations for an Immediate Action Plan. That plan called for contractor-led summer camps to be planned and delivered, in an adaptable fashion should pandemic constraints still exist. The Immediate Action Plan also recommended that the City prepare for the possibility that some facility rentals could resume in the summer or fall of 2021.

*January 2021*

- The Parks and Recreation Commission received an introduction to the project and reviewed the Immediate Action Plan.
- The Parks and Recreation Commission held a workshop focused on categorizing types of services and programs and understanding the objectives of cost recovery.
- The City launched a community engagement survey on its Let's Talk platform. The survey requested input on community priorities, including the investment of tax dollars in recreation programs and services.

*February 2021*



- The Parks and Recreation Commission further refined the cost recovery framework during its regular meeting in January.
- The City Council received a written update and provided staffing resources to implement the Immediate Action Plan (agenda bill AB 5814).
- The Commission held a special meeting workshop focused on learning about a pricing strategy, reviewing the results of the Let's Talk surveys, understanding how the Reset Team was approaching the fee study, and discussing parameters for future program and service offerings.

#### *March 2021*

- During their March 4 regular meeting, the Parks and Recreation Commission examined the resources necessary to implement Phase 1, learned which policies and procedures may require adjustment to implement the new Reset Strategy, and reviewed the proposed Reset phases.
- A special meeting was held on March 18 for the Commission to hear about and discuss the draft Reset Strategy and to receive an initial fee schedule. The group also discussed the City's differential pricing policy.

#### *April 2021*

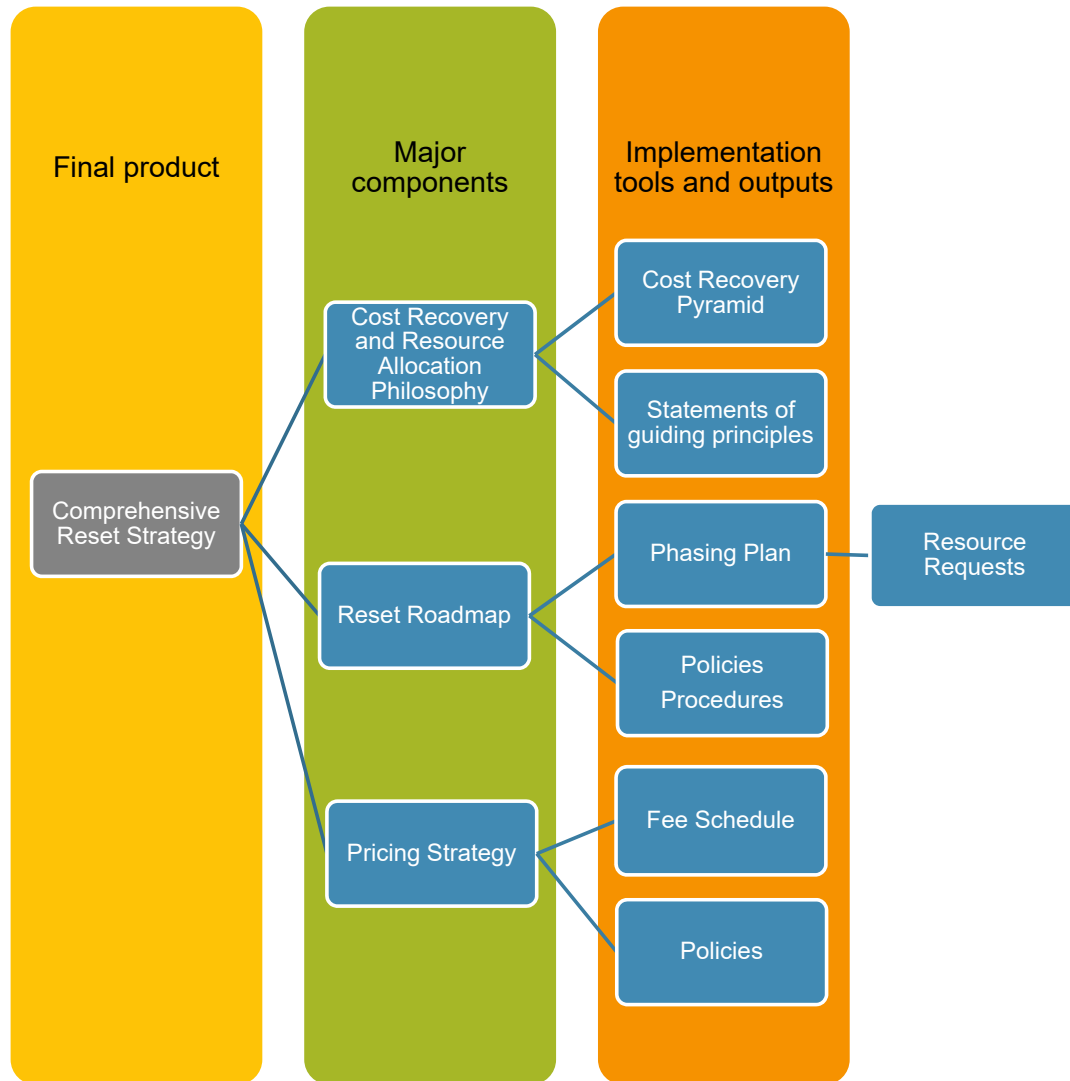
- The Parks and Recreation Commission acted to approve and recommend the Reset Strategy and a request for Accelerated Phase 1 resources.
- The Reset Team and Parks and Recreation Commission presented the proposed Reset Strategy to City Council for consideration.

#### *July 2021*

- City Council review and acceptance of the plan.

### **Reset Plan Architecture**

This strategy introduces several terms and has multiple parts. The following diagram illustrates how each of the pieces are connected. Definitions of the terms can be found in subsequent sections of this document.



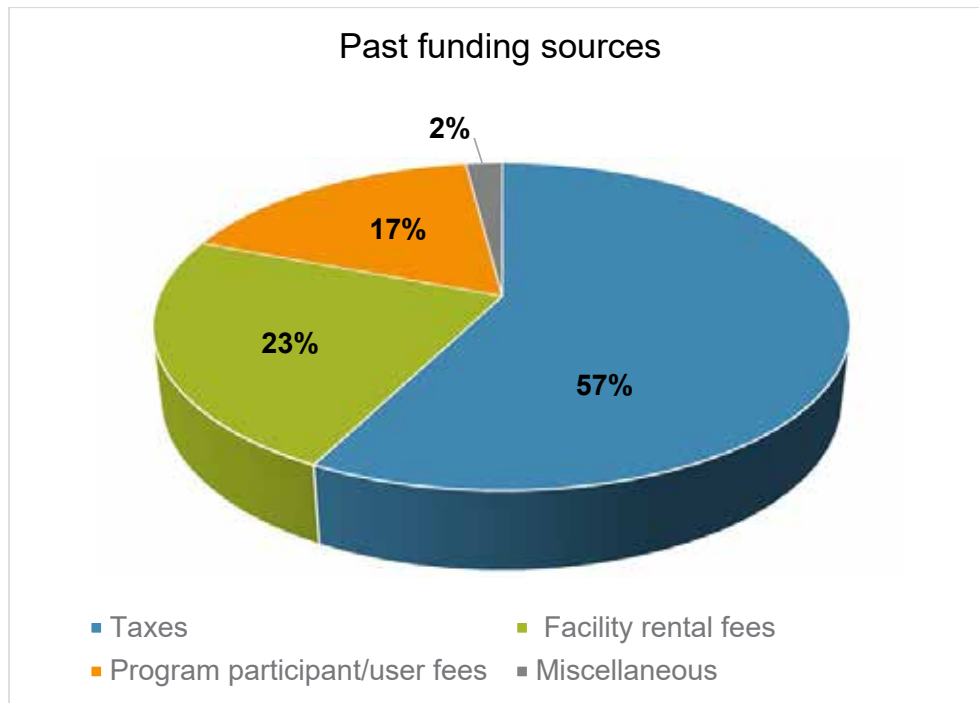
## COST RECOVERY

### What is Cost Recovery?

Cost recovery is the degree to which the operational (and sometimes maintenance) costs of providing a program or service are supported by user fees and/or other funding mechanisms such as grants, partnerships, donations, sponsorships, or other alternative (non-tax) funding sources. Programs and services can range from recovering more than their costs (i.e., generating surplus revenue) to being wholly subsidized or supported by General Fund support such as revenue from taxes collected by the City. Subsidy can be thought of as the community's investment in recreation. Most often, when establishing cost recovery goals, municipalities focus on how much of the city's direct costs can be covered by non-tax revenue.

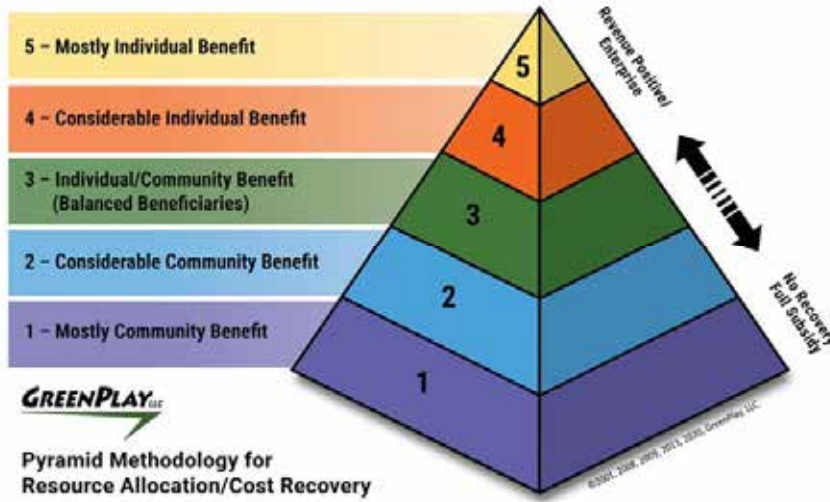
### Past Cost Recovery in Mercer Island

The City of Mercer Island has embraced the concept of cost recovery for at least two decades. Previous City budgets and other governing documents declared a few, overall cost recovery goals and some guidance regarding fees. While the City's desire to organize services and programs within a cost recovery structure was clear, the City had not firmly established the foundational philosophy for that structure nor the policies and practices to support it.



### Establishing a Cost Recovery Framework

The Reset Project Team utilized, with permission, a cost recovery methodology construct from GreenPlay, LLC due to that model’s ability to address Mercer Island’s desired project outcomes. The GreenPlay model requires that programs and services be sorted into tiers on a pyramid based on who benefits from the program or service. Doing this sort of categorization helps put essential services and priorities into focus and promotes discussions about who should pay for the benefits received from the program or service.



While the primary way of sorting programs and services in this methodology is to assess who benefits, several other ways of viewing service provision and other pieces of information can be influential. Those filters and factors include:

Filters	Definitions
Benefit	Who receives the benefit of the service? (Skill development, education, physical health, mental health, safety)
Access/Type of Service	Is the service available to everyone equally? Is participation or eligibility restricted by diversity factors (i.e., age, ability, skill, financial)?
Organizational Responsibility	Is it the organization's responsibility or obligation to provide the service based upon mission, legal mandate, or other obligation or requirement?

Historical Expectations	What have we always done that we cannot change?
Anticipated Impacts	What is the anticipated impact of the service on existing resources? On other users? On the environment? What is the anticipated impact of not providing the service?
Social Value	What is the perceived social value of the service by constituents, city staff and leadership, and policy makers? Is it a community builder?
<b>Factors:</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trends (ranging from traditional/expected to innovative/fad)</li> <li>• Commitment factors (ranging from drop-in to specialized)</li> <li>• Political filter (may require asking and understanding, “What is in/out of our control? What is going on right now?”)</li> <li>• Marketing factor (i.e., the effect in attracting participants/customers)</li> <li>• Relative cost to provide factor (ranging from low to high)</li> <li>• Economic conditions factor (the financial realities; City and participant abilities to pay)</li> <li>• Financial goals factor (ranging from 100% subsidized to programs and services that generate excess revenue)</li> </ul>

The pyramid’s five tiers identify the varying degrees to which the community or individuals benefit from an assortment of programs and services. The lower tiers represent programs that often serve the entire community, are thought of as essential,

may be the kinds of services that are traditionally provided by recreation departments, or may be necessary for the business sustainability of the greater operation. The upper tiers represent programs that provide a greater degree of benefit to individual participants or specialized groups, may go beyond the core mission of the providing agency, may be available in the private marketplace, and likely could generate revenue to cover direct costs or more. (See Appendix A for more definitions of the tiers and additional guidance on sorting programs.)

The Reset Team developed a list of past and/or possible programs and services for team members and Parks and Recreation Commissioners to sort into the five tiers. Over time, these categories can be deleted, renamed, broadened, narrowed or added to, depending on policy makers' and practitioners' desires. (See Appendix B for definitions of programs' and services' categories.)

Each tier is also differentiated by its related expectations for cost recovery or General Fund subsidy. Programs and services that are placed in the upper tiers must help subsidize the costs of providing those in the lower tiers. Programs and services in the lower tiers receive more tax support than those in the upper tiers. Cost recovery tier placement is not synonymous with the level or amount of fee. Actual fees for programs within the same tier will vary, and fees will be set based on a variety of factors. (See the Pricing section of this document for more information about setting fees.) The tier-level cost recovery targets represent the minimum cost recovery for the aggregated categories of service within that tier. While each individual service within the tier may have a fee that is established to recover at or above the minimum cost recovery target level, the primary objective is for the entire tier as a group to achieve the target. Tier-level cost recovery targets are set to primarily recover the direct operating costs of service provision – not all costs (such as capital or indirect costs). However, some programs or services may have fees that enable the City to recover some of the indirect costs of providing the service and/or to further offset the tax subsidy of programs in other tiers.

Recommended cost recovery targets were set based on the Reset Team's examination of a sampling of historical program expenditure and revenue data, assumptions about

revenue potential and/or the ability to control direct costs, an understanding of the marketplace, and after a review of the cost recovery targets of several other municipalities. The City's current way of accounting costs and revenues in recreation and for the MICEC does not easily allow quantification at the program or service level. Going forward, Staff will track and report on costs and revenues based on the categories of programs and services identified in the cost recovery pyramid. Tier-level cost recovery targets and individual program cost recovery expectations should be re-examined and adjusted, as needed, on a periodic basis.

## Defining Direct and Indirect Costs

To effectively set targets and monitor cost recovery performance, the City must first define what will constitute a direct cost versus an indirect cost.

Direct costs include all the specific, identifiable expenses (fixed and variable) associated with providing a service, program, or facility. These expenses would not exist without the program or service and often increase exponentially. Examples of direct costs include: salary and benefits costs for all personnel directly attached to the program, all consumable supplies for the program, all related contractual services expenses, and non-consumable equipment purchased only for the program that require periodic, continual replacement or are necessary for the start of the program. Direct expenses may also include or a prorated share of some expenses such as marketing or promotional costs.

Indirect costs include departmental administration, support services or cost allocations from other internal departments that encompass the remaining overhead (fixed and variable) and are not identified as direct costs. Examples of indirect costs include: office furniture, building maintenance and utility costs if they are not charged back to the program, groundskeeping costs, debt service, vehicle use or mileage reimbursement, and hiring costs (such as advertising jobs).

The Reset Team has categorized each past program's costs (i.e., expenditure types by the financial management system's object codes) according to whether it should be

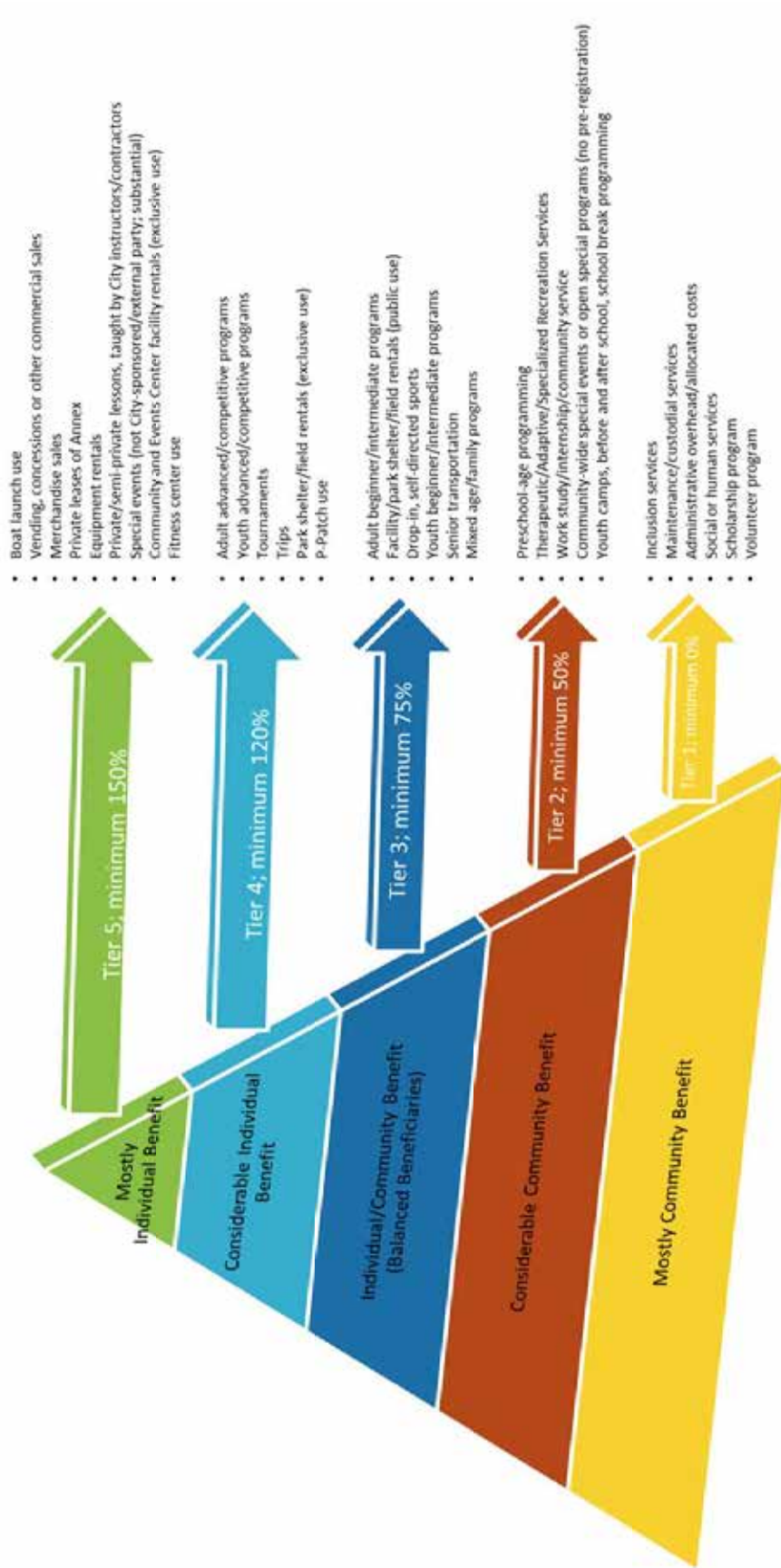


considered a direct or indirect cost. In addition, the Reset Team has identified shares of indirect costs that upper tier program fees may be constructed to recover. For example, the revenue received from the service category of “Community and Event Center facility rentals (exclusive use)” may help cover building utility costs. City staff will utilize this cost accounting tool each time a new program is designed, offered and evaluated, to ensure that its cost recovery can be calculated and assessed.



### **Mercer Island's Cost Recovery Pyramid**

The City's cost recovery pyramid is depicted below and in Appendix C.



Note: Categories of programs and services are listed in no particular order within each tier.

## RESOURCE ALLOCATION PHILOSOPHY

When an organization seeks to create better financial sustainability and wise investment of tax resources, establishing the cost recovery framework is critical. In addition, the cost recovery framework sparks the promotion of a resource allocation philosophy to govern which programs and services should be offered, why and with what resources. A resource allocation philosophy helps the City manage its resources according to its strategic goals. The philosophy involves balancing competing needs and priorities and determining the best way to maximize or optimize benefit using limited resources.

### Goals

The resource allocation philosophy has several aims:

- To support the cost recovery framework (i.e., some programs receive a greater share of tax dollars and some programs will subsidize others)
- To sustain core services (both social/public good core and business sustainability core)
- To be deliberate about where resources are going
- To offer services when the City is the best or most appropriate provider
- To be thoughtful about how to best offer services with feasible resources, including through partnerships or contracting
- To reflect the values, mission and priorities of the City and its residents
- To assist the City in meeting its performance and quality of service goals.

**The resource allocation philosophy provides the parameters for offering services and programs, and guidance to avoid offering too much or acting inconsistently or irresponsibly.**

### Core or Essential Services

Through the development of the Cost Recovery Pyramid, the City began identifying which programs and service categories could be considered “core” or “essential.” Having some degree of clarity about this is important when establishing a resources allocation philosophy. Simply stated, the level of resource support should be higher for core or essential services. This is how these terms are defined and how programs and services are categorized for the purpose of the Reset Strategy:

### **Social Good or Public Good Core**

These programs and services are those that may benefit all members of the community, are typically offered through tax support (rather than user/participant fees), and may focus on health, safety and equity or access.

In the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy, these programs are found in the lower tiers (predominantly 1 and 2) and will receive the greatest share of community investment.

### **Business Sustainability Core**

These programs and services produce revenue for the City that covers some of the indirect costs of programs or reduces the need for tax support for other programs. These programs and services are designed to meet the needs of the market and are offered with market rates in mind. These programs typically benefit individuals or specific groups.

In the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy, these programs are found in the higher tiers (predominantly 5 and 4) and are financially supported by the beneficiaries of the service.

### **Desirable Set**

Many programs and services could be labeled as desirable and this categorization is often the subject of debate. In part, the Reset Strategy labels categories of programs and services as “desirable” if they simply do not fall into either the social/public good core or the business sustainability core.

In the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy, desirable programs are largely clustered in the middle tiers of the pyramid. Desirable programs offered by the City should meet these criteria:

- The program is likely to generate sufficient revenues to offset its costs and meet cost recovery targets.
- Hosting the program at a City facility will not adversely affect the City’s ability to offer social/public good or business sustainability core services.
- High demand exists
- The program will serve a large population or significant, identified community need.

## Community Input on Resource Allocation

The City conducted a survey in early 2021 to gather input from community members about which types of programs should be offered, what types of users should be prioritized, and which types of programs should receive the greatest share of tax dollar support. Over 550 people participated in the survey. The survey responses provided valuable insight for the Reset planning project and validated the City’s initial work on the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy. (See Appendix D for the survey report.) Some of the highlights from the results include:

- **Use of tax dollars:** Respondents placed the greatest value in the types of programs and services found in Tier 1, 2 and 3. This is where the community investment should be placed (i.e., tax dollars). When asked which programs and services should receive the greatest share of tax support, respondents replied that “programs or services where there is a balance between individual and community benefit (example: providing summer camp opportunities for Mercer Island youth)” and “programs or services where the community benefits considerably, in addition to specific individuals (examples: safety programs for youths, or programs that provide fee-waivers or scholarships to increase accessibility to programs)” should receive the greatest share of community investment. “Programs or services where the individual participating benefits the most (examples: a resident taking an art or

fitness class)” had the least support for tax subsidy. Approximately half of the respondents were neutral or stated that little or no tax support should be given to a “few special events during the year, available to all community members.”

- **Choosing programs or services to offer:** One of the two strongest opinions on the delivery of programs spoke to how the MICEC should be used. Over 40% of respondents said that maximizing private evening and weekend use to support public programs and services was “really important.” Leveraging the facility in this way was “somewhat important” or “really important” to 74% of respondents. The second strong opinion about the facility’s use was that the MICEC should offer “something for everyone” (74% of respondents rated this as “somewhat important” or “really important”). It is also important to note that, although it had the lowest combined positive score (“somewhat important” + “really important”), over 60% of respondents said that offering services to under-served populations or those not served by the private marketplace was important.
- **Prioritizing programmatic use of space:** Survey respondents stated that use of the facility should be prioritized for these groups or interests (in rank order, from highest priority)
  1. Activities for seniors
  2. Activities for youth
  3. Programs for residents with special or adaptive recreation needs
  4. After-school and school break programs
  5. Fitness programs

Drop-in (no instructor) recreation/fitness opportunities (approximate tie with “Fitness programs”)

Survey respondents stated that the following groups or interests’ use of the facility were the lowest priorities (in ranked order, from lowest priority):

1. Other lifestyle, social or personal improvement programs
2. Activities for adults
3. Art programs
4. Special events open to the public
5. Organized athletics

Key take-aways from the survey include that respondents value that recreation programs and the MICEC serve a diversity of ages and interests. There is community support for private use of the facility that provides the means for public programs and services. Respondents felt the MICEC's space should be prioritized for seniors, youth, adaptive recreation, school break/after school, fitness and drop-in use. Many respondents advocated for avoiding competition with other Mercer Island entities and for the City to complement what is offered elsewhere. Many people expressed pride in the facility and the City's programs; they shared a desire to grow awareness and use of these assets and opportunities.

**"The community center is a great space and efforts should be made to expand use but keep it financially viable."**

**"I love that the Community Center can be a place for physical, mental and cultural activities for all."**

**"This is an amazing facility that should be used to engage the community with programming as well as generate operating revenue."**

**"MICEC is a beautiful facility and should be seen as a hub of gathering for our community. Thanks for giving residents the opportunity to complete this survey and share our ideas!"**



“(There are) many ways to increase revenue going forward which in turn will increase the value you can bring to the community and offer more low cost/subsidized programs for our multi generation population.”

“It's a valuable resource to us and well worth our tax dollars for its accessibility!”

*Quotations from survey respondents*

## Building and Maintaining the City’s Portfolio of Programs and Services

The cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy coupled with an understanding of the community’s values, priorities and needs provides the basis for designing the City’s recreation portfolio. Adhering to those parameters will require commitment and diligence, and a willingness to reassess from time to time.

The City’s initial portfolio should:

- Focus on delivering core and essential programs and services first (i.e., the social and public good core plus the business sustainability core). These are categories found in Tier 1 and possibly some Tier 2 plus those found in Tier 5 and possibly some in Tier 4 of the cost recovery pyramid.
- Focus on doing a few things well before starting more. The complete Reset will take time. At the outset, staffing, budget and other resources are limited. The community will benefit more from the City offering fewer, high-quality services rather than many, low-quality services.
- Put resources into enhancing City staff’s role as stewards (of public funds and facilities) by:

- Creating program development and evaluation tools
- Ensuring maintenance of building and equipment
- Building and tracking program-level budgets
- Reporting on cost recovery, access equity and other goals.

The following should also be considered as the City begins offering programs or as the City seeks to increase offerings:

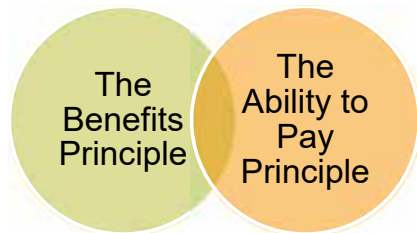
- As a group, Tier 1 services are a priority, but the City should evaluate the need for and the City's ability to provide the human services category and the volunteer program. The City should purposefully design offerings in these categories.
- Programs and services in Tiers 2 and some Tier 3 (including drop-in activities), should be added slowly and as properly resourced or as can be efficiently delivered.
- Additional Tiers 3, 4 and 5 services, could be added as they are able to be resourced, as they can be efficiently delivered, as any related fees and policies are established or updated, and as they are needed to subsidize the programs and services in Tiers 1, 2 and 3.
- The Reset Team recommends that the implementation strategy provide strong support for marketing, development of a volunteer program, and the successful operation of facility rentals and daytime uses of the MICEC.

To aid Staff in making decisions about what programs to offer in subsequent phases of the Reset and beyond, a consistent assessment and decision-making process is needed. The development of a new program evaluation tool is included as a future task in the Reset Roadmap. This tool may include utilizing a matrix to evaluate the need, the potential benefit, the resource demand, the consistency with the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy, and other factors prior to authorizing development and marketing of a new or pilot program.

Additionally, proper maintenance of the City’s recreation and MICEC portfolio will require ongoing program management to ensure designs target desired outcomes, and program assessment to stay in-tune with program life cycles and their abilities to meet cost recovery targets.

## PRICING

The City’s pricing strategy is the method for establishing and charging fees for recreation and MICEC services. The chosen method reflects both the Benefits Principle and the Ability to Pay Principle, where taxpayers or users’ contributions for a service reflect the benefits received from it, and where the price for the service reflects an individual’s ability to pay for the service such that an individual is not excluded from receiving that service. The City’s pricing strategy reflects the City’s desire to promote equity and inclusion.



There are typically four types of pricing strategies in the realm of recreation services:

1. Arbitrary (prices are set to reach an overall revenue target)
2. Market-based (prices are a product of demand for services or what the target market is willing to pay; in many cases this strategy results in setting fees at the midpoint or higher)

3. Competitor-based (prices are established to match, beat or exceed other providers; in many cases this strategy results in setting fees at the midpoint or lower)
4. Cost recovery pricing (prices are designed to reach cost recovery goals, within the range allowable by market and other conditions)

In addition, all of the strategies above could include a second strategy called “differential pricing,” where different fees are charged for the same service when there is no real difference in the cost of providing the service. (Differential pricing is explained in a subsequent section of this report.)

### **MICEC and Recreation Pricing Strategy**

The City’s strategy reflects market-based, competitor-based, cost recovery and differential pricing.

The goal of the pricing strategy is to set reasonable fees that are responsive to demand, market realities and minimum cost recovery goals, such that the overall operation is financially sustainable and Mercer Island residents of all income levels can participate.

The method for determining pricing includes conducting market and competitor research, employing established cost recovery targets, and applying policies and procedures related to differential pricing.

### **Fee study**

The City conducted a fee study to review the market and competition prices for benchmarked programs and services. The study helped the City understand what other providers are charging for similar services and how they are structuring those charges (e.g., as part of a membership fee, an ala cart fee, or a package). The City gathered information from area municipalities and private and non-profit providers for a sampling

of programs and services. Here are a few examples of the programs or services that were benchmarked:

- Meeting room rental
- Special events facility rental and related services
- Youth martial arts classes
- Fitness center use
- Drop-in activities

Collecting the fee study data was only one part of establishing the City's prices. Fees were also a product of the cost recovery targets and differential pricing.

## **Fee Schedule**

Fees will be set and maintained by the department director, per the municipal code. The list of fees, called a fee schedule, will be publicly posted annually as a reference for all potential users and participants.

A systematic approach to fee revisions is necessary to be thoughtful of customer tolerance for revisions, to give participants and users time to adjust, and to successfully communicate and demonstrate the value of the service or program. The fees should be evaluated every two years through a fee study and through an evaluation of the cost performance of each category and aggregated tier. Fees may be adjusted annually to keep up with the cost of delivering programs.

The City may establish differential pricing for some programs in the fee schedule or utilize a scholarship or financial assistance program that participants could utilize for those same programs or services.

## **Differential Pricing and the Scholarship Program**

Differential pricing involves offering variations of the price of a service or program to a particular group, which may result in more equitable and efficient service delivery. In differential pricing, different groups are charged different prices for the same service, even though there is no direct corresponding difference in the costs of providing the

service to each of these groups. Price differentials or fee waivers can be based on resident (taxpayer)/non-resident, age of participant, location of facility, time or season, quantity of use, incentives, reciprocity benefits for affiliates, or other considerations. Differential pricing can help stimulate demand, reach an underserved population, or shift demand to another time, place or date.

The City of Mercer Island has employed some differential pricing for many years by offering discounted rates for residents versus non-residents, an occasional break on prices for households registering multiple children, and through a scholarship or financial assistance program. The Reset Strategy recommends continuing these practices but examining the policy and procedures of the scholarship program for potential improvements and contemplating other potential ways differential pricing could be offered to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion. Many area municipalities offer similar scholarship programs, setting aside a budget each year for fee waivers. One critical element of these programs is how eligible recipients are defined and authorized.

Under the City's current program, Mercer Island residents who demonstrate income-based need and who are eligible for other types of governmental financial assistance (such as SNAP food benefits) can qualify for a scholarship of up to \$300 per year for an individual or up to \$500 per year for a household. Potential beneficiaries must apply for the scholarship for each program in which they wish to participate during the upcoming quarter, as Staff currently awards funds on a quarterly basis. Applications are screened by Youth and Family Services and then approved for the applicant's desired programs by Recreation's administration. In the future, the City may be able to accept applications for eligibility that continues for the entire year, and the City's financial management or recreation information system may be able to proactively apply the approved level of differential pricing or scholarship balance to each registration.

## **Alternative Sources of Funding and Support**

In general, there has been a decrease in the amount of tax support available to public parks and recreation departments across the nation. Mercer Island is no exception. As such, the need to seek alternative sources to financially support services has become

increasingly important. Alternative funding and support sources could include gifts, grants, donations, sponsorships, collaborations and volunteer contributions.

During the Immediate Action Phase (a period corresponding to the second half of 2021) of this Reset project, the City was able to pilot offering summer camps through a partnership. This was a good way to begin testing the City's ability to deliver programs through enhanced collaborations. It is quite likely that many other creative opportunities for partnerships exist, which could enable the City to meet community demand in the most efficient and effective way possible. Simply put, the City need not provide every service, nor does it need to be the direct provider for every program it offers.

Relatedly, the City could grow its capacity to utilize volunteers to deliver programs and services. This would help the City contain the costs of providing services and assist certain categories of programs or tier groups of services in meeting cost recovery targets. Volunteer programs certainly also require effective management and offer a wide range of other individual and community benefits.

## POLICY AND PROCEDURE ADJUSTMENTS

There are several program development tasks, policies and procedures that will require attention over the next few years to ensure consistency with the Reset Strategy. An initial list (shown by implementation phase) is included in Appendix E.

## RESET ROADMAP AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Implementation of the Reset Strategy will take a few years and will require ongoing collaboration between Staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the City Council and the public. A Reset Roadmap is provided in Appendix F. The phases of the Reset were designed in response to the stipulations in the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy, community input on values and priorities, and the near-term uncertainties of the pandemic.

While the Reset Team placed all the "past and potential" categories of programs and services that were listed in the cost recovery model in the phasing plan, **the City may not**

**offer every specific program nor every category of program in the future.** The Reset Strategy is not designed to simply restart everything that once was. This is a strategy designed to improve outcomes and align offerings to an overall community investment and prioritization structure. Individual program offerings will be determined as each phase is further developed. Actual program offerings will be the result of several factors, including an assessment of trends and program life cycle stage, competition and duplication in the community or area, desired program outcomes, partnership and cooperation possibilities, commitment level of potential participants, availability of resources, and consistency with the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy. Implementation of the Reset Strategy not only involves shaping supply (i.e., what services and programs are available), but may also serve to shape demand to a degree. Residents, patrons, and customers may develop a different and better sense of what they can receive from the City's recreation and MICEC.

The Reset Strategy should be reassessed for alignment with the in-progress Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan or as community needs and priorities change.



A tall, thin, abstract sculpture made of dark metal stands in a grassy park. The sculpture has a central vertical pole and several curved, blade-like elements at the base. In the background, there are lush green trees under a clear blue sky. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing the title text.

# APPENDIX G: COMPREHENSIVE ARTS & CULTURE PLAN

## CITY OF MERCER ISLAND COMPREHENSIVE ARTS AND CULTURE PLAN



*\* Photo courtesy of Sandy Glass*



*\* Photo courtesy of Mercer Island Reporter*



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## **PREFACE**

The Mercer Island Arts Council recognizes the importance of art as an enhancing event, occasion, and activity on Mercer Island. Including a culture component in the city comprehensive plan reflects this community value. The council is committed to assimilating positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members and removing two basic barriers to advancement: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation and (2) a lack of space. Our community has a historic tradition of public support for art, a value engendered in this cultural plan. Our objectives - aligned with those of the city council - are to embrace cultural vitality, identify and create adequate arts spaces, and collaborate with our unique and diverse community partners on Mercer Island.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The city of Mercer Island is committed to supporting and sustaining its rich and diverse cultural and arts identity. The arts play an integral role in the vitality and connectedness of a community. Indeed, the arts, culture, and heritage of a community are its heart.

Mercer Island is a town unique in its geographical character: it is a small town with distinct borders etched of lake water. Yet it is the most populated island situated in a lake in the country, comprised of a diverse population with rich cultural variety that nurtures and incubates creativity and invention from within its tight boundaries. Its identity was forged of ancient myth – of a lake that sank into the water at night and resurfaced each dawn. Not unlike a more famous mythical island that is shrouded in mist and magic. But unlike Avalon, Mercer Island’s magic is real. It is home to innovators, intellects, and artists all deeply committed to shaping an enchanted quality of living for its community.

It is this drive, and a commitment to lacing the arts into a shared ethos, that led a sizeable effort in the early 1990s to build art into public life on the Island. It was a vision born then that remains: ***to assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members.***

Yet more recently, division and process have weighted cultural and artistic progress on Mercer Island. Public input reveals ***two basic barriers to advancement: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation and (2) a lack of space.*** The city now aspires to resurface its cultural code, to bridge the gaps serving as barriers to progress, and to recommit to the preservation and cultivation of its heritage and arts identity.

By establishing this arts and culture comprehensive plan, the city formalizes its dedication to advancing the enrichment and unification of the whole community

through the arts. By delineating Mercer Island’s vision, challenges, and goals, this plan serves as a city blueprint to build upon existing arts capital and ensure arts are an essential support for Mercer Island’s present and future.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Mercer Island has a Historic Tradition of Public Support for Art.**

Mercer Island is a community deeply committed to enriching its quality of life through the arts. In 1985, the Mercer Island City Council passed ordinances establishing the Mercer Island Arts Council (MIAC) and the Municipal Art Fund. MIAC consists of 11 “working” board members who strive to nurture, promote, and support quality cultural art activities for the community. In 1985, MIAC won the National Parks and Recreation Association Dorothy Mullen Arts and Humanities award for its region. Its programs have won the award four additional times, and the national award in 1987.

In the early 1990s, Mercer Island experienced a dramatic reconfiguration of its landscape due to the widening of Interstate 90 and construction of Aubrey Davis Park (formerly “The Lid” park). In this change, the city saw opportunity. It envisioned enhancing the open space created by the corridor and complementing this unique landscape by providing positive public art experiences for a broad audience. To accomplish this, the city aimed to cover the entire two-and-a-half mile strip of I90 running through the city with sculptures, water parks, and trees. In this process, Mercer Island became the first community in the state to adopt a comprehensive plan that included the incorporation of artwork into parkland, natural open spaces, trails, and public life.<sup>1</sup>

Building on this innovative foundation and a vision to bring art to all, Mercer Island has continued to support arts and culture through its own programming and in associations with local arts organizations.

### **A small snapshot of recent arts activity includes the following:**

In 2009, the City approved a one-time emergency grant (funds moved from the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund for this purpose) to support Youth Theater Northwest.<sup>2</sup> In 2013, the city commissioned and installed a replacement play sculpture titled *Kenton’s Dragon* in Deane’s Children Park.<sup>3</sup> The city has partnered for twenty-five consecutive years with Wooden O/Seattle Shakespeare Company to present annual

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<sup>1</sup> Mercer Island 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

<sup>2</sup> Mercer Island City Council Meeting Minutes, June 15, 2009, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?AMID=1647>.

<sup>3</sup> See Mercer Island Arts Council Archive of Minutes, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?SectionID=-1&CCBID=2>.

Shakespeare in the Park performances at Luther Burbank Park. Each year, the productions draw more than five thousand local attendees.<sup>4</sup> Either by acquisition or donation, the city has added at least eight works to its public art collection in the past five years, including two murals at Luther Burbank park and a sculpture installation at Fire Station 92 on the south end commemorating 9/11.<sup>5</sup> The city maintains its indoor and outdoor galleries, which produce thousands of dollars of revenue for the city yearly.<sup>6</sup> The city supports local and regional musicians through its Mostly Music in the Park program, which produces live music performances for thousands of attendees yearly.<sup>7</sup>

### **Mercer Island Supports a Diverse Series of Arts Programming.**

The city provides art experiences that complement and celebrate its unique history, culture, and landscape. Mercer Island encourages positive art engagement for the broadest possible audience by offering regular music concerts, film series, outdoor Shakespeare performances, and community dances. It houses a rotating indoor art gallery, maintains an outdoor sculpture gallery, and sustains a large public art collection comprised of indoor and outdoor pieces, including paintings, sculpture, murals, and a town center streetscape project that embeds symbolic historical artwork into city infrastructure.

### **Highlights:**

**Mostly Music in the Park:** Mercer Island Arts Council’s annual summer concert series. Concerts feature various bands and artists from around the region, performing a wide variety of music.



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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, (In 2016, artists Sandy Glass and Jose Orantes completed a mosaic mural located in the Luther Burbank park playground incorporating student artwork. Fire Station 92 artwork “Gateway of Service” installed in 2015.).

<sup>6</sup> See Mercer Island Arts Council Archive of Minutes, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?SectionID=-1&CCBID=2>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

**Mercer Island Gallery:** Artwork by regional artists on display and for sale at this public gallery. Exhibits are updated approximately every two months.



**The Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery:** Located along the I-90 Corridor on Sunset Highway between 77th Ave SE and 80th Ave SE, the gallery displays sculptures for at least one year, on a rotating basis. The gallery was the first of its kind in the state. In 1997, in recognition of the gallery, the Arts Council received the Pacific Northwest Regional Arts and Humanities Award, given by the National Recreation & Park Association.



**Public Art Collection:** In addition to public outdoor sculpture, the city has a collection of small sculpture, paintings, murals, and other two-dimensional work in various public buildings, including the library, city hall, and the Mercer Island Community & Event Center.





**Sponsoring Community Building Art Events:** A community dance event is offered once a year incorporating live music, a dance lesson, and social dance time. Rock painting activities are sponsored at events to promote the community building “MI Rocks” movement. Interactive art installations are sponsored for the annual Summer Celebration event. MIAC hosted Washington State Poet Laureate, Todd Marshall, in 2015 for readings, writing events, and workshops.



*\* Photo courtesy of Ari Levitt*





**Mercer Island is Home to an Array of Arts Organizations and Activities.**

A sizable number of organizations support and house arts-focused programs on Mercer Island. The Island is home to hundreds of artists. It is the decades long home of an acclaimed youth theater group. It supports a world-renowned dance program for individuals with Parkinson’s disease as well as several quality youth dance programs. It is home to a visual arts league as well as many art galleries. The arts play a central role in Mercer Island life and culture.

**Highlights:**

**Carrucio’s:** Culinary arts event space.

**Children’s Youth Conservatory/Island Youth Ballet:** Youth ballet instruction and performances.

**Clarke and Clarke Art + Artifacts:** Art and objects of art gallery.

**Dance for PD®:** World acclaimed Dance for Parkinson’s program is offered in conjunction with Seattle Theater Group, Mercer Island Parks and Recreation, and the Mercer Island Arts Council. The program provides adapted dance classes for people with Parkinson’s disease and their caregivers.

**Fine Arts Advisory Council:** Nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting K-12 fine arts education in the Mercer Island School District.

**Island Books:** Bookseller hosting author events, book clubs, and children’s programs.

**Island Choral Experience:** Community-based youth choral and performing arts company.

**Mercer Island Art Uncorked:** Annual music, art, food, and wine tasting festival held in the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery.

**Mercer Island Center for the Arts:** Organization founded in 2013 with the goal of building a community arts facility on Mercer Island.

**Mercer Island Historic Society:** Established in 1954, the Mercer Island Historical Society collects, preserves, researches, records, and makes available the heritage of Mercer Island.

**Mercer Island School District:** Provides diverse art instruction and opportunity for students and includes the arts in its “Vision 2020” mission.

**Mercer Island Sister City Association:** Nonprofit community organization that promotes educational, cultural, and other exchanges between the citizens of Thonon-les-Bains, France, and Mercer Island.

**Mercer Island Visual Arts League:** Founded in 1961, MIVAL supports the visual arts of its members and the community. Members show their work throughout the year in local businesses and at MIVAL Gallery in the Town Center.

**Musical Mind Studio:** Youth musical education featuring conventional and adaptive training techniques.

**Nancy Stewart:** In conjunction with her pilot project, Sing with Our Kids, Nancy provides music resources and events in the community.

**Russian Chamber Music Foundation:** Organization providing Russian music performances, programs, and education.

**Stroum Jewish Community Center:** Community center hosting a wide array of arts events, including a film festival, films, music, speaker events, comedy, theater, and culinary arts events.

**SZ Gallery:** Art gallery offering monthly art walks and events.

**Youth Theatre Northwest:** Educational arts organization founded in 1984, providing drama education, performing opportunities, and live theater experiences for children and young adults.

## **CULTURAL VITALITY AND THE ISLAND'S ARTS GAPS**

Despite Mercer Island's rich tapestry of art and cultural offerings, there are gaps to be bridged. ***Mercer Island needs community art and heritage space and coordinated cooperation directing its art and culture activities.***

Numerous comments expressing the need for art space and cooperation amongst arts groups were collected at the Mercer Island Arts Council public engagement meeting on March 14, 2018.<sup>8</sup> It is not the first time the public has conveyed these challenges – they are long-standing issues that have been voiced in a variety of forums and engagement processes.

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<sup>8</sup> Mercer Island Arts Council Meeting, March 14, 2018, *Public Comment to the Draft Comprehensive Art Plan*, <http://www.mercergov.org/files/PublicEngagementDraftResponses.pdf>.

**Mercer Island Embraces Cultural Vitality.**

A sparkling feature of input received through these public engagement processes is the confirmation that Mercer Islanders embrace the integration of arts and culture into the concept of quality of life. A belief that arts are integral to the sustenance of a good community is prevalent.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, cultural vitality is “the evidence of creating, disseminating, validating, and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities.”<sup>10</sup> It is comprised of three chief domains: presence of opportunity for participation, cultural participation, and support.<sup>11</sup> Island community input demonstrates the need for further growth in the first domain: opportunity for participation, which flows from space availability and cooperation. Addressing these two unique Island needs will provide better opportunity for the fusion of art into the daily life of Islanders.

**The Island Lacks Adequate Arts Space.**

Island children’s theater group, Youth Theatre Northwest (YTN), lost its permanent home when the school district reclaimed its district-owned theater for construction of a new elementary school in 2011. Between 2011 and 2013, the city began addressing the impending need for a new home for YTN. This process revealed a larger community need for art space.<sup>12</sup> Demand for art activity space has only compounded since this time.

In 2014, a “for-profit business” displaced the community center art room.<sup>13</sup> Schedules at the two available performing art venues on the island, Mercer Island High School Performing Arts Center and the Stroum Jewish Community Center auditorium, are consistently full. Rents and fees for these spaces are rising. Churches on the island have historically provided space for art activities; however, changes in tax implications for these arrangements are leading to constraints on availability. The Historical Society has run out of space for storage of important historical documentation.

A multidisciplinary-oriented, centralized arts facility will serve not only to improve availability for arts on the Island but also act as a magnet for collaborative force.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/50676/311392-Cultural-Vitality-in-Communities-Interpretation-and-Indicators.PDF>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> City of Mercer Island City Council Meeting and Study Session Agenda and Packet, February 6, 2018, <https://sirepub.mercergov.org/meetings/cache/108/1xvxwb55umwiz145ykh02k55/45220504102018113531804.PDF>.

<sup>13</sup> Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, February June 11, 2014, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2266> (describing need for art space and better collaboration).

### **Coordinated Arts Cooperation Will Benefit the Island.**

A lack of coordination among arts groups on the island is a long-standing issue and a distinct barrier to opportunity and rich cultural development. Island art groups have made regular appearances at Mercer Island Arts Council meetings expressing the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of arts collaboration resources in the community.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, there is a long-standing perception in the community that the arts operate insularly on Mercer Island. Community art organizations have called for increased cooperation through resource development and focus on collaboration.<sup>15</sup>

Leadership at the Mercer Island Fine Arts Advisory Council has recently recognized this deficit and is working to improve island arts organizations' relationships by forming the "All for Arts" initiative.<sup>16</sup> Mercer Island is a small, robust, and tight-knit community. Communication among the arts organizations on the island should reflect this same sense of solidarity. Enhancing alliances of the local arts community will improve availability of resources and encourage healthier flow of information.

Building vision and goals into the city comprehensive plan that address the Island's arts and cultural needs operates as a first step in forging a thriving future for Mercer Island. By adopting this plan, the city welcomes the opportunity to address its gaps and to commit to enhancing the vitality and economic vibrancy of Mercer Island life.

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<sup>14</sup> Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, February 14, 2018, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2656> (describing need for collaboration); Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, April 13, 2016, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2472> (documenting local organization request for collaboration); Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, September 9, 2015, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2391> (documenting need for space update); Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, June 11, 2014, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2266> (describing need for art space and better collaboration).

<sup>15</sup> Shirley Qiu, *Mercer Island Gets in Touch with its Artsy Side*, March 13, 2016 Crosscut, <https://crosscut.com/2016/03/mercer-island-gets-in-touch-with-its-artsy-side>, (The need for better cooperation is historic and could be addressed through a community arts facility. Community arts advocates believe that arts organizations have "operated in different silos" and a central facility could act as a focal point for local organizations, improving cooperation challenges on the island.).

<sup>16</sup> Mercer Island Arts Council Minutes, February 14, 2018, <http://www.mercergov.org/Agendas.asp?Display=Minutes&AMID=2656> (documenting "All for Arts" presentation on the need for collaboration.)

## **VISION AND GOALS**

***Vision: To assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members.***

### **Mercer Island Aims for Deliberate, Focused Support for the Arts.**

To realize its vision Mercer Island will build on its foundational support for the arts to help foster economic and cultural sustainability in the years ahead. Through creative placemaking and innovative approaches to town center planning and community development, Mercer Island looks to leverage the power of arts and culture to advance livability, sustainability, and equity. Using strategies that honor Mercer Island’s unique arts traditions and integrate innovative approaches to economic and cultural stimulation, Mercer Island will centralize and celebrate the role of art in our community as it crafts a vibrant future.

Broadly defined goals uphold the vision through targeted policies to guide the city in its planning processes. Mercer Island’s arts and culture comprehensive plan goals are: (1) to support the arts on Mercer Island; (2) to nurture public art on Mercer Island; and (3) to preserve Mercer Island’s heritage.

These goals aim not only to foster community connection and improved quality of life but also to promote economic development. Direct and indirect economic impacts of investment in the arts are real and measurable. Using an input-output economic analysis model, Americans for the Arts’ Economic Impact Study documents the cultural and economic benefits of the arts.<sup>17</sup> On a national level in 2015, the nation’s nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$166.3 billion in commerce represented by \$63.8 billion in spending by arts organizations. This activity leveraged an additional \$102.5 billion in event-related spending by audiences. This economic activity supported 4.6 million jobs and generated \$27.5 billion in government revenue. The impact of this market is significant. Promoting increased arts investment and activity at a local level in the Mercer Island community would likewise drive substantial economic stimulus and revenue.

### **Arts Add Vitality to the Economy.**

The city’s commitment to prioritizing the arts in its forecasting and visioning occurs simultaneous to a greater Washington state concept to build a network of arts driven communities that intentionally foster economic growth through the arts and creative industries.

In May 2017, governor Inslee signed into law HB 1183 which, “[a]uthoriz[es] specified local governments, including municipalities . . . to designate a portion of

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<sup>17</sup> American for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: Summary Report*, 2015, [https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF\\_Files/ARTS\\_AEPsummary\\_loRes.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/ARTS_AEPsummary_loRes.pdf)

their territory as a creative district subject to certification by the Washington state arts commission.”<sup>18</sup> As a result of this legislation, the state arts commission, ArtsWA, launched an implementation program to develop certified creative districts in the state. Certified creative districts are community defined geographic areas that are devoted to developing and promoting arts, culture, and creativity for the purpose of building and supporting a robust creative economy.

Indeed, the impact arts and culture have on economic vitality are well-documented. In the United States, the arts and artists are drivers of innovation, help shape and direct economic achievement, and give the United States relevance in the global economy. Nationally, the arts have a remarkable presence. More than 670,000 or 4.01% of all businesses are involved in the creation or distribution of the arts, and they employ 3.48 million people (2.04% of all U.S. employees).<sup>19</sup> The vitality of Washington State’s creative economy reflects national statistics. In 2014, creative industries in Washington State represented \$19.2 billion in total industry earnings and employed more than 147,000 people.<sup>20</sup> Mercer Island’s Creative Vitality Index surpasses the state value of .97. With a Creative Vitality Index value of 1.31 and a population of more than 23,000 people in 2016, more than 1,100 were employed in creative jobs.<sup>21</sup> Supporting the arts is not just good press or simply for the kids; it’s business best practice.

Through implementation of this arts and culture plan and leveraging its existing and potential arts and culture assets, the city seeks to expand opportunities to unite the community and address financial challenges.

### **Approach.**

**Goal 1:** Support the arts on Mercer Island.

- Policy: Support implementation of and encourage community involvement in accessible, high quality performing, visual and literary arts programs, projects, and events.
- Policy: Provide educational art opportunities through Parks & Recreation curriculum.

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<sup>18</sup> HB 1183 – 2017-18,  
<http://apps2.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary?Year=2017&BillNumber=1183&Year=2017&BillNumber=1183>.

<sup>19</sup> Americans for the Arts, *The Creative Industries in the United States*, 2017,  
[https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/by\\_program/reports\\_and\\_data/creative/2017\\_UnitedStates\\_NationalOnePager\\_Color.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/by_program/reports_and_data/creative/2017_UnitedStates_NationalOnePager_Color.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Creative Vitality Suite, *Snapshot of the Arts in Washington State*, 2014,  
[https://www.arts.wa.gov/media/dynamic/docs/Washington\\_Page\\_1.jpg](https://www.arts.wa.gov/media/dynamic/docs/Washington_Page_1.jpg).

<sup>21</sup> Creative Vitality Suite, *Snapshot of the Arts in 98040*, 2016, [See Attachment A].



- Policy: Maintain a citizen Arts Council, which is advisory to the City Council and that spearheads arts programming and partnerships.
- Policy: Promote cooperation and local partnerships between the City of Mercer Island and artists, arts providers, nonprofit organizations, urban designers, architects, developers, and others to help improve the quality of the built environment.
- Policy: Coordinate and collaborate with the local school district to broaden accessibility and awareness of local art opportunities and to further art education.
- Policy: Coordinate and collaborate with local, regional, and national arts organizations, and through public and private partners to integrate art into the community via permanent installations and special events.
- Policy: Assess community art needs through community engagement and public involvement.
- Policy: Implement a creative district and accountability strategy to complement and enhance overall city economic development strategy and to foster a thriving creative economy.
- Policy: Support:
  - Efforts to secure space for art and cultural activities;
  - The establishment of a community maker space;
  - Opportunities for housing and/or live/work space for artists; and,
  - A multidiscipline-oriented community arts facility.
- Policy: Maintain a parity of public space for art and cultural activities when existing public art and cultural activity space is modified or eliminated.

**Goal 2:** Nurture public art on Mercer Island.

- Policy: Encourage diversity in public art.
- Policy: Maintain current and encourage new spaces for public art placement.
- Policy: Maintain and preserve the current collection and encourage the acquisition of additional public art.
- Policy: Incorporate public art in town center development design and site features.



- Policy: Maintain requirement that at least 1% of qualifying capital improvement projects' costs are set aside for public art acquisition, repair, and maintenance.
- Policy: Make an effort to incorporate public art into and surrounding transportation projects.
- Policy: Welcome and support community involvement in public art processes.

**Goal 3**: Preserve Mercer Island's Heritage.

- Policy: Promote awareness and appreciation of Mercer Island's history and historic resources.
- Policy: Support efforts to secure space for the preservation of Mercer Island's historical and cultural heritage and related archival materials.
- Policy: Promote public engagement with culture and heritage organizations.
- Policy: Support the curation of historical exhibits in the community.

## **ACTION AND ACHIEVEMENT**

Adoption of this arts and culture comprehensive plan is the first step in supporting and directing action to sustain and implement the policies to achieve Mercer Island's stated vision and goals. The city and public are eager to move forward together, as a unified body, to further enrich and enhance the community via arts and culture investment.

Art brings people together; it builds community. Mercer Island is a community accessed only via bridges. It is fortunate to have bridges linking to world-class art opportunities and facilities. However, bridges are needed not only to access art across a lake; bridges must be built within Mercer Island's community, to facilitate cooperation, solidify vision, and embolden a future flourishing with art opportunities of its own right.



### The Bridge Builder

An old man going a lone highway,  
Came at the evening, cold and gray,  
To a chasm, vast, and deep and wide,  
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim;  
The sullen stream had no fear for him;  
But he turned, when safe on the other side,  
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near,  
"You are wasting strength with building here;  
Your journey will end with the ending day;  
You never again will pass this way;  
You've crossed the chasm, deep and wide-  
Why build you this bridge at the evening tide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:  
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,  
"There followeth after me today,  
A youth, whose feet must pass this way.

This chasm, that has been naught to me,  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."

- Will Allen Dromgoole

# ATTACHMENT A

## Snapshot of the Arts in 98040 2016



### Creative Vitality Index

**1.31**  
CVI Value

United States CVI = 1.0

This regional snapshot report gives the big picture of a region's creative landscape. It provides an overview of creative jobs, industry earnings, FDR grants, and Nonprofit revenues.

### Total Population

**23,429**

### Past 5 years of CVI Performance



### GAIN

▲ 3%  
since 2015

### 2016 Creative Jobs



**1,105**

Total Creative Jobs

There are 30 more creative jobs in the region since 2015

### Occupations with greatest number of jobs



### GAIN

▲ 6%  
since 2015

### 2016 Creative Industries



**\$34.9M**

Total Industry Earnings

There is a gain of \$2.0 million in creative industry earnings in the region since 2015

### Industries with greatest earnings



### LOSS

▼ 59%  
since 2015

### 2016 Cultural Nonprofit



**\$2.2M**

Nonprofit Revenues

There are \$3.1 million less in revenues in the region since 2015

CVSuite does not have grant data for 2016.



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# APPENDIX H: SUMMARY OF PAST PLANS



## Citywide Plan Summaries

### City Comprehensive Plan 2015-2035

The adopted City Comprehensive Plan identifies several community values related to the provision of a parks and recreation system on Mercer Island:

- “Livability is Paramount,” which translates into the feeling that Mercer Island is “the nicest of places for everyone to live.”
- “Cherish the Environment” recognizes that residents are “stewards” of the island environment, and environmentally sensitive lands will be prioritized.
- Maintain Environmental Value through implementing policies aimed at preserving and enhancing the Island’s physical characteristics.

The preservation of open space (trees and green spaces) continues to be a primary means to attain the community’s quality-of-life vision and is reinforced through stated goals in the Comprehensive Plan. Land Use policies (under Goal 19) and Parks and Open Space policies (under Goal 20) outline steps to continue Mercer Island’s unique quality of life through open space preservation, park and trail development, and well-designed public facilities. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that a more specific policy direction for parks and open space shall be identified in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Plan.

Parks and Open Space-related comprehensive plan amendments:

- 2017: 19.13 Pursue a trail lease agreement from the Washington State Department of Transportation to allow for the development of an I-90 Connector Trail to establish a pedestrian connection between Luther Burbank and Town Center.
- 2018: 20.13 Support the conservation of private property on Mercer Island through the use of conservation tools and programs including, but not limited to, the King County Public Benefit Rating System and Transfer of Development Rights programs.

The next update to the City Comprehensive Plan will be adopted by 2024, and the revised PROS Plan will likely be incorporated as an appendix.

### Parks and Recreation Plan 2014-2019

The six-year Parks and Recreation Plan (now known as the Parks, Recreation and Open Space or PROS Plan) was adopted in 2014 and outlined a blueprint for maintaining and enhancing the quality of life on Mercer Island. At the time of adoption, the Parks and Recreation Department was responsible for operating and maintaining over 460 acres of parks and open space, 30 miles of trails, over 150 annual recreation programs and events, and a 42,000 square foot community center. The Plan identified a six-year list of proposed capital projects through a comprehensive conditions and assessment process combined with the recommendations from adopted master plans for Mercedale Park, Pioneer Park, Homestead Field, and Luther Burbank Park, as well as the Open Space Vegetation Plan and Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan.

The Parks and Recreation Plan focused on maintaining current levels of service, upgrading and maintaining parks and facilities, developing new recreational opportunities, implementing master plans and vegetation management plans, balancing usage priorities at the community center, and developing new trail connections. The proposed capital project list included over \$20 million of improvements, repairs, and renovations to the Mercer Island parks and open space system.

### Open Space Vegetation Plan

The Open Space Vegetation Plan was adopted in 2004 and updated in 2015. This plan series has guided the management of 300+ acres of public open space. It established levels of service and prioritized certain landscape types that have high value or unique functions. The 2015 update added a goal to foster climate-resilient plant communities that can recover from disturbances and adapt to climate change. It also changed the levels of service from the 2004 plan to define objectives that better meet these revised goals.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan

The 2010 Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities (PBF) Plan updated key policies and prioritized future improvements for alternative transportation opportunities in the City. The PBF Plan sought to expand the flexibility of the non-motorized system and introduced new design concepts to continue to increase the mobility needs of persons of varying ages and abilities. The PBF Plan acknowledged the increase in public support for non-motorized facilities and the strong relationship between community health and higher levels of walkability. The PBF Plan emphasized key corridor projects that would provide greater connectivity and safety improvements for routes to and from elementary schools. The concept of routine accommodation was recognized for ensuring that pedestrian and bicycle needs should be factored into all transportation projects, both new construction and reconstruction. The PBF Plan lists project priorities for inclusion in the six-year transportation improvement program (TIP) and a 20-year project list to achieve connectivity, safety, and mobility goals.

## Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan

The Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan for Mercer Island, adopted in 2018 and incorporated into the Citywide Comprehensive Plan, acknowledged the importance of arts, culture, and heritage in enhancing the quality of life on Mercer Island. The Arts and Culture Plan describes the history of arts and culture on Mercer Island and the commitment to supporting arts, culture, and heritage in the community.

Public input during plan development revealed two fundamental barriers to the advancement of arts and culture progress in the community: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation among community arts, culture, and heritage groups, and (2) a lack of space for creating and participating in arts, culture, and heritage opportunities. The Plan's vision for Mercer Island is "to assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members." The Plan's goals are to support the arts on Mercer Island; to nurture public art on Mercer Island, and to preserve Mercer Island's heritage. The Arts and Culture Plan proposed a framework for future progress with specific emphasis on more effective collaboration across organizations, programs, and activities, and the creation of a shared physical arts space.

## Shoreline Master Plan Policies

The City's adopted Shoreline Master Plan addresses public access to increase and enhance access to waterfront recreational opportunities along the Mercer Island Shoreline, and, where appropriate, street-end facilities. The planning work acknowledges that universal/ADA access needs to be considered when developing public access to shoreline areas. As required by the State program, the resources and amenities of Lake Washington are to be protected and preserved for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

## Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services Strategy

In the fall of 2020, amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, a consultant-led staff team began developing a "reset" plan to deliver recreation programs and re-open the Mercer Island Community & Event Center (MICEC). While the impacts of the pandemic were the primary cause of this action, the City had been working to strengthen the fiscal sustainability of the Recreation Division for several years.

Along with the Parks & Recreation Commission, the project team analyzed past programs and services, revenues and costs, community needs, and identified opportunities and challenges. The work developed program assessment tools, focused services to best support the community, and established a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy and a pricing strategy, among other project outcomes. The result of the project was the Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services Strategy, adopted by the City Council in July of 2021. This strategy will help guide future recreation services and the use of the MICEC and the parks system.

## Master Plan Summaries

### Audrey Davis Park Master Plan

Adopted in December 2019, the Audrey Davis Park (ADP) Master Plan established the vision and recommendations for the 2.8 -mile park along I-90, including the Park on the Lid, the Mountains to Sound Trail, the Boat Launch, and the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery. The master plan is organized into four main categories: vegetation management, trails improvements, park improvements, and arts, culture & placemaking. The master plan is also intended as a platform to renegotiate the maintenance agreement with WSDOT, the primary owner of the park.



City of Mercer Island park staff maintain Aubrey Davis Park based on agreements with WSDOT from 1987 and 1989. The final master plan proposed vegetation management strategies to improve the landscape and open space areas, including soil amendments, infill plantings, and lawn modification to reduce maintenance and water use. Trail recommendations include improved safety through clear sightlines, re-established shoulders, potential targeted trail realignment near the Lid A restrooms, integrated wayfinding, and new ADA access.

The ADP Master Plan recommendations proposed improved ADA accessibility where facilities would be upgraded. New facility projects include a restroom near West Mercer Way, an off-leash dog area and enhanced shoreline access at the boat launch.

The ADP Master Plan arts, culture, and placemaking recommendations propose creating and strengthening community connections through arts and culture with direct ties to the City's public art process. The implementation of the ADP Master Plan recommendations prioritized the projects using criteria that mirror the City's Capital Improvements Program, with public safety as the highest priority.

### Homestead Field (Park) Master Plan

Potential future developments of Homestead Field were explored in a public process from 2001 to 2003 that provided a consensus on desired future park improvements. Improvements included hooded backstops, baseball viewing area pavement, pathway improvements, picnic tables, drinking fountain, batting cage, and an ADA ramp from parking to play areas.

### Luther Burbank Park Master Plan

In 2006, the Luther Burbank Park Master Plan identified a long-term vision for operations and future improvements to the park. The goals of the master plan were to retain and enhance the park's value, identity, uses, and facility needs. The Luther Burbank Park Master Plan identified proposed improvements following guiding principles to embrace natural systems, maintain park character, manage vegetation, improve park infrastructure, and improve the park arrival experience. The Master Plan divided the park into zones, related to uses, location, and character to better describe the variety and uniqueness of targeted improvements.

### Luther Burbank Boiler Building Study

The 2017 Boiler Building Study evaluated the existing structures for safety and identified options for public use through renovations and estimated project construction costs. The Study also reviewed options for expanding building uses in supporting summer boating programs. The Boiler Building currently supports paddle camps as a restroom and storage facility. The 2006 Luther Burbank Park Master Plan envisioned this building to be occupied, offering classes and rentals in addition to summer camps. It would provide the operational facilities to support these programs.

The 2017 Study recommended two phases of improvements to the site. Phase I includes general repairs to address aging infrastructure needs and seismic reinforcement. Bathrooms would be remodeled for accessibility, and new roofing would be installed for both structures. Phase II includes accessibility improvements to the site from the main campus area of the Park, a remodeled concession area, and additional classroom and office spaces to support expanded programming.

### Mercerdale Park Master Plan

Adopted in 1998, the Mercerdale Park Master Plan called for a public plaza, play spaces for children, walking pathways, natural area trails, and future use for elderly housing, a senior/community center, a Thrift Shop, and a Recycling Center. Much of the proposed park development was completed.

Mercerdale Park includes a sewer line running north to south through the middle of the park. Some of the amenities at Mercerdale Park are aging and are due for renovation or replacement, which includes the Skate Park and the Recycling Center/Restroom building. An updated Master Plan may be warranted to address these needs.

### Pioneer Park Master Plan

The Pioneer Park Master Plan, prepared in 2001, addressed the overall vision for this vital asset and identified key issues related to open space management. Themes included natural resource management, acceptable levels of public use, trail system design and layout, and the character of the open space.

The Plan was built on previous studies relating to invasive plant species, forest health conditions, soils, and slopes. The City's Parks and Recreation Department and the Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust collaborated on the master planning process to



guide the management and proposed improvements to Pioneer Park as an open space public land. The preparation of the property's forest/vegetation management planning was recognized as equally important to the master plan and was conducted concurrently. The Master Plan recommendations included trail hierarchy improvements, viewpoints, street crossings, interpretive signage, boundary marking and landscape enhancements.

## Other Planning and Policy Studies

### Parks Impact Fees Ordinance 15C-22 (2015)

The City of Mercer Island adopted Ordinance 15C-22 establishing park impact fees for new development consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Parks Capital Facilities Plan. The impact fees created a mechanism to ensure that new development paid its share of new capital costs. This program ensures that there are adequate park facilities at the time that new development occurs.

### Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan (2003, 2009) and Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey (2008)

#### 2003 & 2009 - Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan

For over a year in late 2002 and into 2003, the Open Space Conservancy Trust developed a forest management plan that provided direction for management and intervention within Pioneer Park to maintain the native forest ecosystem, protect public safety, and enhance positive uses of the park over the long-term. The Forest Management Plan focused on the 118-acre Pioneer Park and its three 39-acre blocks of second-growth western-hemlock forest and one of the largest relatively unfragmented forest habitats remaining on the Island. Laminated root rot was killing Douglas fir trees while age claimed many alders and maples in the park.

As these trees were dying, they left "gaps" in the tree canopy of the park. Invasive, non-native plants, notably ivy, holly, and blackberry, were widespread in the park and taking over wherever trees were dying. They were preventing the regrowth or "regeneration" of canopy trees. As a result, the Plan was developed to guide future vegetation and forest work priorities and was subsequently adopted by the City Council on December 15, 2003.

#### 2008 - Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey and Forest Health Work Plan

Following the December 2006 Hanukkah Eve storm, the Mercer Island City Council considered whether enough was being done to restore the tree canopy in Pioneer Park. The City Council commissioned a Forest Health Survey to quantify prescribed forest health factors. The study discovered several conditions that the existing Forest Management Plan was not adequately addressing. The work plan changed the focus of the restoration work in Pioneer Park from a site-based approach to a systemic approach. For example, the Forest Health Survey found that canopy regeneration, invasive trees and ivy were of particular concern. A Forest Health Work Plan proposed new projects designed to address these critical issues park-wide while holding the line where site-based comprehensive restoration was already underway. Together, the Forest Health Survey and the Forest Health Work Plan were appended to the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan by the Open Space Conservancy Trust in 2009.

#### Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report

This staff-prepared assessment, completed in 2018, provides a comprehensive evaluation of current and future trail upkeep and safety needs to ensure the best management practices for the City's extensive trail network. It included a complete inventory of trail assets in public parklands. Regular maintenance has kept most of the trail system in good condition. The more complex infrastructure of the trail network, primarily stairs and retaining walls, was in various stages of disrepair or advanced rot. The Report prioritizes addressing these structural conditions and recommends the timing for repair or replacement. In specific situations, certain sets of stairs were identified for possible decommissioning.

#### Tree Canopy Assessment

Mercer Island's urban forest is a valuable asset that provides residents and visitors with many ecological, environmental, and community benefits. This assessment analyzed the City's urban tree canopy (UTC), possible planting area (PPA), and change in UTC over 10 years (aerial imagery from 2007-2017). The results provide baseline data to develop strategies to protect and expand Mercer Island's trees and natural areas during planning and development. The maps and projects report help to concentrate efforts in areas where needs are greatest, tree planting space is available, and benefits can be realized.



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# APPENDIX I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



## Historical Background

Mercer Island began settlement in 1876 and early speculation led to claiming of all land by 1890. In 1924, a bridge was built over the East Channel, connecting Mercer Island with the eastern mainland. Until 1940, when the first floating bridge to the west was built, this was the only vehicle access to the Island. As the population grew in the 1950s, Islanders looked for local government to provide for the type of lifestyle they desired. In 1960, the Town of Mercer Island and the City of Mercer Island were created. As growth slowed in the early 1970s, the Town and City were merged.

In the 1970s, residents were growing concerned about their environment, resulting in the passage of the Steep Slope, Land Clearing, and Watercourse Ordinances providing firm policy on the preservation of open spaces. During this time, residents also passed several bond issues to purchase park and open space land or improve existing holdings.

The provision of adequate park and recreational facilities, and the conservation of natural areas are important to Mercer Island residents. The following inventory of selected studies, plans, events, and bond issues demonstrates the extent of the community's efforts to preserve open space and fulfill recreational and community facility needs.

### 1961 - Park and Community Activities Board

The Park and Community Activities Board were created in 1961 to oversee park uses, development, and recreation programming. Lands were being considered for park use and resources for recreational programming. King County and the City of Seattle were the primary providers of recreation activities until the Board hired a part-time Recreation Director in 1961. The new Director was employed on a part-time basis, also working as the School District Athletic Director. A full-time director was hired for the first time in 1965. The Parks and Recreation Department moved into the Luther Burbank Park Administration Building, then called the Luther Burbank Community Center in 1971, and the Mercer View Elementary School was first leased to the City as a Community Center in 1980.

### 1962 - Dragon Park

The Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) actively fundraised to help develop a children's park as part of Island Crest Park, originally owned and operated by King County. MIPA solicited support from service organizations to help purchase equipment and develop what became known as Dragon Park, due to a 50' long plaster and metal dragon feature. After taking a lead stewardship role in the maintenance and care of the area, MIPA handed over park responsibilities to the City of Mercer Island in August of 1965. The park was later named Deane's Children's Park in honor of Lola and Phil Deane, who were active in developing the park and other youth and civic activities. The City and MIPA have partnered in subsequent improvements over the years, including a significant renovation in 2005.

### 1963 - A Preliminary Park and Recreational Plan

The Preliminary Park and Recreational Plan was the City of Mercer Island's first attempt to comprehensively plan for the Island's recreational needs. The plan introduced an open space classification for unbuildable areas and recommended such sites for acquisition by the City. The plan also proposed a trail system through designated open space areas along East Mercer Way, across the University of Washington properties (Pioneer Park), and up to Island Crest Park.

### 1963 - Circulation and Recreation Planning

#### John Graham and Company

The John Graham Study was the first significant report dealing with the recreational needs of the Island. The report noted that the Mercer Island lacked public recreational facilities primarily because most residents could provide for their own recreational needs. It was found that Mercer Island residents would be willing to spend money to acquire "just plain old open space" in order to preserve the natural features of the Island.

### 1964 - Park Bond Issue

In 1964, Islanders approved an \$890,000 bond issue for acquisition and minor development of the University of Washington & Catholic Archdiocese properties (Pioneer Park).

## 1966 - Park and Open Space Plan

The Planning Commission, Park Board, and City of Mercer Island staff drafted the Park and Open Space Plan. It was the first parks plan to be officially adopted. The plan emphasized parkland acquisition to serve projected population levels. Recreational standards were adopted as goals that could be modified in the future, if necessary, to meet the particular characteristics of the Island. An open space system was introduced, which combined individual parks into one system, provided safe access, and utilized ravines and other unbuildable areas for paths and trails.

## 1968 - Parks Master Plan

The Parks Master Plan, prepared by the Parks and Recreation Department and adopted by the City Council in 1968, was a further step by the City toward developing a workable parks and recreation plan. It provided guidelines for parkland acquisition and development of existing park sites, along with a six-year capital improvement program. The Master Plan continued the City's efforts to develop the concepts in the 1966 Park and Open Space Plan.

## 1969 - Mercer Island Planning Phase I Population Land Use Economics

The Phase I Planning Study prepared by Harstad Associates, Inc. clarified, for the first time, the amount of developed and undeveloped land on the Island. In 1968, out of a total of 4,127 acres of land on the Island, 3,062 acres were developed, and 1,065 acres were undeveloped. It was found that most of the undeveloped land was in areas of 25 percent slope or more (the areas previously considered unbuildable).

## 1969 - Golf Course Advisory Ballot

In 1969, an advisory ballot to build a golf course on the eastern 80 acres of Pioneer Park was presented to and defeated by the voters. This was the first in a series of attempts to build a golf course on Mercer Island.

## 1970 - A Proposal for Planned Saturation for Mercer Island

A proposal prepared by Moss-Ralston introduced the much-debated concept of limiting the Island's population growth by utilizing "trading dollars" to purchase open space land. Open space land would be purchased with the money taxpayers would save by not extending the services required to support a saturation population. The report recommended that the City acquire and establish use restrictions on approximately 670 acres of undeveloped land to obtain paths, greenbelts, and open space land.

A follow-up analysis of the Moss-Ralston proposal proved that the cost of purchasing the 670 undeveloped acres was beyond the City's budget and introduced other methods short of outright purchase to acquire some or all of the undeveloped land for public use. The study also inventoried undeveloped land areas, and derived cost per acre figures for each of the Island's major geographic areas. An analysis of the cost per acre figures revealed that it would be more cost-effective for the Island to buy steeply sloping, unplatted areas rather than platted sites.

A second follow-up study of the Moss-Ralston proposal by a "Greenbelt Steering Committee" concluded that although the dollars saved by not extending services offset the cost of land acquisition, there were other equally important intangibles that would be provided by the acquisition of open space areas. It was recognized that the preservation of open space to protect the Island's natural drainage areas and hillsides was a justifiable end in itself. The Greenbelt Steering Committee recommended a priority land acquisition schedule based on the probability of land being lost to development. A \$5,000,000 bond issue (see below) was recommended to purchase approximately 400 acres.

## 1971 & 1972 - Bond Issues

In 1971, a \$2,000,000 bond issue was presented to Mercer Island voters. The bond issue was the first phase of a \$5,000,000 plan to purchase approximately 400 acres of wooded ravines and hillsides. All parcels to be purchased were two or more acres in size. The proposed levy would have increased property taxes by approximately three percent. The proposal was endorsed by the voters but did not receive the voter turnout necessary for implementation.

Following a strong positive indication of support from a sample survey, a \$2,900,000 bond issue was presented to the voters in September 1972. One part of the issue proposed \$1,200,000 for open space. Other parts proposed \$500,000 for parks, and \$300,000 for trails. The open space and parks issues failed by a significant margin. The trails issue passed with 64 percent of the vote.

## 1972 - Natural History of Pioneer Park

Citizens recognized that the 113.95-acre Pioneer Park represented a valuable natural resource to Mercer Island. To better indicate the general uses for which Pioneer Park would be suited, the Mercer Island Environmental Council prepared an inventory and analysis of the park's wildlife, vegetation, hydrology, climate, and aesthetic qualities. The City published a revised edition in January 1990.



### 1972 - Mercer Island Capital Improvements Program

The Mercer Island Capital Improvements Program, developed in 1972 by Harstad Associates, Inc., identified goals for capital improvements and nominated capital improvement and community facilities projects for completion over a year time frame.

### 1972 - Mercer Island Comprehensive Planning Study

The Mercer Island Comprehensive Planning Study, also prepared by Harstad Associates, Inc., discussed the need to incorporate environmental considerations into the land development process. The study also included an urban design program, a discussion of community facilities, an arterial plan proposal, and a draft Planned Unit Development ordinance. The document was used to adopt the Design Commission and Land Clearing Ordinances in 1972, the Watercourse Ordinance in 1974, and the Steep Slope Ordinance in 1978. The 1973 Community Facilities Plan and the 1976 Arterial Plan were additional outgrowths of the study.

### 1973 - Pioneer Park Concept Plan

The City of Mercer Island prepared a concept plan for the uses of Pioneer Park. This plan proposed various recreational improvements in the Park. The northwest section would be designed for family use and would contain pedestrian/ bicycle trails, benches, trash receptacles, a picnic area, and a perimeter equestrian trail. The southeast section would be for pedestrians, bicycles, and horses, and have pedestrian/bicycle trails and some equestrian trails. The northeast section would be used for environmental education and contain trails, interpretive markers, portable toilets, and safety improvements. This plan also called for the acquisition of property or easements to allow access to the northeast ravine from East Mercer Way. Some of these improvements have been installed; others have been funded through the 1983 Bond Issue.

### 1975 - Outdoor Education. Athletic Facility Study

In a study performed by Hogan and jointly funded by the City of Mercer Island and the Mercer Island School District, school facilities were evaluated in terms of their educational and park and recreational potential to maximize the use of available facilities for educational and recreational purposes.

### 1976 - Golf Course Feasibility Study

The Golf Course Feasibility Study, prepared by the Windscott Company, recommended that the City develop a nine -hole golf course, a driving range,

clubhouse, and indoor tennis facility on the School District’s “South 40” property (now, “The Lakes” subdivision). This recommendation was supported by the City Council and included as part of a \$2.5 million 1976 Bond Issue for parks improvement.

### 1976 - Bond Issue

Voters rejected this ballot issue, which included the “South 40” improvements discussed above, along with improvement of the Middle School athletic fields, renovation of Island Crest Park, and improvements at Homestead, Groveland, and Clarke Beach parks. The bond issue was supported by a majority of the voters but failed to receive the voter turnout necessary for implementation.

### 1979 - Bond Issue

\$1.4 million was requested in 1979 to acquire 17 hillside acres adjacent to the Mercerdale property, between the business district and surrounding single-family residential area. If passed, the wooded character of the property would be preserved, and development would consist of trails and trail appurtenances. The proposal received 85 percent voter approval. Trails within the 1.3-mile-long greenbelt between SE 40th and SE 27th and between the business district and First Hill were completed in 1981.

### 1980 - Mercerview Elementary School – Community Center Lease Agreement

A lease agreement was established with the Mercer Island School District for the Mercer View Elementary School and property, which was approximately 8.4 acres. Originally built in 1960, the school was closed because of declining enrollment. The first year lease was set at \$84,000 and \$21,000 annually thereafter. In 1985, the annual payment of \$21,000 was eliminated as the City agreed to maintain 17 acres of School District athletic fields at South Mercer Playfields.

Subsequently in 2002, the property was finally purchased from the Mercer Island School District. The 4-building facility served approximately 120,000 residents and visitors each year. The 27,000 sq. ft. Center provided office space for the Parks and Recreation Department and Youth and Family Services Department, as well as rooms for recreation programs serving youths, teens, adults, families, and seniors and for rentals (i.e., Weight Watchers, ski clubs, Chamber of Commerce luncheons, business and community meetings, etc.). A small gymnasium, weight room, and a public art gallery were also included in this facility. This facility served as the City’s community center until 2004 when a new facility was built.

### 1983 - Bond Issue

A \$2 million bond issue for general parks improvement received 62% voter approval in 1983. Improvement plans included installing sports fields with appropriate lighting, restrooms, parking areas, and landscaping on 17 acres of semi-developed property at Islander Middle School (now South Mercer Playfields) and Island Crest Park. Other improvements would occur at the City's street ends, Clarke Beach, Groveland Beach, Pioneer, and Homestead Field Parks.

### 1984 - Bond Issue

In 1984, a \$2.4 million bond issue was presented to the voters to acquire three surplus school district properties, including 17 acres of the "South 40" property, west of Islander Middle school, the "Secret Park" property, and the East Seattle School property. Development funds would also have been provided for the improvement of East Seattle School. The issue was supported by 52% of the voters, but failed to receive the voter turnout necessary for implementation.

### 1987 - Secret Park Purchase

In 1987, the City Council agreed to purchase Secret Park, which was being surplus by the School District. Voters approved using the unallocated funds from the 1979 Bond Issue for this transaction.

### 1988 - Bond Issue

In May 1988, Mercer Island voters passed a \$1.7 million bond issue to purchase 7 acres of vacant property between I-90 and Gallagher Hill Road, east of Shorewood. This land consisted of two parcels - 1.3 acres owned by an insurance company, zoned Commercial Office, and 5.67 acres (zoned multi-family R-2) for which permits had been submitted for the development of 122 apartment units.

### 1988 - Mercerdale Task Force Report

Following the establishment of a new City Hall on the old "Farmers" site at 9611 SE 36th St., a community task force was appointed to study the future use of Mercerdale Field. A passive use plan was adopted in June 1988, which included a plaza, water feature, paths, lawns, and benches.

### 1989 - King County Bond Issue

In November 1989, King County voters approved a county-wide bond issue for the purchase of open space. Two Mercer Island projects were included in the list of land to be purchased: 21 acres along SE 53rd Place, and 15,000 square feet adjacent to the Mercerdale Hillside open space.

The City purchased the Mercerdale site, but unfortunately the SE 53rd Place land was put on the market and sold to a private developer for \$3.5 million (significantly more than the \$1 million authorized by the bond issue). After negotiations with the developer, the City was able to secure the purchase of the land. Bridge financing was used until October 1991.

### 1990 - Hebert Studies

In late 1989 and early 1990, the City commissioned Hebert Research Inc. to perform two different surveys. The first addressed human service needs, including recreational programming, support for improvements and Community Center use. The second study was designed to survey Mercer Island attitudes toward the size of single-family housing.

### 1990 - Golf Sub-Committee Report

In March 1989, a group of residents asked the Park and Community Activities Board (PCAB) to consider using a portion of Pioneer Park for a 9-hole executive golf course. Following a series of public meetings, the PCAB voted to establish a golf sub-committee. This sub-committee met bi-weekly between November 1989 and June 1990. The majority report (subsequently accepted by the PCAB and sent to the City Council for action) recommended placing the golf course issue on the November 1990 ballot. A public hearing on the recommendation was held before the City Council in August 1990. In September 1990, the City Council rejected the committee's recommendation, effectively halting the proposal. Staff was also directed to research methods to designate Pioneer Park as a natural area.

### 1990 - Pioneer Park General Master Plan

As an update to the 1973 concept plan previously adopted by the City Council, the new plan was presented to the Park and Community Activities Board in June 1990. The Plan was not ever adopted by the City Council.

### 1991 - Ballfield User Group (BUG)

A group of community sports organizations, known as the Ballfield User Group (BUG), came together in 1991 to address growing demands on athletic facilities and reduce the number of conflicts occurring between teams, organizations, and officials. With the demand on fields growing each year, field conditions were deteriorating, and safety was a concern. Bringing together the main youth and adult athletic agencies provided the City with better communication channels and the ability to instill the priority of ongoing maintenance.

The role of the Ballfield User Group was to provide



feedback to the Parks and Recreation Department and to support Department policies and operations. Participating organizations were the Parks and Recreation Department, Parks Maintenance, School District Maintenance, the High School, the Middle School, the Boys and Girls Club, the Soccer Association, and the Jewish Community Center. The Island Baseball Club and the Lacrosse Club were added in 2000.

### 1992 - Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust

City Council established the Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust in response to the many needs and strong desire to maintain, protect, and preserve open space on the Island. The Trust's role is to receive and hold title to real property, or interest in real property and to ensure the development and use of the Open Space Properties are consistent and compatible with the intent and purposes of the Trust and guidelines and policies enacted by the City Council.

### 1994 to 2001 - Skate Park at Mercerdale Park

The original 50' X 70' skate facility at Mercerdale Park was constructed in 1994 as the first unsupervised skate facility in the region. Members of the Park and Community Activities Board (PCAB), local youth and their parents, staff, and representatives from the City Council worked for over a year to develop a safe area for skateboarding activities.

Due to the immense popularity of skating and the demand for public skating facilities, the Washington State Legislature adopted SSB 5254 in 1997, which amended the recreational user statute to include skateboarding. This change meant that the cities would not be held responsible for injuries sustained by skateboarders or inline skaters at skateboard parks operated by the city as long as: (1) a fee is not charged for the use of the skateboard park; and (2) conspicuous signs are posted to warn of any known dangerous, artificial, latent conditions. On December 3, 2001, the City Council authorized the expansion of the skate park to almost double in size. The expansion of the skate park was the result of meetings held with skaters and parents. The construction was completed on the addition and reopened in 2002.

### 1995 - I-90 Lid Sculpture Park

In 1995, the City of Mercer Island reached an agreement with the Washington State Department of Transportation to install outdoor sculptures on a portion of the I-90 property between 77th Ave SE and 80th Ave SE. The first year Primavera II was installed at the 80th Ave end. Since then, three other permanent pieces have been acquired by the City.

The idea for an outdoor gallery began in 1992 with a task force of over 35 volunteers. The vision for the gallery was to humanize and enhance the open space created by the I-90 corridor, complement and celebrate the unique landscape opportunity, and provide positive public art experiences for the broadest possible audience. The sculpture gallery also displays other sculptures on an annual rotation, typically hosting up to eight additional sculptures along the pedestrian walkway. This program won the Dorothy Mullens Arts and Humanities Award from the National Recreation and Parks Association in 1997.

### 1996 - Hebert Park Usage Assessment Focus Groups

The City again commissioned Hebert Research, Inc. to host two focus groups of residents with children under the age of 18 and residents without children. The focus groups considered what parks are used, what programs are used, the level of awareness of programs, participation at the Community Center, perceived needs, program strengths and weaknesses, Recreation Guide use, Senior Newsletter use, and what improvements residents felt were necessary for programs, services, or facilities.

### 1996 - Park and Community Activities Board Eliminated

During 1994-1996, the City Council systematically studied the mission and effectiveness of boards and commissions. A comprehensive review, the Glaser Report, was delivered in March of 1995. A Special Meeting of the City Council and board/commission members was held in May 1995. Subsequently, the City Council formed a sub-committee to draft a new policy on City boards and commissions. At the same time, each board was asked to describe their current statement of work and value to the community. A study session was held in October 1995, where additional public and City Council input was solicited.

In December 1995, the Council passed a motion to eliminate specific boards and restructure others. The Park and Community Activity Board was eliminated in 1996 in order to reduce costs and streamline the Cities board system.

### 1998 - Bond Issue

A \$19.1 million Bond Issue was presented to the voters to construct a new community center at the current Community Center at Mercer View site. Because the land was still owned by the Mercer Island School District, \$3 million was to be used to purchase the land. Miller/Hull Architects were contracted to design the community center.



With strong opposition from a community group, the bond was defeated by a 2 to 1 margin. The same year, a follow-up study by Hebert Research, Inc. indicated that the residents were not willing to support a \$19.1 million bond measure but may be willing to pay a lesser amount for a community facility.

### 1998 - Mercerdale Park Master Plan

The Mercerdale Park Master Plan, developed by MacLeod Reckord, was approved by the City Council in 1998. The plan retained Mercerdale as public land for development as a naturally landscaped park with open space trails, quiet areas, play areas for children, a public plaza and future use for elderly housing, a senior/community center, a thrift shop, and a recycling center.

### 2000 - Financing of Youth and Family Services & Parks and Recreation Departments

City Council reviewed the financing, sources of funds, and fiscal management of the services provided by the Parks and Recreation Department and the Youth and Family Services Department.

### 2000 - Park Services District Analysis, Youth & Family Services Governance and Financing

As a result of the passage of I-695 and with concerns about revenue loss, the City explored the possibility of implementing a voted park district and the possibility of transitioning the Youth and Family Services Department to a private non-profit.

### 2000 - City Council/School Board Joint Resolution on Cooperation and Collaboration

The City of Mercer Island and the Mercer Island School District adopted a resolution supporting cooperation and collaboration in the delivery of services. Given that both entities shared the same boundaries, served the same community, and derived funding from the same tax base, the commitment to shared principles and goals was timely and important.

### 2000 - Parks Maintenance Level of Service

In the early 1980s, the Maintenance Department assumed responsibility for maintaining park and open space properties. In 1999, a City Council study session provided a venue to discuss park maintenance standards. As part of the 2001-2002 budget development process, the City Council reviewed the level of service (LOS) standards to determine whether the level of service was too high in all parks, too high in a few parks, too low in some parks, or at an appropriate level in all parks. The City Council concurred with the staff's recommended level of service.

### 2000 - Class (Escom) Facility Booking and Activity Scheduling Software

In September 1997, a committee was formed to explore the computer scheduling software available on the market. After two years of consideration, on November 1, 1999, the City Council approved purchasing the new software for \$58,796 for scheduling, registration, cash receipting, reporting, training, and a server upgrade. The facility scheduling software was implemented in July 2000 and the Registration Module was implemented in September 2000.

### 2001 - Pioneer Park Master Plan

In Fall 2000, the Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust and the City of Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department initiated the development of a long-term Master Plan for improvements to Pioneer Park. MacLeod Reckord provided consulting services in the development of the plan. The purpose of the plan was to address physical improvements that would improve access and enhance public use of the park. The plan was approved by the Trust in October 2001, and the City Council allocated funding to implement the plan in 2002.

### 2001 to 2002 - Community Facilities Planning Process

Over a two-year period, the City worked cooperatively with the principal owners and suppliers of community facilities. The Community Facilities Planning Process was created to assess the potential of shared use and joint development of community facilities, primarily of a recreational/educational nature on Mercer Island. The key players included the City, the School District, the Boys and Girls Club, the Stroum Jewish Community Center, and the French American School.

During the planning process, Beckwith Consulting was hired to facilitate the development of a Master Plan involving all participating agencies. In December 2002, the Evans/McDonough Company conducted a telephone survey on the most critical issues facing the residents of Mercer Island. The survey found that voters were optimistic about the way things were going on Mercer Island. The Community Center was not among the top four issues of concern. Police and firefighting were the top voter priorities for city tax dollars. It was found that even though there was positive support for the job the Parks and Recreation Department was doing, there was not enough support to meet a 60% vote and pass a bond issue.



## 2002 - Mercerdale Park Master Plan Improvements

The Mercerdale Park Master Plan was developed in 1989 and revised in 2000 ("Plan 2000"). A skate park was installed on the east side of the park just south of the nature garden in 1992. A major expansion of the skate park and the addition of a children's play area was completed in the fall of 2002. The Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) partnered with the City in fundraising for the new children's park, now known as "Train Park". Two public art pieces were located along the south end of the park. The Recycling Center and restrooms on the northwest corner are adjacent to Bicentennial Park. Recent additions to the park have expanded the natural forested area on the west side with winding pathways.

## 2002 - Bounce Foundation

At a May 2002 City Council Meeting, several young teens addressed the Council about a teen center initiative they had launched "to provide a safe, fun and educational gathering place operated by and for teenagers." City Council supported the idea of providing some financial support for a teen-oriented café. A \$35,000 grant was awarded to the Bounce Foundation on a 50% matching basis. The "Bounce Cyber Café" opened in a vacant mall facility but struggled to find volunteers, financial support, and willing teen users. The Café closed after six months of operations.

## 2002 - Council Parks and Recreation Committee

On August 5, 2002, the City Council established a sub-committee of the Council to consider Parks and Recreation issues. The City Council was dealing with increasing numbers of parks and recreation projects and issues. The City Council decided that a sub-committee of the Council could provide a valuable source of information and, in some cases, recommendations to the full City Council. Three City Council members were appointed to the committee by the Mayor to work with the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department to bring this committee into action. The first meeting of the committee occurred on March 13, 2003.

## 2002 - Cost of Service and Fee Study

Based on concerns about revenues and the growing cost of providing services, the City of Mercer Island initiated a study to analyze the cost of service and fees for the Parks and Recreation Department. The overall objectives of the study were to: (1) Identify the cost of service for the Department's activities and services; (2) Determine the amount of cost recovered through fees; (3) Review parks and recreation fees in

comparable jurisdictions; and (4) Assist the Department in developing fee recommendations for its 2003-2004 proposed budget. Financial Consulting Solutions Group, Inc. (FCSG) submitted its final report on November 20, 2002.

## 2002 - Transfer of 1.57 acres to City

In 2002, Margaret and Kenneth Quarles transferred 1.57 acres of property in the 6500 block of East Mercer Way to the City for \$200,000. This acquisition was financed equally from City Capital Improvement Plan funds dedicated to open space acquisition and King County Conservation Futures. Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) levy funds are collected from property taxes levied throughout King County and its cities to purchase open space lands. This addition, in conjunction with a pedestrian trail easement on an adjacent property (James Altman), allowed a trail and bridge connection from Pioneer Park to East Mercer Way in 2003.

## 2002 - Mary Wayte Pool Transfer

To alleviate budget problems, King County offered to transition the ownership of many of its pools and parks to local municipalities. The proposed property transfers included Mary Wayte Pool and Luther Burbank Park to the City of Mercer Island. After many months of negotiation and meetings, the City of Mercer Island decided that the acceptance of the pool would be a financial burden to the City and declined the offer.

Luther Burbank Park, however, was accepted with specific provisions and the details are further described in a subsequent section. After deciding not to accept the pool, the City Council met with many citizens asking for another plan. King County planned to close the pool at the end of 2002 if no other solution was found.

On December 12, 2002, the City Council authorized the allocation of \$100,000 toward the support of the Northwest Center to operate the pool for the year 2003 and \$100,000 annually for five years thereafter. The Northwest Center was a non-profit organization that supports special needs populations and was willing to take on the pool as an income source. The Northwest Center also took on three other pools in cities throughout King County.

## 2002 - Wireless Communication Facilities (WCF's) in Parks

In December of 2002, the Mercer Island City Code section that regulates wireless communications facilities (19.06.040) was modified to provide more placement options for these facilities. In residential zones, the placement of WCFs was restricted to Island Crest Way between SE 40th Street and SE 68th Street, the South Mercer Island Fire Station, Puget Power Substation,

and the Mercer Island Water Reservoir. Residents along Island Crest Way felt that they were unfairly targeted by the City when permitting these facilities. Therefore, City Council decided to limit the placement of WFCs to Island Crest Way between SE 40th Street and SE 53rd Place and SE 63rd Street to SE 68th Street and allow these facilities to be placed in Island Crest Park and adjacent to Clise Park under certain conditions.

### 2002 - Historical Designation of Luther Burbank Park Administration Building

The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 02-16 (Historical Designation Ordinance), providing a process for the designation of historical buildings. The Historical Designation Ordinance requires that the City Council review a staff recommendation regarding the mandatory criteria to determine whether or not a nominated building should receive a historical designation. The City agreed to adopt a historical designation for the Luther Burbank Park Administration Building on December 2, 2002.

### 2003 - Luther Burbank Park Transfer

During the summer of 2001, representatives from the King County Executive's Office contacted the City concerning the status of Luther Burbank Park. Facing a \$52 million deficit for 2002 with growing deficits in 2003 and beyond, King County approached several cities containing regional parks to gauge local interest in long-term ownership and operation of the facilities. Mercer Island, Kirkland, Tukwila, and Bellevue were the first cities contacted. Following eight months of negotiations, the City and the County negotiated an Intergovernmental Land Transfer Agreement providing for the transfer of the Luther Burbank Park to the City of Mercer Island effective January 1, 2003.

### 2003 - New Park Fee Increases

Based on the results of the Cost of Service and Fee Study conducted by Financial Consultant Solutions Group, Inc. (FCSG), to determine the cost of all parks and recreation programs and services and identify the level of cost recovery for each program, it was necessary to implement increased fees for recreation programs and services beginning January 1, 2003. The study recommended, and the City Council concurred, that the Department adjust their recovery goal to an average of 51% of overall costs.

### 2003 - Community Center Summary Report

Three hundred interviews were conducted by Evans/McDonough Company, Inc., using a random sample of registered voters, to determine awareness/knowledge of the City's current plans for a new community center and assess support for various possible bond measures.

The results of the interviews were provided to the City Council to inform the development of a financial strategy for a future Community Center.

### 2003 - Mercer Island Recreation Services Foundation Eliminated

Having been inactive for a number of years, a decision was made to dissolve the Mercer Island Recreation Services Foundation and its board of officers and directors. In January 2004, the Department joined the Northwest Parks Foundation, a 501(C)3 corporation, as a community partner in establishing a Parks Safety Net Fund which acts as a donor intermediary for directed donations to the Department. The Northwest Parks Foundation, founded in 2002, is a private, non-profit organization created to support park and recreation facilities throughout Western Washington through financial endowments, organizational grants, and capital projects.

### 2003 - New Community Center Plan

After the defeat of the 1998 Bond Issue, a Hebert Research Inc. survey concluded that another bond issue would probably fail. The construction of a new community center was made a high priority issue at the 2002 City Council retreat. On November 18, 2002, the City Council received a presentation on a range of Community Center project proposals and costs. The City Council then authorized the funding for the development of schematic drawings and a voter survey to be implemented to poll the residents of Mercer Island on their level of support for various community center scenarios.

The survey reflected some negative feelings carried over from the 1998 Community Center, but also a high level of support for the City. At the 2003 City Council retreat in January, the City Council decided to use Capital Reserve Funds and Capital Improvement Program Reserves (REET) to fund the construction of a new Community Center. The City Council looked at the cost options of either a remodel of the current Center or the construction of a totally new center.

On July 7, 2003, the City Council voted to fund new construction at the existing Community Center at Mercer View site for \$13.1 million dollars (later amended to \$12.4 million). Parks and Recreation offices were relocated to the Luther Burbank Administration Building in June 2004, and recreational programs were temporarily relocated to other community facilities on Mercer Island. The new 42,000 sq. ft. community center opened in December 2005.



### 2003 - Homestead Field Master Plan

As part of the City's 2001-2002 Capital Investment Program (CIP), City Council authorized and set aside funds for the Homestead Field drainage improvement project. In coordination with the renovation project, City staff engaged regular users of the park as well as residents of the Homestead neighborhood in a public involvement process that related to potential future developments at Homestead Field. Bruce Dees and Associates facilitated and formulated the plan. This process was intended to provide a forum for considering a number of facility improvements that had been requested by various park users over the last few years. Because not all park user interests could be met (some too costly, some contradictory), an advisory committee including representatives of the park users and City staff was formed to develop a consensus plan for potential future improvements. The "master plan" presented to the City Council reflected that consensus.

On May 6, 2002, upon further consideration of the drainage project and other proposed improvements, the City Council authorized staff to move forward with the drainage project but chose not to endorse any of the proposed future improvements for the park. On August 4, 2003, on subsequent consideration, the City Council approved the revised Plan.

### 2003 - Mercer Island School District Stadium Interlocal Agreement

Voters approved a bond issue for the renovation of the Mercer Island High School stadium field surface and track. At the joint meeting of the School Board and the City Council, the City agreed to a \$500,000 payment to the District in exchange for (1) community use of the field during specified hours, and (2) the City control of the scheduling of all field use through its CLASS software program. The Agreement was finalized in October 2003 by both entities, and scheduling began in January 2004. The Agreement was sunsetted in 2014.

### 2003 - Luther Burbank Park Bond Issue

During the first year of park ownership, the City Council chose to finance the maintenance of Luther Burbank Park through a capital reserve account – a "one-time" revenue source. The City Council authorized \$240,000 to maintain the park for just the one year. At the September 2, 2003, City Council meeting, the Council directed the City Manager to submit the question to the voters of Mercer Island as part of the General Election ballot, of new revenue in the annual amount of \$415,000 for the specific purpose of paying for existing and future expenses to maintain and operate Luther Burbank Park for a period of six years. The Bond Issue passed, and funding was established for 2004 through 2010. During the six-year period, a planning

process and a park master plan were developed to guide operations and future improvements at the park.

### 2003 - Recreation Services Report

MIG (Moore, Iacofano, Goltsman, Inc.) completed a comprehensive recreation services study that defined the Parks and Recreation Department's role as a major provider and coordinator of recreation programs and special events. The study provided a snapshot of classes offered during the 2002 calendar year. It identified staff, facilities, and partnerships that will be needed in order to provide future programs and services.

### 2003 - Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan

For over a year in late 2002 and into 2003, a forest management plan was developed by the Open Space Conservancy Trust that provided direction for management and intervention within Pioneer Park to maintain the native forest ecosystem, protect public safety, and enhance positive uses of the park over the long-term. The Forest Management Plan focused on the 118-acre Pioneer Park and its three 39-acre blocks of second-growth western-hemlock forest and one of the largest relatively unfragmented forest habitats remaining on the Mercer Island. Laminated root rot was killing Douglas fir trees while age was claiming many alders and maples in the park.

As these trees were dying, they left "gaps" in the tree canopy of the park. Invasive, non-native plants, notably ivy, holly, and blackberry, were widespread in the park and taking over wherever trees were dying. They were preventing the regrowth or "regeneration" of canopy trees. As a result, the Plan was developed to guide future vegetation and forest work priorities and was subsequently adopted by the City Council on December 15, 2003.

### 2003 - Boys and Girls Club Shared Use Agreement

The 'Community Facilities Planning Process' was created to assess the potential of shared use and joint development of community facilities, primarily of a recreational/educational nature on Mercer Island. On October 30, 2001, the Boys and Girls Club submitted a proposal to the City for joint financing and use of the Club's facilities. The original proposal included plans to renovate and make additions to the larger portion of the Club. The final Agreement designated the joint use by the City of the renovated gym facility only. City Council's final approval of the Agreement was made at the December 15, 2003, City Council Meeting. The City agreed to commit \$1,000,000 to the Club for shared use of the renovated gym facility for a minimum of 2,746 hours a year. The Club was required to fundraise 70% of the entire project budget

prior to December 31, 2004, and the remaining 30% by June 30, 2005, in order to receive the City's \$1,000,000 matching funds.

### 2003 - Park Improvement, Gift and Donation Policy

The City Council adopted a park improvement, gift, and donation policy to guide the consideration of gifts and donations to the Parks and Recreation Department. The policy clarified the roles and responsibilities of the donor, staff, advisory boards, and the City Council and provided criteria in which to evaluate potential improvements.

### 2004 - Ivy Initiative

In early March 2003, several residents pursued placing an initiative on the ballot to raise property taxes in order to provide funding for the removal of non-native, invasive plant material (i.e., English ivy, Himalayan and Evergreen blackberry, English laurel, English holly, and Japanese knotweed, etc.) from all city- owned parks, open spaces, street ends and public rights of way. The effort called for increasing the regular property tax levy to generate \$1,250,000 in tax revenue per year for a period of ten (10) consecutive years. The City Council passed a resolution opposing the initiative. Subsequently, King County Elections certified 2,466 signatures and the matter was placed before the voters at a special election on March 9, 2004. The initiative was defeated with an 82% "no" vote. The City Council then directed staff to propose an independent scope of work to address the condition of parks and open space areas.

### 2004 - Open Space Vegetation Plan

After the Ivy Initiative, the City Council directed staff and consultants to assess the current condition of park properties, host public meetings to ascertain the values/benefits of vegetation and to prioritize various management methods and costs that would result in several investment options for City Council consideration. In early October, the City Council received the Open Space Vegetation Plan and indicated an initial willingness to fund a moderate level of vegetation control work for \$79,000 per year in 2005-06 from the City's Capital Improvement Fund. Subsequently, the City Council increased the level of vegetation management by appropriating an additional \$56,000 per year in 2005-06 from the City's Beautification Fund.

### 2004 - Community Center Operations Report

As a result of the City Council's decision to construct a new community center, staff retained Warren Cooley/EdCon to update and recalculate the 1998 operational

assessment of the then proposed 52,753 square foot community center complex. In April 2004, a Final Report was prepared and issued to staff for budget planning.

### 2004 - City Budgeting Survey Summary Report

A telephone survey of 401 randomly chosen registered voters of Mercer Island was performed by Evans/McDonough Company, Inc. to help the City understand voter priorities, evaluate the City's performance in a variety of service areas, and establish baseline measurements to track changes in these figures over time. The Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department received the most favorable ratings (91%) when analyzed with other external and internal organizations (King County Council, City Council, Police Department, etc.) Summer Celebration (84%) and other community events (86%) were given favorable ratings. Strong positive ratings were given to the City's maintenance of parks, trails, and open space (85% positive) and "providing recreation programs for families with children" (71%). A third (32%) of voters didn't know enough about the City's senior recreation programs to rate them. However, voters over 50 years old gave positive ratings to these services. Two-thirds (64% vs. 58% overall) gave positive ratings to the program while 13% gave a negative rating. A quarter (23% vs. 32%) of voters over 50 years old did not know enough to rate the program.

### 2004 - Community Center at Mercer View demolished

The major portions of the Community Center at Mercer View began to be demolished (with the exception of "Building D"- and three day care spaces) in the summer of 2004 to make way for a new 42,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art community center offering program meeting rooms, a large multi-purpose room, a senior/program room, health room, fitness, dance and games areas, a large gymnasium, public art gallery, lounge, and library area, serving kitchen, arts and crafts room and administrative offices. By the time the original community center closed its doors on May 28, 2004, the building was 40 years old.

### 2004 - Northwest Parks Foundation

In January 2004, the Parks and Recreation Department collaborated with the Northwest Parks Foundation, a 501(C)3 corporation, as a community partner to establish a Parks Safety Net Fund which served as a donor intermediary for directed donations to the Department. On January 14, 2004, the Foundation Board President approved the Parks Safety Net Fund for the City of Mercer Island. The fund provided for a



flexible pool of donations entrusted to the Northwest Parks Foundation that enabled donors to direct their charitable contributions to a desired park improvement or acquisition project.

### 2004 to 2005 - Luther Burbank Park Public Visioning Process

Planning for Luther Burbank Park began in November 2004 with a Community Visioning Process. Community visioning was completed in January 2005, at which time the City Council reviewed the design guidelines that were created during three community workshops. At their annual planning retreat in April 2005, the City Council determined to move ahead with a park master planning process for Luther Burbank Park. The master plan was developed over approximately five months, beginning in September 2005, and included numerous opportunities for community involvement.

### 2005- to 2006 - Luther Burbank Park Master Planning Process

The City Council initiated a Master Planning Process for Luther Burbank Park on September 6, 2005. Guided by the results of the Community Visioning Process, three discrete planning phases were developed: 1) Information Gathering/Concept Design Development, 2) Review of Concept Designs, and 3) Review of Preferred Concept Design. The eight-month long master planning process included 15 opportunities for public involvement. A series of five small group sessions were conducted regarding the Off-Leash Dog area, the dock area and Small Boat Facility, shoreline restoration, connections to Upper Luther Burbank, and children's opportunities in the Park. Based on this inventory and analysis, three preliminary master plan concepts were developed for the site and then consolidated into a preferred Master Plan concept based on public feedback. The master plan was adopted by the City Council on April 17, 2006.

### 2005 - eCitygov.net and www.myparksandrecreation.com Online Activity Registration

In the fall of 2000, several cities began to collaborate and develop an online activity/program registration process that would enable citizens to search, select, and pay for recreation programs across several cities in one, single, easy transaction. Nine Eastside cities participated in developing the technical, operational, and financial capacity to create a website portal that would provide the needed features and functions. The launch of the website portal, www.myparksandrecreation.com, happened in early February 2005 with the cities of Bellevue, Kirkland, and Mercer Island. The Cities of

Issaquah, Woodinville, and Bothell joined in the spring of 2005, with Sammamish, Snoqualmie, and Kenmore joining later in the year. The online portal functioned for over two decades and then was sunsetted.

### 2005 - Community Center at Mercer View Opens

Designed by the architectural firm of Miller & Hull, the Community Center at Mercer View opened its doors to the public on December 10, 2005, as a modern, state-of-the-art center serving as both a primary civic and business meeting place and a multi-generational facility.

The new center was constructed with a 3,335 square foot multi-purpose room, a full-service kitchen, five meeting rooms, a fitness center, locker and shower rooms, and an outdoor terraced patio. It also has a 10,500 square foot gymnasium that supports a wide array of fitness programs and rentals, and it has added a number of enhanced programs that were not able to be offered at the old facility, such as Open Gym and Indoor Playground. The North Annex is the only remaining building from the former facility.

### 2005 - Upper Luther BMX Course formalized

An informal BMX Course in Upper Luther Burbank Park existed prior to the City's acquisition of Luther Burbank Park. In 2005, Parks and Recreation staff met with course users and established a set of rules about ramp, jump, and course modifications. The rules were developed to ensure that user-built features met certain industry standards.

### 2005 - Pioneer Park Encroachment Policy

In order to clarify boundaries and promote proper use of Open Space Conservancy Trust properties, the Trust and the Parks and Recreation Department established a policy addressing existing private property encroachments, including requirements, criteria, guidelines, and procedures for remedying them and limiting authorized encroachments.

### 2006 - City Budgeting Summary Report

A tracking survey, based on the content of a similar 2004 survey, was conducted by Evans/McDonough Company, Inc. to help the City understand voter priorities, evaluate the City's performance in a variety of service areas, and establish baseline measurements to track changes in figures over time. Four hundred and two interviews were conducted among registered voters. The Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department received a 91% favorable rating, other community events an 86% rating, and Summer Celebration an

86% favorable rating. The maintenance of parks, trails, and open space received an 87% favorable rating, while recreation programs for families with children and (79%), recreation programs for seniors received 79% and 64% favorable ratings respectively.

### 2006 - Revisions to Animal Code

The revisions to Mercer Island's Animal Code were adopted by the Council on July 24, 2006, and became effective that September. The adoption of the revisions represented a culmination of nine months of public input and discussion about Mercer Island's leash law. The old leash law permitted dogs to be under voice control in certain types of parks and open space areas yet required dogs to be on a leash in other types of park areas. On-leash and off-leash areas were not clearly defined, so park users were often confused about where it was permissible to let their dogs roam without a leash and where it was not. Additionally, terms such as "under control" were vague and difficult to enforce.

### 2006 - Transfer of Engstrom Open Space to City

Margaret and Kenneth Quarles, 6610 East Mercer Way, agreed to transfer nearly 7 acres of rare open space property to the City of Mercer Island for \$300,000. The three properties, totaling 6.93 acres are located immediately west of East Mercer Way and abut the northeast quadrant of Pioneer Park. The acquisition was made possible from a fund balance in the City's 2005-2006 Capital Improvement Plan.

The property, permanently dedicated for park and recreation purposes, is managed as open space by the City's Parks and Recreation Department. The Quarles were residents of Mercer Island since 1925, where Margaret was born and raised on the surrounding properties owned by her father, the late Mr. Oscar Engstrom. The significant gift to the City serves as a lasting legacy to the Mercer Island community and represents their strong desire to preserve the property from potential development while providing recreational trail opportunities for future generations. This was the second such property transfer made by the Quarles (1.57 acres purchased by the City for \$200,000 in 2002). Together, all properties were named the Engstrom Open Space.

### 2007 - King County Proposition 2 Open Space and Regional Trails Levy

In 2007, King County voters approved two property tax levy lid lifts to support park operations and open space and trails for the period of 2008 to 2013. The Open Space and Trails Levy was a five-cent levy that included one-cent for open space and trails for each of the 39

cities within King County, distributed by population and assessed value. King County voters approved this levy by 59 percent.

### 2007 - South Mercer Playfield Synthetic Turf

The South Mercer Playfields All-Weather Field Renovation project was funded in the 2007 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It was the first synthetic turf field on Mercer Island. The total approved budget for the project was \$755,830. A separately funded field lighting project was completed in the spring of 2008.

### 2006 to 2007 - Ballfield Use Study

In 2007 the City completed a Ballfield Use Analysis using Beckwith Consulting, which involved an exhaustive look at then-current field inventory and field conditions, a review of scheduling protocols, and direct feedback from users. It was determined that on a per capita basis, Mercer Island had sufficient fields to meet demand, but that field upgrades and revised scheduling practices would maximize the fields more efficiently.

### 2008 - Leap for Green

The first Leap for Green event started in 2008 as a fun interactive event for children, their families, and others in the community to promote responsible human impacts on the environment. The conception of this event began with Island Vision, a non-profit Mercer Island group whose mission is to encourage and support sustainable practices on Mercer Island. The target audience was kids, but the event was for "kids of all ages" with the intention that kids come with parents and grandparents and those without kids would feel comfortable attending. Leap for Green was held during April as close to Earth Day as possible. This special event ran until 2019.

### 2008 - Island Crest Way Trail

The half-mile-long trail along Island Crest Way from SE 71st Street to SE 78th Street formally opened at the end of July 2008. The construction was completed by Parks Maintenance staff under the approved \$90,000 budget. Staff also applied for and received funding from the King Conservation District for landscaping along the Trail. City staff and neighbors worked on the landscaping design. Landscaping was installed by neighborhood volunteers and Parks and Recreation staff in October 2008. This trail added 0.5 miles of trail to the right-of-way system.

### 2008 - Cost of Service and Fee Study

The City hired PMC, a planning and municipal consulting firm, to determine the City's cost of providing fee-generating recreation services, review



comparable fees from other jurisdictions, and assist in developing fee recommendations. Costs included direct and indirect costs. The plan recommended cost recovery goals for different categories of activities. These goals were used for over a decade to establish revenue targets for recreation programs and services.

### 2008 - Playful City USA

Mercer Island was first recognized in 2008 as a Playful City USA, a program of KaBoom!, a national non-profit that promotes local access to playgrounds to ensure every kid has a great place to play. The Playful City USA program was sponsored by the Humana Foundation. It was a national recognition program honoring cities and towns investing in children through play.

### 2008 - Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey and Forest Health Work Plan

Following the December 2006 Hanukkah Eve storm, the Mercer Island City Council considered whether enough was being done to restore the tree canopy in Pioneer Park. The City Council commissioned a Forest Health Survey to quantify prescribed forest health factors. The study discovered several conditions that were not being adequately addressed by the existing Forest Management Plan. The work plan that resulted from the study changed the focus of the restoration work in Pioneer Park from a site-based approach to a systemic approach. For example, the Forest Health Survey found that canopy regeneration, invasive trees, and ivy were of particular concern. A Forest Health Work Plan proposed new projects designed to address these critical issues park-wide while holding the line where site-based comprehensive restoration was already underway. Together, the Forest Health Survey and Forest Health Work Plan were appended to the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan in 2009 by the Open Space Conservancy Trust.

### 2008 - Mercer Island Park Bond and Park Operation and Maintenance Levy

Mercer Island voters approved a 15-year Parks Operations & Maintenance Levy for \$900,000 per year with 53.13% of the vote. The Parks Operations & Maintenance Levy replaced the previous levy which paid for operations and maintenance of Luther Burbank Park and expired in 2009. It also funded open space and forest restoration and school-related park and recreation activities.

Included in the total amount were costs associated with new parks capital projects that were to be funded by a separate bond levy. The bond levy was approved by 53.86% of voters, however, it required a "supermajority" of 60% of the votes and therefore did not pass. On

November 17, 2008, the City Council approved levying \$882,000 rather than the full amount of \$900,000, backing out \$128,000 in maintenance and operations related to the bond levy that failed and levying only \$110,000 from the 2003 Luther Burbank Park lid lift for small capital projects.

### 2008 - Luther Burbank Parks Shoreline Restoration Phase I

Approved by the City Council in July 2008, the first phase of shoreline restoration at Luther Burbank Park included adding woody debris and spawning gravel along the shoreline for bank stabilization, removing non-native plants, planting native trees, shrubs, and groundcovers, installation of a split rail fence (between the protected shore and the trail), building rock steps that direct park patrons to small recreation beaches, and construction of a new ADA accessible gravel path.

### 2008 - Luther Burbank Park Off-Leash Area Renovation

Following input from the off-leash area users, this renovation project at Luther Burbank Park included non-native plant and vegetation removal, surface grading, installation of under drainage, adding sand surfacing material, wetland enhancements, minor landscaping improvements, construction of gravel and asphalt paths, installation of 4' high split rail fencing with mesh on all perimeters, installation of chain link gates at all entrances and exits, and relocation of the kiosk, benches and garbage cans.

### 2010 - Boys and Girls Club PEAK

A new home for the Boys and Girls Club was completed on 86th Ave SE in August 2010. The new three-story, 41,000 square foot facility included sports facilities, a teen center, a tech and learning center, preschool, and multi-purpose rooms. In exchange for its financial contribution, the City receives six hours per week of recreational programming at the PEAK facility.

### 2010 - Community Center at Mercer View name changed to Mercer Island Community & Event Center (MICEC)

In May of 2010, the Community Center at Mercer View changed its name to The Mercer Island Community & Event Center (MICEC) in an effort to build awareness with the public via a variety of online media including: website, online advertising, online directories, email marketing, print, trade shows, social media, video, and more. This new name leveraged the existing brand equity of the Mercer Island name and helped position the MICEC as a premier event facility.



## 2010 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan Update

In June 2010, MacLeod Reckord Landscape Architects, Dugan Planning Services, and KPG completed a comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan, which updated the previous plan from 1996. The Plan identified specific projects that work together to improve walking and bicycling and encourage them as an attractive alternative form of transportation. The Plan has been used since then to guide decisions about pedestrian and bicycle facilities. It is an essential part of the Transportation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

## 2010 - Engstrom Loop Trail, Upper Luther 84th Bypass Trail and Connector Trails, and Island Crest Park – Island Park Elementary Connector Trail

A series of new trails were completed in-house and with Mountains to Sound Greenway volunteers using King County Proposition 2 Levy funding in the first year of trail construction, adding one mile of trail to the park system.

## 2010 - South Mercer Playfield Improvements (Synthetic Turf, Batting Cage and Concession Stands)

In September 2009, the City and the Mercer Island School District entered into an Interlocal Agreement for improvements, maintenance, and operations of District sports fields at Island Park, Lakeridge, and West Mercer Elementary Schools, as well as capital improvements to the sports fields at the South Mercer Playfield complex. The City issued Councilmanic Bonds in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,114, including bond issuance costs of \$12,092, to fund the South Mercer Playfields approved improvements. These bonds were approved by the City Council and issued in October 2009.

Phase I of the improvements included replacing the dirt infields with synthetic turf on Fields #1, #2, and #3, as well as two bullpen areas. Phase I was completed in March 2010. Phase II was completed in March 2011, using the remaining funds, and consisted of a remodel to the existing restroom building with the inclusion of a concession function, a new batting cage, and an electronic scoreboard on Field 1.

## 2010 - Playground added to MICEC

A new playground was installed in the previously open grass area behind the Mercer Island Community and Event Center. The new structure, comprised of unique climbing pieces and cables, was installed by Parks Maintenance crews in the summer of 2010.

## 2011 - Mercer Island Community & Event Center Technology & Equipment Sinking Fund Established

In 2011, a facility-wide technology and equipment replacement cycle was established with contributions from the community center's annual operating budget to address the various replacement needs of this facility.

## 2011 - Transfer of Right-of-Way trails to Parks and Recreation

Starting in the 2011-2012 biennium, Right-of-Way trails that were previously maintained by the Maintenance Department were transferred to Parks and Recreation.

## 2011 - Upper Luther Ravine Trail

A new trail was completed in-house and with Mountains to Sound Greenway volunteers using King County Proposition 2 Levy funding. The trail extended into the main ravine in Upper Luther Burbank Park and featured a suspended wooden staircase to access the ravine. This added 0.2 miles of trail to the park system.

## 2012 - Shorewood Trail and Access Easements

Shorewood Apartments parent company granted pedestrian trail easements to allow the construction of the Gallagher Hill Trail and an extension of the Upper Luther Ravine Trail. The company also granted a public access easement across the Shorewood Apartments property to connect these trails into a regional trail system. These new connections added 0.9 miles of trail to the park system.

## 2012 - Island Crest Park Synthetic Turf

The Island Crest Park Synthetic Turf project was funded in the 2012 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It was the first regulation-sized baseball synthetic turf infield on Mercer Island. The total project budget was \$328,706. The project was completed in February 2013.

## 2012 - Electric Vehicle Charging Station addition to MICEC

The City installed three new electric vehicle charging stations on Mercer Island, one located at the MICEC. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant funds covered the total cost of \$75,000 for the charging units, the necessary infrastructure, and installation. The locations for the stations were identified so as to compliment the regional charging network. They will benefit electric vehicle drivers in the community as well as those traveling the I-90 corridor.



### 2013 - Gallagher Hill Trail and Island Crest Park South Trail

Two trails were completed with King County Proposition 2 Levy funding using in-house crews and Mountains to Sound Greenway volunteers. The Gallagher Hill Trail provided a connection between Shorewood and the East Mercer commercial area. The Island Crest South Trail provided park users a bypass around the south field and access for residents of SE 60th to the ravine. These new connections added 0.3 miles of trail to the park system.

### 2013 - Luther Burbank Park Playground Improvement

The Luther Burbank Park Playground project was funded in the 2013 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The final design of the new playground included public input from two community meetings as well as stakeholder participation in the design of the project. A joint partnership between the Mercer Island Preschool Association and the City contributed to the funding of this project. The project was completed in September 2013 and included a new zip line, climbing web, accessible surfacing, and new embankment slides.

### 2013 - Lid Park Renamed to Aubrey Davis Park

In July 2013, the Park on the Lid was renamed Aubrey Davis Park in honor of former Mercer Island Mayor and City Councilmember Aubrey Davis. Among his many achievements, Mr. Davis served as the principal negotiator in the 1976 redesign of Interstate 90, demanding the State take into account the impact of the interstate on the Mercer Island Community.

### 2013 - Solar Panel Array added to Community Center

On July 23, 2013, the first City-owned solar array on the Island was activated at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center. Built with grant money from Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and citizen donations, the 22-panel installation is estimated to produce approximately 4468-kilowatt hours of electricity per year, using solar panels and electrical inverters made in Washington State.

Mercer Island's success in meeting Puget Sound Energy's Green Power Challenge, to encourage the adoption of renewable energy, led to a \$30,000 challenge grant for the solar project. Area residents supportive of solar power donated an additional \$5,500 towards the project. The installation earns credit on the Community Center's electric bill.

### 2013 – Second Electric Vehicle Charging Station added to MICEC

The City designated a second electric vehicle charging station at MICEC.

### 2013 – New Dragon at Deane's Children's Park

A reinforced concrete dragon sculpture was created in 1965 at Deane's Children's Park by artist Kenton Pies. Numerous coats of paint brightened the 50-foot, sit-on dragon through the decades, but exposure to the elements had taken a toll on the dragon and the concrete was disintegrating. The Parks and Recreation Department contacted the 81-year old original artist, who was living in Montana, to inquire about repairing the dragon. The artist built a new dragon with a welded frame and high-strength concrete that was installed in 2013.

### 2014 – Mercer Island Parks & Recreation Plan (2014-2019) adopted by City Council

The City of Mercer Island completed an update of its Parks and Recreation Plan in early 2014. The plan contained an updated inventory of parks and recreation facilities, the demographic profile of the community, needs assessment, goals and objectives, and a capital facilities plan. It qualified the City to apply for state recreation and conservation funding through the state Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

### 2014 – Mercer Island Parks Overwater Structures Assessment

The City commissioned an engineering analysis performed by OAC Services of the docks, bulkheads, and other in-water structures at Luther Burbank Park, Clarke Beach, and Groveland Beach. The study found the need for major renovation and repair at all three parks and outlined a schedule of short-term and long-term repairs that would be necessary to maintain the existing facilities.

### 2014 – Luther Burbank North Wetland Boardwalk

A 200-foot section of new boardwalk through the north wetland at Luther Burbank Park provided the missing link between the existing boardwalk trail and Calkins Point. The project protected vegetation buffers for the known bald eagle nesting site. An innovative design of fiberglass grating suspended on pin piles minimized impacts to the wetland.

## 2015 – Open Space Vegetation Plan 10-Year Evaluation & Update

This study by City staff measured the results of ten years of open space management that started with the 2004 Open Space Vegetation Plan. It found that invasive plant cover had decreased from 58% to 32% while native conifer regeneration had increased from near zero to 78 stems per acres. However, the persistence of invasive holly remained a troubling observation. The plan revised the goals and strategies to anticipate the need for climate adaptation and to transition sites to a more stable condition.

## 2015 – Luther Burbank 84th Ave Entry Trail

A new entry into Luther Burbank Park provided access to the meadow from 84th Ave SE. This entry created an additional access point along a long stretch of 84th Ave SE and provided park users a more accessible grade than at the other entry points.

## 2015 – Island Glen Bridge Replacement

A new steel bridge replaced a decaying timber span on a trail connecting Island Crest Park with the 5700 block of West Mercer Way, maintaining access to Groveland Beach. This trail is located on a public pedestrian easement in a private community tract for the Island Glen subdivision. Innovative lightweight beam construction was employed to create a strong, long-lasting structure.

## 2015 – Park Impact Fees

The City of Mercer Island adopted Ordinance 15C-22, establishing park impact fees for new development that were consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Parks Capital Facilities Plan. The impact fees created a new mechanism to ensure that new development pays its share of new capital costs related to new development. This program ensures that there are adequate park facilities at the time that new development occurs.

## 2016 – Calkins Landing Street End Improvements

The watercourse and outfall at Calkins Landing were reconstructed to stabilize the stream channel. Park facilities were also upgraded. The project included a stormwater vault to buffer storm flow, a new gravel beach, path, picnic table, and landscaping.

## 2016 – Luther Burbank Shoreline Phase 2: Calkins Point

Calkins Point at Luther Burbank was reconstructed to reduce shoreline erosion and improve public access to the water. A new gravel beach was installed with habitat plantings, and an in-ground sheet piling system provided protection against future shoreline recession. The project included the installation of an accessible path and park furnishings, and interpretive signage.

## 2017 – Luther Burbank Hawthorn Trail

A new trail connecting the access road on the backside of the amphitheater to the P-Patch provided a quiet stroll through a unique stand of hawthorn forest in Luther Burbank Park. The trail was constructed with accessible grades.

## 2017 – Luther Burbank Park Boiler Building Study

The 2017 Boiler Building Study evaluated the existing structures for safety and identified options for public use through renovations and estimated project construction costs. The Study also reviewed options for expanding building uses in supporting summer boating programs. The Boiler Building currently supports paddle camps as a restroom and storage facility. The 2006 Luther Burbank Park Master Plan envisioned this building to be occupied, offering classes and rentals in addition to summer camps. It would provide the operational facilities to support these programs.

The 2017 Study recommended two phases of improvements to the site. Phase I includes general repairs to address aging infrastructure needs and seismic reinforcement. Bathrooms would be remodeled for accessibility and new roofing would be installed for both structures. Phase II includes accessibility improvements to the site from the main campus area of the Park, a remodeled concession area, and additional classroom and office spaces to support expanded programming.

## 2017 – Luther Burbank Lid Connector Trail Comprehensive Plan Amendment

The City's Comprehensive Plan was amended to include a statement supporting the construction of a pedestrian trail connecting Luther Burbank Park to the "Luther Lid" portion of Aubrey Davis Park. This amendment provided the Washington State Department of Transportation the policy support it needed to approve the construction of this trail. This trail has previously been supported in the Luther Burbank Park Master Plan.



### 2018 – Island Crest Park North Field Synthetic Turf and LED Lights

A new synthetic turf outfield was installed on the north field of Island Crest Park and included a shock pad underlayment and cork infill. A new LED lighting system provided complete lighting coverage with significant energy savings. The drainage system was reconstructed, and a new scoreboard was donated by the Mercer Island Baseball Booster Club.

### 2018 – Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan

The Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan for Mercer Island, adopted in 2018, was appended to the Citywide Comprehensive Plan, acknowledging the importance of arts, culture, and heritage in enhancing the quality of life on Mercer Island. The Arts and Culture Plan describes the history of arts and culture on Mercer Island and the community’s ongoing commitment to supporting arts, culture, and heritage in the community.

Public input during plan development revealed two basic barriers to the advancement of arts and culture progress in the community: (1) a lack of coordinated cooperation among community arts, culture, and heritage groups, and (2) a lack of space creating and participating in arts, culture, and heritage opportunities.

The Plan’s vision for Mercer Island is “to assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members.” The Plan’s goals are to support the arts on Mercer Island, to nurture public art on Mercer Island, and to preserve Mercer Island’s heritage. The Arts and Culture Plan proposed a framework for future progress with specific emphasis on more effective collaboration across organizations, programs, and activities and the creation of a shared physical art space.

### 2018 – Trail Structure & Maintenance Inventory Report

Parks staff completed a comprehensive assessment of the City’s trail structures and surfaces rating each element for action needed. The report found that wooden structures were decaying and needing repair at a rate that exceeded the current maintenance capacity. This holistic analysis of the trail system allowed parks staff to look at critical needs in a systematic way and estimate the resources needed to address them.

### 2018 – South Mercer Playfields playground replacement

A new series of features with a naturalistic play theme was installed at the South Mercer Playfields in consultation with the Mercer Island Preschool Association. New drainage and fencing were part of this project.

### 2018 – Current Use Taxation Comprehensive Plan Amendment

The City’s Comprehensive Plan was amended to include a statement supporting the use of King County’s Current Use Taxation program to promote the conservation of privately-owned open space.

### 2019 – Groveland Beach Pier Repairs and Shoreline Improvements

The large swimming pier at Groveland Beach was substantially repaired to extend its useful life by 10 to 15 years. Wave attenuators were installed outboard of the pier to replace wave skirting that was no longer permitted. A small dock was removed, and the shoreline to the north of the swim area was regraded. Shoreline plantings were installed.

### 2019 – Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan Adopted

Mercer Island City Council adopted the Aubrey Davis Park Master Plan after a 16-month development process. The Master Plan addressed the aging infrastructure and landscaping in the park. It called for modest new facilities, including a restroom near West Mercer Way, shoreline access at the boat launch, and an off-leash area at the stacks. The Plan contains a substantial program of landscape renovation to perpetuate the extensive landscaping in the park and provides guidance for arts, culture, and placemaking.

### 2019 – Cityworks Enterprise Asset Management Initiated for Parks

Parks and Recreation maintenance staff began using the Cityworks enterprise asset management software in 2019. This followed the introduction of Cityworks in 2017 to the Public Works department. This comprehensive, geographically-driven, app-based package allows each staff member to track actions and resources at all levels of maintenance.

### 2020 – The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic/Recreation Reset Strategy

The onset of a global pandemic in early 2020 impacted the entire world, resulting in an unprecedented public health emergency response and significant changes to the City of Mercer Island as an organization. Anticipating severely reduced General Fund revenues, City leadership implemented staff reductions and scaled back to essential services only for more than a year.

Field and administrative staff operated in modified or fully remote workspaces for more than eighteen months. The Parks Maintenance division was brought under the Public Works Department, and many recreation staff

served in temporary Emergency Operations capacities. Parks and open spaces were one of the recreational opportunity areas deemed safe and were utilized to a high degree.

Recreation services were suspended completely for over a year and the Mercer Island Community & Event Center closed to the public for nearly 14 months.

The City Emergency Operations team planned the reopening of Parks and Recreation services. It utilized the opportunity to examine and, in some cases, restructure the way it organizes and offers recreation and park services to the community, culminating in the Recreation Reset Strategy adopted by the City Council in July of 2021. This strategy was used to guide the recovery of recreation services on Mercer Island. In the summer of 2021, limited recreation services resumed, Parks Maintenance launched work on various “catch up” projects, and City staff prepared to return to modified in-person operations.



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# APPENDIX J: RECREATION TRENDS



The following summaries from recognized park and recreation resources provide background on national, state and local park and recreation trends. Examining current recreation trends may inform potential park and recreation improvements and opportunities to enhance programs and services.

### 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

The 2020 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Agency Performance Review summarizes the key findings from their Park Metrics benchmarking tool and is intended to assist park and recreation professionals in effectively managing and planning their operating resources and capital facilities. The report offers a comprehensive collection of park- and recreation-related benchmarks and insights to inform professionals, key stakeholders, and the public about the state of the park and recreation industry. The 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review contains data from 1,053 unique park and recreation agencies across the United States as reported between 2017 and 2019.

#### Key Findings and Characteristics

Park facilities and operations vary greatly across the nation. The typical agency participating in the NRPA park metric survey serves a jurisdiction of approximately 42,500 people, but population size varies widely across all responding jurisdictions. The typical park and recreation agency has jurisdiction over 20 parks comprising over 430 acres. Park facilities also have a range of service levels in terms of acres of parkland per population and residents per park. These metrics are categorized by the agency’s population size.

#### Park Facilities

Nearly all (96%) of park and recreation agencies operate parks and related facilities. The typical park and recreation agency has:

- One park for every 2,281 residents
- 9.9 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents in its jurisdiction
- 11 miles of trails for walking, hiking, running and/or biking

Figure I1. Median Residents per Park Based On Population Size

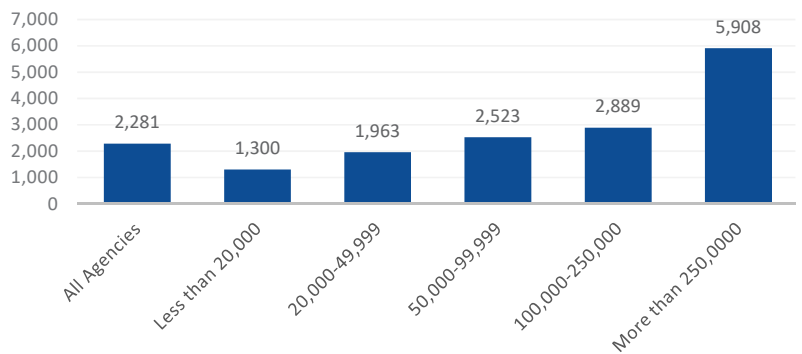
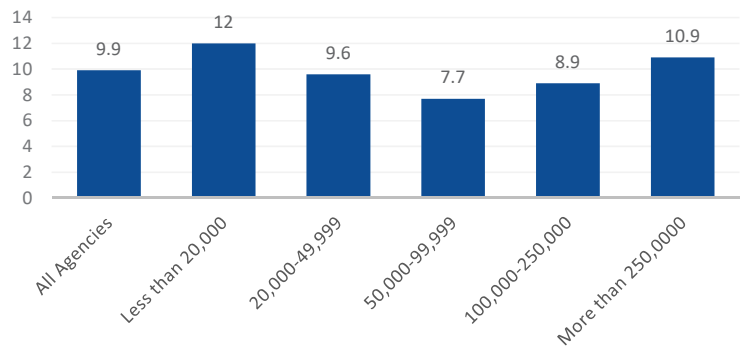


Figure I2. Acres of Parkland per 1,000 Residents based on Population Size



A large majority of park and recreation agencies provide playgrounds (93.9%) and basketball courts (86.5%) in their portfolio of outdoor assets. Most agencies offer community and/or recreation centers (60%) while two in five offer senior centers.

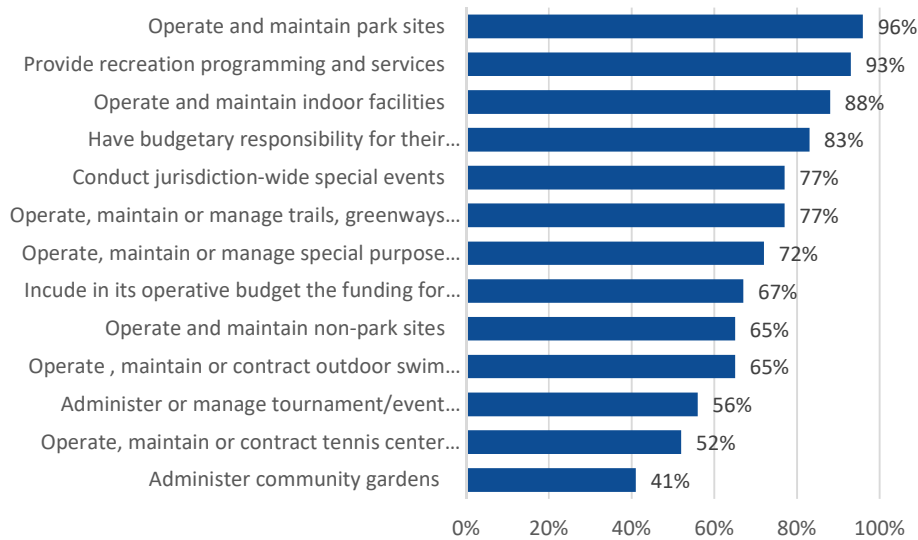
The typical park and recreation agency that manages or maintains trails for walking, hiking, running and/or biking has 11.0 miles of trails. Agencies serving more than 250,000 residents have a median of 84.5 miles of trails under their care.

Park and recreation agencies often take on responsibilities beyond their core functions of operating parks and providing recreational programs. Other responsibilities may include tourist attractions, golf courses, outdoor amphitheaters, indoor swim facilities, farmer’s markets, indoor sports complexes,



campgrounds, performing arts centers, stadiums/arenas/ racetracks, fairgrounds and/or marinas.

**Figure I3. Key Responsibilities of Park and Recreation Agencies**



**Programming**

Nearly all (93%) of park and recreation agencies provide recreation programs and services. More than eight in ten agencies provide themed special events (88% of agencies), team sports (87%), social recreation events (87%), youth summer camps (83%), fitness enhancement classes (82%), and health and wellness education (81%).

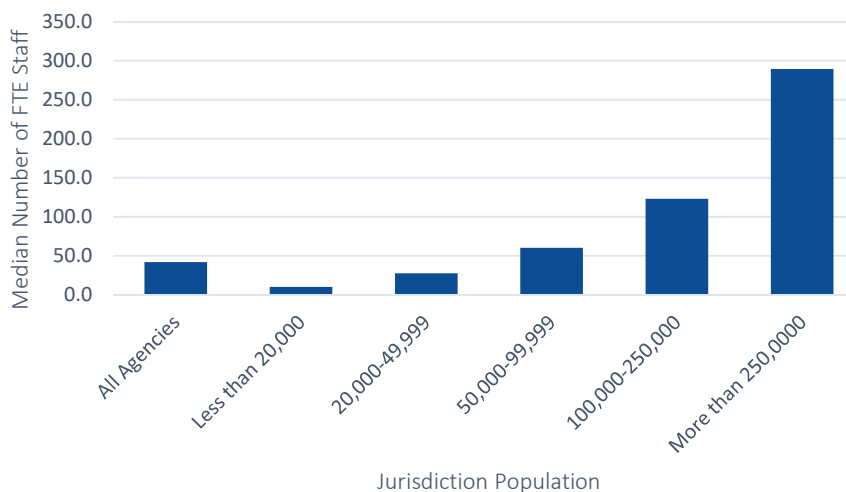
**Staffing**

Park and recreation employees are responsible for operations and maintenance, programming and administration. The typical park and recreation agency

has:

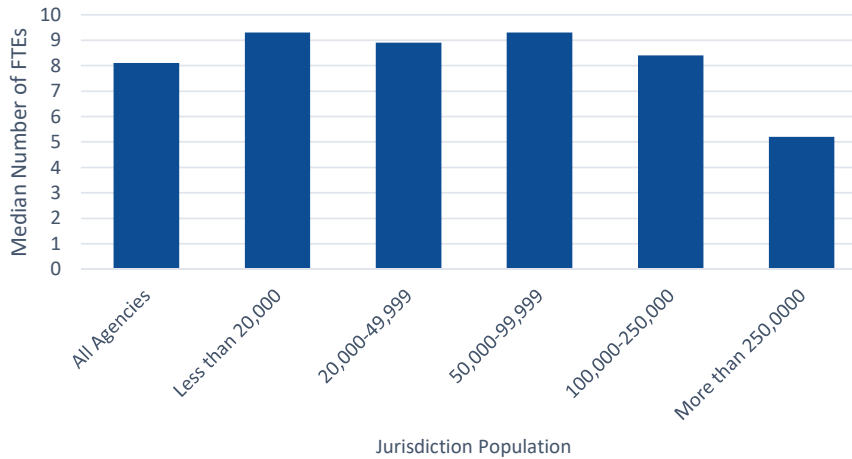
- 41.9 full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) on payroll
- 8.1 FTEs on staff for every 10,000 residents in its jurisdiction
- Median FTE counts also positively correlate with the number of acres maintained, the number of parks maintained, operating expenditures, and the population served. For example, agencies that serve populations between 20,000 and 49,999 residents employ an average of 27.3 FTE, while agencies that serve 50,000 to 99,000 people employ an average of 60 FTE.

**Figure I4. Park and Recreation Agency Staffing: Full-Time Equivalents (By Jurisdiction Population)**



Another way of comparing agency staffing across different park and recreation agencies examines number of staff per 10,000 residents. These comparative numbers hold fairly steady across population sizes with the median for all agencies at 8.1 FTEs.

Figure 15. Park and Recreation Agency FTEs Per 10,000 Residents



### Capital and Operating Expenses

For capital expenses, the typical park agency:

- Dedicates about 55% to renovation projects and 32% to new development projects.
- Plans to spend about \$5,000,000 million on capital expenditures over the next five years.
- For operations, the typical park agency spends:
  - \$4.3 million per year on total operating expenses
  - \$7,000 on annual operating expenses per acre of park and non-park sites managed by the agency
  - \$81.00 on annual operating expenses per capita
  - \$97,000 in annual operating expenditures per employee
- 54% of the annual operating budget on personnel costs, 38% on operating expenses, and 5% on capital expenses not included in the agency’s capital improvement plan (CIP)
- 44% of its operating budget on park management and maintenance, 43% on recreation, and 13% on other activities

### Agency Funding

The typical park and recreation agency:

- Derives 60% of their operating expenditures from general fund tax support, 26% from generated

revenues, 11% from dedicated taxes or levies, and 5% from grants, sponsorships and other sources

- Generates \$21.00 in revenue annually for each resident in the jurisdiction

### 2020 State of the Industry Report

Recreation Management magazine’s 2020 Report on the State of the Managed Recreation Industry summarizes the opinions and information provided by a wide range of professionals (with an average 22.3 years of experience) working in the recreation, sports, and fitness industry. Given the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, Recreation Management also conducted a supplemental survey in May 2020 to learn about both the impacts to the industry and what mitigation steps organizations were taking in response.

### Partnerships

The 2020 report indicated that most (89%) recreation, sports, and fitness facility owners form partnerships with other organizations as a means of expanding their reach, offering additional programming opportunities or as a way to share resources and increase funding. Local schools are shown as the most common partner (64%) for all facility types. Youth-serving organizations (Ys, JCC, Boys & Girls Clubs) and park and recreation organizations were the most likely to report that they had partnered with outside organizations, at 100% and 95% respectively.

## Revenue Outlook

In January 2020, half of respondents expected revenues to increase in both 2020 and 2021. Survey respondents from urban communities are more optimistic about revenue increases as compared to rural respondents.

In last year's report, parks respondents had reported increases in their average operating expenditures with operating costs that grew by 14% between fiscal year 2018 and 2019. Respondents generally expected their operating expenses to continue to increase between 2019 and 2021, with camps expecting a 10% increase, recreation centers at 8%, and parks at 6%.

Relative to costs and revenues, few facilities covered by the survey reported that they cover more than 75 percent of their operating costs via revenue. The percentage recovered varied with type of organization with the average percentage of costs recovered for all respondents hovering near 50% and private for-profit organizations achieving the highest cost recovery rates. For parks, the cost recovery rate remained steady at 44%.

Over the past decades, public parks and recreation departments and districts have faced a growing expectation that facilities can be run like businesses. Many local facilities are expected to recover much of their operating costs via revenues. While this is the business model of for-profit facilities like health clubs, it is a relatively recent development for publicly owned facilities, which have typically been subsidized via tax dollars and other funding sources. Most recreation providers (81%) have been taking actions to reduce expenditures. Cost recovery actions typically involve reduction in expenses with improving energy efficiency as the most common action (51% of respondents). Increased fees and staffing cost reductions and putting off construction or renovation plans were reported as other common methods for reducing operating costs.

As of May 2020, nearly 90% of respondents anticipated that total revenues would decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most anticipated a revenue drop of 30-50%, though one in seven expected a decline of more than 50%. In general, respondents are split on when they expect that revenues will begin to recover – 44% believe revenues will begin to rebound in 2021 while 40% expect further revenue declines.

## Facility Use

The majority of respondents reported an increase in use of their recreational facilities as of January 2020. Looking forward, more than half of respondents (53%), including 60-65% of parks and recreation centers, were expecting to see further increases in the number of people using their facilities over the next two years.

In 2020, 22% of respondents said they were planning to add more staff at their facilities, 75% were planning to maintain existing staffing levels, and 3% were planning to reduce staffing. The May 2020 survey found, however, that nearly half of responding organizations had laid off or furloughed staff due to the impacts of COVID-19 and nearly two-thirds had suspended hiring plans.

## Facilities and Improvements

Respondents from parks were more likely than other respondents to include: park shelters (83.3% of park respondents had shelters); playgrounds (82.7%); park restroom structures (79%); open spaces (73.9%); outdoor sports courts (71.9%); bike trails (48.3%); outdoor aquatic facilities (42.1%); dog parks (40.4%); skateparks (39.9%); fitness trails and outdoor fitness equipment (34.5%); disc golf courses (33.7%); splash play areas (33.3%); community gardens (32.3%); golf courses (29.2%); bike and BMX parks (14.2%); and ice rinks (13.9%).

Over the past seven years, the percentage of respondents who indicate that they have plans for construction, whether new facilities or additions or renovations to their existing facilities, has grown steadily, from 62.7 percent in 2013 to 72.9 percent in 2020. Construction budgets have also risen. The average amount respondents were planning to spend on their construction plans was up 10.8% in 2020, after an 18.4% increase in 2019. On average, respondents to the 2020 survey were planning to spend \$5.6 million on construction.

A majority of park respondents (54%) reported plans to add features at their facilities and were also the most likely to be planning to construct new facilities in the next three years (39%).

The top 10 planned features for all facility types include:

1. Splash play areas (25.4% of those with plans to add features were planning to add splash play)
2. Playgrounds (20.3%)
3. Park shelters (17.3%)
4. Dog parks (17.1%)
5. Park restrooms (16.1%)
6. Synthetic turf sports fields (14.8%)
7. Walking and hiking trails (14.8%)
8. Fitness trails and outdoor fitness equipment (14.8%)
9. Disc golf courses (12.9%)
10. Outdoor sports courts (11.3%)

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on construction plans. As of May 2020, over

one-third (34%) of respondents had put construction on hold due to the impacts of the pandemic, rising costs, and supply shortages.

**Programming**

Nearly all respondents (97%) offer programming of some kind. The top 10 most commonly offered programs include: holiday events and other special events (provided by 65.3% of respondents); educational programs (59%); group exercise programs (58.8%); fitness programs (57.6%); day camps and summer camps (57.3%); youth sports teams (55.2%); mind-body balance programs such as yoga and tai chi (51.2%); adult sports teams (46%); arts and crafts programs (45.8%); and programs for active older adults (45.4%).

Respondents from community centers, parks and health clubs were the most likely to report that they had plans to add programs at their facilities over the next few years. The ten most commonly planned program additions were:

1. Fitness programs (24% of those who have plans to add programs)
2. Group exercise programs (22.4%)
3. Teen programs (22%)
4. Environmental education (21.8%)
5. Day camps and summer camps (20.9%)
6. Mind-body balance programs (20.5%)
7. Programs for active older adults (18.1%)
8. Special needs programs (17.9%)
9. Holidays and other special events (17.4%)
10. Arts and crafts (17%)

Addressing the COVID-19 pandemic required many respondents to either put programs or services on hold (82%) or cut programs or services entirely (34%). Additionally, many respondents have had to rethink their programming portfolios. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) had added online fitness and wellness programming as of May 2020, 39% were involved in programs to address food insecurity, and one in four was involved in programs to provide educational support to out-of-school children.

**General Challenges**

In January 2020, facility managers were asked about the challenges they anticipated impacting their facilities in the future. Generally, overall budgets are the top concern for most respondents including their ability to support equipment and facility maintenance needs (58%) and staffing (54%). Marketing, safety/ risk management, and creating new and innovative programming also remain continuing challenges for facility managers. Facility managers also report that environmental and conservation issues (13%) and social equity and access (10%) are posing increasing challenges. However, as of May 2020, many respondents concerns had shifted to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic impacts described in the sections above.

**2020 Outdoor Participation Report**

**Overall Participation**

According to the 2020 Outdoor Participation Report, published by the Outdoor Foundation, just over half of Americans ages 6 and older participated in outdoor recreation at least once in 2019, the highest participation rate in five years. This increase was not universal, however, and there was significant variation in participation between age, gender, and racial groups.

Despite the overall increase in the percentage of Americans engaging in outdoor recreation, the total number of recreational outings declined in 2019. Outdoor participants went on a total of 10.9 billion outdoor outings in 2019 – a 12% drop from the 2012 high-water mark of 12.4 billion outings. In addition, the number of outings per participant declined 17% in the past five years, from 85 outings per participant in 2014 to 71 in 2019.

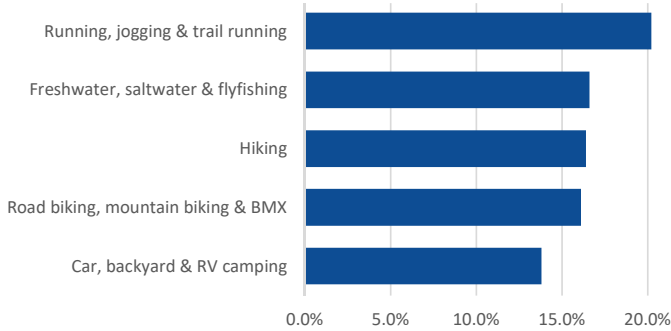
This drop mirrors a decline in the total number of outings per participant. Each year for over a decade, participants have engaged less often in outdoor activities. As a result, the percentage of ‘casual’ participants in outdoor recreation (i.e. those who participate one to 11 times per year) has grown by about 4% over the past 15 years, which the percentage of ‘core’ participants (i.e. weekly participants) has declined.

Figure I6. Frequency of Outdoor Outings: Trending Over Many Years

Frequency of Outdoor Outings	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019
Casual (1 to 11 times)	28.2%	27.9%	28.4%	31.7%	32.6%
Moderate (12 to 51 times)	32.5%	31.8%	33.1%	32.5%	32.6%
Core (52+ times)	39.3%	40.4%	38.5%	35.8%	34.9%

Running, jogging and trail running in the most popular outdoor activity by levels of participation, as shown in the chart below, followed by fishing, hiking biking and camping.

**Figure 17. Most Popular Outdoor Activities by Participants, Nationwide**



### Youth Participation Declines

The youngest participants, children 6 to 17, were outdoors far less than in previous years. Their average outings fell from a high of 91 in 2012 to just 77 per child in 2019. Youth participation declined across the board in 2019, with the biggest declines seen in girls aged 18 to 24 (-5%) and boys ages 13 to 17 (-4%). Households with children, however, continue to drive growth in participation. Adults with children had much higher outdoor recreation participation rates (57%) than adults without children (44.4%).

### Female Participation Continues to Grow

In 2019, women made up 46% of participants in outdoor recreation while men made up 53.8%, representing the smallest gender gap measured in the report's history. Women's participation has increased from 43% of all participants in 2009 to 46% in 2019.

### Diversity Gap Remains

Despite increases in participation, Black/African American and Hispanic Americans continue to be significantly underrepresented in outdoor recreation. Hispanics made up 11.6% of outdoor recreation participants, a 35 percent shortfall relative to their proportion of the population ages 6 and over (17.9%). Similarly, Black/African Americans represented 12.4% of the U.S. population ages 6 and over in 2019, but just 9.4 percent of outdoor participants, a 24 percent participation deficit. Black youth were the least likely to participate in outdoor recreation as compared to Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian youth – signaling a potential future gap in outdoor participants. However, those Black and Hispanic Americans who do participate in outdoor recreation do so frequently – more often, on average, than members of other racial groups.

In 2019, 62% of Asian Americans participated in outdoor recreation, followed by 53% of White, 48% of Hispanic, and 40% of Black/African Americans. Impacts of COVID-19

An August 2020 report from the Outdoor Industry Association indicated that COVID-19 impacted recreation participation in April, May and June as Americans flocked to outdoor recreation amid COVID restrictions. Americans took up new activities in significant numbers with the biggest gains in running, cycling, and hiking given that these activities were widely considered the safest activities during pandemic shutdowns. The hardest hit activity segments during COVID shutdowns were team sports (down 69%) and racquet sports (down 55%). Reviewing just April, May and June 2020, participation rates for day hiking rose more than any other activity, up 8.4%.

### 2020 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report

Prepared by a partnership of the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) and the Physical Activity Council (PAC), this February 2020 participation report summarizes levels of activity and identifies key trends in sports, fitness, and recreation in the US. The report is based on over 18,000 online interviews of a nationwide sample that provides a high degree of statistical accuracy using strict quotas for gender, age, income, region, and ethnicity. The study looked at 122 different team and individual sports and outdoor activities.

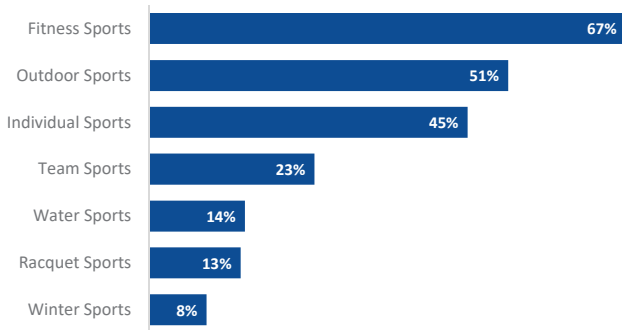
Compared to 2014, eight million more Americans were casually active in 2019 indicating a positive movement toward an increasingly active population. Sports that made great strides in the last six years include trail running, cardio tennis, BMX biking, and day hiking. Over the last year, only 2.1 million additional people reported participating in an activity that raises their heartrate for more than 30 minutes. Participation in active high calorie activities has remained flat for the last four years.

The percentage of people reporting no physical activity during the past year declined to 27% in 2019 - its lowest point in six years – continuing an increasing trend in activity. Rates of inactivity continue to be linked to household income levels, with lower income households having higher rates of inactivity. However, in 2019, households across the income spectrum saw declines in inactivity.

Fitness sports continue to be the most popular activity type for the 5th consecutive year. Other sports activities, including individual sports, racquet sports, and water

sports have seen a modest decline in participation since 2018. Team sports experienced a slight increase in participation, driven by the increasing popularity of basketball and outdoor soccer. While racquet sports lost about 2% of participants since 2018, mostly due to declines in squash and badminton participation, the rising popularity of pickleball and cardio tennis may reverse this declining trend.

**Figure 18. Total Participation Rate by Activity Category**



When asked which activities they aspire to do, all age-groups and income levels tend to show interest in outdoor activities like fishing, camping, hiking, biking, bicycling, and swimming. Younger age groups are more interested in participating in team sports, such as soccer, basketball and volleyball, while older adults are more likely to aspire to individual activities like swimming for fitness, bird/nature viewing, and canoeing.

Physical education (PE) participation shows 96% of 6 to 12-year old youth and 82% of 13-17 year olds participated in PE in 2019. While younger children were more likely to participate in PE, older youth had higher average days of participation. Children were more than twice as likely to be inactive if they did not attend PE. Overall, all ages saw an increase in PE 2019. Participation in PE is thought to lead to an increase of active healthy lifestyles in adulthood.

**Figure 19. Sports with the highest 5-year increase in participation**

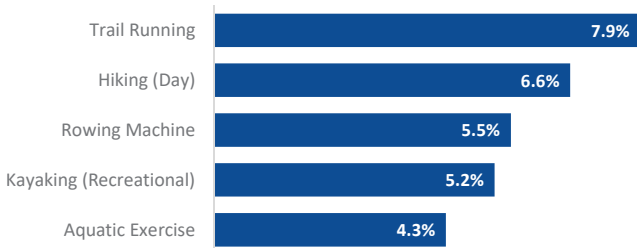
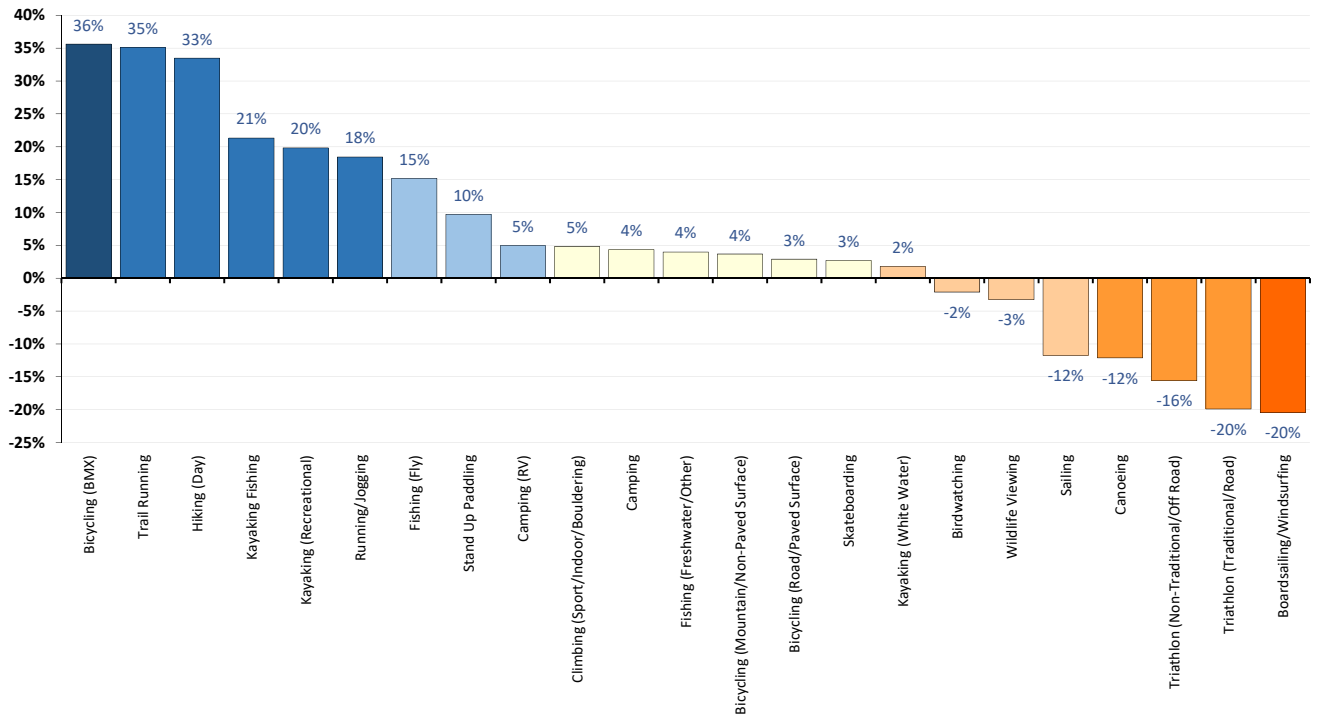


Figure I10. 5-Year Change in Outdoor Sports Participation



### Americans Engagement with Parks Survey

This annual study from the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) probes Americans’ usage of parks, the key reasons that drive their use, and the greatest challenges preventing greater usage. Each year, the study examines the importance of public parks in Americans’ lives, including how parks compare to other services and offerings of local governments. The survey of 1,000 American adults looks at frequency and drivers of parks/recreation facilities visits and the barriers to that prevent greater enjoyment. Survey respondents also indicate the importance of park and recreation plays in their decisions at the voting booth and their level of support for greater funding.

In 2020, NRPA conducted a shorter-than-typical Engagement survey because of the dynamic nature of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Study focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on park and recreation usage, whether residents see public parks as an essential public service, and whether people vote for political leaders based on their support for parks and recreation funding.

Key findings include:

- Eighty-two percent of U.S. adults agree that parks and recreation is essential.
- Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents indicate that having a high-quality park,

playground, public open space or recreation center nearby is an important factor in deciding where they want to live.

- U.S. residents visit local park and recreation facilities more than twice a month on average.
- Three in five U.S. residents — more than 190 million people — visited a park, trail, public open space or other recreation facility at least once during the first three months of the pandemic (mid-March through mid-June 2020). Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the Americans Engagement with Parks report,

“In many communities across the nation, parks, trails and other public open spaces have been crucial resources available to people seeking a brief respite from the public health crisis. As businesses shut down operations during the spring, many parks and trails remained open, providing people with opportunities to safely enjoy outdoor physical activity with its many attendant physical and mental health benefits. According to NRPA Parks Snapshot Survey data ([nrpa.org/ParksSnapshot](http://nrpa.org/ParksSnapshot)), 83 percent of park and recreation agencies kept some/all of their parks open during the initial wave of COVID-19 infections in April 2020, while 93 percent did the same with some/all of their trail networks.

Consequently, people flocked to their local parks, trails and other public open spaces. Three in five U.S. residents — more than 190 million people — visited a park, trail, public open space or other recreation facility at least once during the first three months of the pandemic — from mid-March through mid-June 2020. Parks and recreation usage was particularly strong among GenZers, Millennials, Gen Xers, parents, people who identify as Hispanic/Latinx and those who identify as nonwhite.

As has been the case with virtually every aspect of life, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the frequency with which most people engage with their local park and recreation amenities. Still, slightly more than half of people have been visiting parks, trails and other public open space amenities as often — if not more often — since the start of the pandemic than they had during the same period in 2019. Twenty-seven percent of U.S. residents report that their use of parks, trails and other public open spaces increased during the first three months of the pandemic relative to the same period in 2019. A quarter of survey respondents indicates their parks and recreation usage during the period from mid-March to mid-June 2020 matched that of the same three months in 2019. Forty-eight percent of people report that their usage of parks, trails and public open spaces declined during the early months of the pandemic.”

## Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan

The 2018-2022 Recreation and Conservation Plan for Washington State provides a strategic direction to help assure the effective and adequate provision of outdoor recreation and conservation to meet the needs of Washington State residents. The plan identifies the following five near and long-term priority areas and establishes specific actions within each priority to help meet the outdoor recreation and conservation needs within the state:

1. Sustain and Grow the Legacy of Parks, Trails, and Conservation Lands
2. Improve Equity of Parks, Trails, and Conservation Lands
3. Meet the Needs of Youth
4. Plan for Culturally Relevant Parks and Trails to Meet Changing Demographics
5. Assert Recreation and Conservation as a Vital Public Service

### Sustain & Grow the Legacy

A wealth of existing recreation and conservation areas and facilities should be kept open, safe, and enjoyable for all. Some modifications to meet the interests of today’s population may be needed at some facilities. Sustaining existing areas while expanding and building new facilities to keep up with a growing population is one of the five priority goals.

### Improve Equity

The National Recreation and Park Association’s position on social equity states:

“Our nation’s public parks and recreation services should be equally accessible and available to all people regardless of income level, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age. Public parks, recreation services and recreation programs including the maintenance, safety, and accessibility of parks and facilities, should be provided on an equitable basis to all citizens of communities served by public agencies.”

The Washington plan restates that equity goal for all its citizens. Improving equity is also a strategy for improving a community’s health. Current statewide participation rates in outdoor activities were surveyed as part of the plan.

Figure I11. Participation Rates for Washington Residents in Outdoor Activities

Participation Rates for Top 12 Categories	
Activity	%
Walking	94%
Nature activities	89%
Leisure activities at parks	82%
Swimming	68%
Sightseeing activities	67%
Hiking	61%
Outdoor sports	48%
Water-based activities (freshwater)	46%
Camping	45%
Trending activities	33%
Snow and ice activities	30%
Bicycling	28%

### Get Youth Outside

Washington State youth participate in outdoor activities to a greater extent than youth nationally. Park and recreation providers are urged to offer a variety of outdoor activities for youth and to support youth programs. Most youth are walking, playing at a park, trying new or trending activities, fishing in freshwater,



exploring nature, and riding bikes. Other activities of interest to youth are activities in freshwater such as boating and paddling, fishing in saltwater, and target shooting, hiking, outdoor sports, and riding off-road vehicles.

**Figure I12. Youth Participation Rates for Washington Residents in Outdoor Activities**

Youth Participation Rates	
Activity	%
Walking	88%
Leisure in parks	78%
Trending activities	77%
Fishing in freshwater	77%
Nature-based activities	75%
Bicycling	74%
Freshwater-based activities*	66%
Target shooting	62%
Hiking	57%
Outdoor sports	57%
Off-road vehicle riding	57%
Fishing in saltwater	53%

\*(not swimming)

### Plan for Culturally Relevant parks and Trails to Meet Changing Demographics

Washington’s population is expected to grow by 2 million people by 2040 leading to more congestion and competition for recreation resources. Between 2010-2040, the percent of people of color are expected to increase from 27 percent to 44 percent. With the cultural change in the population, preferred recreational activities also will change. By 2030, more than one of every five Washingtonians will be 65 years old or older. By 2040, there will be more seniors than youth. Park and recreation providers should be prepared to create new and diverse opportunities and accommodate the active senior population.

### Assert Recreation and Conservation as a Vital Public Service

The plan recognizes that outdoor recreation contributes to a strong economy and is a public investment like other public services and infrastructure. The report cites the Outdoor Industry Association and other economic studies that reinforce the importance of park and recreation services locally, regionally and statewide.

## 2019 Special Report on Paddlesports & Safety

In 2019, the Outdoor Foundation produced a report focused on paddlesports data based on a participation survey (over 20,000 online interviews with a nationwide sample of individuals and households). In 2018, 22.9 million Americans (approximately 7.4% of the population) participated in paddle sports. This represents an increase of more than 4 million participants since the study began in 2010. Over the last five years, there continues to be an increase in paddlesports popularity among outdoor enthusiasts, with significant portions of the nationwide growth occurring in the Pacific region.

Recreational kayaking continues to grow in popularity but may be driving some of the decline in canoeing. The popularity of stand-up paddling has soared, increasing by 1.5 million participants over the past five years, though it does not have nearly as high a participation rate as either recreational kayaking or canoeing.

Most paddlers are Caucasian, other racial and ethnic groups are largely under-represented. However, Caucasian participation has remained relatively flat while participation by people identifying as Hispanic or Black/African American has grown by 0.5% to 1% per year since 2013. This growth has led to more than 773,000 new Hispanic paddlers in just six years, signaling the importance and potential of engaging minority groups in paddlesports.

One in eight paddlers have been participating in the sport for 21 years or more. However, many participants – between thirty and sixty percent, depending on the discipline – tried a paddlesport for the first time in 2018. Such high levels of first-time participation may produce longer term growth in paddling, assuming participants continue to enjoy the sport.

Among adult paddlers, most participate for excitement and adventure, for exercise, or to be close to nature. Kayakers, rafters, canoers and stand-up paddlers often enjoy, or would be willing to try, other paddlesports. Many also enjoy similar outdoor “crossover” activities such as hiking, camping, walking, and nature viewing.



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# APPENDIX K: IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS & TACTICS



## LOCAL FUNDING OPTIONS

The City of Mercer Island possesses a range of local funding tools that may be used for the benefit of growing, developing, and maintaining its parks and recreation facilities and programs. The sources listed below represent potential funding sources. Funding may also be dedicated for other local purposes, which limit applicability and usage.

### Councilmanic Bonds

Councilmanic general obligation bonds and other forms of debt may be issued by cities without public vote. The principal and interest bonds are paid from and secured by the city’s regular property taxes and full faith and credit. These types of bonds may also be secured by a pledge of other legally available revenue. Debt service payments are from existing city revenue or new general tax revenue, such as additional sales tax or real estate excise tax. Issuance of general obligation bonds is subject to the State constitutional and statutory limitations on debt that may be incurred without a vote of the electorate. As discussed below, cities may issue general obligation debt for general municipal purposes up to 2.5% of the assessed valuation of taxable property in the city at the time of calculation. Up to 1.5% of the 2.5% allowable capacity may be issued as councilmanic bonds without a vote of the electorate.

### Voted General Obligation Bonds

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.52.056>

Cities may issue unlimited tax general obligation bonds payable from and secured by excess property taxes to fund capital projects such as construction, expansion, or replacement or renovation of an existing facility or facilities. Subject to a 60% supermajority voter approval requirement, these types of bonds are issued for general purposes up to 2.5% of assessed valuation, up to 2.5% of assessed valuation for certain utility purposes, and up to 2.5% of assessed valuation for open space, park facilities, and facilities for economic development. As previously noted, within the 2.5% of allowable debt capacity for general purposes, up to 1.5% of the bond amount may

be issued without voter approval. The combination of voter-approved and non-voter approved general obligation debt for general purposes may not exceed 2.5% of the city’s assessed valuation at the time the debt is incurred. For all purposes, the total of all general obligation debt may not exceed 7.0% of the city’s assessed valuation. (Article VIII, Section 6).

Unlimited tax general obligation bonds are also subject to validation requirements. The minimum turnout at the election must be at least 40% of the city voters who voted at the last preceding state general election. If the ballot proposition approving the issuance of voter-approved debt is approved by a supermajority of voters, and the validation requirements are met, the bonds will be payable from and secured by an excess property tax levy that is unlimited in rate/amount. The levy will be set at a rate that matches the debt payment schedule on the bonds.

### Property Tax Excess Levy for Operations and Maintenance - One Year Only

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.52.052>

Cities also have the authority to ask the voters to approve a one-year excess property tax levy for any lawful purpose (RCW 84.52.052). This one-year excess property tax levy requires supermajority (60%) voter approval and must be re-approved by the voters each year. As this action increases revenue for one year, it is wise to request this type of funding for one-time uses only or to address a short-term funding gap.

### Regular Property Tax - Ld Lift

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.55.050>

Cities are authorized to impose ad valorem taxes upon real and personal property. A city’s maximum regular property levy rate for general purposes is limited to \$3.375 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. This amount may not increase in excess of \$3.60 per \$1,000 of assessed value if the city is annexed into a library district, a regional fire service protection authority, and/or a fire protection district, less the actual regular levy

made as a result of the annexation. Furthermore, a city may impose an additional \$0.225 per \$1,000 of assessed value beyond the \$3.375 or \$3.60 (for annexed cities) if the city has a fire pension fund, which must be used to the extent necessary for firefighters' pension funding purposes. Otherwise, this tax may be levied and used for any other municipal purpose.

State law also limits the amount of a regular levy for any particular year to the highest amount that could have been levied in any prior year, multiplied by a specified percentage (the "limit factor"), plus an adjustment for new construction, annexations, certain improvements, and state assessed property. The limit factor is the lesser of 101% or 100% plus inflation. Cities can exceed this limit factor if such an increase is approved by a majority (50% plus one) of voters. Receiving voter approval to exceed the limit factor is known as a lid lift. A lid lift may be permanent or for a specific purpose and time period.

A levy lid lift is an instrument for increasing the amount of regular property taxes for operating and/or capital purposes. Because a levy lid lift increases the amount of regular property taxes a city may collect, the corresponding regular property tax rate to generate such an amount must be less than the city's authorized statutory maximum rate. A simple majority vote of the electorate is required, and there are no validation requirements.

Cities have two "levy lid lift" options available: Single-year(basic) or Multi-year.

#### **Single-year Lid Lift:**

The single-year lift refers to receiving voter approval to exceed the limit factor in the first year after the lift is approved. It is a one-time bump over the 101% limit factor. This change increases the city's base levy (in the first year) from which subsequent levies are calculated. Following the first year, levies are calculated using the limit factor described above. The single-year lift does not mean that the lift goes away after one year; after the one-time bump occurs, the city may levy regular property taxes based on its increased base for any amount of time, including permanently, as discussed below. The exception is that if a stated purpose in the ballot measure is for the levy lid lift to pay debt service on bonds, the maximum period is nine years.

The election to implement a single-year lift may take place on any election date listed in RCW 29A.04.321.

#### **Multi-year Lid Lift:**

The multi-year lift allows a city to lift the levy lid or enables its levy to be "bumped up" each year, for up to a maximum of six years. Unlike a one-year levy lid lift, which increases the city's regular property levy amount

over the limit factor for one year only, a multi-levy lid lift may increase the city's regular property tax levy over the limit factor for up to six successive years. The methodology used by the municipality for calculating the increase (such as a dollar amount or percentage increase tied to an index) must be stated in the ballot measure. The voters may approve multi-year lifts at either the August primary or the November general election.

#### **Term of Levy Lid Lift:**

Single-year and multi-year lid lifts can be temporary or permanent. The lift term refers to the length of time the city will benefit from (e.g., receive property tax revenue from) the increased tax levy base. After the city's base is increased, which can happen after the first year in the case of a one-time bump, or at the end of successive years (not to exceed six years), the resulting outcome is the possibility of additional tax revenues. If the levy lid lift is temporary, the incremental increase will continue for a specified number of years. The time frame will be stated in the ballot title. In the case of a temporary levy, after the expiration of the lift term, the city will reduce the levy base to what it would have been had the increase never occurred (assuming that the city would have increased its levy to the maximum amount of the limit factor in the intervening years). Should the intention be that the levy lid lift is permanent, then the ballot measure will state that the levy in the final year will serve as the basis for the calculation of all future levy increases (in other words, be made permanent).

#### **Ballot Measure Requirements and Supplanting:**

When considering a levy lid lift, the city will be attentive to the ballot measure requirements unique to single-year and multi-year increases. Both options require the city to state what the aggregate regular property tax levy rate will be in the first year. When determining the maximum aggregate standard property tax levy rate, the city will consider potential shifts in assessed valuation and other factors to give flexibility as needed. Single-year lifts can be for any purpose, and the ballot title does not need to state the purpose. Alternatively, the city must state the intended purpose of a multi-year lift in the ballot measure. State law also requires the city to specify whether certain exemptions will apply to the lift.

The single-year lift allows supplanting of expenditures within the lift period; however, the multi-year lift does not make expenditure allowances for jurisdictions in King County. State law currently provides an exemption from the supplanting limitations due to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The State Constitution and statutes limit the aggregate of all regular property taxes on any parcel of land (except levies of port districts and public utility districts) to 1% of the true and fair value of the property. Within the 1%, the total regular levy rate (other than certain excluded levies) of senior taxing districts (counties and cities) and junior taxing districts (fire districts, library districts, park districts, etc.) may not exceed the limits of 1% or \$5.90/\$1,000 of assessed value. If this limit is exceeded, levies are reduced or eliminated according to the statute until the maximum levy rate is achieved.

## Sales Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.14>  
Cities have the authority to impose a sales and use tax without voter approval, and specific sales and use taxes with voter approval, subject to various limitations. Paid by the consumer, sales tax is a percentage of the retail price paid for specific classifications of goods and services within the State.

Governing bodies of cities and counties may impose sales taxes within their boundaries without voter approval at a rate set by state statute and local ordinances, subject to referendum.

Various taxing districts impose sales taxes within the City of Mercer Island, including the State (6.5%), King County (1.25%, of which 0.10% is for criminal justice purposes), and Regional Transit (1.40%). The State collects an additional 0.30% sales tax on vehicle sales and leases to fund transportation improvements. The City imposes a 1.0% basic option sales and use tax (of which 0.85% goes to the city and the remainder goes to the County per state law). Revenue from this tax is accounted for in the General Fund and may be used for any city governmental purpose.

Sales taxes applicable to Parks and Recreation include: counties may ask voters to approve a sales tax of up to 0.3 percent, which is shared with cities. At least one-third of the revenue must be used for criminal justice purposes.

Counties and cities may also form public facilities districts. These districts may ask the voters to approve a sales tax of up to 0.2 percent. The proceeds may be used for financing, designing, acquisition, construction, equipping, operating, maintaining, remodeling, repairing, and re-equipping its public facilities.

If a jurisdiction intends to change a sales tax rate or levy a new sales tax, it must pass an ordinance to that effect and submit it to the Department of Revenue at least 75 days before the effective date. The effective date must be the first day of a quarter: January 1, April 1, July 1, or October 1.

## Business and Occupation Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=35.102>  
Business and occupation (B&O) taxes are excise taxes levied on different business classes to raise revenue. Taxes are levied as a percentage of the gross receipts of a business, less some deductions. Businesses are put in various classifications such as manufacturing, wholesaling, retailing, and services. The B&O tax rate may differ by classification.

Cities can impose this tax for the first time or raise rates following the referendum procedure.

B&O taxes are limited to a maximum tax rate that can be imposed by a city's legislative body at 0.2% (0.002) but grandfathered in any higher rates that existed on January 1, 1982. Any city may levy a rate higher than 0.2% if approved by a majority of voters (RCW 35.21.711). As of January 1, 2008, cities that impose the B&O tax must allow for allocation and apportionment, as set out in RCW 35.102.130.

## Admissions Tax

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=35.21.280>

An admissions tax is a use tax for entertainment. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Cities and counties may levy an admission tax in an amount no greater than 5% of the admission charge, as is authorized by statute (cities: RCW 35.21.280; counties: RCW 35.57.100). This tax can be levied on admission charges (including season tickets) to places such as theaters, dance halls, circuses, clubs that have cover charges, observation towers, stadiums, and any other activity where an admission charge is made to enter the facility.

If a city imposes an admissions tax, the county may not levy a tax within city boundaries.

The statutes provide an exception for admission to elementary or secondary school activities. Generally, certain events sponsored by non-profits are exempted from the tax; however, this is not a requirement. Counties also exempt any public facility of a public facility district for which admission is imposed. There are no statutory restrictions on the use of revenue.

## Impact Fees

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.02.050>

Development impact fees are charges placed on new development. These fees are charged in unimproved areas to help pay for various public facilities that serve the new development or for other impacts associated with such development. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Counties and cities that plan under the GMA may impose impact fees on residential and commercial development activity to help pay for certain public facility improvements, including parks, open space, and recreation facilities identified in the county's capital facilities plan. The improvements financed from impact fees must be reasonably related to the new development and must reasonably benefit the new development. The fees must be spent or encumbered within ten years of collection. Mercer Island currently assesses a parks' impact fee.

## Real Estate Excise Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.46.010>

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) is a tax levied on the sale of all real estate unless a specific exemption is claimed. Measured by the total selling price, the tax may include the amount of any liens, mortgages, and other debts given to secure the purchase. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Counties and cities may levy a quarter percent tax known as REET 1 or "first quarter percent". First quarter percent REET (REET 1) revenues are restricted under the Growth Management Act (GMA) and must be spent on capital projects listed in the city's capital facilities plan element of their comprehensive plan. Revenue may also be spent on certain maintenance and operation expenses if specified conditions are satisfied. Capital projects include planning, acquisition, construction, reconstruction, repair, replacement, rehabilitation, or improvement of parks, recreational facilities, and trails.

In addition to REET 1, cities may also impose a second quarter percent or REET 2. Similar to REET 1, the revenue obtained from REET 2 must also be spent on capital projects, including planning, construction, reconstruction, repair, rehabilitation, or improvement of parks, and certain maintenance and operation expenses if specified conditions are satisfied. Acquisition of land for parks is not a permitted use of REET 2. Both REET 1 and REET 2 may be used to make debt service payments on bonds or other debt issued for

qualifying projects. The City of Mercer Island currently assesses both REETs and uses this funding for various capital project needs.

## Lodging Tax

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?Cite=67.28.180>

The lodging tax is a user fee for hotel/motel occupation. Both cities and counties may impose this tax through legislative action.

Cities and/or counties may impose a "basic" 2% tax under RCW 67.28.180 on all charges for furnishing lodging at hotels, motels, and similar establishments for a continuous period of less than one month.

This tax is taken as a credit against the 6.5% state sales tax, so that the total tax that a patron pays in retail sales tax and hotel-motel tax combined is equal to the retail sales tax in the jurisdiction. In addition, jurisdictions may levy an additional tax of up to 2%, or a total rate of 4%, under RCW 67.28.181(1). This is not credited against the state sales tax. Therefore, if this tax is levied, the total tax on the lodging bill will increase by 2%.

If both a city and the county are levying this tax, the county must allow a credit for any tax imposed by a city so that no two taxes are set on the same taxable event. These revenues must be used solely for paying for tourism promotion and for the acquisition or operation of tourism-related facilities. "Tourism" is defined as economic activity resulting from tourists, which may include sales of overnight lodging, meals, tours, gifts, or souvenirs; there is no requirement that a tourist must stay overnight.

## Conservation Futures Tax (King County)

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.34>  
The Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) is provided for in RCW 84.34. King County imposes a Conservation Futures levy at a rate of \$0.0625 per \$1,000 assessed value to acquire open space lands, including green spaces, greenbelts, wildlife habitat, and trail rights-of-way proposed for preservation for public use by either the county or the cities within the county. Funds are allocated annually, and cities within the county, citizen groups, and citizens may apply for funds through the county's process. The CFT program provides grants to cities to support open space priorities in local plans and requires a 100% match from other sources.



## FEDERAL & STATE GRANTS AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

### Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

<http://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, also known as the Rivers & Trails Program or RTCA, is a technical assistance resource for communities. The program is administered by the National Park Service and federal government agencies to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The RTCA program implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of NPS in communities across America.

### Recreation and Conservation Office Grant Programs

[www.rco.wa.gov](http://www.rco.wa.gov)

The Recreation and Conservation Office was created in 1964 as part of the Marine Recreation Land Act. The RCO grants money to state and local agencies, generally on a matching basis, to acquire, develop, and enhance wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation properties. Some money is also distributed for planning grants. RCO grant programs utilize funds from various sources. Historically, these have included the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, state bonds, Initiative 215 monies (derived from un-reclaimed marine fuel taxes), off-road vehicle funds, Youth Athletic Facilities Account, and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

#### **Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)**

This program, managed through the RCO, provides matching grants to state and local agencies to protect and enhance salmon habitat and to provide public access and recreation opportunities on aquatic lands. In 1998, DNR refocused the ALEA program to emphasize salmon habitat preservation and enhancement. However, the program is still open to traditional water access proposals. Any project must be located on navigable portions of waterways. ALEA funds are derived from the leasing of state-owned aquatic lands and from the sale of harvest rights for shellfish and other aquatic resources.

#### **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)**

Funding sources managed by the RCO include the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The

WWRP is divided into Habitat Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Accounts; these are further divided into several project categories. Cities, counties, and other local sponsors may apply for funding in urban wildlife habitat, local parks, trails, and water access categories. Funds for local agencies are awarded on a matching basis. Grant applications are evaluated once each year, and the State Legislature must authorize funding for the WWRP project lists.

#### **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides grants to buy land and develop public outdoor facilities, including parks, trails, and wildlife lands. Grant recipients must provide at least 50% matching funds in either cash or in-kind contributions. Grant program revenue is from a portion of Federal revenue derived from selling or leasing off-shore oil and gas resources.

#### **National Recreational Trails Program**

The National Recreational Trails Program (N RTP) provides funds to maintain trails and facilities that provide a backcountry experience for a range of activities, including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, motorcycling, and snowmobiling. Eligible projects include the maintenance and re-routing of recreational trails, development of trail-side and trail-head facilities, and operation of environmental education and trail safety programs. A local match of 20% is required. This program is funded through Federal gasoline taxes attributed to recreational non-highway uses.

#### **Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) Program**

The YAF provides grants to develop, equip, maintain, and improve youth and community athletic facilities. Cities, counties, and qualified non-profit organizations may apply for funding, and grant recipients must provide at least 50% matching funds in either cash or in-kind contributions.

#### **Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund**

Grants are awarded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for acquisition or restoration of lands directly correlating to salmon habitat protection or recovery. Projects must demonstrate a direct benefit to fish habitat. There is no match requirement for design-only projects; acquisition and restoration projects require a 15% match. The funding source includes the sale of state general obligation bonds, the federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, and the state Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund.



## STP Regional Competition - Puget Sound Regional Council

<https://www.psrc.org/our-work/funding/project-selection>

Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds are considered the most “flexible” funding source provided through federal transportation funding. Every two years, the Puget Sound Regional Council conducts a competitive grant program to award FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. For the Countywide STP/CMAQ competitions, the policy focuses on providing transportation improvements to a center or centers and the corridors that serve them. Centers are defined as regional growth and regional manufacturing/industrial centers, centers designated through countywide processes, town centers, and other local centers. Program set-asides include funding for priority non-motorized projects within King County.

## King County Grants

### King County Youth and Amateur Sports Grants (YASG)

Youth and Amateur Sports Grants (YASG) support fit and healthy communities by investing in programs and capital projects that increase access to physical activity. Program grants range from \$15,000-\$75,000, while capital grants range from \$25,000-\$250,000. Funding is only available to organizations serving residents of King County, including non-profit organizations, public schools, park districts, public agencies, tribes and tribal organizations. A small or emerging community organization without 501c3 status is eligible through a partnership with a fiscal agent. The program is funded and sustained through a 1 percent car-rental tax authorized by the Legislature in 1993. Funds can only be used for programs or capital projects that increase access to health-enhancing physical activities.

### WaterWorks Grants

Approximately \$2 million are awarded every two years for organizations carrying out a variety of projects. Non-profits, schools, educational institutions, cities, counties, tribes, and special purpose districts are eligible to apply, and partnerships are encouraged. Projects must have a demonstrable positive impact on the waters of King County and provide opportunities for stewardship. In addition to the WaterWorks competitive grants, water quality project funding is available through King County Council allocated funding.

## King County Cultural Heritage Grants through 4Culture

As the cultural funding agency for King County, 4Culture offers grants and cultural support in three program areas: arts, heritage, and preservation. Program guidelines and grant award amounts vary between the three program areas.

## OTHER METHODS & FUNDING SOURCES

### Metropolitan Park District

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=35.61>

Metropolitan park districts may be formed to manage, control, improve, maintain, and acquire parks, parkways, and boulevards. In addition to acquiring and managing their own lands, metropolitan districts may accept and manage park and recreation lands and equipment turned over by any city within the district or by the county. Formation of a metropolitan park district may be initiated in cities of five thousand population or more by city council ordinance, or by petition, and requires majority approval by voters for creation.

### Park and Recreation District

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.69>

Park and recreation districts may be formed to provide leisure-time activities and recreation facilities (parks, playgrounds, pools, golf courses, paths, community centers, arboretums, campgrounds, boat launches, etc.). They must be initiated by petition of at least 15% percent of the registered voters within the proposed district. Upon completing the petition process and review by county commissioners, a proposition for district formation and election of five district commissioners is submitted to the voters of the proposed district at the next general election. Once formed, park and recreation districts retain the authority to propose a regular property tax levy, annual excess property tax levies, and general obligation bonds. All three of these funding types require 60% percent voter approval and 40% percent voter turnout. With voter approval, the district may levy a regular property tax not to exceed sixty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for up to six consecutive years.



## Park and Recreation Service Area (PRSA)

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.68.400>

A quasi-municipal corporation with independent taxing authority whose purpose is to finance, acquire, construct, improve, maintain or operate any park, senior citizen activities center, zoo, aquarium, or recreation facilities; and provide a higher level of park service.

## Business Sponsorships/Donations

Business sponsorships for programs may be available throughout the year. In-kind contributions are often received, including food, door prizes, and equipment/material.

## Interagency Agreements

State law provides for interagency cooperative efforts between units of government. Joint acquisition, development, and use of park and open space facilities may be provided between Parks, Public Works, and utility providers.

## Private Grants, Donations & Gifts

Many trusts and private foundations provide funding for park, recreation, and open space projects. Grants from these sources are typically allocated through a competitive application process and vary dramatically in size based on the organization's financial resources and funding criteria. Philanthropic giving is another source of project funding. Efforts in this area may involve cash gifts and include donations through other mechanisms such as wills or insurance policies. Community fundraising efforts can also support park, recreation, or open space facilities and projects.

# ACQUISITION TOOLS & METHODS

## Direct Purchase Methods

### Market Value Purchase

The City purchases land at the present market value based on an independent appraisal through a written purchase and sale agreement. Timing, payment of real estate taxes and other contingencies are negotiable.

### Partial Value Purchase (or Bargain Sale)

In a bargain sale, the landowner agrees to sell for less than the property's fair market value. A landowner's decision to proceed with a bargain sale is unique and personal; landowners with a strong sense of civic pride, long community history or concerns about capital gains are possible candidates for this approach. In addition to cash proceeds upon closing, the landowner may be entitled to a charitable income tax deduction based on the difference between the land's fair market value and its sale price.

### Life Estates & Bequests

If a landowner wishes to remain on the property for an extended period of time or until death, several variations on a sale agreement exist. In a life estate agreement, the landowner may continue to live on the land by donating a remainder interest and retaining a "reserved life estate." Specifically, the landowner donates or sells the property to the city but reserves the right for the seller or any other named person to continue to live on and use the property. When the owner or other specified person dies or releases their life interest, full title and control over the property will be transferred to the city. The landowner may be eligible for a tax deduction when the gift is made by donating a remainder interest. In a bequest, the landowner designates in a will or trust document that the property will be transferred to the city upon death. While a life estate offers the city some degree of title control during the landowner's life, a bequest does not. Unless the intent to bequest is disclosed to and known by the city in advance, no guarantees exist concerning the property's condition upon transfer or to any liabilities that may exist.

### Gift Deed

When a landowner wishes to bequeath their property to a public or private entity upon their death, they can record a gift deed with the county assessors office to ensure their stated desire to transfer their property to the targeted beneficiary as part of their estate. The recording of the gift deed usually involves the tacit agreement of the receiving party.

## **Option to Purchase Agreement**

This type of agreement is a binding contract between a landowner and the city that would only apply according to the conditions of the option and limits the seller's power to revoke an offer. Once in place and signed, the Option Agreement may be triggered at a future, specified date or upon completing designated conditions. Option Agreements can be made for any time duration and can include all of the language pertinent to closing a property sale.

## **Right of First Refusal**

In this agreement, the landowner grants the city the first chance to purchase the property once the landowner wishes to sell. The agreement does not establish the sale price for the property, and the landowner is free to refuse to sell it for the price offered by the city. This is the weakest form of agreement between an owner and a prospective buyer.

## **Conservation and/or Access Easements**

Through a conservation easement, a landowner voluntarily agrees to sell or donate certain rights associated with their property (often the right to subdivide or develop), and a private organization or public agency agrees to hold the right to enforce the landowner's promise not to exercise those rights. In essence, the rights are forfeited and no longer exist. This type of easement is a legal agreement between the landowner and the city that permanently limits land uses to conserve a portion of the property for public use or protection. The landowner still owns the property, but the use of the land is restricted. Conservation easements may result in an income tax deduction and reduced property taxes and estate taxes. Typically, this approach provides trail corridors where only a small portion of the land is needed or for the strategic protection of natural resources and habitat. The city purchases land at the present market value based on an independent appraisal through a written purchase and sale agreement. Timing, payment of real estate taxes, and other contingencies are negotiable.

## **Park or Open Space Dedication Requirements**

Local governments have the option to require developers to dedicate land for parks under the State Subdivision Law (Ch. 58.17 RCW) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Ch. 43.21C RCW). Under the subdivision law, developers can be required to provide the parks/recreation improvements or pay a fee in lieu of the dedicated land and its improvements. Under the SEPA requirements, land dedication may occur as part of mitigation for a proposed development's impact.

## **Landowner Incentive Measures**

### **Density Bonuses**

Density bonuses are a planning tool used to encourage a variety of public land use objectives, usually in urban areas. They offer the incentive of being able to develop at densities beyond current regulations in one area, in return for concessions in another. Density bonuses are applied to a single parcel or development. An example is allowing developers of multi-family units to build at higher densities if they provide a certain number of low-income units or public open space. For density bonuses to work, market forces must support densities at a higher level than current regulations.

### **Transfer of Development Rights**

The transfer of development rights (TDR) is an incentive-based planning tool that allows landowners to trade the right to develop a property to its fullest extent in one area for the right to develop beyond existing regulations in another area. Local governments may establish the specific areas in which development may be limited or restricted and where development beyond regulation may be allowed. Usually, but not always, the "sending" and "receiving" property are under common ownership. Some programs allow for different ownership, which, in effect, establishes a market for development rights to be bought and sold.

### **IRC 1031 Exchange**

If the landowner owns a business or investment property, an IRC Section 1031 Exchange can facilitate the exchange of like-kind property solely for business or investment purposes. No capital gain or loss is recognized under Internal Revenue Code Section 1031 (see [www.irc.gov](http://www.irc.gov) for more details). This option may be a useful tool in negotiations with an owner of an investment property, especially if the tax savings offset to the owner can translate to a sale price discount for the City.

### **Current (Open Space) Use Taxation Programs**

Property owners whose current lands are in open space, agricultural, or timber uses may have that land valued at their current use rather than their "highest and best" use assessment. This differential assessed value, allowed under the Washington Open Space Taxation Act (Ch. 84.34 RCW), helps to preserve private properties as open space, farm, or timberlands. If the land is converted to other non-open space uses, the landowner is required to pay the difference between the current use annual taxes and the highest/best taxes for the previous seven years. When properties are sold to a local government or conservation organization for



land conservation/preservation purposes, the required payment of seven years' worth of differential tax rates is waived. The amount of this tax liability can be part of the negotiated land acquisition from private to public or quasi-public conservation purposes. King County has four current use taxation programs that offer this property tax reduction to incentivize landowners to voluntarily preserve open space, farmland, or timberland on their property.

## OTHER LAND PROTECTION OPTIONS

### Land Trusts and Conservancies

Land trusts are private non-profit organizations that acquire and protect unique open spaces and are traditionally not associated with any government agency. Forterra (formerly called the Cascade Land Conservancy) is the regional land trust serving the Mercer Island area. Its efforts have led to the conservation of more than 234,000 acres of forests, farms, shorelines, parks, and natural areas in the region ([www.forterra.org](http://www.forterra.org)). Other national organizations with local representation include the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and the Wetlands Conservancy.

### Regulatory Measures

A variety of regulatory measures are available to local agencies and jurisdictions. Available programs and regulations include Critical Areas Ordinance, Mercer Island; State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA); Shorelines Management Program; and Hydraulic Code, and Washington State Department of Fisheries and Department of Wildlife.

### Public/Private Utility Corridors

Utility corridors can be managed to maximize the protection or enhancement of open space lands. Utilities maintain corridors to provide services such as electricity, gas, oil, and rail travel. Some utility companies have cooperated with local governments to develop public programs such as parks and trails within utility corridors.

