Urban Forest Stewardship

If you visit any of Mercer Island’s forested parks on a regular basis, you might have noticed a gradual evolution taking place within them. Thanks to a coordinated effort between the Mercer Island Parks Department, several contractors and numerous volunteers, these prized natural resources are being guided toward a level of health and beauty that will benefit the community for years to come.

Volunteer assistance in invasive plant removal, native tree planting and native planting maintenance increased significantly during 2007. Earth Corps, a Seattle-based volunteer-management and restoration non-profit group, reported that a total of 671 volunteers attended Mercer Island events that they managed compared to 201 volunteers in 2006. While many of these volunteers were Island residents, the majority were from the greater-Seattle area.

Currently, four local contractors and several volunteer events are working within eight Mercer Island parks on 12 separate projects to plant a total of 1,435 native bare root tree seedlings and 900 native bare root shrub seedlings. Consider how you can become more involved in securing the health of tomorrow’s forest today! Contact Park Arborist Paul West at 206.275.7833 for more information.

Seeking Citizens to Serve On Boards

The Mercer Island City Council is seeking a diverse range of citizens to voluntarily serve on several advisory boards. Appointments to boards and commissions are made by the Mayor and affirmed by the City Council. Generally, terms run June 1 through May 31, for a four-year period. Upon appointment, board members can expect to spend approximately ten hours a month serving on the board, although the level of commitment may vary. The boards and commissions with positions available are:

- Arts Council (3 positions)
- Design Commission (2 positions)
- Open Space Conservancy Trust (2 positions)
- Planning Commission (2 positions)
- Youth & Family Services Advisory Board (4 adult positions for three-year terms, 3 positions for current 10th graders and 3 positions for current 8th graders for two-year terms)

For more information on each of these boards or commissions or to apply for a position, go to www.mercergov.org/boards, call Ali Spietz, City Clerk at 206-275-7793 or email ali.spietz@mercergov.org. Applications are available online or at City Hall. The application deadline is Friday, May 2, 2008.

PEAK Permit Application Review Process

The facility proposed by the Boys and Girls Club of King County known as “PEAK” includes a 45,000 sq. ft. building and associated parking. The new multi-purpose facility would be for the development, sports and recreation needs of youth and the project site is located at the Mercer Island high school campus. Many regulations and decision-makers are involved in determining whether PEAK will be built and under what conditions. Please visit www.mercergov.org/PEAK for details about the regulations involved in the permit application review process and for current updates.
Sound Transit Opens New Mercer Island Park-and-Ride

Sound Transit’s new Mercer Island park-and-ride opened January 21 with almost twice the number of parking stalls as the old facility, new bicycle storage areas and other rider amenities. “The new Park-and-Ride is a major asset for commuters right in the in the heart of one of the region’s most congested corridors,” said Sound Transit Chair and Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels. “This is our latest addition to a long list of Sound Transit services and projects that are enabling people to trade fast, frequent, reliable and environmentally friendly buses and trains for rising road gridlock.”

“Sound Transit and the City of Mercer Island worked to overcome a lot of obstacles and challenges to get this project done, and we are really happy to get this facility open to the public,” said Mercer Island Mayor Jim Pearman. “Beyond its role in improving regional mobility and convenience, this project is also a real complement to the nearby downtown core development, and we are finally ready to check it off the list.”

The old park-and-ride originally had 250 parking stalls, which were typically full by 7 am on weekdays. The new facility, which will be operated in partnership with King County Metro Transit and serve both Sound Transit and Metro bus routes, has 447 parking stalls and has unique design features inspired by community input that reduce visual and height impacts. The park-and-ride is proposed as the location for future light rail service to Mercer Island as part of a future East Link light rail extension that would connect the Eastside to the Sound Transit’s Link light rail line from the airport to downtown Seattle that is set to open in 2009.

Sound Transit had originally planned to open the facility in March 2007. In September 2006, the discovery of a cracked beam or call (888) 889-6368 / (888) 713-6030 TTY for more rider information.

Managing Stormwater

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit was issued on January 17, 2007, by the Washington State Department of Ecology under the provisions of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Water Act. The permit has specific requirements and deadlines for implementation of programs to minimize the discharge of pollution from municipal stormwater systems into our streams, lakes, rivers and wetlands to protect their beneficial uses and other environmental resources. The City of Mercer Island is classified as a “small” municipal separate stormwater sewer system (MS4). In 2008, the City of Mercer Island will be drafting a Stormwater Management Program document to detail actions the City is already taking to reduce stormwater runoff pollution to Lake Washington, and expand on those actions as needed to comply with the new permit requirements.

Here are a few ways you can help today to reduce stormwater runoff pollution:

- Limit pesticide and fertilizer use.
- If using pesticides and fertilizers, store them properly.
- Properly dispose of hazardous waste.
- Use care with household chemicals.
- Retain pervious surface and trees.


LEAP FOR GREEN!

An Earth Day Celebration for Kids of All Ages

April 19, 2008, 10 am to 2 pm
Community Center at Mercer View

The entire community is invited to celebrate Earth Day at the “Leap for Green” fair on Mercer Island. Kids and adults will be able to jump into fun activities both indoors and outdoors including music, storytelling, food, art, live animal exhibits, gardening, dancing and more. Measure your carbon footprint, learn about easy ways to be gentler to the environment and join the party. Bring the whole family, admission is free! For more information, please visit www.mercergov.org/leapforgreen or call 206.275.7609.

Sponsored by the City of Mercer Island and IslandVision

Interested in helping? Please email Ellen Jeffcott at ellenjeffcott@gmail.com or call Joy Johnston at 206.275.7791.

Your community. Your government. Your Mercer Island.

Subscribe to MI Weekly!

Do you want to know more about your city government? The City’s weekly newsletter, MI Weekly, is available by email subscription. To request a weekly email of the most current City news, please email joy.johnston@mercergov.org or visit www.mercergov.org/miweekly.

Copies are also available at various locations throughout the Island. For more information, please contact Joy Johnston, Communications Coordinator at 206.275.7791.
Get To Know Your Mercer Island City Council

This year, Councilmembers will make decisions about issues ranging from a possible parks ballot measure to revisions to the pedestrian and bicycle plan and will also adopt the City’s budget for the next biennium.

Bruce Bassett
(206) 275-7991
bruce.bassett@mercergov.org

Bruce Bassett was elected to the Council in 2007. A Washington native, he holds engineering degrees from Dartmouth College and the University of Michigan and had a successful career as founder and CEO of a small high tech company before moving to Mercer Island in 2003. Bruce is an active community volunteer who has served on the Open Space Conservancy Trust Board and championed the successful effort to upgrade the IMS dirt field to a turf surface. He is married and has two children in the Mercer Island schools.

Mike Cero
(206) 275-7992
mike.cero@mercergov.org

Mike served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1985 to 1994. He has an undergraduate degree in civil engineering from the United States Military Academy and a MBA in accounting from Seattle University. He has worked with the PACCAR Truck Company and later started Cero Construction, LLC before he was recalled in 2004 to serve in Iraq. Mike is active in the community having served as the Lakeridge PTA President and on various committees. He remains active in many programs and is a recent member of the Mercer Island Rotary. Mike is married and has three young children. Mike’s family moved to the Island in 1996.

Dan Grausz
(206) 275-7994
dan.grausz@mercergov.org

Dan was first elected to the City Council in November, 1999 after having previously served on the Mercer Island Planning Commission, the Tree & Natural Resources Task Force, the School District’s Strategic Planning Committee, the Queen Anne Community Council and as President of Citizens to Save Interbay. Dan is currently the Sr. Vice President, Fleet Operations at Holland America Line. He received his undergraduate degree in Industrial-Labor Relations from Cornell University and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with both a Law Degree and a M.B.A. (from The Wharton School). Dan and his wife have lived on Mercer Island since 1989. Both of their children graduated from Mercer Island High School.

El Jahncke
Deputy Mayor
(206) 275-7995
el.jahncke@mercergov.org

El Jahncke and his wife have lived on Mercer Island since 1978, where he has been actively involved in community and school affairs, having served on the School Board and its strategic planning committee from 1993 to 1997. All three of their children have attended Mercer Island Schools. El's extensive business background includes more than 30 years of investment, management and financing experience in commercial real estate. He is currently president of Washington Capital Management, an investment management company with $3.5 billion of pension assets under management. El is a graduate of Stanford and received his MBA from Columbia. As a naval officer, he served two tours of duty with the Navy Seals in Vietnam and was in charge of the Navy's swimmers for the Apollo 12 and 13 recoveries.

Steve Litzow
(206) 275-7996
steve.litzow@mercergov.org

Steve, his wife and their four children have been active in the community since moving to Mercer Island in 1995. Steve was first elected to the Mercer Island City Council in 2003 and was re-elected in 2007. Steve is a member of the Mercer Island Rotary Club, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce and is a Board Member of Summer Search, a non-profit mentoring program for at-risk children. Steve’s business background includes management, marketing and technology experience starting 24 years ago at Procter & Gamble. Steve is currently a consultant with EMM Group after serving in senior management roles with a number of local companies including ShareBuilder, Compuserve and Xpensewise. He is a graduate of Northwestern University.

Jim Pearman
Mayor
(206) 275-7997
jim.pearman@mercergov.org

Jim Pearman originally moved to Mercer Island in 1969 where he attended Mercer Island schools and graduated from Mercer Island High School in 1976. After college and a hotel career in Chicago, Washington DC and Atlanta he returned to the Island with his wife in 1987. They have two daughters. Prior to being elected to the Council in November 2001, Jim served as Chair of the MI Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, President of the MI Parks and Recreation Foundation, and Co-chair of the Mercer Island Community Center Ad-hoc Task Force. Currently Jim serves on the Suburban Cities Board of Directors, as well as the Board of the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Economic Development District. He has a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Washington.
St. Patrick’s Day Paw Promenade
Saturday, March 15, 1 pm
Mercer Island is going to the dogs...for a St. Patrick’s Day Paw Promenade! Join us Saturday, March 15 along the I-90 Trail for a paws-itively perfect way to share some quality time with your four-legged friend. We will meet at City Hall and follow the paved trail from City Hall to the Luther Burbank off-leash dog park where we will have pet related vendors, raffles, demonstrations and doggone fun activities for the whole family. We won’t let a wee bit o’ rain scare us away...plan to walk rain or shine! Bring your dog, borrow a dog or just hang out with someone else’s dog. Prizes will be awarded to the “most spirited” dog so don’t forget to wear GRRReen! This event is free.

Itsy Bitsy
Ages 3–5 yrs * Mon–Fri * 9am–12pm * $125/wk
Creative and educational themes to include activities, guest speakers, arts, crafts & songs to make going to camp fun everyday!

Little Champs
Ages 4–7 yrs * Mon–Fri * 9am–12pm * $82/wk
Different sport each week to learn the basics in a creative and fun atmosphere!

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Summer Camps!
Registration Begins March 17
Kamp Rock
Ages 6–11 yrs * Mon–Fri * 9am–4pm * $185/wk
Experience a summer packed with adventure, field trips, games and so much MORE! Each week will be a new and exciting theme to create outrageous new experiences!

For more information about Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Programs, call 206.275.7609 or register online at www.myparksandrecreation.com
Yogathon, May 17
Mercer Island Yoga Community, a network of Island yoga instructors, and Youth and Family Services will present Yogathon on Saturday, May 17, at the Community Center. The 10 am morning session will be for beginners or those new to yoga. The afternoon session starting at noon will be for those with 1 or more years of yoga experience. A minimum donation of $20 suggested and proceeds go to Mercer Island Youth and Family Services (MIYFS). Call the MIYFS development office at 206.275.7751 or visit the Mercer Island Yoga Community Web site at www.mercerislandyoga.org for more information.

Other fundraising news....
In addition to Yogathon, Youth and Family Services will be doing its annual School Fund Drive April through June. Proceeds from this direct mail appeal go to support Youth and Family Services counselors in all public schools of the Mercer Island School District.

The Giving from the Heart Breakfast, an annual fundraiser for MIYFS, was held on February 13 at the Community Center. Over 300 people attended the event and YFS saw proceeds of $95,000, exceeding last year's total by $14,000.

Communities That Care Awarded a 5-Year Federal Grant!
As King County funding drew to a close in July 2007, Communities That Care members acquired a County bridge grant to support the group’s efforts through December, and devoted energy to applying for a Drug Free Communities Grant. The result of that challenge is that CTC is kicking off 2008 with new federal funding for five years from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). Selection for DFC funding is highly competitive throughout the U.S.A; only two other communities in Washington State were also first-year grantees. Grant efforts will build upon the coalition’s county-supported work of the last two years.

Research suggests youth in affluent communities are more at risk for alcohol and drug involvement than is generally assumed. Similarly, researchers are aware that early alcohol/drug use among teens can make youth transitions difficult and dangerous and that it may also lead to abuse issues in adulthood. DFC funding supports using a blend of social norms and environmental management approaches to affect community change, with the understanding that drug use is not based solely on personal characteristics, but is also powerfully linked to our social environment. Effective prevention requires altering belief systems that support substance use and abuse – this means addressing complex factors such as norms, mass media messages, as well as accessibility of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Communities That Care was created to mobilize the Mercer Island Community to promote positive youth development and prevent adolescent problem behaviors - particularly alcohol and other substance abuse. It is composed of residents whose vision is to develop and support a healthy Mercer Island Community. If you are interested in the prevention of youth alcohol and drug use, consider joining CTC as an individual or represent a Mercer Island organization or group. For more information, please contact our Project Coordinator, Sharon Broz at 206.275.7743.

Volunteer Appreciation
Parks and Recreation and Youth & Family Services are teaming up again this year to recognize the work of volunteers on Wednesday, April 16 from 4 to 5:30 pm. More information: 206.275.7611.

Mercer Island Youth
SUMMER JOB FAIR
Saturday, March 29, 11 am - 3 pm
Emmanuel Episcopal Church
4400 SE 86th St, Mercer Island

Do You:
Want to earn money this summer?
Want to create an employment resume?
Want to get some volunteer experience?

This is the Job Fair for you!
Questions? Call Cheryl at 206.275.7869 www.mijoblink.org

Sponsored by Mercer Island Youth and Family Services and Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Community Food Drives
Supplies in the Mercer Island Food Pantry wane each spring, so in an effort to stock the shelves, Youth and Family Services is announcing two food drives. If you can give, please bring your non-perishable donations to the Luther Burbank Building inside Luther Burbank Park. If you have large donations and need to have the gate opened for easier access, please call before you come 206.275.7611.

During the week of March 10, MIYFS will be accepting donations of fruit juices, cake mixes and oatmeal.

During the week of April 7, MIYFS will be accepting food donations of tuna fish, cereals, condiments, tea and baking goods.

Utility Bill Assistance
New utility rates went into effect January 1, 2008. The average single-family customer will experience a 6.7% rate increase across all utilities, including water, sewer, storm drainage and emergency medical services (EMS) in 2008.

The City has financial assistance programs for low income families as well as individuals who are both Medicaide-eligible and receiving in-home nursing care services. Please call 206.275.7783 or visit the City’s website at www.mercergov.org/UtilitiesServicesDiscount for more information about this discount.
Revisions to the City’s Water System Plan

The Water System Plan analyzes the City’s existing water system and its operation, provides guidance to evaluate the impacts of future growth and recommends necessary improvements to the water system to ensure the City remains on the forefront in providing high-quality water service to its current and future customers. The new 2008 Water System Plan carries forward the policies and intent of the 2001 Plan and is designed to fulfill all local, state and federal obligations and regulations and is summary of the manner in which the City will continue to fulfill its mission as a water service provider. The revised plan is currently undergoing review by outside agencies and is expected to go to the Mercer Island City Council in April for adoption. For more information, please visit www.mercergov.org/waterutility.

A Better Way to Get Bids for City Projects

The eCityGov Alliance has launched its latest regional web portal designed to make it easier for companies to do business with public agencies. The new Shared Procurement Portal will be utilized by member public agencies such as the City of Mercer Island to directly notify companies of potential business opportunities with local governments. The Shared Procurement Portal can be found at www.WAGovBiz.net. There is no cost for businesses to register on the site.

Summer Volunteering Registration is Right Around the Corner!

This summer, the Mercer Island Youth and Family Services is offering two youth volunteer programs: Volunteer Outreach in Communities Everywhere (VOICE) for high school youth, and Summer Volunteer Program (SVP) for middle school youth. These programs raise the social awareness of Mercer Island youth by providing structured group community service opportunities.

The programs provide the opportunity to work with diverse populations such as children, immigrants and refugees, people living with terminal illnesses and disabilities, and the homeless. Volunteers also participate in environmental projects and community events. Through a combination of hands-on community service, art, and media the program promotes awareness about social justice issues confronting diverse populations both locally and globally. VOICE volunteers commit to serving on at least 8 projects throughout the 8 week program. SVP volunteers commit to serving on 4 projects throughout the 8 week program. Information about the registration process will be available on the website www.mercergov.org/voice in March.

Meet the New YFS Counselor

Steve Pults joined Mercer Island Youth and Family Services in early January, 2008, as an individual and family counselor at the Luther Burbank office. Prior to coming to MIYFS, he worked with children, teens and families with Seattle YMCA Family Services for over 10 years providing counseling and case management in the agency’s foster care program. Steve also has extensive experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities as a counselor and advocate for children and adults at Fircrest School, Seattle, as well as other agencies. For six years he provided counseling for individuals and families at Detroit’s Beaumont Hospital emergency center. Steve is a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC).

His counseling style is aimed at offering acceptance and opportunities for individuals, couples and families to have a safe environment to consider positive changes for their lives. Steve explained, “It’s not easy to take the risk to call a counselor and ask for help. I treat that courage with a great deal of respect and appreciation.”

For more information about Mercer Island Youth and Family Services individual and family counseling services, contact Clinical Supervisor Gayle Erickson at 206.275.7611.

Cops vs. Kids!

The whole community is invited to watch Mercer Island police officers battle it out on the court against seniors from Mercer Island High School. In last year’s game, the kids won a hard-fought battle that wasn’t decided until the final horn sounded. Who will win this year? The only way to know is to come and watch! The sixteenth annual "Cops vs. Kids" basketball game will take place in May (stay tuned for date and time). All money raised by the "Cops vs. Kids" basketball game is used to support Special Olympics Washington, a program of sports competition for people with developmental disabilities. If you would like to support the Mercer Island Police Department’s efforts by making a donation to Special Olympics Washington, please make your check payable to Special Olympics Washington, a program of sports competition for people with developmental disabilities. If you would like to support the Mercer Island Police Department’s efforts by making a donation to Special Olympics Washington, please make your check payable to Special Olympics Washington, and mail your donation to the Mercer Island Police Department, Attention: Sgt. Lance Davenport, 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, WA 98040. Any amount that you can donate to this cause will be greatly appreciated. Donations are tax deductible. Contact: Sergeant Lance Davenport 206.275.7901.
The Value of Trees

Trees are a valuable natural resource to any community. They do an excellent job of slowing erosion, increasing property values, providing wildlife habitat, cleaning our air, minimizing the need for expensive storm drainage facilities and abating noise and wind.

Did you know?

- As few as three trees properly positioned can save the average household between $100 and $250 annually in energy costs. (US. Department of Energy, 2003)
- Leafy tree canopies catch precipitation before it reaches the ground, allowing some of it to gently drip and the rest to evaporate. This lesson the force of storms and reduces runoff and erosion. Research indicates that 100 mature tree crowns intercept about 100,000 gallons of rainfall per year, reducing runoff and providing cleaner water. (USDA Forest Service, 2003)
- Trees reduce runoff and erosion from storms by about 7% and reduce the need for erosion control structures. (Miller, Alban L.; Riley, J.; Schwaab, E., Rabagalia, R.; Miller, K. 1995 Maryland's Forests: A Health Report.)

Citizens are reminded that permits are required to cut trees in the following situations:

1. **Construction Work.** A tree permit is required to cut any large tree as a result of construction work;

2. **Landmark Tree/Grove.** A tree permit is required to cut a landmark tree or any tree located in a landmark grove;

3. **Critical Tree Area.** A tree permit is required to cut any large tree located in a critical tree area;

4. **Commercial Zone.** A tree permit is required to cut any large tree located in a commercial zone;

5. **Emergency.** A tree on private property may be cut without a tree permit in an emergency situation involving immediate danger to life or property, but a tree permit must be obtained later. Please see Mercer Island City Code 19.10.

No private property owner may cut or prune a public tree, which would include trees in the public right-of-way and in parks. There are also state laws protecting eagle nests. If you are unsure if a tree is a public or private tree, or for more information about permit requirements, please contact the City Arborist, Kathy Parker at 206.275.7605. For more information about tree health and maintenance or to locate an arborist, visit www.plantamnesty.org.

Go Natural!

Nature wastes nothing. In natural landscapes, soil life recycles dead plants into food for new plant growth. Plants are adapted to the water, sun and soil available in their site. And the wide variety of plants, soil organisms, insects and animals keeps most pests and diseases in check.

Why Go Natural?

Yards are fun, beautiful, great spaces for relaxing. But in taking care of them, we often use water inefficiently, produce a lot of waste and overuse chemicals that are bad for the environment and our families’ health. By working with nature in your yard, you can have a great looking landscape that’s easier to care for and healthier for families, pets, wildlife and our great Northwest environment. Here’s how:

**Build Healthy Soil**

Feed your soil with compost in the spring or fall. Recycle yard waste to make compost. Leaves, flowers and grass all make great compost in a pile or bin. Fertilize with organic products.

**Plant Right for Your Site**

Group plants with similar light, water and soil needs. Get to know where it is sunny and shady in your yard and what the soil and moisture are like. Choose plants that resist pests and use less water.

**Practice Smart Watering**

Water in the early morning or evening to avoid quick evaporation. Use mulch around plants to hold in moisture.

**Think Twice Before Using Pesticides**

Only about 5 percent of the bugs in your yard are pests. Good bugs actually help control pests. Select pest-resistant plants, and plant them in the sun and soil conditions they like. If a pest or weed problem persists, use the least-toxic solution.

**Practice Natural Lawn Care**

A beautiful lawn is possible without chemicals. Practice grasscycling, or mulch-mowing, leaves grass clippings on the lawn. As these clippings break down, they add nutrients and moisture to the soil, resulting in a healthier lawn.

For more information, visit King County’s website (www.metrokc.gov) or call the Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline at 206-633-0224. Sign up for the Savvy Gardener Connection newsletter at http://savingwater.org/ outside_newslettersignup.htm.
Mercer Island Half Marathon - March 9

The runners are coming to your neighborhood!

The 36th annual Mercer Island Rotary Half Marathon has new courses this year that may impact you. Please plan for traffic delays 7:30 am to 1 pm on Sunday, March 9, 2008. Following are the planned closures and approximate times.

SE 24th St between 78th Ave SE and 82nd Ave SE will be closed both ways from 8 am to noon.

SE 26th St at the Island Crest Way Ramp will be closed 8:50 am to 11:30 am.

81st Ave SE at North Mercer Way will be closed 8 am to 11:30 am.

84th Ave SE to Luther Burbank will be closed 8 am to 10:00 am.

North Mercer Way from South Luther Burbank Park to Gallagher Hill will be closed intermittently 8:50 am to 11:00 am. Local traffic only.

Shorewood Dr at 90th Ave SE will be closed intermittently 8:50 am to 11:30 am.

Gallagher Hill at SE 40th St will be closed 9 am to 9:40 am.

Southbound East Mercer Way from SE 36th St to SE 70th Pl will be closed 8:50 am to 10 am.

There will be other intermittent closures at intersections along West Mercer Way and also near the Park-and-Ride as the race passes.

Local access only during the above times. Thank you in advance for your patience. For more information visit: www.mercerislandhalf.com.