

# Luther Burbank Dock Reconfiguration Report

By Ann Kruse

If you've paddled around the northern side of Mercer Island, you've seen this sight - an old boiler plant and docks at Luther Burbank Park. The stationary docks sit high above the water and are impossible for kayaks to use.



That may change, and you can have input. The City of Mercer Island wants to create a lively waterfront at this location, centered around small boats, including kayaks. It held a virtual

meeting on August 6 to gather information from the public. SSKC was invited to participate, and I attended.

After you read this report, please take the survey sent with it. Please complete the survey by Aug. 15. I'll then compile the results. You can also participate in the process yourself (see below).

## Background

We hold our club meetings at the Mercer Island Community Center, which is located in Luther Burbank Park. The park also contains two other parking lots, trails, tennis courts, a dog park and various water access points. Two maps of the park are at the end of this report.

Here's an overview of the city's plan regarding the dock area, adapted from its project website <https://letstalk.mercergov.org/lbdock>.

Merger Island has begun planning for the future of the docks at the Luther Burbank waterfront. Built in 1974, the docks have less than 5 years of useful service remaining. In addition, the fixed height piers are not useful for smaller boats and don't serve the needs of most current boaters or the City's boating programs.

The City is exploring the potential to reconfigure one or more of the piers to become floating docks while repairing the remaining pier. The goal is to create a lively waterfront activity center centered around small boats including power, sail and paddlecraft. The design process will also consider how to make the waterfront more accessible and attractive for the general public.

**Summary of the August 6 meeting:** Twenty-five people attended this virtual meeting. Half a dozen were staff or design contractors who presented information. The rest were members of the public or vendors who use the site for programs (e.g. a boating school). In addition to me, there were representatives of the Washington Kayak Club and of the Outdoors for All kayak program. These are some points that came out of the meeting:

- Part of the standing dock will be replaced with a low floating dock to make access easier for paddle craft.
- There's a small-pebble beach north of the docks, which may be improved to allow better access for paddle craft.
- A breakwater will be built to protect the docks from boat wakes and wind waves.
- The walkway from the parking lot to the waterfront will be improved, though this will be much later in the process.
- All access improvements will be done to ADA standards.
- They are also considering improvements for a more aesthetic purpose, what city planners call "place making." This might include public art, more seating areas, etc.
- They plan to offer services (through vendors) such as kayak rentals and educational programs.
- They might consider improving the beach in the south part of Luther Burbank Park to allow kayak access there. Access from parking to the water there is more level, whereas the walkway from the north parking to the dock area is quite steep. Improving the south beach will require separating the swimming beach from the kayak beach.

**How you can get involved, learn more and express your opinion.** There are two ways.

Get directly involved in the project. Go to <https://letstalk.mercergov.org/lbdock> . You can get more details and sign up to be kept informed. In late August, an online Open House will be posted there, presenting design alternatives. It's currently scheduled for Aug. 25. The public will be invited to give their feedback via an online survey. The results of this survey will help the City shape the preferred alternative concept for the docks and waterfront.

Take the SSKC Survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2CQJK9Y>

In taking the survey:

- Please respond based on (1) your experience (2) as a kayaker (3) regarding Luther Burbank Park. You do not need to consider others' opinions, or your experience in other capacities, or other locations on Mercer Island.
- It's OK to skip any questions that don't matter to you.
- For all questions except #7, you may select as many answers as apply to you.

## Maps



The terrain from the North Parking Lot to the waterfront is steep.

Improvements to the walkway will be required to comply with ADA and to make the waterfront accessible from the parking lot for kayaks. Any walkway improvement will occur in the more distant future, not as a part of the current project.

Note the distance from the North Lot to the waterfront. The walkway passes three tennis courts, and then the downhill part is a similar distance.

The distance to Calkins point is about twice as long, though it is level.

[https://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/operations/GIS/maps/vmc/images/LB\\_2005\\_detail586.ashx?la=en](https://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/operations/GIS/maps/vmc/images/LB_2005_detail586.ashx?la=en)



[http://www.willhitweb.com/puget\\_sound\\_hiking/luther\\_burbank\\_park/mercer\\_island\\_269.htm](http://www.willhitweb.com/puget_sound_hiking/luther_burbank_park/mercer_island_269.htm)

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