CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL  7:00 PM

APPEARANCES
This is the time set aside for members of the public to speak to the Commission about issues of concern. If you wish to speak, please consider the following points:

- Speak audibly into the podium microphone
- State your name and address for the record
- Limit your comments to three minutes

The Commission may limit the number of speakers and modify the time allotted. Total time for appearances: 15 minutes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Minutes from August 20, 2014

REGULAR BUSINESS  7:10 PM
Agenda Item #1:  2015 Comprehensive Plan Update
Review changes to the Land Use Element of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, required by the State Growth Management Act, and to ensure consistency with regional plans.

OTHER BUSINESS
Staff Comments
Planned Absences for Future Meetings
Announcements & Communications
Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting: September 17, 2014

ADJOURN
STAFF COMMENTS:
Staff discussed the Public Participation Plan prepared for the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update, and the potential for additional outreach to the public in the near future. Also, staff provided an update on future Planning Commission meeting scheduling including upcoming zoning code text amendments. Additionally, George Steirer took a photo of all the Commissioners, which will be used to update the Planning Commission webpage.

PLANNED ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:
Commissioners Cairns and Marshall will not be at the September 3rd meeting. Commissioner Skone will not be at the October 1st or 15th meetings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:
Commissioner Skone announced an upcoming event on September 12- Art Uncorked, which will take place in the Town Center near the sculpture park.

NEXT MEETING:
The next Planning Commission meeting will be September 3, 2014.

ADJOURNMENT:
The Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Lindsay Brown, Planner
CALL TO ORDER:
Chair Friedman called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM in the Council Chambers at 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, Washington.

ROLL CALL:
Chair Jon Friedman and Commissioners Steve Marshall, Craig Olson, Bryan Cairns, David McCann, Suzanne Skone, and Richard Weinman were present. City staff was represented by Lindsay Brown, Planner, Scott Greenberg, Development Services Director, and George Steirer, Principal Planner.

APPEARANCES:
No one from the public requested to address the commission.

MINUTES:
Vice Chair Weinman moved to approve the minutes from the August 6, 2014 meeting. Commissioner Olson seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes.

REGULAR BUSINESS:
Agenda Item #1 – 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update

Lindsay Brown, Planner, provided a brief staff presentation on proposed policy changes to the Land Use Element, and the impacts of extending the housing and employment growth target horizon to 2035.

The Planning Commission reviewed the working draft and provided feedback to be incorporated. The Planning Commission agreed to move the draft forward to the formal draft and public hearing, with the following changes to be incorporated:

1. Insert the following language to Land Use Policy 6.3: …with recognition of regional growth targets by maintaining…
2. Move the existing planning horizon from 2031 to 2035, to reflect the requirement in the Growth Management Act.
3. Add a policy discouraging higher or additional housing targets in future planning periods.

The Commission also directed Planning staff to email them the Town Center Visioning Subcommittee’s list of priorities, and Commissioner’s McCann’s written comments. Planning staff will also informally survey buildings in the Town Center, to try and obtain data on car ownership and occupancy rates in condos and apartment, per Commissioner Skone’s request.
To: Planning Commission
From: George Steirer, Principal Planner
Subject: Agenda Item 1 – 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update: Land Use Element
Date: August 28, 2014 for the September 3, 2014 Meeting
Exhibits: 1. Working Draft Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element

Action Needed: Receive a majority approval by the Planning Commission to include Exhibit 1 in the Draft for the public hearing, with clear direction on any additional changes needed.

Land Use Update
Continuing work to update the Comprehensive Plan to be consistent with the State’s Growth Management Act and the King County Countywide Planning Policies, the Planning Commission made changes to the Draft Land Use Element policies at the August 20th meeting, which have been incorporated into Exhibit 1. The changes were:

A. Insert the following language to Land Use Policy 6.3: …with recognition of regional growth targets by maintaining…
B. Move the existing planning horizon from 2031 to 2035, to reflect the requirement in the Growth Management Act.
C. Add a policy discouraging Mercer Island from accepting any additional growth beyond the most recent growth targets for 2035.

Other minor changes, such as updates to statistics or change in verb tenses, to reflect the current land use environment, have been updated and are shown in Exhibit 1. At the request of the Planning Commission, these more minor changes were not included in the Policy Matrix at the last meeting.

Planning Commission Tentative Schedule for 2014
Below is the current tentative schedule for the Planning Commission through the end of 2014. Although the schedule is subject to change, it is provided to help anticipate the workload ahead.

- September 17: Transportation Element Policies
  SMP/CUP Code Interpretation Application
- October 1: Transportation Element Text, and any related Land Use Element cleanup
- October 15: Utilities Element and Capital Facilities Policies and Text
  Code amendment to allow “Temporary Uses” under existing CUP’s
- November 5: Possible Public Hearing on Draft Comprehensive Plan update
  Application for a code text revision from AT&T representatives
I. INTRODUCTION

Mercer Island prides itself on being a residential community. As such, most of the Island's approximately 6.2 square miles of land area is developed with single family homes. The Island is served by a small Town Center and two other commercial zones which focus on the needs of the local population. Mixed-use and multi-family developments are located within the Town Center. Multi-family development also rings the Town Center and the western fringe of the smaller Commercial Office Zone.

Parks, open spaces, educational and recreational opportunities are highly valued and consume a large amount of land. The Island has over 467 acres of park and open space lands including small neighborhood parks and trails as well as several larger recreational areas, including Luther Burbank Park and the Lid Park above the Interstate 90 tunnel. One hundred and fifteen acres of natural-forested land are set aside in Pioneer Park and an additional 150 acres of public open spaces are scattered across the community. There are three elementary schools, one middle school and a high school owned and operated by the Mercer Island School District. In addition, there are several private schools at the elementary and secondary education levels.

The community strongly values environmental protection. As a result, local development regulations have sought to safeguard land, water and the natural environment, balanced with private property rights. To reflect community priorities, development regulations also attempt to balance views and tree conservation.

For many years, Mercer Island citizens have been concerned about the future of the community's downtown. Past business district revitalization initiatives (e.g. Project Renaissance in 1990) strove to overcome the effects of "under-capitalization" in the Town Center. These efforts sought to support and revitalize downtown commercial/retail businesses and devised a number of recommendations for future Town Center redevelopment. Growing out of previous planning efforts, a renewed interest in Town Center revitalization emerged in 1992 -- one looking to turn the 33 year old downtown into the vital economic and social center of the community.

In 1992 the City of Mercer Island undertook a major “citizen visioning” process that culminated in a broad new vision and direction for future Town Center development as presented in a document entitled “Town Center Plan for the City of Mercer Island”, dated November 30, 1994. The City used an outside consultant to help lead a five day citizen design charrette involving hundreds of island residents and design professionals. This citizen vision became the foundation for new design and development standards within the Town Center and a major part of the new Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in the fall of 1994. At the same time, the City invested about $5 million in street and streetscape improvements to create a
central pedestrian street, along 78th Avenue and route the majority of vehicular trips around the core downtown onto 77th and 80th Avenues. Specific new design and development standards to implement the Town Center vision were adopted in December of 1995. The Mercer Island Design Commission, city staff and citizens used these standards to review all Town Center projects until 2002.

In 2002, the City undertook a major planning effort to review and modify Town Center design and development guidelines, based on knowledge and experience gained from the previous seven years. Several changes were made in the existing development and design standards to promote public-private partnerships, strengthen parking standards, and develop public spaces as part of private development. Another goal of the revised standards was to unify the major focal points of the Town Center including the pedestrian streetscape of 78th Avenue, an expanded Park-and-Ride and Transit Facility, the public sculpture garden, and the Mercerdale Park facility. As a result, the following changes were made to the design standards:

- Expanding sidewalk widths along the pedestrian spine of 78th Avenue between Mercerdale Park on the south and the Sculpture Garden Park on the north,
- Identifying opportunity sites at the north end of 78th for increased public spaces,
- Requiring that new projects include additional public amenities in exchange for increased building height above the two-story minimum, and
- Increasing the number of visual interest design features required at the street level to achieve pedestrian scale.

The changes to the design and development standards were formulated by a seven member Ad Hoc Committee composed of citizen architects, engineers, planners and several elected officials. Working for three months, the Ad Hoc Committee forwarded its recommendations to the Planning Commission, Design Commission and City Council for review. The revised Town Center Development and Design Standards (Mercer Island City Code Chapter 19.11) were adopted by City Council in July 2002 and continue to implement the Town Center vision.

The City’s efforts to focus growth and revitalize the Town Center through targeted capital improvements, development incentives and design standards to foster high quality development are now bearing fruit. As of June 2005, 86 new units had been constructed, 394 units were in various stages of advanced construction, and 420 units were in the permitting pipeline. A total of 112,000 square feet of commercial will be added to the Town Center as a result of projects built since 2001, under construction or in the permitting pipeline. Between 2001 to 2007, 510 new housing units, and 115,922 square feet of commercial area was constructed in the Town Center. Between 2007 and August 2014, 360 new housing units, and 218,015 square feet of new commercial area was constructed.

During 2004, the City engaged in a major effort to develop new design standards for all non-single family development in zoning districts outside the Town Center. This effort also used an Ad-Hoc process of
elected officials, design commissioners, developers, and architects. The design standards for Zones Outside of Town Center were adopted in December 2004. These standards provide new direction for quality design of non-residential structures in residential zones and other multi-family, commercial, office and public zones outside the Town Center.
II. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Town Center

The Town Center is a 76-acre bowl-shaped area that includes residential, retail, commercial, mixed-use and office-oriented businesses. Historically, convenience businesses -- groceries, drugstores, service stations, dry cleaners, and banks -- have dominated the commercial land uses; many of them belonging to larger regional or national chains. Retailers and other commercial services are scattered throughout the Town Center and are not concentrated in any particular area. With a diffused development pattern, the Town Center is not conducive to "browsing", making movement around the downtown difficult and inconvenient for pedestrians, physically disadvantaged persons and bicyclists.

Mercer Island’s downtown is located only 3 miles from Seattle and 1 mile from Bellevue via I-90. I-90 currently provides critical vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access to the Town Center as well as the rest of the Island. Regional transportation plans anticipate future development of a high capacity transit system in the I-90 corridor. In light of recent and potential future public transportation investments in the I-90 corridor and in keeping with the region’s emerging growth philosophy, redevelopment and moderate concentration of future growth into Mercer Island’s Town Center represents the wisest and most efficient use of the transportation infrastructure.

As required by the Growth Management Act of 1990, the Land Use Element presents a practical and balanced set of policies that address current and future land use issues. An inventory of existing land uses (Table 1 and 2 below) and a forecast of future development and population trends (Section III.) provide a backdrop for issues and policies. Subsequent sections IV and V address major land use issues and policies for the Town Center and non-Town Center areas.

Table 1. Town Center Land Uses & Facts Snapshot (December 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Land Area</td>
<td>76.5 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Net Land Area (excludes public right-of-way)</td>
<td>62.2 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Floor Area (includes all uses)</td>
<td>1,657,482 square feet (27% office, 22% retail, 49% residential, 2% public)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Floor Area – Ratio</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Housing Units</td>
<td>796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Net Residential Density</td>
<td>13 units/acre (Approx. 60 units/acre on sites with residential uses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employment</td>
<td>4,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: This table includes two mixed-use projects currently under construction as of June 2005 (i.e. Island Market Square and Building A of The Mercer.) Several additional significant projects are in the development pipeline and are tentatively expected to begin construction on or before 2007.
Areas Outside the Town Center

Single family residential zoning accounts for 90% of the Island's land use. There are 3,705 acres zoned for single family residential development. This compares to 76 acres in the Town Center zones, 19 acres for Commercial Office zone, and 99 acres in multi-family zones. City Hall is located in a Commercial Office zone, while other key civic buildings such as the Post Office and the Main Fire Station are located in the Town Center and City Hall. Many of the remaining public buildings, schools, recreational facilities and places of religious worship are located in residential or public areas zones.

Approximately 95% of all residential land on Mercer Island is currently developed. Over the last thirty years, most public facilities have been re-constructed, or have planned additions, in sufficient quantities to serve current and projected populations. This category includes schools, parks and recreation facilities, streets and arterials, municipal offices and fire stations. Future re-investments in these facilities will primarily improve the reliability and function of the community's infrastructure rather than adding significant new capacity. [Refer to the Capital Facilities Element for a more in-depth discussion of public facilities.]

Single family residential zones designate a number of different lot sizes and densities including 8,400 sq. ft., 9,600 sq. ft., 12,000 sq. ft. and 15,000 sq. ft. Of the 3,300 acres in these zones, approximately 145 remain unimproved. Most unimproved lots are small parcels and/or are platted building lots within previously developed neighborhoods. Some additional capacity exists in larger lots which can be subdivided. However, during the planning horizon, the City expects an average of roughly six subdivisions a year, the majority of which will be short plats of four or fewer lots.

The most densely developed neighborhoods are found on the Island's north end. This includes East Seattle and First Hill as well as neighborhoods immediately north and south of the I-90 corridor and areas along the entire length of Island Crest Way.

The least densely populated neighborhoods are ones with the largest minimum lot size and are designated as Zone R-15 (15,000 sq. ft. minimum lot size). These neighborhoods, generally located along East and West Mercer Way, contain the greatest amount of undeveloped residential land and often contain extremely steep slopes, deep and narrow ravines and small watercourses. Because environmentally sensitive areas often require careful development and engineering techniques, many of these undeveloped lands are difficult and expensive to develop.

Generally, Mercer Island's oldest neighborhoods are situated on a fairly regular street grid with homes built on comparatively small lots 40 to 60 years ago. Interspersed among the older homes are renovated homes and new homes that are often noticeably larger. Newer developments tend to consist of large homes on steeply pitched, irregular lots, with winding narrow private roads and driveways. Many residential areas of Mercer Island are characterized by large
mature tree cover. Preservation of this greenery is an important community value.

Most Mercer Island multi-family housing is located in or on the borders of the Town Center. However, two very large complexes straddle I-90 and are adjacent to single family areas. Shorewood Apartments is an older, stable development of nearly 600 apartment units. It was extensively remodeled in 2000. North of Shorewood and across I-90 is the retirement community of Covenant Shores. This development will have a total of 255 living units, ranging from independent living to fully assisted living.

There is one Commercial/Office (CO) zone outside the Town Center. It is located along the south side of the I-90 corridor at East Mercer Way and contains several office buildings, including the Mercer Island City Hall. In the summer of 2004, the regulations in the CO zone were amended to add retirement homes as a permitted use with conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Land (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family R-8.4</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family R-9.6</td>
<td>1,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family R-12</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family R-15</td>
<td>1,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family MF-3</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family MF-2L</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family MF-2</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned Business – PBZ</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Office – CO</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business – B</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Institutions – P</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures above include adjacent right-of-way.

For land use and transportation planning purposes, Mercer Island has not been designated as an Urban Center in the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Vision 2020. As such, Mercer Island will not share in the major growth of the region, but will continue to see new employment and residential development, most of which will be concentrated in the Town Center. Employment will continue to grow slowly and will be significantly oriented towards serving the local residential community. Transit service will focus on connecting the Island to other metropolitan and sub-regional centers via Interstate 90 and the region’s high capacity transit system.
III. GROWTH FORECAST

Residential and Employment 20-year Growth Targets

The King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) establish growth targets for all of the jurisdictions within King County. The CPPs were initially adopted in 1992, and have been amended several times since then. Elected officials from King County, the Cities of Seattle and Bellevue, and the Suburban Cities Association meet as the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC). This Council makes recommendations to the County Council, which has the authority to adopt and amend the CPPs. During 2012-2003, the GMPC worked with an inter-jurisdictional team of King County Planning Directors to determine an equitable distribution of the growth targets throughout the County. It was agreed that the City of Mercer Island would plan to accommodate 2,000 new housing units and 1,000 new jobs over the 2006-2031 planning period. GMA requires jurisdictions to plan for 20 years of forecasted growth, so the growth target time horizon was extended out to 2035. (See Table 3.)

Table 3 - Growth Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Growth Target (in units)</th>
<th>Employment Growth Target (in jobs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original growth target, 2006-2031</td>
<td>Original growth target, 2006-2031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMPC Targets</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted growth target, 2006-2035</td>
<td>Adjusted growth target, 2006-2035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Target</td>
<td>2,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,437 additional housing units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Target</td>
<td>800 additional jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment and Commercial Capacity

According to the 2002-Puget Sound Regional Council, as of March 2010 Eastside Economic Forum Report, there are approximately 7.8836,622 total jobs on Mercer Island (Hebert Research, Inc.). Based on estimates done by the Suburban Cities Association and the City of Mercer Island, there are approximately 4,292 jobs in the Town Center alone. The City’s analysis completed to inform the 2014 King County Buildable Lands Report shows that According to the 2002 King County Buildable Lands Report, Mercer Island has the capacity for a total of 2,373 new jobs; well in excess of the 1,160 growth target for which Mercer Island must have sufficient zoned land to accommodate. 1,248 new jobs, with an additional 228 jobs from planned developments. Approximately 25,000 sq. ft. of new commercial space was completed in 2002-2005. In addition, approximately 59,000 sq. ft. of new commercial space was under construction with an additional 28,000 sq. ft. of commercial development currently in the entitlement process.

Residential Growth

The Comprehensive Plan contains three types of housing figures: a capacity estimate,
a growth target, and a housing and population forecast. Each of these housing numbers serves a different purpose.

Housing Capacity

As required in a 1997 amendment to the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.215), recent growth and land capacity in King County and associated cities have been reported in the 2014 King County Buildable Lands Report.

The capacity estimate identifies the number of new units that could be accommodated on vacant and redevelopable land under current zoning. The capacity estimate is not a prediction of what will happen, merely an estimate of how many new units the Island could accommodate based on current zoning, the number and size of vacant properties, and some standard assumptions about the redevelopment potential of other properties that could accommodate additional development.

According to the 2014 Buildable Lands Report, the City of Mercer Island has the capacity for 2,271 additional housing units on properties designated for residential uses through new development on vacant lands and/or through redevelopment of underutilized lands. Based on zoning and redevelopment assumptions done in 2012 for the Buildable Lands Report, about 1,279 new housing units could be accommodated in single family zones, 143 new housing units could be accommodated in multifamily zones and 1247 units could be accommodated in mixed-use zones. The housing capacity numbers, particularly in the mixed-use zones (Town Center), are currently under review. Based on recently permitted projects and closer observation of redevelopment factors, the City is analyzing the current Town Center capacity estimates and believes capacity in the Town Center may be more than originally thought. Redevelopable land in the Town Center was determined based on a preliminary analysis of those parcels which currently have an improvement to land value ratio of .5 or less and are not in public or utility ownership. Additionally, townhomes and condominium properties were not considered redevelopable, and only those properties allowing 2.5 residential units or more are included in the analysis. The City believes that there may be capacity in the Town Center for as many as 1300 additional multifamily units. Future assumed densities for this preliminary figure were based on the density of recently permitted projects (2/3 mixed-use, 1/3 commercial only). This methodology used in the 2014 Buildable Land Analysis is the same as a method used in the 2007 Buildable Lands Report. This capacity is in addition to those projects which are currently under construction.

The City is revising the capacity estimates based on recent construction and development trends in the Town Center and concerns about critical area limitations in single family zones. The City will provide new official capacity estimates for all portions of the Island in the next Buildable Lands Report in 2007.
### Housing Targets

As mentioned above, the City has a King County Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) [2035222022](#) housing target of **2,320** new units. The housing target represents the number of units that the City is required to plan for under the Growth Management Act. The housing target is not necessarily the number of units that will be built on Mercer Island over the next two decades. Market forces, including regional job growth, interest rates, land costs, and other factors will have a major influence on the number of actual units created.

### Housing and Population Forecast

The third type of housing figure contained in the Comprehensive Plan is a local housing forecast. Table 43 contains a housing unit and population forecast for 2010 through 2040 conducted by City planning staff the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), using a parcel-based land use model called UrbanSim, based on existing zoning and land use designations. The City conducted this preliminary forecast in response to new construction and development interest that is higher than was anticipated when the GMPC growth targets were established in 2002.

The CityPSRC anticipates an increase in housing units at an average annual growth rate of approximately **0.25-0.9%** between 2010 and 2040, for a total housing unit increase of approximately **21%** over this 20-year period. This represents an increase of approximately **1,856,453** housing units and **1,495,4193** people over **3020** years. The City forecasts **10,662** total housing units and a total population of **26,229** by 2020. Given the uncertainty of future market forces, periodic reviews of housing and population forecasts should be made to evaluate the future growth assumptions. Adjustments to this forecast will also be necessary if the projections on household size and population growth vary significantly from those forecasted. Planning staff predicts that PSRC’s multifamily unit growth estimates in particular are likely to be surpassed as early as 2020, based on current pipeline development in the Town Center in addition to the pattern of larger, mixed use developments adding 100-200 units at a time to the City’s multifamily housing supply. However, based on all available information, the City will likely meet our established 20-year growth target, perhaps as early as 2016 if this forecast is accurate. The City will continue to monitor housing unit, population growth and market trends,
and adjust land use, transportation, and capital facilities planning as necessary prior to the next major Comprehensive Plan update in 2023.

**Housing Density**

The average allowed density in the City of Mercer Island is more than 6.2 dwelling units per acre. This figure is based on the proportional acreage of each land use designation (or zones) that allows residential development, the densities permitted under the regulations in place today for that zone, and an assumption that the average practical allowed density for the Town Center is 99.1681 units per acre. Since there is no maximum density in the Town Center and density is controlled instead by height limits and other requirements, the figure of 99.1681 units per acre represents the average density overall achieved net density of the last four recently approved mixed-use projects in the Town Center constructed since 2006. Even if the land area and density of the Town Center is not included, the average Island-wide allowed density would still be approximately 4.8 dwelling units per acre.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall Household Size (1)</th>
<th>SFR Units (2)</th>
<th>Multifamily Units (3)</th>
<th>Legal ADUs (4)</th>
<th>Total Increase in units per decade</th>
<th>Total Housing Units</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-2010 (Census)</td>
<td>2.4859</td>
<td>6,8737,02</td>
<td>2,2361,619</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8,3219,109</td>
<td>22,699020,16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 (CensusForecast)2090 (Census)</td>
<td>2.54858</td>
<td>7,2016,840</td>
<td>2,2571,813</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>485349</td>
<td>9,4588,806</td>
<td>24,053222,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203102010 (Forecast)</td>
<td>2.53151</td>
<td>7,3490,02</td>
<td>2,266,823</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>959157</td>
<td>9,6159,765</td>
<td>24,355510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204202020 (Forecast)</td>
<td>2.5346</td>
<td>7,2711,64</td>
<td>2,2913,172</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>897.53</td>
<td>9,56210,662</td>
<td>24,194626,229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Forecasts of average household size were obtained from Puget Sound Regional Council (2003), 2010 household size data obtained from the 2010 Census. All other data is from PSRC, using their 2013 Forecast-parcel-based land use model using Urban Sim.

2. Forecasts of Single Family Residential (SFR) Units are based on the trend of net new single family home (new construction minus demolitions) building permits for the last six years. Actual SFR construction may be higher if select known large acreage sites are put on the market during the planning period or due to other change in market factors.

3. Forecasts of Multifamily Units are based on a conservative set of factors and assumptions. These include projects currently under construction, in the development pipeline, and parcels with a high likelihood of redevelopment based on known developer interest and very low improvement to land value ratios. Assumed densities were determined from a sample of six recently completed or permitted projects (4 mixed-use and 2 commercial). Please contact Development Services Group for more information.

4. Forecasts of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are based on a trend line projection of ADU permits issued since 1995.
IV. LAND USE ISSUES

**Town Center**

1. The Town Center land designated for commercial retail, service and office uses is much larger than the local population can support. This has contributed to a historical pattern of relatively low private investment in downtown properties. Consequently, the Town Center consists of principally one story strip centers, surrounded by vast parking lots (FAR of only 0.23); a typical suburban sprawl-like development.

2. Few business developments interact with one another. Retail and office buildings are free-standing, often isolated, without a coherent, concentrated core area conducive to walking and browsing. The lack of a downtown center or core has likely been a significant impediment to private investments in the Town Center.

3. In 1994, the City made significant street improvements in the Town Center, which have resulted in a more pedestrian-friendly environment. However, more needs to be done on the private development side to design buildings with attractive streetscapes so that people will have more incentive to park their car and walk between shopping areas.

4. The Town Center is poorly identified. The major entrance points to the downtown are not treated in any special way that invites people into the business district.

**Outside the Town Center**

1. The community needs to accommodate two important planning values -- maintaining the existing single family residential character of the Island, while at the same time planning for absorbing a relatively small amount of population and housing growth.

2. Accessory housing units are allowed by City zoning regulations, and offer a new way to add housing capacity to single family residential zones without disrupting the character.

3. Commercial Office and PBZ zones must serve the needs of the local population while remaining compatible with the overall residential character of the community.

4. Ongoing protection of environmentally sensitive areas including steep slopes, ravines, watercourses, and shorelines is an integral element of the community's residential character.

5. View protection is important and must be balanced with the desire to protect the mature tree growth.

6. Within the bounds of limited public resources, open space and park land must be preserved to enhance the
community's extraordinary quality of life and recreation opportunities.

Town Center, the Park and Ride, and Luther Burbank Park.

7. There is a lack of pedestrian and transit connections between the

V. LAND USE POLICIES

Town Center

Mercer Island's business district vision as described in "Your Mercer Island Citizen-Designed Downtown" was an important step in galvanizing community support and understanding for future Town Center development. It is the basis for much of what is new in the comprehensive plan. This common vision is essential for revising the Town Center land use policies and for updating the Zoning Code with new standards and guidelines for development.

The following focus areas have been established for the Town Center: Gateway Focus Area, Mixed Use Focus Area, Mid-Rise Office Focus Area, Residential Focus Area and Auto-Oriented Focus Area.

Gateway Focus Area: The purpose of the gateway focus area is to provide the broadest mix of land uses in the Town Center, oriented towards pedestrian connections and regional transit access along I-90.

Mixed Use Focus Area: The purpose of the mixed use focus area is to provide mixed retail, office, and residential uses at a level of intensity sufficient to support transit service.

Mid-Rise Office Focus Area: The purpose of the mid-rise office focus area is to provide an area for office use with ground floor retail in close proximity to transit and the I-90 corridor.

Residential Focus Area: The purpose of the residential focus area is to encourage low-rise, high-density housing in the Town Center. Three residential focus areas have been established (Northwest, Central and South) with varied height restrictions to allow a better transition to the single-family residential to the south.

Auto-Oriented Focus Area: The purpose of the auto-oriented focus area is to provide a location for commercial uses that are dependent on automobile intensive uses.

GOAL 1 Create a mixed-use Town Center with pedestrian scale and connections.

1.1 A mixed-use core should be located adjacent to a regional transit facility and be of sufficient size and intensity to create a focus for Mercer Island.

1.2 The following pedestrian-oriented land uses should continue to develop over time in the Town Center: retail shops, professional offices, restaurants, services, lodging, residences, and community/ recreational facilities.

1.3 Street-level retail, office, and service commercial uses should reinforce the pedestrian-oriented
circulation system. Site improvements should enhance streets and sidewalks.

1.4 Building facades should provide visual interest to pedestrians. Street level windows, minimum building set-backs, on-street entrances, landscaping, and articulated walls should be encouraged.

1.5 A minimum floor area ratio should be established which provides the economic incentives for redevelopment; provides sufficient intensity to support transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; and creates a focus for social, cultural and commercial activities and supports the design elements of the plan.

1.6 A base building height should be established in the Town Center in order to encourage community values such as pedestrian-scale Town Center designs, respect for views, creation of visual interest and identity and incorporation of important public amenities. Additional stories up to a maximum of five (5) stories should be allowed when site development provides for amenities such as ground floor retail spaces, art, public gathering spaces, underground parking, affordable housing units, pedestrian connections, special landscaping and site design features, special building form/design features and transit-oriented design features.

The land area devoted to parking should be reduced by encouraging structured and underground parking for higher intensity uses. Improved access to transit, bicycle, pedestrian and shared parking facilities should be encouraged to reduce trip generation and provide transportation alternatives, particularly for secondary trips once users reach the Town Center. However, the City recognizes that the automobile may remain the primary mode of transportation for most Town Center trips. The City will continue to require new development to meet minimum parking ratios and provide adequate facilities to meet expected demand by auto users.

1.7 Parking structures should not dominate the street frontage. Retail uses should be encouraged on the first floor of street edges of parking structures to improve the visual effect and interest.

1.8 Building and street designs as well as other public facilities should accommodate the needs of physically disadvantaged persons, remaining consistent with the goals and objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

GOAL 2 Encourage Further Development and Enhancement of the Gateway Focus Area within the Town Center.

2.1 A Gateway Focus Area developed through a public-private partnership should be located within the northerly portion of the Town Center, near the I-90 corridor.

2.2 The Gateway Focus Area should reinforce the mixed-use area by creating a place suitable for informal gathering or public events, such as community events, celebrations, and concerts.
2.3 The form of the Gateway Focus Area should be coherent and memorable. It should include seating areas and be enhanced by such features as trees and flower displays, fountains, art and open spaces.

2.4 Pedestrian access should be provided from the Gateway Focus Area to the surrounding areas. Buildings should be oriented toward street and public spaces.

2.5 Uses supportive of the needs and interests of youths, families, senior adults and physically-challenged persons should be encouraged in the Gateway Focus Area.

GOAL 3  Encourage further development in Mid-Rise Office Focus Area in close proximity to retail and transit.

3.1 Future demand for office space development should utilize the land located in the Town Center and the Commercial Office zone.

3.2 Safe and accessible underground parking areas and parking garages should be encouraged or placed to the rear of buildings to maintain pedestrian scale at the street level.

3.3 A maximum building height of five (5) stories should be established which meets the same objectives for building height as in the core area. Special care should be given to landscaping, mass and roof forms of buildings to provide visual interest from residential areas located on the hillside surrounding the downtown.

GOAL 4  Encourage development of low-rise, high-density housing in the Residential Focus Areas of the Town Center.

4.1 A higher concentration of residences should be located within the Town Center boundaries and provide for the major focus of residential growth within the community.

4.2 The higher density residential uses should provide a mix of housing types, including townhouses, condominiums, and apartments and should be attractive to the needs of a variety of housing markets including current Mercer Island homeowners.

4.3 A range of multi-family residential densities should be allowed within the Town Center. Higher density and bulk should be allowed where the topography can accommodate such conditions without negatively affecting surrounding residential neighborhoods.

4.4 Maximum achievable building heights should be five (5) stories in the Town Center in the Gateway, Mixed Use, Mid-Rise Office, and Residential-Northwest areas. Maximum building heights should be four (4) stories in the Residential-Central area of the Town Center three (3) stories in the Residential-South area of the Town Center, and two (2) stories in the Auto-oriented Focus area. Additional stories above an established base height should be allowed when site development provides for public amenities such as ground floor retail spaces, art, public gathering spaces, underground parking, affordable
housing units, pedestrian connections, special landscaping and site design features, special building form/design features and transit-oriented design features.

4.5 The streetscape should be enhanced by articulating building facades, orienting entrances to the street, and through the provision of landscaping and art.

4.6 Residential garages should be positioned to reduce their visual impact on the street.

GOAL 5 Direct uses which rely solely on auto trips to locate in the Auto-Oriented Focus Area on the periphery of the Town Center.

5.1 New auto-oriented uses should be encouraged outside the commercial core on the periphery of the Town Center and parallel to the major Island arterial, Island Crest Way.

5.2 While all uses that are allowed in other Town Center Focus Areas should be allowed in this area, auto-intensive uses including drive-in banks, service stations and automotive repair services should be encouraged.

5.3 Landscaping should be provided to soften and screen the visual impact of parking lots and service areas.

5.4 Uses should respect the neighboring residential uses in terms of aesthetics, noise and automobile traffic.

Economic Development Policies

GOAL 6: Continue to encourage vitality and growth through the support of economic development activities on Mercer Island.

6.1 Establish the Town Center as an active and attractive commercial node, including the use of gateways, wayfinding and signage, and links to transit.

6.2 Maintain a diversity of downtown land use designations.

6.3 Support economic growth that accommodates the required employment growth target of 1,228 new jobs from 2006-2035, with recognition of regional growth targets, by maintaining adequate commercial zoning capacity, infrastructure, and supportive economic development policies. Create an environment for private investment that relies on economic incentives as the primary mechanism for achieving the Downtown Vision.

6.4 Create a center, accessible for vehicles but with an emphasis on the needs of pedestrians, including the needs of senior citizens, youths and physically-challenged persons.

6.5 Integrate residential, retail, civic and transit uses in the downtown area Town Center.

6.6 Create a memorable and desirable downtown for Mercer Islanders, visitors and shoppers to enjoy.
6.7 Create a healthy economic environment where downtown Town Center businesses can serve the needs of Mercer Island residents as well as draw upon broader retail and commercial market areas.

6.8 Look at ways to streamline permits for business renovations that do not include substantial redevelopment, such as tenant improvements.

6.9 Actively work with the Chamber of Commerce, Mercer Island Rotary Club, Mercer Island Lions Club, and other community groups to identify ways the City can support the local business environment.

6.10 Support and encourage home-based businesses in the City, provided that signage, parking, storage, and noise impacts are compatible surrounding uses.

6.11 Work to enhance transportation, parking, electronic, and other infrastructure for business development on Mercer Island.

6.12 Coordinate with other agencies and jurisdictions to encourage business retention.

Land Use Policies Outside the Town Center

GOAL 7: Mercer Island should remain principally a low density, single family residential community.

7.1 Existing land use policies, which strongly support the preservation of existing conditions in the single family residential zones, will continue to apply. Changes to the zoning code or development standards will be accomplished through code amendments.

7.2 Residential densities in single family areas will generally continue to occur at 3 to 5 units per acre, commensurate with current zoning. However, some adjustments may be made to allow the development of innovative housing types, such as accessory dwelling units and compact courtyard homes at slightly higher densities as outlined in the Housing Element.

7.3 Multi-family areas will continue to be low rise apartments and condos and duplex/triplex designs, and with the addition of the Commercial/Office (CO) zone, will be confined to those areas already designated as multi-family zones.

7.4 As a primarily single family residential community with a high percentage of developed land, the community cannot provide for all types of land uses. Certain activities will be considered incompatible with present uses. Incompatible uses include land fills, correctional facilities, zoos and airports. Compatible permitted uses such as education, recreation, open spaces, government social services and religious activities will be encouraged.
GOAL 8  Achieve additional residential capacity in single family zones through flexible land use techniques.

8.1 Use existing housing stock to address changing population needs. Accessory housing units and shared housing opportunities should be considered in order to provide affordable housing, relieve tax burdens, and maintain existing, stable neighborhoods.

8.2 Through zoning and land use regulations provide adequate development capacity to accommodate Mercer Island’s projected share of the King County population growth over the next 20 years.

8.3 Promote a range of housing opportunities to meet the needs of people who work and desire to live in Mercer Island.

8.4 Promote accessory dwelling units in single-family districts subject to specific development and owner occupancy standards.

8.5 Encourage infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites that are outside of critical areas and ensure that the infill is compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

GOAL 9:  With the exception of allowing residential development, commercial designations and permitted uses under current zoning will not change.

9.1 The Planned Business Zone uses on the south end of Mercer Island are compatible with the surrounding single family zone needs. All activities in the PBZ are subject to design review. Supplemental design guidelines have been adopted.

9.2 Commercial uses and densities near the I-90/East Mercer Way exit and SE 36th Street are appropriate for that area. All activities in the CO zone are subject to design review and supplemental design guidelines may be adopted.

9.3 Inclusion of a range of residential densities should be allowed when compatible in the Commercial Office (CO) zones. Through rezones or changes in zoning district regulations, multi-family residences should be allowed in all commercial zones where adverse impacts to surrounding areas can be minimized. Housing should be used to create new, vibrant neighborhoods.

9.4 Social and recreation clubs, schools, and religious institutions are predominantly located in single family residential areas of the island. Development regulation should reflect the desire to retain viable and healthy social, recreational, educational, and religious organizations as community assets which are essential for the mental, physical and spiritual health of Mercer Island.
Natural Environment Policies

GOAL 10: The protection of the natural environment will continue to be a priority in all Island development. Protection of the environment and private property rights will be consistent with all state and federal laws.

10.1 The City of Mercer Island shall protect environmentally sensitive lands such as watercourses, geologic hazard areas, steep slopes, shorelines, wildlife habitat conservation areas, and wetlands. Such protection should continue through the implementation and enforcement of critical areas and shoreline regulations.

10.2 Land use actions, storm water regulations and basin planning should reflect intent to maintain and improve the ecological health of watercourses and Lake Washington water quality.

10.3 New development should be designed to avoid increasing risks to people and property associated with natural hazards.

10.4 The ecological functions of watercourses, wetlands, and habitat conservation areas should be maintained and protected from the potential impacts associated with development.

10.5 The City shall consider-utilize best available science during the development and implementation of critical areas regulations.

10.6 Encourage low impact development approaches for managing stormwater and protecting water quality and habitat.

Parks and Open Space Policies

GOAL 11: Continue to maintain the Island's unique quality of life through open space preservation, park and trail development and well-designed public facilities.

11.2 More specific policy direction for parks and open space shall be identified in the Parks and Recreation Plan and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Plan. These plans shall be updated periodically to reflect changing needs in the community.

11.3 Acquisition, maintenance and access to public areas, preserved as natural open spaces or developed for recreational purposes, will continue to be an essential element for maintaining the community's character.

11.4 View preservation actions should be balanced with the efforts to preserve the community's natural vegetation and tree cover.

11.5 Future land use decisions should encourage the retention of private
club recreational facilities as important community assets.

11.6 Provide recreation and leisure time programs and facilities that afford equal opportunities for use by all Mercer Island residents while considering the needs of non-Mercer Island residents.

11.7 Provide a system of attractive, safe, and functional parks, and park facilities.

11.8 Preserve natural and developed open space environments and trails for the benefit of all existing and future generations.

11.9 Provide a broad representation of public art through cooperation with the Mercer Island Arts Council.

11.10 Funding for existing facilities should be a top priority and should be provided at a level necessary to sustain and enhance parks, trails and open space consistent with the Parks and Recreation Plan, the Trails Plan and the Capital Facilities Element.

11.11 Promptly investigate open space acquisition opportunities as they become available.

11.12 Pursue state and federal grant funding for parks and open space improvements.

VI. ACTION PLAN

GOAL 1 To implement land use development and capital improvement projects consistent with the policies of the comprehensive plan.

1.1 To focus implementation of the Comprehensive Plan on those issues of highest priority to the City Council and community: Town Center development, storm drainage, critical lands protection, and a diversity of housing needs including affordable housing.

1.2 To create opportunities for housing, multi-modal transportation, and development consistent with the city's share of regional needs.

1.3 To make effective land use and capital facilities decisions by improving public notice and citizen involvement process.

1.4 To continue to improve the development review process through partnership relationships with project proponents, early public involvement, reduction in processing time, and more efficient use of staff resources.

1.5 To continue to improve the usability of the "Development Code" by simplifying information and Code format; eliminating repetitious, overlapping and conflicting provisions; and consolidating various regulatory provisions into one document.

1.6 To achieve the goals of the Growth Management Act, the City of Mercer
Island shall not accept any additional housing growth target, above the target of 2,320 established for 2035, due to the existing and projected transportation congestion that would be created within Mercer Island; the need to protect existing open space; provide sufficient recreational opportunities; protect the many environmentally steep slopes on Mercer Island; the limited future expansion potential of public utilities; and to be compatible with the established development pattern and natural constraints of Mercer Island.

**Town Center Streetscape Master Plan**

In 1994, a master plan was developed for the Town Center downtown streetscape after active citizen input in the visioning process. The master plan resulted in wider sidewalks along 78th Avenue, and placement of planters and street furniture on a pedestrian-friendly scale. The plan also requires any new projects over the minimum 2-story height, to include public amenities in its design.
**Mercer Island Land Use Plan**

The Land Use Plan is intended to be a generalized depiction of land uses. The map is not a description of zoning boundaries nor should it be interpreted on a site-specific basis.

---

**Legend**

- **Town Center**
- **Commercial Office**
- **Multi-Family MF-2**
- **Multi-Family MF-2L**
- **Multi-Family MF-3**
- **Neighborhood Business**
- **Single Family R-8.4**
- **Single Family R-9.6**
- **Single Family R-12**
- **Single Family R-15**
- **Public Facility**
- **Park**
- **Open Space**
- **Linear Park (I-90)**

The Mercer Island City limits delineate the communities' Urban Growth Area. The City limits are contiguous with the Mercer Island Lake Washington Shoreline.
Figure 2 - Town Center Map

Mercer Island Town Center Zone Focus Areas

LEGEND:
- Towncenter Boundary
- Focus Area
  - Gateway 3
  - Mid-Rise Office 3
  - Mixed Use 3
  - Residential NW 5
  - Residential Central 4
  - Residential South 3
  - Auto Oriented 2

NORTH

0 375 750 Feet
Dear Brian and Fellow Residents,

The enclosed copy of a letter to the City Council (I received no reply) addresses an issue of importance as Mercer Island becomes an urban community. Please consider the matter. I will be pleased to attend a meeting to discuss it further.

A second issue which may be waiting an injury or death to excite attention is the practice of unloading trucks in the middle or turn lane of the streets in the business district. Apparently buildings are not required to have loading docks for deliveries or if there are docks, use is not required or enforced. I suggest building codes address this hazard and that 76th Avenue S.E. and S.E. 26th Street be monitored.

Yours,

Alfred L. Skinner, M.D.
Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, Emeritus
Erstwhile Mercer Island Pediatric Associates

Encl: letter to City Council of Feb. 20th, 2014
Mercer Island City Council
9611 SE 36th Street
Mercer Island, WA 98040

Dear Councilmembers,

The Central Business District is not child friendly. The new apartments on SE 27th St. and 76th Ave. SE make no provision for play for preschool and elementary school age children. Without access to nearby outdoor play areas, children will remain indoors. This contributes to the public health problem of obesity and related morbid conditions.

The newspaper reported that 130 or more school age children live in the apartments. There may be an equal number of preschoolers. While play areas exist in the 3200 block of 77th and 78th Avenues SE, they are too far for an unsupervised small child to walk alone. Similarly, the play areas in the 7300 block on the lid and on West Mercer Way are uphill and too far.

At a conference on “The Child in the City” at the International Children’s Center, I heard a speaker state that young healthy architects design buildings for young healthy adults, not for children. Children will play outdoors if they are near their parents, not if their parents are on the upper stories of high rise buildings or several blocks away.

Mercer Island is in transition. The City Council and Planning Commission must recognize that, in addition to our single family homes and neighborhood parks, the apartment development requires attention to the needs of small children for outdoor play and perhaps for day care also.

Thank you for your attention to this public health problem.

Sincerely yours,

Alfred L. Skinner, M.D.
Pediatrician

CC: Mercer Island Pediatrics
Ms. Lola Deane