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Introduction
# INTRODUCTION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1960, the newly created City of Mercer Island adopted the city's Comprehensive Plan. At that time the issues facing the community reflected those of a city in its infancy:

- to encourage the most appropriate use of land;
- to develop a circulation system that will provide safety and convenience;
- to install public facilities adequate to meet the demands of the population; and,
- to preserve the unique physical setting of the island.

Since 1960, the city has evolved into a mature community within the rapidly growing Puget Sound region. The 1990 Growth Management Act provided an opportunity for the community to update its original Comprehensive Plan. By 1994, the issues facing the community were different from those in 1960.

The 1994 Comprehensive Plan identified the essential issues facing the City while reinforcing our community values in relationship to the region. The Plan focused on how to revitalize the city's Town Center, comply with regional requirements for clean water and transportation, meet local needs for affordable housing and maintain reliability in public facilities and utilities.

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan update will build upon the efforts begun in the previous decade. Some change has occurred. Improvements to Town Center streets and the adoption of new design regulations have helped spawn new mixed-use and commercial development in the Town Center. However, most of the key issues and the overall vision identified in 1994 Comprehensive Plan continue to be relevant for this community.

Currently, the island is almost fully developed, consistent with the long term goals of maintaining a single family residential community within a unique physical setting. The City is served with an adequate and convenient circulation system. Parks, open space, public facilities and utilities are available, consistent with the needs of the citizenry. The City and private parties have made a considerable investment in the redevelopment of the Town Center with new buildings, a more vibrant streetscape and pedestrian-friendly environment.

The City's efforts to focus growth and revitalize the Town Center through targeted capital improvements and design standards to foster high quality development are now bearing fruit. At the time the 2004 amendments were adopted, two mixed-use projects had been constructed, two large mixed-use projects were in various stages of construction and three additional mixed-use and residential developments had received design approval and are expected in 2005-2007. Between 2004 and 2014, eight mixed use projects were constructed in the Town Center, consisting of approximately 850 housing units.

The Vision Statement, following this Introduction, details how the community's values will be manifested in future years. The issues addressed in this Comprehensive Plan concern how best to revitalize the city's Town Center, comply with regional requirements for clean water and transportation, meet local needs for
affordable housing and maintain reliability in public facilities and utilities.

The challenge in this process will continue to be in translating the requirements of the Growth Management Act into a meaningful planning process for Mercer Island. Every effort has been made to concentrate first on the most pressing issues of the community, while still complying with the other requirements of the Act.

Overview

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into the five-six elements mandated by the Growth Management Act: Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Utilities, and Capital - Facilities, and Shorelines. Each of the elements contains the following:

- information on existing conditions;
- explanation of how the element integrates with other plans and programs including the requirements of the Growth Management Act;
- a statement of policy direction; and
- an action plan.

Technical and background information are contained in a separately bound appendix document.

Implementation

Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is the first step toward achieving the City's goals for the future of the community. The Plan will only be effected when implemented through a number of actions. These actions include a broad range of requirements including the adoption of new city code provisions, revised zoning and design guidelines, city participation and representation in regional forums and re-investment in capital facilities.

The Plan should be viewed as a dynamic document and subject to change as community values, conditions and needs change. To this end, the city will perform periodic reviews of the plan and amendments as changing conditions require and citizen involvement dictates. The Growth Management Act requires that the Plan be comprehensively reviewed and updated every seven years. Periodic updates may not occur more than once a year except as allowed under RCW 36.70A.130.
II. VISION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Growth Management Act, Vision 2020, Destination 2030 and related policies have ushered in a wide range of new planning options, challenges and opportunities. Like other jurisdictions throughout the region, Mercer Island must periodically engage in a comprehensive review of its policies and their relationship to state and regional planning mandates. This process provides the opportunity to identify and reaffirm the community's long held values. It also offers a forum for policies to be updated and assimilated to function as a whole.

A Vision Statement is an essential ingredient in successful comprehensive community policy planning. Essentially, the statement should reaffirm time-tested policies or values that are generally held as positive "community trademarks" and identify others deemed relevant. Moreover, a Vision Statement should be a reflection of community aspirations. Through periodic review and refinement, it is intended to set parameters for future community activities.

The following Vision Statement is essentially the compilation of several long standing policies embodied in several existing planning documents including the Land Use Plan, Town Center Plan, and Park and Open Space Plan. Reexamining these policies implies a reexamination of the City's overall policy base.

This Vision Statement should satisfy (at least) the following three purposes: 1) City Boards, Commissions and Staff will use the Council's explicit guidance in determining the priority and degree of evaluation of existing elements in the City's Growth Management Act Policy & Planning Work Plan; 2) City employees will be guided in the provision of quality municipal services; 3) Most importantly, the Council, its advisory bodies and the community-as-a-whole will proceed with a common understanding of the quality of life values or themes that will shape our community for years to come.

"Islands can seem rather special, but then so can islanders...most people who remove themselves to islands regard themselves as having entered paradise.... Classically, a person goes to an island in much the same spirit as a person heads into exile--seeking simplicity, glorying in a world that is still incomplete and therefore full of possibilities."

Paul Theroux
COMMUNITY VALUES

Mercer Island is not an island unto itself. The community is part of a regional complex that affords housing, human services, jobs, transportation, cultural and recreational opportunities. As a partner in the ever changing world of environment, economics and politics, Mercer Island has and will continue to be an active player in regional issues. However, within this framework, Mercer Island will continue to maintain local control of all significant policy issues. Likewise, active community participation and leadership are fundamental for protecting and enhancing the values and characteristics that have shaped the quality of life and liveability of Mercer Island.

In relative terms, Mercer Island is a young community. However, the City adheres to a collection of intrinsic values and has a desire to shape its own future as well as be an effective regional partner. While values can change over time, they do provide the basic foundation for a host of community actions and generally reflect the “heart and soul” of the community. The values listed below are among the community's most important and therefore deserve special attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Community</th>
<th>Mercer Island is principally a single-family residential community, supported by healthy schools, religious institutions and recreational clubs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality Municipal Services</td>
<td>Mercer Islanders need and expect safety, efficiency and continuously improving municipal services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal responsibility</td>
<td>Mercer Islanders expect fiscal responsibility from its municipal services in light of limited resources and heightened competition for revenues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education is the Key</td>
<td>The community and its public and private institutions are committed to provide excellence in education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liveability is Paramount</td>
<td>Our community's values are reflected by safety and freedom from fear, physical and environmental attributes, and the cultural and recreational opportunities of our Island. This translates into the feeling that Mercer Island is &quot;the nicest of places for everyone to live.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherish The Environment</td>
<td>Island residents see themselves as &quot;stewards&quot; of the island environment. In considering community decisions, protection and enhancement of trees, open spaces, clean water and air, neighborhood quiet and environmentally sensitive lands will be given high priority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction -5 PC Recommended 11-19-2014
Sustainable Community

Mercer Island strives to be a sustainable community: Meeting the needs of the present while preserving the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We consider the relationship between the decisions we make as a community and their long-term impacts before committing to them. We understand that our strength is dependent on an open decision-making process that takes into account the economic, environmental and social well-being of our community.

HOW THE VALUES ARE MANIFESTED

Values often are characterized by specific actions or combinations of actions. Over time these actions become local community trademarks that have a profound influence in shaping a wide range of private and public decisions. Specific actions that will continue to exemplify Mercer Island’s values include:

Regional Role

- The community clearly links its interests in regional matters through involvement in transportation, education, human services, domestic water, air traffic noise, marine patrol, public health and safety, and pollution abatement. Participation will continue through individual citizens, interest groups and elected officials.

Community Leadership

- Mercer Island is committed to representing its citizens through its elected and appointed officials. A longtime producer of resourceful and professional leaders, Mercer Islanders will continue to exert strong and active leadership in local and regional affairs.

- Active participation by the Island’s citizens in civic events and issues is essential to representative self-government. As one of its “trademarks”, the community continues to place a high value on the opportunity to participate at all levels of decision-making.
Environment

- The City is committed to implementing policies aimed at preserving an enhancing the Island’s physical characteristics. Regulatory tools such as the Zoning Code, Subdivision Ordinance, Critical Lands Regulations, Shoreline Master Program, Tree Ordinance and Design Standards continue to serve as the underpinning for protection of environmental values.

- Open space (trees and green spaces) preservation continues to be a primary activity for attaining the community's quality-of-life vision. City leaders will continue to search for effective new tools and standards to protect and enhance the environment.

Town Center

- The Town Center will continue to be located within its current boundaries and will be bordered by residential uses. Mixed-use development that includes residential units shall be encouraged within this zone. Businesses should continue to develop at a scale compatible with other community values and should provide a range of retail, office and residential opportunities. The community-scaled business district will primarily cater to the needs and desires of Island residents and employees.

- Ongoing attention to urban design principles, pedestrian needs, traffic considerations and green spaces is essential.

Community Services

- Mercer Island will continue to provide a wide range of education, cultural and municipal services for the community's varied population. Balanced and flexible programs will be necessary to meet the community's evolving needs in education, recreation and cultural enjoyment. The community will maintain its broad range of quality basic services, including public safety, human services, physical development and utilities. At the same time, community leaders recognize that delivery of these services will take place in an arena of limited resources and heightened competition for tax revenues.
Residential Land Use

- Mercer Island is principally a low density, single-family residential community. The community will continue to seek ways to enhance its image as Puget Sound’s "most liveable livable residential community." Supporting these efforts, City leaders will maintain the integrity of existing approved land use policies.

- The community, through its ongoing consideration of public and private projects, will continue to seek ways of enhancing the Island’s quality of life through open space preservation, pedestrian trails and well-designed and functional public and semi-public facilities.

- As a single-family residential community with a high percentage of developed land, it is not necessarily appropriate that the community provide all types of lands uses. Certain activities will be viewed as incompatible with prevalent land uses and environmental values. Examples include certain recreational uses, cemeteries, zoos, airports, land fills and correctional facilities.

- Civic, recreation, education and religious organizations are important and integral elements of the community character and fabric. Their contribution and importance to the established community character should be reflected and respected in land use permit processes.

Housing

- The single-family character of the community will continue to generate the need for a variety of housing. A mix of residential housing opportunities in and around the Town Center and other existing multi-family areas will be an important element in maintaining the diversity of the Island’s population.

- To understand and preserve the quality and diversity of the Island’s housing stock, periodic reviews of housing policies will be undertaken. With that end in mind, methods will be sought to encourage diversity and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and homes.
Transportation

- The geography, employment and lifestyle characteristics of Mercer Island demands good permanent access to and from Interstate 90. This will require continued participation in regional transportation matters.

- Local land use policies will be coordinated with transportation plans in order to provide safe, functional surfaces for vehicles, bikes and pedestrians while avoiding local "gridlock." Local transportation planning will continue to emphasize a semi-rural setting for various arterial and collector streets. Pedestrian walks linking activities will continue to be a high community priority.

Population

- As with virtually all facets of the community fabric, population changes will occur. Mercer Islanders can expect to see their population grow from 23,310 in 2014 to an estimated (PSRC, approximate) 26,000 persons by 2020 25,200 persons by 2030.

- Within that population base, the Island will see changes in age profiles, along with their respective needs and expectations for municipal services. The provision of human services and facilities must be updated with changes in the community’s racial, age, income and lifestyle make-up. This diversification will continue to be encouraged. The standard for providing excellent services for the Island’s youth will be applied to all public services and across all ages.
III. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Introduction

At its March, 1992 retreat, the City Council decided to seek professional assistance in reviewing the City's existing public involvement practices. As envisioned, the review was to include an analysis of citizen participation as it relates to specific issues facing the Council and community as well as to look at the role of City boards and commissions in public input processes. Ultimately, the Council was interested in the identification of strategies and techniques that would enhance City decision-making in general, and how citizen participation is conducted on Mercer Island in particular.

Upon completion of the review, the City adopted its Public Participation Strategy (August, 1992). The strategy included Objectives and Principles which help to guide the crafting of future public involvement plans for future public issues. At the time of adoption, the Council committed to applying its new Strategy to its two most important and immediate concerns: Downtown Revitalization and development and implementation of the (GMA-required) Comprehensive Plan.

The Objectives and Principles are described below, followed by the specific public involvement strategies adopted and implemented for the Downtown Revitalization and Comprehensive Plan processes.

Commitment to Public Involvement

Mercer Island City government is committed to good public process. That commitment is reflected in efforts to enhance and optimize the way in which City decisions are made to include the broadest possible range of Island residents. The City's mission and values are understood by the Council and serve as the unifying principles that guide its decisions.

As the City undertakes its initiative to enhance its overall public participation framework, the following specific objectives have been defined:

- Increased openness and responsiveness of City government to its constituents.
- Better City decisions considering expert opinion as well as a full range of citizen perspectives and information.
- Informed consent of various stakeholder groups in decision-making processes, recognizing that conflict will exist and must be resolved.
- Streamlined decision making with broadened public input and participation, visible public acceptance and support for Council decisions.

Public Participation Principles

- Public participation should be driven by the specific goals and objectives of the program, in consideration of the specific groups of potentially affected interests or stakeholders, NOT by a random collection of public participation techniques.
- Public participation should take place as early as possible in a decision process, preferably at the scoping or option identification stage. It should include specific activities as well as informal, "keeping an ear to the ground" efforts.
and should focus on opportunities for two-way communication and responsiveness by the public.

- The decision-making entity should commit in advance to the planned level of public involvement and how it will use the public input that is received to make its decision. People must be brought to realize that the City is always listening to their concerns, even though it may not always agree with what it hears or implements.

- Appropriate techniques range from simply informing citizens to involving them through opportunities for direct participation in decision making. The guiding principle is to select the fewest number of the simplest techniques that will meet the objectives.

- Public input must be fully integrated and sequenced with technical work and the decision process in order to be useful in raising and resolving emerging issues.

- Providing feedback to public participants is critical to confirming their input, demonstrating that it is valued and in maintaining their interest in participating in City processes.

**Citizen Participation & the Comprehensive Plan**

Foreseeing the need to initiate "early and continuous citizen involvement" for the Comprehensive Plan, the City focused its expanded model for public participation on development of the Central Business District (CBD) Vision -- the place where nearly all of Mercer Island's Growth Management issues are focused. In August, 1992, the City launched the Town Center "visioning" process that relied upon the broadest range of community "stakeholders". Over 80 active participants worked between October, 1992 and June, 1993 to develop the document entitled "Your Mercer Island Citizen Designed Downtown". A newsletter mailing list of over 150 persons was built to maintain continual communication to interested individuals.

August, 1993 marked another major step in the Council's commitment to the role of public participation in the implementation of the Town Center vision and preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. The City Council created the GMA Commission to serve as the primary citizen body to oversee the drafting of the draft plan.

Consistent with the adopted public involvement strategy, the GMA Commission consisted of citizen "stakeholders", representing standing City boards and commissions, citizens, downtown property owners, and business community groups. The GMA Commission oversaw and coordinated the preparation of all comprehensive plan elements, ultimately passing them on to the City Planning Commission for formal review and public hearings.

Prior to making formal recommendations to the City Council, the Planning Commission will conduct meeting, hearings and/or workshops to obtain further public input. Providing another avenue for public input, environmental review of the draft plan's impacts is integrated into the Planning Commission's hearing and review process.

The Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City Council in
December, 1993 after GMA Commission review and discussion, Planning Commission review and approval, SEPA review and City Council workshops and public hearings. Adoption of the remaining four planning elements occurred in October, 1994.

Between 1994 and 2014, the 2005 update was the only substantial update. The City continues to be committed to public participation in its Comprehensive Plan Update. The City held more than a dozen meetings, and an open house, to discuss proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and related Critical Lands Regulations amendments prior to City Council Public Hearings. Public involvement included the use of a stakeholder group composed of citizens representing a range of interests.

**AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic document because it is based on community values and an understanding of existing and projected conditions and needs, all of which continually change. The city should plan for change by establishing formal procedures for regularly monitoring, reviewing and amending the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan also represents an integrated statement of policies, consistent with regional plans and based on a broad perspective developed over many months of wide spread public involvement. Amendments to the plan should be done carefully with a view toward maintaining the internal consistency and integrity of the document.

WAC 365-195-630 requires that each jurisdiction establish a process for amending the Comprehensive Plan. It also states that plan amendments cannot be considered more frequently than once a year except in an emergency, and that all proposed amendments in any year must be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of the changes can be considered.

**Process for Amending the Comprehensive Plan**

1. In January of each calendar year, After the January City Council Planning session, the Planning Commission shall prepare an annual report to the City Council on the status of the plan and progress made in implementation of the proposed Planning Commission annual work program.

2. Any requests for a Comprehensive Plan amendment shall be submitted to the Planning Commission by June of each year and action taken by the City Council by the end of the calendar year.

3. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan shall follow the notice and hearing requirements specified for adoption of the plan.
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LAND USE ELEMENT

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 were 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.

In 2006, a grassroots effort of Island citizens led the City to modify the vision statement in its comprehensive plan to include language embracing general sustainability, and in May 2007 the Council committed to a sustainability work program as well as a specific climate goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 2007 levels by 2050, which was consistent with King County and Washington State targets. Later in 2007, the Council set an interim emissions reduction goal (often called a “milepost”) for City operations of 5% by 2012.

From 2010 to 2014, with the entire community’s sustainability in mind, the City has implemented a wide range of outreach programs, efficiency campaigns, alternative energy initiatives, land-use guidelines, and other natural resource management measures designed to minimize the overall impacts generated by Island residents, for the benefit of future generations. Due to the 20-year horizon envisioned by this comprehensive plan, it is especially appropriate to include measures that address the long-term actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ideally in collaboration with other local governments. Actions that the City will take in the management of its own facilities and operations are addressed in the Capital Facilities Element of this plan.

These measures, and others under consideration, are identified in more detail in a rolling 6-year Sustainability Plan, to be adopted in 2015, which will guide the City’s internal and external actions while taking into account the interrelated issues of climate change, population change, land use, public infrastructure, natural resources management, quality of life, public health, and economic development.

Updates to this document were made in 2014 to comply with the Countywide Planning Policies, including updated housing and employment targets.

In 2014, the city began a process to review the vision for the Town Center. The new vision includes an extensive public process, and may result in changes to the Town Center Plan. The Land Use Element specific to the Town Center will be reviewed and updated as appropriate following this process.
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</td>
<td>62.2 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right-of-way)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Floor Area (includes all uses)</td>
<td>1,657,482 square feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(27% office, 22% retail,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 units/acre on sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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 which were 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 90-98% of the Island's land use. There are 3,705-3,534 acres zoned for single family residential development. This compares to 77 acres in the Town Center zones, 19 acres for Commercial Office zone, and 99-103 acres in multi-family zones (Table 2). 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 3,705-3,534 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 most of 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 2. Land Uses Outside Town Center (2004) Zones and Acreage (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZONE</th>
<th>ACREAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business - B</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Office - CO</td>
<td>19.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifamily - MF-2</td>
<td>42.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifamily - MF-2L</td>
<td>7.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifamily - MF-3</td>
<td>53.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Institution - P</td>
<td>284.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned Business - PBZ</td>
<td>13.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family - R-12</td>
<td>77.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family - R-15</td>
<td>1277.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family - R-8.4</td>
<td>779.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family - R-9.6</td>
<td>1399.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Center - TC</td>
<td>77.16</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, 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 housing units and 1,437 new jobs between 2006 and 2031. 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>Original growth target, 2006-2031</th>
<th>Adjusted growth target, 2006-2035</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GMPC Targets</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted growth target, 2006-2035 &amp; Housing Target</td>
<td>2,320</td>
<td>3,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional housing units</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-Target</td>
<td>800 additional jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment Growth Target (in jobs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original growth target, 2006-2031</th>
<th>Adjusted growth target, 2006-2035</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</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 7,882 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.

Footnote: 1 Housing Analysis Appendix, Exhibit J-1, page A-17.
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 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 our current zoning code, 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 2,004 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, 1,247 new housing units could be accommodated in mixed use zones and 124 units could be accommodated in the Town Center.

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 an 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 1,300 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 a similar methodology to that 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) 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 44 contains a housing unit and population forecast for 2010 through 2030 conducted by City planning staff of 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 City anticipates an increase in housing units at an average annual growth rate of approximately 0.25%. This represents an increase of approximately 1,856 housing units and 4,193 people over 20 years. The City forecasts 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 4 – 2010/2030/2020 Housing Unit and Population Forecast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall Household Size (1)</th>
<th>SFR Units (2)</th>
<th>Multifamily Units (3)</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>2.485</td>
<td>6,873</td>
<td>2,236 N/A</td>
<td>8,321</td>
<td>22,699</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 (Census Forecast)</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>7,400</td>
<td>2,253</td>
<td>4,464</td>
<td>24,991</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2030 (Forecast)</td>
<td>2.581</td>
<td>7,474</td>
<td>2,261</td>
<td>959.82</td>
<td>25,243</td>
<td></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.
## 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. Some 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.

7. There is a lack of pedestrian and transit connections between the Town Center, the Park and Ride, and Luther Burbank Park.
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 Create a prominent 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 Establish a 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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 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
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 utilizing best available science during the development and implementation of critical areas regulations. Regulations will be updated periodically to incorporate new information and, at a minimum, every seven years as required by the Growth Management Act.

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

10.7 Services and programs provided by the City with regards to land use should encourage residents to minimize their own personal carbon footprint, especially with respect to energy consumption and waste reduction.

10.8 The City’s development regulations should encourage long term sustainable stewardship of the natural environment. Examples include preservation and enhancement of native vegetation, tree retention, and rain gardens.

10.9 Outreach campaigns and educational initiatives should inform residents of the collective impact of their actions on local, county, and state greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

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 Mercer Island has consistently accepted and planned for its fair share of regional growth, as determined by the GMPC and the King County CPPs. Build out of the City is approaching, and could occur by 2035 or shortly thereafter. In the future, therefore, the City will advocate for future growth allocations from the GMPC which reflect its community vision, as reflected in the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations; environmental constraints; infrastructure and utility limitations; and its remaining supply of developable land.

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.
Housing
I. INTRODUCTION

The housing element highlights the goals and needs of Mercer Island housing in four areas. Neighborhood quality discusses the need to balance the vitality of existing housing stock and neighborhood character with the changing housing needs of Island residents. The Housing Supply section covers changing demographic needs and both existing housing stock and projected goals for providing future housing. The section on Housing Options addresses housing needs for people of all economic segments as well as those with special housing needs. Implementation and Tracking outlines strategies for accomplishing all the City’s housing goals.

II. PLANNING CONTEXT

Growth Management Act

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to create a 20 year planning document. This plan must include a housing element that makes provisions for existing and projected housing needs. The State’s GMA goal is to

- Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock
- Ensure housing for all economic segments of the population of this state
- Participate in making available a fair share of affordable housing, including affordable housing for people with special needs
- Promote zoning classifications which allow a variety of residential densities and housing types
- Encourage preservation of existing housing stock
- Assure that housing complies with local, state, and federal fair housing laws

In order to accomplish these goals, Mercer Island must promote secure and well maintained residential single family and multi-family areas, while searching for opportunities to increase the supply and diversity of housing. The Mercer Island Municipal Code allows for accessory dwelling units to be integrated into single-family neighborhoods, increasing the housing supply and diversity of housing types while maintaining neighborhood character. In much of the Town Center, development can be four or five stories tall, provided significant amenities or major site features are integral to the site design. These two policies are examples of how Mercer Island’s policies support the state’s housing goal.

Policies to allow new innovative and single-family compatible housing types have been proposed for single-family neighborhoods. The Town Center and CO zoning districts have also been targeted as an area for additional multi-family housing opportunities.
Countywide Planning Policies

The King County Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) has also established housing policies that affect the City. In addition to establishing projected growth targets (see Land Use Assumptions section) the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) provide a framework to plan for and promote a range of housing choices. The CPPs state:

Overarching Goal: The housing needs of all economic and demographic groups are met within all jurisdictions.

“All jurisdictions shall provide for a diversity of housing types to meet a variety of needs and provide for housing opportunities for all economic segments of the population. All jurisdictions shall cooperatively establish a process to ensure an equitable and rational distribution of low income and affordable housing throughout the County in accordance with land-use policies, transportation, and employment locations.”

The countywide need for housing by percentage of area median income is shown in Table 1, located in Section IV. Housing Supply: Housing Affordability & Availability. The CPPs also specify the amount of affordable housing jurisdictions should plan for:

“Each jurisdiction shall plan for a number of housing units affordable to households with incomes between 50 and 80 percent of the County median household income that is equal to 17 percent of its projected net household growth. In addition, each jurisdiction shall plan for a number of housing units affordable to households with incomes below 50 percent of median income that is either 20 percent or 24 percent (24 percent for Mercer Island) of its projected net household growth.”

While these goals are aggressive, they reflect the countywide income mix of all households.

Mercer Island has a very limited supply of undeveloped, buildable residential land. That fact and high land values make it more difficult to provide affordable housing on the Island. The Housing Affordability and Availability section of this element (Section IVb) describes Mercer Island’s strategies and progress in meeting affordable housing targets addressing the need for housing affordable to households at all income levels.

In an effort to provide affordable housing on a regional level, in support of affordable housing development and preservation on a regional level, the City is a member of A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH), an intergovernmental agency that works to preserve and increase the supply of housing for low- and moderate-income Eastside households.
**Land Use Assumptions**

**Accommodating Growth**

Mercer Island has historically served as a residential community, and the majority of the Island’s land use is in single family dwellings on relatively large lots. Mercer Island residents strongly value their community for its quality family neighborhoods and accessible local services. The Island is served by Mercer Island’s Town Center, which allows for diverse commercial and non-commercial land uses, and two smaller commercial areas. These commercial areas focus on the needs of the local population.

There are three general types of residential areas in Mercer Island: Single family residential neighborhoods, which is the Island’s predominate land use; Town Center multifamily residential and mixed use development; and multifamily areas surrounding the Town Center.

The Housing Element is coordinated with the Land Use element and land use map, recognizing the City’s 20-year growth target of 1,437 original growth target of 2,000 new housing units (2006-2031) set by the Growth Management Planning Council, and a local 20-year forecast of 1,856 new housing units. Because the Growth Management Act requires jurisdictions to plan for 20 years of growth, the planning horizon and the growth target was extended to 2035 with the units to accommodate increasing to 2,320.

Between 2006 and 2012, 698 new housing units were constructed, counting against the growth target of 2,320 and resulting in 1,622 units that the City must plan to accommodate through 2035.

The 2014 Buildable Lands Report identifies capacity for 2,274 additional new housing units on Mercer Island, which is sufficient to meet the 20-year City’s household growth target, as well as the more recently generated housing forecast. Current zoning will accommodate 614 single family units (30.6% of total capacity), 143 multifamily units (7.1% of total capacity), and 1,247 units (62.3% of total capacity) in mixed-use and multifamily developments in the Town Center.

However, due to recent development activity and trends as of 2005, the City is reviewing assumptions about multifamily capacity in the Town Center. It is expected that multifamily capacity is significantly higher than originally estimated.

Based on a preliminary analysis of those parcels which currently have an improvement to land valuation of .5 or less and are not in public or utility ownership, the City believes that there may be capacity in the Town Center for as many as 1,300 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 capacity is in addition to those projects which are currently under construction.

Achieving Planning to accommodate the City’s 20-year growth target of 1,437 2,320 households units by 2035 through growth in the community’s housing stock is
consistent with regional land use and transportation plans.

**Targeted Housing Growth**

One strategy of this housing element is to focus a significant percentage of the Island’s 20-year projected growth into the Town Center and surrounding multifamily areas. This strategy puts less growth pressure on existing single family neighborhoods; provides opportunities to address some of the community’s changing demographics (e.g. more smaller households, aging population); and multifamily development can help meet the City’s housing affordability goals.

Even if as predicted, a significant portion of future housing permits are for multifamily housing, it would not significantly impact Mercer Island’s existing nature of being a predominantly single family community. For example, if two-thirds of the City’s 20-year growth target was achieved through with multifamily units as predicted in the 2014 Buildable Lands Report, the overall proportion of single family housing would only decrease from about 72% to 65% of the City’s total housing supply. The change in single family to multifamily proportion is minimal because projected growth will only be a relatively small part of the predominantly single family housing supply.

This Housing Element plans for projected growth in ways that will mirror the City’s existing residential character of single-family residential, multifamily residential in multifamily zones, and multifamily and mixed-use in the Town Center. It includes new and infill development of traditional and, potentially on a more limited basis, innovative single family housing types (e.g. accessory dwelling units and compact courtyard homes) in single family areas; as well as rental and condominium multifamily housing in the Town Center and in multifamily areas that ring the Town Center and in CO and PBZ zoning districts.

**Housing Characteristics**

Of the 8,930 housing units reported by the 2010 Census, 73.9% are single family and 26.1% are multifamily units. Between 1992 and 2002, 74% of new permits issued in Mercer Island were for multifamily housing, consistent with the housing strategy since 2005 of focusing much of the housing growth in the Town Center and multifamily zones. While Mercer Island has issued a lower proportion of multifamily permits than other cities in East King County (overall 63%), it is an increase from the previous decade when only about 22% of new permits in Mercer Island were multifamily.

Mercer Island’s housing stock includes 167 permitted accessory dwelling units, 139 persons in institutional care (nursing home), one federally subsidized Section 8 apartment complex with 59 units for seniors, and 68 units of retirement housing. There are no formal estimates of the number of group homes, however, 222 people indicated that they lived in group quarters in the 2010 Census.

Mercer Island has consistently met its overall housing growth targets, and since 1992 almost 60% of that growth came from

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1. 2014 Buildable Lands Report
2. In addition to the Point Cities, Newcastle (15% MF) and Sammamish (38% MF) were equal or less than Mercer Island (ARCH permit survey).
multi-family homes, or about the same percentage as King County overall. This corresponds to the development of mixed-use multi-family housing in the town center. Consequently, single-family detached homes have declined as a share of the city’s total housing stock, but are still greater than in most EKC cities.

The bulk of Mercer Island’s housing was built during the 1950’s and 1970’s. Prior to 1959, 2,783 units existed. In the next two decades (1960-1979), 3,966 units were added. Another 1,655 housing units were added between 1980 and March 2000. By 1990, housing development had slowed and shifted from large subdivisions to infilling of already built neighborhoods. After Town Center regulations underwent a significant update in 2006 and the post-recession economic pickup in the late 2000’s, several buildings were constructed in the Town Center. Between 2006 and 2012, 472 new multifamily units were constructed in the Town Center, primarily in mixed-use buildings.

Generally, the oldest housing areas have a regular street grid pattern, and homes are on lots of 8,400 to 9,600 sq. ft. They are located on the most level terrain, including East Seattle and First Hill, north and south of I-90, and along Island Crest Way. The newer housing and the largest lot sizes (15,000 sq. ft. and up) are along the east and west sides of the Island on narrow, curving roads, many of which are private. These neighborhoods often contain steep slopes, deep, narrow ravines and small watercourses. Due to the environmentally sensitive nature of these areas, careful development and engineering requirements make this land difficult and expensive to develop.

Most multifamily housing is located in and around the Town Center. In addition, two large complexes straddle I-90 and abut single family neighborhoods.

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1 Mercer Island permitting activity prepared for the King County 2014 Buildable Lands Report 2014 Buildable Lands Report
II. PLANNING CONTEXT

Growth Management Act

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to create a 20 year planning document. This plan must include a housing element that makes provisions for existing and projected housing needs. The State’s GMA goals for housing are as follows:

- Ensure housing for all economic segments of the population of this state
- Participate in making available a fair share of affordable housing, including affordable housing for people with special needs
- Promote zoning classifications which allow a variety of residential densities and housing types
- Encourage preservation of existing housing stock
- Assure that housing complies with local, state, and federal fair housing laws

In order to accomplish these goals, Mercer Island must promote secure and well maintained residential single family and multi-family areas, while searching for opportunities to increase the supply and diversity of housing.

Policies to allow new innovative and single-family compatible housing types have been proposed for single family neighborhoods. The Town Center and CO zoning districts have also been targeted as an area for additional multi-family housing opportunities.

Countywide Planning Policies

The King County Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) has also established housing policies that affect the City. In addition to establishing projected growth targets (see Land Use Assumptions section) the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) require that new housing should provide a mix of affordability. The CPPs state:

“All jurisdictions shall provide for a diversity of housing types to meet a variety of needs and provide for housing opportunities for all economic segments of the population. All jurisdictions shall cooperatively establish a process to ensure an equitable and rational distribution of low-income and affordable housing throughout the County in accordance with land use policies, transportation, and employment locations.”

The CPPs also specify the amount of affordable housing jurisdictions should plan for:

“Each jurisdiction shall plan for a number of housing units affordable to households with incomes between 50 and 80 percent of the County median household income that is equal to 17 percent of its projected net household growth. In addition, each jurisdiction shall plan for a number of housing units affordable to households with incomes below 50 percent of median income that is either 20 percent or 24 percent (24 percent for Mercer Island) of its projected net household growth.”
While these goals are aggressive, they reflect the countywide income mix of all households.

Mercer Island has a very limited supply of undeveloped, buildable residential land. That fact and high land values make it more difficult to provide affordable housing on the island. The Housing Affordability and Availability section of this element (Section IV[b]) describes Mercer Island’s strategies and progress in meeting affordable housing targets.

In an effort to provide affordable housing on a regional level, the City is a member of A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH), an intergovernmental agency that works to preserve and increase the supply of housing for low- and moderate-income Eastside households.

III. NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY

Mercer Island is characterized by high quality neighborhoods that are well maintained and have a strong sense of pride.

There are three general types of residential neighborhoods in Mercer Island. First are single family neighborhoods which comprise the majority of the city’s developed land area, and consist primarily of owner occupied housing. Second, is the Town Center and third the surrounding multifamily zones which consist of a mix of rental and ownership multifamily housing.

The single family neighborhoods are predominantly residential with scattered uses such as schools and religious buildings. Single family neighborhoods typically serve the needs only of its residents, and because of their lower density residents rely predominantly on automobiles.

The Town Center multifamily areas are intermixed with other commercial and office uses. The mix of residential and commercial uses in the downtown results in creating a neighborhood that serves the needs of downtown area residents and residents from the broader community. The compactness of this area allows more opportunity for pedestrian access and transit use by residents.

Multifamily residential areas outside the Town Center tend to be more auto-dependent, with on-site or adjacent amenities such as open-space that primarily serves these neighborhoods. Residents in mixed use neighborhoods and multifamily residential areas often look for more amenities within walking distance of their housing and rely more on shared open spaces. When considering strategies and policies to address neighborhood character and quality, strategies can vary depending upon the type of neighborhood.

Some level of investment, and thus change, in existing neighborhoods is natural and an indication of a healthy, stable environment. Typical investments may include new additions and improvements on existing houses, as well as new houses that are built either on vacant lots or after a house is torn down.
down. One of the City’s roles in promoting neighborhood quality is to facilitate healthy change within neighborhoods by providing for development that is compatible in quality, design, character and scale with existing land uses, traffic patterns, public facilities and sensitive environmental features. **All neighborhoods in Mercer Island, but single family neighborhoods in particular, are largely dependent on cars as the primary transportation to jobs, transit stations, and commercial goods and services.** Current and future provision and maintenance of roads, utilities and other public services are necessary to maintain residential access to all services and amenities.

Mercer Island single family neighborhoods pride themselves on their narrow, quiet streets and dense plantings. The City protects these neighborhoods through development regulations and other city codes which restrict the bulk and scale of buildings, control noise and nuisances, minimize the impact of non-residential uses and help preserve the natural environment. Parks, open spaces and trails also contribute to the neighborhood quality.

Through citizen boards, commissions and special task forces, the City encourages neighborhood participation in protecting and enhancing neighborhood quality. A matching grant program from the Beautification Fund encourages landscape plantings and other amenities.

**GOAL 1:** To ensure that single family and multi-family neighborhoods provide safe and attractive living environments, and are compatible in quality, design and intensity with surrounding land uses, traffic patterns, public facilities and sensitive environmental features.

1.1 Ensure that zoning and city code provisions protect residential areas from incompatible uses and promote bulk and scale consistent with the existing neighborhood character.

1.2 Promote single family residential development that is sensitive to the quality, design, scale and character of existing neighborhoods.

1.3 Promote quality, community friendly Town Center, CO and PBZ district residential development through features such as pedestrian and transit connectivity, and enhanced public spaces.

1.4 Preserve the quality of existing residential areas by encouraging maintenance and revitalization of existing housing stock.

1.5 Foster public notification and participation in decisions affecting neighborhoods.
1.6 Provide for roads, utilities, facilities and other public and human services to meet the needs of all residential areas. (See Appendix G — Mercer Island Human Services Strategic Plan 1999–2000)
Housing – 9

IV. HOUSING SUPPLY

Demographic Changes

Mercer Island’s population changed very little (just 3%) from 2000 to 2010, but the number of households grew by 15%. This implies smaller households, which is reflected in the city’s household types. A majority of Mercer Island households (61%) consist of only one or two persons. This compares to 58% in 2000 and 49% in 1980, and is consistent with overall smaller households in most parts of the County.

What differentiates Mercer Island from other East King County (EKC) cities (aside from the Point Cities) is the relatively high percentage of married couples without children—35% of all households. As in other “maturing suburbs” (typically incorporated before 1990, little or no annexation), the city has many empty nesters who continue to live where they raised their families. And unlike most of the rest of East King County, Mercer Island experienced an actual small decline in married couples with children.

Mercer Island has a larger proportion of school-age children and senior adults and lower percentages of younger (age 20 to 44) adults. Note that, according to the Mercer Island School District, more than 100 students now live in the Town Center, a demographic believed to be rising. In addition, the 34-to-44 age group fell in proportion, while the 55-to-64 age group rose. The Mercer Island population is expected to increase by about 10% to 19% between 2000 and 2020. In addition, the housing needs of some of Mercer Island residents may change significantly over the next twenty years. There was a 131% increase in the total number of seniors living on Mercer Island between 1980 (1,779 people over 65) and 2000, (4,114 people over 65) even though the total population increased only about 2%. In comparison, King County experienced a 40% increase in senior population between 1980 and 2000. Mercer Island’s percentage of seniors has gone from 8.3% (less than the countywide average) to over 18.5%, well over the countywide average and the highest percent in East King County.

From 1980 to 2000, Mercer Island has seen a significant decrease in population aged 21 to 35 (16.0% to 8.7%). The Countywide figures for the same time period show a decrease from 29.7% to 23.7%. This indicates that Mercer Island has historically had a relatively low percentage in the 25 to 35 age group that has become even more pronounced in the last twenty years. This trend can also be seen in the 35 to 45 age group. For this age group, Mercer Island has seen a shift from having a higher percentage compared to countywide averages in 1980 (16.7% vs. 12.6%), to having a lower percentage (15% vs. 17.8%).

Mercer Island does have a relatively high percentage of married households with children, but they comprise only 30% of all households. The total percentage of households with children also decreased from 42% in 1980 to 35% in 2000. (30% MI

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41980, 2000 and 2010 Census

5Puget Sound Regional Council, Residential Forecasts 12/18/03, City of Mercer Island local housing and population forecast 12/3/04.
households are married with children and 5% MI households are single parent with children. A majority of Mercer Island households (58%) consist of only one or two persons. This compares to 49% in 1980 and is consistent with overall smaller households in most parts of the County.\textsuperscript{6}

Simply stated, Mercer Island households were older and smaller in 2010 than they were 320 years before, and that trend is not expected to change. Mercer Island’s challenge is to provide a variety of housing opportunities in a community that has limited capacity for new development and does not anticipate or desire any significant changes to its existing residential areas.

Several policies are outlined in subsequent sections of the housing element to address these changing needs. These include allowing new multifamily housing in the downtown and surrounding multifamily zones, encouraging the continued use of accessory dwelling units, providing opportunities for senior housing, and enabling innovative forms of single family housing. These forms of housing, both rental and ownership, may provide some alternatives for smaller households, including households looking to downsize from single family homes.

Innovative housing types, including compact courtyard homes and accessory units, are another way Mercer Island seeks to maintain its existing neighborhood quality while providing new opportunity. An accessory unit built into an existing home can provide a separate living unit that provides additional income to the home owner as well as more affordable living for renters.

\textsuperscript{6}1980 and 2000 Census
Housing Affordability & Availability

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income Type</th>
<th>Percent of County Median Income</th>
<th>2010 King Co. Income Range (4-person HH)</th>
<th>Percent of County Population</th>
<th>Percent of Mercer Island Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Below 30%</td>
<td>Below $25,680</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>30% to 50%</td>
<td>$25,680 to $42,800</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>50% to 80%</td>
<td>$42,800 to $68,480</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>80% to 120%</td>
<td>$68,480 to $102,720</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Middle</td>
<td>Above 120%</td>
<td>Above $102,720</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2010 HUD Family Income Limits and 2010 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Mercer Island has the challenge of supplying housing affordable to all economic segments of the population. "Housing affordability" is relative to household income. Table 1 defines the most commonly used income groups as well as the percent of Mercer Island's and King County's population that fell into each category in 2000.

It is an accepted standard that total housing costs should not exceed 30 percent of total gross household income. Typically, the lower the household income, the greater percentage of income paid to housing costs and vice-versa.

In Mercer Island in 2000, 58% of households earning $25,000 per year or less paid more than 35% of their income toward housing costs. Conversely, over 60% of households earning more than $75,000 paid less than 20% of their income for housing.

Average rents on the Island rose 53% since 2000, taking Mercer Island from one of the more affordable places to rent in EKC to one of the most expensive. Virtually none of the city's multi-family housing built since 1994 was affordable to moderate-income households. Sixteen percent (16%) of the city's rental housing is still affordable to low-income households—slightly higher than the EKC average—but 62% are too expensive for moderate-income households, compared to 41% in EKC.

While this pattern of low-income households overpaying for housing is typical throughout the region -- the problem is exacerbated in Mercer Island because of the limited number of multifamily units and the high values of owner occupied homes. Many owner

Source: 2000 Census, HUD 2000 Income Guidelines for King County, and ARCH
Occupied units are currently affordable to low and moderate income owners because mortgage payments are low or homes are owned outright. However, there are many homeowners in Mercer Island who would not be able to afford to buy their homes today with their current incomes.

Outside the Point Cities, only Sammamish had a higher median household income or proportion of incomes greater than 120% of median in 2011. Nevertheless, “housing cost-burden” is more common (40%) among Mercer Island renters than the rest of EKC (37%). The same holds true at the higher level of “severe cost burden”. Cost burden is lower among homeowners, but as in most cities, that rate increased significantly during the recent recession. As in other East King City counties, cost-burdened households are primarily lower-income and relatively young (under 25 years of age) or relatively old (65 or over). In Mercer Island, as in most communities in East King County, the vast majority of housing affordable to low and moderate income families is rental housing.

Over the past decade price increases for both rental and ownership housing on Mercer Island have outpaced income increases. Between 2000 and 2010 average rents have increased over 53%, and average house values have increased 108%, while King County median income has increased only 30%. More notable is that over this period, average rents went from being toward the low end of rents in cities located in East King County, to one of the highest average rents.

Average prices of homes that sold in Mercer Island dropped more than 60% from 2008 to 2012, but had gained almost 40% in 2012 (compared to a 21% decline, and 9% recovery, across all East King County cities). Ninety-seven percent (97%) of owner-occupied housing had a value greater that what is affordable for a median-income family. This compares to 90% for East King County.

While this pattern of low-income households overpaying for housing is typical throughout the region—the problem is exacerbated in Mercer Island because of the limited number of multifamily units and the high values of owner-occupied homes. Many owner-occupied units are currently affordable to low and moderate income owners because mortgage payments are low or homes are owned outright. However, there are many homeowners in Mercer Island who would not be able to afford to buy their homes today with their current incomes.

In Mercer Island, as in most communities in East King County, the vast majority of housing affordable to low and moderate income families is rental housing. In 2000, 46% of the City's rental housing was priced below $1,000 per month and would be affordable to most moderate income families. Also, about 9% of rental housing was priced below $500 per month and may be affordable to some low income families. However, rental units accounted for only 19% of Mercer Island's housing stock. Also, over the past decade price increases for both rental and ownership housing on Mercer Island have outpaced income increases. Between 1990 and 2000 average rents have increased 78%, and average house values have increased 71%, while King County median income has increased only 46%. More notable is that over this period, average rents went from being toward the low end of rents in cities located in East King County, to one of the highest average rents.
in East King County, to one of the highest average rents.

Between 1990 and 2002, Mercer Island has made significant contributions toward its affordable housing targets through preservation and direct assistance of low-income housing, e.g., the preservation of Ellsworth House Section 8 senior apartments, and by providing regulatory incentives to achieve moderate-income housing, e.g., Mercer Island's Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADUs) program. The Mercer Island ADU program permitted more than 167214 dwelling units between 1993 and 201202, more than twice the number of any other Eastside city considerably more than any other East King County city.

Including the affordable housing that the city has helped fund outside of Mercer Island, the city has met 23% of its 2012 low-income affordable housing target, and 120% of its moderate-income target. (A majority of the latter is accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in Mercer Island.) Overall, 5% of the city's housing units are affordable for low-income families (compared to 7% across EKC and 15% countywide) and an additional 6% for moderate-income families (compared to 17% in EKC and 20% countywide). More recently, Mercer Island has adopted Town Center Development and Design Standards, which implements the Land Use and Housing vision of increased multifamily development in the Town Center. The City also revised the Land Use Code to allow retirement homes in the CO Zone with revised development conditions.

Future strategies for achieving affordability and more diverse housing types may include incorporating innovative housing types in single family neighborhoods such as compact courtyard homes, preservation and direct assistance of existing affordable housing, and the addition of new mixed-use and multifamily residential projects in the CO and PBZ zoning districts.

Mercer Island has adopted Town Center Development and Design Standards, which implements the Land Use and Housing vision of increased multifamily development in the Town Center. However, relatively high land costs and high construction costs in the Town Center make it more difficult to build housing affordable to households earning less than median income. Mercer Island may need to promote development of affordable housing by providing additional incentives or direct assistance.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Mercer Island's housing stock grew by over 40% as the last major tracts of undeveloped land were converted into single family neighborhoods. Between 1980 and 2000, Mercer Island saw only a 13% increase in housing units. Current development patterns have shifted away from large subdivisions towards “infilling” on undeveloped lots within existing neighborhoods. During this same period of growth, the average household size has consistently declined—from 3.22 persons per household in 1980, to 2.58 in 2000. Mercer Island's 1980–2000 population change showed a total increase of about 2%.

A major challenge presented by Growth Management is for Mercer Island to continue to provide housing for all economic segments of the population. Given the trend of land and housing values rising faster than income, some segments of the population are finding it harder to remain in the community. These include young adults, the elderly, single parents, and people with special needs. In 2000, the Island's housing consisted of 4%...
low income and 6% moderate income units for a total of 817 affordable units, compared to 1990 when the Island’s housing included 1,183 affordable units.

One reason for this net loss of affordable units comes from a change in relative affordability in the Shorewood Apartments. Shorewood Apartments once accounted for a large percentage of the Island’s affordable units. Loss of any existing affordable housing has a great impact on this limited resource. The City should actively work to preserve existing affordability, as seen in the successful preservation of the Ellsworth Senior Apartments.

The Town Center goals include a vision of new multifamily developments and mixed uses. Providing housing in commercial areas is essential to meet new housing unit goals. Mixed neighborhoods of residential/commercial will enhance the vitality of these areas and provide a pedestrian orientation and support for transit. The Town Center Development and Design standards seek to implement the policies established in the Land Use Element of this Comprehensive Plan.

A major challenge presented by the Growth Management Act and the Countywide Planning Policies is for Mercer Island to continue to provide housing for all economic segments of the population. Given the trend of land and housing values rising faster than income, some segments of the population are finding it harder to remain in the community. These include young adults, the elderly, single parents, and people with special needs.

While it is not likely that density or zoning will change in the single family neighborhoods, housing opportunities can be established there by allowing innovative housing types, including accessory housing units to be incorporated into residences through the addition of accessory dwelling units. Another way to create new housing opportunities is to enable development of innovative housing and smaller single family housing types on vacant or underutilized properties such as compact courtyard homes as a demonstration project. These units should be subject to strict guidelines that protect the character of the neighborhood.

Accessory units can provide affordable housing and have the added benefit of helping those on a limited income remain in their homes. The City considered a cottage housing project on a city-owned surplus lot on First Hill in 2008 but decided to sell the property to a home developer instead, who built conventional single family homes on the site. Nevertheless, the possibility of a demonstration project should be considered as a way to create new housing opportunities serving smaller households on the island.

Jobs/Housing Balance - Regional Context

Until recently the Eastside cities primarily acted as bedroom communities -- providing housing for people who traveled to Seattle and elsewhere in the region for work. This trend has changed dramatically as the Eastside has attracted large and small businesses and significantly increased its employment base. An increased job sector brings economic vitality and demand for
More and more, Eastside jurisdictions are faced with balancing the need for jobs with the need for appropriate housing for the persons filling those jobs. The balance is referred to as a jobs/housing balance.

The Needs Analysis Supplement shows that East King County’s jobs-housing ratio has increased from well below 1.0 in 1970 to 1.3 in 2006. While Mercer Island’s ratio has also increased during this period, it remains below 1.0, indicating that the supply of housing on the island exceeds demand generated by employment. Anticipated growth in Mercer Island through the year 2031 would slightly reduce its jobs-housing ratio, while the East King County ratio would continue to increase.

Certain employment-related information about Mercer Island’s work force could have housing implications. The community’s employment mix is somewhat unusual compared to other cities its size in King County. In 2012, 20% of its workforce works in finance, insurance, or real estate (FIRE), the highest concentration of any EKC city. Nevertheless, the average private-sector wage in Mercer Island in 2010 was 67% of that across all East King County cities, mainly because nearly half of the community’s occupations are lower-paying, service-sector jobs. A household at the average Services wage on the Island ($39,722) would be able to afford housing costs of $993 per month.

In 1990 Mercer Island had approximately 4,000 more housing units than demanded by the number of workers within the City limits. Unlike most other Eastside cities, Mercer Island has a housing to jobs surplus. In 2000, that housing to jobs surplus was less, about 3,600 more housing units than demanded by the number of workers within the City limits. Projections show that in 2022, housing growth should be slightly greater than job growth in Mercer Island, producing a 4,500 unit housing to jobs surplus. Although Mercer Island will continue to act as a bedroom community, it is important to recognize that the City will be impacted by the housing to jobs demand created by other Eastside cities and Seattle. The greatest issue facing Mercer Island may be providing housing opportunities affordable to local employees and responding to some of the housing demand created by regional trends.

GOAL 2: Provide a variety of housing types and densities to address the current and future needs of all Mercer Island residents.

2.1 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.

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

2.3 In order to increase the supply of housing and the diversity of housing the City should emphasize housing opportunities, including mixed-use development, affordable housing, and special needs housing, in the Town Center.

2.4 Encourage residential development in mixed use zones, through regulatory tools, infrastructure improvements and incentives. Track residential
development over time to ensure policies are effective.

2.5 Use the addition of housing in the Town Center, PBZ and CO zones to create new, vibrant neighborhoods that complement the character of existing development. Consider expanding the City's recent Code revision allowing Retirement Homes in the CO Zone to allow other appropriate multifamily uses, maintaining compatibility with specific development conditions allowing additional types of multifamily housing in the CO zone.

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

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

2.8 Promote the continued use of existing affordable apartments as a community asset which provides a substantial portion of affordable housing.

2.9. Strive to meet future affordable housing goals as dictated by GMA and King County (GMPC). Based on a 2001 – 2022 planning target of 1,437 new units:

- 344 units would be needed for those families with incomes under 50% of County median income (24% of new units)
- 244 units would be needed for those with incomes between 50 and 80% of County median income (17% of new units).

Through a mix of new construction and the preservation of existing units, strive to meet Mercer Island’s proportionate amount of the countywide need for housing affordable to households with moderate, low, and very low incomes, including those with special needs.
V. HOUSING OPTIONS

Housing Options

As previously noted, Mercer Island's population is expected to increase by as much as 19% over the next 20 years through 2031, depending on market factors and other conditions; perhaps more important are demographic and economic changes occurring in our community. The population of adults age 65 and over, accounting for over 19% of Mercer Island's 2000-2010 population will age and may have increased mobility limitations or health care needs; and some people with mental and physical disabilities who were formally housed in institutions may wish to return to their community as the trend of closing institutions continues. In 2010, 810% of the Island's population, 2,280 persons including nearly 27% of the senior population, were reported as disabled.

Relative to King County with 15% disabled population and other Eastside cities that average 12.5% disabled population, Mercer Island has proportionately fewer persons with special needs. One reason for this may be the lack of appropriate housing options. Mercer Island can increase the opportunity for more diverse housing options by providing on-going housing services funding or other resources for developing housing. In addition, the City can continue to evaluate its land use regulations to assure that housing can be constructed which responds to the demographic changes and special housing needs within Mercer Island.

It is imperative that the community avoid displacing its current residents because of a lack of appropriate housing types. Adult children and young adults have little "starter housing" in which to build equity. Many residents are finding it difficult to move from their large home to a smaller home and remain in the community due to the local condo market being mostly "high-end". Single parent families have difficulty maintaining the family residence, and must leave the Island to find affordable housing. A substantial amount of the Island workforce cannot afford housing in this community.

Two currently underserved housing markets include: a) existing Mercer Island homeowners who wish to move to a smaller home while remaining in the community; and, b) young Mercer Islanders wishing to begin home ownership in the community where they grew up. The City should provide a mechanism to allow for a "turnover" of existing single family homeowners to new, and perhaps, younger homeowners and ways to increase the variety of ownership opportunities for young families.

The Island has a need for more diverse housing types. These can be encouraged by several means. Density bonuses, flexible parking and development standards, or reduced development regulations or fees, might be allowed in exchange for the provisions of affordability or other public benefit. Alternative zoning for smaller lots, cluster housing, compact courtyard homes and townhouses should be considered. The
County requires that a minimum density be set for residential zones. Proposed
Identified Comprehensive Plan alternatives to provide greater housing options and
affordability should be further examined in the City’s Housing Strategy and Work Plan,
and updates to the City’s land use code. This Comprehensive Plan is a twenty year
planning document, and these alternatives should be included in future review.

The private market is providing rental housing for those at greater than 80% of
median income and ownership housing for those at greater than median income. It is
not providing units at the low and
low/moderate income levels. Special needs
housing units are not being provided either.

The planning and provision of housing for all
economic segments of a community is a
complex issue requiring the cooperation of a
wide range of governments, organizations,
and institutions. In order to best serve the
needs of its residents, the City should
explore all possible means for cooperating at
a regional level to address its housing needs.
Adequate housing, for all economic
segments of the population, is a basic need
of King County’s residents and an issue of
countywide concern. Increasingly, city
government is seen as a key player in
addressing the housing needs of the
community, especially in terms of low and
moderate income families. The Growth
Management Act requires communities to
plan for housing for all economic segments
of the community. Two key tools in this
effort are local land use regulations and the
local regulatory process.

Though there is increased local
responsibility, housing needs and solutions
cross between neighboring cities. If all

Local Resources for Housing

Local resources can be a critical part of
developing or preserving affordable housing.
This is especially true in housing for
individuals and families who can not afford
housing created through the private market.
Local resources are often required as a
match for other public (county, state,
federal) and private funding sources, and
therefore work to leverage a significant
amount of funding into Mercer Island and
the region that would otherwise not be
available. Local resources go beyond just
granted or loaned funds -- credit
enhancements, City bonding, and donated
land are all creative ways to support low
cost housing developments. Surplus public
land is often cited as one of the key resources local government can use to encourage affordable housing.

Special Needs Housing / Fair Housing

Some members in a community may have special housing needs due to physical or mental disabilities, health, or other circumstances. Special needs housing can be provided in a variety of structures -- single family homes, multifamily dwellings, and/or institutional settings. Supportive services are typically provided on site by government or non-profit agencies or the private sector.

The provision of housing and services for the most needy residents is a regional problem whose solution typically transcends the boundaries of individual jurisdictions.

GOAL 3: Support the adequate preservation, improvement, and development of housing for people of all economic segments.

Affordable Housing Policies

3.1 Work cooperatively with King County, “A Regional Coalition for Housing”, (ARCH) and other Eastside jurisdictions to assess the need for and to create affordable housing.

3.2 Continue membership in ARCH or similar programs to assist in the provision of affordable housing on the Eastside.

3.3 City housing goals and policies should be coordinated with regional growth, transit and employment policies.

3.4 Work cooperatively with and support efforts of private and not-for-profit developers, and social and health service agencies to address local housing needs.

3.5 Work to increase the base of both public and private dollars available on a regional level for affordable housing especially housing affordable to very low income households. (See Appendix G – Mercer Island Human Services Strategic Plan 1999 – 2000)

3.6 Consider supporting housing legislation at the county, state and federal levels which would promote the goals and policies of the Housing Element.

3.7 Continue to explore ways to reform regulations that would either provide incentives or reduce the cost to produce affordable housing.

Local Resources Policies

3.8 Use local resources to leverage other public and private funding when possible to build or preserve affordable housing on Mercer Island and in other Eastside cities, including housing for very low income households. Use local resources to leverage other public and private funding when possible to build or preserve affordable housing that will serve Mercer Island residents.
including very low income households.

3.9 Consider using regulatory and financial incentives in the Town Center and PBZ/CO districts such as density bonuses, fee waivers, and property tax reductions to encourage residential development for a range of household types and income levels.

3.10 Provide incentives for first-time and more affordable ownership housing opportunities to meet local needs, such as condominiums and compact courtyard homes.

3.11 Consider allowing the development of one innovative housing project, e.g. compact courtyard housing, attached single family housing or smaller lot housing, to examine the feasibility and desirability of additional housing options to address the changing demographics on Mercer Island. The demonstration project should include smaller single family units, common open space and other amenities, and be subject to strict design review. Following completion of the project, the City will engage in a policy discussion concerning extension of similar forms of housing to additional single family areas.

Adopt an interim ordinance enabling a demonstration project that would allow the development of one innovative housing project, e.g. compact courtyard housing, attached single family housing, or smaller lot housing, in a single family neighborhood to examine the feasibility and desirability of allowing additional housing options to address the changing demographics on Mercer Island. Such project should include smaller single family units, at slightly higher densities, which include common open space and other amenities, and are subject to strict design review. Following successful completion of a demonstration project, the City will engage in a policy discussion concerning extension of similar forms of housing to additional single family areas.

3.12 Consider establishing a means to provide non-cash subsidies such as credit enhancements and City bonding to support development of affordable housing.

3.13 If City-owned property is no longer required for its purposes, it shall be evaluated for its suitability for affordable housing.

3.14 Waive, defer, or reduce building, planning, or mitigation fees in exchange for a contractual commitment to affordable housing.

3.15 Continue to provide Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for housing projects which serve low and moderate income households.

3.16 Housing developed or preserved using local public resources shall be maintained as affordable for the longest term possible.
3.17 Encourage self-help and volunteer programs which provide housing rehabilitation and development.

3.18 Support housing options, programs and services that allow seniors to stay in their homes or neighborhoods. Promote awareness of Universal Design improvements that increase housing accessibility.

3.19 Encourage energy efficiency and other measures of sustainability in new and preserved housing.

Special Needs / Fair Housing Policies

3.2018 Mercer Island shall periodically review and revise policies and regulations to assure the Zoning Code meets the requirements of the Federal Fair Housing Act and the State of Washington Fair Housing Law to provide equal access for people with special needs and recognized protected classes (race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status, disability).

3.219 Zoning should provide appropriate opportunities for special needs housing. Support should be given to organizations that offer services and facilities to those who have special housing needs.

3.220 Support and plan for special needs housing using federal or state aid and private resources.

3.231 Encourage development of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing with appropriate on site services for special needs populations.

3.242 Identify regulatory methods and coordinated assistance for improving housing opportunities for frail elderly and other special needs populations in Mercer Island.
VII. IMPLEMENTATION/TRACKING

Housing Strategies

The City acknowledges that goals alone will not increase the production of housing. The City must use its regulatory powers and resources to encourage future development of housing that meets all of the community’s needs, programs and services. An organized strategic plan and work program, adopted by the City Council, provides the direction needed to determine which strategies will work most effectively in Mercer Island. A strategy plan provides Mercer Island with more adequate time to evaluate each strategy, thereby, increasing the likelihood of adopting policies and regulations that will be effective in Mercer Island.

It is important to evaluate and track the progress made by individual City actions. A wide array of information could be potentially collected for a data base, with key information presented in a bi-annual periodic report to the Council. To the extent possible, existing information should be used (e.g. Central Puget Sound Real Estate Research Report). Information that could be relevant for the data base includes:

- Number and types of residential building/demolition permits;
- Number and types of housing units assisted through public assistance;
- Surveys on market rents and home prices;
- Vacancy rates;
- Conversion of apartments to condominiums;
- Progress on the City’s Housing Work Program, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of new programs;
- Tracking projects that will have expiring federal subsidies.

It may also be useful to try to develop some indicators that can help measure the success of the city to meet its housing needs. Examples might include vacancy rates; changes in rents/housing prices relative to changes in income; increase in housing relative to increases in employment; level of demand for homeless shelters.

The housing data base prepared by staff should be done in cooperation with efforts to monitor housing development throughout the County as called for in the Countywide Affordable Housing Policies, Housing Technical Appendix of the King County Countywide Planning Policies. This includes both defining what information should be collected countywide, and providing the requested information on an annual basis. The City’s bi-annual periodic Housing Strategy and Work Plan report should include the information requested by the County. Coordinating this work is currently included in ARCH’s work program, and should continue to be part of its work program in the future.

GOAL 4: Adopt and implement specific strategies designed to achieve the housing goals outlined in this Housing Element. Continue to monitor how well Mercer Island resident’s housing needs are being met.
Implementation Policies

4.1 Adopt a housing "Strategy Plan and Work Program," at least every five years, which identifies specific housing strategies that will be considered in order to address the city's housing needs and goals. Every five years, adopt a Strategy Plan and Work Program identifying strategies and implementation measures that increase the City’s achievement of housing goals, including the provision of adequate affordable housing.

4.2 The City shall track production and demolition of housing on an ongoing basis. This information shall be maintained in a housing database. Track key indicators of housing supply, affordability and diversity. Key indicators include but are not limited to housing production, demolition, conversion and rezones, in addition to units affordable to moderate, low and very low income households.

4.3 The City of Mercer Island shall cooperate with Countywide regional efforts to do an ongoing analysis of the regional housing market.

4.4 Periodically review land use regulations to assure that regulations and permit processing requirements are reasonable.

4.5 At least once every two years, the City shall evaluate the achievements of its housing goals and policies and present the findings to the City Council. This evaluation will be done in cooperation with Countywide evaluations done by the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC), or its successor organization, and coordinated with the development of the biannual budget.
Transportation
TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

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TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

The intent of the Transportation Element is to establish, provide, program, policies, and projects to guide the development of Mercer Island transportation system in support of the City’s vision for the future. The policies are designed to guide the actions of both the City, as well as private the decisions related to individual developments.

The Transportation Element provides an inventory of Mercer Island’s existing transportation system and includes all modes of travel — auto, truck, bicycle, bus, and pedestrian. In addition, a section focuses on the special transportation needs of the Town Center.

Objectives of the Transportation Element

The construction of I-90 in the late 1980’s created many opportunities for changes to the Island’s road network. In 1985, Entrance Engineers compiled a report on the impact of I-90 on the City’s transportation system. Most recently in 2004, Perteet Engineering provided analysis of existing and future vehicle traffic and level of service (LOS) standards.

Based on this analysis, the City of Mercer Island has created three main objectives within its Transportation Element:

- To develop multi-modal goals, policies, programs and projects which support implementation of the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan,
- To define policies and projects that encourage the safe and efficient and effective development of the transportation system, and
- To comply with legislative requirements for multi-modal transportation planning.

Washington State’s 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA) outlined specific requirements for the Transportation Element of a city’s comprehensive plan. It calls for a balanced approach to land use and transportation planning to ensure that a city’s transportation system can support expected growth and development. In addition, it mandates that capital facilities funds be adequate to pay for any necessary improvements to the transportation system. Finally, the city must adopt specific standards for the acceptable levels of congestion on its streets; these standards are called level of service (LOS) standards.

At the federal level, the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21 as it is commonly called) and subsequent updates to this law transportation funds have been
focused attention on the preservation and improvement of existing transportation facilities and funding on creating a multi-modal approach to transportation planning. For Mercer Island, transportation projects combining improvements for auto, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians have a much greater chance of receiving state and federal gas tax funds than those that focus solely on widening the road to carry more single occupancy vehicles.

Other legislative requirements addressed by the Transportation Element include the King County 2012 Countywide Planning Policies, the 1991 Commute Trip Reduction Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the 1990 federal Clean Air Act Amendments. Each of these laws emphasizes closer coordination between a jurisdiction’s land use planning and its approach to transportation planning.

**Transportation Today**

Most of Mercer Island’s streets are two lane residential streets with low to moderate volumes of traffic. Island Crest Way, a north-south arterial which runs the length of the island, is an exception to this rule because it is a principal feeder route to I-90. East and West Mercer Way provide the island with two connections to I-90 as well. SE 40th Street and Gallagher Hill Road are also major traffic carriers from the north-central portion of the island. In addition to I-90, the remaining street system is made up of arterial streets, the local street network which provides access to other streets and private residences and properties. Transit service on the island centers on the Park and Ride lot in the I-90 corridor, and fixed route service which travels along Island Crest Way.

Mercer Island has over 56 miles of off-road, trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes for non-motorized travel. A regional trail runs across the north end of the Island along the I-90 corridor providing a convenient connection to Seattle and Bellevue for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Upcoming Changes**

Regional changes to the transportation system will likely change how Mercer Island residents travel and live. The I-90 center reversible lanes will be replaced by the Sound Transit East Link light rail line, slated for completion in 2023. A new light rail station at the Town Center will provide access to destinations in Seattle, Bellevue and Redmond. In addition, carpools and other high occupancy vehicles (HOV) will no longer travel on the center reversible lanes, but will instead access new dedicated HOV lanes. Finally, the possibility of I-90 tolling may change regional travel patterns and potentially change the travel behavior of Mercer Island residents. The current park and ride at North Mercer Way is frequently at or near capacity, and parking demand will increase when the center HOV lane is closed and with Light Rail. The City should address the overall parking for Mercer Island citizens, the total funding costs, and work with other agencies.

Commented [JD1]: Moved up in Section 1

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In sum, these regional changes will likely affect travel and land use development patterns, particularly for the north end of the Island. The changes will also provide new opportunities for the island and will support the vision and development of the Town Center.

Land Use Assumptions – The Comprehensive Plan

Mercer Island’s Comprehensive Plan, of which the Transportation Element is a part, must be internally consistent. This means that the various requirements in each element must not contradict one another. Of particular importance is the relationship between the Transportation Element and the Land Use Element.

Local transportation projections used in this element are based on Mercer Island growth targets for housing and employment, regional traffic forecasts by the Puget Sound Regional Council, and local traffic counts and specialized transportation modeling. Within the 2001/2006 to 2022/2035 planning period, housing on Mercer Island is expected to increase by 1,437 to 2,320 new housing units. 800 and 1,160 new jobs are expected to be generated on the Island during this 20-year period.

Mercer Island is a largely residential community bisected by Interstate 90, one of the most heavily traveled freeway corridors in Washington State. Mercer Island has managed to avoid most of the congestion and adverse traffic impacts seen in other suburban cities in the Seattle area. Outside the I-90 corridor and portions of Island Crest Way and the Town Center, nearly all of Mercer Island’s streets are two-lane, residential streets with homes on one or both sides. Congestion problems on the island are largely limited to the principal routes to the I-90 freeway.

The Land Use Element defines Mercer Island’s strategy for managing future growth and physical land development for the next 20 years. Proposed transportation improvements, policies and programs are consistent with the vision of the Land Use Element. The Land Use vision emphasizes continued reinvestment and redevelopment of the Town Center to create a mixed-use pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented environment. Most of the forecasted housing units needed to accommodate additional population and jobs will be located in and around the downtown core. Outside of the Town Center, the lower density residential nature of the remainder of the island will be maintained with low forecasted changes in household growth.

Transportation Today

Most of Mercer Island’s streets are two lane residential streets with low to moderate volumes of traffic. Island Crest Way, a north-south arterial which runs the length of the island, is an exception to this rule because it is a principal feeder route to I-90. East/West Mercer Way rings the island and provides two connections with I-90 as.
well. SE 40th Street and Gallagher Hill Road are also major traffic carriers from the north-central portion of the island to I-90. The remaining street system is made up of a local street network which provides access to other streets and private residences and properties. Transit service on the Island centers on the Park and Ride lots in the I-90 corridor, and fixed route service which travels along Island Crest Way.

Mercer Island has over 56 miles of off-road, trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes for non-motorized travel. A regional trail runs across the north end of the Island along the I-90 corridor providing a convenient connection to Seattle and Bellevue for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Town Center Plan**

The Town Center Plan for Mercer Island was developed in 1994 through a cooperative effort of City staff, consultants and the Town Center Streets Citizens Design Task Force. Specific objectives include:

- Enhancing access to existing and future development in the Town Center while, at the same time, discouraging through traffic from penetrating the Town Center core.

- Emphasizing pedestrian, transit and bicycle access, safety and mobility throughout the Town Center, to reduce the need for vehicular travel within the downtown area.

- Creating a pedestrian-friendly environment along 78th Avenue SE which will encourage pedestrian-oriented retail development between SE 27th and SE 29th Streets.

The plan for a Sound Transit Link Light Rail station located on the I-90 corridor between 77th Avenue SE and 80th Avenue SE will continue to focus multimodal development and population growth within the Town Center area.

The form and character of the development that has occurred within the Mercer Island Town Center reflects community vision and planning of the last twenty years.
II. TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND POLICIES

The following transportation goals and policies have been developed to guide transportation decisions for Mercer Island. They have been crafted to be consistent with all other Comprehensive Plan elements, including most importantly, the Land Use Element. They also serve to further articulate and implement the City Council’s vision for the future.

The goals and policies were also developed with the recognition that past transportation and land use decisions largely define the existing transportation system as well as most of the issues and choices the community will face in the future. Following the Goals and Policies are sections on the Existing Transportation System and Future Conditions and Financial Analysis. The Goals and Policies were written with the constraints, data and opportunities of those sections in mind.

Goals and Policies

GOAL 1: To encourage the most efficient use of the transportation system through effective management of transportation demand and the transportation system.

1.1 The City of Mercer Island encourages measures to reduce vehicular trips consistent with the city’s adopted Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Plan. Encourage measures to reduce vehicular trips using Transportation Demand Management strategies such as preferential parking for carpool/vanpool, alternative work hours, bicycle parking, and distribution of information and promotion of non-motorized travel, transit and ridesharing options.

1.2 The City of Mercer Island encourages businesses and residential areas to explore opportunities for shared parking and other parking management strategies.

1.3 The City of Mercer Island employs transportation system management (TSM) techniques to improve the efficient operation of the transportation system including, but not limited to: traffic through and turn lanes, management of street parking, signals and other traffic control measures.

GOAL 2: To receive the maximum value and utility from the City’s investments in the transportation system.
2.1 The City of Mercer Island places a high priority for transportation expenditures on maintaining the existing transportation facilities and the public rights of way.

2.2 The City of Mercer Island will continue to prioritize its expenditures in the transportation system recognizing the need to maintain existing transportation assets, meet adopted service level goals, and emphasize continued investments in non-motorized transportation facilities.

2.3 The City of Mercer Island will look for opportunities for private sector participation in the provision, operation and maintenance of the transportation system.

2.4 The City of Mercer Island will coordinate street improvement projects with utilities, developers, neighborhoods, and other parties in order to minimize roadway disruptions and maintain pavement integrity.

2.5 Transportation investments are expected to be financed primarily from local sources. However, the City of Mercer Island will explore all available sources for transportation funding, including grants, impact fees and other local options as authorized by the state legislature, if implementation of the adopted land.

2.6 Prioritize transportation investments in the Town Center that promote mixed-use and compact development and provide multi-modal access to regional transit facilities.

GOAL 3: To Minimize negative transportation impacts on the environment.

3.1 The City of Mercer Island will work to reduce total vehicle miles traveled through implementation of transportation demand management measures and other techniques.

3.2 The City of Mercer Island will use sound design, construction and maintenance methods to minimize negative impacts related to water quality, noise, and neighborhood impacts.

3.3 The City of Mercer Island will work with WSDOT and other agencies to minimize impacts on island facilities and neighborhoods from traffic congestion on regional facilities, implementation of ramp metering on regional facilities, and provision of transit services and facilities.

3.4 The City of Mercer Island will construct transportation improvements with sensitivity to

Commented [G5]: 2.6 is a new policy identified by MPP-T-11. The PSRC certification process is based on the conformity with the GMA, and consistency with the Multicounty-wide Planning Policies and regional Transportation Plan (Vision 2040).

Commented [D6]: Redundant with Policy 1.1
GOAL 4: To Provide transportation choices for travelers through the provision of a complete range of transportation facilities, and services.

4.1 The City of Mercer Island will work with King County Metro during the update of its Six-Year Plan; the City will also work with Sound Transit, and other transit providers during the creation and amendment of their long range system plans to develop ensure adequate transit services to meet the needs of the island, including:
- maintain existing and encourage new public transit service on the Island;
- provide maintain convenient transit connections to regional activity centers, including the Seattle CBD, Bellevue, the University of Washington and other centers;
- provide convenient transit service for travel on Mercer Island and enhance connections to regional transit stations including the proposed Link light rail station; and
- investigate potential new services including demand responsive transit for the general public, subscription bus, or school buses on a space available basis.

4.2 The City of Mercer Island will work to provide and encourage non-motorized travel modes consistent with the Comprehensive Park, and Recreation, Open Space, Arts Plan and Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan.

4.3 The City of Mercer Island will support opportunities to facilitate transfers between different travel modes through strategies such as:
- provision of providing small park and ride facilities throughout the island; and;
- improving pedestrian access to transit with on and off road pedestrian improvements.

4.4 The City of Mercer Island will investigate opportunities for constructing and financing self-supporting park and ride lots for Mercer Island residents only.

4.5 The City will investigate opportunities for use of innovative methods for pedestrians crossing streets, including use of colored and textured pavements within the City.

4.6 The City will encourage site and building design that promotes pedestrian activity and the use of transit and...
ridesharing opportunities, and the use of transit.

4.7 4.6 The City will Promote the development of pedestrian linkages between public and private development and transit in the Town Center District.

4.7 Promote the mobility of people and goods through a multi-modal transportation system consistent with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan.

GOAL 5: To fully Comply with local, regional, state and federal requirements related to transportation.

5.1 The City of Mercer Island will meet the requirements of the Growth Management Act.

5.2 The City of Mercer Island will Comply with the requirements of the federal and state Clean Air Acts, and will work with other jurisdictions in the Puget Sound region to achieve conformance with the State Implementation Plan.

5.3 The City of Mercer Island will Meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and apply these standards to development of the transportation system.

5.4 The City of Mercer Island complies Comply with the Commute Trip Reduction requirements of the State through the adoption and continued implementation of their CTR plan (See Appendix A).

5.5 The City of Mercer Island will Assist regional agencies in the revisions and implementation of the Destination 2030 plan Transportation 2040 (PSRC), the Regional Transit Plan, and the WSDOT Highway System Plan, and the 2007-2026 Washington Transportation Plan and subsequent versions of these documents.

5.6 The City of Mercer Island will Work with the participants of the Eastside Transportation Partnership (ETP) to coordinate transportation planning for the Eastside subarea.

5.7 Comply with state initiatives and directives related to climate change and greenhouse gas reduction. Identify implementable actions that improve air quality, reduce air pollutants and promote clean transportation technologies.

GOAL 6: To Ensure coordination between transportation and land use decisions and development.

6.1 The City of Mercer Island will strive to Ensure compatibility between transportation facilities and services and adjacent land uses, evaluating aspects such as:
- potential impacts of transportation on adjacent land use;
• potential impacts on the operation of land development and activities on transportation facilities caused by activities on adjacent land facilities and services; and
• need for buffering and/or landscaping alongside transportation facilities.

6.2 The City of Mercer Island will develop strategies to manage property access along arterial streets in order to preserve their transportation function.

6.3 To the extent possible the City of Mercer Island will strive to route traffic around neighborhoods so as to minimize traffic impacts and foster a "pedestrian friendly" environment.

6.4 In the project development review process, the City of Mercer Island will evaluate transportation implications including:
• congestion and level of service;
• connectivity of transportation facilities and services from a system perspective;
• transit requirements for travelers and for transit operators; and
• non-motorized facilities and needs for travel by non-motorized travel modes; and
• potential density bonuses in return for inclusion of transit supportive actions.

6.5 Ensure that transportation improvements, strategies and actions needed to serve new developments shall be in place at the time new development occurs or be financially committed and scheduled for completion within six years.

6.6 As part of a project’s SEPA review, the City shall review the project’s impact on transportation and may require mitigation of on-site and off-site transportation impacts. The City shall mitigate cumulative impacts of SEPA-exempt projects through implementation of the Transportation Improvement Program.

6.7 The City shall adopt standards and procedures for measuring the transportation impact of a proposed development and for mitigating impacts.

6.8 The City of Mercer Island will participate in the review of development and transportation plans outside the city boundaries that may have an impact on the island and its transportation system, and will consider the effect of the City’s transportation plans on other jurisdictions.
6.9 The City of Mercer Island encourages “Encourage transit friendly”, bicycle and pedestrian principles in the design of projects including:
- locating structures on the site in order to facilitate transit and non-motorized travel modes;
- placing and managing on-site parking so to encourage travel by modes other than single occupant vehicles;
- provision of convenient and attractive facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists; and
- provision of public easements for access and linkages to pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.

6.10 The City recognizes that travel by single occupant vehicle is, and for the foreseeable future may continue to be, the dominant mode of transportation. The City will require adequate parking and other automobile facilities to meet anticipated demand generated by new development.

GOAL 7: To provide a safe, convenient and reliable transportation system for Mercer Island.

7.1 The City of Mercer Island will include in its roadway design standards, requirements for facilities that safely accommodate travel by all travel modes.

7.2 The City of Mercer Island will provide a safe transportation system through maintenance and upkeep of transportation facilities.

7.3 The City of Mercer Island will monitor the condition and performance of the transportation system to compare growth projections with actual conditions, assess the adequacy of transportation facilities and services, and to identify locations where improvements may become necessary.

7.4 The City of Mercer Island will monitor traffic accidents, citizen input/complaints, traffic violations, and traffic growth volumes to identify and prioritize locations for safety improvements.

7.5 Where a need is demonstrated, consider the use of devices, signage, traffic controls, or other strategies to improve the safety of pedestrian crossings.

7.6 The City of Mercer Island will maintain verification the policies, criteria and a process to determine when, and under what conditions, private roads and privately maintained roads in the public right of way or private roads should be accepted for public maintenance and improvement.
7.7 Coordinate with local and regional emergency services to develop priority transportation corridors and develop coordinated strategies to protect and recover from disaster.

GOAL 8: To preserve adequate levels of accessibility between Mercer Island and the rest of the region.

8.1 The I-90 Memorandum of Agreement was amended in 2004. Any future modification to such access for Mercer Island traffic must comply with the terms and conditions of the MOA, as amended, and must properly mitigate the impacts of any reduction in Mercer Island traffic mobility and capacity, as set forth in Resolution 1337.

8.2 The City recognizes I-90 as a highway of statewide significance.

8.3 The City of Mercer Island will work with King County Metro and the Sound Transit to ensure adequate levels of transit service linking Mercer Island to the rest of the region.

8.4 The City of Mercer Island will work with WSDOT, King County Metro, and the Sound Transit to ensure the provision of adequate Park and Ride capacity for island residents.

8.5 The City of Mercer Island will continue to maintain an effective role in regional transportation planning, decisions-making and implementation of transportation system improvements.

GOAL 9: To balance the maintenance of quality island neighborhoods with the needs of the island's transportation system.

9.1 The City of Mercer Island shall use a consistent approach to resolve neighborhood street issues.

9.2 Address parking overflow impacts on neighborhoods caused by major traffic generators such as schools, businesses, parks, and multi-family developments.

9.3 The City of Mercer Island will provide facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists designed in keeping with individual neighborhood characteristics.

9.4 The City of Mercer Island will work with King County Metro to provide public transit vehicles and services that are more in...
scale with the city's neighborhoods and its local road network.

9.5 The City of Mercer Island will maintain comprehensive street classification design guidelines and standards that determine the appropriate function, capacity, and improvement needs for each street/roadway while minimizing construction and neighborhood impacts.

GOAL 10: To maintain acceptable levels of service for transportation facilities and services on Mercer Island.

10.1 The City of Mercer Island establishes Level of Service (LOS) “C” defined shall be a minimum of “D” as stable traffic flow with acceptable delays at intersections as its for the City’s transportation level of service standard required under GMA at arterial street intersections.

10.2 Use the level of service standard to evaluate the performance of the transportation system and guide future system improvements and funding.

10.3 Implement the following strategy when vehicle capacity or funding is insufficient to maintain the LOS standard: (1) seek additional funding for capacity improvements, (2) explore alternative, lower-cost methods to meet level-of-service standards (e.g., transportation demand management program, bicycle corridor development or other strategies), (3) reduce the types or size of development, (4) restrict development approval, and (5) reevaluate the level of service standard to determine how it might be adjusted to meet land use objectives.

10.4 The City of Mercer Island will ensure that its level of service policies are linked to the land use vision and comply with concurrency requirements.

10.5 Revise the Transportation Element if the Land Use and/or Capital Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan are changed to maintain a balanced and consistent plan.

10.6 Monitor the transportation impact of growth in households and employment in relation to the land use assumptions used to forecast traffic growth in the Transportation Element.
GOAL 11: To Establish Ensure parking standards that support the land use policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

11.1 The City of Mercer Island will continue to implement flexible parking requirements for Town Center development based on the type and intensity of the proposed development; the site location, the potential for characteristics; likelihood for parking impacts on the adjacent uses; the opportunities for transit, carpooling or shared parking; and the objective to enhance shared parking; and potential for enhancements to the pedestrian environment in the site design.

11.2 Maintain the current minimum parking requirements of three off-street spaces for single family residences, but may consider future code amendments that, allow for the reduction of one of the spaces, provided that the quality of the environment and the single family neighborhood is maintained.

11.3 The City of Mercer Island may restrict support business development in the downtown area by prioritizing on-street parking spaces in the Town Center for short-term parking, to support business development in the downtown area, and will encourage the development of off-street joint-use parking facilities for long term parking in the Town Center.

GOAL 12: Promote bicycle and pedestrian networks that safely access and link commercial areas, residential areas, schools, and parks within the City.

12.1 Maximize the safety and functionality of the bicycle system by enhancing road shoulders, which are to be distinguished from designated bicycle lanes.

12.2 Implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan, which provides for a safe, coordinated system of bikeways, walkways, and trails, including through bicycle routes, to meet existing and anticipated needs for non-motorized transportation. This Plan should be coordinated with other transportation planning efforts and periodically updated.

12.3 Emphasize non-motorized improvements that provide alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles and ensure that bike transportation remains an important component of community identity.

12.3 Study opportunities for use of innovative methods for pedestrians crossing streets, including use of colored and textured pavements within the City.
III. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM – EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section describes and inventories the current travel patterns and transportation system serving Mercer Island, including land, water and air transportation. Major transportation modes serving Mercer Island include automobiles, non-motorized modes such as walking and biking, and public and school transit.

Travel Patterns - How Mercer Islanders Move About

Mercer Island is predominantly an upper middle class city with relatively high levels of vehicle ownership and personal mobility. Approximately three quarters of the households on Mercer Island have two or more vehicles, while less than three percent of households have no vehicle at all. This high reliance on the automobile is confirmed by commuter trip patterns. When comparing the 2012 American Community Survey (US Census) data with the 2000 US Census, these data show that over 76 percent of Mercer Island residents who commute to work by driving alone has dropped from 76 percent to 71 percent; those who take a bus or carpool to work decreased from 17 percent to 14 percent, and seven percent of island residents who work at home increased from 7 percent to 10 percent. The average travel time to work for Mercer Island residents is 24 minutes, which is similar to below the regional average of 27 minutes.

The most complete source of travel pattern information for the Island is the regional travel model developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). This model estimates existing and future travel patterns based on computer simulations derived from Census data and surveys of trip makers throughout the region. For the 2000 base year (which corresponds to the most recent Census), the number of work trips from Mercer Island to Seattle has decreased from 68 percent in 1990 to 55 percent in 2000. The number of work trip destinations to Eastside and other work sites accounts for 42 percent of all work trips from Mercer Island. The number of Island commuters who work at home has decreased from approximately 10 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 2000. A November 2013 WSDOT Mercer Island Travel Survey found that 55 percent of commute trips originating on the Island traveled west towards Seattle and 45 percent traveled east towards Bellevue.

Roadway Network

According to the 2000 Census, Mercer Island residents own an average of two vehicles per occupied housing unit. Twenty-three percent of Island residents own three or more vehicles. These vehicle ownership figures are slightly higher than the King County average for vehicles per household.
(1.79) and residents with three or more vehicles available per household (21%). The PSRC's travel models also forecast future travel patterns for the year 2030. Although total travel to, from and within Mercer Island is expected to increase by about 20 percent between 2000 and 2030, the major travel patterns described above are expected to remain the same.

The Transportation System—Facilities & Services

1. Land Transportation

Mercer Island is currently served by a variety of land transportation facilities and services. Automobiles, public transit and school transit utilize the island's road network. Pedestrians and bicyclists use trails and paths as well as the road network. This section describes current facilities and services provided for each of these travel modes.

A. Roads

Mercer Island has over 75 miles of public roads. Interstate 90 (I-90) runs east-west across the northern end of Mercer Island, providing the only road and transit connection to the rest of the Puget Sound region. I-90 is a six lane divided highway with an additional two center HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes across the island. On-Access to the I-90 on-ramps and off-ramps to I-90 are provided at East Mercer Way, Island Crest Way, West Mercer Way, 76th Avenue SE, and 77th Avenue SE. On- and off-ramps to the reversible center HOV lanes are provided at 77th and 80th Avenue SE, Island Crest Way, and East Mercer Way.

There are a number of changes occurring to the I-90 corridor in preparation for Sound Transit light rail, scheduled for completion in 2023. These include the addition of westbound and eastbound HOV lanes to the I-90 mainline with ramps providing access to the HOV lanes at

Transportation - 16  PC Recommendation 11-19-2014
80th Avenue SE. The reversible HOV lanes down the center lanes of the I-90 facility will become the dedicated rail corridor for Sound Transit light rail.

On the island, most of the road network is comprised of 2-lane local streets serving the island's residential areas. Arterials, Arterial roadways comprise approximately 25 miles, or one third, of the system. In addition to public roads, there are numerous local streets and private roads serving individual neighborhoods and developments on the island.

Roadways on the island are classified into different categories according to their purpose and physical characteristics. The categories are:

- Principal Arterials carry the highest volumes of traffic and provide the best mobility in the roadway network. They do this by limiting access to adjacent land uses, and having fewer traffic control devices and These roads generally have higher speed limits, higher traffic volumes, and limited access to adjacent land uses.

- Secondary Arterials connect with and augment principal arterials and generally have a higher degree of access to adjacent land, lower traffic volumes and lower travel speeds.

- Collector Arterials provide for movement within neighborhoods, connecting to secondary and principal arterials; they typically have low traffic volumes and carry little through traffic.

- Local Streets provide for direct access to abutting properties and other connecting local streets; they carry low volumes of traffic at low travel speeds and Local streets are usually not intended for through traffic.

Individual streets are assigned classifications based on several criteria, including the type of travel to be served, the role of the street in the overall street network and transportation system, physical characteristics, traffic characteristics, and adjacent land uses. Based on City Staff recommendations, the City Council periodically reviews and updates the street classification system, its criteria and specific street classification designations. Figure 1 shows the street functional classifications.

Figure 1 illustrates the system and its classifications. Figure 2 shows existing roadway conditions features describing the shoulder types and sidewalk locations. Figure 3 shows the number of travel lanes and, posted speed limits, and the location of 12 signalized intersections and four signalized non-motorized crossings, existing traffic volumes on this network. Traffic volume measures are an amalgam of traffic counts taken over an extended period of time. They are a snapshot of traffic volumes that were present when the counts were taken. Current traffic volumes may differ from

Commented [lnb10]: The planned 80th Ave SE I-90 ramp is only for eastbound traffic.

Commented [lnb11]: Signalized intersections are shown on Figures 5 and 6.
those shown here depending upon changes in road configurations elsewhere in the community and/or changes in the public's travel patterns. They should be used only as first indicators of where road deficiencies may be and where further traffic analysis is warranted.
Current Map (to be replaced)  Updated Map
Current Map (to be replaced)  

Updated Map
Level of Service Standard

Level of Service (LOS) is a measurement of the quality of traffic flow and congestion at intersections and roadways. LOS is defined by the amount of delay experienced by vehicles traveling through an intersection or on a roadway. LOS is based on an A-F scale with LOS A representing little or no delay to LOS F representing extreme delay.

Under the Growth Management Act, each local jurisdiction is required to establish a minimum threshold of performance for its arterial roadways. Cities use this standard to identify specific actions to maintain the adopted LOS standard. The City of Mercer Island has established its Level of Service standard as LOS D at intersections of two arterial streets. This standard applies to the operation during either the AM or PM peak periods.

This LOS D standard is consistent with the WSDOT standard for Interstate 90 and its ramp intersections. I-90 is designated as a Highway of Statewide Significance under RCW 47.06.140.

Traffic Operations

For transportation planning purposes, traffic operations are typically analyzed during the busiest hour of the street system, when traffic volumes are at peak levels. On Mercer Island, the peak hour of traffic operations corresponds with the afternoon commute, which typically falls between 4:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon (PM peak hour). Traffic counts were collected at 39 intersections throughout the Island.

Selected counts for the AM peak hour were also collected to provide an understanding of the transportation system during the morning commute, which typically peaks between 7:30 AM and 8:30 AM.

The analysis shows that during the AM and PM peak hour, all intersections operate at LOS D or better for existing 2014 conditions, with two exceptions. The intersection of SE 53rd Place/Island Crest Way operates at LOS F during the morning peak hour and at LOS E during the afternoon peak hour. The intersection of N Mercer Way/77th Avenue SE operates at LOS E during the morning and afternoon peak hours. Figure 5 shows the existing 2014 LOS at key intersections during the morning and afternoon peak hours.

Parking

Prior to the 1994-96 CBD Street Reconstruction Project, there were a total of 230 on-street parking spaces. Most parking in the City is provided by off-street parking lots, along residential access streets, or by on-street spaces in select areas of the Town Center within Mercer Island's Town Center. Upon completion of the Town Center streets reconstruction, on-street parking spaces are projected to decrease to approximately 140. Diagonal parking is permitted on the south side of SE 27th Street, east of 76th Avenue SE, and parallel parking is allowed on portions of the other streets in the downtown.
In 2001, the City implemented a permit parking program for the northernmost streets-on-street parking in the Town Center in response to overflow conditions at the Mercer Island Park and Ride lot. This program preserves selected public on-street parking spaces for Mercer Island resident use, between the hours of 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM, Monday through Friday. All Mercer Island residents are eligible for a Town Center District permit which will allow them to park on Town Center streets during the specified hours.

Another additional permit parking program was developed for residential streets north of the Sound Transit Park and ride lot on North Mercer Way. This program only allows only residents of the area to park on city streets between 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM, weekdays.

Together, these programs reduce overflow parking from the Park and Ride lot on City streets by off island commuters, many of whom travel to their destination via the Mercer Island Park and Ride transit stop.

Outside the Town Center, most parking for non-residential land uses is provided in dedicated off-street parking lots attached to the specific use. Examples are parking lots serving the shopping center at the south end of the island, and those at schools, churches and community centers. Parking is allowed on most residential access streets, or on the adjacent shoulder, and supplements the driveways serving the homes and off-street lots serving multi-family developments.

Overflow parking continues to be an issue in a number of areas, including and without limitations, neighborhoods adjacent to the high school and adjacent to a limited number of multi-family housing developments on the west side of the Town Center.
Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

With an inventory of over 56 miles, Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are a valuable asset for the residents of Mercer Island. These facilities are used for basic transportation, recreation, going to and from schools, and they contribute to an important element to our community’s quality of life—these facilities contribute to our community’s quality of life. In 1996, the City developed a Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan to provide a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The plan focused on encouraging non-motorized travel and improving the safety of routes near the Island’s elementary schools. Of the 47 projects identified in the plan, 38 of the projects were either fully or partially completed during the first 12 years of the plan.

In late 1995, the City Council instructed the Road and Trails Board to review the 1990 Comprehensive Plan and develop a new plan that is consistent with the City of Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan. Over the next year, the Board held several public meetings and open houses to gather input on what residents wanted. A 2010 update to the plan included vision and guiding principles, goals and policies, an existing and future network, a list of completed projects, revised facility design standards, and a prioritized list of projects. The plan emphasizes further development of safe routes to schools, completion of missing connections, and application of design guidelines.

A regional trail runs across the north end of the Island along the I-90 corridor providing a convenient connection to Seattle and Bellevue for pedestrians and bicyclists. The majority of streets in the Town Center include sidewalks. In addition, there are sidewalks near schools and select streets. Throughout the island, there are paved and unpaved shoulders and multiuse trails that provide for pedestrian mobility.

The bicycle network is made up of designated bicycle facilities including bicycle lanes and sharrows, and shared non-motorized facilities including shared use pathways, off-road trails, and paved shoulder areas. Figure 25 shows the pedestrian and primary bicycle facilities on the island as identified by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan.

In preparing the plan, the Road and Trails Board worked to balance the often conflicting priorities of safety, use, the environment, local character, and cost. The trade-offs were guided by several principles:

- Arterial corridors are shared-use assets.
- Incremental solutions are preferred.
- Appropriate facilities balance our community values, expected uses, and the site.
- The Mercer Ways are a unique and valuable community asset.
- Maintenance, parking, and speed control policies affect the use of these facilities.

The cost of construction, reconstruction, and ongoing maintenance need to be balanced with the perceived benefit of each project.
On August 5, 1996 the City Council adopted the Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities Plan. With the adoption of the plan, the Council dissolved the Road and Trails Board. The role the Board used to plan in the City was subsequently divided between the Council and staff.

The Plan guides staff and Council in decision making - specifically in relation to the Capital Facilities Element of the City of Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan.

The City identified the development of roadside shoulders on East, West and North Mercer Ways as a priority project in the 2005—2010 Six Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). These and other transportation project funding decisions are made consistent with City policy goals. Projects are coordinated with other capital projects to gain with greatest effect.

Copies of the adopted 20-year Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities Plan are available at City Hall.

**Public Transportation**

The King County Department of Metropolitan Services (Metro) and the regional transit agency Sound Transit provide public transportation services for Mercer Island and throughout King County. Metro provides three major types of service offered on the island: local fixed route service, regional express service, and custom bus service. and Access service.

Local fixed route service operates on the arterial roadway system, and provides public transit service for most of the island, connecting residential and activity areas. Generally, service is provided on 30 minute headways during the peak hour and on one hour headways midday. Service headways (i.e., the time between buses on a route) and frequent stops along the routes result in relatively slow travel times compared to private autos.

Transit passengers tend to be "transit dependent" travelers, such as those too young to drive, people unable to drive, or those who do not have access to a private vehicle.

Regional Express service, which also operates on fixed routes, is oriented toward peak hour commuter trips between Mercer Island and major employment and activity centers off the island. Express service is designed to pick up riders at central collection areas such as park and ride lots, and stop less frequently along the route to major destinations. Express service is provided west and east along I-90 into Seattle and Bellevue, and is provided by King County Metro and Sound Transit.

Custom bus service includes specially designed routes to serve specific travel markets, such as major employers, private schools, or other special destinations. These services are typically provided during peak commute hours, and operate on fixed routes with limited stops. At least two Custom bus routes are currently provided; one to the Jewish Day School. 

Commented [lnb15]: Updated to reflect changes in public transit routes on Mercer Island.
Bellevue
Mercer Island Park and another
to Ride and Lakeside School and
University Prep in Seattle.

Access Service provides door-to-door
transportation to elderly and special
needs populations who have limited
ability to use public transit. Access
covers trips within the King County
METRO transit service area.

Figure 4 shows the current transit
routes serving the island. In September
2014, King County Metro reduced bus
service throughout its service area due
to revenue shortfalls. On Mercer Island,
the changes reduced the number of
routes from six to two. Other service
reductions have affected Mercer Island
Park and Ride, which was reduced
from ten routes to three King County (201,
204 and 216), and two Sound Transit
(550 and 554) routes. Some of the
remaining routes were provided with
expanded service hours.

Route 201 serves the western portion of
Mercer Island providing service from
the Mercer Island Park and Ride lot,
along 78th Avenue SE, West Mercer
Way, East Mercer Way, SE 70th Place,
and SE 68th Street to Mercer Village
Center. This route operates only on
weekdays and has only two morning
and one afternoon trips.

Route 204 provides service between the
Mercer Island Park and Ride lot and the
Mercer Village Center. This route travels
on 78th Avenue SE, SE 40th Street, 86th
Avenue SE, Island Crest Way, and SE
68th Street to the Mercer Village
Center. The route operates every 30-60
minutes from approximately 6:00 AM to
6:00 PM on weekdays.

Park and Ride

The Mercer Island Park and Ride is
located north of I-90 on N Mercer Way
near Mercer Island’s Town Center. The
Park and Ride has 447 spaces and is
served by Metro and Sound Transit
buses.

The existing Mercer Island Park and
Ride, with 257 spaces, is located north
of I-90 in downtown Mercer Island, and
is the largest park and ride on the
island. It is owned and operated by the
Washington State Department of
Transportation (WSDOT).

Sound Transit proposes to replace the
existing 257-vehicle surface parking lot
with a two-story, partially below
ground, 450-space parking structure, an
increase of 193 spaces. The adjacent
bus pull-out areas on both the north
and south sides of North Mercer Way
will be lengthened, the adjacent
sidewalks widened and transit shelters
installed to improve waiting and
boarding areas for transit users.
Construction is expected to begin in
2006.

Based on a ridership survey performed
by Metro Transit in 2001, this park and
ride is filled to capacity on a daily basis
before 8:00am and is used by both
Mercer Island residents (approximately
43%) and commuters who reside east of
Mercer Island (approximately 57%).

Fourth Quarter 2013 Park and Ride
Utilization Report prepared by King

Commented [Inb16]: The transit text and figure are likely to change in late Winter 2015, after all cuts to Metro have gone through and pending potential service improvements by the City.

Commented [Inb17]: Updated to reflect changes to the Park and Ride structure.
County, shows the Mercer Island lot is typically fully occupied during weekdays.

To supplement park and ride capacity on the island, Metro has leased two three private parking lots for use as park and ride lots, located at the Mercer Island Presbyterian Church and the, Mercer Island United Methodist Church, and at the Mercer Village Center. These lots are described in Table 3 Table 1. Together, they provide an additional 6069 parking spaces for use by Island residents.
Figure 4 - Comprehensive Trail Plan

Current Map (to be replaced)  Updated Map

Figure 4
Existing Transit Service
Transit Routes
301
204

A Detailed Trail Map is available at City Hall
Current Map (to be replaced)

Updated Map
### Table 31: Mercer Island Park and Ride Locations and Capacities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Cars Parked</th>
<th>% Spaces Occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro Mercer Island Park and Ride</td>
<td>7800 N Mercer Way</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>84th Ave SE &amp; SE 37th St.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Methodist Church</td>
<td>70th Ave SE &amp; SE 24th St.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercer Village Center</td>
<td>84th Ave SE &amp; SE 68th St.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### School Transportation

The Mercer Island School District #400 (MISD) provides bus transportation for public Kindergarten through 12th grade students on Mercer Island. The MISD operates 32 bus routes with a total of 35 buses to provide this service. On average, the school district serves 2,278 students on a daily basis (2003-2004), or around 55% of the total school population approximately 40 scheduled bus routes during the morning and afternoon. In addition, the District provides free Orca cards to high school students who live more than one mile from Mercer Island High School and do not have either a parking pass or are not assigned to a district bus.

### Rail Services & Facilities

There are no railroad lines or facilities on Mercer Island. In the region, the Burlington Northern Railroad and Union Pacific Railroad companies provide freight rail service between Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, and other areas of Puget Sound, connecting with intrastate, interstate and international rail lines. Amtrak provides scheduled interstate passenger rail service from Seattle to California and Chicago. Major centers in Washington served by these interstate passenger rail routes include Tacoma, Olympia, Vancouver, Everett, Wenatchee, and Spokane.

### Air Transportation

Mercer Island does not have any air transportation facilities or services. Scheduled and chartered passenger and freight air services are provided at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in SeaTac, and at the King County International Airport in south Seattle.

### Water Transportation

Mercer Island does not have any public water transportation services. Lakemont dock, a public boat launch providing access to Lake Washington, is located at the foot of 97th Avenue SE. The city's other public boat launch is on the east side of the island, off of East Mercer Way, under the East Channel Bridge. Port services and facilities are provided by the Port of Seattle in Seattle. Public ferry services between Seattle and Edmonds and Kitsap County are provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation.
IV. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM – FUTURE NEEDS

**Growth Management Act Requirements**

This section describes the future year transportation needs, particularly in terms of traffic volumes and road capacities, and the process used to identify them. The Growth Management Act requires the City to forecast traffic demands for at least ten years into the future, identifying where future improvements may be necessary in order to accommodate future population and traffic growth. The Act goes on to require the City to develop financing strategies which will implement the “growth-related” traffic system improvements within six years. Conditions and analysis used to identify future transportation needs and improvements.

“Level of Service” Analysis

Mercer Island analyzes its arterial road transportation needs and capacities in terms of its established Level of Service (LOS) “C” standard—the community’s measure of maximum tolerable traffic congestion. The analysis is based on traffic counts that have been collected over a number of years and projected into the future. The LOS analysis is used to anticipate and respond to transportation system “deficiencies” in a timely and effective manner. However, because traffic volumes change with changing travel and growth patterns, LOS analysis is a continual process. With that caveat, the data and analysis that follows should not be regarded as precise, final conclusions. Instead, the projections and results should be indicators of where future traffic planning and data collection should occur before commitments to physical improvements are made.

Traffic volumes and levels of service were forecast for 2022, the 20-year planning horizon established for the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan.

**Town Center Street Plan**

The Town Center Plan for Mercer Island was developed through a cooperative effort of City staff, consultants and the Town Center Streets Citizens Design Task Force. The primary concept behind the Town Center Street Plan was to support the Downtown Mercer Island Vision Plan adopted by the City in mid-1993 and the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element adopted in December, 1993. Specific objectives included:

- Enhance access to existing and future development in the Town Center while, at the same time, discouraging through traffic from penetrating the Town Center core.
- Emphasize pedestrian, transit and bicycle access, safety and mobility throughout the Town Center, particularly among planned residential, commercial and retail uses, to reduce the need for vehicular travel within the downtown area.

Commented [Inb18]: This discussion on GMA is moved up to Section III.

Commented [JD19]: Moved to Section 1
Create a pedestrian-friendly environment along 78th Avenue SE which will encourage pedestrian-oriented retail development between SE 27th and SE 29th Streets.

Transportation Improvements for the Town Center

In 1996, Town Center District streets were renovated and resurfaced with new asphalt, new street lights, widened and improved sidewalks (at least 8 feet wide), new curbs and gutters, additional street trees and art inlays at intersections. Detailed descriptions of the planned improvements are available in the City's Development Services Department.

Implementation of the Town Center street improvements began in 1994, with construction of improvements to 77th and 78th Avenues SE; construction on the easterly portion of SE 27th Street began in June 1994. The remaining improvements were constructed in 1995 and 1996. Funding for the Town Center street projects was provided through a combination of ISTEA grants matched by local funds from the City of Mercer Island. Transit in the Town Center focuses transit service increases on the I-90 corridor, rather than on additional north-south service on the island. Future service increases on the island will most likely concentrate on Island Crest Way and are not expected to impact the downtown area.

Adequacy of Town Center Street Plan

An issue which arose during the development of the Downtown Streets Plan was whether the transportation system would be adequate to support the growth planned for the Town Center. The Downtown Vision Plan calls for more retail, residential and commercial activity than currently exists in the Town Center, and the reduction of roadway capacity for some facilities. Questions were raised about the ability of the proposed street plan to accommodate Town Center growth along with other growth on the island. A detailed analysis of the traffic demand and the capacity of the revised street system was analyzed by KJS Associates in 1994. In 2004, Perteet Engineering examined the possible need for new traffic signals on SE 27th Street at SE 27th Avenue SE and SE 28th Avenue SE as a result of proposed developments in the Town Center. They also examined existing vehicle volumes and future trip projections. The analysis of current and future traffic flows on the downtown streets confirmed that the transportation plan for the Town Center is sufficient to maintain acceptable levels of traffic congestion. Specific findings of the analysis revealed that:

The majority of travel from regional facilities to the rest of the island will not go through the Town Center. The principal connections to the I-90 freeway are located at: Island Crest Way, the West Mercer interchange, and the East Mercer interchange. Although Island Crest Way runs along the east side of the Town Center, traffic on this arterial does not impact the Town Center due to the physical and visual separation provided by the retaining walls along Island Crest Way. Drivers bound for the Town Center must exit Island Crest Way at SE 30th Street in order to reach the Town Center street system. Since there will not be much growth in through traffic in the Town Center,

Transportation - 32  PC Recommendation 11-19-2014
Center, the Downtown Street Plan does not have to provide excess capacity for through traffic. The mixed-use development and pedestrian orientation of the Downtown Vision Plan will reduce vehicular trip generation rates for new development by about 15 percent, compared to typical suburban centers. This means that the total average daily traffic (ADT) into and out of the Town Center will increase by about only 30 percent, or 9,500 ADT at full build-out of the Town Center.

Future levels of service with three lane streets and roadway improvements will maintain LOS C or better at all locations in downtown. The existing four-way stop signs will work well for many years. Traffic signals should be installed at downtown intersections only when warranted by actual traffic volumes.

Street System Outside of the Town Center

For travel demand forecasts outside the Town Center a growth rate of one percent per year was used. This assumption is based on the projected growth patterns for Mercer Island, and historical growth patterns in traffic on the street network. Population and employment growth on the island that will affect traffic levels through the 20 year planning period is expected to be low. Annually, this amounts to about one percent growth per year. The majority of this growth is anticipated to be in and near the CBD, and is not likely to significantly affect traffic elsewhere on the island. Table 5 and Figure 6 show estimated future traffic volumes, volume-to-capacity ratios, and expected levels of service (LOS) for selected locations around Mercer Island.
## Table 5 - 2022 Traffic Volume Forecast for Mercer Island

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary Arterials</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belvedere Way</td>
<td>N of SE 96th St</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>75,125</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 46th Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Mercer Way</td>
<td>N of SE 96th St</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mercer Way</td>
<td>N of SE 96th St</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 48th Street</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE 60th Street</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Existing conditions have been factored out.*

# of Lanes - Number of lanes for each arterial.
Capacity - Maximum capacity of the arterial in vehicles per hour.
Volume - Actual volume of traffic on the arterial in vehicles per hour.
LOS - Level of service for the arterial.
V/C Ratio - Vehicle to capacity ratio.

** 2004 counts have been factored by 1% per year to reflect 2022 conditions.

## Arterials in the Downtown Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE 72nd Street</td>
<td>N of SE 75th St</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 75th Street</td>
<td>N of SE 75th St</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 80th Street</td>
<td>N of SE 75th St</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 85th Street</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE 90th Street</td>
<td>N of SE 75th St</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Existing conditions have been factored out.*

# of Lanes - Number of lanes for each arterial.
Capacity - Maximum capacity of the arterial in vehicles per hour.
Volume - Actual volume of traffic on the arterial in vehicles per hour.
LOS - Level of service for the arterial.
V/C Ratio - Vehicle to capacity ratio.

** 2004 counts have been factored by 1% per year to reflect 2022 conditions.

## LOS Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V/C Ratio</th>
<th>LOS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Future Travel Demand

The future traffic volumes were forecast for the year 2035 based on the City's land use and zoning, as well as the housing and employment growth targets, as identified in the King County Buildable Lands (2014) report. More than 70 percent of new households and 76 percent of new jobs are forecasted to occur within the Town Center.

The analysis assumes the opening of the East Link light rail line in 2023, which will result in an additional travel option between the Town Center and regional destinations. The potential tolling on the I-90 bridge would result in minor reductions to mainline I-90 traffic volumes and on-island traffic volumes and patterns.

Overall, the traffic growth in the Town Center is forecast to increase by 35 percent between 2014-2035, an annual growth rate of 1.5 percent. Town Center traffic growth was adjusted to reflect the higher potential for pedestrian and transit trips. For areas outside the Town Center, traffic growth is expected to be low with approximately 10 percent growth between 2014-2035, an annual growth rate of 0.5 percent.

The resulting forecasted traffic volumes directly reflect the anticipated land use, housing, and employment growth assumptions for the island.

Baseline Traffic Operations

The 2035 baseline traffic analysis uses the forecasted growth in traffic, planned changes to the regional transportation system, and the roadway and intersection improvements identified in Mercer Island’s 2015-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Results of the 2035 baseline traffic operations analysis shows that five intersections would operate at LOS E or F by 2035 if improvements are not made to the intersections. In the vicinity of the Town Center, the three intersections of N Mercer Way/77th Avenue SE, SE 27th Street/80th Avenue SE, and SE 28th Street/80th Avenue SE, would operate at LOS E or F during either the AM or PM peak hours, without improvements. Outside of the Town Center the intersections of SE 53rd Place/Island Crest Way would operate at LOS F during either the AM or PM peak hours, without improvements; while the intersection of SE 68th Street/Island Crest Way would operate at LOS F in the AM peak hour, and LOS D in the PM peak hour, without improvements.

Figure 6 shows the future baseline traffic operations at the study intersections assuming only improvements identified in the 2015-2020 TIP.

Recommended Improvements

In addition to the baseline projects identified in the City’s 2015-2020
Transportation Improvement Program, a future needs analysis developed a list of recommended improvements. The future needs analysis identified select projects from the City’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan to improve non-motorized safety and connectivity. Additional roadway and intersection improvement projects were identified based on the operational and safety needs through 2035. Figure 7 shows the recommended transportation projects for the next 20 years. Table 2 provides a map identification, describes the location and details for each of the projects, and estimates a project cost. The table is divided into two main categories of project types:

**Non-Motorized Projects** – The listed projects include new crosswalk improvements and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. These projects are identified projects from the City’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan that connects residential areas to schools, parks, regional transit and other destinations.

**Intersection/Road Projects** – Roadway projects are those that increase the capacity and safety of an intersection or roadway segment. The projects include the maintenance of existing roadway segments to ensure that the city’s current street system is maintained.

The analysis identifies a total of $51.6 million dollars of transportation improvements over the next 20 years. About 78 percent ($40.0 million) of the total is for street preservation and resurfacing projects to maintain the existing street system. Another 9 percent ($4.6 million) is for non-motorized system improvements. About 10 percent ($5.0 million) is for traffic operational improvements at intersections to maintain LOS operations.

Commented [lnb21]: Updated to reflect revised cost estimates for non-motorized improvements in Table 2.
### Table 2. Recommended Project List 2015-2035

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAP ID</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>JUSTIFICATION</th>
<th>COST ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NM-1</td>
<td>PBF Plan Implementation</td>
<td>Annual funding for non-motorized improvements.</td>
<td>2015-2020 TIP: Project D1.</td>
<td>810,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-2</td>
<td>Safe Routes to School - Biennial</td>
<td>Biennial funding for safety improvements near schools.</td>
<td>Ongoing Every other year</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-3</td>
<td>Safe Routes - Madrona Crest (86th Avenue SE) Sidewalk</td>
<td>Sidewalk between SE 38th to SE 39th Street.</td>
<td>2015-2020 TIP: Project D2.</td>
<td>510,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-4</td>
<td>Safe Routes to School - New Elementary School</td>
<td>Pedestrian improvements to support the new elementary school.</td>
<td>2015-2020 TIP: Project D3.</td>
<td>454,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-5</td>
<td>Island Crest Way Crosswalk Enhancement - SE 32nd Street</td>
<td>Add Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) at existing pedestrian crossing.</td>
<td>2015-2020 TIP: Project D4.</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-6</td>
<td>84th Avenue Path (SE 39th to Upper Luther Burbank Park)</td>
<td>Add a gravel shoulder pedestrian facility.</td>
<td>2015-2020 TIP: Project D5.</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-7</td>
<td>East Mercer Way Roadside Shoulders (From 6600 block to south end of E Mercer Way)</td>
<td>Add a shoulder for non-motorized users.</td>
<td>2015-2020 TIP: Project D6.</td>
<td>1,067,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-8</td>
<td>West Mercer Way Roadside Shoulders (7400-8000 Block)</td>
<td>Add a shoulder for non-motorized users.</td>
<td>2015-2020 TIP: Project D7.</td>
<td>417,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-9</td>
<td>West Mercer Way Roadside Shoulders (8000 block to E Mercer Way)</td>
<td>Add a paved shoulder (east side) for non-motorized users.</td>
<td>PBFP:Project WMW 7.</td>
<td>472,4004,035,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM-10</td>
<td>West Mercer Way Roadside Shoulders (6500 to 7400 block)</td>
<td>Add a paved shoulder (east side) for non-motorized users.</td>
<td>PBFP:Project WMW 7.</td>
<td>1,306,0004,76,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Commented [lnb22]: Updated to reflect cost per linear foot.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAP ID</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>JUSTIFICATION</th>
<th>COST ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NM-11</td>
<td>78th Avenue SE - SE 32nd Street to SE 40th Street</td>
<td>Improve with sidewalks, bicycle lanes/sharrows to connect with the Town Center.</td>
<td>PBFP: Project N16.</td>
<td>1,131,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intersection Projects (I) / Road Projects (R)**

| I-1 | SE 24th Street/W Mercer Way | Add southbound left turn pocket (re-channelize). | East Link/Fails to meet LOS Standard | 25,000 |
| I-2 | 77th Avenue SE/N Mercer Way | Traffic signal* or add center receiving lane. | East Link/Fails to meet LOS Standard | 820,000 |
| I-3 | SE 27th Street/80th Avenue SE | Traffic signal. | East Link/Fails to meet LOS Standard | 858,000 |
| I-4 | SE 28th Street/80th Avenue SE | Traffic signal. | East Link/Fails to meet LOS Standard | 854,900 |
| I-5 | SE 40th Street Corridor (East of Island Crest Way) | Install dedicated left turn signal phase and turn pocket. | 2015-2020 TIP: Project C3. | 758,800 |
| I-6 | SE 40th Street/Gallagher Hill Road | Add eastbound left turn pocket | Fails to meet LOS Standard | 133,900 |
| I-7 | SE 53rd Place/Island Crest Way | Traffic signal. | Fails to meet LOS Standard | 602,700 |
| I-8 | SE 68th Street/Island Crest Way | Traffic Signal/Roundabout* | Fails to meet LOS Standard | 982,500 |
| R-1 | Street Preservation/Maintenance | Street resurfacing based on PCI rating. | 2015-2020 TIP: Projects A1, B1-B2, C1-C10, E1-E3. | 40,000,000 |

*Cost estimate reflects higher cost option of alternative actions.

**Total 2015-2035 Projects** $1,620,200 (4,862,800).

Commented [lnb23]: Revised to reflect recalculated non-motorized project costs.
Transportation – with Recommended Improvements

With the recommended improvements, the intersection operations will meet the City’s LOS standard for intersection operation and the transportation system will provide a better network for pedestrian and bicycle travel, allowing greater mobility for island residents. In addition, improvements to regional transportation facilities will accommodate growth in housing and employment, which will be focused in the Town Center, where residents can be easily served by high capacity transit. Table 3 compares the 2035 intersection study locations with baseline and with the recommended improvements for each of the AM and PM study locations. The baseline improvements includes the roadway and intersection improvements identified in Mercer Island’s 2015-2020 Transportation Improvement Program. The recommended improvements are those additional improvements that are needed to meet the City’s LOS standard.
### Table 3. 2035 Intersection Operations - Baseline and Recommended Improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersection</th>
<th>2035 AM Peak Hour</th>
<th>2035 PM Peak Hour</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Baseline</td>
<td>With Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvements</td>
<td>Improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-90 EB ramps/W Mercer Way</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 24th St/W Mercer Way</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 24th St/72nd Ave SE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 24th St/76th Ave SE</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Mercer Way/76th Ave SE</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Mercer Way/77th Ave SE</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Mercer Way--Park &amp; Ride/80th Ave SE</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>N Mercer Way/Island Crest-SE 26th St</td>
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<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-90 EB off-ramp/77th Ave SE</td>
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<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 27th St/76th Ave SE</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 27th St/77th Ave SE</td>
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<td>SE 27th St/80th Ave SE</td>
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<td>SE 28th St/8th Ave SE</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE 28th St/90th Ave SE</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE 28th St/Island Crest Way</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>SE 68th St/E Mercer Way</td>
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Figure 6 – 2004 Traffic Volumes, V/C Ratios & Level of Service

Figure 7 – Intersection Level of Service in 2004 (without Table 2 Improvements)

Current Map (to be replaced)                      Updated Map
Deficiencies in the Road System

Mercer Island’s current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes projects to remedy safety, operational and physical deficiencies through 2010. Beyond 2010, projected deficiencies must be verified by a detailed traffic engineering analysis. Therefore, additional congestion relief projects will be identified as the TIP is updated. Based on updated traffic counts, the following locations appear to exceed the City’s level of Service standard of C:

- Island Crest Way north of SE 68th Street
- Island Crest Way south of SE 40th Street
- Island Crest Way north of SE 40th Street and SE 40th Street east of Island Crest Way.

The City adopted the 2005-2010 TIP in May 2004, prior to the most recent analysis that indicated possible current deficiencies.

For the purpose of concurrency compliance, locations needing improvements will be identified for further evaluation in the next TIP. Prior to any commitment of funds, the City will perform additional traffic analysis to verify actual conditions.

Updated traffic counts and preliminary data show deterioration on ten roadway segments. Additional information, including verification of the predicted deficiencies with more detailed traffic count data is required before the City can identify a specific improvement project at these locations. These deficiencies will be examined as part of the arterial roadway reconstruction projects identified in Years 2005 to 2010, in the adopted TIP.

The TIP also includes a 2005 construction project, jointly funded by the City and Mercer Island School District, to improve access and parking at Island Park Elementary School. This construction project will reduce congestion and eliminate traffic delays created by daily school and school bus traffic on Island Crest Way north of SE 68th Street.

In the Town Center, no locations currently exceed the adopted LOS standard, however, the segment of 77th Avenue SE north of SE 27th Street is expected to exceed the LOS standard C in 2022. The adopted Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes a traffic signal project to be installed at this intersection, when warranted. This improvement should manage congestion and return the adopted standard LOS C.

The City will monitor locations identified for current and future deficiencies and review roadway and intersection operations in 2010 to verify the forecast. Access and channelization improvement projects will be added to the TIP after 2010, if necessary.

The traffic forecast and Level of Service analysis for these streets should be regarded as “worst case” scenarios and do not reflect policy or reductions in projected traffic growth from implementation of the Commute Trip Reduction Ordinance. Therefore, new traffic counts should be conducted to verify the traffic volumes on these streets.
roadways before physical or operational improvements are made.
V. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Transportation Investments

Since incorporation in 1960, the City has consistently made (or required through private development) transportation investments that have preceded and accommodated population growth and its associated traffic growth. This strategy has enabled the City to make significant improvements in the community's neighborhood streets, arterial roads, pavement markings, streets signs, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities.

In recent years, the City has relied on gas tax revenues ($450,000 in 2014) and real estate excise tax ($1,500,000 in 2014) to fund local transportation projects. Historically, the City has relied upon an annual distribution of approximately $470,000 (1999 dollars) in state gas taxes to finance local transportation projects. However, since 1985, the City has increased annual transportation funding sources to include state-shared Vehicle Registration Fees ($190,000 per year) and Real Estate Excise Taxes ($500,000 per year). Given the City's transportation financial policies (1994), Mercer Island will contribute approximately.

In 2014, the City is considering a Transportation Benefit District that will add a $20 per vehicle fee to provide an estimated $350,000 annually to support transportation needs. Combined the City anticipates approximately $2.3 million to $2.6 million in annual revenues $1.2 million per year to the City Street Fund.

Combined with supplemental federal and state grant funding, Mercer Island will have sufficient resources to maintain and improve its transportation system over the next twenty years. Current transportation resources, when extended out over the twenty years, should be sufficient to accomplish the following:

- Maintain the City's arterial street system on a twenty year (average) life cycle;
- Maintain the City's residential system on a thirty-five year (average) life cycle.
- Maintain, improve and expand the City's pedestrian/bicycle system over the next twenty years.
- Maintain transportation and growth concurrency as outlined in the transportation and Land Use Elements. [This assumes that no additional capacity improvements will be needed.]
• **Table 6** below summarizes system to meet the City's Transportation Financial Policies, and long-term transportation reinvestment strategies—forecasted housing and employment growth targets.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital Facility</th>
<th>Level of Service</th>
<th>Current Capacity Deficiencies</th>
<th>New Capital Cost (Capacity)</th>
<th>Annual Reinvestment (Average)</th>
<th>Financial Policy (Source)</th>
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<td>Arterial Streets</td>
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<td>$130,000</td>
<td>Street Fund</td>
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VI. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Program and Policy Implementation

The following actions by the City of Mercer Island and other jurisdictions will be necessary to effectively implement the program and policy elements of this transportation element:

Transportation System - Streets, Transit, Non-Motorized

- Develop local neighborhood traffic control plans as necessary to address specific issues.
- Develop a program for monitoring transportation adequacy to compare projections to actual conditions and identify locations where improvement may become necessary.
- Implement TSM techniques to control traffic impacts.

Planning - Standards, Policies, Programs

- Periodically update the City's inventory of transportation conditions, functioning level of service and projected levels of service.
- Complete the plan for non-motorized transportation, improvements consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, including a review of the Comprehensive Trails and Bicycle Facilities Plan and its design standards.
- Develop a comprehensive street classification system to identify facilities appropriate for automobile, truck, transit, bicycle and pedestrian uses.
- Develop a neighborhood parking program to address parking overflow impacts from schools, businesses, parks and multi-family housing.
- Revise design standards as necessary to comply with ADA requirements.
- Continue to involve the public in transportation planning and decisions.
- Develop "transit friendly" design guidelines for project developers to follow.
- Develop policies, criteria and a process to determine when, and under what conditions, private roads and privately-maintained roads in public rights of way or private roads should be accepted for public maintenance and improvement.
- Implement the City's adopted Commute Trip Reduction program.

Financial Strategies

- Implement Secure funding to implement the adopted 1999-2004 Capital Six-year Transportation Improvement Program.
- Actively pursue outside funding sources to pay for adopted
transportation improvements and programs.

Transit Planning

- Work with Metro to test the feasibility of replacement or augmentation of current fixed route transit services with demand response services.
- Work with Metro, King County and other jurisdictions to explore alternative methods of providing service to establish more reasonable mode split goals for Mercer Island consistent with regional requirements/residents, such as developing a demand responsive service throughout the island.
- Work with Metro and the Regional Transit Authority Sound Transit to site, design and construct high capacity transit and parking facilities consistent with Land Use and Transportation Policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mercer Island supports the long-range transit service policies and concepts included in the King County Department of Metropolitan Services (Metro) Long Range Policy Framework for Public Transportation (October 1993). Particular attention should be given to implementing the Dial-a-Ride transit (DART) portion of the concept for Mercer Island. Some of the considerations to be assessed in evaluating potential demand response service include:

- **Density:** The area should have relatively low density so that the service is not overwhelmed with excess demand.
- **Service Focal Point:** If a service focal point or anchor is available it can facilitate the transfer process for travelers with different destinations, especially if it is served by regular fixed route service.
- **Productivity:** As a general guideline, demand response service should be considered as a replacement for fixed route service that is operating with less than five passengers per service hour.
- **Potential for Private Contracting:** Due to relatively low productivity levels, demand response service can require high levels of subsidy per passenger. Private contractors may be able to provide the service for lower costs due to greater flexibility with labor.

In looking at Mercer Island, general purpose demand response service (as opposed to service restricted to the disabled) could be practical in the northern portion of the Island. Service in this area is provided by Metro Transit. There is currently a service focal point at the Park and Ride lot which is served by 10 other routes. Several of these routes have coordinated schedules. Thus, a demand response service with a fixed departure time from the park and ride lot would provide convenient transfers to multiple destinations.
VII. CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANS & REQUIREMENTS

The Growth Management Act of 1990 requires that local comprehensive plans be consistent with plans of adjacent jurisdictions and regional, state and federal plans. Further, there are several other major statutory requirements with which Mercer Island transportation plans must comply. This section briefly discusses the relationship between this Transportation Element and other plans and requirements.

Other Plans

The Transportation Element of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan is fully consistent with the following plans:

Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan — The Transportation Element is based on the needs of, and is fully consistent with the Land Use Element.

King County Countywide and Multicounty Planning Policies — Mercer Island’s proposed transportation policies are fully consistent with PSRC’s multi-county and King County’s countywide and multi-county planning policies. However, the mode split goals developed for Mercer Island by the PSRC under county Policy T-10 appear to be too optimistic and require further refinement.

Vision 2040 — Vision 2040 builds upon Vision 2020 and Destination 2030 to articulate a coordinated long-range land use and transportation growth strategy for the Puget Sound region. Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan’s Land Use Element and Transportation Elements support this strategy by accommodating new growth through redevelopment of the Town Center which is near existing and proposed future transportation improvements by concentrating along the I-90 corridor.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan — The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is currently developing a Metropolitan has updated its long-term vision of the future transportation system through the Vision 2040 and Transportation Plan (MTP) to implement Vision 2020. Since the MTP is being developed in accord with Vision 2020 plans. The Transportation Element will be consistent with the MTP these plans.

Regional Transit System Plan — The Sound Transit’s Regional Transit System Plan (RTP) lays out the Puget Sound region’s plans for constructing and operating a regional high capacity transit system. Both the Land Use and Transportation Elements directly support regional transit service and facilities, and are consistent with the RTP.

METRO Long Range Plan For Public Transportation — The King County Department of Metropolitan Services (Metro) has prepared a long range public transportation plan for King County that details service concepts for local areas within the county. Metro’s service concept for Mercer Island is
generally consistent with the Transportation Element. However, Mercer Island's plan stresses demand response service more than Metro's plan does. This issue can be worked out between the jurisdictions as service changes are considered and implemented.

Plan Requirements

The Transportation Element of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan meets the following regulations and requirements:

Growth Management Act — The Growth Management Act, enacted by the Washington State Legislature in 1990 and amended in 1991, requires urbanized counties and cities in Washington to plan for orderly growth for 20 years into the future. Mercer Island's Transportation Element conforms to all of the components of a comprehensive transportation element as defined by GMA.

Commute Trip Reduction — In 1991, the Washington State Legislature enacted the Commute Trip Reduction Law which requires implementation of transportation demand management (TDM) programs to reduce work trips. In response to these requirements, Mercer Island has developed its own CTR program to reduce work trips by City employees. There are two other CTR-affected employers on the island; both have developed CTR programs.

Air Quality Conformity — Amendments to the federal Clean Air Act made in 1990 require Washington and other states to develop a State Implementation Plan (SIP) which will reduce ozone and carbon monoxide air pollutants so that national standards may be attained. The Central Puget Sound area, including King County and Mercer Island, are currently designated as "non-attainment" areas that meet the federal standards for both ozone and carbon monoxide. The plans, programs and projects included in this Transportation Element are consistent with the requirements of the Central Puget Sound SIPs for ozone and are designated as a carbon monoxide maintenance area, meaning the area has met federal standards, but is required to develop a maintenance plan to reduce mobile sources of pollution.
Utilities

City of Mercer Island  Comprehensive Plan
UTILITIES ELEMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Growth Management Act requires this comprehensive plan to include the general location and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities on Mercer Island (RCW 36.70A.070). The following element provides that information for water, sewer, stormwater, solid waste, electricity, natural gas and telecommunications.

One main goal of the utilities element is to describe how the policies contained in other elements of this comprehensive plan and various other City plans will be implemented through utility policies and regulations.

The Land Use element of this plan allows limited development that will not have a significant impact on utilities over the next 20 years. For that reason, many of the policies in this element go beyond the basic GMA requirements and focus on issues related to reliability rather than capacity.

Policies - All Utilities

1. Rates and fees for all City-operated utilities shall be structured with the goal of recovering all costs, including overhead, related to the extension of services and the operation and maintenance of those utilities.

1.1 The City shall encourage, where feasible, the co-location of public and private utility distribution facilities in shared trenches and assist with the coordination of construction to minimize construction-related disruptions and reduce the cost of utility delivery.

1.3 The City shall encourage economically feasible diversity among the energy sources available on Mercer Island, with the goal of avoiding over-reliance on any single energy source.

1.4 The City shall support efficient, cost effective and reliable utility service by ensuring that land is available for the location of utility facilities, including within transportation corridors.

1.5 The City shall maintain effective working relationships with all utility providers to ensure the best possible provision of services.
II. WATER UTILITY

Mercer Island obtains its water from the Seattle Public Utilities (SPU). The City of Mercer Island purchases and distributes most of the water consumed on the Island under a new long-term contract with SPU that guarantees an adequate supply through the year 2062. The City’s new contract with SPU was negotiated and signed in 2003. In 1997, the City assumed the Mercer Crest Water Association that for many years had been an independent purveyor of SPU. It served a largely residential base with customers residing in the neighborhoods south of the Shorewood Apartments, and east and west of the Mercer Island High School campus areas of the island. The Mercer Crest system was intertied and consolidated into the City utility during 1998-99. One small independent water association, Shorewood, remains as a direct service customer of SPU. The City is one of 215 wholesale customers (Cascade Water Alliance and 20 neighboring cities and water districts) (purveyors) of SPU.

The bulk of the Island’s water supply originates in the Cedar River watershed and is delivered through the Cedar Eastside supply line to Mercer Island’s 30-inch supply line. Mercer Island also is served periodically through the South Fork of the Tolt River supply system.

Water is distributed by the City through 86.8 115 miles of mains (4-, 6-, and 8-inch) and transmission lines (10- to 30-inch) constructed, operated and maintained by the City. The City’s distribution system also includes two 4-million-gallon storage reservoirs, two pump stations, and 86 28 pressure-reducing valve stations.

Minimizing supply interruptions during disasters is a longstanding priority in both planning efforts and the City’s capital improvement program. The City completed an Emergency Supply Line project in 1998-99, which added a parallel 16-inch water main from the East Channel Bridge to the reservoirs. In 2001 following the Nisqually Earthquake, SPU strengthened sections of the 16-inch pipeline.

The year before the earthquake, the City completed extensive seismic improvements to its two storage reservoirs. As a result, neither was damaged in the earthquake. The improvements were funded through a hazard mitigation grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The city also constructed an emergency well, which was designed and permitted to provide 5 gallons per day for each person on the island for a period of 7 to 90 days.

In 2014, the city took significant action to ensure high water quality standards after two boil water advisory alerts, including additional expanded collection of water quality samples, injection of additional chlorine, research into potential equipment upgrades and improvements, and a thorough review of the City’s cross-contamination program, including the best means of overseeing the registration of certification of backflow prevention devices.

In 2004 2013, the City’s total number of water customers was 7,400 7,376.
Future Needs

Both the water supply available to the City and the City's distribution system are adequate to serve growth projected for Mercer Island. From 1999-2004 to 2013, the number of water customers has increased by 3,187. New development, as anticipated by the land-use element of this plan, will increase the City's total number of water customers by no more than 1,437 by 2022, approximately 500 by 2035.

In 2004, the City completed a Seismic Vulnerability Assessment that examined how a major seismic event might impact the 30-inch and 16-inch SPU lines that supply water to the island. The assessment predicted that the Island's water supply would likely be disrupted in a disaster such as a major earthquake. In response to the finding, City officials initiated a Water Supply Alternatives study before applying for a source permit for an emergency well, the first such permit to be issued in Washington State. Construction of the emergency well was completed in spring of 2010. Recommendations from the Assessment were being evaluated by the staff and the City's Utility Board at the time of this plan update. The recommendations include creating additional storage on the island, which could be done either through a new storage reservoir or wells.

The City does not plan to implement an aquifer protection program because there are no known aquifers in the vicinity of Mercer Island that are utilized by the City or any other water supplier.

Although aquifer protection is not a factor for future needs, species protection may be. On March 24, 1999 the National Marine Fisheries Service issued a final determination and listed the Puget Sound Chinook salmon as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Like all communities in the Puget Sound region, Mercer Island will need to address a number of land use, capital improvement and development process issues that affect salmon habitat. However, Mercer Island may be better positioned to respond to the ESA listing than some due to the island's small, unique environment with a lack of continuous rivers or streams, minimal amounts of vacant land available for new development, progressive critical areas regulations and previous attention to stormwater detention.

Policies - Water Utility

2.1 The City shall continue to obtain a cost-effective and reliable water supply that meets all the needs of Mercer Island, including domestic and commercial use, fire-flow protection, emergencies, and all future development consistent with the land-use element of this plan.

2.2 The City shall continue to upgrade and maintain its distribution and storage system as necessary to maximize the useful life of the system. All system improvements shall be carried out in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Water System Plan and Capital Improvement Program.

2.3 The City shall continue to work cooperatively with the Seattle Public Utilities - 4 PC Recommendation 11-19-2014
Utilities and its other purveyors on all issues of mutual concern.

2.4 The City shall continue to obtain Mercer Island's water supply from a supply source that fully complies with the Safe Drinking Water Act. For this reason, future development on Mercer Island will not affect the quality of the Island's potable water.

2.5 The City shall comply with all water quality testing required of the operators of water distribution systems under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

2.6 The City shall adopt an action plan to ensure Mercer Island’s full participation in regional efforts to recover and restore Puget Sound Chinook salmon.

2.7 The City will continue to prepare the Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) which provides Mercer Island water customers with information about the source, treatment, and distribution of their drinking water. This CCR will be updated and distributed annually in accordance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, and will also be available on the City’s website.

2.8 The City shall aggressively promote and support water conservation on Mercer Island and shall participate in regional water conservation activities. The goal of the City’s efforts shall be a significant and lasting reduction in Mercer Island’s peak water consumption. In 1999 the City decided to participate in SPU's 1% Water Conservation Initiative, and continues to receive information and assistance in reducing water consumption in City facilities and in the community.

2.9 The City shall consider requests for consolidation with the Shorewood water association, but only if it can be demonstrated that such action would benefit all water customers and would not have a significant impact on water rates.

Commented [g2]: Policy Removed at Planning Commission’s request, per meeting on 11/05/2014. The report is required per the Safe Water Drinking Act (40 CFR 141.155a and b).
Commented [g3]: Certain maps removed for security reasons. Additionally, the information on specific location is not critical to the long range planning of the city. Site specific review is done at time of building permit and land use review. The issue of available water supply is addressed in the text.
III. SEWER UTILITY

The City owns, operates and maintains the sewage collection system that serves all of Mercer Island. The Island’s sewage is delivered to a treatment plant at Renton operated by the Metropolitan King County Government (formerly Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle). At the Renton plant, the sewage receives primary and secondary treatment.

The City’s system includes a total of 18 pump stations, 2 flushing pump stations, and more than 98 miles of gravity and pressure pipelines, ranging in diameter from 3 to 24 inches which ultimately flow in King County Department of Natural Resources (KCDNR) facilities for treatment and disposal at the South Treatment Plant in Renton.

As of 2004, a total of 7,227 residential and commercial customers were hooked up to the City sewer system.

Future Needs

New development on Mercer Island, as anticipated in the land-use element of this plan, is not expected to add significantly to the wastewater generated daily on Mercer Island. The number of customers hooked up to the sewer system has increased by 73 since 1999 and is expected to increase by no more than 1,437 by 2022, according to housing unit projections outlined in the 2002 King County Buildable Lands Report.

A General Sewer Plan was developed in February 2003 as an update to the 1994 Sewer System Comprehensive Plan. The General Sewer Plan identifies a variety of needs that will be addressed during the next several years. These include replacing portions of the sewer lake line along the northwest shoreline, collection system improvements, pump station improvements, and replacement of the pump station telemetry system. A Sewer Lakeline Replacement feasibility study was completed in September 2002 and recommended replacement of a 9,000 foot segment of sewer lake line bordering the northwest shoreline of the island to replace the rapidly deteriorating sewer and increase pipeline capacity to eliminate impacts to Lake Washington from periodic sewage overflows caused by inadequate capacity and poor system function. The preliminary design and environmental work was started in 2003 with construction anticipated to begin in 2006. The Lakeline Replacement Project will be the single largest sewer system capital project since the 1960’s, when much of the sewer system was originally constructed. The replacement of the 9,000 foot segment was completed in 2010. The 2002 feasibility study also reported that the 9,000 foot segment was more critical than other sections, which were in acceptable condition. The city is scheduled for a feasibility project in 2020 to evaluate the condition of the remaining asbestos concrete main located in Reach 4, and evaluate options for replacement. After the condition is assessed, a determination will be made on the schedule for replacement.

In 2002, Mercer Island successfully competed with other local cities for a share of $9 million allocated by King County to investigate and remove groundwater and stormwater commonly known as...
inflow/infiltration (I/I) from local sewers. The $900,000 pilot project on Mercer Island lined 16,000 feet of sewer in the West Seattle neighborhood (basin 54) in 2003. Post construction flow monitoring and computer modeling showed a 37 percent decrease in peak I/I flows.

The City must serve the sewer needs of its planned growth, much of which will be focused in the Town Center. While most of the Town Center’s sewer system is adequate to meet future demand, some pipelines may exceed their capacity during extreme storms and will require monitoring to determine if larger diameter pipelines are warranted. The City will use substantive authority under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to require mitigation for proposed projects that generate flows that exceed sewer system capacity.

All future improvements to the sewer system will be addressed through a capital improvements plan developed in conjunction with the updated General Sewer Plan and/or CIP budget.

**Policies - Sewer Utility**

3.1 The City shall require that all new development be connected to the sewer system.

3.2 Existing single-family homes with septic systems shall be allowed to continue using these systems so long as there are no health or environmental problems. If health or environmental problems occur with these systems, the homeowners shall be required to connect to the sewer system.

3.3 Any septic system serving a site being re-developed must be decommissioned according to county and state regulations, and the site must be connected to the sewer system.

3.4 The City shall actively work with regional and adjoining local jurisdictions to manage, regulate and maintain the regional sewer system.

3.5 The City shall take whatever steps are economically feasible to prevent overflows.

3.6 The City shall design and implement programs to reduce infiltration/inflow wherever these programs can be shown to significantly increase the capacity of the sewer system at a lower cost than other types of capacity improvements.
IV. STORMWATER

Mercer Island’s stormwater system serves a complex network of 54 drainage basins. The system relies heavily on "natural" conveyances. There are more than 22 miles of ravine watercourses that carry stormwater, and 30 miles of open drainage ditches. All but 5 percent of the ravine watercourses are privately owned, while roughly 75 percent of the drainage ditches are on public property.

The artificial components of the system include 54 miles of public storm drains, 10 miles of private storm drains, 2,664 public catch basins and 537 private, and more than 4,500 catch basins.

The public portion of the system is maintained by the City’s Maintenance Department as part of the Stormwater Utility, with funding generated through a Stormwater Utility rate itemized on bimonthly City utility bills.

Mercer Island has no known locations where stormwater recharges an aquifer or feeds any other source used for drinking water.

Future Needs

In May 1993, the City began preparing to make significant changes in the way it manages stormwater on Mercer Island. The catalyst for this effort is new regional, state and federal requirements that must be met by local governments.

During the second half of 1993, two of Mercer Island’s 54 drainage basins were studied in detail during a process that actively involved interested basin residents. The studies were designed to gauge public perception of drainage and related water-quality problems, and to evaluate the effectiveness of various education tools.

The information gained from these studies, along with additional work scheduled for mid-1994, was used to develop an Island-wide program of system improvements and enhancements and a financing structure for the program.

In the fall of 1995, the City Council passed two ordinances (95C-118 and 95C-127) that created the legal and financial framework of the Storm and Surface Water Utility and provided the tools to begin achieving the goals of “creating a comprehensive program that integrates the Island’s private, public and natural and manmade systems into an effective network for control and, where possible, prevention of runoff quantity and quality problems.”

By the end of 1998, the Storm and Surface Water Utility had been fully launched with a full range of contemporary utility issues and needs. Major capital projects have been planned for the upcoming six years, and along with operating and maintenance standards, have been established to meet customer service expectations and regulatory compliance.

The City is in full compliance with all applicable federal and state stormwater requirements, Western Washington Phase II Municipal (NPDES) Permit issued by the Washington State Dept. of Ecology. In 2004-05, the utility city will developed a Comprehensive Basin Review that examined the City’s storm and surface water programs, focusing on capital needs, capital priorities.
and utility policies. The capital priorities are updated regularly in conjunction with the capital budget process to reflect changing conditions, new regulations (NPDES) and ratepayer expectations. Given that Mercer Island is urban/residential in nature and all of the Island's stormwater eventually ends up in Lake Washington, the prevention of nonpoint pollution will be a major priority.

**Stormwater Policies**

4.1 The City shall continue to implement programs and projects designed to meet the goals and requirements of the Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan.

4.2 The City shall actively promote and support education efforts focusing on all facets of stormwater management.

4.3 The City shall maintain and enforce land-use plans and ordinances requiring stormwater controls for new development and re-development. The ordinances shall be based on standards developed by the state Department of Ecology and shall be consistent with the policies in the Land-Use Element of this plan and the goals and policies of the City's Development Services Group.
Figure 3 - Stormwater Drainage Basins

Legend
- Drainage Basin
- Shoreline

Utilities - 12  PC Recommendation 11-19-2014
V. SOLID WASTE

The majority of solid waste services on Mercer Island are provided through a private hauler licensed by the City. The hauler currently serving Mercer Island is Eastside Disposal Republic Services, a division of Rabanco. Eastside collects residential and commercial garbage, and also collects residential recyclables and residential yard waste. Businesses that recycle select their own haulers. In 2004, Eastside, Republic Services was serving a total of 6,580 residential and commercial customers on Mercer Island.

A new contract for collection of solid waste was approved by the City Council for 1999 to 2009. This contract replaces the former license agreement dating back to 1981. The term of the new contract is 10 years. Rates are adjusted July 1 each year based on the Seattle-area Consumer Price Index (CPI) and apply only to operating costs affected by inflation. Pass-through costs such as tipping fees charged by King County are allowed after 30-days notice to customers, but any increase exceeding the rate of inflation requires permission from the City. Revenue from the sale of recyclables collected at the curb is returned to customers in the form of a rate credit. The cost of providing solid waste services on Mercer Island is covered entirely through the rates charged by haulers.

Eastside Disposal Republic Services transports garbage from Mercer Island to the Factoria Transfer Station, which is operated by the King County Solid Waste Division, for disposal in the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. Recyclables are transported to the Rabanco processing facility in Seattle, and yard waste is taken to Cedar Grove Composting near Issaquah.

Some Mercer Island households take all or a portion of their recyclables to a drop-off facility at Mercerdale Park operated by the Mercer Island School District. These recyclables are sold to a variety of processors. There are no other fixed solid-waste facilities on Mercer Island.

Future Needs

In 1988, Mercer Island entered into an interlocal agreement that recognizes King County as its solid waste planning authority (RCW 70.95). The Mercer Island City Council adopted the first King County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan in mid-1989, and in October 1993 the City Council adopted the updated 1992 edition of the Plan.

The King County’s 2001 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan established new countywide targets which will hold per resident and per-employee disposals constant throughout the planning period. As of 2014, King County was working on an update of the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. As a plan participant, Mercer Island met the original King County goal of 35 percent waste reduction and recycling in 1992. By late 1993, Mercer Island was diverting nearly 50 percent of its waste stream. Subsequent goals called for reducing the waste stream 50 percent in 1995 and 65 percent by the year 2000. Mercer Island has consistently diverted an
average of 65% of its waste stream annually since 2000 to 2014. Achieving these goals has helped lengthen the lifespan of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill and avoid the need to find alternative disposal locations for Mercer Island’s garbage.

The overall amount of waste generated on Mercer Island is not expected to increase significantly due to new development anticipated in the land-use element of this plan. However, the amount of recyclables and yard waste being diverted from Mercer Island’s waste stream should continue increasing over the next few years. Private facilities (Republic Services and Cedar Grove Composting) have the capacity to absorb this increase. Any additional garbage produced due to growth will be collected through a private hauler licensed by the City.

The 2001 General Sewer Plan called for the replacement of the Factoria Transfer Station. The King County Solid Waste Division is currently working with local cities to develop a new plan for the transfer system and a subsequent plan for exporting the region’s waste once the Cedar Hills Landfill reaches capacity and closes. A new system plan is expected to be completed by December 2005. To increase capacity, the existing Factoria Transfer Station began construction in late 2014.

The City’s existing solid waste program of offering two special collection events per year is expected to remain adequate. These events, at which yard waste and hard-to-recycle materials are collected by private vendors, are designed to assist households in further reducing the waste stream.

The collection of household hazardous waste on Mercer Island is available once a year over a two-week period through the Household Hazardous Wastemobile, a program of the Seattle-King County Local Hazardous Waste Management Plan. Mercer Island households and businesses help fund the Plan through a surcharge on their garbage bills.

**Solid Waste Policies**

5.1 All new construction, with the exception of single-family homes, shall be required to provide adequate space for on-site storage and collection of recyclables pursuant to Ordinance A-99.

5.2 The City shall actively promote and support recycling, composting and waste reduction techniques among the single-family, multi-family and commercial sectors.

5.3 The City shall, whenever practical, provide convenient opportunities for residents to recycle appliances, tires, bulky yard debris and other hard-to-recycle materials.

5.4 The City shall actively promote and support the proper handling and disposal of hazardous waste produced by households and businesses. The use of alternate products that are less hazardous or produce less waste shall be encouraged.

5.5 City departments and facilities shall actively participate in waste reduction and recycling programs.
5.6 All hazardous waste generated by City departments and facilities shall be handled and disposed of in accordance with applicable county, state, regional and federal regulations.

5.7 The City shall actively enforce the Solid Waste Code and other ordinances and regulations that prohibit the illegal dumping of yard debris and other types of waste.

5.8 The City shall play an active role in regional solid waste planning, with the goal of promoting uniform regional approaches to solid waste management.

5.9 The City shall actively promote and support the recycling, re-use or composting of construction, demolition and land-clearing debris wherever feasible.
VI. ELECTRICITY

All of the electricity consumed on Mercer Island is provided by Puget Sound Energy (Puget) under a franchise agreement with the City of Mercer Island. An new agreement was approved in early 1994 that will run through the year 2014 is valid until a new agreement is reached. Puget’s rates are set by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC).

In 1997, the company formerly known as Puget Sound Power & Light merged with Washington Natural Gas to become an investor owned energy utility with the new name Puget Sound Energy (PSE).


The electricity consumed by those customers is imported from generation sites on the Columbia River, in Canada, and other locations both inside and outside PSE’s service territory.

PSE builds, operates and maintains the electrical system serving Mercer Island. The system includes 6.2 miles of transmission lines (115 kV), three substations and two submarine cable termination stations.

Future Needs

The demand for electricity on Mercer Island is not expected to increase significantly during the period covered by this plan. In fact, the Island’s total electricity consumption was 164,713,778 KWH in 1998. In 2004, the electricity consumption was 107,210,400/KWH or an average of 11,528/KWH per customer. In 2013, the total electricity consumed was 174,352,420/KWH, or an average of 18,234/KWH per customer.

The capacity of the PSE system on Mercer Island is adequate to handle growth anticipated in the land use element of this plan. Still, improvements to the transmission system may occur that incorporate new technology, improve system reliability, or replace aged facilities. Localized improvements to the distribution system also are expected. Elsewhere in the PSE service territory that includes Mercer Island, population and employment forecasts indicate that new transmission lines and substations may have to be constructed to meet the peak winter demand for electricity. PSE’s planning analysis has identified five alternative solutions to address transmission capacity deficiency identified in the “Eastside Needs Assessment Report – Transmission System King County” dated October 2013. Each of these five solutions fully satisfies the needs identified in the Eastside Needs Assessment Report and satisfies the solution longevity and constructability requirements established by PSE. These five solutions include two 230 kV transmission sources and three transformer sites, outside of Mercer Island. PSE states construction is anticipated to begin in 2017 and be completed in 2018.

With one exception (see Policy 6.1), the only significant changes in PSE’s Mercer Island facilities will come from efforts aimed at improving system reliability.
The issue of system reliability, which is the subject of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the City of Mercer Island and PSE, will require considerable attention over the next several years. The MOA (see Utility Appendix) sets policies for identifying locations where power lines should be relocated underground and describes strategies for funding undergrounding projects. There is a reoccurring issue of unreliability which is unresolved and needs to be addressed.
Policies - Electricity

6.1 PSE, or the current provider, shall be encouraged to upgrade its facilities on Mercer Island where appropriate and incorporate technological changes when they are cost effective and otherwise consistent with the provider’s public service obligations. Mercer Island will serve as a test area for projects involving new technologies when appropriate.

6.2 The City shall annually evaluate the reliability of electric service provided to Mercer Island. Measures of reliability shall include the total number of outages experienced, the duration of each outage, and the number of customers affected.

6.3 All new electric transmission and distribution facilities shall be installed in accordance with this plan, the City’s zoning code, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries electrical code and other applicable laws, and shall be consistent with rates and tariffs on file with the WUTC. The electricity provider will obtain the necessary permits for work in the public right-of-way, except in emergencies.

6.4 The City shall encourage the undergrounding of all existing and new electric distribution lines where feasible. As required by the City’s franchise agreement with PSE (Section 5), any extension of existing distribution lines up to 15,000 volts shall be installed underground and should be arranged, provided, and accomplished in accordance with applicable schedules and tariffs on file with the WUTC.

6.5 The City shall encourage the undergrounding of electrical transmission lines where feasible, if and when such action is allowed by, and consistent with rates, regulations, and tariffs on file with the WUTC. Along with PSE, work cooperatively with the WUTC to establish rate schedules that equitably allocate the cost of undergrounding transmission lines among PSE customers.

6.6 The clearing of vegetation from power lines in rights-of-way shall balance the aesthetic standards of the community while enhancing improved system reliability.

6.7 The City shall support conservation programs undertaken by the electricity provider, and shall encourage the provider to inform residents about these programs.
VII. NATURAL GAS

Natural gas is provided to Mercer Island by Puget Sound Energy (PSE) under a franchise agreement with the City. The current 25-15 year agreement expires in the year 2020, with the City having the right to grant a five year extension. The delivery of natural gas is regulated by the Federal Energy Regulation Commission, the National Office of Pipeline Safety, and the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). These agencies determine service standards, and safety and emergency provisions. The WUTC also sets rates.

Natural gas is delivered to Mercer Island via an interstate pipeline system that is owned and operated by Northwest Pipeline Corp. The pipeline connects to PSE’s regional distribution network. Natural gas consumed in the Pacific Northwest comes from a variety of sources in the United States and Canada.

The number of natural gas customers on Mercer Island in 1999 was 6,028. For the year ending 1998, Mercer Island customers consumed 9,058,474 therms of natural gas. At the same time, average residential natural gas consumption on a nationwide basis decreased by 7.5% between 1994 and 1998 percent due to fuel-efficient construction, weatherization and more efficient appliances. In 2004, PSE served approximately 6,450 customers. In total, Mercer Island customers consumed 5,527,650 therms of natural gas, or an average of 857 therms per customer.

Future Needs

While natural gas is not considered a utility that is essential to urban development, it is an important alternative energy source that helps reduce reliance on electricity.

New natural gas lines on Mercer Island are installed on an as-requested basis. Natural gas lines are in place in virtually all developed areas of the Island, making natural gas available to most households.

No major new facilities would be required to accommodate this number of customers. New development, as anticipated in the land-use element of this plan, is not expected to significantly affect the number of gas customers on Mercer Island.

Policies - Natural Gas

7.1 The City shall promote and support conservation and emergency preparedness programs undertaken by PSE, or the current provider, and shall encourage PSE to inform residents about these programs.

7.2 The City shall encourage PSE or the current provider to make service available to any location on Mercer Island that wishes to use natural gas.
VIII. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunication utilities on Mercer Island encompass conventional wireline telephone, wireless communications (Cellular telephone, Personal Communication Services [PCS], and Specialized Mobile Radio [SMR]), and cable television. The telecommunications industry underwent dramatic change, in part as a result of the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

On February 8, 1996, the President signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 into law. Its overall intent is to develop competition in the telecommunications marketplace by allowing local telephone exchange carriers to provide long distance telephone service, as well as, cable television, audio services, video programming services, interactive telecommunications and Internet access. Similarly, long distance providers, cable operators and utilities are now permitted to offer local exchange telephone service. The legislation represents the first major rewrite of the Telecommunications Act of 1934.

Qwest CenturyLink Communications provides local exchange telephone service for all of Mercer Island. In early 1999, (then) U S WEST was serving an increasing number of access lines (telephone numbers) in the Mercer Island exchange area. This growth is more fully discussed below in the “Future Needs” section. The Qwest CenturyLink and its predecessor have served communities in Washington for more than 100 years. Qwest CenturyLink is regulated by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and the Federal Communications Commission.

Mercer Island has seen its wireless communications service providers grow from two in 1995, to seven in 1999 and excess of four in 2015. As of the 2004, there are 34 wireless communications facilities installed on the island. These installations are regulated by the FCC. However, the City may still conduct design review and enforce zoning provisions for locating facilities. In recognition of the continued demand for suitable sites, a Wireless Telecommunications Ordinance was passed by the City Council in 1996.

Cellular communication involves transmitting and receiving radio signals on frequencies reserved for cellular use. Signals to and from cellular phones are
routed along a series of low-powered transmitting antennas located at “cell sites.” Cellular communications are part of a broader category of services defined as Commercial Mobile Radio Service (“CMRS”). These include any mobile service that is (i) provided for profit; and (ii) makes interconnected service (i.e., enable customers to send and/or receive messages over the public switched telephone network) available to the public or to a substantial portion of the public. If this test is not met and the provider is not a “functional equivalent” of a commercial mobile radio provider, it is considered a private mobile radio service (PMRS) provider. This is the broadest term for wireless carriers, including cellular, PCS, SMR. Personal Communications System (PCS) is a loosely defined future ubiquitous telecommunications service that will allow “anytime, anywhere” voice and data communication with personal communications devices. Specialized Mobile Radio (SMR) is a private, business service using mobile radio telephones and base stations communicating via the public phone network.

Viacom Cablevision provided cable services for all of Mercer Island under a franchise agreement renewed in 1995. Viacom’s franchise was granted for ten years. Later in 1995, TCI Cablevision of Washington was granted a transfer of ownership for the former Viacom cable system properties. All terms and conditions of Mercer Island’s franchise were continued under the new TCI ownership. In December of 1998, TCI was acquired by AT&T for which a transfer of ownership was granted. The franchise continued to operate under the name of TCI of Washington until the third quarter of 1999. At that time the company name was changed to AT&T. Cable operations were then sold to Comcast in 2003 and a subsequent transfer of ownership was granted.

In 1999, AT&T was serving approximately 6,318 customers on Mercer Island through 65.9 distribution miles of overhead lines and 26.2 distribution miles of underground lines. In 2004, Comcast served 6,700 cable customers and 3,530 high-speed internet customers. In 2014, Comcast served 8,900 customers.

The data services offered by Comcast originate at a primary transmitter site in Bellevue. Comcast’s receiving apparatus on Mercer Island is contained in facilities located at 4320 – 88th Avenue SE.

The cable industry was deregulated by Congress in 1984, launching an almost 10-year period without local rate regulation. In November 1993, the City received certification from the FCC, pursuant to the 1992 Cable Act, to regulate basic cable service rates.

**Future Needs**

As a telecommunications utility, Qwest CenturyLink is required to provide services on demand. The industry has experienced a tremendous explosion in the demand for telecommunications services. Qwest CenturyLink customers, especially customers on Mercer Island, are routinely asking for multiple lines into their homes for fax machines, computers, separate business lines and separate lines for children. The result of the huge growth in telecommunications services is that Qwest’s telephone network is overloaded in some neighborhoods. The network was built over...
the last 100 years, and during most of that time, the company planned for 1.5 lines into each home. Today customers are demanding two, three, four and even more lines into their homes. On Mercer Island, U S WEST installed a large quantity of new lines during the mid-1990’s. To reduce the number of delayed service orders, the company has been investing in its central office and outside cable facilities on Mercer Island to meet the escalating demands for service.

Comcast has sufficient capacity to provide cable communications services to any new development on Mercer Island. During its franchise, Viacom replaced the coaxial cable in its trunk-line system on Mercer Island with fiber-optic cable. This 1993 undertaking was a major step toward meeting customer demand for an expanded number of channels and improved reliability.

The FCC has mandated Enhanced-911 (E-911), which seeks to improve the effectiveness and reliability of wireless 911 service by requiring Automatic Location Identification (ALI). ALI will allow emergency dispatchers to know the precise location of cell phone users to within 50-100 meters. Wireless carriers on Mercer Island will need to retrofit their wireless communication facilities to comply with this new federal requirement. In addition to the equipment that is required to support a network-based E-911 system, other hardware will need to be installed to transmit data from the sensor at the location site to the E-911 server. Full compliance is expected by December 31, 2005.

## Telecommunications Policies

8.1 The City shall encourage the consolidation and shared use of utility and communication facilities where feasible. Examples of shared facilities include towers, poles, antennae, substation sites, cables, trenches and easements.

8.2 The City shall encourage the undergrounding of all existing and new communication lines where feasible and not a health or safety threat.

8.3 The City shall periodically review and revise development regulations for telecom facilities to ensure that a balance exists between the public benefit derived from the facilities and their compatibility with the surrounding environment.

8.4 The City shall work with the cable communications provider to select and implement pilot projects appropriate for Mercer Island that explore the newest advances in cable technology, including interactive cable and public access.

8.5 The City continues to participate in a consortium of Eastside jurisdictions to collectively analyze rate adjustments proposed by the cable communications provider.

8.6 The City may allow limited well designed Wireless Communication Facilities (WCF) in Clise Park and Island Crest Park, consistent with the
8.68.7 The City shall encourage and work with WCF providers to increase the battery life of large cell sites.

Commented [g6]: The City removed Design Commission review. New Federal regulations exempt certain changes from zoning review.
Capital Facilities
CAPITAL FACILITIES ELEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Land Use & Capital Facilities

Incorporated in 1960, Mercer Island is a "mature" community. Approximately 95% of the community's residential lands have already been developed and its commercial centers are now experiencing increasing redevelopment pressures. The remaining lands to be developed are all commercial and residential "in fill" where public facilities have long been established. Mercer Island will not see major new subdivisions over the next two decades.

As a "mature community", Mercer Island has made substantial investments in public infrastructure over the last thirty years. As a result, the community largely has sufficient capacity in water and sewer systems, parks, schools, local streets and arterials, and public buildings (City Hall, library, fire stations, and community center) to handle projected growth. However, additional investments may be considered for park improvements as well as open space acquisition and trail development. In addition, improvements will be needed to maintain adopted transportation Level of Service (LOS) standards and to maintain existing infrastructure.

The following sections of the Capital Facilities Element inventory Mercer Island's existing public facilities in terms of their capacity (quantity) to serve current and forecasted populations through 2035. The Element continues with a discussion of existing "Levels of Service" standards and expenditure requirements to meet those standards. This is followed by a discussion of the City's overall capital planning and financing strategy as well as the revenues available for capital investment. The Element concludes with Policies that will guide development of the City CIP and capital investments.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a Mercer Island value. It is a process of ensuring the wise use and management of all resources within a framework in which environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being are integrated and balanced. It means meeting the needs of today without adversely impacting the needs of future generations. In 2006, a grassroots effort of Island citizens led the City to modify the vision statement in its comprehensive plan to include language embracing general sustainability, and in May 2007 the Council committed to a sustainability work program as well as a specific climate goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 2007 levels by 2050, which was consistent with King County and Washington State targets. Later in 2007, the Council set an interim emissions reduction goal (often called a "milepost") for City operations of 5% by 2012.

In recent years, the City has pursued a wide range of actions focusing on the sustainability of its internal operations. These measures began with relatively humble recycling and waste reduction campaigns, and then expanded into much larger initiatives such as energy-efficiency retrofits and cleaner-burning fleet vehicles. More recently, the City has installed its own on-site solar PV project at the Community and Event Center, and has now purchased several commercial-grade electric utility vehicles for Water Department and Parks Maintenance purposes. Approximately 35% of the City's internal electricity use is offset through the purchase of green power REC's from Puget Sound Energy. The City tracks several metrics in its annual "Dashboard"
Report” that evaluate progress made in energy consumption, fuel use, green power purchasing, solid waste diversion, and overall carbon footprint of City operations.

In 2012, activities were expanded further with the hiring of the City’s first dedicated Sustainability Manager, who designs, implements, and then oversees much of the internal sustainability project work. In addition, the Mayor and Council have increasingly addressed or supported specific regional and state-level climate commitments or legislation.

Due to the 20-year horizon envisioned by this comprehensive plan, it is especially appropriate to include internal measures that address the long-term actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ideally in collaboration with other local governments. Actions that the City will implement with the entire community’s sustainability in mind are addressed in the Land Use Element of this plan. Various City Departments, such as Parks and Recreation and Maintenance, prepare functional plans that directly implement some sustainability programs.

These Capital Facilities measures, and others under consideration, are identified in more detail in a rolling 6-year Sustainability Plan, to be adopted in 2015, which will guide the City’s internal and external actions while taking into account the interrelated issues of climate change, population change, land use, public infrastructure, natural resources management, quality of life, public health, and economic development.

II. CAPITAL FACILITIES INVENTORY

Listed below is a brief inventory of Mercer Island’s public capital facilities. Detailed descriptions of facilities and their components (e.g. recreational facilities in public parks) can be found in the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Arts Plan2014-2019 Parks and Recreation Plan, the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan and Transportation and Utilities Elements.

Public Streets & Roads

Mercer Island has over 75 miles of public roads. Interstate 90 runs east-west across the northern end of Mercer Island, providing the only road and transit connection to the rest of the Puget Sound region. Most of the road network on the island is comprised of local streets serving the island’s residential areas; arterials comprise approximately 25 miles, or one third, of the system.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Mercer Island has over 55 miles of facilities for non-motorized travel. In general, non-motorized facilities serve multiple purposes, including recreational travel for bicycles and pedestrians as well as trips for work and other purposes. On-road facilities for non-motorized travel include sidewalks and paths for pedestrians and bicycle lanes for cyclists. Regional access for non-motorized travel is provided by special bicycle/pedestrian facilities along I-90. Additional detail is provided in the 1996 2010 Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan.

Parks & Open Space

Mercer Island has over 467 472 acres of City parks and open space lands. This acreage comprises about 12% of the island. Eight CityEleven City parks, open spaces and playfields are over 10 acres in size. Three parks exceed 70 acres (Luther Burbank, Pioneer Park, and Park on the LidAubrey Davis Park, formerly known as the Park on the Lid). Island residents enjoy 20.81 acres of publicly-owned park and open space lands per 1,000 population. This compares with neighboring jurisdictions as follows: Bellevue – 21.84 acres/1000 pop.; Kent –
- 15.5 16.8 acres/1000 pop.; Redmond – 28.04 acres/1000 pop.; Kirkland - 194.1 acres/1000 pop. In addition to City park lands, approximately two-thirds of the Mercer Island School District grounds are available to Island residents. And, an additional 40 acres of private open space tracts are available for residents of many subdivisions on the Island. See Figure 1 for the locations and geographical distributions of the community’s parks, open space lands, street end parks, school district lands, I-90 facilities and private/semi-public facilities.

**Public Buildings**

Mercer Island is served by seven City-owned public buildings, the Mary Wayte Pool operated by the Northwest Center owned by the Mercer Island School District and operated by Olympic Cascade Aquatics, one Post Office and one King County (KCLS) Branch Library. Facility uses, locations and sizes are listed in Table 1 below.

During 2001, construction of a new Main Fire Station and a sizeable remodel of the Thrift Shop were completed. The City became the owner of Luther Burbank Park in 2003 after transfer of the property by King County. Construction of a new Community Center at Mercer View will begin in late 2004. The new 37,925 sq. ft. building will include a 10,000 sq. ft. gymnasium and is expected to be completed by December 2005. The Mercer Island Community and Events Center was completed in 2006, and in 2014, Fire Station 92 began construction at the south end of the Island.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Approx. Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Hall</td>
<td>Police, Dispatch &amp; General Admin.</td>
<td>North MI 9611 SE 36th St.</td>
<td>32,000 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Center at Mercer View</td>
<td>Comm. Mtgs., Recr. Programs Gymnasium and Fitness Senior adult and Youth Programs</td>
<td>North MI 8236 SE 24th St.</td>
<td>37,925 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Station</td>
<td>Fire &amp; Emergency Aid Response &amp; Admin.</td>
<td>Central Business District 3030 - 78th Ave. SE</td>
<td>16,600 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Fire Station</td>
<td>Fire &amp; Emergency Response</td>
<td>South End Shopping Cntr. 8473 SE 68th St.</td>
<td>3,500 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and Family Svcs. Thrift Shop</td>
<td>Sales-Fundraising: Recycled Household Goods</td>
<td>Central Business District 7710 SE 34th St.</td>
<td>5,254 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther Burbank Park Admin. Bldg.</td>
<td>Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Youth and Family Services Depts.</td>
<td>Luther Burbank Park 2040 – 84th Ave. SE</td>
<td>5,000 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Wayte Pool (Northwest Center)</td>
<td>Indoor Swimming Facility</td>
<td>Mid-island 8815 SE 40th St.</td>
<td>7,500 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Post Office</td>
<td>Postal Service</td>
<td>Central Business District 3040 78th Ave. SE</td>
<td>10,000 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King County Library (KCLS)</td>
<td>Public Library - Branch of KCLS</td>
<td>Mid-island 4400 88th Ave SE</td>
<td>14,620 s.f.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Schools

The Mercer Island School District owns and operates one high school, one middle school and three elementary schools. Altogether, the School District owns 108.6 acres of land, including those lands dedicated to parks, open space and recreational uses. The District serves a 2004-2014 school population of 4,000-4,310 students in approximately 461,000 total square feet of “educational” space. In addition to educational/athletic facilities, the District also owns and leases space to private non-profit groups at the North Mercer Campus.

During the 1990s, the District completed a major capital improvement program to remodel its schools. In 1993, the voters passed a $10.9 million bond issue to modernize Islander Middle School. The latest remodel of the Islander Middle School occurred in 2000, when the school completed an addition to the multi-purpose room and seven new classrooms. In 1994, the voters again approved a $16.4 million bond issue to modernize the three Elementary Schools. All these schools underwent $6 million remodels that were completed in September 1995. In 1996 voters approved a $26.7 million bond issue to modernize the High School. The total cost of the renovation, which included some new construction, was $37.2 million. In May 2002 February 2010, the community approved a 2-year capital fund levy, and a 12-year bond to replace the Mercer Island High School track and field. In February 2004, the community approved a four-six year capital levy for nearly $14.9 million per year, targeting minor capital replacement costs and improvements at each school site. Included in the levy were funds for the addition of music and orchestra rooms at Mercer Island High School, portable classrooms for elementary and middle schools, hard play area resurfacing at the elementary schools, repair and replacement of the turf field and repair of the track at Islander Middle School and major tennis court renovation at the high school. Mercer Island High School, painting, re-roofing, pavement overlays, security improvements, etc and other improvements.

Despite a lack of enrollment loss in 2003-2004, School District enrollment is in a population decline cycle. In the February 11, 2014 special election, Mercer Island voters overwhelmingly approved three targeted facilities projects to address overcrowding in Mercer Island schools.

After months of public discussions, meetings and work by the Mercer Island community, school board and district, a bond proposal was approved by the board in September 2013. It was then approved by more than 74 percent of Mercer Island voters in February 2014. The targeted facilities projects include:

- building a fourth elementary school on the district-owned North Mercer campus;
- expanding Islander Middle School, including 14 new classrooms and lab spaces, commons and cafeteria, gymnasiums, music rooms and administrative space; and
- building 10 additional classrooms at Mercer Island High School, including four lab spaces and six general education classrooms.

Annually, the District develops projections primarily utilizing the historical enrollment
trends tracked each October for the past five years. In addition to the cohort derived from that historical database, the District looks at much longer "real growth" trends as well as birth rates and female population patterns. Current enrollment projections show an anticipated increase of approximately 245 students over the next eight years, in addition to an increase of approximately 250 students over the last six years.

Provision of an adequate supply of K-12 public school facilities is essential to avoid overcrowding and to enhance the educational opportunities for our children and to avoid overcrowding. A variety of factors can contribute to changes in K-12 enrollment, including changes in demographics, the resale of existing homes, and new development. The District and the City will work together to review the District’s enrollment projections and capacity needs, and will examine whether appropriate school facilities are available. The District is engaged in an ongoing long-range planning process to examine, maintain updated enrollment projections, house anticipated student enrollment projections, school capacity, financing options, and school facility options, and provide adequate school facilities.

Water System

The City's Water Utility consists of 87,115 miles of water mains and transmission lines which serve over 7,400 customers, 7,640 water meters. In addition, the system includes two 4 million gallon storage reservoirs, two pump stations and 78,86 pressure reducing valve stations and an emergency well completed in 2010. The City purchases water from the Seattle Water Department - Seattle Public Utilities who conveys it primarily from the Cedar River and Tolt River watersheds, watershed to Mercer Island via a 16 inch supply line crossing Lake Washington's East Channel. A smaller proportion of our water supply comes from the Tolt River System.

Sewer System

The Mercer Island sewer utility is made up 98,104 miles of collection lines which serve over 7,200 customers. The collection system is linked to 18-17 pump stations, 2 flushing stations, and more than 98,113 miles of gravity and pressure pipelines, ranging in diameter from 3 to 24 inches which ultimately flow into King County Department of Natural Resources (KCDNR) facilities for treatment and disposal at the South Treatment Plant in Renton.

Storm Water System

The Island’s storm water system is made up of a complex network of interconnected public and private conveyances for surface water. The system serves 54,88 separate drainage basins. The major components of the system include more than 22,15 miles of natural watercourses, 95,60 percent of these are privately owned; 40,26 miles of open drainage ditches, 75,70 percent of which are on public property; 4,500 public City owned catch basins; and nearly 600 over 3,300 private non city owned catch basins.
III. LEVEL OF SERVICE & FORECAST OF FUTURE NEEDS

In analyzing capital financing over twenty years, the City must make estimates in two areas: Cost of New Facilities and the Cost to Maintain Existing Facilities. To estimate the former, the City must evaluate its established levels of service (LOS) for the various types of facilities - streets, parks, recreational facilities, open space, trails, public buildings -- and project future needed investments to reach those service targets. In this case, "Level of Service" refers to the quantitative measure for a given capital facility. See Table 2 below. In establishing an LOS standard, the community can make reasonable financial choices among the various "infrastructure" facilities that serve the local population.

Fortunately, Mercer Island has already acquired and/or built most of the facilities needed to meet its LOS goals (e.g. parks acreage, recreational facilities, water and sewer system capacity, street system capacity, police, fire and administration buildings). As a result, while a few "LOS deficiencies" must be addressed over the next twenty years (open space, new trail construction, some street capacity improvements), most capital financing projections for Mercer Island involve reinvesting in and maintaining existing assets.

Listed in Table 2 below is a summary of level of service and financial assumptions (by facility type) used in making a twenty year expenditure forecast. In looking at the assumptions and projections, the reader should bear in mind two things: 1) No detailed engineering or architectural design has been made to estimate costs. The numbers are first level estimates; and, 2) The objective of the analysis is to predict where major financing issues may arise in the future. The estimates should be used for long range financial and policy planning; not as budget targets.
Table 2 - Level of Service & Financial Forecasts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital Facility</th>
<th>Level of Service Standard</th>
<th>Capital Needs</th>
<th>New Capital Cost (To address deficiency)</th>
<th>Annual Reinvestment Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Streets-Arterials -Residential -CBD</td>
<td>LOS “C,” “D”</td>
<td>None; 4 locations identified</td>
<td>To be determined $3,322,900</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>$0 $1,712,900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Open Space</td>
<td>Will be established in the Revised Park and Open Space Plan</td>
<td>Dock Infrastructure, Safe Facilities, Open Space, Trails and Athletic Fields</td>
<td>To be assessed $8 million</td>
<td>$250,000/yr $1.3 million, Parks &amp; Open Space CIP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational Facilities</td>
<td>See Park &amp; Open Space Plan</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existing and New Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities</td>
<td>Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan</td>
<td>Multiple Shoulder improvements, 78th Ave, pedestrian and bike improvements, safe routes to school</td>
<td>$8 million/yr</td>
<td>$375,000/yr $140,000</td>
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<td>Open Space</td>
<td>Will be Established in the Revised See Park and Open Space Plan</td>
<td>Standard to be set</td>
<td>To be assessed</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
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<td>Water Syst – Supply Storage Distribution Fire Flow</td>
<td>6.7 mill. Gal/day Energy Supply Line None None None</td>
<td>$1.2 million $121,500,000 None None</td>
<td>$8 million/yr $150,000 from Utility Rates</td>
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<td>Storm &amp; Surface Water System</td>
<td>Washington DOE Stormwater Manual Multiple</td>
<td>$350,000-$425,000 from Utility Rates on average goes to one major basin improvement project annually</td>
<td>$350,000/yr $500,000 from Utility Rates $11.1 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanitary Sewer System</td>
<td>0 - Sewer Overflows</td>
<td>Inflow &amp; Infiltration Sewer Lakeline - portion of reaches 314</td>
<td>$145,766 million</td>
<td>$500,000/yr $1 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>MISD</td>
<td>Maintenance of existing buildings, new elementary school, middle school and high school expansions</td>
<td>Major Renovations, Completed $98.8 million bond</td>
<td>$4.9 million/yr, levy passed February 201004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parking Facilities*</td>
<td>To be assessed*</td>
<td>To be assessed*</td>
<td>To be assessed*</td>
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</table>

*An analysis is in progress, capital needs and costs to be evaluated pending completion of studies, after completion of light rail.

[Note: More detailed LOS standards for capacity and operational reliability, operational reliability, and capital facilities needs can be found in the following documents: Transportation]
IV. CAPITAL FACILITIES FINANCING

In light of the relatively large past investments in public facilities and the relatively low level of projected future growth, most future capital spending will go for repair, upgrade or replacement of existing capital assets. Generally speaking, Mercer Island will finance most of these capital reinvestment activities on a pay-as-you-go basis; or in the case of school renovations - local general obligation debt will be the primary financing technique.

The community should expect most funding for future capital improvements to come from local public sources. Substantial investments in transportation facilities, including parking, sewage collection and conveyance, and stormwater facilities will be needed over the 20 year planning period. Funding for open space acquisition and parks improvements may also be needed to meet community expectations. Private development will finance some minor new capital improvements, such as stormwater facilities, sewage conveyance improvements, and transportation improvements where proposed development will exceed adopted levels of service. Because future growth outside the Town Center is expected to be relatively minor and Mercer Island is a mature community with well developed infrastructure, Mercer Island will not finance capital improvements through development impact fees. The City will use substantive authority under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to require mitigation for new development that is directly related and proportional to the impacts of that development.

Revenue Sources

The City’s capital program is funded by a variety of revenue sources ranging from largely unrestricted, discretionary sources like General Funds and REET 1 to very restricted sources like fuel taxes and grants. Listed below is a description of the major capital funding sources used by the City.

General Fund Revenues - Revenues from property, sales and utility taxes as well as licenses and permit fees, other user fees, and state shared revenues. Funds can be used for any municipal purpose and are generally dedicated to the operation of the City’s (non-utility) departments and technology and equipment upgrades.

Real Estate Excise Taxes (1 & 2) - Taxes imposed on the seller in real estate transactions. Both REET 1 & 2 taxes are levied at 1/4 of 1% of the sale price of the property. Revenues are to be dedicated only to projects identified in the City’s Capital Facilities Element. Revenues must be used on the following types of projects:
The City of Mercer Island separates the Capital Improvement Program into two parts: The Capital Reinvestment Program (CRP) and the Capital Facilities Program (CFP). The CRP contains all major maintenance projects for existing public assets. The CFP consists of proposed new capital facilities.

**Capital Reinvestment Plan (CRP)**
The CRP’s purpose is to organize and schedule repair, replacement and refurbishment of public improvements for the City of Mercer Island. The CRP is a six-year program setting forth each of the proposed maintenance projects, the cost and funding source. These capital projects are generally paid for from existing City resources.

The program emphasis in a reinvestment plan is timely repair and maintenance of existing facilities. To this effect, while new equipment and improvements are made to some older fixed assets, the intent is to design a program which will preserve and maintain the City’s existing infrastructure. The maintenance and enhancement of the taxpayer’s investment in fixed assets remains the City’s best defense against the enormous cost of the replacement of older but still very valuable public improvements.

The CRP is intended to be a public document. For this purpose, it is organized by functional area. Hence, any individual who wishes to gain knowledge about a project need not know the funding source or any other technical information but only needs to know the general type of improvement in order to find the relevant information. The Capital Reinvestment Program is divided into four functional programmatic areas: streets and pedestrian...
and bicycle facilities, park and recreational facilities, general government (buildings, equipment and technology), and utilities - water, sewer and storm water drainage.

CRP projects are typically "pay as you go", which means that they are funded from the current operations of the City Street Fund, CIP Funds, and the utilities funds.

**Capital Facilities Plan (CFP)**

The CFP is a six-year plan to outline proposed new capital projects. The CFP is also divided into four component parts: streets and pedestrian and bicycle facilities, parks and recreation facilities, general government (buildings, equipment and technology), and utilities - water, sewer and storm water drainage.

Like the CRP, the plan for new facilities provides easy access for the public. Each project in the plan is described briefly and the total cost and appropriation for the next six years is stated.

Funding for CFP projects will be identified in the Capital Facilities Element. However, final funding strategies will be decided simultaneously with the approval of the projects. This may involve a bond issue, special grant or a source of revenue that is outside the available cash resources of the City.

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**CIP Project Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Project Code</th>
<th>Status of Funds</th>
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**Commented [g1]:** The following CIP project summary information replaces the previous 2004 to 2010 summary. The Capital Improvements Projects are chosen and funded by City Council. THE FOLLOWING SUMMARIES ARE THE MOST CURRENT DRAFT AS OF 10-30-2014. City Council is scheduled to adopt the final CIP projects in December of 2014.
## CIP Project Summary

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<th>Bond</th>
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**Total General Government: 1,223,000**

### Capital Facilities - 13 PC Recommendation 11-19-2014

#### Storm Drainage Utility

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<th>CapEx</th>
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**Total Storm Drainage Utility: 1,223,000**

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*Capital Facilities - 13 PC Recommendation 11-19-2014*
## CIP Project Summary

### Capital Facilities Plan

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### General Government

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Total Capital Projects: 0.00

### Total Capital Projects

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Total Capital Projects: 0.00

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**Capital Facilities - 14 PC Recommendation 11-19-2014**
V. CAPITAL FACILITIES GOALS AND POLICIES

Together with the City's Management and Budget Policies contained in the City’s Budget (and Capital Improvement Program), the following goal and policies guide the acquisition, maintenance and investment in the City's capital assets.

GOAL 1: Ensure that capital facilities and public services necessary to support existing and new development are available at locally adopted levels of service.

1.1 The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) shall identify and plan for projects needed to maintain adopted levels of service for services provided by the City.

1.2 The City shall schedule capital improvements in accordance with the adopted six-year Capital Improvement Program. From time to time, emergencies or special opportunities may be considered that may require a re-scheduling of projects in the CIP.

1.3 The CIP shall be developed in accordance with requirements of the Growth Management Act and consistent with the Capital Facilities Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

1.4 If projected expenditures for needed capital facilities exceed projected revenues, the City shall re-evaluate the established service level standards and the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan, seeking to identify adjustments in future growth patterns and/or capital investment requirements.

1.5 Within the context of a biennial budget, the City shall update the six-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

1.6 The City’s two-year capital budget shall be based on the six-year CIP.

1.7 The Capital Facilities Element shall be periodically updated to identify existing and projected level of service deficiencies and their public financing requirements, based on projected population growth. Capital expenditures for maintenance, upgrades and replacement of existing facilities should be identified in the biennial budget and six-year Capital Improvement Program.

1.8 The City shall coordinate development of the capital improvement budget with the General Fund budget. Future operation costs associated with new capital improvements should be included in operating budget forecasts.

1.9 The City shall seek to maintain its assets at a level adequate to protect capital investment and minimize future maintenance and replacement costs.

1.10 Highest priority for funding capital projects should be for improvements that protect the public health and safety.

1.11 The City will adopt a Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan will be updated periodically and shall guide City efforts to maintain reliability of key infrastructure and address vulnerabilities and potential impacts associated with natural hazards.

1.12 Maintenance of and reinvestment in existing facilities should be financed
on a "pay as you go" basis using ongoing revenues.

1.13 Acquisition or construction of new capital assets should be financed with new revenues (such as voter approved taxes or external grants).

1.14 Water, sanitary sewer and storm water capital investments should be financed through utility user fees.

1.15 The City shall coordinate with other entities that provide public services within the City to encourage the consistent provision of adequate public services.

1.16 City operations should be optimized to minimize carbon footprint impacts, especially with respect to energy consumption and waste reduction. New Capital Facilities should incorporate and encourage the sustainable stewardship of the natural environment, and consider the benefit of creating cutting-edge, demonstration projects.

1.17 City procurement should include consideration of total lifecycle costs, recycled content, and other common measures of product sustainability.

1.18 Current City facilities are operated in an energy-efficient manner, and opportunities for improvement are implemented when feasible. New City facilities should explore meeting public and private-sector sustainable building certification standards, such as the ‘BuiltGreen’ system and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system.

1.19 Parks & Open Space – Implement sustainability measures identified within the City’s Parks and Recreation Management Plan, including special attention to direct sustainability measures, such as tree retention, preference for native vegetation and habitat creation, minimized use of chemicals, and reductions in energy and fuel use.

1.20 Implement proposed projects in the City’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan (PBF), with emphasis placed on quick and affordable early fixes that demonstrate the City’s progress in providing safe alternative transportation modes to the public.
VI. CAPITAL FACILITIES FINANCIAL FORECAST

In analyzing the City's existing and projected expenditure and revenues for its capital facilities in light of the City's established Levels of Service standards (LOS) and capital financing policies (City Budget), a sustainable twenty year forecast emerges. Figure 2 below shows the twenty year impacts of capital investments the City's infrastructure.

Figure 2 - Capital Facilities Forecast
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital Costs</th>
<th>Revenue Sources</th>
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<tr>
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<td>20 year est. capital expenditures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Streets and Trails (PBF)</td>
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Capital Facilities - 18 PC Recommendation 11-19-2014
2015-2016 Proposed CIP Budget by Project Category

- Utilities: 44%
- Streets, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities: 22%
- Buildings, Equipment and Technology: 17%
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space: 17%
VII. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Mercer Island has made substantial past investments in its infrastructure. Most future investments will be for maintenance of existing capital assets. However, additional investments will be needed in transportation facilities, stormwater facilities, and sewage collection and conveyance over the twenty year planning period. The City will invest approximately $12.4 million in the development of a new Community Center at Mercer View. This facility is expected to provide recreation and other services to meet community needs well beyond the 20 year planning period. Utility rate adjustments in all utilities will be required over time to support reinvestment in these aging facilities. When viewed over a twenty year period, Mercer Island will have sufficient funding capacity to achieve its LOS goals and construct and maintain its capital facilities.

To identify specific locations of future facilities, see the annually updated Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan, 2004 2014 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Arts, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan, 2014 01Water System Plan, and 2003 General Sewer Plan. Specific storm drainage improvements will be identified as development and implementation of capital improvements to the public storm drainage utility (and drainage basins analyses) progress.
VIII. PROCESS FOR SITING PUBLIC FACILITIES

Background - State & County

The Growth Management Act requires that jurisdictions planning under its authority develop and adopt a process for identifying and siting essential public facilities, including those facilities typically difficult to site.

The State Office of Financial Management maintains a list of those essential State facilities that are required or likely to be built within the next six years. The list includes: airports; state education facilities; state or regional transportation facilities; state and local correctional facilities; solid waste handling facilities; in-patient facilities including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities and group homes; waste water treatment facilities; utility and energy facilities; and parks and recreation facilities.

King County Policies also identify the parameters for the siting of new public capital facilities of a county- or state-wide nature. The facilities shall be sited so as to support countywide land use patterns, support economic activities, mitigate environmental impacts, provide amenities or incentives, and minimize public costs. Public facilities development projects are also to be prioritized, coordinated, planned and sited through an inter jurisdictional process.

Interstate 90 represents the community's largest essential public facility of a regional or statewide nature. Given the lack of available land, the residential nature of Mercer Island and the comparatively high land and development costs, future siting of major regional or state facilities on Mercer Island is most likely unrealistic and incompatible with existing land uses.

Mercer Island Facilities

At the local level, the City of Mercer Island identifies facilities as essential to the community: public safety facilities (fire and police), general administration and maintenance (City Hall), public library, public schools and facilities housing human services and recreation/community service programs. These facilities are not generally classified as “essential public facilities” as they do not have the same level of regional importance and difficulty in siting. Though not “essential” under GMA, these public facilities provide public services that are important to the quality of life on Mercer Island and should be available when and where needed.

The City of Mercer Island employs many methods in the planning for and siting of public facilities: land use codes, environmental impact studies, and compliance with state and federal regulatory requirements. In addition, the Transportation, Utilities and Capital Facilities Elements of the Comprehensive Plan identify existing and future local public facilities and require substantial public involvement in the siting of those facilities.

However, because the vast majority of Mercer Island's available land has been developed for residential uses (over 95%), siting most public facilities that are generally regarded as not compatible with residential land uses becomes problematic.
In the past, siting local public or human services facilities has produced a wide range of responses within the community. Community acceptance is a significant issue and nearly always has a strong influence on final site selection. Developing a basic framework for community involvement early in the facilities development process clearly enhances the whole siting process. The City should establish a public participation plan that involves the community during the siting and development processes and, if necessary, after operations begin at the facility.

In large part, the most effective facilities siting approaches include early community notification and ongoing community involvement concerning both the facilities and the services provided at the site. Use of these strategies creates opportunities to build cooperative relationships between the City, the adjacent neighbors and the broader community who use the services. They also help to clearly define the rights and responsibilities of all concerned.

Policies for Siting Public Facilities and Essential Public Facilities

The purpose of the Essential Public Facilities Siting Process is to ensure that public services are available and accessible to Mercer Island and that the facilities are sited and constructed to provide those services in a timely manner. Site selection is an important component in facilities development and should occur within a process that includes adequate public review and comment and promotes trust between City and the community.

2.1 Essential public facilities should be sited consistent with the King County Countywide Planning Policies.

2.2 Siting proposed new or expansions to existing essential public facilities shall consist of the following:
   a. An inventory of similar existing essential public facilities, including their locations and capacities;
   b. A forecast and demonstration of the future need for the essential public facility;
   c. An analysis of the potential social and economic impacts and benefits to jurisdictions receiving or surrounding the facilities;
   d. An analysis of the proposal’s consistency with County and City policies;
   e. An analysis of alternatives to the facility, including decentralization, conservation, demand management and other strategies;
   f. An analysis of alternative sites based on siting criteria developed through an inter-jurisdictional process;
   g. An analysis of environmental impacts and mitigation; and
   h. Extensive public involvement consistent with the Public Participation Principles outlined in the Introductory section of the Comprehensive Plan.

2.3 Local public facility siting decisions shall be consistent with the Public Participation Principles outlined in the Introductory section of the Comprehensive Plan.
2.4 Local public facility siting decisions shall be based on clear criteria that address (at least) issues of service delivery and neighborhood impacts.

2.5 City departments shall describe efforts to comply with the Essential Public Facilities Siting process when outlining future capital needs in the Capital Improvements Program budget.

2.6 City departments shall develop a community notification and involvement plan for any proposed capital improvement project that involves new development or major reconstruction of an existing facility and which has been approved and funded in the biennial Capital Improvement Program budget.
Shorelines
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is four-fold:

1. To fulfill the requirements of the Shoreline Management Act of 1971, Chapter 286, Laws of 1971, Chapter 90.58. RCW and Chapter 173-16 WAC by developing a Master Program to guide the future use and development of Mercer Island’s shoreline.

2. To recognize the Regional Lake Washington Master Program as a basis for Mercer Island’s Master Program.

3. To provide guidelines and recommendations for revising local ordinances and zoning codes and for updating the comprehensive plan.

4. To provide a basis for evaluating applications for shoreline permits on Mercer Island.

The State of Washington Shoreline Management Act of 1971 recognizes that the shorelines of the state are among our most valuable and fragile natural resources and directs all local governments to develop a Master Program for the management of these shorelines. The Law specifies that all lakes over 1,000 acres in surface area are Shorelines of Statewide Significance. Lake Washington is such a shoreline and in our planning we must, as the Shoreline Management Act specifies, provide for uses in the following order of preference: those which

1. Recognize and protect the state-wide interest over local interest;
2. Preserve the natural character of the shoreline;
3. Result in long term over short term benefit;
4. Protect the resources and ecology of the shoreline;
5. Increase public access to publicly owned areas of the shoreline;
6. Increase recreational opportunities for the public in the shoreline;
7. Provide for any other element deemed appropriate or necessary.

The Final Guidelines to the Shoreline Management Act provide additional criteria with respect to Master Programs, the natural systems, and use activities. Some guidance in shoreline planning is also offered in the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the State Environmental Policy Act of 1971, other legislation pertaining to the use of shorelines, and the strong voter support for shoreline legislation in 1972.

Under Emergency Rules the Department of Ecology has designated Lake Washington as a “region” for the purpose of shoreline planning. In response, each affected local government sent representatives to serve on a Technical Committee and appointed citizens to sit on a Regional Citizens Advisory Committee from May to October, 1973. These two Committees worked together to develop goals and policies for the future of the Lake. The Regional Goals and Policies document has been used by the Mercer Island Shorelines Management Citizens Advisory Committee as the basis for developing the Goals and Policies portion of the Mercer Island Master Program.

Beginning in June, 1973, the Mercer Island Citizens Advisory Committee has met on a near weekly basis to meet a December 20,
1973 deadline. The early meetings were informational in nature, but since September the Committee has met to review and modify preliminary goal and policy statements submitted as revised from the Regional Program. The meetings of the Committee have been open to the public.

The Mercer Island Planning staff gathered information and provided drafts as well as contacting regional, state and federal agencies. These agencies assisted in providing the staff information and legal advice. As a final step in the preparation of this document, three public hearings were held on December 3, 10 and 17, 1973.

PROLOGUE

To the early developers who built metropolitan Seattle, Lake Washington was perceived as a utilitarian resource. During the past hundred years the Lake has been utilized for transportation, agricultural and domestic water supplies, waste disposal, and numerous types of commercial and industrial enterprises. Many of these activities had adverse impacts on the Lake, and the discharge of sewage eventually led to serious problems with respect to water quality. In response to the rapidly declining quality of Lake Washington, the public voted to create the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle (METRO) for the purpose of treating sanitary sewage and diverting its discharge from the Lake to Puget Sound. Today the lake is once again suitable for swimming and other recreational activities.

Many of the functions previously related to the lake are now met by other means. The region’s water supply is from rivers, one of which feeds into Lake Washington. Sanitary sewers have been diverted and measures are being taken to minimize further pollutants from entering the Lake. Water-borne transportation has been largely replaced by an extensive road network around and across the Lake. Also, commercial and industrial uses of the Lake have declined in recent years. In contrast, the use of Lake Washington for leisure activities has increased. The vast majority of the Lake is presently used for residential or recreational purposes. Thus, the future of Lake Washington may be quite different from the expectations of its early developers.

Mercer Island was originally utilized as a source of timber, and although proposed as a “regional park” in its entirety at one time, it became a recreational and, later, a prime residential area. Until 1940 boat and ferry travel was the primary means of reaching the Island from Seattle. In 1940 the Lake Washington floating bridge was completed. At this time the population of the Island and, subsequently, the complexion of development changed rapidly. Developers took advantage of the relatively easy access and relatively close proximity to Seattle’s employment centers, and land quickly changed from forest to subdivision.

Planning during this time and up until the early 1960’s was done by King County. Since accepting the County zoning upon incorporation of the City in 1960, few changes affecting the shoreline have occurred. Most of the shoreline of Mercer Island had been platted previous to incorporation. Some of these areas are zoned R-8.4 which is a higher density than the R-15 which Mercer Island preferred to impose on the unplatted land it had the opportunity to regulate. Changes in zoning to a lower density along the shoreline have been virtually impossible to achieve. However, the City has developed several ordinances such as those relating to waterfront structures, community waterfront tracts, tree
clearing, preserving of watercourses and others that directly or indirectly preserve and enhance shoreline areas.

INTENT

The Lake Washington Regional Citizens and Technical Committees have recognized that the shoreline of Lake Washington is a valuable and fragile natural resource and that there is a great concern throughout the region relating to its utilization, protection, restoration, and preservation. They further recognized that unrestricted construction on the shoreline of Lake Washington is not in the best public interest, while at the same time recognizing and protecting private property rights consistent with the public interest. In addition, they recognized that the shoreline of Lake Washington is located within a major urbanized area and is subjected to ever increasing pressures of additional uses necessitating increased coordination in the management and development of said shoreline. They stated that there is a clear and urgent demand for a planned, rational and concerted effort to insure coordinated and optimum utilization of the shoreline of Lake Washington.

Although the Regional Program provides a basis for the Mercer Island Master Program, historically, shoreline development and, more recently, the nature of our land use ordinances, zoning codes and comprehensive plan, have established a fairly set land use pattern. Community attitudes have strongly emphasized the desire to retain the residential/recreational uses of the shoreline. Therefore, there appears to be a need to slightly modify the tone of the Regional Program to fit Mercer Island.

The Mercer Island Citizen Advisory Committee has indicated that the order of preference for shoreline development should be evaluated according to the following considerations:

1. Low density single-family residences should continue to be the primary land use of the shoreline of Mercer Island.

2. Conservation of marshes, spawning grounds and other unique or fragile areas is of primary concern.

3. Importance of the public having ample access to the shoreline.

4. Water-oriented recreation is deemed to be appropriate and desirable.

Planning and usage of the Mercer Island shoreline should reflect these priorities.

This document should be read in its entirety and be considered as a whole. These goals and policies were developed with the above priorities in mind and should be applied accordingly. The goals and policies within the following Elements: Shoreline Uses and Activities, Conservation, Public Access, and Components are intended by the Committees to be applicable in all cases.

LAKE WASHINGTON REGIONAL GOALS

The Regional Goals have provided a basis for the Goals and Policies developed for Mercer Island. The Regional Goals are, therefore, summarized below to provide a reference to the Goals and Policies formulated by the Mercer Island Citizens Committee.

PRIMARY GOAL

Shoreline Goals and Policies - 5
The natural amenities and resources of Lake Washington are to be conserved in a predominately recreational/residential environment with adequate access available to the public.

The regional goals established by the Regional Committees are listed below in order of preference:

-- The shoreline of Lake Washington is to be planned and coordinated to afford optimal use of the limited water resource.

-- The shoreline of Lake Washington is to provide natural amenities within an urban environment.

-- The resources and amenities of Lake Washington are to be protected and preserved for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

-- Increase public access to and along the shoreline areas, provided public safety, private property rights, and unique or fragile areas are not adversely affected.

-- Water-dependent recreational activities available to the public are to be encouraged and increased on the shoreline of Lake Washington where appropriate and consistent with public interest.

-- Existing residential uses are to be recognized and new residential construction will be subject to certain limitations if applicable.

-- Existing economic uses and activities on the shoreline of Lake Washington are to be recognized, while economic uses of activities that are not dependent on a Lake Washington location are to be discouraged.

-- A balanced transportation system for moving people and goods is to be encouraged within existing corridors.

**DESIGNATED ENVIRONMENT**

The Final Guidelines - Shoreline Management Act of 1971 requires that as a part of the Master Program the City is required to do the following:

1. Designated type of environments the Mercer Island shorelines represent.

2. The environmental designations be consistent with the information in the Shoreline Inventory.

3. The designation must be consistent with the provisions of the Guidelines and Mercer Island’s Goals and Policies.

More generally the Guidelines state that:

“In order to plan and effectively manage shoreline resources, a system of categorizing shoreline areas is required for use by local governments in the preparation of the master programs. The system is designated to provide a uniform basis for applying policies and use regulations within distinctively different shoreline areas. To accomplish this, the environmental designation to be given any specific area is to be based on the existing development pattern, the biophysical capabilities and limitations of the shoreline being considered for development and the goals and aspirations of local citizenry.

The recommended system classifies shorelines into four distinct environments (natural, conservancy, rural and urban) which provide the framework for implementing shoreline policies and regulatory measures.
This system is designed to encourage uses in each environment which enhance the character of that environment. The basic intent of this system is to utilize performance standards which regulate use activities in accordance with goals and objectives defined locally rather than to exclude any use from any one environment. Thus, the particular uses or type of developments placed in each environment should be designed and located so that there are no effects detrimental to achieving the objectives of the environment designations and local development criteria. This approach provides an ‘umbrella’ environment class over local planning and zoning on the shorelines. Since every area is endowed with different resources, has different intensity of development and attaches different social values to these physical and economic characteristics, the enforcement designations should not be regarded as a substitute for local planning and land-use regulations.”

Although none of the four categories precisely fit Mercer Island, the most appropriate environment designation is that of Urban as designated in WAC 173-16-040(4)(b)(iv).

The objective of the urban environment is to ensure optimum utilization of shorelines within urbanized areas by providing for intensive public use and by managing development so that it enhances and maintains shorelines for a multiplicity of urban uses. Because shorelines suitable for urban uses are a limited resource, emphasis should be given to development within already developed areas. In the master program, priority is also to be given to planning for public visual and physical access to water in the urban environment. Identifying needs and planning for the acquisition of urban land for permanent public access points to the shoreline should be linked to non-motorized transportation routes, such as bicycle and hiking trails.

In some instances, the Conservancy Environment designation may apply. Designation of these areas should be undertaken at the time unique and fragile areas are further inventoried and mapped.

**SHORELINE USES AND ACTIVITIES**

The Mercer Island Shoreline Inventory indicates that present usage of the shoreline is primarily residential/recreational in character. As the population of both the Island and the region grows, demands for all forms of shoreline use and activities on Lake Washington are expected to increase. At some future time this demand is likely to exceed the existing supply of the Lake’s shoreline. Several studies related to appropriate uses of the shoreline, particularly those of a residential or recreational nature, have been undertaken on Mercer Island to determine the best land uses. Most of these studies and plans have only indirectly addressed the question of proliferation of shoreline development on Lake Washington. To date a water use management plan has also been indirectly considered. This document is intended to complement existing studies and to provide criteria to assist in determining the optimal mix of shoreline uses.

**GOALS**

1. *The Shoreline of Mercer Island is to be planned and coordinated to afford optimal use of the limited resource.*
2. **The shoreline of Mercer Island is to provide natural amenities within an urban environment.**

**POLICIES**

1. Plans should be made for reasonable and appropriate shoreline uses and activities.
   a. Short-term economic gain or convenience in development should be evaluated in relationship to potential long-term effects on the shoreline.
   b. Preference should be given to those uses or activities which enhance the natural amenities of the Lake and which depend on a shoreline location or provide public access to the shoreline.
   c. Planning, zoning, capital improvements and other policy and regulatory standards should not increase the density or intensity of shoreline uses or activities.
   d. Shorelines particularly suited for a specific appropriate water-dependent use or activity should be planned for and designated.
   e. Multiple-use of shorelines should be planned where location and integration of compatible uses or activities are feasible.
   f. Aesthetic values must be considered when evaluating new development, redevelopment of existing facilities or for general enhancement of shoreline areas.
   g. Shoreline uses and activities should be discouraged if they are objectionable due to noise or odor of it they create offensive or unsafe conditions in relating to reasonable and appropriate uses and activities.

2. Existing shoreline use or activities identified as being inappropriate should be encouraged to relocate away from the shoreline.

3. Uses and activities in unique or fragile shoreline areas should be discouraged unless measures can be satisfactorily undertaken to mitigate all related adverse impacts.

4. Sufficient amounts of open space should be distributed along the shoreline to provide nearby recreational opportunities for the general public.

5. Shoreline uses or activities not specified in this document should be consistent with the intent of the goals and policies stated herein.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Mercer Island should formulate programs for the relocation of inappropriate uses and activities. The use of public funds, trading of other public lands where feasible, or other incentives should be considered when necessary to accomplish this objective.

2. Unique and fragile shoreline areas should be defined and inventoried on Mercer Island by appropriate City staff members and Boards and Commissions as soon as possible.
CONSERVATION ELEMENT

According to the Shoreline Management Act, three of the highest priorities for Shorelines of Statewide Significance are to a) preserve the natural character of the shorelines; b) result in long term over short term benefit; and c) protect the resources and ecology of the shoreline. Although some natural resources are non-renewable in character, Lake Washington is a unique biological, economic and recreational resource which can be managed in a way to allow its assets to be continually available to the region and the state.

Human activities have either directly or indirectly influenced the Lake’s entire shoreline. Some areas (stream outlets, marshes, embayments, wooded areas and others) have remained in a somewhat natural condition. As the population of the Island increases, the pressures to develop these natural condition. But the costs involved in preparing some of these sites for development may be high due to soil or hydrologic conditions. There may be greater long term value in preserving these areas for purposes of open space within an urbanizing region. Often these areas are also important habitats for fish and wildlife. Preservation of these remaining areas, during the subdivision or development process, could be accomplished through the use of the open space option of the Subdivision Ordinance.

Conservation efforts are not directed solely toward undeveloped areas. Activities on the shoreline or within the drainage basin may adversely affect water quality, aquatic life or other resources of the Lake. Normal single-family residential activities within the shoreline appear to have minimal negative effects on the resources of the Lake. Long range planning should seek to minimize such adverse impacts.

The concept of conservation should also apply to structures or areas worth preserving for their historical, cultural, educational or scientific value. The use of some areas, either on a temporary basis for special events or festivals, or permanently for facilities reflecting our past or enhancing our future, are considered as reasonable and appropriate.

GOAL

The resources and amenities of Lake Washington are to be protected and preserved for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

POLICIES:

1. Existing natural resources should be conserved, consistent with private property rights.

   a. Aquatic habitats, particularly spawning grounds, should be protected, improved and, if feasible, increased.

   b. Wildlife habitats should be protected, improved and, if feasible, increased.

   c. Unique and fragile areas should be so designated and mapped. Access and use should be restricted if necessary for the conservation of these areas. The type and degree of development to be allowed should be based upon such factors as: slope, soils, vegetation, geology and hydrology.

   d. Water quality should be maintained at a level to permit recreational use (specifically swimming), provide a suitable habitat for desirable forms of
Shoreline Goals and Policies - 10

1. Aquatic life and satisfy other required human needs.

2. Existing and future activities on Lake Washington and its shoreline should be designed to minimize adverse effects on the natural systems.

3. Uses or activities within all drainage basins related to Lake Washington should be considered as an integral part of shoreline planning.
   
   a. Developers should be required to bear the cost of providing safeguards to prevent storm drainage damage resulting from their development.
   
   b. Excessive soil erosion and sedimentation and other polluting elements should be prevented from entering and adversely affecting the Lake and its constituent watercourses.
   
   c. Restoration of natural systems adversely affected by sedimentation and pollution should be encouraged.
   
   d. The destruction of watercourses feeding into Lake Washington should be discouraged.
   
   e. The planning and control of surface drainage water from Mercer Island into Lake Washington should be based on such factors as the quality and quantity of water, rate of flow and containment, etc. The latest applicable data should be used in the implementation of a storm drainage system.

4. Shoreline areas having historical, cultural, educational or scientific value should be protected and restored.

   a. Public and private cooperation should be encouraged in site preservation and protection.
   
   b. Suspected or newly discovered sites should be kept free from intrusion until their value is determined.
   
   c. Festivals and temporary uses involving public interest and not substantially or permanently impairing water quality or unique and fragile areas should be permitted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Since the shorelines are valuable and fragile resources, Mercer Island should designate use regulations to minimize man-made intrusions on the shoreline. Conservancy environments should be designated and mapped where the natural conditions so indicate.

2. Unique and fragile areas on the Island’s shoreline should be further defined, inventoried and mapped by August, 1974.

3. Discharge of sewage (sewage is defined as treated or untreated wastes which do not meet Federal, State, or local standards for discharge in Lake Washington), waste, rubbish and litter from boats on Lake Washington should not be permitted. Pumping and tank facilities for the discharge of sewage, waste, rubbish and litter from boats equipped with marine toilets and/or galleys, should be provided in all new marinas or public moorages.

4. Comment should be solicited from Metro concerning proposed activities affecting water quality in Lake Washington or its tributaries.

Shoreline Goals and Policies - 10
5. Mercer Island should consider designating sites of historic value such as the passenger boat and ferry landings and areas of early settlement such as the Proctor, Calkins and Olds homesites.

6. Where appropriate, natural watercourses should be retained.

7. A watercourse ordinance to preserve the systems of natural drainage on the Island should be passed.

8. Information concerning the use of the State Open Space Taxation legislation of 1970, 1971 and 1973 should be made available to encourage preservation of unique and fragile areas.

9. The open space option of Mercer Island’s Ordinance 59, the Subdivision Ordinance, should be utilized for preserving unique and fragile areas.

**PUBLIC ACCESS ELEMENT**

The waters of Lake Washington are in the public domain and should be readily accessible to the public. As the population around Lake Washington grows, there will be an increasing need for public access to the shoreline. The Shoreline Management Act and the Final Guidelines make repeated reference to the issue of public access to the shoreline. In accordance with the Act, a Public Access Element has been included in this study. However, this situation is not unique to Lake Washington, and other planning efforts have addressed this challenged in a variety of ways.

The intent of the Shoreline Management Act and these goals and policies is not to reduce unlawfully the rights attached to private property to condone trespass, but rather to recognize and protect private property rights consistent with the public interest. The public access requirements of this section are not applicable to single family residences.

**GOAL**

Increase public access to and along the Mercer Island Shoreline where appropriate and consistent with public interest, provided public safety, private property rights, and unique or fragile areas are not adversely affected.

**POLICIES:**

1. Public access to and along the water’s edge should be consistent with the public safety, private property rights, and conservation of unique or fragile areas.

2. Public access to and along the water’s edge should be available in publicly owned shoreline areas.

3. In new substantial shoreline development, developers should be encouraged to provide public access to and along the water’s edge provided that no private property shall be taken involuntarily for public purposes without due compensation.

4. When substantial modifications or additions are proposed to substantial developments, the developer should be encouraged to provide for public access to and along the water’s edge if physically feasible provided that no private property be taken involuntarily without due compensation.

5. In new developments on the shoreline, the water’s edge should be kept free of buildings.
6. Where publicly owned shoreline areas are available for public pedestrian and bicycle pathways, these should be developed as close to the water’s edge as reasonable.

7. Views of the shoreline and water from shoreline and upland areas should be preserved and enhanced. Enhancement of views shall not be construed to mean excessive removal of vegetation.

8. Rights-of-way on the shoreline should be made available for public access where appropriate.

9. Access onto shoreline public street ends should be enhanced.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Consideration should be given to provisions for the handicapped, disabled, and elderly when developing public access to shoreline areas.

**RECREATION ELEMENT**

Mercer Island has approximately 15 miles of shoreline most of which is devoted to low density single family residences. It could be said that almost 100% of the developed shoreline of Mercer Island is devoted to water-dependent recreation, assuming that the waterfront residents find both active and passive enjoyment from their shoreline location. The remainder of the shoreline is set aside for public or semi-public water-related recreation except for a fraction which is utilized for bridge crossings and utilities. The latter, in some cases, is also available for public access to the water.

The City presently owns 2,600 feet of shoreline which is developed as waterfront parks with facilities for swimming, fishing and car-top boat launching. King County owns an additional 4,000 feet which is being developed as a regional public park for active and passive water-related recreation; as of the summer of 1973 a bathing beach has been completed, day moorage is under construction, a trail system has been partially completed, a marsh has been restored and a spawning area is being preserved.

Nineteen street ends of widths varying from 30’ to 75’ add an additional 938 lineal feet of shoreline to the public domain and provide the potential for considerable access to the water’s edge in all segments of the Island. Development of six street ends has been undertaken as a cooperative effort between the city and the adjacent neighborhoods. Some provide swimming access, others offer car-top launching access, others provide minimal access solely for passive enjoyment because of the limitation of size or topography, and lack of neighborhood interest and availability of funds.

There are three private waterfront clubs owning a combined 1,840 feet of frontage. They provide swimming, moorage, and boat launching facilities to a significant portion of the Island’s families. Shorewood apartments owns approximately 650 feet of shoreline which serves as open space, swimming, picnicking, and moorage for its 690 residential units. Numerous private neighborhood waterfront “parks,” offering access to up, and residents, exist along the shoreline.

The Mercer Island Park and Open Space Plan, adopted by the City in 1966, was specific in expressing the desire to acquire and develop waterfront parks and public access to the water’s edge. As of 1973 several of the plans have been implemented. Yet to be accomplished, is the goal to acquire...
a waterfront park in the East Seattle area, further utilize the street ends and provide public trailer boat launching facilities.

**GOAL**

*Water-dependent recreational activities available to the public are to be encouraged and increased on the shoreline of Mercer Island where appropriate and consistent with the public interest.*

**POLICIES**

1. Water-dependent recreational activities should be increased and given priority.
   
   a. Public shoreline parks should be increased in size and number.
   
   b. Additional swimming areas should be developed on the shoreline.
   
   c. Recreational fishing should be maintained or increased.
   
   d. Recreational boating activities should be encouraged as long as they are compatible with other uses. Day moorage should be a permitted use in recreational areas where feasible except in unique and fragile areas.
   
   e. Accommodations should be made for launching small water craft at public shoreline parks and street ends where feasible.

2. Open space and opportunity for passive forms of recreation should be encouraged and increased.

3. Retention of some public shoreline in a nearly natural state is desirable.

4. Based on the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, the appropriate governmental agency should avail itself of the earliest opportunity to acquire shoreline when available. See Recommendations.

5. Mercer Island and other appropriate governmental agencies should join in a cooperative effort to expand recreational opportunities through programs of acquisition, development, and maintenance of waterfront areas.

6. Semi-public water-dependent recreational facilities (e.g., private beach clubs, yacht clubs, etc.) should be permitted and recognized as providing access to the water for a segment of the population of Mercer Island and should be recognized as providing a vital part of the island’s recreational facilities.

7. Every opportunity should be taken to acquire private recreational facilities if they are likely to be developed for other than recreational purposes.

8. Recreational shoreline activities adjacent to residential uses are not to constitute a public nuisance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. The Mercer Island Park and Open Space Plan should be coordinated with appropriate, adopted regional plans.

2. Early efforts should be made to suitably develop presently held public shoreline for water-dependent public recreational uses and open space.

3. Cooperation between the City of Mercer Island and neighborhoods should be
continued in the planning and development of small neighborhood parks and street ends.

4. Mercer Island should cooperate with other governmental agencies to undertake studies to determine the optimum level of boating activity on Lake Washington.

5. Rental or provision of small, non-motorized water craft and water-related recreational equipment should be made available at several waterfront parks when feasible.

6. Small non-motorized water craft are non-destructive to the shoreline environment and such boating activity should be shown preference by policies governing waterfront recreation facilities.

7. The designation of underwater areas for skin or scuba diving should be considered.

8. Interest in fishing for bass, perch, crappie, and other under-utilized species should be stimulated through community education.

9. Procedures should be developed for real estate agencies to notify public agencies when waterfront property is available for purchase.

RESIDENTIAL ELEMENT

Residential development presently accounts for over 85% of Mercer Island’s wetland area. Single-family dwellings comprise the majority of this use with Shorewood Apartments being the only multi-family use. The Shoreline Management Act specifically excludes individual homes in the permit process, but the Act does not exclude other types of residential development, such as multi-family structures or residential subdivisions. Inasmuch as the Act encourages the inclusion of elements deemed sufficiently important or necessary, although not specifically named therein, the Residential Element is included herein.

Present residential zoning on Mercer Island’s shoreline is for single family dwellings with the exception of one area of multi-family zoning on the north shore. Strong local resistance to changes in zoning, strengthened by the lake Washington Regional Goals and Policies Use and Activities Policy 1.c), make it highly unlikely that Mercer Island zoning density will be increased. However, it should be noted that some of the shoreline is not yet developed as intensely as it could be under existing zoning. Several large shoreline properties now used by one family could be subdivided to allow from one to three additional residences.

GOAL

Existing residential uses are to be recognized, and new residential construction will be subject to certain limitations where applicable.

POLICIES

1. Existing single-family residential uses will be protected. New construction or modifications shall be allowed within the framework of the policies in this document and City Ordinance.

2. New residential uses over water will not be permitted.

3. In single-family development developments within the shoreline, the water’s edge should be kept free of
buildings other than components required for boat and equipment storage. Such components should be screened by appropriate landscaping. Single-family uses may include fences or other means to minimize trespassing and provide protection.

4. Public access to and along the water’s edge should be encouraged in the design of multi-family structures, subdivisions, and planned unit developments occurring on the shoreline, provided that no private property shall be taken involuntarily without due compensation.

5. Public access does not include the right to enter upon single-family residential property without the permission of the owner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Mercer Island Planning Department should have information available for shoreline homeowners regarding the enhancement of fish and wildlife habitats, especially at the water’s edge.

2. Consideration should be given to revising the Mercer Island Zoning Code regarding back yard structures to reflect the intent of Policy No. 2. Boat houses on the water’s edge should be considered as an alternative to, not in addition to, a boat moorage.

3. The Planning Commission should consider actions to clarify the City Zoning Code to provide for a minimum twenty-five (25) foot setback from the water’s edge for all primary residential structures and appropriate accessory structures.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Economic development of the shorelines of Mercer Island is essentially non-existent. Such shorelines and associated wetlands, being zoned single-family and multi-family residential, preclude economic development other than that associated with recreation. Thus, zoning and the Comprehensive Plan do not allow for economic development on the shoreline of Mercer Island. However, this section is included in the Local Plan for two reasons:

1. To recognize the Regional Plan’s potential implications for Mercer Island, and

2. To insure that any unforeseen long-range future land use changes would only be allowed within the framework of the Regional Master Plan goals and policies as contained in Appendix “A”.

GOAL

Existing economic uses and activities on the shorelines of Mercer Island are to be recognized. Economic uses or activities that are not dependent upon a Mercer island Shoreline location are to be discouraged.

POLICIES

1. Shoreline economic uses and activities on Lake Washington should locate where commercial or industrial areas exist.

2. Economic uses and activities which do not depend on a Mercer Island shoreline location shall not be permitted.
3. Drilling for oil or gas and deep or surface mining for minerals is prohibited in the shoreline areas of Mercer Island.

CIRCULATION ELEMENT

Lake Washington is a 22,139 acre body of water located in the midst of an urban area. An extensive network of transportation routes exists around and across the Lake. Although transportation facilities were developed in response to projected demands, these facilities have in turn helped generate additional transportation needs. For example, construction of the Lake Washington bridges has permitted the eastern portion of the region to change from a low density, summer home area to a higher density, suburban/commercial area. This increase in activity has resulted in suggestions for third and fourth bridges crossing the Lake.

Lake Washington itself is a navigable body of water and is connected to Puget Sound by a system of canals and locks. Although some commercial navigation does occur, most of the boating activities in Lake Washington are recreational in nature. Seaplane activity is also present on the Lake, and three airfields are located on the shoreline. The automobile, however, is the predominant means of transportation to, from, around and across the lake. Our heavy reliance on the automobile has contributed to problems in air quality, fuel supply and traffic congestion. In the long term, urban areas should look toward providing alternatives to the automobile as the primary means of transportation.

Principal transportation routes on Mercer Island include Inter-State 90, a highway that crosses Lake Washington via Mercer Island and two connecting bridges, and a series of arterial roads that follow the shoreline around the Island a short distance inland.

Thus, shoreline-related roads form an important element of principal transportation routes on the Island. In addition, numerous lateral roads connect the shoreline following arterials with properties along the water’s edge, and frequently provide public access to the Lake through developed and undeveloped street ends as well as visual access to the Lake.

A rudimentary system of pedestrian and bicycle ways has gradually developed along portions of the shoreline following arterials; more definitive development of such ways is planned. Metro buses provide important modes of on-Island transportation as well as access to neighboring municipalities and employment centers. Other forms of transportation are non-existent, except for privately owned boats and a few seaplanes along the shore.

GOAL

A balanced transportation system for moving people and goods is to be encouraged within existing corridors.
POLICIES

1. Roadways serving shoreline areas should be developed principally as scenic avenues rather than major arterials.

2. Public transportation should be provided to facilitate access to recreation areas on the shoreline.

3. Pedestrian and bicycle pathways, including provisions for maintenance, operation and security, should be developed around and across the Lake, consistent with private property rights.
   a. Access points to and along the shoreline should be linked by pedestrian and bicycle pathways developed as close to the water’s edge as reasonable.
   b. Pedestrian and bicycle pathways should be included in new or expanded bridges.
   c. Pedestrian and bicycle pathways should be included in publicly financed transportation systems or rights-of-way, consistent with public interest and safety.

4. Provisions for METRO Public Transit should be implemented in transportation facilities crossing Mercer Island.

5. No new regional vehicular traffic corridors should be opened across Mercer Island’s shoreline.
   a. The width of the I-90 corridor shall be limited to that approved by the City of Mercer Island as stated in Mercer Island Resolution 595 adopted September 24, 1973.
   b. Future regional requirements for moving people through Mercer Island’s shorelines shall be limited to public mass transit systems constructed within the approved I-90 corridor.

6. Commercial aircraft facilities on the shoreline should not be permitted.

7. Moorage, storage, servicing and operation facilities for ocean-going or commercial ships and barges should not be permitted on the shoreline.

8. Proposals for additional transportation across Lake Washington should consider alternative modes above, on, or below the surface of the Lake.

9. Cross-lake transportation facilities must be designed to minimize the increase in noise, air or water pollution above existing levels and, in addition, must reduce to the maximum extent, similar impacts from existing facilities via upgrading and improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mercer Island should cooperate with Metro to coordinate public transportation routes with public access points along the shoreline.

2. Mercer Island should coordinate with King County and neighboring communities in the implementation of its Trails Plan when feasible.

3. The connection of upland trails on the Island to the shoreline activity nodes and pedestrian and bicycle pathways, along the Mercer Ways, should be encouraged and developed.
4. To assist in developing pedestrian and bicycle pathways, easements along rights-of-way should be obtained and incentives should be offered to property owners for utilizing setback areas.

5. Mercer Island and other governmental agencies should consider using water-borne modes of transporting commuters and sightseers in a manner compatible with environmental quality and recreational activity. Such considerations should include terminals and connections.

COMPONENTS

Lake Washington’s shoreline has been recognized as a “valuable and fragile resource” by the Shoreline Management Act of 1971. The extent and the desirability of man-made modifications to these shorelines has not yet been determined. Although several studies relative to this issue have been made, are being conducted, and are envisioned, it is unlikely that any conclusive evidence will be available in the near future.

In instances where the literal interpretation of the policies in the Components Element create a demonstrated hardship, unique to an individual property, relief may be sought through the variance process as delineated in the Variance and Conditional Uses Section, pages 38 and 39.

POLICIES

Activities, Conservation, Public Access, NOTE: The policies set forth within the following Elements: Shoreline Uses and Components, are to apply to all uses and activities contained within this document. The policies under this heading are to apply to all components.

1. Components in or near the water should not be constructed from materials which have significant adverse physical or chemical effects on water quality, vegetation, fish and/or wildlife.

2. Components should be discouraged in unique or fragile areas, unless it can be shown that measures can be taken to adequately mitigate all related adverse impacts.

3. Components should be designed to permit normal circulation of water, sediments, fish and other aquatic life in and along the shoreline area.

4. High rise structures should be prohibited on the shoreline.

5. Shoreline low-rise development should provide substantial grade level views of the water from public shoreline roads running generally parallel to the water’s edge.

6. Enclosed overwater structures should not be allowed except when overriding considerations of the public interest are served. This would not preclude the use of covered, unenclosed moorage’s.

7. Substantial repairs or alterations to non-conforming structures should be in conformance with the policies contained herein.

8. Non-conforming shoreline structures which receive little use and/or are in a general state of disrepair should be abated within a reasonable period of time.
RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Component Section of this document should be reviewed and modified as necessary at the completion of the research program being undertaken by the cooperative Fishery Unit at the University of Washington, and any other relevant studies.

2. Site planning should include setbacks from the shoreline. Landscaping should also be considered as a method of retaining a sense of nature in developed shoreline areas. Retention of trees and other natural vegetation should be encouraged where possible, particularly in those areas in or adjacent to marshes, wetlands, or other areas of ecological and environmental significance. (Note: all site planning, landscaping, and development for non-single family uses is subject to review by the Design Commission under Ordinance No. 297 and the Design Commission Guidelines.)

LANDFILL AND DREDGING

Landfill is usually contemplated in locations where the water is shallow and where rooted vegetation often occurs. In their natural condition these same areas provide suitable habitat for fish and wildlife feeding, breeding and shelter. Biologically the shallow vegetation areas tend to be highly productive portions of the Lake. For these reasons governmental agencies and scientific experts have generally taken a stand against landfill.

In most cases when dredging is done it also occurs in shallow areas and may disturb the environment in the following ways: 1) temporary reduction of water clarity from suspended sediments, 2) losses in aquatic plants and animals by direct removal or from the sedimentation of suspended materials, 3) alteration in the nutrient and oxygen levels of the water column, and 4) suspension of toxic materials from the sediments into the water column.

Mercer Island has some uneven shorelines due to the historically varying degrees of control over filling and bulkheading beyond the ordinary high water line. In some instances, it may be appropriate to bulkhead and do minor landfill. These instances may include, but not be limited to, provision of protection of slide prone areas where necessary and to add to or repair failing bulkheads. These and other unusual situations in which the literal interpretation of the Shorelines Master Program, Guidelines or Mercer Island Goals and Policies creates a demonstrated hardship can be addressed through variance procedures. (Note: See Variance and Conditional Uses Section)

POLICIES

1. Landfill and dredging should be prohibited in unique or fragile areas.

2. Landfill or dredging should not be permitted except in the following cases, and even then should generally be discouraged.

   a. Landfill or dredging may be permitted where necessary for the development and maintenance of public shoreline parks.

   b. Landfill or dredging may be permitted where necessary to improve water quality where no other possible alternatives are available.

   c. Replenishing sand on public and private community beaches should be allowed.
d. Landfill or dredging may be permitted where additional public access is provided, and/or where there is anticipated to be a significant improvement to fish or wildlife habitat; provided there is no major reduction upon the surface waters of the Lake.

3. Dredging spoils should be deposited on approved dumping sites. Dumping sites should not be allowed in the Lake or in unique or fragile areas.

4. Dredging should be permitted to maintain water flow, navigability, and water depth in cases of water course siltation.

5. Dredging for the purpose of obtaining fill or construction material should be prohibited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. When reviewing applications for landfill intended to improve water quality, Mercer Island Planning Department should consult with appropriate governmental agencies to determine the necessity and proper location for such fill.

2. Appropriate governmental agencies and local jurisdictions should approve funding and/or personnel to undertake a short term study on the biological impacts of dredging and landfills and to devise suitable criteria or guidelines for such activities.

SHORELINE PROTECTIVE STRUCTURES

Shoreline protective structures are used to diminish the destructive forces of waves and currents on beaches, to protect anchorages, to encourage the deposition of littoral materials or, in some cases, for purposes of convenience of appearance. Although these structures protect the backshore, they may also encourage scouring or erosion on adjacent shoreline or submerged land.

On Mercer Island individual situations and related problems may dictate that the repair of bulkheads or placing of new ones in order to control slides may occur very near to, rather than precisely at, the ordinary high water line. Such minor deviations should remain within the province of the City Planning Department discretion. However, in any other instances where significant changes occur to the water side of the ordinary high water line, these can be addressed through variance procedures.

BULKHEADS

The purpose of a bulkhead is to stabilize land at the water’s edge to prevent erosion. When structures reflect rather than absorb wave energy, the destructive forces are largely redirected. In some cases, bulkheads transmit wave energy downward, thereby eroding the beach at the base of the structure. Sloping, permeable structures, on the other hand, absorb wave energy, reduce wave run-up, and minimize scouring action at the base. In cases where bulkheading is permitted, scientific information suggests a rock riprap design should be preferred. The cracks and openings in such a structure afford suitable habitats for certain forms of aquatic life.

At times bulkheads are built out into the water in conjunction with landfill for the purpose of creating new dry land areas. However, this is being discouraged at all levels of jurisdiction concerned with shorelines.
POLICIES

1. Construction or repair of bulkheads should not extend into the Lake beyond the existing high water line, except as approved by a variance or in the case of approved land fill.

2. The use of vegetation for stabilizing the water’s edge from erosion should be encouraged with the use of bulkheads.

3. Bulkheads at the water’s edge should be designed to minimize the transmission of wave energy to other properties.

4. Bulkheads and landfill may be permitted to restore lands lost to erosion within one year of the date that erosion occurred. A one year extension for a reasonable cause may be granted by the local jurisdiction. The applicant is responsible for demonstrating the severity and extent of such erosion.

5. Breakwaters should generally be discouraged. In those limited instances where breakwaters are permitted, a floating design is preferred unless such a design is not technically or ecologically practical.

6. There should be no construction of jetties, groins, or other protective structures unless there is a demonstrated need for such structures and no preferable alternatives are available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Appropriate governmental agencies should be encouraged to undertake a study on the short-term and long-term effects of breakwaters, bulkheads, and other shoreline protective structures in order to develop suitable criteria or guidelines for their construction.

2. It is recommended that bulkheads be of sloping rock riprap design.

3. It is recommended that policy be developed on the issuance of variances for bulkheads to cover such instances as those in which lands are lost to erosion where a suitable building site does not exist. Further, bulkheads or landfills may be permitted out to a line connecting existing immediately adjoining neighboring bulkheads through the variance procedures.

PIERS AND MOORAGES

A majority of the single family properties on the shoreline have piers and/or moorages. The only multi-family areas, Shorewood, also has piers along its waterfront area. These waterfront components provide desirable facilities to the property owners but may, at some future date, if totally uncontrolled, result, in some undesirable consequences for the Lake and the community. Further, the Shoreline Management Act directs the Local Master Program to address itself to this possibility. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider additional piers and/or moorages in light of future as well as existing uses and patterns and further, to provide general guidelines and controls for issuing permits and reviewing new development proposals.

Existing City zoning codes contain sections on pier length and setbacks as well as moorages. These should be reviewed in light of the recommendations contained in this Master Program. In addition, any relevant data generated from local and regional studies on piers and moorages should be
considered in the periodic updating of the Mercer Island Master Program.

POLICIES

1. Construction of new or expanded piers should generally be regulated, and the following limitations shall apply:
   
a. Piers should be allowed only for moorage of pleasure craft, for water-dependent recreation, for water-dependent economic activities, for utility maintenance, or for required emergency vessels.

   b. Temporary moorages may be permitted for vessels used in the construction of shoreline facilities.

   c. Adjoining waterfront property owners should be encouraged to share a common pier.

   d. The size and extent of a pier should not exceed that which is required for the water-dependent purposes for which it was constructed.

   e. In multi-family or condominium developments the ratio of moorage berths to residential units should be equal to or some fraction less than one.

2. The use of buoys for moorage should be considered as an alternative to the construction of piers for this purpose. Such buoys should be placed as close to shore as possible in order to minimize hazards to navigation.

3. Exterior lighting utilized in conjunction with piers and waterfront structures should be directed away from adjacent property and the water wherever offensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mercer Island should establish uniform standards governing the design of piers including criteria for length, width, location, density and floating versus pile construction. It should be noted that floating piers can be rearranged, removed or relocated as needs or regulations change.

2. Consideration should be given to revising Ordinance 15, the Zoning Code, to reduce setbacks along property lines for piers from ten (10) feet to zero (0) feet.

3. Regulation of spacing between piers and total number of piers in a designated distance should be considered.

4. Study and consideration should be given to revising Ordinance 15, the Zoning Code, as it prescribes dock length at 100 feet. Dock length should be related to intended use and water depth which may be greater or less than that prescribed by the Code.

UTILITIES

Utilities are services which produce or carry electric power, gas, sewage, water, communications or oil products. The potential exists for combining some of these uses with other shoreline uses, including public access.

Although the diversion of sewage away from Lake Washington has substantially improved water quality in the Lake, storm sewers continue to affect water quality. As rain and other waters pass over impervious land
surfaces, these waters pick up large quantities of sediments, oil, litter, heat and other contaminants. The impact of surface runoff from construction sites is of particular concern. Excessive quantities of suspended solids and oil are carried away and may significantly affect the quality of the receiving waters and associated aquatic life.

It should be noted that the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 may apply to surface runoff if there is a recognizable source of contamination (for example, business districts, parking lots, major land developments, and others). But the issue is complicated by the fact that much contamination comes from numerous sources which are small and often very difficult to identify.

POLICIES

1. Whenever possible, consolidation of utilities should be encouraged within rights-of-way.

2. These facilities should be placed underground, except where it is clearly technically and economically not feasible.

3. After completion of installation or maintenance of these facilities, the shoreline area should be restored to its pre-project condition. If the previous condition is identified as being undesirable, then landscaping and other improvements should be undertaken.

4. In all new developments, the developer should install means to control the entry of contaminants into the Lake within acceptable water quality standards.

5. Prior to construction of major new outfalls, water circulation studies should be conducted to determine the best shoreline location for such facilities.

6. Major shoreline outfalls should be designed and constructed to minimize damage to the lake’s edge and be placed below the surface of the Lake where feasible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The proliferation of impervious surfaces in the drainage basins serving Lake Washington should be kept to a minimum.

2. Whenever possible contaminants should be removed from surface runoff at the source of contamination. Methods of removing contaminants include oil skimmers, sediment traps, and street sweeping.

3. When contemplating the construction of a major new outfall, Metro and other appropriate governmental agencies should be consulted regarding the appropriate location and design for the outfall.

PARKING

Whether for work or leisure time, many people reach the shoreline by automobile. The use of shoreline areas for parking, however, precludes other more appropriate uses of the land. Since landfill as a means of increasing dry land areas is to be discouraged, the storage space for automobiles is limited. Thus, the number of required parking spaces for new construction can severely restrict the density in many developments.
The use of the automobiles as the primary mode of transportation is expected to continue. Any reliable public transportation system may take years to develop. The problem of the automobile as a major waterfront land user may increase as the demand for various waterfront uses and activities increases.

**POLICIES**

Parking facilities for motor vehicles or boat trailers should be minimized in the shoreline area.

a. Parking facilities should not be permitted along the water’s edge.

b. Upland parking facilities for shoreline activities should provide adequate pedestrian access to the shoreline.

c. Upland parking facilities should be designed and landscaped to minimize adverse impacts on the shoreline and adjacent lands.

**BOAT LAUNCHING FACILITIES**

Boating is a popular form of recreation in the Lake Washington area, and demand for boating is expected to increase as the population in the region grows. The use of boat launching facilities permits dry land storage of vessels and reduces the need for marinas and piers. At present there are 41 public boat launching ramps on Lake Washington; however, none exist on Mercer Island at present. The proposed Comprehensive Plan envisions two areas for boat launching and water-related recreation under the future I-90 bridge approaches.

**POLICIES**

1. Regional boat launching facilities should be provided which are adequate for the needs and carrying capacity of the Lake subject to other policies herein governing land and water use.

2. Boat launching facilities should not be constructed in unique and fragile areas.

3. Boat launching facilities should be separated from swimming areas wherever possible.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Mercer Island should consider the feasibility of developing one or two of their shoreline street ends for car-top boat launching.

2. Mercer Island and appropriate governmental agencies should join together in a Lake-wide study which would optimize the number of boat launching facilities on Lake Washington.

3. Boat launching ramps should only be provided after provisions for adequate parking, screening, and landscaping have been made.

**SIGNS**

Signs are public displays whose purpose is to provide information, direction, identification and advertising. Mercer Island has developed an Ordinance (No., 297) creating a Design Commission. The Ordinance enjoins the Commission to control all signs within the public and private sectors (except traffic control), to assure uniform application to achieve a desirable, balanced environment. Form, proportion, color, material, surface treatment, and position will be considered in
each case. The criteria used for Design Commission sign review are the interim sign guidelines developed as a part of the Mercer Island Design Guidelines.

POLICIES

1. Off-premise and non-appurtenant signs are prohibited on the shoreline.

2. Illuminated or free standing signs or any signs extending above roof lines should be prohibited on the shoreline except for required navigational aids.

3. Advertising signs, when permitted, and approved by the Design Commission, should be limited to areas of high-intensity land use, and should be stationary, non-blinking, and a size commensurate with the structure to which it is fixed.

4. Signs advertising the sale of property are not prohibited provided they do not exceed 6 sq. ft. (e.g.: 2’ x 3’), and are limited to one street side and one water side sign.

APPENDIX ‘A’

Mercer Island’s Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance preclude economic uses of shorelines such as those permitted in Business, Planned Business, or Commercial-Office zones and community values have clearly shown an intent to perpetuate this land use pattern. However, the Regional Master Program, and, in particular, the Economic Element thereof, addresses potential development that may have a significant impact on the waters of Lake Washington and the shoreline. For these reasons the Regional Economic Element is contained herein to indicate Mercer Island’s concern for major developments that may affect the quality of Lake Washington and its tributaries.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Economic development of the shorelines of Mercer Island is essentially non-existent. Such shorelines and associated wetlands, being zoned single-family and multi-family residential, preclude economic development other than that associated with recreation. Thus, zoning and the Comprehensive Plan do not allow for economic development on the shoreline of Mercer Island. However, this section is included in the Local Plan for two reasons:

1. To recognize the Regional Plan’s potential implications for Mercer Island, and

2. To insure that any unforeseen long-range future land use changes would only be allowed within the framework of the Regional Master Plan goals and policies as contained in Appendix “A”.

GOAL

Existing economic uses and activities on the shorelines of Mercer Island are to be recognized. Economic uses or activities that are not dependent upon a Mercer Island Shoreline location are to be discouraged.

POLICIES

1. Shoreline economic uses and activities on Lake Washington should locate where commercial or industrial areas exist.
2. Economic uses and activities which do not depend on a Mercer Island shoreline location shall not be permitted.

3. Drilling for oil or gas and deep or surface mining for minerals is prohibited in the shoreline areas of Mercer Island.
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND
ORDINANCE NO. 09C-10

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON
RESCINDING MERCER ISLAND CITY CODE CHAPTER 10.70,
COMMUTE TRIP REDUCTION PLAN; ADOPTING MERCER ISLAND
CITY CODE CHAPTER 10.71, COMMUTE TRIP REDUCTION PLAN

WHEREAS, motor vehicle traffic is a major source of emissions that pollute the air, and air
pollution causes significant harm to public health and degrades the quality of the environment; and

WHEREAS, increasing motor vehicle traffic aggravates traffic congestion in the Town Center of
Mercer Island; and

WHEREAS, traffic congestion imposes significant cost on City business, government, and
individuals in terms of lost working hours and delays in the delivery of goods and services as
well as making the City a less desirable place to live, work, visit, and do business; and

WHEREAS, capital and environmental costs of fully accommodating the existing and projected
motor vehicle traffic on roads and highways are prohibitive while decreasing the demand for
vehicle trips is significantly less costly and is at least as effective in reducing traffic congestion
and its impacts as constructing new transportation facilities; and

WHEREAS, employers have significant opportunities to encourage and facilitate the reduction
of single-occupant vehicle commuting by employees; and

WHEREAS, in 1991 the state legislature enacted the State Commute Trip Reduction (CTR)
Law, now known as the Commute Trip Reduction Efficiency Act, to require local governments
in those counties experiencing the greatest automobile-related air pollution and traffic congestion
to develop and implement plans to reduce single-occupant vehicle commute trips; and

WHEREAS, in 2006 the state legislature updated the Commute Trip Reduction Efficiency Act,
codified in RCW 70.94.521, to extend the effective date and to make other significant revisions
to the Act; and

WHEREAS, state policy, as set forth in RCW 70.94.527 and the CTR Board Guidelines, requires
the City of Mercer Island to develop and implement a plan to reduce single occupant vehicle
commute trips and vehicle miles travelled; and

WHEREAS, the City of Mercer Island recognizes the importance of increasing individual
citizens' awareness of air quality, energy consumption, and traffic congestion and the
contribution individual actions can make toward addressing these issues, and

WHEREAS, the City of Mercer Island's Commute Trip Reduction Plan was approved by the
Puget Sound Regional Council in October 2007 and the State CTR Board in January 2008; and
WHEREAS, this ordinance is consistent with the CTR Board guidelines and RCW 70.94.521 through RCW 70.94.551;

WHEREAS, the State of Washington’s 2006 update to the Commute Trip Reduction Efficiency Act caused Chapter 10.70 MICC to be outdated and in need of substantial revisions;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WASHINGTON DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1:  **MICC Chapter 10.70 Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Plan.** MICC Chapter 10.70 “Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Plan” is hereby rescinded.

Section 2:  **MICC Chapter 10.71 Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Plan.** MICC Chapter 10.71 “Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Plan” is hereby adopted, as follows:

10.71.010 **Definitions**

For the purpose of this Chapter, the following definitions shall apply:

"Affected Employee" means a full-time employee who begins his or her regular work day at a single worksite for an effected employer between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. (inclusive) on two or more weekdays for at least twelve continuous months. Seasonal agricultural employees, including seasonal employees of processors of agricultural products, are excluded from the count of affected employees.

"Affected Employer" means an employer that employs one hundred (100) or more full-time employees at a single worksite, within the City of Mercer Island, who are scheduled to begin their regular work day between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. (inclusive) on two or more weekdays for at least twelve continuous months. Construction worksites, when the expected duration of the construction is less than two years, are excluded from this definition.

"Baseline measurement" means the survey of affected employers to determine the drive-alone rate and vehicle miles traveled per employee at the worksite. The City uses this measurement to develop commute trip reduction goals for the affected employer. The baseline measurement must be conducted in a manner that meets the requirements specified by City.

"Carpool" means a motor vehicle, including a motorcycle, occupied by two to six people of at least 16 years of age traveling together for their commute trip, resulting in the reduction of a minimum of one motor vehicle commute trip.

"City" means the City of Mercer Island.

"Commute Trips" mean trips made from a worker's home to an affected worksite on weekdays.
“CTR” is the abbreviation of Commute Trip Reduction.

“CTR Plan” or “Commute Trip Reduction Plan” means the City’s plan authorized by MICC 10.71.020.

"CTR Program" means an affected employer's City approved strategies to reduce employees' drive alone trips and average VMT per employee.

"Compressed Work Week" means an alternative work schedule, in accordance with employer policy, that regularly allows a full-time employee to eliminate at least one work day every two weeks by working longer hours during the remaining days, resulting in fewer commute trips by the employee. This definition is primarily intended to include weekly and bi-weekly arrangements, the most typical being four 10-hour days or 80 hours in nine days, but may also include other arrangements.

“Drive Alone” or “Single-Occupant Vehicle” means a motor vehicle occupied by one (1) person for commute purposes, including a motorcycle.

“Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC)” means a person who is designated as responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of an employer's CTR program.

“Full-Time Employee” means a person, other than an independent contractor, whose position is scheduled on a continuous basis for 52 weeks for an average of at least 35 hours per week.

“Good Faith Effort” means that an employer has met the minimum requirements identified in RCW 70.94.531 and this Chapter, and is working collaboratively with the City to continue its existing CTR program or is developing and implementing program modifications likely to result in improvements to its CTR program over an agreed-upon length of time.

"Implementation" means active pursuit by an employer of the CTR goals of RCW 70.94.521-555 and this Chapter as evidenced by appointment of an employee transportation coordinator (ETC), distribution of information to employees regarding alternatives to drive alone trips, and commencement of other measures according to its approved CTR program and schedule.

"Proportion of Drive Alone Trips" or "Drive Alone Rate" means the number of commute trips over a set period made by employees in single-occupancy vehicles divided by the number of actual commute trips by employees working during that period.

“Single Worksite” means a building or group of buildings on physically contiguous parcels of land or on parcels separated solely by private or public roadways or rights-of-way.

"Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Per Employee" means the sum of the individual vehicle commute trip lengths in miles made by employees over a set period divided by the number of employees during that period.
10.71.020 City of Mercer Island CTR Plan

The City Manager or his/her designee shall adopt and administer a Commute Trip Reduction Plan that will regulate affected employers’ CTR programs, and set CTR goals for affected employers that are consistent with this Chapter. The City will review the CTR Plan each year and update the CTR Plan as necessary and at least once every 4 years.

10.71.030 Applicability

The provisions of this Chapter shall apply to any affected employer within the corporate limits of the City of Mercer Island.

10.71.040 Baseline Survey and CTR Program

A. Affected employers shall perform a baseline measurement within (90) days from the effective date of this Chapter or within 90 days of becoming an affected employer, whichever occurs later.
B. If an affected employer has performed a baseline measurement or equivalent thereto that was approved by the City pursuant to any previous Commute Trip Reduction Plan within three (3) years prior to the initial effective date of this Chapter, such measurement will be used as that employer’s baseline measurement.
C. Affected employers shall identify themselves to the City within (90) days of becoming an affected employer.
D. Not more than 90 days after receiving written notification of the results of the baseline measurement from the City, an affected employer shall develop and submit a CTR Program to the City. The program will be developed in consultation with the City so as to be consistent with the goals of the CTR Plan. The program shall be implemented not more than 90 days after approval by the City.
E. If an affected employer has a City approved CTR Program in place at the time of the initial effective date of this Chapter, that Program shall remain effective until the Program’s next scheduled update.

10.71.050 Change in Status as an Affected Employer

A. If an employer initially designated as an affected employer no longer employs one hundred (100) or more employees and expects not to employ one hundred (100) or more affected employees for the next twelve (12) months, that employer may submit a written request to the City to no longer be treated as an affected employer. If the employer proves to the City’s satisfaction that it will not employ one hundred or more employees for the next twelve months, that employer is no longer an affected employer.
B. If an employer satisfies the requirements in paragraph A of this Section and subsequently employs one hundred (100) or more affected employees within the same twelve (12) months, that employer will be considered an affected employer for the entire 12 months and will be required to continue its most recent approved CTR program.
C. If an employer satisfies the requirements in paragraph A of this Section and subsequently employs one hundred (100) or more affected employees twelve (12) or more months after its
change in status to an unaffected employer, that employer shall be treated as a newly affected employer and will be subject to the same program requirements as other newly affected employers.

10.71.060 Requirements for Employers

Every affected employer is required to make a good faith effort, as defined in RCW 70.94.534(2) and this Chapter, to develop and implement a CTR program that will encourage its employees to reduce VMT per employee and drive alone trips. Each affected employer’s CTR program must include the mandatory elements as described in MICC 10.71.070 and the additional program elements as required in MICC 10.71.080.

10.71.070 Mandatory Program Elements

Each affected employer's CTR program shall include the following mandatory elements:

A. Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC). The employer shall designate an ETC to administer the CTR program. The ETC and/or designee's name, location, and telephone number must be prominently displayed physically or electronically at each affected worksite. The ETC shall oversee all elements of the employer's CTR program and act as liaison between the employer and the City. The objective is to have an effective transportation coordinator presence at each worksite; an affected employer with multiple sites may have one ETC for all sites.

B. Information Distribution. Information about alternatives to drive alone trips as well as a summary of the employer's CTR Program shall be provided to employees at least once a year and to new employees at the time of hire. The summary of the employer's CTR Program shall also be submitted to the City with the employer's program description and regular report.

10.71.080 Additional Program Elements

In addition to the specific program elements described above, the employer's CTR program shall include additional elements as needed to meet CTR goals. Elements may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

A. Provision of preferential parking for high-occupancy vehicles
B. Reduced parking charges for high-occupancy vehicles;
C. Instituting or increasing parking charges for drive alone commuters;
D. Provision of commuter ride matching services to facilitate employee ridesharing for commute trips;
E. Provision of subsidies for rail, transit, or vanpool fares and/or transit passes;
F. Provision of vans or buses for employee ridesharing;
G. Provision of subsidies for carpools, walking, bicycling, teleworking, or compressed schedules;
H. Provision of incentives for employees that do not drive alone to work;
I. Permitting the use of the employer's vehicles for carpooling or vanpooling;
J. Permitting flexible work schedules to facilitate employees' use of transit, carpools, or vanpools;
K. Cooperation with transportation providers to provide additional regular or express service to the worksite;
L. Construction of special loading and unloading facilities for transit, carpool, and vanpool users;

M. Provision of bicycle parking facilities, lockers, changing areas, and showers for employees who bicycle or walk to work;

N. Provision of a program of parking incentives such as a rebate for employees who do not use the parking facilities;

O. Establishment of a program to permit employees to work part- or full-time at home or at an alternative worksite closer to their homes which reduces commute trips;

P. Establishment of a program of alternative work schedules, such as a compressed work week, which reduces commute trips;

Q. Implementation of other measures designed to facilitate the use of high-occupancy vehicles, such as on-site day care facilities, emergency taxi services, or guaranteed ride home programs;

R. Charging employees for parking, and/or the elimination of free parking; and

S. Other measures that the employer believes will reduce the number and length of commute trips made to the site.

10.71.090 CTR Program Report and Description

A. Affected employers shall review their program and file a biennial CTR Program Report and Description with the City in accordance with the format and schedule provided by the City. The CTR Program Report and Description outlines the strategies to be undertaken by an employer to achieve the commute trip reduction goals for the reporting period. Employers are encouraged to consider innovative strategies and combine program elements in a manner that will best suit their location, site characteristics, business type, and employees' commuting needs. Employers are further encouraged to cooperate with each other to implement program elements.

B. At a minimum, the employer's CTR Program Report and Description must include:

1. A general description of the employment site location, transportation characteristics, employee parking availability, on-site amenities, and surrounding services;

2. The number of employees affected by the CTR program and the total number of employees at the site;

3. Documentation on compliance with the mandatory CTR program elements as described in MICC 10.71.070;

4. Description of any additional elements included in the employer's CTR program (as described in MICC 10.71.080; and

5. A statement of organizational commitment to provide appropriate resources to the program to meet the employer's established goals.

C. Document Review. The City shall review each affected employers' proposed CTR program within 90 days of receiving it from an affected employer. The City will approve, reject, or request modifications to the proposed CTR program within the 90 day review period unless the City provides written notification to the affected employer that the City will extend the review period by no more than 90 days. If the City does not expressly approve, reject, or request modifications to the proposed CTR program within the review period, the proposed CTR program will be deemed accepted. In the event the City requires modifications to the CTR program within a certain time frame or otherwise extends the review period, the implementation date for the employer's CTR program will be extended an equivalent number of days.
D. Modification of CTR Program Elements

1. Employer Requested Modifications. Any affected employer may submit a request to the City for modification of its approved CTR program. Such request may be granted if one of the following conditions exist:
   a. The affected employer can demonstrate it would be unable to comply with the CTR program elements for reasons beyond the control of the employer, or
   b. The affected employer can demonstrate that compliance with the program elements would constitute an undue hardship.

   The City may ask the affected employer to substitute a program element of similar trip reduction potential rather than grant the employer's request.

2. City Required Modifications.
   a. If an affected employer meets either the drive alone or VMT goals established in the CTR Plan, the employer has satisfied the objectives of the CTR plan and will not be required to improve its CTR program;
   b. If an affected employer makes a good faith effort, as defined in RCW 70.94.534(2) and this Chapter, but has not met the applicable drive alone or VMT goal, no additional modifications are required.
   c. If an affected employer fails to make a good faith effort as defined in RCW 70.94.534(2) and this Chapter, and fails to meet the applicable drive alone or VMT reduction goal, the City shall direct the employer to revise its program within 30 days to come into compliance with the measures defined by RCW 70.94.534(2), including specific recommended program modifications. In response to the recommended modifications, the employer shall submit a revised CTR Program Report and Description, including the requested modifications or equivalent measures, within 30 days of receiving written notice to revise its program. The City shall review the revisions and notify the employer of acceptance or rejection of the revised program. If a revised program is not accepted, the City will send written notice to that effect to the employer within 30 days and, if necessary, require the employer to attend a conference with program review staff for the purpose of reaching a consensus on the required program. A final decision on the required program will be issued in writing by the City within 10 working days of the conference.

E. Extensions. An affected employer may request additional time to submit a CTR Program Description and Report, or to implement or modify a program. Such requests shall be via written notice directed to the City Manager or his/her designee at least 30 days before the due date for which the extension is being requested. Extensions not to exceed 90 days shall be considered for reasonable causes. The City shall grant or deny the employer's extension request by written notice within 10 working days of its receipt of the extension request. If there is no response issued to the employer, an extension is automatically granted for 30 days. Extensions shall not exempt an employer from any responsibility in meeting program goals. Extensions granted due to delays or difficulties with any program element(s) shall not be cause for discontinuing or failing to implement other program elements. An employer's regular reporting date shall not be adjusted permanently as a result of these extensions. An employer's biennial reporting date may be extended at the discretion of the City.

10.71.100 Biennial Measure of Employee Commute Behavior
In addition to the baseline measurement, affected employers shall conduct a survey as a means of determining worksite progress toward meeting CTR goals. As part of the program evaluation, the employer shall distribute and collect Commute Trip Reduction Program Employee Questionnaires (surveys) to all affected employees at least once every two years, and strive to achieve at least a 70% response rate from affected employees in the City of Mercer Island.

10.71.110 Record Keeping

Affected employers shall maintain a copy of their approved CTR Program Description and Report, their CTR Program Employee questionnaire results, and all supporting documentation for the descriptions and assertions made in any CTR report to the City for a minimum of 48 months.

10.71.120 Exemptions and Goal Modifications

A. Worksite Exemptions. An affected employer may request the City to grant an exemption from any or all CTR program requirements or penalties for a particular worksite. The employer must demonstrate that it would experience undue hardship in complying with some or all the requirements of this Chapter as a result of the characteristics of its business, its work force, or its location(s). An exemption may be granted if, and only if, the affected employer demonstrates that it faces extraordinary circumstances, such as bankruptcy, and is unable to implement any measures that could reduce the proportion of drive alone trips and VMT per employee. Exemptions may be granted by the City at any time based on a written request provided by the affected employer. The request should clearly explain the conditions for which the affected employer is seeking an exemption from some or all the requirements of this Chapter. The City shall grant or deny the request within 30 days of receipt of the request. The City shall review annually all affected employers receiving exemptions, and shall determine whether the exemption will be in effect during the following program year.

B. Employee Exemptions. Employees who are required to drive alone to work as a condition of employment may be exempted from a worksite’s CTR program. Exemptions may also be granted for employees who work variable shifts throughout the year and who do not rotate as a group to identical shifts. The City will use the criteria identified in the CTR Board Administrative Guidelines to assess the validity of affected employee exemption requests. The City shall grant or deny the request within 30 days of receipt of the request. The City shall review annually all employee exemption requests, and shall determine whether the exemption will be in effect during the following program year.

C. Modification of CTR Program Goals

1. An affected employer may request that the City modify its CTR program goals. Such requests shall be filed in writing at least 60 days prior to the date the worksite is required to submit its program description or biennial report. The goal modification request must clearly explain why the worksite is unable to achieve the applicable goal. The worksite must also demonstrate that it has implemented all of the elements contained in its approved CTR program.

2. The City will review and grant or deny requests for goal modifications in accordance with procedures and criteria identified in the CTR Board Guidelines.
3. An employer may not request a modification of the applicable goals until one year after City approval of its initial program description or biannual report.

10.71.130 Civil Monetary Penalties

A. Each day an affected employer violates this Chapter shall constitute a separate violation and shall be considered a Class I infraction pursuant to RCW 7.80.120. The penalty for a violation shall be $50 per day.

B. No affected employer with an approved CTR program which has made a good faith effort will be required to pay a civil monetary penalty solely for its failure to reach its applicable drive alone or VMT goal;

C. An affected employer shall not be liable for civil monetary penalties if failure to implement an element of a CTR program was the result of an inability to reach agreement with a certified collective bargaining agent under applicable laws where the issue was raised by the employer and pursued in good faith. Unionized employers shall be presumed to act in good faith compliance if they:
   1. Propose to a recognized union any provision of the employer’s CTR program that is subject to bargaining as defined by the National Labor Relations Act; and
   2. Advise the union of the existence of the statute and the mandates of the CTR program approved by the City and advise the union that the proposal being made is necessary for compliance with state law (RCW 70.94.531).

10.71.140 Appeals

A. Reconsideration of Decisions – Conference. Any affected employer wishing to appeal a decision regarding program approval, goal modifications, program modifications, or exemptions must request a conference with the City Manager or his or her designee to request a reconsideration of the decision. Such a conference must be requested within ten (10) City business days of the decision and shall be scheduled within thirty (30) days of the decision. The City shall issue a final decision on the reconsideration request within ten (10) City business days of the completion of the conference. Any action seeking judicial review of the final decision must be filed within (14) days from the date the decision is rendered.

B. Appeals of Notice of Infraction. Any appeal of a notice of infraction issued for a violation of this Chapter may be appealed pursuant to Chapter 7.80 RCW and rules of procedure governing the Mercer Island Municipal Court.

Section 4: Ratification. Any act consistent with the authority and prior to the effective date of this ordinance is hereby ratified and affirmed.

Section 5: Severability/Validity. The provisions of this ordinance are declared separate and severable. If any section, paragraph, subsection, clause or phrase of this ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portion of this ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that they would have passed this ordinance and each
section, paragraph, subsection, clause or phrase thereof irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, paragraphs, clauses or phrases were unconstitutional or invalid.

Section 5: Effective Date. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force thirty (30) days after its passage and publication.

PASSED by the City Council of the City of Mercer Island, Washington at its regular meeting on the 7th day of December, 2009 and signed in authentication of its passage.

CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

ATTEST:

Allison Spietz, City Clerk

Approved as to Form:

Katie Knight, City Attorney

Date of Publication: 12/10/09