



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WA**

**AB 4626
April 25, 2011
Regular Business**

**COMMUNITY CENTER AT MERCER VIEW
MARKETING AND BRANDING**

Proposed Council Action:

Authorize staff to modify the name of the Community Center at Mercer View.

DEPARTMENT OF	Parks and Recreation (Jana Raasch)
COUNCIL LIAISON	Dan Grausz El Jahncke Mike Cero
EXHIBITS	n/a
APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER	

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$	2,500
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$	2,500
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$	0

SUMMARY

The primary function of Mercer Island’s community center, the Community Center at Mercer View, is to service the gathering needs of the Mercer Island community while operating within a set monetary subsidy as established by the City Council. Some examples of the general forms of gatherings include:

1. Parks Department visitor reception and program registration location
2. Information center for City-wide knowledge and resources
3. Emergency Shelter location
4. City, preschool, senior and general program and event location
5. City’s internal meetings location
6. Public Art Gallery and sales location
7. Drop-in/unstructured social activities
8. Business and celebratory place to gather (room rentals)

While the facility’s primary goal is to service the Mercer Island community at a reduced (subsidized) rate, the financial constraints of operating within a set subsidy produces a secondary, yet critical, function of the facility. This secondary function is to offer an alternate meeting location for off-Island businesses, groups and individuals to rent at a premium rental rate. This secondary group of renters accounts for approximately 48% of the facility’s “room rental” usage, but 75% of all “room rental” revenue. This is the primary source of profit and allows for subsidizing of various on-Island meetings, activities and childcare services. Also, a large percentage of the secondary customer rental income is from one-time events (i.e. weddings and Bar Mitzvahs) rather than repeat meetings, and therefore, is more expensive and time consuming to market to as rentals.

To more effectively attract this critical customer group, it was identified that an enhanced “brand” was needed for the facility. OnMerit Marketing, a marketing and advertising firm, was hired to assist in developing a proper and effective brand. During the branding process, it was determined that one of largest

hurdles is the actual name of the facility and the fact that the name doesn't utilize the inherent value of the name "Mercer Island" or the word "event." These are two critical "message" components for attracting off-Island renters. Specifically, the addition of these words within the facility's name will increase online visibility, drive more traffic to the Center's website and thereby allow more opportunity to increase overall rental revenue.

The proposed community center name modification is:

FROM: "Community Center at Mercer View"
TO: "Mercer Island Community & Event Center"

Outline of Benefits

1. To take advantage of the inherent value or brand equity of the "Mercer Island" name, one of the Seattle area's most well-established brands. The Mercer Island name:
 - a. Is synonymous with "quality"
 - b. Has the expectation of "quality" built-in
 - c. Creates an immediate "perceived value"
 - d. Automatically conveys the geographic location
2. To take advantage of two important key words in online searches: "Mercer Island" and "Event":
 - a. "Event" is a top keyword" used to search for venues
 - b. "Event" nicely represents the facility's function and value to the community
 - c. These words increase the potential of new customers discovering this facility, and will reduce the web site's "bounce-rate" (or, immediate exit) of customers who are searching for a quality and central facility
 - d. Increase the ability to reach more prospective renters without increasing staffing levels
3. To keep length of the facility name at a manageable size by omitting "Mercer View."

Budgetary Impact:

No additional funding is needed. All related expenses will be absorbed within the current operating budget. These anticipated expenses include building signage such as: lettering on exterior monument signage (parking lot entrance), lettering on exterior building signage (at main entrance), and several smaller lettering adjustments within the facility itself.

Expected Result:

For a minimal budgetary impact, the name modification of the facility is expected to enhance the overall branding efforts and the image of the facility, which will in turn:

1. Increase the facility's ability to generate critical Off-Island rental revenue
2. Help the City maintain the lowest possible Mercer Island rental rates
3. Have a positive impact on facility's overall budget
4. Help the facility operate within the established annual subsidy level

RECOMMENDATION

Business & Operations Superintendent, Parks & Recreation Department

MOVE TO: To authorize the Parks & Recreation Department to modify the name of the community center, currently known as "Community Center at Mercer View" to the recommended name of "Mercer Island Community & Event Center."