



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

**AB 4164
March 5, 2007
Study Session**

2006 PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT AND PROPOSED 2007 PLANNING COMMISSION WORK PLAN	Proposed Council Action: Receive 2006 Annual Report and Review 2007 Work Plan
---	---

DEPARTMENT OF	Development Services Group, (Jeff Thomas)
COUNCIL LIAISON	Steve Litzow
EXHIBITS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approved 2006 Planning Commission Work Plan 2. Proposed 2007 Planning Commission Work Plan 3. Proposed 2007 Planning Commission Work Plan with Staff Hours Allocated to Work Tasks 4. Sustainability
APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER	<i>Rich Council 3-1-07</i>

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$	n/a
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$	n/a
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$	n/a

SUMMARY

2006 Planning Commission Work Program Report

There were four primary areas of focus approved as part of the 2006 Planning Commission Work Plan including Town Center Design Standard Development Code amendments; the annual Comprehensive Plan and Development Code amendment processes; other regular land use actions; defining sustainability and studying ways to address multiple land use actions on a single site. The approved 2006 Planning Commission Work Plan is included as Exhibit 1. A brief summary of the progress made in each area and a summary of additional work items added to the Work Program is included below.

I. Town Center Design Standard Development Code Amendments

The Planning Commission is currently in the process of conducting hearings on Town Center Design Standard Development Code amendments recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the Council to propose such amendments to the Planning Commission. This process began in December 2006 with the Planning Commission hosting a joint study session with the Design Commission. The Planning Commission conducted a first public hearing in February 2007 and is scheduled to meet again in March to continue the public hearing on these amendments and forward an action recommendation to the City Council.

II. Annual Comprehensive Plan and Development Code Amendments

One Comprehensive Plan amendment was process by the Planning Commission in 2006 related to sustainability as detailed below. Development Code amendments included updating Chapter 19.02 to increase the allowed impervious surface coverage (i.e. lot coverage) on lots owned by schools, religious institutions, private clubs and public facilities in single-family zones with slopes of less than 15%. Staff spent approximately 400 hours on Development Code amendments in 2006.

III. Regular Land Use Actions

A number of land use actions were heard by the Planning Commission in 2006 including three Variances (two for critical areas and one for shorelines), two Conditional Use Permits (one for use and one for shorelines) and one Preliminary Long Plat. Staff spent approximately 800 hours on these land use actions.

IV. Sustainability Definition

After completing further study of sustainability both in early 2006 and again in the summer, the Planning Commission developed a definition of sustainability deemed appropriate to be recommended to the Council for inclusion in the Vision Statement of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission requested the City Council sponsor a Comprehensive Plan amendment to incorporate this language. This request was granted and the Comprehensive Plan amendment was completed in December. Staff spent approximately 200 hours on all sustainability related work in 2006.

V. Study ways to Address Multiple Land Use Actions on a Single Site

The Planning Commission did not study this issue in 2006 and proposes to carry it over to their 2007 Work Plan.

Proposed 2007 Planning Commission Work Program-Discretionary vs. Mandatory Work Items

The Planning Commission discussed the proposed 2007 Work Plan at its regular meeting on February 21, 2007. The proposed 2007 Planning Commission Work Plan is included as Exhibit 2 and is expanded to include allocated staff hours in Exhibit 3.

The City Council directed a number of work tasks during their annual Planning Session in January 2007, including completing the Town Center Design Standard Development Code amendments from 2006, proposing Town Center Streetscape Standards and Development Code amendments, reviewing necessary Development Code amendments resulting from the 2006 DSG Service Review, reviewing a Development Code amendment for enforcement of SEPA parking conditions, proposing an ordinance for the Single-Family Demonstration Project and performing a Town Center Parking Analysis. All of these items are discretionary as the City is not obligated under either state law or city code to complete these work tasks.

Under the Mercer Island City Code (MICC) and state law, the City is required to conduct annual Comprehensive Plan and Development Code amendment processes. Under the MICC, the Planning Commission is required to act as a decision maker and appeal authority for certain land use matters including the required Conditional Use Permit for the PEAK project.

The Planning Commission also proposes to carry over from 2006 a study of ways to address multiple land use actions on a single site.

Sustainability

At the City Council 2007 Planning Session, Council directed staff to include “Sustainability – Implementation of 2007 Management and Budget Policy” as a 2007 work item within the City Council’s 5 year work plan. The Management and Budget Policy directed staff to undertake efforts to curtail its consumption of scarce resources including electric energy, water, fossil fuels and land fill space. During the 2007 Planning Session, Councilmember Litzow suggested that the Council hold a joint study session with the Planning Commission to discuss possible “low-hanging sustainability fruit” for the City to pursue. This joint study session will provide an opportunity for this discussion. Councilmember Grady asked and was granted Council permission to work with Councilmember Litzow, the Planning Commission and the City’s state and federal delegation to learn more about funding mechanisms for City sustainability projects including carbon banking. City Manager Conrad also was authorized by the Council to work with other city managers and administrators to discuss conversion of city fleets to alternative fuels.

The City Executive Team comprised of the City Manager and Department Directors discussed the issue of sustainability and prepared Exhibit 4 to this Agenda Bill setting forth a description of (1) Existing Sustainability Programs; (2) Low Hanging Sustainability Fruit for the City to pursue; and (3) More Significant Sustainability Initiatives requiring Council funding. The existing sustainability programs are items that would be included in “below the line” work. “Below the line” work is work that is included in our normal service delivery. These are administrative services and do not require policy direction from the Council. Staff will be prepared to discuss the possible new sustainability initiatives during the Council’s study session. In addition, staff will continue to collect more detailed information (including cost information) on the sustainability programs listed in Exhibit 4 and other available programs. Staff has scheduled a sustainability briefing for Council at its regular April 16, 2007 City Council meeting.

In conclusion, staff supports all of the work identified in Exhibit 2 as important long range planning work for the City. However, the total staff hours required to complete this work is estimated at 6300 hours, requiring the equivalent of approximately three City employees. This is comparable to the 2006 work plan that was estimated to require 2100 staff hours or the equivalent of one City employee. In 2006, the actual staff hours allocated to the Planning Commission work was 1400 hours. Due to recent staff changes in the Development Services Group (DSG) Department, it is unlikely that DSG will be fully staffed until the second half of 2007. Accordingly, staff recommends Council prioritize the listed discretionary work tasks and recognize that all these work items cannot be completed in 2007 with existing staff resources. The annual Comprehensive Plan and Development Code amendment processes and the other land use action work mandated by the MICC and state law are not discretionary work and so Council does not need to prioritize this work.

RECOMMENDATION

Jeff Thomas, Interim Development Services Director and Planning Commission Chair, Bill Chapman

MOVE TO: Receive Planning Commission 2006 Annual Report, prioritize discretionary items within proposed 2007 Planning Commission Work Plan and direct staff to return with the prioritized 2007 Planning Commission Work Plan on March 19, 2007 for City Council approval.

Council Adopted 2006 Planning Commission Work Program

I. Town Center Design Standards Zoning Code Text Amendments

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (1000 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Ad Hoc Committee (6-7 meetings) • Prepare Recommendations for Council • Work with Attorney to Write Proposed TC Design Standards Code Amendments • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

II. Process Citizen Initiated Comp Plan Amendments, Zoning Code Text Amendments, and Other Land Use Permit Applications, i.e. CUP's, Rezoning, Variances, Appeals.

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (600-1000 Hours) [Variable depending upon number and type]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Comp Plan or Code Amendments • Review Other Land Use Permits • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process Citizen Initiated Comp Plan or Code Text Amendments and Other Land Use Permits • Analyze Proposed Changes • Prepare Recommendations for Planning Commission • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

III. Complete Study of Sustainability Issue and Present Definition of Sustainability and Potential Options for Incorporating Sustainable Development into City Policies and Standards such as Town Center Design Standards Currently Under Study.

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (225 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Definition of Sustainability • Develop Options for Incorporating Sustainable Development into City Policy and Standards such as Town Center Design Standards. (e.g. mid-block connections) • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist Commission with Research on Sustainability Definition, and Potential Policy Changes for Comp Plan. • Assist Commission with Research on Potential Policies for Sustainable Development in Town Center Design Code Amendments.

IV. Study of Ways to Integrate Timing of Planning Commission Decisions with Staff Administrative Decisions Involving Multiple Land Use Permit Applications for a Single Site.

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (125 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Past Cases of Multiple Land Use Permits for a Single Site • Make Recommendations to Staff for Improvements Regarding Timing of Decisions Without Changing the Decision-Maker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Support for Planning Commission • Coordinate with City Attorney • Review Recommendations of Planning Commission for Possible Changes in Policy or Codes During Future Work Programs

Planning Commission Proposed 2007 Work Plan

1. Mandatory Work. The Mercer Island City Code requires the Planning Commission to act as decision maker or appeal authority for the following land use matters:

- Complete annual Comprehensive Plan and Development Code amendment processes mandated by either state law (Growth Management Act) of the Mercer Island City Code allowing citizen and public applications for Comprehensive Plan amendments and Development Code amendments.
- Regular Business including shoreline deviations, variances and conditional use permits (including PEAK CUP) and appeals of short plats, development code interpretations, variances, deviations, critical area determinations and SEPA threshold determinations.

2. Discretionary Work. The Mercer Island City Council directed the following work tasks during the Council's annual January 2007 Planning Session:

- Complete Town Center Design Standards Code Text Amendments recommended by Ad Hoc Committee.
- Propose Town Center Streetscape Standards and Code Text Amendments. Review 1994 Town Center Master Plan for streetscape standards as starting point. Include street grid, street furniture, lighting, planters, sidewalk width and configuration.
- Code Text Amendments resulting from the DSG Service Review conducted in 2006.
- Code Text Amendment – Enforcement for violation of SEPA parking condition.
- Single Family Demonstration Project – Code Text Amendment implementing the Comprehensive Plan. See Housing Policy 3.11 – “adopt an ordinance enabling a demonstration project that would allow the development of one innovative housing project”.
- Perform Town Center Parking Analysis to determine if the parking ratios are sufficient for demand.

3. Discretionary Work. Future Sustainability work.

4. Discretionary Work. Multiple Land Use Permit Applications on a Single Site. Planning Commission requested this issue be added to its 2006 work plan but this work was not completed in 2006 due to lack of staff resources.

2007 Planning Commission Proposed Work Program

I. Town Center Design Standards Code Text Amendments

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (800 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Code Amendments • Recommend revisions to Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Staff Reports to Planning Commission, present report to Planning Commission, staff public hearings • Work with City Attorney to draft revisions to ordinance prepared by staff in response to Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for TC Design Standards Code Amendments. • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

II. Town Center Streetscape Standards and Code Text Amendments

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (800 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Code Amendments • Recommend revisions to Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze 1994 TC Master Plan and existing streetscape standards • Prepare Staff Report to Planning Commission, present report to Planning Commission, staff public hearings. • Work with Attorney to draft proposed TC Design Standards Code Amendments. • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

III. DSG Service Review Code Text Amendments

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (1000 Hours - variable depending on whether Commission and Council limit review to those changes recommended by staff for better clarity and ease of permit processing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Code Amendments • Recommend revisions to Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Staff Reports to Planning Commission, present report to Planning Commission, staff public hearings. • Work with City Attorney to draft proposed Code Amendments. • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

IV. Code Text Amendment – Enforcement for violation of SEPA parking condition

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (400 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Code Amendments • Recommend revisions to Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with City Attorney to write code text amendments allowing enforcement for violation of SEPA parking condition. • Prepare Staff Report to Planning Commission, present report to Planning Commission, staff public hearings. • Draft revisions requested by Planning Commission • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

V. Single Family Demonstration Project – Code Text Amendment implementing Housing Policy 3.11 of the Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (1000 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Code Amendments • Recommend revisions to Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with City Attorney to write proposed TC code text amendments regarding single family demonstration project. • Prepare Staff Reports to Planning Commission, present report to Planning Commission, staff public hearings. • Draft revisions requested by Planning Commission • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council public hearing and adoption

VI. Perform Town Center Parking Analysis Regarding Parking Ratios vs. Parking Demand. Code Text Amendments if Warranted

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (800 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Staff Report and Consultant Work • If code amendments are recommended by staff based upon consultant work, review code amendments. • Recommend revisions to Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Staff Reports to Planning Commission, present report to Planning Commission, staff public hearings. • If necessary, work with City Attorney to write Proposed TC Design Standards Code Amendments covering parking. • Prepare Staff Report to Planning Commission on TC parking code text amendments. • Draft revisions requested by Planning Commission • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

VII. Process Citizen Initiated Comprehensive Plan and Code Text Amendments

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (500 Hours - Variable depending upon number and type)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Comprehensive Plan or Code Amendments • Recommend revisions to Code Amendments • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process Citizen Initiated Comp Plan or Zoning Code Amendments • Analyze Proposed Changes • Prepare Recommendations for Planning Commission • Draft revisions requested by Planning Commission • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

VIII. Regular Land Use Work (e.g. shoreline deviations, variances and conditional use permits including PEAK CUP and appeals (e.g. SEPA threshold determination.))

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (800 Hours - Variable depending upon number and type)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Public Meeting • Review Conditional Use Permit, Variances or other land use actions • Make revisions to Staff Recommendation • Make Recommendation to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Staff Report on land use matter, present report to Planning Commission, staff public hearings. • Draft revisions requested by Planning Commission • Prepare Agenda Bills for Council Public Hearing and Adoption

IX. Study of Ways to Coordinate Planning Commission Project Reviews Involving Multiple Land Use Permit Applications for a Single Site.

Planning Commission Volunteer Roles	Staff Support Roles (200 Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Past Cases of Multiple Land Use Permits for a Single Site • Make Recommendations to Staff for Improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Support for Planning Commission • Coordinate with City Attorney • Review Recommendations of Planning Commission for Possible Changes in Policy or Codes During Future Work Programs

Sustainability

Next Steps for City Following Adoption of Comprehensive Plan Vision

Sustainability Statement. The City Council approved the following Sustainability statement to be included in the Community Values section of the Vision Statement of the City's Comprehensive Plan:

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.

What Existing City Programs Promote Sustainability?

- **Energy Conservation.** City encourages conservation of energy in its public buildings. Employees and tenants are directed to turn off the lights when leaving an office or conference room. The City uses compact fluorescent light fixtures which are more energy efficient and have longer life. The City replaced all of its single pane windows to double pane and experienced a substantial reduction in kilowatt hours as a result of this investment.
- **Vehicle Emissions.** In Washington, more than 50 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by automobiles. The City has purchased one hybrid vehicle (approximately 40 miles per gallon) and will order 3 more hybrid vehicles during the 2007-2008 biennial budget for fleet replacements. The City plans to continue to consider all new technologies in future fleet vehicle replacement purchases including hybrid vehicles, alternative fuel vehicles and electric vehicles. Electric vehicles also are being evaluated for functions such as parks maintenance and meter reading. While planning for the replacement of its fire fleet, the City is considering investing in engine technology that can be converted to non-petroleum alternatives when they become more widely available. The City has encouraged Allied Waste (City solid waste franchise) to consider conversion of its fleet.
- **Alternative Fuel.** In 2005, the City converted to low-sulfur diesel fuel, which substantially reduces emissions from heavy equipment. The Mercer Island School District uses low-sulfur diesel in its buses.

- **Equipment Retrofit.** Thanks to a grant from the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, four of the Maintenance Department’s older pieces of heavy equipment are being retrofitted to substantially reduce emissions.
- **Commute Trip Reduction.** The City complies with the Commute Trip Reduction Act (CTR) and has a telecommuting program and flexible work week schedule for its employees. The CTR program results in reduced vehicular trips to work and reduced vehicle emissions. The City prepares a CTR Report to the state that tracks the percentage reduction in SOV travelers and use of flexible work schedules to avoid vehicle trips.
- **Public Works Projects.** In City public works projects, Mercer Island considers low cost alternatives that are environmentally friendly (e.g. the bioswale at the Community Center).
- **Water Utility.** Mercer Island’s water utility has a water conservation program that conserves this critical natural resource. Global warming is predicted to result in increasing water shortages. City participates in the Seattle Public Utilities 1% for Conservation Program. The City water utility utilizes a tiered rate structure to encourage reduced water consumption. The City also imposes a summer conservation surcharge for higher water users. The water utility invests in a public education program to encourage water conservation.
- **Park Maintenance.** Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department employs a multi-tier conservation plan that responds to regional water shortages and strives to conserve at least 10%. Maxicom, a sophisticated computerized irrigation system used in the City’s parks and open spaces, monitors precipitation through a weather station on the I-90 Park on the Lid and adjusts turf irrigation levels throughout the park system as a result.
- **Ballfield Lighting.** A computerized ballfield lighting system conserves electricity by operating only when needed and prevents accidental overrides.
- **Invasive Plant Removal.** The City has committed to invasive plant removal on its 476 acres of parks and open space areas, consisting of selected hand removal of blackberry, ivy, holly and laurel. “Survival rings” are created around trees. Since 2005, over 3,800 trees have been planted in “canopy gaps” - areas where trees are sparse or missing in an otherwise forested setting. Others were planted in areas of mature deciduous trees to provide new conifers to replace aging trees as they die.
- **Recycling.** The City employs a number of recycling strategies that include:
 - Plastic, aluminum and glass can and bottle recycling at Luther Burbank Park and Community Center at Mercer View.
 - Paper recycling in all City buildings and offices

- Cardboard recycling at City special events
 - Spring and Fall community recycling events for household items;
 - City has adopted Recycled Product Policy (e.g. recycled paper and toners)
 - Annual community Christmas tree wood chipping
 - City Solid Waste Franchise includes free citizen recycling of waste.
- **Stormwater System.** Mercer Island's management of its stormwater system ensures the protection of threatened or endangers species from the impacts of climate change. Having control of its own stormwater utility allows the City to consider future programs such as using reclaimed water. Recently, Mercer Island exceeded the mitigation required for its sewer lake line by agreeing to rehabilitate over 900 feet of eroding shoreline in the Luther Burbank Park and another location on the west side of the Island. Mercer Island participates in WRIA 8 watershed for purposes of making environmental enhancements to protect endangered or threatened species.
 - **Parks and Open Space.** Mercer Island's significant open space and park acquisitions protect its natural resources and provide opportunities for carbon banking.
 - **Reduce Paper.** The City conserves natural resources by eliminating paper copies of certain documents (e.g. IMercer, electronic police reports, Council Agendas delivered to staff and citizens, Public Records Act responses, DSG Weekly Bulletin)
 - **Bike and Pedestrian Trail.** The Council's adoption of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan allows the City to invest in new trails for both pedestrians and bikes to encourage non-motorized modes of transportation.
 - **Lawnmower Rebate.** Mercer Island was one of the first cities to offer a rebate to its citizens for the purchase of rechargeable lawnmowers. Lawnmowers can produce more emissions than certain vehicles.
 - **Police Bike Patrol.** The Mercer Island Police Department staffs a two person bike patrol in the Town Center resulting in reduced vehicle emissions.
 - **Park and Ride Lot.** Expanded capacity for transit use will be available in 2007 when the expanded Park and Ride lot opens resulting in potential reduced vehicle emissions.

Low Hanging Sustainability Fruit. What new low cost and easily implemented sustainability and efficiency initiatives are available?

- Consider hybrids or other new non-petroleum technologies when replacing fleet vehicles.
- Use Solid Waste Franchise negotiations in two years to encourage Allied Waste to convert its fleet.
- Seek federal or state grant dollars to establish a City and/or fleet carbon footprint to establish a baseline from which future sustainability programs will be based upon.
- Install motion sensors in public facilities so light fixtures automatically turn off when facilities are not being used and turn on when someone enters the room or facility.
- City Manager will discuss fleet conversions with other cities during Spring 2007.
- Create new Employee Award for Sustainability Ideas
- Convert holiday lights to LED to conserve energy.
- Use fire training facilities that recycle water for training activities.
- Increase education effort to encourage citizens to reduce use of natural resources and encourage recycling efforts.

More Significant Sustainability Initiatives Requiring Council Funding

- Determine baseline of all City carbon emission and set goals for the reduction of this carbon emission level.
- Create a Fleet Business Plan and set goals for reduced emissions, increase in miles per gallon and decrease in total carbon footprint from fleet.
- Construct a separated bike trail around Mercer Island for non-motorized travel
- Purchase reclaimed water from King County for Parks irrigation system. Seek state grant to fund the infrastructure to allow use of reclaimed water.
- Paperless Office
- Street Lights. Purchase and install new technology to reduce kilowatt hours used by street lights
- Fund infrastructure and vehicles necessary to convert public fleet to hybrid technologies and/or biofuels.
- Amend building regulations. This is fairly controversial and does not have the same significant impacts on maintaining a sustainable environment since over 50% of the emissions are caused by vehicles and not new impervious surfaces or types of materials used in construction.
- Once regulations exist setting maximum carbon level, create carbon banking program allowing the City to sale portions of its green footprint to third parties.