



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

**AB 6291
July 5, 2023
Regular Business**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6291: Town Center Parking Study Draft Report & Early Actions Implementation Update	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Resume the process to finalize and adopt the Town Center Parking Study Report by the end of 2023.	

DEPARTMENT:	Public Works
STAFF:	Patrick Yamashita, Public Works Deputy Director Jeff Thomas, CPD Director Ed Holmes, Police Chief Mike Seifert, Operations Commander Sarah Bluvas, CIP Project Manager
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. Draft Town Center Parking Study Report 2. Summary of Early Action Items
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to seek direction for reviewing and adopting the Town Center Parking Study Report as well as providing a recommendation to the City Council on implementing early actions identified in the report.

- City Council approved \$80,000 in the 2021-2022 Biennial Budget to conduct a new Town Center Parking Study (50% funded by General Fund via the Street Fund and 50% funded by Sound Transit Mitigation dollars for study elements related to mitigation impacts).
- On March 21, 2023, the City Council received the draft Town Center Parking Study Report (Exhibit 1), which includes three comprehensive strategies to achieve the Council’s goals for Town Center parking ([AB 6242](#)).
- At that time, the Council directed staff to suspend work on the Town Center Parking Study until the State legislative session concluded, as several bills pending in the legislature could impact parking regulations in Town Center.
- The City Council also directed staff to return with a plan for implementing early actions identified in the report. These early actions include updating Town Center parking usage counts (work is in

progress), promoting the availability of public parking in parking garages, updating the parking citation fees, reviewing the public parking time limits in Town Center, identifying locations for bicycle parking, and identifying additional locations for ADA Parking (Exhibit 2).

- During this meeting, staff will update the City Council on the parking-related outcomes of the State legislative session and review the previously identified early action items.

BACKGROUND

On March 21, 2023, the City Council received the draft Town Center Parking Study (Exhibit 1). The report is informed by parking inventory and usage data as well as community input collected from March to September 2022. It includes strategies to achieve the following goals identified by the Council:

1. Create a parking program that activates Town Center, supports small businesses, and enhances the Town Center visitor experience.
2. Ensure Mercer Island residents have priority access to public transportation.
3. Determine if on-site commercial and multi-family residential parking is adequately supplied and utilized. Identify options for increasing and/or regulating its use.

During the March meeting, the Council directed staff to suspend work on the Town Center Parking Study until the Washington State Legislative session concluded. A few bills were under consideration that may have impacted parking in Town Center. Suspending work on the study ensured that the final recommendations aligned with State law.

2023 LEGISLATIVE OUTCOMES RELATED TO TOWN CENTER PARKING

The Council received an update on the outcomes of the Legislative session during the mid-year planning session on May 23, 2023 ([AB 6257](#)). Staff also met internally to review specific bills that could impact Town Center parking; a summary of how those bills could affect Town Center parking is provided below.

Bills that Passed

[HB 1110](#) This legislation mandates new middle housing density in single-family neighborhoods and prohibits parking minimums for new housing that is within a quarter-mile walking distance of the future Light Rail station. The prohibition on parking minimums applies only to new middle housing types required by the new legislation; staff anticipate that this will primarily affect future redevelopment in the single-family neighborhoods located north of I-90 and a quarter mile from the future Light Rail station, rather than new development in the Town Center zone.

Residential dwellings are permitted throughout the Town Center zone, but there are few parcels that may be suitable for middle housing density as opposed to the high-density multifamily housing developments built in Town Center recent years. However, increased housing density in surrounding neighborhoods could push more community members to park in the Town Center zone, which could impact parking availability for customers, employees, and other Town Center visitors.

[HB 1042](#) This legislation allows housing units to be added within the envelope of existing commercial and mixed-use buildings. In addition to requiring City code reconciliation, this legislation limits the City's ability to impose additional parking requirements for any new housing that may be added under the new allowances. Residents of future housing would need to use other forms of parking, such as street parking, if their units do not supply dedicated parking spaces, which could impact parking availability in the Town Center.

[HB 1293](#) This legislation requires cities to apply clear and objective design review standards to the exterior of new development (with exceptions) and will limit design review for residential development.

Parking requirements for Town Center are regulated by MICC 19.11.130, which provides a range for parking minimums required by different types of development/uses in the Town Center zone. The proposed number of parking spaces and design of the parking facilities are reviewed by the Design Commission as part of the current design review process. These regulations must be revised by June 30, 2025, to comply with the new legislation. Namely, the range must be replaced with a “clear and objective standard,” and design review will be limited to an administrative process with a maximum of one public hearing.

Bills that Failed

[SB 5466](#) This legislation promoted transit-oriented development around rapid transit stations such as the forthcoming Light Rail station and would’ve limited the City’s ability to require parking for future Town Center developments. Staff anticipate that this proposed legislation will return in some form in 2024.

Ultimately, legislative impacts to Town Center parking were minimal in 2023. However, cities’ ability to enact parking regulations will almost certainly be a problem as future legislation related to density will likely deemphasize on-site parking requirements and push vehicle parking to the public realm. The recommendations of the Town Center Parking Study intend to work together to achieve City Council’s stated goals and will require periodic review and calibration to respond to such future legislative requirements.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

While the Town Center Parking Study work was suspended, the Council directed staff to return with a plan for implementing “early actions” identified in the report and presented to the Council in March. These actions are listed below, and progress/details are included in Exhibit 2.

- Update parking counts, including collecting data on the Mercer Island Park & Ride and the Town Center & North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) permit programs.
- Observe ADA parking usage.
- Evaluate and modify parking citation fees.
- Improve wayfinding to and promote availability of public parking in Town Center parking garages.
- Observe bicycle usage and identify locations for/relocate additional bicycle parking.
- Phase in conversion of two-hour parking limits depending on observed congestion/lack of turnover.

During Wednesday’s meeting, staff will present the work completed to-date to address these items and seek direction for next steps. Additionally, given the outcomes of the 2023 Legislative Session, staff recommend resuming the process to review and adopt the Town Center Parking Study Report by the end of the year.

NEXT STEPS

Should the City Council decide to resume the Town Center Parking Study, staff will finalize the draft report and publish the draft on Let’s Talk by July 31, 2023. Staff will then commence a public outreach process to collect input on the strategies and recommendations included in the report. Opportunities for commenting on the report will be publicized via City channels (Let’s Talk, MI Weekly, social media, business e-mail

outreach, etc.), partner organizations, and at upcoming community events. The public comment period will remain open through mid-September.

At the September 19 City Council meeting, staff will present a summary of the public input received, hold a public hearing, and solicit feedback from the Council. Staff anticipate returning to the City Council in Q4 2023 with a final Town Center Parking Study Report for review and adoption.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Resume the process to finalize and adopt the Town Center Parking Study Report by the end of 2023.