



Downtown Streetscapes: Street Name Inlays

Arts Council Regular Hybrid Meeting | July 17, 2024

TALLMAN • GILPIN

Agenda for Discussion

1. About *Downtown Streetscapes*: Street Name Inlays
2. ADA Transition Plan Implementation
3. Current and Future Impacts to Street Name Inlays
4. Potential Recommendations
5. Staff Responses to Project Questions
6. Discussion / Next Steps





What are the Street Name Inlays?

- Part of *Downtown Streetscapes* installation by artist Ellen Sollod.
- Installed on 77th and 78th Avenues SE during Town Center street reconstruction in 1994.
- Features original names of seven downtown streets, which were named after early Mercer Island families.
- Two bronze names inlaid at the base of the curb ramps on street corners to mark original intersections.



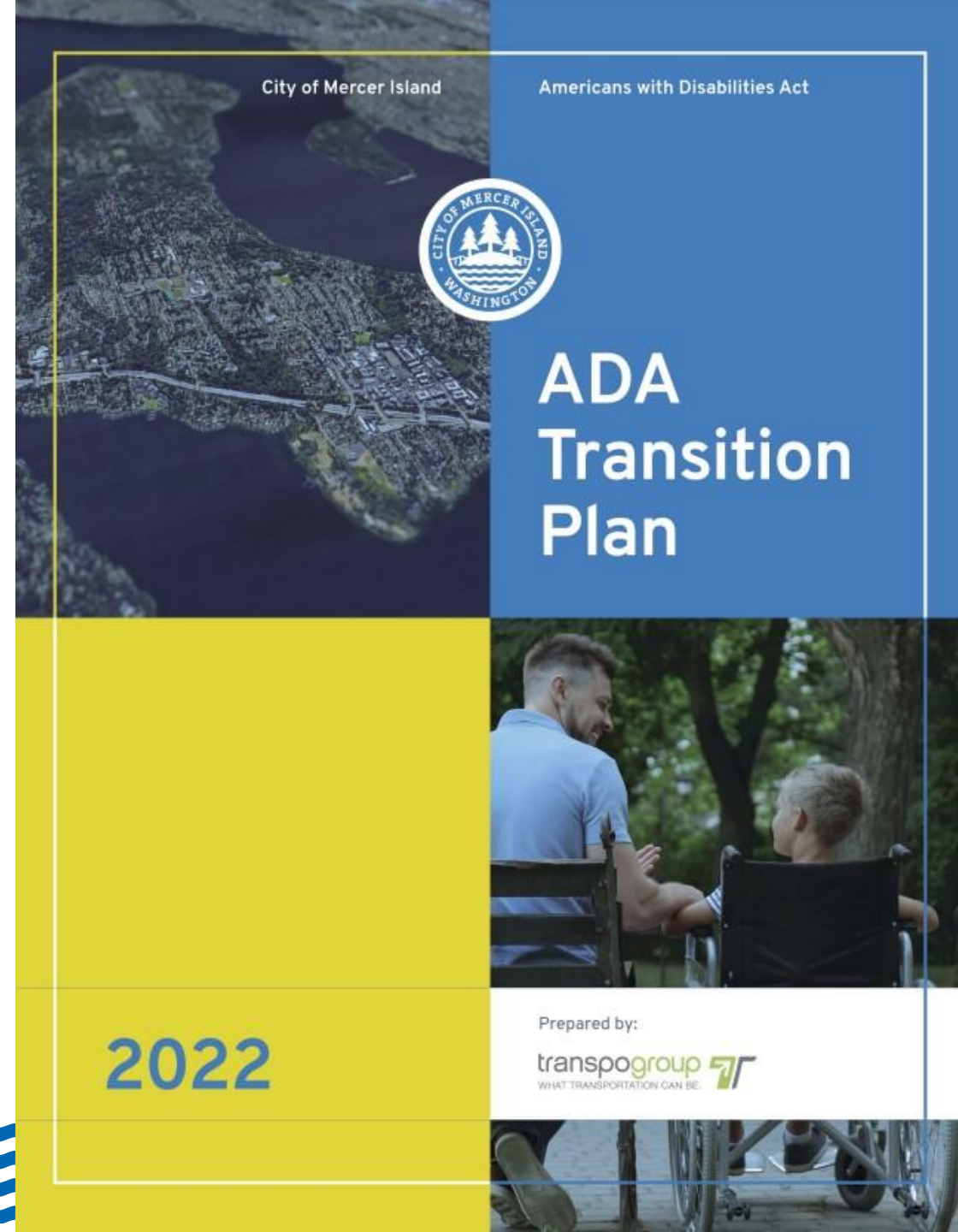
Installation Details

- Bronze 655 plate letters measuring 4.5” tall and .375” thick each.
- Last letters of each marker welded to silicon bronze framework.
- Entire intersection name secured to a block-out and filled with set grout.



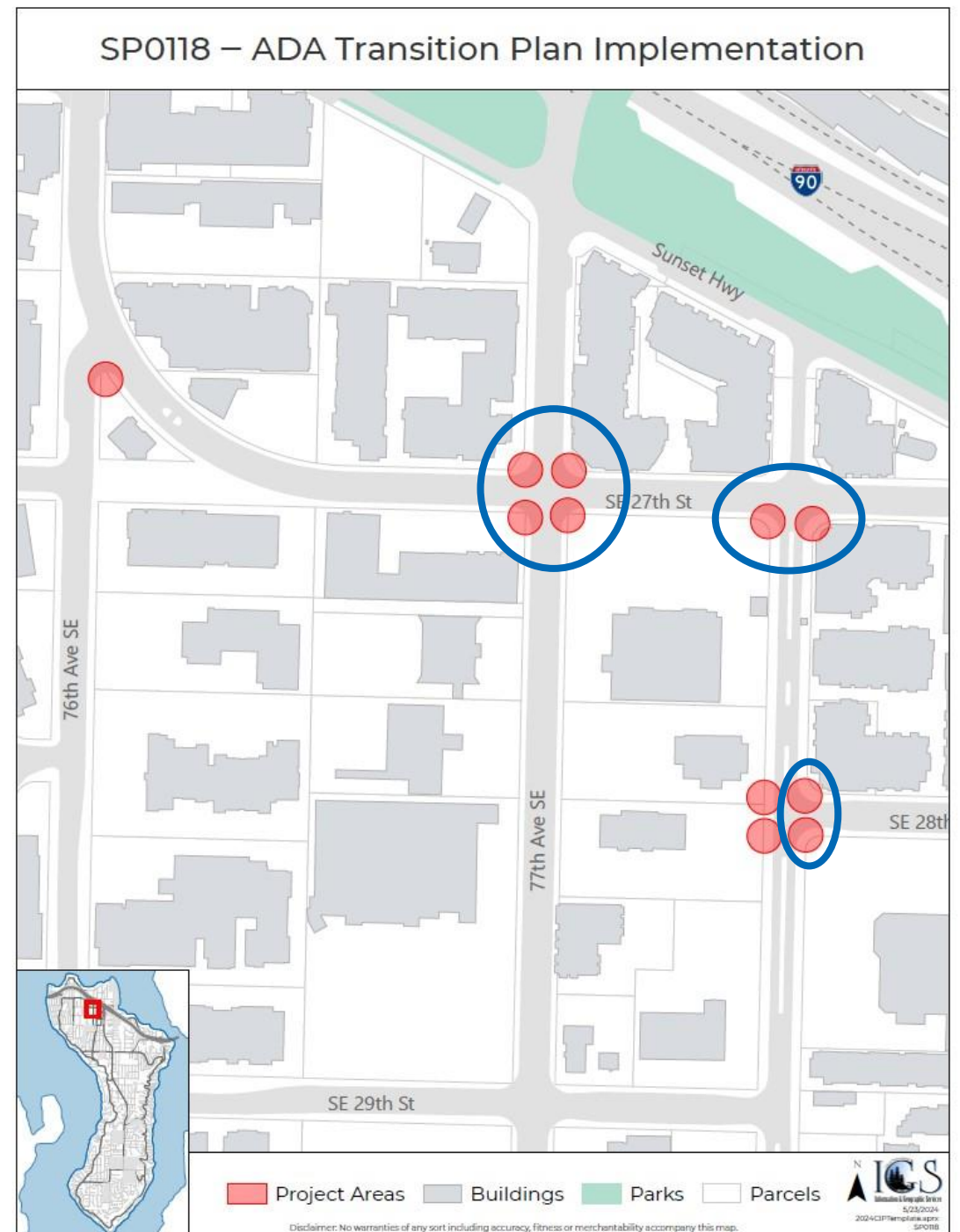
ADA Transition Plan

- Plan adopted in 2022.
- Identifies and guides the implementation of necessary accessibility improvements across the Island.
- Implementation focused on Town Center in 23-24 Biennial Budget.
- City's Transportation Engineer oversees implementation.
- Plan available for review at: <https://www.mercerisland.gov/ada>



SP0118 ADA Transition Plan Implementation

- Summer 2024 work includes replacing curb ramps, adjacent curbs/gutters, and sidewalks at 11 street corners (map to right).
- 8 of the 11 street corners include Street Name Inlays.
- Inlays will be removed during construction to accommodate new warning strips known as truncated domes.
- Other curb ramps with Street Name Inlays will be renovated during future CIP projects.





Input from Artist Ellen Sollod

- Staff met with Sollod in August 2023.
- Did not recommend re-siting to a new location since the inlays are place-specific.
- Supported deaccessioning series if suitable alternative isn't identified.
- Suggestion #1: Develop a new project with salvaged pieces that builds on/responds to context and history of current installation.
- Suggestion #2: Donate pieces to fine arts school or center to be melted down and used for new projects.

***The River* by Ellen Sollod; installed at Renton Transit Center**
Example of place-based artwork installed in different location

Removal Methods from ADA Design Consultant

Concrete Block

- Sawcut the intersection marker and remove as one concrete block to store.
- Not extremely time-intensive
- Would need to be removed carefully to maintain planar portion.
- Slabs would be heavy and fragile.
- No cost estimate for this option.

Individual Letters

- Chip each letter out of concrete, then clean and store.
- Limited to one street corner at a time to maintain pedestrian circulation.
- Very time- and labor-intensive.
- Cost per intersection = \$2,500
- Would need to be funded by 1% for Art in Public Places fund.

Meeting with Mercer Island Historical Society

- Staff met with MI Historical Society Co-Presidents July 11, 2024.
- Discussed significance of the Street Name Inlays and lack of historical representation in public art collection.
- Concerned about lack of notice to MI Historical Society about possible deaccession.
- MI Historical Society Board submitted a letter to the Arts Council on July 16 supporting development of a new project to highlight Island history in the Town Center.

THIS WEEK

Mercer Islanders are at the helm of a new project at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 21, when the Chappin Symphony Orchestra comes to the island for a family concert at Mercer Island High School. The performance features Puck/Noel's "Four in the Wolf" as well as Stravinsky's "A Child's World."

Chappin is the first professional orchestra to perform on Mercer Island since 1968 according to Marguerite Sutherland, host of Classical Music Supper, which is sponsoring the concert. Tickets are available at Island Books, or by calling 860-6035. Tickets are \$12 (\$10 seniors, \$5 children).

Islanders' long beach houses are a threat to the island's reputation for fine architecture. The island has two producers training this week.

Center Stage, the Eastside's only weekly professional theater, is producing the award-winning play "Night Light" by Donald Margulies. It opens on Friday, Jan. 13 and continues through Feb. 12 at the Theater at Shiloh Jewish Community Center, 310-315, are available by calling 738-4200.

The Youth Theatre Northwest presents a show "Cyrano" in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the play's creation. It opens Jan. 19 and features the talents of the theater's advanced acting troupe. Tickets are \$8, available by calling 232-2250.

Few like the Government is too big and too distant? Mercer Islanders can get closer to government and talk to the mayor tonight, from 7 p.m. at Executive Sam's, next to Alpacas at 78th Avenue Southside.

Mayor Andy Carlson will be here to listen to what you or your friend - or the dog in a vest of "Coffee with the Mayor" sponsors has been holding recently. The evening's volume, and there's no set agenda - everybody's welcome to ask, ask questions, or just listen.

Let's call for Christmas cheer! The City of Mercer Island's free Christmas tree shipping program ends on Friday, Jan. 20. If you still haven't gotten around to having down the white-brown, except for the City (North Island, City Hall, 8001 S.E. 20th Street) the drops are used for real and planted had maintenance in good place.

Have you deviated from the CBD streets lately and wondered about some of the lesser streets?

Have you been curious about the street names, or the meaning of the words on the tree street?

That's the whole idea. The art inlays were throughout downtown on the tree, golden, sidewalk inlays, and light blue, oval-shaped, were needed to "engage the viewer in understanding and celebrating Mercer Island's history," according to T. Eden Seidel, an artist who developed the art plan for downtown.

Let us have to get out of your car to see these - and that's the idea. From a map you see the street lights and houses, and you notice the street names, but it's only by walking through the CBD that you can appreciate the artwork. Only by walking do you slow down to see the details and the pedestrian-oriented scale of some of the changes.

Art for pedestrians



The unadorned growth of the cellular telephone business is putting a few hurdles on Mercer Island, and in smaller towns and cities around the state.

City Hall seems to have started collecting business taxes from the cellular telephone companies that serve Mercer Island, under a new ordinance reviewed this week.

For businesses, the tax will mean a 4 percent increase in their monthly bills to \$1.99 per month on a \$49 bill.

On top of that, last month, the Metropolitan King County Council approved a 20-cent excise tax on cellular phone bills to pay for a public service. The county already collects 10 cents per month for every minute telephone.

The cellular industry faces another hurdle as the law second time in a year. Islanders are sending out applications for cellular antennas, which are being refused in neighborhoods throughout the region by the county's health commission.

Health officials say 30 mobile phone antennas near the Northside Yeshiva High School on Mercer Island was submitted to City Hall last week.

The health commission's health concerns related to electromagnetic frequencies transmitted by the antennas.

Laurie McGowan, a resident who developed the petition, said that researchers have warned



For an island, attention to the sidewalk is essential. One of the bronze inlays, on S.E. 27th Street near 77th Avenue S.E., depicts transportation between Mercer Island and Seattle, and the tree used by various means of conveyance.

Art at your feet

Bronze inlays in CBD speak of Island history, poetry

redevelopment of Mercer Island's downtown drew attention to the island and contemporary surroundings of the island's character," said Seidel. "Rather than proposing large-scale independent artworks, an emphasis on artwork integrated into the landscape was recommended."

So, park your car and take a walk around, here's a walking guide to the new art elements in the CBD.

Street names: When you get to a corner, look down. Instead of bronze, the original names of the two streets intersecting in front of you. In 1988, King County removed street names from downtown Mercer Island and replaced them with a number system. To retain the historic identity of the district, the original street names were placed on the sidewalks, along 77th and 78th Avenues from S.E. 2nd north to 27th Street.

So, for our "tree street" - 78th Avenue, in Golden Street - 78th Avenue, S.E. 25th to Center, S.E. 26th to Tallman, S.E. 28th to Summit, S.E. 30th to Treen, and S.E. 32nd to 34th.

If you're able to go on the way on 78th Street (Provincetown), you can see at Precinct Landing. The building, the lake and the street names are visible after Gardner Precinct and his Indian wife, Etowah. On the west side of the street on the northwest corner of the island in the 1980s.

The art, like for the

New tax proposed on cellular phones

Some Islanders questioning safety of cellular antennae

about the potential health benefits of long-term exposure to transmitters over airwaves, there's such concern.

Similar concerns have been raised in Seattle neighborhoods and across the country.

BUT HEALTH OFFICIALS say the evidence of health risks posed by the low-frequency radio waves is not conclusive.

Cellular One, the company seeking to raise the 30-cent monthly fee for the private school, also studies to show the frequency is no less as to be regulated.

Lisa Winick, a city planner, says the antennas being proposed near the school will increase a frequency of three times that the federal government's standard for safety.

King County health officials last year reviewed the health issue for the 15 West Avenue area. First HRE and concluded that each antenna was not a health risk.

Earlier this month, the City Council, in a vote, gave approval to the school's plan to install the antennas at the school.

If the antennas choose to appear, the case will be decided by a Superior Court judge.

County members Tom Tate and Linda Johnson voted against the proposal. Johnson said a controversial situation, such as a residential antenna, should not be allowed in a residential neighborhood.

In addition, Tate argued that that researchers have warned

Trial begins for logger of ancient, underwater forest

that he knowingly salvaged logs without the valid permits, took 1,100-year-old trees from an area that was off-limits, and illegally used the logs to build a house.

Defense Attorney Deborah Phillips told jurors on Thursday that Tormoz purchased the salvaging company in 1981 and was trying to keep the business "as certain as I can be" he was doing anything wrong," she said.

Despite several contacts with state and county officials, scientists and local residents never was told that he had the permission to remove the logs.

Even in March 1982, when a helicopter was sent off to remove the logs, Phillips said, the county's environmental department searched the area to look for the logs, but the government employees who interviewed Tormoz on his salvaging logs never mentioned that he had the permission to remove the logs.

"Only now, the state is saying to Mr. Tormoz that what he had to do had all the necessary permits. This procedure, instead

New field use fee plan gets review

A new fee for nonusers and athletes who play sports on public fields will be reviewed on Thursday by the Park and Community Services Board.

The fee, which is expected to add about \$800 to the regular fee for adult softball, has been proposed to fund maintenance and the replacement of athletic leagues that use city fields.

A controversial idea to charge \$5 per player for adult leagues and \$10 for youth leagues has been eliminated. Under the new plan, children ages 12 and under may use the fields free of charge.

The Board & City Clerk expected to pay about \$1,000 a year to be for the league fees. Mercer Island High School is expected to pay about \$2,000 a year for its teams to use city fields. And the Mercer Island Youth Soccer Association will pay about \$2,500 a year for its youth soccer teams.

City officials say the fee will be the top condition, which is expected to be reviewed and approved by the Board & City Clerk.

The Park and Community Services Board meeting is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 19, in the Community Center of Mercer Island, 928 S.E. 34th St.

Read More

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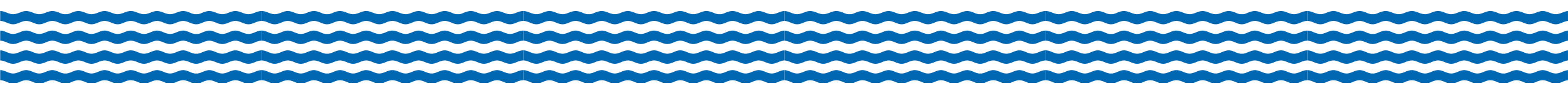
Phone 732-2222, Circulation 4100
Send ad to: 1001 1st Street
Mercer Island, WA 98040



Next Steps for Street Name Inlays

- SP0118 scheduled to begin construction later this month.
- Based on input from artist and cost to remove inlays, staff recommended the CIP project move forward without salvaging the impacted Street Name Inlays.
- Still opportunity to address other Street Name Inlays installed in Town Center.

NW Corner at SE 29th Street and 77th Avenue SE
Street Name Inlay previously removed by City ROW



Potential Recommendations

The Arts Council may choose to:

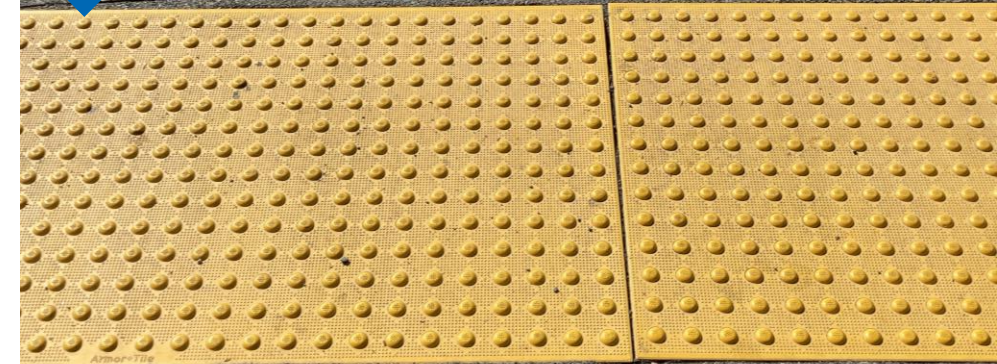
1. Recommend that the Street Name Inlays be deaccessioned.
2. Recommend further exploration for salvaging pieces during future capital projects.
3. Recommend that a new project highlighting historic street names be developed.
4. Some combination of options 1-3 OR a different recommendation proposed by an Arts Councilmember.

Questions Received by Staff

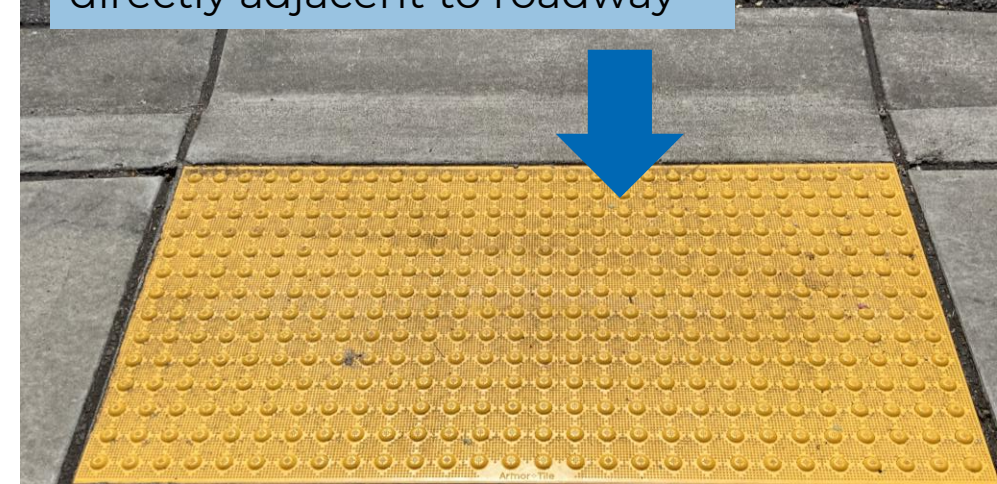
Why do photos in Exhibit 2 show corners that already have truncated domes?

- Photos in Exhibit 2 show truncated domes already installed at corners on SE 27th and SE 28th Streets.
- These curb ramps were upgraded by the developer of 77 Central when that complex was built in the mid-2000s.
- At the time, the City required the developer to make street frontage improvements, including adding the truncated domes to the curb ramps and reinstalling the Street Name Inlays on the impacted corners.
- The audit for the ADA Transition Plan found that none of those curb comply with the ADA.

Non-compliant truncated dome placement



Compliant truncated dome – directly adjacent to roadway



Questions Received by Staff

Did the City consider re-siting the impacted Street Name Inlays somewhere else in the sidewalk on the corner? (E.g., at top of curb ramp, near building, etc.)

- The Mercer Island Historical Society suggested this.
- Design challenges for this option:
 - Length of the curb ramp depends on the length of the sidewalk and the slopes leading into the roadway.
 - ROW space is limited at the corners, and the required ADA design pushes the ramps closer to the ROW edge, leaving little to no room for Street Name Inlays.

Questions Received by Staff

Can you clarify the number of Street Name Inlays?

- 21 Street Name Inlays currently installed in Town Center.
- 8 impacted by summer 2024 construction.
- 13 will not be impacted this summer.

Can you clarify the construction timing?

- Our Transportation Engineer is working on the construction contract now, and we anticipate that construction of the curb ramp improvements will begin later this month.

Questions Received by Staff

When will the remaining 13 corners with Street Name Inlays be upgraded?

- No set timeline for future retrofits/reconstruction.
- Will continue to focus ADA Transition Plan implementation on Town Center, including on pedestrian facilities ahead of Light Rail opening.
- Still time to evaluate opportunities for salvaging the remaining Street Name Inlays.

Questions Received by Staff

Can you clarify the timing of deaccessioning for each potential recommendation?

- If the Arts Council chose Recommendation #1, the recommendation to deaccession the Street Name Inlays series would be sent to City Council for approval in Q4 of 2024.
- If the Arts Council chose Recommendation #2, a recommendation to deaccession the Street Name Inlays series would only be sent to City Council after further exploration of salvaging pieces is complete/the Arts Council provides direction.
- If the Arts Council chose Recommendation #3, the recommendation to deaccession the Street Name Inlays series would be sent to City Council at the same time approval of a new public art project to highlight historic street names is requested.

How are deaccession needs evaluated?

Current Deaccession Criteria

1. A work is not, or is only rarely, on display because of lack of a suitable site.
2. The condition or security of the artwork cannot be reasonable guaranteed.
3. The artwork has been damaged or has deteriorated and repair is impractical or unfeasible.
4. The artwork endangers public safety.
5. In the case of site-specific artwork, the artwork is destroyed by severely altering its relationship to the site.
6. The artwork has been determined to be significantly incompatible or inferior in the context of the collection.
7. The City wishes to replace the artwork with work of more significance by the same artist.
8. The artwork requires excessive maintenance or has faults of design or workmanship.