
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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PLANNING COMMISSION

To: City Council

From: Angela Battazzo, Planning Commission Chair

Date: June 12, 2024

Subject: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review – Findings and Recommendation

Attachments:

- A. Recommended Draft Comprehensive Plan Elements (Clean)
- B. Recommended Draft Comprehensive Plan Elements (with Markup)

On behalf of the Planning Commission, I am pleased to present a recommendation to adopt, as amended, an update of the Comprehensive Plan Elements. Over the course of 24 meetings from February 2022 to June 2024, the Planning Commission reviewed the Comprehensive Plan Elements to complete the work the City Council assigned when it approved the project scope of work, master schedule, and public participation plan with [Resolution No. 1621](#) and supplemented by [Resolution No. 1646](#). The approved minutes and all documents considered during the review are [posted on the City website](#) and available for review. The record of the process shows how the Commission meticulously considered each goal and policy, staff recommendation, and public comment throughout this process to arrive at the enclosed recommendation. At its June 12, 2024, meeting, the Planning Commission approved a motion to make this recommendation, capping off an effort that the Planning Commission began in 2022.

The recommended draft Comprehensive Plan update reflects the Planning Commission’s hard work over the course of the last two-plus years. The Planning Commission recommended draft is the result of many volunteered hours spent reading, discussing, and weighing alternatives. It is important to acknowledge the significant contributions from both current and former Planning Commission members: Michael Murphy, Kate Akyuz, Adam Ragheb, Victor Raisys, Carolyn Boatsman, Chris Goelz, Michael Curry, and Daniel Hubbell. Vice Chair Murphy and former Commissioner Daniel Hubbell deserve additional credit for serving as chairs during the first two years of the project.

The recommended drafts of the Comprehensive Plan Elements are attached to this memo in two formats. Attachment A provides the Planning Commission recommended drafts clean, without tracked changes. Attachment B shows the Planning Commission recommended draft with tracked changes from the existing Comprehensive Plan. Please note that Attachment B does not include tracked changes of the Housing, Economic Development, and Parks and Open Space

elements. The recommendation is that the existing Housing Element be repealed and replaced with the Planning Commission recommended draft thereby striking the entire existing Housing Element. The Planning Commission recommended Economic Development and Parks and Open Space elements are two entirely new elements the Planning Commission prepared as directed by the project scope of work.

Findings

In addition to the Planning Commission's recommendations on the draft elements, the Commission made findings to provide additional context for City Council consideration. The findings generally relate to ways the City can address public comments during the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies. The Planning Commission makes the following findings:

- A. Consider CPP T-6 when planning for any sub-area plans or surrounding infrastructure for the future Link Light Rail expansion.

- B. When implementing residential anti-displacement policies, identify approaches that are more likely to:
 1. Increase the number of lower-cost rental units;
 2. Expand homeownership opportunities to renting households; and
 3. Increase the variety of housing options.

- C. Identify regulations that can reduce the following impacts when establishing regulations for moderate density:
 1. More people parking on neighborhood streets;
 2. Traffic and parked cars affecting pedestrian safety;
 3. Reduced parking requirements in areas close to transit causing more residents to park on the street; and
 4. Loss of mature trees and landscaping when new development occurs.

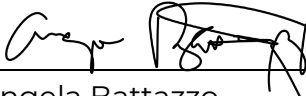
- D. During implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, open space networks should be preserved and enhanced, particularly in and around higher density areas of the City.

- E. Consider the following strategies for increasing affordable housing first when implementing the Housing Element:
 1. Support Proximity to Transit Hubs: Foster the development and preservation of affordable housing within walking distance of the Link Light Rail;
 2. Allow Multifamily in C-O zone: Permit mixed-use and multifamily development in areas of the city zoned Commercial-Office (C-O) if they incorporate affordable housing units within the development;

3. Town Center Focus: Concentrate the development of affordable housing units in Town Center zones by increasing the maximum allowable height for multifamily or mixed-use developments inclusive of affordable housing.
 4. Streamline Permit Processes: Reduce permit review times and fees for new development that include affordable housing units.
 5. Mandatory Inclusion in New Development: Require the inclusion of affordable housing units in all new multifamily or mixed-use development.
- F. Prioritize the following actions when implementing the Transportation Element:
1. Improve and expand safe pedestrian and bicycle routes, including safe routes to school;
 2. Improvements to the “last mile” transportation options to the Town Center and transit station; and
 3. Provide more public parking in the Town Center for patrons and commuters.
- G. Prioritize the following investments when implementing the Comprehensive Plan:
1. Maintaining City services;
 2. Quality infrastructure;
 3. Increasing variety of businesses on Mercer Island; and
 4. Protect natural resources.
- H. Transportation Element Policy Goal 4.10 received six public comments asking that we note that off-street parking is important to families and those who are handicapped.
- I. A number of public comments expressed opposition to state mandated or Planning Commission driven changes included in the new draft of the comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission took up several amendments to the draft in response to public comment but did not elect to make all changes recommended by the public. We encourage the City Council to review public comment during their consideration of the draft plan.

Recommendation

At its June 12, 2024, meeting, the Planning Commission recommended adoption of the updated Comprehensive Plan to the City Council. The recommended drafts are attached.



Angela Battazzo
Planning Commission Chair

July 8, 2024

Date