



PLANNING COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PCB 24-07
April 17, 2024
Special Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PCB 24-07: Comprehensive Plan Update: Parks and Climate Change Amendments	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Review proposed amendments and come to consensus on recommended public review drafts.	

STAFF:	Alison Van Gorp, CPD Deputy Director	
EXHIBITS:	1. Draft Land Use Element Goals and Policies 2. Draft Parks and Open Space Element 3. Comparative Analysis of Comprehensive Plan and PROS Plan	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning Commission (PC) will review draft Comprehensive Plan amendments related to two topics: (1) Climate Action Plan (CAP) Land Use Element consistency amendments, and (2) Draft Parks and Open Space Element. Both groups of amendments are primarily reorganization to maintain consistency between the Comprehensive Plan, CAP, and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan.

- Under the WA State Growth Management Act (GMA), the City of Mercer Island is required to periodically review and update its Comprehensive Plan no later than December 31, 2024;
- On March 1, 2022, the City of Mercer Island adopted the current version of the PROS Plan with [Resolution 1618](#);
- On March 15, 2022, the City Council set the scope of work, master schedule, and public participation plan for the Comprehensive Plan periodic review with [Resolution 1621](#);
- The Comprehensive Plan periodic review scope of work included the following tasks
 - Update policies throughout the plan to ensure consistency with the PROS Plan and CAP;
 - Establish a new Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element that adopts the PROS Plan by reference;
- By November 2022, the PC had reviewed the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan and arrived at a public review draft ([PCB 22-19](#));
- On April 4, 2023, the City Council adopted the CAP as presented in [Agenda Bill 6246](#);
- On February 28, 2024, the PC was briefed on possible CAP consistency amendments to the Land Use Element ([PCB24-03](#));
- Staff prepared the attached draft Land Use Element Goals and Policies (Exhibit 1) and Draft Parks and Open Space Element (Exhibit 2) to ensure the Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the CAP and PROS Plan as directed by the adopted scope of work; and
- The PC will review and is asked to reach consensus on both the Draft Land Use Element Goals and Policies (Exhibit 1) and the Draft Parks and Open Space Element (Exhibit 2) in advance of the Comprehensive Plan open house planned for May 1.

BACKGROUND

The PC initially reviewed and revised the Land Use Element between summer and fall 2022, finalizing a public review draft in November 2022 ([PCB 22-19](#)). At the time the draft was finalized, it was noted in the draft that

additional changes would likely be needed to align with the CAP, which was eventually adopted in 2023 ([Agenda Bill 6246](#)). Further amendments to the Land Use Element were made in March 2024 by the PC related to consistency with the Housing Element ([PCB 24-06](#)). Finally, the adopted scope of work for the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan includes the creation of a new Parks and Open Space Element. This will also require amendments to the Land Use Element, which currently houses goals and policies related to parks and open space.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Climate Goals and Policies

The PC had an initial discussion of potential options to align the Comprehensive Plan with the CAP on February 28, 2023 ([PCB 24-03](#)). At that time, the commission discussed potentially creating a new Climate Element and/or dispersing climate related goals/policies throughout the Comprehensive Plan Elements. The Growth Management Act (GMA) now requires Mercer Island to adopt a Climate Element (or add the required components within existing elements) by 2029 ([House Bill 1181](#)).

Since the February 28 meeting, City staff have reviewed this matter further, along with other remaining work items related to the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan and determined that the City should retain the existing climate goals and policies in the Land Use Element for now, along with adopting two new policies. These new policies will: 1) adopt the CAP by dynamic reference, and 2) provide policy direction for the City to comply with GMA requirements for a Climate Element.

Staff have also reviewed the existing climate goals and policies for consistency with the CAP. No conflicts or inconsistencies were identified. Thus, no further amendments are required. However, two minor amendments are proposed to Policies 21.3 and 28.1 to update the policy direction to align with current objectives. Policy 21.3 has been updated to reflect that green building requirements were adopted in the Town Center development regulations in 2016. Policy 28.1 has been amended to acknowledge that it is likely no longer possible to fully prevent the impacts of climate change. Exhibit 1 includes the proposed amendments to the climate goals and policies in the Land Use Element.

Parks and Open Space Element

The City Council included a new Parks and Open Space Element in the scope of work for the periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan. This new element is intended to adopt the PROS Plan, [adopted in 2022](#), by dynamic reference. The PROS Plan's 8 goals and 80 objectives provide strategic policy direction for parks operations, maintenance, enhancements, and guide capital improvement decisions. Because the PROS plan already provides detailed policy direction, staff have taken a high-level approach to drafting the Parks and Open Space Element. The draft Element includes a brief introduction, one goal that was adapted from an existing goal in the Land Use Element, and two new policies, adopting the PROS plan by dynamic reference and providing policy direction for the future adoption of the Open Space and Parks zones. Exhibit 2 is the draft Parks and Open Space Element.

Other Land Use Element Amendments

A few additional minor amendments are proposed to the goals and policies of the Land Use Element to maintain consistency with the above-described amendments; these amendments are included in Exhibit 1. The Land Use Element includes one goal and thirteen policies related to parks and open space (Goal 20 and policies 20-1-20.13). Staff analysis of this goal and policies has resulted in several proposed amendments. Goal 20 has been revised and moved to the Parks and Open Space Element as Goal 1. Three policies (20.3, 20.4 and 20.12) are recommended to be relocated to other areas of the Land Use Element. These policy relocation amendments are proposed because these policies do not pertain to parks or open space. Thus, they are proposed to be moved to other, more appropriate, goals in the Land Use Element, as follows:

- Policy 20.3 related to balancing view preservation with tree/vegetation cover has been moved to Goal 19;
- Policy 20.4 related to private club recreational facilities has been moved to Goal 15 and combined with a similar/related policy moved from Goal 17 (Policy 17.4);
- Policy 20.12 related to conservation of private property has been moved to Goal 19.

The remaining policies are no longer necessary because PROS Plan policies already cover the subject matter; these policies are proposed for omission. Exhibit 3 provides a comparison of the Land Use Element policies proposed for omission and the corresponding goals and objectives that are already part of the PROS Plan.

Recommended Review Process

Staff has categorized the proposed amendments to the Land Use Element (Exhibit 1) based on whether they pertain to climate or parks, and further sorted them into major and minor amendments in Tables 1 (Page 4) and 2 (Page 5). Major amendments are substantial new policy direction. Minor amendments would not substantially change the policy direction from the original.

Staff recommends the PC review the proposed amendments as follows:

1. **Parks and Open Space amendments to the Land Use Element:** consider the minor amendments listed in Table 2 as a block. The amendments categorized as major in Table 1 can be discussed in more detail if needed.
2. **Climate amendments to the Land Use Element:** consider the amendments listed in Table 2 as a block. The amendments categorized as major in Table 1 can be discussed in more detail if needed.

Staff will provide an overview of the draft Parks and Open Space Element (Exhibit 2). Following the overview, the PC can discuss sections of the draft element, as needed. Please note, as discussed above, this element is intended to be brief and high level, because the PROS Plan already includes detailed and specific policy guidance.

Table 1. Parks Land Use Element Policy Amendments

Major or Minor ¹	Policy #	CAP or Parks ²	Amendment	Staff Comment
Minor	15.4	Parks	Social and recreation clubs, schools, and religious institutions are predominantly located in single family residential areas of the Island. Development regulation should reflect <u>recognize the desire-need and support the ability to retain-viable-maintain, update, and renovate-and</u> healthy social, recreational, educational, and religious organizations <u>facilities as allowed by the land use code. Such facilities are-as</u> community assets which are essential for the mental, physical and spiritual health of Mercer Island. <u>Future land use decisions should encourage the retention of these facilities.</u>	This minor amendment combines policies 17.4 and 20.4. Policy 20.4 was originally listed as a parks and open space policy but is recommended to remain in the Land Use Element rather than move to the Parks and Open Space Element.
Minor	19.7	Parks	View preservation actions should be balanced with the efforts to preserve the community’s natural vegetation and tree cover.	Policy 19.7 was originally Policy 20.3, relocated to keep policy in Land Use rather than move to the Parks and Open Space Element.
Minor	19.10	Parks	<u>Support the conservation of private property on Mercer Island through the use of conservation tools and programs including, but not limited to, the King County Public Benefit Rating System and Transfer of Development Rights programs.</u>	Policy 19.10 was originally Policy 20.13, relocated to keep policy in Land Use rather than move to the Parks and Open Space Element.
Major	20.1-13	Parks	Policies 20.1-20.13 were omitted, except as noted above.	Policies were either moved to other sections of the Land Use Element or are struck in the draft because they are redundant with PROS Plan goals (Exhibit 3).

Notes:

1. Major changes are proposing changes that are substantially different from the originally adopted goal or policy. Minor changes do not substantially alter the policy direction.
2. Proposed amendments labeled “Parks” are amendments for consistency with the Parks and Open Space Element.

Table 2. Climate Action Plan Land Use Element Policy Amendments

Major or Minor ¹	Policy #	CAP or Parks ²	Amendment	Staff Comment
Minor	21.3	CAP	Evaluate requiring the use of <u>Consider expanding requirements for green building techniques for new construction and certification to additional zones and/or</u> development of subdivisions as a component of a green building program.	Clarification that the City already has green building requirements in some zones, rather than needing to evaluate an entirely new program.
Major	New Goal 26	CAP	<u>Continue to develop and refine City policies and implementation strategies to address climate change.</u>	The original Goal 26 would be replaced with the proposed amendment. In the previous public review draft, the PC had agreed to strike the original Goal 26 and its corresponding policies because they referred to an outdated certification program (STAR Community Framework)
Major	New 26.1	CAP	<u>Adopt a Climate Element or equivalent components in this plan, as directed by state law, to plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled and to improve community resilience by planning for climate preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.</u>	The original Policy 26.1 would be replaced with the proposed amendment. This new policy would establish the direction to establish a Climate Change Element as required under the GMA (House Bill 1181).
Major	New 26.2	CAP	<u>The most recent version of the Climate Action Plan is hereby adopted by reference. This plan provides more specific policy direction and implementation guidance for climate action. This plan shall be updated periodically to reflect changing needs in the community.</u>	The original Policy 26.2 would be replaced with the proposed amendment. This amendment would adopt the CAP by reference, as directed by the adopted Scope of Work for the Comprehensive Plan periodic review.
Minor	Goal 28	CAP	Develop and implement a Climate Action Plan.	Goal 28 is proposed to be struck because it's now covered under Goal 26.
Minor	28.1	CAP	Prioritize the prevention <u>reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and other contributors to</u> of climate change.	Minor change to be more consistent with CAP verbiage.

Notes:

3. Major changes are proposing changes that are substantially different from the originally adopted goal or policy. Minor changes do not substantially alter the policy direction.
4. Proposed amendments labeled "Parks" are amendments for consistency with the Parks and Open Space Element.

NEXT STEPS

The amendments recommended by the PC on April 17 will be incorporated into the Public Review drafts of the Land Use Element and Parks and Open Space Element. These elements will be included in the content under consideration at the May 1 Comprehensive Plan Open House.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Review proposed amendments and come to consensus on recommended public review drafts.