

## **City of Mercer Island 2025 State Legislative Priorities**

### **Capital Funding for Emergency Replacement of City's Sole Water Source**

The City of Mercer Island relies on Seattle Public Utilities for its water supply and recently declared an emergency due to a leak in the main water supply pipeline. The City is seeking \$3 million in emergency state funding to cover 15% of the cost to undergo emergency replacement of the damaged water supply pipeline, relocate the pipeline to a safer location, and upgrade it with earthquake-resistant materials. This will ensure the City is able to reliably provide safe drinking water and sufficient water pressure for fire response.

### **Support for Public Safety**

The City supports law enforcement strategies that protect our community and businesses. Priorities include:

- Increasing capacity at regional law enforcement academies. Limited academy spots are delaying police hires, leaving recruits waiting months to begin work while on full pay and benefits.
- Supporting cities in hiring new officers by fully covering the \$5,000 Basic Law Enforcement Academy cost per officer and providing ongoing funding for public safety technologies like body-worn cameras.
- Additional State resources and policy support to reduce auto and organized retail thefts.
- Support for expanded State regulations to address the growing use of e-scooters and e-bikes to ensure safe use while promoting sustainable transportation. Recent research indicates a significant rise in e-bike head injuries nationwide over the past five years, which indicates a need for stronger safety regulations.
- Amend the Public Records Act to exempt Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) security footage from disclosure. This change will improve government service efficiency, safeguard privacy, and maintain the effectiveness of law enforcement tools for public safety.
- As a regional marine patrol provider, Mercer Island supports increased funding for on-water safety programs, enhanced training for marine patrol providers, and public awareness initiatives to strengthen law enforcement and promote water safety.

### **Increase Resources for Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Prevention**

The City is a direct provider of behavioral health services through community- and school-based programs while also relying on regional public health infrastructure for specialized care and crisis response. Priorities include:

- Increasing prevention and intervention resources targeting opiates and other substances of abuse, specifically those disproportionately impacting youth and young adults.
- Funding to expand low-barrier community- and school-based behavioral health services for youth.
- Opportunities to integrate behavioral health and first responders for enhanced crisis response.
- Increased resources for senior/geriatric behavioral health and support for basic needs.
- Support local governments' ability to deliver integrated behavioral health services through public-private partnerships, enabling outreach teams and crisis responders to effectively assist individuals in need.

### **Support for Affordable Housing**

The City champions a proactive stance on housing, using innovative tools and incentives to enhance housing supply and affordability. Priorities include:

- **Transit-oriented development** that prioritizes housing and infrastructure investments near major transit infrastructure and walkable jobs. Any bill should include affordability requirements, align with the City's housing targets under ESSHB 1220 (2021), and appropriately clarify any conflicts with other state housing regulations. This approach maximizes regional transportation investments to enhance mobility, expand affordable housing, and safeguard the environment.
- **Complete Communities** that support walkability, public safety, livability, and access to resources in tandem with affordable housing. Acknowledgement that cities are the best suited to implement these values in the unique context of their community.
- **State investments and low-interest loans** to strengthen local infrastructure such as sewer and water systems, which are essential for expanding affordable housing opportunities.
- **Support continued partnership and investment in regional homelessness response** through expansion of affordable and supportive housing capacity under ESSHB 1220, active participation in King County's Crisis Care Centers Levy implementation, and ongoing collaboration with ARCH. The City opposes unilateral state measures that would undermine these proven, coordinated local efforts to increase access to safe shelter and housing across Washington communities

### **Sustainable Funding Preservation and Maintenance of Critical Transportation Infrastructure**

The City advocates for fully funding and prioritizing maintenance of critical state transportation infrastructure, including the six miles of I-90 crossing Mercer Island, one of the state's most expensive and complex assets. Maintaining and keeping these interstates operational is essential for safety, reliability, and commerce.

### **Preserving and Protecting the Environment**

The City supports legislation, partnerships, and funding opportunities that advance the implementation of the City's adopted Climate Action Plan. This includes initiatives for clean energy, emissions reduction, electrification of public assets, and innovative practices that promote resilience and protect natural resources.