
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

9611 SE 36TH STREET | MERCER ISLAND, WA 98040

PHONE: 206.275.7605 | www.mercerisland.gov



PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Adam Zack, Senior Planner

DATE: April 20, 2022

SUBJECT: 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update
Project Kickoff

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Approved Comprehensive Plan Update Scope of Work and Master Schedule
- B. Approved Comprehensive Plan Update Public Participation Plan
- C. Housing and Economic Development Work Group Charters

SUMMARY

The April 27, 2022, Planning Commission meeting marks the kickoff of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update project. At this meeting, the Planning Commission will:

- Be briefed on the planned Comprehensive Plan element review process;
- Select members for the Economic Development and Housing Work Groups; and
- Get an overview of the planned project schedule through the end of the year.

BACKGROUND

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires King County and incorporated jurisdictions within King County to update their comprehensive plans on or before December 31, 2024. Note the periodic review date was recently amended by HB 1241. On March 15, 2022, the City Council approved Resolution 1621, which set a scope of work, master schedule, and public participation plan for the Comprehensive Plan update. Under the approved scope of work and master schedule, the periodic update of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan will be completed by April 2024.

Additional summary information includes:

- The last periodic update of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan occurred in 2015 and was adopted in 2016.
- On March 15, the City Council approved the scope of work, master schedule, and public participation plan with Resolution 1621.

- The approved scope of work and master schedule for this effort is included as Attachment A.
- The approved public participation plan for this effort is included as Attachment B.
- The public participation plan includes creating economic development and housing work groups composed of two Planning Commissioners and two Councilmembers.
- The work group charters are included as Attachment C.
- The proposed scope of work anticipates adoption of the periodic update to the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan by April 2024.

The Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan sets forth a vision and establishes goals, policies, and implementation actions for managing and growing into the future. The vision is a statement of how the Comprehensive Plan will guide the City. Comprehensive Plan goals describe what objectives the City will pursue to further the vision. The policies and implementation actions established in the Comprehensive Plan describe what the City will do to achieve its goals and provide crucial guidance for the City in capital improvements, development regulations, and other supporting programs and services.

The Comprehensive Plan considers projected growth during a twenty-year period called a “planning horizon”. Currently, the GMA requires cities and counties to update each respective plan every nine years to extend the planning horizon. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan update will extend the planning horizon to the year 2044.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENT REVIEW PROCESS

The approved scope of work outlines a focused “surgical” update of the Comprehensive Plan (Attachment A). The concept is to limit the updates primarily to those required by state law. As such, the tasks for the Land Use, Utilities, Capital Facilities, and Transportation Elements are primarily constrained to only those updates required by the GMA and to account for recent planning actions. The narrow scope for each of these elements is necessary for the City to complete the periodic review before the mandated deadline.

Land Use, Utilities, Capital Facilities, and Transportation Elements

The review process for the Land Use, Utilities, Capital Facilities, and Transportation elements will follow the same pattern. The master schedule allows for the Planning Commission to review each element over the course of three meetings. Many of the amendments to these elements will be limited to technical updates required for extending the planning horizon. Because the amendments will mostly be technical, the Planning Commission will not need to make substantial changes during the update. This means that some of the elements might not require all three meetings for the Planning Commission to finish their review. In general, the element review process will be:

First Meeting: Staff Draft and Initial Planning Commission Input

Staff will prepare the initial draft of the element and brief the Planning Commission on amendments made and solicit initial general input to add to the second draft. General input can include requests for additional information to better inform decision making.

Second Meeting: Draft Refinement

Staff will incorporate the input from the first meeting into the initial draft and brief the Planning Commission on the changes made. The Planning Commission can consider making further refinements to the draft, if needed. Additional edits to the draft should be agreed to by the entire commission. Some elements might be ready to be approved as a public hearing draft by the end of the second meeting. See the description of public hearing draft below.

Third Meeting: Agree to the Public Hearing Draft

Staff will incorporate the refining amendments from the second meeting into the third draft. The Planning Commission will give a final review and make refinements to the draft. Ideally, any refinements will be minor because the first two touches on the draft captured the major comments. Once the Planning Commission completes their review, the draft can be agreed upon as a public hearing draft of the element. The public hearing draft is what the public will comment on during the final community workshop and public hearing. The public hearing draft is not a 'final' draft.

Economic Development and Housing Elements

The amendments to the Housing Element and drafting an Economic Development Element will include additional review prior to the Planning Commission process outlined above. Two work groups will prepare and refine the first drafts of these two elements. Throughout summer and fall 2022, the work groups will work on shaping the first drafts and collecting community input. Refining the first draft through the work group process should result in first drafts of the Economic Development and Housing elements that will only need minor refinement, allowing for the same three-meeting process with the Planning Commission used for the other elements.

Public Hearing Drafts

The public hearing drafts are not the final Planning Commission drafts of each element. The Planning Commission will have two more passes on the amendments before making a recommendation to the City Council. The next time the Planning Commission will touch the drafts will be after the community workshop planned for June 2023 (Attachment B, page 5, Task 4.3). The community workshop will be followed by the Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan update tune up meeting. The tune up will give the Planning Commission the opportunity to integrate comments from the community workshop into the drafts as needed. Then, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the update. During deliberations, the Planning Commission can fine tune the update to address concerns that are raised during the public hearing. The Planning Commission will then make a recommendation to the City Council on the overall Comprehensive Plan update.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING WORK GROUPS

Work on the Economic Development Element and Housing Element will require an expanded review process. The approved public participation plan includes the creation of two work groups to prepare drafts of the Economic Development and Housing elements. Each work group will be composed of two Planning Commissioners and two Councilmembers. The work group charters, establishing the rules for the work groups, are included as Attachment C. On April 27, The Planning Commission will select members for the Economic Development and Housing work groups.

The work groups will meet several times through the summer and early fall of 2022. Both work groups will meet at least three times, but there will likely be a couple additional meetings depending on the amount of public feedback desired once drafting has begun. The first meetings are expected in May and the final meetings are expected no later than November. Serving on a work group will include responsibility for reviewing and refining initial drafts of the Economic Development and Housing elements respectively. This responsibility would be in addition to regular Planning Commission meetings during this time. Scheduling of the work group meetings will be agreed to by members of each group; allowing some flexibility.

Selection of Work Group Members

The proposed process for selecting Commissioners to serve on the Economic Development and Housing work groups is similar to the process for electing officers. Staff proposes the following steps to select work group members:

- (1) Volunteering: Commissioners can volunteer to serve on a work group. Each work group needs 2 Commissioners.
- (2) Consensus: If more than two Commissioners have volunteered for a single work group then the Planning Commission can hold a thumbs up/down vote for each volunteer, with the two Commissioners receiving the most thumbs up votes being elected to the work group.

PROJECT SCHEDULE THROUGH THE END OF THE YEAR

Work on the Comprehensive Plan update will begin in May. The following projects are planned for the remaining 8 months of 2022.

May

First Housing Work Group Meeting
First Economic Development Work Group Meeting

June

Economic Development Community Workshop and Survey
Housing Needs Assessment and Economic Analysis Planning Commission and City Council briefings

July

Second Housing Work Group Meeting
Second Economic Development Work Group Meeting
First Land Use and Transportation elements Planning Commission briefings

August

Legislative recess
Staff prepares drafts and other materials for upcoming meetings in September and October

September

Second Land Use and Transportation elements Planning Commission briefings
Third Housing Work Group meeting, finish work group draft of Housing Element
Third Economic Development Work Group meeting

October

Third Land Use and Transportation elements Planning Commission briefings
First Housing Element Planning Commission briefing
Additional Economic Development Work Group meeting, if needed

November

Second Housing Element Planning Commission briefing
Additional Economic Development Work Group Meeting, finish work group draft of Economic Development Element

December

Third Housing Element Planning Commission briefing

January 2023

First Economic Development Element Planning Commission briefing

NEXT STEPS

At the April 27 meeting, the Planning Commission will select members for the Economic Development and Housing Work Groups. The City Council will also select members for the work groups in early May. The work groups will begin meeting in the second half of May.