

AB 6359 Town Center Parking Study Draft Review

Exhibit 4: Public Comment Matrix

10/16/2023

Log #	Date	Channel	Comment(s)
1	08.02.03	E-mail	I just reviewed the report, and I have to say I have never experienced an issue finding parking in Town Center, even during the farmer’s market. I don’t think there’s a problem and I agree that management of on-street parking is the best strategy (strategy #1) to support retailers in Town Center. I don’t think that requiring new developments to provide crazy amounts of parking is a good idea—it adds to the cost of a development and reduces housing affordability. Having to walk 1 block to where I’m going actually helps add to the vitality of street life in Town Center, making it more likely that I might find a new business I haven’t seen before. Adding bike parking and strengthening communication about other ways of getting to Town Center/adding safer ways to get to Town Center by bike/ped (for a climate perspective as well) is one thing I might suggest so that we don’t all have to drive down all the time.
2	08.09.23	Let’s Talk	I’d really appreciate a central parking spot (willing to pay) where I could leave my car and walk to several shops and services in downtown.
3	08.10.23	E-mail	<p>After reading the survey findings, I have the following comments.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. While there are spots available at the various business throughout the town center, there are only while shopping at each respective store. So, if I want to shop at Walgreens and/or True Value, and then want to pop over to any of the businesses in Tabit Square, I am required to drive across the street to a strip mall where parking is always an issue. Additionally, if I wanted to go to Umpqua Bank, I would, yet again have to move my car, adding to traffic congestion, as well as increasing my carbon footprint to shop in Town Center. There is no easy and convenient way to park one’s car and walk about Town Center to complete errands without risk of getting ticketed by private companies the buildings have hired to monitor their parking lots. The city should definitely consider building a public parking garage with a 4 hour limit so residents can easily shop, visit friends, and dine in town center without having to move one’s car. 2. Many of the mixed use buildings were granted an additional story by providing public parking which then is taken away and leased out to the apartment dwellers for second and third cars. This has not been enforced by the city at all. I now must have an APP to park in Island Square’s public parking where we maintain a business just to run up and drop something off or to pop into my bank. The city is not requiring any of the landlords to follow through on public parking provisions after the buildings have been built. 3. New building permits for mixed use buildings should require set-backs to include on-street parking around the buildings. The argument that they won’t build here if the city pushes back is just not true. We are lining the pockets of developers at the expense of a vibrant and easily walkable town center. With the buildings taking public parking away after the projects are completed, it is often difficult to find a parking spot in the building garages. For those of living on other parts of the island, we do need to drive to town center, thus need a spot to park. 4. A viable town center is not limited to providing parking for customers but for employees as well. 5. With the light rail stations and basically no guarantee of parking one’s car at the Park and Ride, there is absolutely no incentive to use light rail instead of driving into the city. 6. I question the timing of the survey as parts were conducted at the end of June. Not the most optimal time to see how parking is utilized and also not a time of the year when it would have been busy in the town center with school just getting out and families heading out of town for summer vacations.
4	08.12.23	Let’s Talk	By reconfiguring 77th Ave between 29th and 32nd, diagonal parking and street facing retail could be included in a redevelopment plan. 77th as presently configured is too wide for the present traffic and usage patterns and is not friendly to pedestrian retail experience. Consider reconfiguring it as one way from 29th to 32nd, one lane with bike lane on ex-Farmers side and diagonal parking along the retail side. Expose retail frontage for businesses in redevelopment plan. The parking aspect is just re-striping and does not affect existing curb cuts or sidewalks. A more thorough redevelopment design would likely turn up valuable improvements.

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5	08.14.23	Let's Talk	Agree with report recommendation to provide incentives for sharing space in existing parking lots that look underutilised, in the older developments. Parking once and walking around is key to retail success from a community viewpoint. Information, such as signage, about the location of public parking is essential, as demonstrated by the research on underutilised spaces. Continued improvements to the ped and bike system are important, and should not be sacrificed to add parking. But parking on arterials can provide a buffer between traffic and peds. Parking can also make open restaurant windows more attractive, e.g. at the former Bennett's and Mo's restaurants, since the sidewalks are too narrow to provide distance between fast cars and diners. Agree that more gathering spaces would be great, maybe a small basketball spot somewhere downtown.
6	08.17.23	E-mail	If we decide we need more parking, my pet idea is to create a subsidy to encourage owners of private lot to designate spaces for public use. Spaces could be available for a limited amount of time or only during some hours. Not sure if that makes sense, but I thought I'd throw it out there.
7	08.17.23	E-mail	We would like parking to remain FREE.
8	08.19.23	E-mail	I wanted to make sure I understood the report. My daughter and her husband have a home on 78th Ave SE which has already lost significant value since she bought it because the new bus turn around is two houses away. I cannot express what an eye sore this has created! The only saving grace has been the parking permits which prohibit people from using her street for overflow parking. If I interpret the report correctly there is some consideration for letting the public use her street for parking should the downtown and Park and Ride be full? I certainly did not see Sound Transit compensate her for the loss of property value with the latest construction. I could only imagine what would happen if her street became a parking lot. Please seriously consider the hard working people living on those streets adjacent to town center when decisions are made. The hit they are taking on their home values diminishing is far greater than the price of parking permits. These home owners are not made whole even if folks who do not live on the street pay more for permits.

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9	09.05.23	E-mail	<p>The City hired Walker Consultants to evaluate parking in the downtown commercial core. Walker recently completed a “draft” of the study for which the City is seeking comments.</p> <p>I would like to advocate for the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study recommends more and better distributed bike parking in the downtown (see page 29). <u>We strongly agree with this recommendation.</u> • The study recommends bicycle parking on SE 27th Street (see page 32). <u>We strongly agree with this recommendation and additionally support bike trail on this roadway.</u> • The study recommends reconfiguring 77th Ave. SE to eliminate the center turning lane, add car parking and maintain the existing bike trail on both sides of 77th Ave. SE (see page 32). 77th Ave. SE is the primary bike route through town to the light rail and the I-90 trail. That roadway currently has unprotected bike trail on both sides of the roadway (running north and south). There currently is no parking on the roadway. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While the study is focused on parking, we need more and better bike trails leading to the downtown and to the off-island transportation network. ○ 77th Ave. SE is the city’s bicycle gateway to the light rail station and the I-90/Mountains to Sound bike trail. It is imperative that we have a bike trail on this roadway. <u>Its primary design focus should be the safety of cyclists.</u> ○ It appears possible to eliminate the center turning lanes, add a small number of parking spaces (northbound) while also retaining and upgrading the existing bike trail on both sides of 77th Ave. SE. <u>The trail should be designed to protect cyclists from cars (including “dooring”) through the inclusion of barricades, planters or other barriers.</u> <p>Thank you for looking at the results of this study not just with a car-centric mandate but also with a bike-friendly focus.</p> <p>In addition to considering the parking spaces please ensure there is adequate parking reinforcement. To have slots that are taken all day does the merchants no good when someone wants to pop in to get a purchase. At least staggering the parking gives the chance that someone will be able to find a spot to park and shop.</p>
10	09.06.23	Let’s Talk	<p>Any talk of adding parking to 77th immediately brings to question the bike lanes one either side of the road. I really don't care what happens to the road or whether parking is added (I have never struggled to find parking within a block and am not burdened by walking to multiple stops. I can walk across the street and don't need to drive 100ft if that's where my second stop is) Any re-configuration of 77th must preserve the bike lanes, and the opportunity exists to use parking to create PROTECTED bike lanes. I also agree strongly that some of underutilized private parking could be converted to public parking through pay apps such as Pay by Phone or Parking Spot.</p>

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11	09.13.23	E-mail	<p>I just found time to read the Walker study. Is this our 3rd parking study? 4th? ...</p> <p>The overall tone matches my experience with parking in TC, which is that 95% of the time I will find an available spot within a minute and occasionally I'll need to walk a block. I agree with most of the report findings to include better bicycle accessibility. My best shopping experiences have generally been when I travelled by bike.</p> <p>I also strongly agree with the thought that we need to do a better job of managing our existing on-street parking. It doesn't make any sense to look at increasing the supply of on-street parking when we aren't managing what we already have. Create more 30 minute spots and enforce the time limits. Which brings us to the recommendation to study 77th...</p> <p>I'm not feeling it. It sounds like a quick "win" to repaint 77th to eliminate the center lane and add parking, but this jeopardizes the bike lanes and doesn't add parking where it's needed. There are almost no storefronts on 77th and those few do all have plentiful parking. The folks that won't presently walk a few hundred feet from the current "park once" parking are unlikely to do so from 77th.</p> <p>I'm looking forward to the discussion as well as the next parking study!</p>
12	09.14.23	Let's Talk	<p>I bike to/from my home on Mercer Island to my office on Mercer Island DAILY, via 77th Ave. I use 77th Ave despite it being less direct than zig-zagging through 80th/30th/78th, because it feels safer. It feels safer because there are no parked cars, few driveways, and plenty of room for cars to pass with a wide margin. Making the road narrower and adding parking will not make me feel safer unless the bike lanes are going to be fully protected. Street parking will impede visibility of bikes, especially children on bikes, to drivers pulling out of driveways along 77th. IMHO, cars pulling out of driveways in the Town Center is the biggest risk to bikers (Starbucks drive-through being the absolute worst). I'm pro-bike lane, but only if the bike lanes are safe. I think adding car parking along 77th will make those lanes *less safe*, without significant investment to fully protect them. I don't understand why, in 2023, we're trying to add parking to make driving "more convenient". Priority 1 should be providing safe, convenient alternatives to driving a car - not figuring out how to use more of the public right of way for car storage. Many of the other ideas: sharing existing private lots so more efficient, converting all existing street parking to 2 hr zones, converting more zones to 10m loading/unloading to encourage ride-share, etc - all seem better than adding street parking.</p>
13	09.14.23	Let's Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating a thriving downtown is so important, and I don't think we should do anything that adds impediments to getting people in the area. I strongly believe that if we charge for parking, even nominal fees, people will move more of their shopping online in an effort to avoid having to pay. - Right now it appears that we have commercial properties with either too much (area by old Mud Bay location) or too little parking (e.g. area by UPS, Cafe Sano), and we should encourage ways for people to park once and then walk around rather than deter people to walk offsite with parking signage that suggests they will be towed if they are not a customer of that business. - I agree that consistent 2 hour parking limits should be applied throughout the downtown area. Ensure there's good communication about how residents should address big city events, like Summer Celebration or Music in the Park, where we want to encourage residents to be in the town center and stay for more than 2 hours. - Parking in Tabit Village Square is always very packed, but the spots are incredibly narrow and there are regularly near accidents there. Would be great for whoever manages that lot to work on revamping the parking, especially because there is no available public street parking nearby. - Bicycle parking would be great, including spots that support bicycles with carriers for gear / kids. - Increase signage from the road to call attention to underground / commercial lots that have available public parking. - Really need to create more specifically protected bike lanes so that the growing number of electric scooters can join bikers safely on the road.

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14	09.15.23	Let's Talk	With 77 Central being downtown and a parking audit being done I wanted to bring up the concern that when the new intersection was put in on 77th ave and Sunset Hwy they took away 2-3 parking spots and replaced it with a sidewalk instead of keeping the parking. This was highly used for vendors, residents, retail clients, ETC. Would love to see them come back to make it parking again.
15	09.15.23	E-mail	<p>I just finished reading the report and wanted to comment, particularly regarding 3a and 3e.</p> <p>We have lived on the island for 15 years and have three children 6-13 yo. We have spent many years walking and biking downtown to community activities such as the farmers market. In the past few years our children have become independent cyclists who meet up with friends in the downtown area. They routinely share stories of close calls with cars speeding or swerving too close to them while they're biking. My husband has considered biking to the park and ride to use public transportation (he used public transportation for years until the parking lot was overcrowded and he couldn't find a spot). But for new cyclists, the lack of safe bike routes are intimidating and a barrier.</p> <p>-We need safe biking and walking routes more than we need on street parking to accommodate more cars. These routes would have dedicated bike lanes with safety barriers.</p> <p>-We are a small town that thrives on community. The community spaces are more valuable to the quality of life on Mercer Island than more on street vehicle parking.</p> <p>Thank you for doing this work, we look forward to hearing the positive outcomes of the project!</p>
16	09.17.23	E-mail	<p>I appreciate that there are now "A-boards" on the sidewalks indicating public parking in the larger buildings but I think we can take that a step further and do consistent, attractive, electronic signage that indicates how many stalls are available in each building. If not that at least get a recognizable standard for the A boards, one that meets the current/or a revised sign code . The city could provide the signage. It is looking pretty messy with all the different A boards on our sidewalks. Having a standard sign for underground parking that is easily identified would encourage use of underground parking.</p> <p>I hope the city will prioritize people, bikes and getting people out of their cars. It is ok if traffic is slow in the town center, other communities have reduced street width, adding parking, making crossing easier and slowing traffic. Encouraging east west travel to use North Mercer Way is better for our retail district.</p>
17	09.17.23	E-mail	Thank you for your work on parking. Having reviewed the draft report online, my main question is what the City intends to do with the former Tully's property. Is it part of the parking plan? Thank you.
18	09.18.23	E-mail	I would appreciate if the City Council could please address the Tully's site future plan. The former Tully's site was originally intended for a parking structure and mixed use plot. Further, ARCO had agreed to reimburse substantial costs in developing the site. The parking site was originally intended to open in 2023.

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19	09.18.23	Let's Talk	<p>To me it is disconcerting that the Parking Study does not speak to the fact that most Mercer Island residents do not shop locally. This topic has been investigated multiple times to understand why. In all cases the main reason given by residents was lack of public (safe, obvious and retail-aware) parking, followed by walkability and lack of desired retail. Of the studies done, the lowest number of residents that cited parking as their main concern was just over 50% but recently that appears to have risen to possibly as high as 85% of residents that have parking concerns with shopping in our Town Center.</p> <p>It is important for the current parking study to also note that the Town Center's critical (anchor) retail is supported more by non-residents than residents. This fact can easily be checked by quizzing individual retailers to ask them directly what percent of their customers are local to the community and what are not. Their figures may not be exactly correct but they give what is most important, a picture of who is shopping in the Town Center.</p> <p>Why these facts are important is that it means that collection of parking data at this moment is identical to taking seating data at an eatery when it is closed. This helps no one. Instead you want to understand why residents won't shop here and determine what changes need to happen for residents to support their own community. When you do, it becomes evident that the Town Center's private parking is not considered to be safe, obvious or retail-aware. It becomes evident that the minor public parking we have is so scarce and hard to find that most residents don't know where it is and no wayfinding can point to it because it is so spread out. It becomes evident when studying the Town Center in evening hours that the arteries are so poorly lit that they become unsafe for anyone to park on them.</p> <p>A secondary concern is the study's recommendations to switch to two hour parking for all public parking instead of recommending that public parking needs to be "retail-aware".</p> <p>In an open meeting five years ago between city leaders and local property/retail owners on the subject of parking, both property and retail owners accented that two hour parking would hurt or put them out of business. The reason for this has to do with their needs. Many local businesses rely on off island staff that require parking for their employment. This means a need for parking for at least eight hours. Many of the smaller retail shops have no employee parking but even one of our grocery stores with a large parking lot explained that they would have problems without some limited public parking for staff.</p> <p>At this meeting, one of our nicer eateries said they would be put out of business without at least three hour parking which is the time they felt was needed for a customer to come to their restaurant, dine, be entertained, and return to their car. This was on top of the need for longer period parking for any resident that wants to accomplish more than one task at a time like window shopping, having drinks/appetizers at one eatery, having a nice dinner at another, followed by a walk or other entertainment. The longer term parking doesn't have to be directly in front of the businesses but it does have to be obvious and within a safe walking distance of the retail core, all hours of the day.</p> <p>What this says is that Mercer Island's Town Center like all retail cores will be negatively affected if it is limited to just two hour parking throughout. Public parking has to actually meet the needs of the businesses that require it.</p> <p>A final thought, that I think is important, is my disappointment that the pictures of safety concerns related to the dead center lanes on 77th Avenue SE and SE 27th Street were removed from the most recent report.</p>
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			<p data-bbox="655 224 2510 326">The issue of safety in relation to use of dead center lanes for pickup/delivery have been noted to me by multiple business owners. Along with requiring deliveries and pickups to be made in a dangerous manner (often in the active lanes), these Stroads cause the traffic to move too quickly and the arteries to be too wide for safe crossing.</p> <p data-bbox="655 367 2510 537">I personally think the removed photographs should be put back in recognition that above all we as a community care for our local businesses and residents. The current design of Town Center arteries make our retail core unsafe. Their design makes it unsafe for cyclists as well as pedestrians. No matter how hard we try to get residents to shop local, they will not do so if safety is a concern. We can not get proper traffic flow through the Town Center if we have to use overly expensive traffic lights to slow traffic to desired speeds instead of properly designing arteries so traffic will automatically drive the right speeds. No type of fancy crosswalk is safe for crossing a Stroad.</p> <p data-bbox="655 578 2462 680">I much appreciate your consideration of my comments. Currently we have a community that is unsustainable. A community that can not support its residents. A community with an unhealthy Balance Sheet. This will not change until residents feel comfortable shopping locally. The first step for this to happen is for us to make it possible for residents to actually come to our Town Center.</p> <p data-bbox="655 721 1266 750">What is a Stroad - https://youtu.be/OZ1HhLq-Huo.</p>

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Log #	Date	Channel	Comment(s)
20	09.18.23	E-mail	<p>I am writing this email regarding AB 6336 (Town Center Parking Study) in my capacity as a business owner in the Mercer Island Town Center. I have the following comments on the Town Center Parking Study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From our (Island Books) perspective, thanks to changes in work/commute behavior due to COVID there does not appear to *currently* be a parking problem in our portion of the Town Center (I acknowledge that businesses in other parts of the town center may have a different perspective - e.g Boyd building, Tabit Square etc.). What’s unclear is whether this is a temporary condition or a permanent condition. There was a very serious and significant parking problem prior to the COVID pandemic. With large employers such as Amazon and Microsoft currently pushing for a return to work in the office, we may also see our serious and significant Town Center parking problems return. It’s too early to tell if the current state of parking in the Town Center will be the “new normal” or not. Therefore, I would recommend not making any significant or irreversible changes until we have more clarity on the what the “new normal” is (and this will take some time). • However, what the Town Center Parking Study completely misses (or ignores) is the impact that the current parking requirements within our commercial development code will have on the future parking capacity within the Town Center. The Town Center Parking Study points to both weekday and weekend parking utilization below the 85% threshold (again, at the end of the COVID pandemic). However, the parking utilization includes two large surface lots at the north (Walgreens) and south (Rite Aid) ends of the Town Center. What happens when these lots are redeveloped under current development code with the current parking regulations? What happens to on-street and off-street parking utilization then? For example, the Xing Hua property currently has ~76 parking spaces (I counted) completely dedicated to commercial/retail parking. When redeveloped Xing Hua will have 46 “flex” parking spaces (parking for both residential and commercial parking) – a reduction of at least 39% in commercial/retail parking capacity for the site. In addition, Xing Hua will have 157 dedicated residential parking spaces for 159 units (less than one parking space per unit). So, for the Xing Hua site, we expect to see increased demand for parking due to inadequate residential parking and significantly decreased commercial/retail parking. What could possibly go wrong? Now let’s extend that scenario to the Walgreens and Rite Aid sites. What happens to parking utilization when the Walgreens and Rite Aid sites are redeveloped under current development code and parking regulations (even if we keep current parking demand constant)? What happens when you add the variable of increased residential density that comes with mixed use development? Over the last few years, this city council has had to deal with the issue of decreasing retail space in our Town Center due to poorly written development code, an issue created by previous city councils and previous administrations. I urge this council not to create a similar problem with regard to parking. I suggest the council direct city staff, the consultant and this Town Center Parking Study to evaluate our current parking requirements within our commercial development code to assess the impact of future parking capacity within the Town Center.

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21	09.19.23	E-mail	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to review the Walker Consultants Draft Parking Study. Neighbors in Motion provides the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study recommends more and better distributed bike parking facilities in the downtown (page 29). <u>We strongly agree with this recommendation.</u> • The study recommends bicycle parking on SE 27th Street (page 32). <u>We strongly agree with this recommendation and additionally support bike trail on this roadway.</u> • The study recommends reconfiguring 77th Ave. SE to eliminate the center turning lane, add car parking and maintain the existing bike trail on both sides of 77th Ave. SE (page 32). 77th Ave. SE is the primary bike route through town to the light rail and the I-90 trail. That roadway has unprotected bike trail on both sides of the roadway. At present, there is no parking on the roadway. Walker’s proposal does not provide details as to the design of this element but based on what we know, our responses are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We do not make a recommendation regarding the necessity of adding parking to 77th Ave. SE. ○ While the study is focused on parking, we need more and better bike trails leading to the downtown and to the off-island transportation network. ○ 77th Ave. SE is the City’s bicycle gateway to the light rail station and the I-90/Mountains to Sound bike trail. It is imperative that we have a bike trail on this roadway. <u>Its primary design focus should be the safety of cyclists.</u> ○ By the sparse details provided, it may be possible to eliminate the center turning lanes, add a small number of parking spaces (northbound) while also retaining and upgrading the existing bike trail on both sides of 77th Ave. SE. <u>The trail should be designed to protect cyclists from cars (including “dooring”) through the inclusion of barricades, planters or other barriers.</u>
22	09.19.23	Public Hearing / E-mail	<p>I'm a resident here on Mercer Island. I live in the Town Center so I see how people use it all the time. I've read over the parking study and I think it has a lot of good suggestions. I just wanted to highlight two points:</p> <p>Parking utilization is actually rather low. The study shows that at the peak, we only use 70% of our on-street spaces and 50% of the off-street spaces. This is below the 85% max that parking experts usually try to target.</p> <p>So, I'd like to encourage the council to adopt recommendation 3-B in the report, which talks about making a shared parking supply. Right now in the city code we require every new development to have independent parking, which leads to one lot being relatively full while others are relatively empty. The biggest benefit is cheaper development, as parking garages cost millions of dollars to make, which in turn makes housing and commercial rent more affordable.</p> <p>Narrower roads My two least favorite streets in the Town Center are 77th Avenue - the main north-south road - and 27th St, the main east-west road. The travel lanes are wider than necessary and have a mostly unused center turn lane.</p> <p>77th at least has some bike lanes, but they're very narrow, so hardly anyone uses them. I often see people just riding on the sidewalk instead.</p>

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			<p>If you look at your email, I sent you a possible reconfiguration for these roads [attached to this email as well]. By just using paint, we can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - slightly narrow the existing travel lanes, which reduce car speeds - add parking on one side - add buffered bike lanes on both sides <p>This is exactly what recommendation 3-D of the report says. If we make biking and walking nicer, people will be more okay with getting around outside a car, and we can reduce the amount of parking we need in the first place.</p>  <p>The diagram, titled "77th Ave current", shows a cross-section of a street with buildings on both sides. From left to right, the components and their widths are: an 8-foot sidewalk, a 2-foot tree buffer, a 4-foot buffered bike lane, a 10-foot drive lane, a 12-foot center turn lane, another 10-foot drive lane, another 4-foot buffered bike lane, another 2-foot tree buffer, and an 8-foot sidewalk. The text "Made with Streetmix" is visible at the bottom right of the diagram.</p>

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