

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN (DRAFT)

Comprehensive Plan – Growth Management Act Compliance

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This document identifies the key milestones for the GMA Compliance project and the opportunities for community engagement in the decision-making process.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Growth Management Hearings Board Final Decision and Order

Cities and counties in Washington State are required to adopt a comprehensive plan under the Growth Management Act (GMA). Mercer Island recently completed a periodic review and update of its Comprehensive Plan in 2024 (see [AB 6573](#)). The 2024 adoption of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan periodic review and update was appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) on the grounds that the Comprehensive Plan did not adequately plan for and accommodate future affordable housing needs (GMHB Case No. 25-3-0003). On August 1, 2025, the GMHB issued a Final Decision and Order (GMHB Order) finding that the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan was noncompliant with some of the provisions of the GMA and remanded the Comprehensive Plan to the City for revision.

The Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2024 remains in effect during the remand; however, the City must complete work to update the plan and comply with the timeline established by the GMHB Order ([RCW 36.70A.300\(3\)\(b\)](#)). The compliance timeline is one year from when the GMHB issued its decision; work must be completed by July 31, 2026. Failure to comply with the GMHB Order can result in sanctions against the City ([RCW 36.70A.340](#)).

The GMHB Order requires the City to address four issues:

1. Land Capacity: Analyze residential land capacity at each housing affordability level and close any identified gaps.
2. Adequate Provisions: Adopt incentives, mandatory provisions, and planned actions (“aka adequate provisions”) that will increase the supply of affordable housing.
3. Station Area Subarea Plan: Adopt a subarea plan for the area around the transit station.
4. Anti-Displacement Measures: Adopt anti-displacement measures to address the potential displacement that can occur with changes in zoning.

A more in depth description of the GMHB Order and its implications is provided in [AB 6838](#).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Public Engagement Goals

The City’s public engagement goals for this project are identified below:

- Provide the Mercer Island community with timely information on the GMHB Order, the compliance process, and the scope of work. Provide project status updates and opportunities for the community to review and comment on proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.
- Make draft documents readily available on the Let’s Talk page.
- Provide opportunities for public input at project milestones and via public hearings prior to decision-making by the City Council.
- Consult and consider recommendations from state agencies, Native American tribes, and neighboring jurisdictions.

Public Engagement Opportunities

The project will meet the standard public engagement required for all Comprehensive Plan and development code amendments as established in Title 19 MICC, which includes the following steps:

- Notice of application posted onsite and mailed to property owners within 300 feet
- SEPA Notice of Decision and public comment period
- Public comment at Planning Commission meeting
- Public hearing notice at least 30 days prior to the Planning Commission public hearing.
- Public comment at Planning Commission public hearing
- Public comment at City Council meetings throughout the process

In addition to the engagement goals and opportunities outlined above, the City plans to keep the public informed through the methods outlined below.

Public Information Channels

A webpage has been created on the City's public engagement website, Let's Talk Mercer Island: <https://letstalk.mercergov.org/comprehensive-plan-gma-compliance>. This webpage will be used to provide frequent project updates, event announcements, links to documents, and the opportunity to post public comments.

The webpage will be the central repository of all information related to the GMA Compliance project, including drafts under consideration, and available for public review and comment. The page also includes staff and City Council contact information for questions and comments. Additionally, the City's main website includes links to official notices, City Council, and Planning Commission agenda packets, meeting minutes, meeting videos, and related meeting materials. Finally, the City's e-newsletter, the *MI Weekly*, and social media accounts will be used to promote information about this project.

Community Information Sessions

Community information sessions will be held via online webinar or additional platforms to provide updates on the GMHB Order, the compliance strategy, and amendments that are under consideration. The sessions will be scheduled to coincide with key project milestones. See Table 1 for additional details on the anticipated timing of the community information sessions in relation to other project tasks.

Public Notice

Official public notice will be provided for decisions, public meetings, and public hearings as established in [MICC 19.15](#). Public hearing notices will be provided in the newspaper of record, posted onsite, and mailed to addresses within 300 feet.

Public Comment

Interested parties will be encouraged to provide comments to the City of Mercer Island during public comment at public meetings or via the Let's Talk webpage. All comments will be included in the public record for consideration during the legislative review of proposed Comprehensive Plan and development code amendments.

Public Meetings

The project is expected to be completed with approximately 8 to 10 public meetings. The City Council will be briefed on this scope of work and will provide initial input on the GMHB compliance strategy. At subsequent meetings, the City Council will be briefed on consultant analyses and staff recommendations.

Once the compliance strategy is fully established, the City Council will direct the Planning Commission to initiate the legislative review process, and the staff will prepare the draft comprehensive plan and development code amendments for review.

The Planning Commission will be the primary forum for detailed review of proposed amendments, public comments, and recommendations to the City Council via the established legislative review process in [MICC 19.15](#). The Planning Commission will hold public hearings to review proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations. Interested parties will be encouraged to attend and provide comments. Official notices will be provided as outlined above, under Public Notice. The Planning Commission review is expected to begin in May, and a recommendation must be transmitted to the City Council by early June.

The City Council is expected to review the Planning Commission recommendation in June and July, to adopt amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations ahead of the July 31, 2026, GMHB compliance deadline.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT TASKS

This project will involve the tasks outlined in Table 1. Opportunities for public comment at public meetings is denoted with the star inside the circle.

Table 1. Project Master Schedule

Task #	Task	2026											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1	City Council initial direction and scope of work approval		★										
2	Staff and consultant analysis												
3	Community Information Sessions		★			★							
4	Council briefing on consultant findings and initial direction on scope of work		★	★	★								
5	Draft comprehensive plan and development code amendments prepared by staff and consultants												
6	Planning Commission review and recommendation and public hearings					★	★						
7	City Council review and decision						★						
8	GMHB Order Compliance Deadline (July 31, 2026)												
9	GMHB Compliance Hearing (September 15, 2026)												
10	GMHB Ruling on Compliance (expected within 60 days of the Compliance Hearing)												

★ Information Sessions and Public Meetings