



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 6866
February 17, 2026
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6866: GMA Compliance Public Engagement Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Approve the GMA Compliance Public Engagement Plan.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

DEPARTMENT:	Community Planning and Development
STAFF:	Jeff Thomas, Community Planning and Development Director Alison Van Gorp, Community Planning and Development Deputy Director
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. Draft GMA Compliance Scope, Schedule and Public Engagement Plan
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ n/a
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ n/a
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ n/a

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to present the draft Growth Management Act (GMA) Compliance Public Engagement Plan for City Council consideration.

- After an appeal of the Mercer Island 2024 Comprehensive Plan, the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) ordered the City to update the Comprehensive Plan and associated development regulations to address four issues identified in the GMHB order.
- At the January 16, 2026, City Council Planning Session, the Council approved seven motions that provided direction to the staff on the GMHB Order compliance strategies. Motion #5 directed the staff to return to the City Council with a public engagement plan in February 2026.
- The City Council will also be reviewing compliance strategy options at the February 17, 2026, City Council meeting (see AB 6865) and discussing opportunities to condense the legislative review process (see AB 6871).
- The draft Public Engagement Plan (Exhibit 1) outlines the key milestones for the GMA Compliance project and identifies the opportunities for community engagement in the decision-making process.
- It is important to acknowledge that the Public Engagement Plan is a roadmap and meetings, engagement strategies, and communications will be adapted as the work progresses.

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 most 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 number 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, but the City must complete work to update the plan and comply by 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 may 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 detailed description of the GMHB Order and its implications is provided in [AB 6838](#).

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

At the January 16, 2026 City Council Planning Session, the Council directed the City Manager to prepare a Public Engagement Plan to support the GMA Compliance Work, which is included as Exhibit 1. The Plan includes key milestones and outlines the timeline and opportunities to connect with the community on this significant body of work.

In preparing the Public Engagement Plan, it is important to recognize that the deadline for compliance is the end of July, which is very compressed. During this time staff anticipate holding at least two community information sessions. In addition, the policy work will be presented to the City Council and Planning Commission over 8 to 10 public meetings.

The City will actively advertise these meetings and promote all opportunities for engagement with both the City Council and the Planning Commission, using multiple communication channels to ensure the community is informed and encouraged to participate throughout the process.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the Public Engagement Plan is a roadmap and meetings, engagement strategies, and communications will be adapted as the work progresses.

Immediate Next Steps

The City has received substantial public correspondence regarding the GMHB Order and related compliance efforts. To continue meaningful public engagement and gather additional input, staff recommend hosting a community information session in the next two weeks. At that session, staff will provide an overview of the GMHB Order, share the proposed compliance framework, and outline any direction resulting from the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting. Staff will also provide information to the community on upcoming meetings and other ways to engage during this process.

NEXT STEPS

The City and consultant team will continue developing the GMA compliance strategy.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approve the GMA Compliance Public Engagement Plan and direct staff to schedule the first community information session.