

Draft comprehensive plan goals and policies
Planning Commission Recommendation
October 8, 2019

Item No. 1: Remove Specific Town Center subarea designations from the Land Use Element

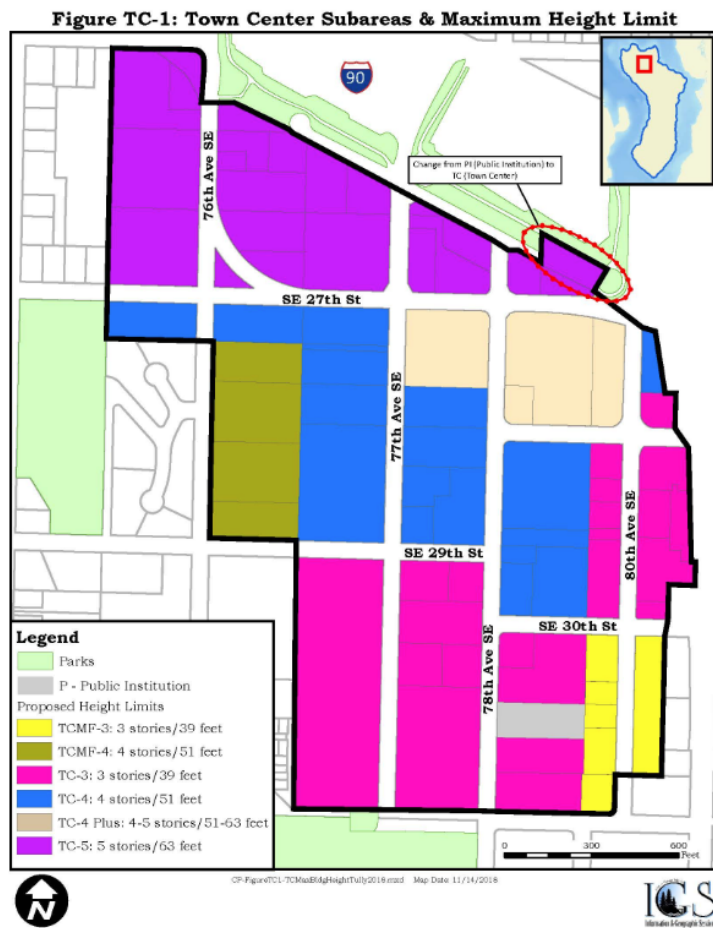
Suggested Amendments:

Land Use Goal 3:

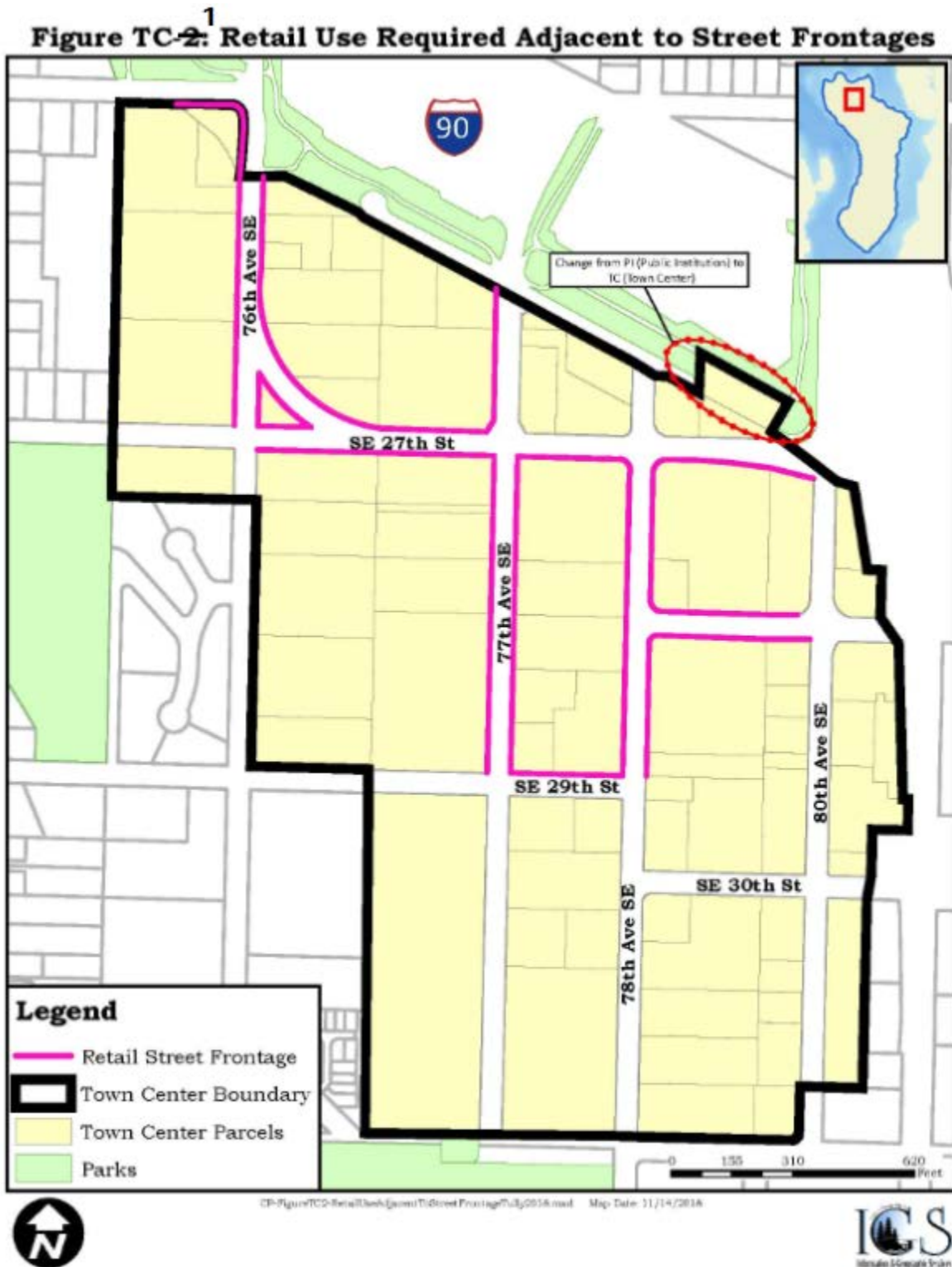
Have a mixture of building types, styles and ages that reflects the evolution of the Town Center over time, with human-scaled buildings, varied height, set-backs and step-backs and attractive facades.

3.1 Buildings taller than two stories may be permitted if appropriate public amenities and enhanced design features are provided.

3.2 Locate taller buildings on the north end of the Town Center and step down building height through the center to lower heights on the south end, bordering Mercerdale Park. [See Figure TC-1.](#)



4.2 Retail street frontages (Figure TC-2¹) should be the area where the majority of retail activity is focused. Retail shops and restaurants should be the dominant use, with personal services also encouraged to a more limited extent. [...]



12.3 Investigate potential locations and funding sources for the development (and acquisition if needed) of one or more significant public open space(s) that can function as an anchor for the Town Center's character and redevelopment. Identified "opportunity sites" are shown in Figure TC-3.2 and described below. These opportunity sites should not preclude the identification of other sites, should new opportunities or circumstances arise.



Item No. 2: Establish goals and policies to prevent and/or mitigate the impacts of climate change

Land Use Element

I. Introduction [...]

The community strongly values environmental protection. As a result, local development regulations have sought to safeguard land, water and the natural environment, balanced with private property rights. To reflect community priorities, development regulations also attempt to balance views and tree conservation.

Town Center

For many years, Mercer Island citizens have been concerned about the future of the community's downtown. Past business district revitalization initiatives (e.g. Project Renaissance in 1990) strove to overcome the effects of "under-capitalization" in the Town Center. These efforts sought to support and revitalize downtown commercial/retail businesses and devised a number of recommendations for future Town Center redevelopment. Growing out of previous planning efforts, a renewed interest in Town Center revitalization emerged in 1992 -- one looking to turn the 33-year-old downtown into the vital economic and social center of the community.[...]

Sustainability

Mercer Island has a proud tradition of accomplishment toward sustainability. One of the earliest efforts was the formation of the Committee to Save the Earth by high school students in the early 1970s. Through the students' fundraising, the construction and opening of the Mercer Island Recycling Center was realized in 1975. The self-supported Center was well-patronized by Islanders and, during its many years of operation, it prevented millions of pounds of recyclable materials from ending up in the landfill while contributing to the development of a sustainability ethic on Mercer Island.

Numerous community groups have contributed to sustainability accomplishments in the ensuing years, and many are still active. Sustainable Mercer Island (SMI), has helped organize and publicize solarize campaigns, among other contributions. SMI participants are also independently involved in youth environmental education, public outreach, advocating for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and many other activities. Some are doing research and many are volunteering with national and local organizations working to solve the climate crisis. One volunteer leads the very successful Green Schools program for the Mercer Island School District, supported by King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks. It fosters waste reduction, recycling, and conservation by students and schools. IslandVision, a non-profit organization, encourages and supports sustainable practices on Mercer Island. It provided to the City, in 2018, a technical analysis of GHG sources on Mercer Island and recommended strategies to reduces GHG emissions.

In 2012, the City convened a Sustainability Policy Taskforce, a City/community partnership, to recommend sustainability policies to the City. The Council adopted its recommendations including dedicated staffing, incorporation of recommendations into City planning documents, development of a

[Sustainability Plan, and legislative actions to foster sustainability. The Sustainability Manager was hired in 2013.](#)

In 2006, a grassroots effort of Island citizens led the City to modify the vision statement in its comprehensive plan to include language embracing general sustainability, and in May 2007 the Council committed to a sustainability work program as well as a specific climate goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 2007 levels by 2050, which was consistent with King County and Washington State targets. Later in 2007, the Council set an interim emissions reduction goal (often called a “milepost”) for City operations of 5% by 2012.

From 2010 to 2014⁹, with the entire community’s sustainability in mind, the City has implemented a wide range of outreach programs, efficiency campaigns, alternative energy initiatives, land-use guidelines, and other natural resource management measures designed to minimize the overall impacts generated by Island residents, for the benefit of future generations. Due to the 20-year horizon envisioned by this comprehensive plan, it is especially appropriate to include measures that address the long-term actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ideally in collaboration with other local governments. Actions that the City will take in the management of its own facilities and operations are addressed in the Capital Facilities Element of this plan. In 2018, the City continued to promote and support sustainable development, through the development of green building goals and policies for all residential development.

~~Beginning in 2018, the City assessed the City’s strengths and weaknesses in supporting sustainability using the STAR Communities framework. Information from this assessment, along with the measures discussed above, and others under consideration, will be identified in more detail in a rolling 6-year Sustainability Plan, to be adopted in 2019, which will guide the City’s internal and external actions while taking into account the interrelated issues of climate change, population change, land use, public infrastructure, transportation choices, natural resources management, equitable services and accessibility, arts and community, public health and safety, human services, and economic development.~~

[Climate Change](#)

[Climate change has far-reaching and fundamental consequences for our economy, environment, public health, and safety. Cities have a vital role in mitigating and adapting to climate change both individually and by working collaboratively with other local governments. Current science indicates that to avoid the worst impacts of global warming we need to reduce global greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions sharply.](#)

[In 2008, the City created a Climate Action Task Force which was charged with developing a climate action plan for the City and Community. The resulting plan called for tracking emissions and the formation of a City/community partnership which was called the Green Ribbon Commission. It was tasked with identifying strategies to reduce GHG emissions. Notable outcomes were the successful promotion of Puget Sound Energy’s Green Power Program, which generated funds to cover the cost of the solar array the City installed at the Community Center, and the 22 Ways emissions reduction campaign.](#)

1 [Leap for Green Sustainability Fair spearheaded by IslandVision and co-developed with the City is a vital](#)
2 [instrument to educate and encourage engagement in sustainability. In addition to food and](#)
3 [entertainment, the fair offers activities for kids and adults, demonstrations and displays of](#)
4 [environmentally friendly ways of living, sustainability vendors, and more. The fair was not held in 2019](#)
5 [due to budget constraints.](#)

6 [In 2013, the City was recognized by the EPA as a Green Power Community of the Year for its Green](#)
7 [Power sign up campaign and for its commitment to local solar power generation. It was awarded Sol](#)
8 [Smart Gold Designation from the Department of Energy in January 2018 for removing obstacles to solar](#)
9 [development. The City offers same-day permitting for most solar installations. The City has installed](#)
10 [electric vehicle charging stations, banned plastic bags, and successfully piloted bike share and ride](#)
11 [hailing services among many other actions.](#)

12 [The Capital Facilities Element includes a summary of the City's actions to reduce its own carbon](#)
13 [footprint.](#)

14 [King County and cities formed the innovative King County-Cities Climate Collaboration \(K4C\) in 2014 to](#)
15 [coordinate and enhance local government climate efforts. They have charted opportunities for joint](#)
16 [action to reduce GHG emissions and accelerate progress toward a clean and sustainable future. Mercer](#)
17 [Island is a member of K4C and seeks opportunities to partner on outreach to decision-makers and the](#)
18 [public, adopt consistent standards and strategies, share solutions, and cooperate on seeking funding](#)
19 [resources. In 2016, Mercer Island, along with King County and other partners in K4C was recognized](#)
20 [with a national Climate Leadership Award from EPA. In 2013, the City was recognized by the EPA as a](#)
21 [Green Power Community of the Year for its very successful Green Power sign up campaign for residents](#)
22 [and for its commitment to local solar power generation.](#)

23 [As of January 2018 there were 184 known solar installations, higher per capita than any other Eastside](#)
24 [City. The City offers same day permitting for most solar installations and most require only an electrical](#)
25 [permit.](#)

26 [The City has been active in reducing its own carbon footprint by reducing fleet emissions and energy use](#)
27 [in facilities and lighting, and by minimizing and managing waste more sustainably. The City has installed](#)
28 [electric vehicle charging stations, banned plastic bags, and successfully piloted bike share and ride](#)
29 [hailing services among many other actions. In 2017, the City confirmed a major commitment to clean](#)
30 [power by announcing its contract with Puget Sound Energy for 2019 through 2039, in which it will buy](#)
31 [20 years of clean wind power to replace its current mix of electricity, covering its annual municipal usage](#)
32 [of three million kilowatt-hours.](#)

33 [Community GHG emissions have been inventoried and reported to K4C and the public when possible.](#)
34 [From 2016 through 2019, staff was not able to complete this task. The major sources of GHG on Mercer](#)
35 [Island have been found to be passenger car travel \(estimated at 40% of total\) and building energy](#)
36 [consumption \(48% residential plus commercial\).](#)

With many good efforts completed and underway, it is necessary to take further action in order to meet GHG reduction targets, both in our households and in our community.

Goal 28: Reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions

28.1 Collaborate with King County and cities as a member of the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C) to increase the efficiency of efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

28.2 Dedicate staff to represent the City in K4C and to coordinate City programs and actions to mitigate climate change.

28.3 Update and adopt Mercer Island GHG reduction targets consistent with K4C, as amended.

28.4 Prioritize for implementation those K4C-recommended strategies that are relevant and feasible for Mercer Island.

28.5 Support annual reporting of Mercer Island GHG emissions to K4C and the public.

28.6 Engage individuals, community organizations, and businesses in a collaborative effort to mitigate climate change.

28.7 Provide public outreach and information to citizens about how they can mitigate and respond to climate changes.

28.8 GHG reduction strategies should be evaluated and used to set a priority for actions. Community acceptance and legal requirements should be considered.

28.9 Consider for early action the reduction of emissions from passenger vehicles.

a) Work with the community to develop zero-greenhouse gas emitting transportation option for traveling intra-Island to or from community connection points. These options should be popular enough in use to substantially reduce aggregate GHG emissions from passenger vehicles. The program should be in place by 2023 when light rail arrives.

b) Promote electric vehicles.

28.10 Consider for early action the reduction of energy use in in buildings.

a) Determine the best methods to promote a transition from natural gas to electricity for the energy needs of new buildings and retrofit of existing buildings as the regional source of power moves entirely away from fossil fuels.

b) Encourage and provide incentives for energy-saving retrofits of existing homes and buildings, in partnership with Puget Sound Energy and other organizations.

c) Determine the best methods to promote the use of construction materials that embody the least carbon feasible in manufacture and use. Consider building code changes, as necessary, to accommodate this transition.

- d) Consider adopting a local building energy-benchmarking and disclosure ordinance.
e) Support green power community challenges and other programs to reduce building energy use.

28.11 Promote renewable power generation in the community.

- a) Support campaigns to install solar energy and other power generation methods.
b) Continue to offer streamlined renewable energy installation permitting, when possible, incentives, and other means to encourage power generation.
c) Consider building code changes, as necessary, to accommodate community renewable power generation.

28.12 Focus future land development where utility and transportation investments have been made and encourage land use patterns to be carbon efficient.

28.13 Strive to increase carbon sequestration and resilience to urban heat island effects by expanding tree canopy and vegetation cover. Consider the use of cool roofs and pavements (reflective, for example), reduced pavement widths, green roofs, and other potentially useful strategies.

28.14 Consider development of an Urban Forest Management Plan to assess canopy cover, set goals, and establish implementation strategies.

28.15 Encourage residents using fossil fuels, such as home heating oil, to convert to clean and renewable energy sources.

Goal 29: Develop a Climate Action Plan.

Consider development of a Climate Action Plan including the following components:

- A summary of City actions to date;
- A broad examination of actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Re-evaluation of the recommendations from the 2012 Sustainability Policy Recommendations Report;
- Provisions to monitor progress of implementation; and
- Provisions to update the plan in response to changing conditions and new opportunities.

Goal 30: Adapt to climate change.

Place the highest priority on mitigating climate change but respond to indications of impacts in the community that may require an adaptive response.

[...]

Utility Element
Solid Waste Policies

- 5.1 All new construction, with the exception of single-family homes, shall be required to provide adequate space for on-site storage and collection of recyclables pursuant to Ordinance A-99.
- 5.2 The City shall actively promote and support recycling, composting and waste reduction techniques among the single-family, multi-family and commercial sectors [with the aim of meeting or exceeding King County diversion goals](#).
- 5.3 The City shall, whenever practical, provide convenient opportunities for residents to recycle appliances, tires, bulky yard debris and other hard-to-recycle materials.
- 5.4 The City shall actively promote and support the proper handling and disposal of hazardous waste produced by households and businesses. The use of alternate products that are less hazardous or produce less waste shall be encouraged.
- 5.5 City departments and facilities shall actively participate in waste reduction and recycling programs.
- 5.6 All hazardous waste generated by City departments and facilities shall be handled and disposed of in accordance with applicable county, state, regional and federal regulations.
- 5.7 The City shall actively enforce the Solid Waste Code and other ordinances and regulations that prohibit the illegal dumping of yard debris and other types of waste.
- 5.8 The City shall play an active role in regional solid waste planning, with the goal of promoting uniform regional approaches to solid waste management.
- 5.9 The City shall actively promote and support the recycling, re-use or composting of construction, demolition and land-clearing debris wherever feasible.

[...]

Capital Facilities Element

I. Introduction [...]

In 2012, activities were expanded further with the hiring of the City's first dedicated Sustainability Manager, who designs, implements, and then oversees much of the internal sustainability project work. In addition, the Mayor and Council have increasingly addressed or supported specific regional and state-level climate commitments or legislation.

[In 2017, the City confirmed a major commitment to clean power by announcing its contract with Puget Sound Energy for 2019 through 2039, in which it will buy 20 years of clean wind power to replace its current mix of electricity, covering its annual municipal usage of three million kilowatt hours.](#)

Due to the 20-year horizon envisioned by this comprehensive plan, it is especially appropriate to include internal measures that address the long-term actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ideally in collaboration with other local governments. Actions that the City will implement with the entire community's sustainability in mind are addressed in the Land Use Element of this plan. Various City Departments, such as Parks and Recreation and Maintenance, prepare functional plans that directly implement some sustainability programs.

~~These Capital Facilities measures, and others under consideration, are identified in more detail in a rolling 6-year Sustainability Plan, to be adopted in 2016, which will guide the City's internal and external actions while taking into account the interrelated issues of climate change, population change, land use, public infrastructure, natural resources management, quality of life, public health, and economic development.~~

V. Capital Facilities Goals and Policies [...]

1.20 City operations should be optimized to minimize carbon footprint impacts, especially with respect to energy consumption and waste reduction. New Capital Facilities should incorporate and encourage the sustainable stewardship of the natural environment, ~~and~~ consider the benefit of creating cutting-edge, demonstration projects, and favor options that have the lowest feasible carbon footprint and greatest carbon sequestration potential. The adoption of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets recommended by King County-Cities Climate Collaboration should be considered.

1.21 City procurement should include consideration of total lifecycle costs, recycled content, and other common measures of product sustainability.

1.22 Current City facilities are operated in an energy-efficient manner, and opportunities for improvement are implemented when feasible. New City facilities should explore meeting public and private-sector sustainable building certification standards, such as the 'BuiltGreen' system and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system.

1.23 Parks & Open Space Capital Facilities – Identify measures to reduce carbon footprint and GHG emissions when planning projects, choosing options with the lowest feasible carbon footprint and greatest carbon sequestration potential. Implement sustainability measures identified within the City's Parks and Recreation Management Plan, including special attention to direct sustainability measures, such as tree retention, preference for native vegetation and habitat creation, minimized use of chemicals, and reductions in energy and fuel use.

Item No.3: Placeholder for the development of goals and policies supporting economic development on Mercer Island

Land Use Element

GOAL 14:

Support the continued ~~Continue to encourage vitality through the support of~~ economic development of Mercer Island, particularly ~~activities~~ in the Town Center.

14.1 Establish the Town Center as an active and attractive commercial node, including the use of gateways, wayfinding and signage, and links to transit.

14.2 Maintain a diversity of downtown land uses.

14.3 Support economic growth that accommodates Mercer Island's share of the regional employment growth target of 1,228 new jobs from 2006-2035, by maintaining adequate zoning capacity, infrastructure, and supportive economic development policies.

14.4 Investigate formation of a business improvement area (BIA), or other mechanism authorized by state law, to help promote Island businesses, to support Town Center activities, and to finance improvements and amenities. Identify a staff person who will help coordinate economic development activities.

14.5 Support public and private investment in existing properties, infrastructure, and marketing to help maintain longstanding businesses and attract new ones.

14.6 Create a healthy economic environment where Town Center businesses can serve the needs of Mercer Island residents as well as draw upon broader retail and commercial market areas.

14.7 Engage residents, community organizations, and businesses in a collaborative effort to establish a strategy for Mercer Island economic development.

Item No. 4: Goals and policies supporting the review and possible establishment of multi-modal transportation level of service

Transportation Element

II. Transportation Goals and Policies

Goal 7: Provide a safe, convenient and reliable transportation system for Mercer Island.

7.1 Include in the City's roadway design standards, requirements for facilities to safely accommodate travel by all travel modes.

7.2 Provide a safe transportation system through maintenance and upkeep of transportation facilities.

7.3 Monitor the condition and performance of the transportation system to compare growth projections with actual conditions, assess the adequacy of transportation facilities and services, and to identify locations where improvements may become necessary.

7.4 Monitor traffic collisions, citizen input/complaints, traffic violations, and traffic volumes to identify and prioritize locations for safety improvements.

7.5 Where a need is demonstrated, consider signage, traffic controls, or other strategies to improve the safety of pedestrian crossings.

7.6 Verify the policies, criteria and a process to determine when, and under what conditions, private roads and privately maintained roads in the public right of way should be accepted for public maintenance and improvement.

7.7 Coordinate with local and regional emergency services to develop priority transportation corridors and develop coordinated strategies to protect and recover from disaster.

7.8 Strive to create a complete, connected active transportation system allowing direct and safe access for active transportation modes.

7.9 New or remodeled public institution, commercial mixed use and multifamily facilities should have sufficient storage for bicycles and other active transportation modes.

[...]

Goal 10: Maintain acceptable levels of service for transportation facilities and services on Mercer Island.

10.1 The City of Mercer Island Level of Service (LOS) at arterial street intersections shall be a minimum of "C" within and adjacent to the Town Center and "D" for all other intersections.

10.2 Use the level of service standard to evaluate the performance of the transportation system and guide future system improvements and funding. Emphasize projects and programs that focus on the movement of people and provide alternatives to driving alone.

10.3 Implement the following strategy when vehicle capacity or funding is insufficient to maintain the LOS standard: (1) seek additional funding for capacity improvements, (2) explore alternative,

1 lower-cost methods to meet level-of-service standards (e.g., transportation demand management
2 program, bicycle corridor development or other strategies), (3) reduce the types or size of
3 development, (4) restrict development approval, and (5) reevaluate the level of service standard
4 to determine how it might be adjusted to meet land use objectives.

5 10.4 Ensure that the City's level of service policies are linked to the land use vision and comply with
6 concurrency requirements.

7 10.5 Revise the Transportation Element if the Land Use and/or Capital Facilities Element of the
8 Comprehensive Plan are changed to maintain a balanced and consistent plan.

9 [10.6 Levels of service for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit transportation modes should be established.](#)
10

11 [...]

12 Goal 12: Promote bicycle and pedestrian networks that safely access and link commercial areas,
13 residential areas, schools, and parks within the City.

14 12.1 Maximize the safety and functionality of the bicycle system by enhancing road shoulders, which are
15 to be distinguished from designated bicycle lanes.

16 12.2 Implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan to meet existing and anticipated needs for non-
17 motorized transportation. This Plan should be coordinated with other transportation planning
18 efforts and periodically updated.

19 12.3 Study opportunities for use of innovative methods for pedestrians crossing streets, including use of
20 colored and textured pavements within the City.

21 [12.4 Strive to build community through the in-person interactions facilitated by active transportation at](#)
22 [community connection points \(schools, library, community centers, bikeshare hubs, etc.\)](#)

23 [12.5 Areas near schools and commercial areas should have higher levels of service for pedestrians,](#)
24 [bicycles, and transit.](#)
25