

2044 Comprehensive Plan Update

# Public Participation Plan

City of Mercer Island, WA



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## Public Participation Plan

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to update its Comprehensive Plan (*Plan*) on or before June 30, 2024 (RCW 36.70A.130(5)(a)). This update will extend the *Plan* planning horizon to the year 2044. The 2044 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review and Update (*Plan* update) will satisfy this requirement. Public participation is a vital aspect of the *Plan* update process. Public participation improves the planning process by gathering the shared knowledge and experience of the community and fostering public confidence in the proposed *Plan* amendments. This document details the goals, tasks, phases, and schedule for public participation during the *Plan* update.

The *Plan* update will primarily be a targeted “surgical” update. The focus of the majority of the work will be technical updates to the growth projections and associated infrastructure needs detailed in the *Plan*. As such, most of the work in the *Plan* update will not require extensive public outreach. There are two aspects of the *Plan* update that will have a broader scope than the technical updates, creating more opportunities for public participation. These two aspects are adopting an Economic Development Element and updating housing goals and policies to respond to the findings in the *Housing Needs Assessment*. These two components of the *Plan* update will require more goal and policy work than the remainder of the project.

The drafting and adoption of an Economic Development Element will include extensive opportunities for the public to provide input. The Economic Development Element goals and policies will define how the City chooses to grow its economy. This will require additional public outreach to ensure that the Economic Development Element aligns with the public’s vision for economic development through the planning horizon. The public participation plan for the Economic Development Element reflects the broader nature of this part of the project.

The City will prepare a *Housing Needs Assessment* as part of updating the growth projections in the *Plan*. The *Housing Needs Assessment* is a technical document that defines housing need based on the projected growth. Policy responses during the *Plan* update may be required to address housing needs. If policy amendments are needed to address the findings in the *Housing Needs Assessment*, those amendments would require a broader public participation. As such, the public participation planned for the Housing Element update allows additional room for community input. Updates to Housing Element goals and policies will give stakeholders several opportunities to provide input during the *Plan* update.

### Roles

The *Plan* update will engage various groups. These groups have unique roles in the process, summarized below.

#### City Council

The Mercer Island City Council are the elected officials endowed with the legislative authority to adopt *Plan* amendments. The City Council also directs Planning Commission and staff work programs. The City Council will review the proposed *Plan* amendments throughout the *Plan* update. Ultimately, the City Council will adopt the *Plan* update after considering the Planning Commission, staff recommendations and public input.

### Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is a volunteer advisory committee made up of island residents. The commission was established to review and make recommendations to the City Council on amendments to the *Plan*. They provide the City Council with the lay perspective on planning issues. The Planning Commission review of the *Plan* update will include the majority of the public participation, including a public hearing prior to making their recommendation to the City Council.

### Housing Work Group

A Housing Work Group (HWG) will work on drafting updated Housing Element goals and policies. The HWG will be made up of two Planning Commission members and two City Council members. The HWG will meet with stakeholders and subject matter experts during the *Plan* update to get input on housing goal and policy amendments to address housing needs.

### Economic Development Work Group

An Economic Development Work Group (EDWG) will work on drafting new goals and policies for the Economic Development Element. The EDWG will be composed of two Planning Commission members and two City Council members. The work group will meet with stakeholders and subject matter experts during the *Plan* update to refine the draft Economic Development Element.

### City Staff

City staff provides professional and technical recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council. Staff will prepare drafts and make recommendations throughout the *Plan* update.

### Subject Matter Experts

Subject matter experts (SME) are professionals that work in a *Plan* related field (i.e. affordable housing nonprofit staff, King County Economic Development Council, etc.). SMEs can provide the City with their professional and technical expertise during the *Plan* update.

### Stakeholders

Stakeholders are groups and individuals that have an interest in the outcome of the *Plan* update. Stakeholders are diverse and can have numerous and conflicting concerns. The *Plan* update will benefit from engaging these groups and individuals to gather varied perspectives and build consensus on the proposed updates. Engaging stakeholders with diverse viewpoints will help the Planning Commission and City Council understand the plurality of public opinions on goals and policies in the *Plan*. Some of the *Plan* update stakeholders are listed below.

- Local business owners;
- Housing providers;
- Developers;
- Builders and contractors;
- Local and regional policy advocacy organizations; and
- The general public.

## Public Participation Goals and Tasks

Public participation is central to planning under GMA. Public participation is one of the statewide planning goals established in RCW 36.70A.020(11), which states:

“Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.”

In pursuit of this statewide planning goal, this public participation plan details the public participation goals and tasks the City will use throughout the *Plan* update.

### **Goal 1 – Inform the Public Throughout the *Plan* Update**

Keeping the public informed throughout the *Plan* update will help ensure stakeholders know what to comment on, when comments will be effective, and how to provide their perspective to decision makers.

#### Tasks

**1.1** Maintain a project webpage on the City website. The project webpage will list working drafts, project timeline, and public comments.

**1.2** Publish notice of special public meetings such as community workshops in *The Mercer Island Reporter* and on the City website.

**1.3** Maintain a mailing list of interested parties. Interested parties will be notified of public meetings.

### **Goal 2 – Gather Input on Economic Development Element Goals and Policies**

Drafting a new Economic Development Element will require extensive public input on proposed vision, goals, and policies. Stakeholders and subject matter experts (SME) should be engaged throughout the refinement of proposed Economic Development Element goals and policies.

#### Tasks

**2.1** City staff will conduct SME and key stakeholder interviews to establish a list of priority policy issues to address in the Economic Development Element. Key stakeholders are those with specific interest in economic development in the City. After the interviews, staff will prepare a list of important economic development issues to get more information on during the workshop and survey (Tasks 2.2 and 2.3).

**2.2** City staff will hold an Economic Development Vision Community Workshop to get public input on a vision for economic development and identify priority policy topics to be addressed in the Economic Development Element.

**2.3** City staff will conduct a survey to gather public input on the vision for economic development and identify priority policy topics to be addressed in the Economic Development Element.

**2.4** The Economic Development Work Group (EDWG) will meet with economic development SMEs to refine the preliminary draft of economic development goals and policies to address the priority policy issues identified in tasks 2.1 through 2.3. This meeting will result in a first draft of the Economic Development Element.

**2.5** The EDWG will meet with a stakeholder panel to get input on and refine the first draft of the Economic Development Element.

**2.6** The Planning Commission considers the EDWG and stakeholder input during its first touch of the Economic Development Element.

**2.7** The Planning Commission considers the EDWG and stakeholder input during its second touch of the Economic Development Element.

**2.8** The City will hold a community workshop to get feedback on and refine the third draft of the Economic Development Element.

**2.9** The Planning Commission considers the public input from the community workshop during its third touch of the Economic Development Element.

### **Goal 3 – Gather Input on updates to the housing goals and policies**

Housing goals and policies might need to be updated after the City has prepared a *Housing Needs Assessment* (HNA). Any necessary changes are expected to be minor refinements of the existing housing policies to account for the findings in the HNA. Input from housing stakeholders and SMEs will be sought to ensure that the goals and policies adequately address the findings in the HNA.

#### Tasks

**3.1** Housing Work Group (HWG) prepares an initial list of housing policy responses based on the HNA findings.

**3.2** The HWG will meet with SMEs to refine the initial list of policy responses to be incorporated into the first draft of amendments to housing goals and policies.

**3.3** Planning Commission first two touches on the draft housing goal and policy amendments.

**3.4** Planning Commission third touch on the draft housing goal and policy amendments, resulting in a public hearing draft.

**3.5** The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the *Plan* update (Task 4.2, below), which will include the amendments to the Housing Element.

### **Goal 4 – Gather Public Input on the Overall *Plan* Update**

Gathering public input on the overall *Plan* update will be vital to ensure the update satisfies the statewide planning goal for public participation. This will increase community support for the update.

#### Tasks

**4.1** Create a dedicated Comprehensive Plan update public comment email inbox.

**4.2** Planning Commission refines draft amendments and responds to public comments during public meetings.

**4.3** Hold a community workshop on the *Plan* update after the Planning Commission has prepared a pre-hearing draft of the overall *Plan* update. The community workshop will precede a Planning Commission public hearing.

**4.4** The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and deliberations before making a recommendation to the City Council on the *Plan* update.

**4.5** The City Council will hold a public hearing and deliberations before adopting the *Plan* update by ordinance.

## Engagement Phases

Public participation for the *Plan* update will be divided into four distinct phases. Each phase will be composed of outreach tasks to achieve the public participation goals outlined above. The four phases are:

**Phase I – Ongoing Notices**

**Phase II – Identify Policy Responses**

**Phase III – Refine Drafts**

**Phase IV – Build Consensus**

### **Phase I: Ongoing Notices**

The purpose of Phase I is to ensure that the public stays up to date on the *Plan* update project throughout its duration. By providing public notice throughout the *Plan* update, the City will keep the public informed of the status of the project and how to provide comments. Phase I will take place through the duration of the *Plan* update. The tasks undertaken during Phase I are related to public participation goals 1 and 4.

### **Phase II: Identify Policy Responses**

The purpose of Phase II is to engage the general public, stakeholders, and SMEs to set the agenda for making goal and policy updates. The focus of this phase will be amendments to the Housing Element and drafting the new Economic Development Element. Phase II will take place early in the drafting process for these two elements. The input gathered in this phase will highlight priority goal and policy amendments needed to address the housing and economic development issues the community is concerned about. The tasks undertaken during Phase II are related to public participation goals 2 and 3.

### **Phase III: Refine Drafts**

The purpose of Phase III is to gather input on the draft *Plan* Elements in advance of public hearings. Phase III will center on engaging the broader public and gathering input on proposed goal and policy updates. Refining drafts will take place through the middle of the *Plan* update process, in advance of the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings. The tasks undertaken during Phase III are related to public participation goals 2, 3, and 4.

### **Phase IV: Build Consensus**

The purpose of Phase IV is to build public buy in on the drafts refined during Phase III by engaging the public in the fine-tuning of the *Plan* update in advance of its adoption. Phase IV will take place during the last stages of the *Plan* update. The tasks undertaken during Phase IV are related to public participation goals 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1 lists the four public participation phases, information flow, and public participation tasks undertaken during each phase.

1 **Table 1. Public Participation Phases, Information Flow, and Tasks.**

Phase	Information Flow	Public Participation Tasks
<b>Phase I Ongoing Notices</b>	<b>City</b> ↓ <b>Public</b>	<b>1.1</b> Maintain a project webpage on the City website. The project webpage will list working drafts, project timeline, and public comments.
		<b>1.2</b> Publish notice of special public meetings in The Mercer Island Reporter and on the City website.
		<b>1.3</b> Maintain a mailing list interested parties. Interested parties will be notified of public meetings.
		<b>4.1</b> Create a dedicated Comprehensive Plan update public comment email inbox.
<b>Phase II Identify Policy Responses</b>	<b>General Public, Stakeholders and SMEs</b> ↓ <b>City</b>	<b>2.1</b> Economic development SME and key stakeholder interviews to identify policy priorities.
		<b>2.2</b> Economic Development Vision Community Workshop.
		<b>2.3</b> Economic Development Vision Survey.
		<b>2.4</b> EDWG meeting with stakeholders and SMEs.
		<b>3.1</b> HWG prepares initial list of housing policy responses.
		<b>3.2</b> HWG meeting with SMEs to refine a draft of housing goal and policy amendments.
<b>Phase III Refine Drafts</b>	<b>General Public, Stakeholders, and SMEs</b> ↓ <b>City</b>	<b>2.5</b> EDWG meeting with stakeholders to refine the draft Economic Development Element.
		<b>2.6</b> Planning Commission first touch on the draft Economic Development Element
		<b>2.7</b> Planning Commission second touch on the draft Economic Development Element
		<b>2.8</b> Economic Development Element community workshop
		<b>2.9</b> Planning Commission third touch on the draft Economic Development Element
		<b>3.3</b> Planning Commission first and second touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments.
		<b>3.4</b> Planning Commission third touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments.
		<b>4.2</b> Planning Commission refines draft <i>Plan</i> amendments and responds to public comments.
<b>Phase IV Build Consensus</b>	<b>General Public</b> ↻ <b>City</b>	<b>4.3</b> Hold a community workshop on the <i>Plan</i> update.
		<b>3.5</b> Planning Commission public hearing on the <i>Plan</i> update (Task 4.4, below), which will include the amendments to the Housing Element.
		<b>4.4</b> Planning Commission will hold a public hearing before making a recommendation to the City Council on the <i>Plan</i> update.
		<b>4.5</b> City Council public hearing before adopting the <i>Plan</i> update.

2  
3



Public Participation Schedule

Table 2. Public Participation Schedule.

		2022												2023												2024						
Phase	Public Participation Task	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
I	1.1 Project website	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	1.2 Publish notices	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	1.3 Maintain mailing list	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
	4.1 Dedicated public comment email	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
II	2.1 Staff interviews Economic Development SMEs and stakeholders	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.2 Economic Development Vision Community Workshop	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.3 Economic Development Vision Survey	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.4 EDWG meeting with stakeholders and SMEs	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.1 HWG prepares initial list of housing policy responses	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.2 HWG meeting with SMEs to refine a draft of housing goal and policy amendments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
III	2.5 EDWG meeting with stakeholders to refine the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.3 Planning Commission first and second touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.4 Planning Commission third touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.6 Planning Commission first touch on the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.7 Planning Commission second touch on the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.8 Economic Development Element community workshop	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.9 Planning Commission third touch on the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	4.2 Planning Commission refines draft amendments and responds to public comments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	4.3 Hold a community workshop on the <i>Plan</i> update	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
IV	3.5 & 4.4 Planning Commission <i>Plan</i> update public hearing, deliberations, and recommendation	J	F	M	A	M	J	J		S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	4.5 City Council <i>Plan</i> update public hearings, deliberations, and adoption	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J