
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Adam Zack, Senior Planner

DATE: February 11, 2022

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review
Draft Scope, Public Participation Plan, and Schedule

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Draft Comprehensive Plan Update Scope of Work and Master Schedule
- B. Draft Comprehensive Plan Update Public Participation Plan

SUMMARY

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires King County and incorporated jurisdictions within King County to update their Comprehensive Plan on or before June 30, 2024. The purpose of this memo is to present a proposed scope of work, master schedule, and public participation plan for completing the periodic update of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan. Additional summary information includes:

- The last periodic update of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan occurred in 2015 and was adopted in 2016).
- The proposed scope of work and master schedule for this effort is included as Attachment A.
- The proposed public participation plan for this effort is included as Attachment B.
- After the February 16 briefing, staff is seeking feedback from the Planning Commission and the community on potential revisions to the scope of work, the schedule, and/or the public participation plan. Comments and feedback are requested by March 1 and should be submitted via email to Senior Planner Adam Zack at adam.zack@mercerisland.gov. (Note: The Let's Talk Page will be forthcoming).
- The comments will be compiled and presented to the City Council for review and consideration at the March 15, 2022, City Council meeting. Staff will be seeking approval of the project scope at this meeting so that planning work may commence on this two-year project.
- The proposed scope of work anticipates adoption of the periodic update to the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan by May 2024.

BACKGROUND

The Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan (*Plan*) sets forth a vision and establishes goals, policies, and implementation actions for managing and growing into the future. The vision is a statement of how the *Plan* will guide the City. *Plan* goals describe what objectives the City will pursue to further the vision. The policies and implementation actions established in the *Plan* describe what the City will do to achieve its goals and provide crucial guidance for the City in capital improvements, development regulations, and other supporting programs and services.

The *Plan* considers projected growth during a twenty-year period called a “planning horizon”. Currently, the GMA requires cities and counties to update each respective plan every nine years to extend the planning horizon. The *Plan* is shaped by a combination of state, regional, county, and local contexts.

Statewide Planning Context

The Washington State Legislature adopted the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990. The GMA establishes a requirement that counties and cities adopt comprehensive plans to manage growth. The GMA also includes a timeline for counties and cities to periodically review their comprehensive plans ([RCW 36.70A.130](#)). During periodic review, counties and cities must extend the twenty-year planning period in their comprehensive plans. Other GMA requirements establish a statewide framework for counties and cities to plan for managing growth. Some of the key GMA requirements are:

- Consistency with the 14 coequal planning goals established in [RCW 36.70A.020](#) and [36.70A.480\(1\)](#);
- Comprehensive plans must include land use, housing, utilities, capital facilities, transportation, economic development, and parks and recreation elements ([RCW 36.70A.070](#));
- Plans must designate natural resource lands and critical areas, rural lands, and urban growth areas (UGAs);
- Cities and counties must provide sufficient development capacity to accommodate the projected growth ([RCW 36.70A.115](#));
- Comprehensive Plans must include provisions to ensure that public facilities and infrastructure keep pace with the projected growth;
- Comprehensive plans must be internally consistent, avoiding goals and policies that work at cross-purposes; and
- Comprehensive plans must be externally consistent so that growth assumptions and targets are coordinated between neighboring jurisdictions.

Regional Planning Context

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is a regional policy body that develops policies and coordinates decisions about regional growth within King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties. The PSRC allocates growth throughout the region through its multicounty planning policies. The multicounty planning policies regarding growth for the next periodic review are established in a regional plan called [Vision 2050](#). The multicounty planning policies in *Vision 2050* are one of the principal ways PSRC coordinates planning at the regional level.

Countywide Planning Context

King County coordinates planning throughout the County through Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). The CPPs establish housing and employment growth targets for the cities within King County. The King County Council updated the CPPs on December 14, 2021, with [Ordinance 19384](#). The updated CPPs established the

following growth targets for Mercer Island: 1,239 additional housing units and 1,300 additional jobs by 2044. The 2044 housing growth target did not change from the previous 2035 target. The 2044 employment growth target increased by 140 jobs over the 2035 employment growth target.

In addition to setting growth targets, King County assesses the amount of development capacity for UGAs within its boundaries. The 2044 development capacity for King County UGAs is provided in the [2021 King County Urban Growth Capacity Report](#) (UGC Report), dated June 21, 2021. The UGC Report details how much development is possible in UGAs given current zoning, achieved densities and intensities, existing development, planned development, and environmental constraints. This report is crucial to help King County and its cities understand how much development is possible through the planning period. The CPPs and UGC Report are two important ways King County coordinates assumptions about growth among the cities within its boundaries.

Local Context

The City of Mercer Island adopted its first GMA compliant Comprehensive Plan in 1994 ([Ordinance A-122](#)). The City's Comprehensive Plan has been amended several times since 1994. The last periodic review of the *Plan* was completed in 2015. The existing Comprehensive Plan planning period is 2015 to 2035. The next mandated periodic review of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan must be adopted by June 30, 2024 ([RCW 36.70A.130](#)). This periodic review will extend the planning period for the Comprehensive Plan through the year 2044. Because the 2044 housing growth target has not changed and the 2044 employment growth target only increased by 140 jobs since the last periodic review, the *Plan* update is generally expected to require only minor changes to maintain compliance with GMA.

SCOPE OF WORK

Staff has prepared the attached draft scope of work outlining a focused “surgical” update of the *Plan* (Attachment A). The concept is to have a narrow scope, primarily limited to only those updates required by state law. As such, the element-specific tasks for the Land Use, Utilities, Capital Facilities, and Transportation Elements are primarily constrained to only those updates required by the GMA and to account for recent planning actions. There are two aspects of the *Plan* update that will include more extensive goal and policy work beyond the technical updates elsewhere in the *Plan*. In depth goal and policy review will take place during work on drafting a new Economic Development Element and amendments to housing goals and policies to address the findings in the *Housing Needs Assessment*.

Planning Commission Comments

Planning Commissioners may propose adding or subtracting tasks from the element-specific task list (Attachment A, page 9, Table 2). Please keep in mind, additions to the scope of work may increase the duration of the project and push back the target adoption date. Conversely, removing element-specific tasks reduces the scope for that element. The tasks marked as “required” are those necessary to maintain compliance with state and regional planning requirements. Only those tasks marked as local choices should be altered.

MASTER SCHEDULE

Attachment A includes the master schedule for the *Plan* update project. The master schedule begins on page 3 of Attachment A. Establishing a schedule at the outset of the project will help the City stay on track for adoption by the projected date. Throughout the project, staff will use the schedule to check in on progress toward eventual adoption.

This project is expected to take approximately 2 years commencing this spring and concluding with City Council adoption in April 2024 and filing with appropriate agencies in May 2024. Most of 2022 and 2023 will

be spent preparing technical analyses and drafting amendments with the Planning Commission culminating in public workshops in the late summer and fall of 2023. The project will then enter the public hearing phase at the end of 2023. The Planning Commission public hearing and deliberations are planned to take approximately 3 months from September to November 2023. The City Council review process will begin after the Planning Commission makes a recommendation. The Council review will include a public hearing and is expected to take roughly 4 months from January to April 2024.

Planning Commission Comments

The Planning Commission may provide input on the projected duration and expected adoption date. The current project schedule anticipates adoption by May 2024. Adding additional tasks to the scope or expanding public participation beyond what is proposed in the public participation plan will likely push back the expected adoption date. The periodic review is required to be adopted by June 30, 2024. Adjustments to the scope, public participation plan, and master schedule should not extend the target adoption date past the GMA required adoption deadline on June 30, 2024.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Public participation is a vital aspect of the periodic review 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. The public participation plan (PPP) details the engagement goals, tasks, phases, and schedule for public participation during the *Plan* update. The draft PPP is provided in Attachment B.

The PPP details the following strategies for engaging the public during the periodic review:

- A dedicated public comment email address (comp.plan@mercerisland.gov) for the public to provide written comments throughout the project;
- A dedicated project Let's Talk Page where drafts and written public comments will be posted (<https://letstalk.mercergov.org/comprehensive-plan-periodic-update>);
- An economic development vision survey to identify high-level themes that the Economic Development Element vision, goals, and policies should address;
- An economic development vision community workshop to gather more input on the themes identified in the survey;
- An Economic Development Work Group (EDWG) to engage with stakeholders and subject matter experts while refining drafts of the Economic Development Element. The EDWG will be composed of both City Council and Planning Commission members;
- A Housing Work Group (HWG) to engage stakeholders and subject matter experts while refining drafts of housing goal and policy amendments. The HWG will be composed of both City Council and Planning Commission members;
- An economic development community workshop to receive feedback on the draft Economic Development Element in advance of the Planning Commission public hearing;
- An overall Comprehensive Plan Update community workshop to gather public input on the proposed *Plan* amendments in advance of the Planning Commission public hearing; and,
- Public hearings preceding adoption.

Planning Commission Comments

The Planning Commission may provide feedback on the engagement goals and tasks beginning on page 3 of Attachment B. Proposed changes should indicate whether participation planned for a given topic should be expanded or reduced. Staff would also be interested in feedback on how the commission would like to engage with the broader community during the update process. Commissioners with a longer tenure may be able to share lessons from past long range planning efforts such as the Town Center Code update and the Residential Development Standards update, and the types of public outreach and engagement they felt where the most productive and informative as the Commission developed its recommendations.

NEXT STEPS

- **March 1** – Questions, comments and/or requested revisions from City Council and Planning Commission due.
- **March 1** – City Council considers ratification of the King County CPPs including Mercer Island growth targets.
- **March 15** – City Council considers requested revisions and adopts a resolution approving the scope, master schedule, and public participation plan for completing this periodic update.

FEEDBACK REQUESTED

Please provide feedback in written comments referencing page and line number(s) on the draft scope of work, master schedule and public participation plan no later than March 1, 2022, via email to adam.zack@mercerisland.gov. Staff will compile all feedback for City Council consideration at its March 15 regular meeting.