

JUNE 10, 2022 (UPDATED)

CITY OF MERCER ISLAND 2021/2022 TOWN CENTER PARKING STUDY: ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Community engagement—and more specifically, community collaboration—is tantamount to our work on an effective, equitable, and implementable City of Mercer Island Town Center Parking Study. The purpose of this Engagement Plan is to detail the specifics of this collaboration effort, including:

- The framework and guiding principles for our engagement strategy
- How decisions made as part of this work will affect the Mercer Island community
- How our engagement strategy will coordinate with other engagement efforts undertaken by the City
- How our engagement strategy will seek to equitably include and collaborate with typically underrepresented groups
- Key collaboration partners, their roles for the project, and how each will be engaged
- How we will measure the success of our engagement strategy

CITY OF MERCER ISLAND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

The Mercer Island Engagement Strategy will focus on the following key tenets:

- **Building Understanding and Awareness:** Craft a singular message about the project scope, purpose, and objectives, and sharing that message broadly and transparently with the public.
- **Creating a Shared Vision of Success:** Work with City staff and key stakeholders—such as decision-making bodies, the business community, and residents—to create a collective vision of what success for this project will look like and feel like.
- **Leveraging Existing Community Engagement Successes:** Build upon existing mediums where the Mercer Island community is comfortable sharing input—such as the Let’s Talk Mercer Island website—and closely coordinate with concurrent and ongoing community engagement efforts.
- **Offering Layered Options:** Acknowledge that different members of the Mercer Island community have different levels of interest, time, and ability to participate in the engagement process. Offer layered and multi-faceted opportunities so that everyone can have an equitable voice in project outcomes.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Changes to parking, access, and the curb in Town Center will impact the entire Mercer Island community to varying degrees in the following ways:

- Impacts on the ability of Mercer Island community members, including residents, customers, business and property owners, and employees to access their destinations using their desired mode of transportation
- Impacts on the ability of Mercer Island community members, including residents, customers, business and property owners, and employees to use the curb for their needs, such as conducting business, making or receiving a delivery, traveling from place to place, or recreating.
- The short-term and long-term identity, economic health and vibrancy of Town Center
- Environmental impacts and opportunities created by, or influenced by, decisions about the parking and mobility system and how options are priced and treated in the right-of-way

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Beyond these community-wide impacts, we anticipate that the following groups will be most significantly impacted by the decisions, recommendations, and actions included in the Town Center Parking Study:

- **Employers and Commercial Space Owners/Operators:** Employers and commercial space owners/operators may have a significant interest in how parking, access and curb management will influence the transportation decisions of their employees and tenants, and the convenience of the community in the eyes of potential hires and tenants.
- **Service Business Owners and Operators:** Retail and restaurant business owners and operators may have a significant interest in how parking, access and curb management will influence the transportation decisions of their customers, and how their customers may view the convenience and affordability of the Mercer Island community as a service destination.
- **Town Center Residents:** Residents of Town Center may have a significant interest in how parking, access and curb management will influence their transportation options and how they access their homes.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ONGOING ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

Planning efforts concurrently undertaken by the City with public engagement efforts that are related to and/or have bearing on the Town Center Parking Study included the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2022, and the Climate Action Plan.

- **Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update:** The [approved public participation plan](#) for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update focuses public input on economic development and housing impacts and vision. Possible links to the Town Center Parking Study might include identified parking, access, and mobility elements to, in, around, or through Town Center that impact economic vitality or housing affordability and affordability.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2022:** Public participation on the 2022 TIP focuses on comments and ideas on possible transportation infrastructure improvements. Possible links to the Town Center Parking Study might include comments on parking, connectivity, and overall access to, in, around, or through Town Center.
- **Climate Action Plan:** Future community collaboration on the Climate Action Plan will focus on feedback and support of possible strategies to meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. Possible links to the Town Center Parking Study might include climate action steps that focus on transportation demand management and reduction of emissions from single-occupancy vehicles. Of note, much of the comments from community members in the initial Community Kickoff Event (held in December 2021) focused on transportation options.

Specific action steps to align engagement related to the Town Center Parking Study with these concurrent and related planning efforts include:

- **Links on Let's Talk Mercer Island Website:** Work with City staff and project leaders to connect the Town Center Parking Study project page with related project pages through live links, quick polls, and other activities/integrations as appropriate.
- **Engagement Modules:** Work with City staff and project leaders to deploy Town Center Parking Study engagement modules at community meetings dedicated to these interrelated projects as appropriate.

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KEY ENGAGEMENT PARTNERS

We have developed a unique engagement strategy for each collaboration partner, outlined below.

CITY STAFF

ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS

City staff representing multiple departments will serve as the primary technical advisors for information-gathering, strategy development, alternatives analysis, and ultimate alternative selection. Primarily, their insight and feedback will:

- Ensure that appropriate and meaningful data is collected and assessed.
- Assist in crafting appropriate, focused, and contextual messaging to other collaboration partners.
- Spearhead coordination and alignment with other key City projects.
- Help the project team understand the comprehensive impacts of decisions across all City departments and staff levels.

MEMBERSHIP

The core City staff team includes the following members (subject to change based on staff turnover or changes to project scope and direction):

- Jessi Bon, City Manager
- Sarah Bluvus, Economic Development Coordinator
- Jeff Thomas, Interim Director, Community Planning and Development
- Matt Mornick, Director, Finance
- Mike Seifert, Operations Commander, Police Department

MEETINGS AND METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Targeted web-based meetings are the primary method of engagement for this constituency. Meetings will be scheduled over the course of the project to discuss findings, recommendations, and next steps at each critical juncture.

HEAVILY IMPACTED COMMUNITY GROUPS AND MEMBERS

ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS

The voices of community groups and individual members most significantly impacted by the study's outcomes—such as the Town Center business community, resident groups, transportation and mobility advocacy and policy groups, and others—will be elevated through targeted outreach. The goals of this targeted outreach are to:

- Create opportunity for the voices of organizations and constituencies with a close relationship to Town Center to be heard and centered.
- Help to expand the reach of the engagement process by engaging with their constituents and contacts.
- Evaluate the prospective acceptance of various strategies and decisions.

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- Build champions of the project and help to create broad support.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in this group is not exclusive; however, outreach will be targeted as described above.

MEETINGS AND METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Project Launch, Updates and Opportunities for Input:

We will build three e-mail/social media blasts at key project milestones, summarizing progress and ways to share input on Let's Talk Mercer. Let's Talk Mercer content will be updated at these three intervals.

- **Project Announcement:** Project one-pager, description of goals and objectives, and information-building and vision-building polling questions, idea generation and mapping activity on Let's Talk Mercer.
- **Direction-Building:** Update on project progress with new direction-building activities on Let's Talk Mercer.
- **Consensus-Building:** Update on project progress and announcement about project adoption and how to show support, as well as consensus-building and excitement-building polls and ideas generation on Let's Talk Mercer.

Virtual Focus Groups:

Two virtual meetings held in Summer 2022 with an open invitation, but targeted towards the key groups referenced above. Meeting content will include a project overview and a number of activities to provide direction-building feedback.

COMMUNITY-AT-LARGE

ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS

The community-at-large will be our guiding voice throughout the project, offering diverse and multiple perspectives on their experience with parking and mobility system and its programs, their acceptance of various strategies and opportunities, and their predictions for how certain changes would influence their own transportation choices. Primarily, their insight and feedback will:

- Build a broad understanding of system challenges, opportunities, and likely outcomes.
- Share their personal acceptance of and reactions to various strategies and decisions.
- Help to generate increased engagement and collaboration through social media, word of mouth, and other organic methods.

MEMBERSHIP

For the purposes of this project, the definition of "community-at-large" is inclusive of any person who engages with the Town Center parking and mobility system in any way, even indirectly.

METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Our engagement plan for this collaboration partner includes multiple opportunities to learn about the project, learn about parking and mobility in general, and provide feedback, including both ongoing 24/7 options and scheduled events.

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- **Project Awareness:** Development and issuance of a Project One-Pager with a clear and concise description of project scope, objectives, impacts, and opportunities for collaboration through City website, Let’s Talk Mercer Island website, social media channels, and other mediums as appropriate, such as at City Hall, the Mercer Island Library, and Town Center businesses.
- **Let’s Talk Mercer Island Website Engagement:** Quick polls, comment threads, and mapping activities on
 - the Let’s Talk Mercer Island website project page.
- **Engagement Modules:** A series of simple, interactive 15- and 30-minute virtual engagement modules using our Mural and Mentimeter platforms to gather feedback from integral community groups as determined by the City, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Mercer Island PTA Council, and others. We will create training materials on these modules to City staff, and present at up to three (3) meetings or sessions.

CITY LEADERSHIP

ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS

The role of City leadership is to make decisions at key milestone points over the duration of the project, using the technical analysis of the project team and the input of our core collaboration partners to guide them. Their insight, feedback, and direction will also:

- Align project outcomes with broader community goals, objectives, policies, and constraints.
- Represent the broad, future-forward interests of the Mercer Island community.

MEMBERSHIP

The Mercer Island City Council will serve as the primary decision-making body involved in the project. Other bodies, such as the Planning Commission and Design Commission, may be included at various intervals over the project’s duration.

MEETINGS AND METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Targeted web-based meetings/work sessions are the primary method of engagement for this constituency. The following meetings are scheduled over the duration of the project (where dates are tentative, only the month is listed):

July 2022: City Council work session to discuss key findings from to-date analysis and engagement from the Project Advisory Committee and general public, and workshop initial recommendations.

October 2022: Presentation to City Council focused on final recommendations and discussion of implementation and action steps.

MEASURING SUCCESS

A successful engagement plan is essential to effective, community-supported, and sustainable strategies for the parking, access, and mobility in Town Center. Throughout the project duration, we must be able to draw a clear line between the input we collect from our collaboration partners and the strategies developed and decisions made. Our engagement efforts will be evaluated on an ongoing basis in the following ways:

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- **Alignment of feedback with stated purpose of engagement:** We will compare contributions from our collaboration partners with the stated purpose of engagement for each constituency. If a lack of alignment is noted, we will add new engagement methods, reach out to new collaborators, or offer different prompts for participants to generate additional feedback and input. For example, if the community is heavily focused on traffic and congestion, we will tailor prompts to focus more on permit parking experiences, paid parking experiences, or mobility experiences using modes outside of the single- occupancy vehicle.
- **Analytics:** Walker will work with City staff to evaluate both volume and demographics of participants in online opportunities for engagement on a monthly basis and develop recommendations for improving participation intensity and equity if needed.

Evaluations in these areas will be regularly discussed with the project management team, comprising both consultant staff and core City staff.

PROJECT CLOSEOUT

When the project is finished, collaborators must have a clear understanding of how their efforts shaped outcomes. They should also have time and space to reflect on the process and help improve and tailor future engagement processes. We will conduct the following actions at and as part of project close out:

- **Final Report Language:** The final report will not only include a section summarizing public input; it will also include call-outs throughout the document drawing the connections between recommendations and strategies chosen and the input supporting those recommendations and strategies. In this way, readers who participated in the process can visualize the impact of their voices on the final decisions.
- **Post-Project Thank you and Survey:** We will reach out to collaborators to thank them for their time and energy. We will also develop a short (3-5 question) survey asking participants to share their opinion of the engagement process and offer suggestions for improvement.