

From: [Andrea Larson](#)
To: "Jim Gregson"
Cc: [Salim Nice](#); [Jake Jacobson](#); [Robin Proebsting](#)
Subject: RE: Town Center
Date: Friday, February 12, 2021 4:03:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Thank you Mr. Gregson. This has been received. Staff will included written comments as part of the staff report and transmitted to the Design Commission that way.

Kind Regards,

[Andrea Larson](#)

Senior Administrative Assistant
City of Mercer Island – Community Planning & Development
206.275.7791 | mercerisland.gov/cpd

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Community Planning and Development has modified our operations. City Hall and the Permit Center are closed to the public. There is no “walk in” permit service; staff are working remotely and services are being continued via remote operations. More information is available on the City’s website: mercerisland.gov/cpd. Please contact us by phone for general customer support at 206-275-7626.

Notice: Emails and attachments may be subject to disclosure pursuant to the Public Records Act (chapter 42.56 RCW)

From: Jim Gregson <jcgregson@psfinc.com>
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2021 3:55 PM
To: Andrea Larson <Andrea.Larson@mercergov.org>
Cc: Salim Nice <salim.nice@mercergov.org>; Jake Jacobson <jake.jacobson@mercergov.org>
Subject: Town Center

Andrea,

I will now be out of town on the 24th so am unable to attend the Town Center meeting. Is it possible to have something read on the record?

If so, please include the following in the record:

My family and I have lived on the island for 12 years. We have two children in the public school system. We are committed to the community.

We have multiple thoughts regarding the redevelopment of the downtown.

1. Mixed residential and commercial does not work. Favorite spots on MI included the old True Value, the old Tullys, the old Freshy’s market, Island Books, Robertos, Baskin and Robbins. In fact Freshy’s and The Islander are two good examples of popular spots that moved to mixed

use and saw their business change overnight. Mio Posto is successful in spite of their terrible parking garage, due to the fact that finding parking for a two hour stay seems worth it, but not to pop in for a piece of fish for dinner. People still drive, people still need to park cars, and people don't frequent small retail if it is inconvenient. We cannot expect small businesses to thrive here if people cannot find reasonable parking. I am not sad to lose Menchies, as parking across the street at Walgreens was a lousy but the easiest option. I am expressing this in very specific examples because this is the everyday impact- it doesn't fit into a spreadsheet.

2. While there is agreement that King Insurance is an eyesore, and should be re-developed, the owner, as he attested at a council meeting 3 or 4 years ago, is looking to maximize his investment. That is a reasonable position for him to take, but investing in real estate comes with risks. Cities have every right to change development rules, for any number of reasons including economic impact, environmental impact, public opinion even. The rules change over time, and sitting on a derelict property in order to hit a home run is risky. In this case, the public does not want another mega block project, with a failed "mixed use" concept.
3. The argument that small businesses can't afford rent on MI is directly related to speculators buying or holding property in hopes of developing or selling at the peak of the market. If developers are expecting to build 4 or 5 story apartments and condos, the property gains enormous value. If the city elects to keep the downtown core restricted in size and scope of projects, the property value will reflect that, which in turn will be reflected in rents. Put differently, as a homeowner, my property value is directly impacted by what I can and cannot do on my property. We cannot subdivide and build two houses on our lot, even though it would result in a financial windfall for us. Taking this argument a step further, if the city determined that we had environmental, steep slope, hydrology, or other issues that made changing the footprint in any way, a problem, we would not be allowed to make changes to the property at all, even though we could have when we bought the property. This is the risk of speculative development. If the investors were unable to build 4 and 5 story buildings, the property value would decrease, and the rents would reflect that.
4. There are many other issues with increased density- schools, traffic, utilities, parking- that others will I am sure address. Those are concerns of ours as well.

Please prevent the massive redevelopment of the mega block, and restrict the developers in size and scope of the project. If completed, it would be generations before it could be undone. Look no further than the Farmers Life Insurance building to see what experimental development looks like and the long term consequences of buildings that don't fit.

Thank you.

Jim

James C. Gregson, CEBS

Principal, Account Executive

PARKER, SMITH & FEEK

Direct: 425-709-3744 | Cell: 206-446-8739

Toll Free: 800-457-0220 | Fax: 425-709-7460

e: jcgregson@psfinc.com

2233 112th Avenue NE, Bellevue, WA 98004

[CLICK HERE](#) to securely send me an attachment.

www.psfinc.com [Read our latest articles](#)

The information transmitted is intended only for the person or entity to which it was originally addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged material. Any review, retransmission, dissemination or other use of, or taking of any action in reliance upon, this information by persons or entities other than the intended recipient is prohibited. If you received this in error, please contact the sender and delete the material from any computer.

California License Number 0155652