

Robin Proebsting

From: Evan Maxim
Sent: Friday, February 7, 2020 12:53 PM
To: Nicole Gaudette
Cc: Mona Davis; Alison Van Gorp
Subject: FW: Xing Hua development (formerly King property)

FYI –

Regards,

Evan Maxim

Director

City of Mercer Island - Community Planning & Development

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— Planning. Period. —

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From: Ali Spietz <Ali.Spietz@mercergov.org>
Sent: Friday, February 7, 2020 11:17 AM
To: Jessi Bon <jessi.bon@mercergov.org>; Evan Maxim <evan.maxim@mercergov.org>
Subject: FW: Xing Hua development (formerly King property)

FYI

Allison (Ali) Spietz

Chief of Administration

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From: Victor Raisys <victor@mercerislandbooks.com>
Sent: Friday, February 7, 2020 10:29 AM
To: Council <council@mercergov.org>; Lisa Anderl <lisa.anderl@mercergov.org>; Jake Jacobson <jake.jacobson@mercergov.org>; Salim Nice <salim.nice@mercergov.org>; Craig Reynolds <craig.reynolds@mercergov.org>; David Rosenbaum <david.rosenbaum@mercergov.org>; Wendy Weiker <Wendy.Weiker@mercergov.org>; Benson Wong <Benson.Wong@mercergov.org>
Cc: Laurie Raisys <laurie@mercerislandbooks.com>
Subject: Xing Hua development (formerly King property)

Mercer Island City Council -

I'm extremely disappointed in the plans for the Xing Hua development. I'm disappointed not only in the plans themselves (which I will detail below) but also in the way this has been rolled out by the city.

Nearly two weeks ago, I sat through the Saturday session of your annual planning meeting. I left the meeting hopeful that the city was finally on the right track. You prioritized a review of town center codes, a review of town center parking, development of an economic development plan and an economic development resource - this was all great

news albeit very short lived. Shortly after this meeting, the city rolled out plans for the Xing Hua development which will exacerbate our Town Center parking issue and further minimizes the already diminished retail space in the Town Center. To call this move by the city tone deaf is a massive understatement. A few months ago, our interim city manager told the previous city council the city/city council have a trust issue. With proposals like this one, the city's trust issue is about to get a whole lot worse.

Overall, one of the more stunning things that I found as I reviewed the proposal was there were two separate documents devoted exclusively to trees (Arborist Report, 17 pages and Mercer Island Tree Inventory, 2 pages) and the impact of the development project on trees. There was no analysis done on the impact of the development project to retail or the retail vibrancy of the Town Center. There was a single page devoted to parking in the traffic impact analysis (basically a description of how the parking was calculated). So, 19 pages of analysis on trees, 1 page of analysis on parking and 0 pages of analysis on retail, retail vibrancy and economic impact.

I'm aware that there will be a public input process and I will provide the input below at the appropriate time (and I will make sure others do as well - see my trust comments above). However, my question to you is how was this even submitted for public review when the plans don't follow what has been laid out in the current comp plan (as flawed as that may be). This is not a design commission issue - this is a city council issue. There is a disconnect between the actions of the city council and the actions of the city staff. Additionally, city staff doesn't seem to be following the guidelines set in the current comp plan. This is an extremely broken process and this needs to be fixed by the city manager with strong guidance from the city council.

Here are the issues:

- Issue #1 - retail frontage: I'm sure that all of you are familiar with the map of the redrawn retail core (the crayon/colored marker map) that is in the current comp plan amendment. This development falls within the redrawn retail core. The redrawn retail core map calls for retail frontage on 78th, 77th and 29th. This development seems to have most of the retail frontage on 78th. Where is the retail frontage on 29th and 77th? As a reminder, the redrawn retail core map calls for retail frontage on all three street facing sides of this development. It does not call for a smattering of retail around the building
- Issue #2 - retail space: The Xing Hua development is replacing 19,136 square feet of current retail space (Mud Bay + former King property/Looks pharmacy) with 10,742 square feet of retail space, a 43% reduction of retail space. Mic drop #1. Let me put that into perspective for you, 10,742 square feet of retail space is approximately 2.5 Island Books. So, in an already reduced retail core, we are reducing retail even further. So, in a mega-block development in one of the largest parcels in Town Center, which runs from the Jackson Shell to the McDonalds and runs street to street from QFC to New Seasons, we will have retail space that is equivalent to 2.5 Island Books. Mic drop #2. But wait! It gets worse (much worse). Keep in mind that the previous city council drew 69,048 square feet of retail space out of the town center. Where will all this retail relocate to? Certainly not the Xing Hua development. So with the elimination of another 8394 square feet of retail, the total retail square footage lost on your watch and the previous council's watch is 77,442 square feet - that is your legacy.
- Issue #3 - parking: we currently have a major parking issue in the Town Center. It is unclear to me why, in that environment, the city would put forth a development proposal with inadequate parking. The development call for 201 parking spaces, 166 or 168 (the documents are inconsistent in what the actual number is) parking spaces for residential, and 35 parking spaces for retail. According to the current comp plan, the requirement for residential parking is 1 - 1.4 parking spaces per unit. So, in a Town Center plagued with parking issues, the bare minimum is being proposed for residential parking for this development. According to the comp plan, the requirement for retail parking is 2-3 per 1000 square feet of retail so it would appear that there is adequate retail parking. HOWEVER, see my comments above regarding inadequate retail space. ALSO, there is enough parking for retail only if the space is occupied strictly by retail. If you look at other properties in the Town Center, all spaces (without exception) have some sort of food establishment (requirement in the comp plan is 5-10 spots per 1000 square feet for restaurant/deli/bakery) and in fact three food establishments are being displaced with this development. In addition, most properties in the Town Center also include some sort of services in their mix (requirement in the comp plan is 3-5 spots per 1000 square feet for financial, services,

health). Therefore parking even with the reduced retail footprint being proposed is woefully inadequate for this development

So, diminished retail in an already diminished retail core combined with an exacerbated parking problem in the Town Center. What could possibly go wrong?

Victor Raisys
co-owner, Island Books