

Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan  
Station Subarea Plan

## Land Use

### GOALS AND POLICIES

#### Station Area Planning Community Engagement

- Goal 1:** The Station Area has strong regulatory standards that balance community priorities identified during the planning process.
- 1.1 In Phase 2, work with neighborhoods within the Station Area to determine subdistrict boundaries.
  - 1.2 In Phase 2, develop a coherent Station Area vision building off the Town Center vision that reflects the needs and aspirations of community members living and working within the Station Area boundary.
  - 1.3 In Phase 2, work with Station Area residents and landowners to calibrate density distribution and land use mix across subdistricts.

#### Encouraging Transit-Oriented Development

- Goal 2:** The Station area includes a mixture of mixed-use and residential uses at a range of densities that support regional transit goals, and local housing targets in compliance with RCW 36.70A.020(4) and RCW 36.70A.840.
- 2.1 Beginning in Phase 1 and completing in Phase 2, focus additional development capacity in the Town Center to the extent possible.
  - 2.2 During Phase 2, develop a land use strategy for neighborhoods within the Station Area that balances upzoning with proximity to regional transit, current neighborhood configuration, topography, environmental constraints, and public input.

#### Supporting Economic Development

- Goal 3:** Capitalize on regional transit investments to advance economic development outcomes in Town Center and accommodate the majority of Mercer Island's employment growth target within the Station Area.
- 3.1 Maintain a diversity of Town Center land uses ***[Previously LU 6.2].***
  - 3.2 Support economic growth that accommodates Mercer Island's share of the regional employment growth target of 1,300 new jobs from 2024—2040 by maintaining adequate zoning capacity, infrastructure, and supportive economic development policies ***[Previously LU 6.3].***
  - 3.3 Create a healthy and safe economic environment where Town Center businesses can serve the needs of Mercer Island residents and ~~draw upon broader retail and commercial market areas~~ benefit from off-island consumers connected by regional public transit ***[Previously LU 6.4].***

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- 3.4 In Phase 2, identify potential areas to locate commercial and mixed-use development to compliment residential uses within the Station Area district, and create strong connections to Town Center.

**Managing parking demand**

**Goal 4:** Station Area public parking management minimizes conflicts between residents, transit riders, and local business access.

- 4.1 In Phase 2, develop a local empirical parking study to right-size parking requirements for the Station Area.
- 4.2 In Phase 2, develop streetscape standards and public improvement requirements that balance increased street parking demand with safe non-motorized travel.

**Fine-Grained Connections and Destinations**

**Goal 5:** Create a mixed-use Town Center with pedestrian scale and connections to form a dense and walkable node serving the Station Area and Island-at-large *[Previously LU Goal 1]*.

- 5.1 Invest in a walkable mixed-use core adjacent to a regional transit facility with sufficient size and intensity to produce a multi-service destination *[Previously LU 1.1]*.
- 5.2 Street-level retail, office, and service uses should reinforce the pedestrian-oriented circulation system with amenities, tree-lined streetscapes, wide sidewalks, storefronts with canopies, and cross-block connections that make it easy to walk around and connect to regional transit facilities *[Previously LU 1.2]*.
- 5.3 During Phase 2, consider street frontage improvement standards in the broader Station Area.
- 5.4 Strengthen walkable connections to community facilities and institutions surrounding the Station Area.

**Land Use Pattern**

~~Goal 1-Goal 6: Create a policy and regulatory structure that will result in~~ Facilitate diverse uses that meet Islanders' daily needs and help create a vibrant, healthy Town Center serving as the City's business, social, cultural, and entertainment center *[Previously LU Goal 2]*.

~~5-56.1~~ Use a variety of creative approaches to organize various land uses, building types, and heights in different portions of the Station Area ~~Town Center~~ *[Previously LU 2.1]*.

~~5-66.2~~ Maintain a minimum commercial square footage in the Town Center to preserve the quantity of commercial space in recent developments as new development occurs, with a specific focus on maintaining the current number of large grocery stores to ensure adequate access to food for residents *[Previously LU 2.2]*.

~~6.3~~ Encourage retail street frontages ~~should be the area~~ where the majority of retail activity is focused. Retail shops and restaurants should be the dominant use, with personal services also encouraged to a more limited extent *[Previously LU 2.3]*.

~~5-76.4~~ In Phase 2, complete an existing conditions analysis to inform appropriate land use mix within the Station Area.

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**Built Environment**

~~Goal 2: Goal 7:~~ Have a mixture of building types, styles, and ages that reflects the evolution of the Town Center, and the Station Area over time, with human-scaled buildings, varied height, setbacks and step-backs, and attractive facades **[Previously LU Goal 3]**.

~~5.8~~ Buildings taller than two stories may be permitted if appropriate public amenities and enhanced design features are provided **[Previously LU 3.1]**.

~~5.9~~ Locate taller buildings on the north end of the Town Center and step down building height through the center to lower heights on the south end, bordering Mercedale Park **[Previously LU 3.2]**.

~~5.10~~ Calculate building height on sloping sites by measuring from the lowest point on that side of a building **[Previously LU 3.3]**.

~~2.17.1~~ Mitigate the "canyon" effect of straight building facades along streets through the use of upper floor step-backs, façade articulation, and similar techniques, except when doing so conflicts. Use frontage design techniques to encourage distinct, high-quality design while balancing with other priorities such as providing affordable housing or encouraging low carbon development **[Previously LU 3.4]**.

~~2.2~~ Buildings on larger parcels or with longer frontage should provide more variation of the building face to allow for more light and create the appearance of smaller scale, more organic, village-like development pattern. Building mass and long frontages resulting from a single user should be broken up by techniques such as creating a series of smaller buildings (like Island Square), providing public pedestrian connections within and through a parcel, and use of different but consistent architectural styles to create smaller building patterns **[Previously LU 3.5]**.

~~2.37.2~~ Building facades should provide visual interest to pedestrians. Street-level windows, building setbacks, on-street entrances, landscaping, and articulated walls should be encouraged **[Previously LU 3.6]**.

~~5.117.3~~ Review how the average daylight plane, major site features, and major façade modulation requirements impact the maximum allowed floor area ratio during Station Subarea Plan Phase 2.

~~Goal 3: Goal 8:~~ Allow The Station Area has a variety of housing forms for serving all life stages, including townhomes, apartments, and live-work units that are attractive to families, singles, and seniors at a range of price points consistent with the goals and policies in the Housing Element **[Previously LU Goal 4]**.

~~3.18.1~~ Land uses and architectural standards should provide for the development of a variety of housing types, sizes, and styles **[Previously LU 4.1]**.

~~3.2~~ Allow development of low-rise multifamily housing in the Town Center Multifamily (TCMF) subareas of the Town Center **[Previously LU 4.2]**.

~~3.38.2~~ Allow/Facilitate the development of affordable housing within the Station Area Town Center **[Previously LU 4.3]**.

~~3.48.3~~ Allow the development of accessible and visitable housing within the Town Center Station Area **[Previously LU 4.4]**.

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~~3.58.4~~ Allow options for ownership housing within the ~~Town Center~~ Station Area *[Previously LU 4.5]*.

### Public Realm

~~Goal 6: Goal 9:~~ Have A variety of inviting, accessible outdoor spaces ~~with~~ provide seating, greenery, water features, and art ~~that~~ offer settings for outdoor entertainment and special events as well as for quiet contemplation *[Previously LU Goal 5]*.

~~6.19.1~~ Outdoor public spaces of various sizes in the ~~Town Center~~ Station Area are important and should be encouraged *[Previously LU 5.1]*.

~~6.29.2~~ Encourage the provision of on-site open space in private developments. This can include incentives, allowing development agreements, and as an alternative to land dedication. In addition, encourage the aggregation of smaller open spaces between parcels to create a more substantial open space *[Previously LU 5.2]*.

Investigate potential locations and funding sources for the development (and acquisition if needed) of one or more significant public open space(s) that can anchor the Town Center's character and redevelopment. Identified "opportunity sites" are shown in

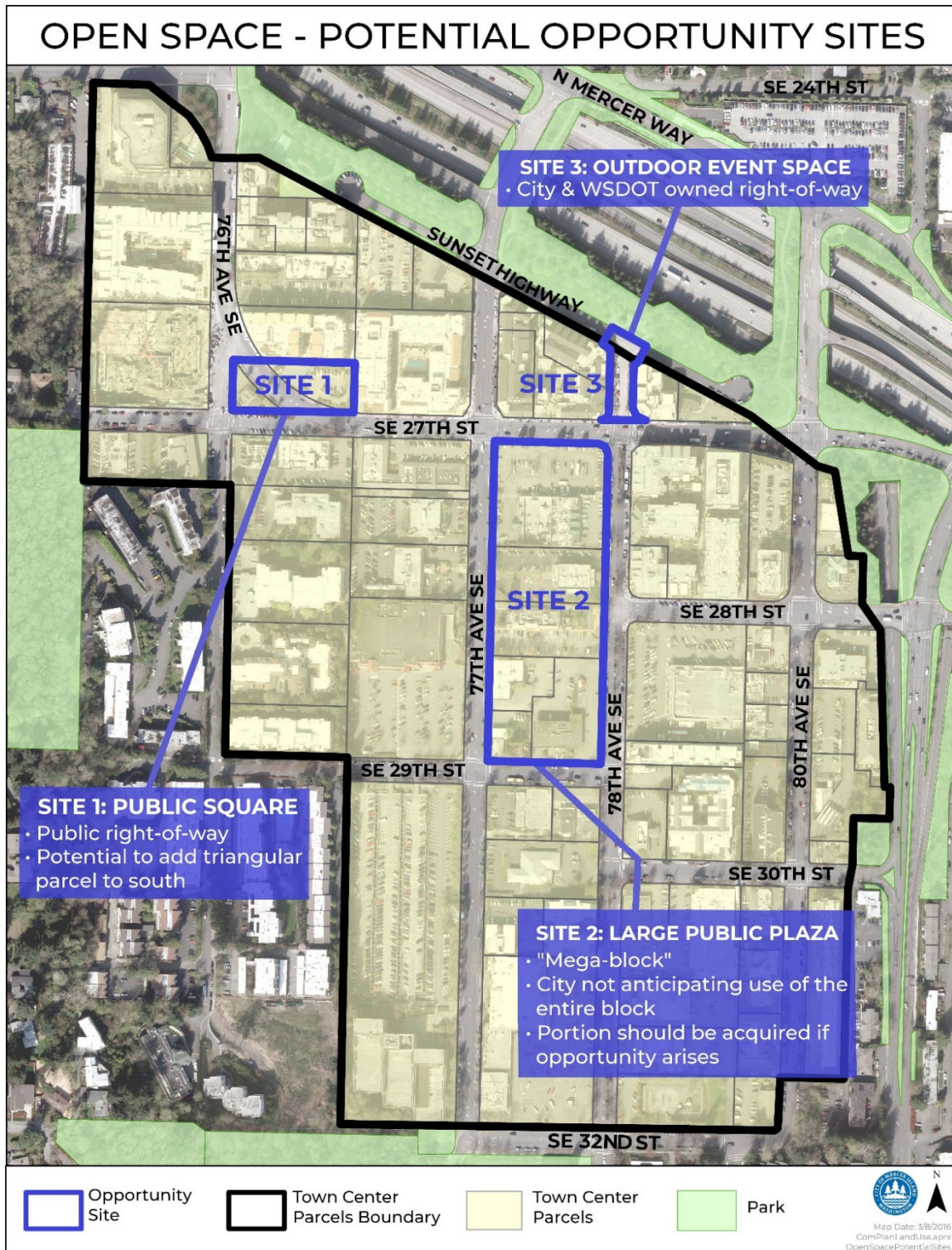
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- ~~6.39.3~~ ~~Figure 1~~ ~~Figure 10~~ ~~Figure TC-2~~ and described below. These opportunity sites should not preclude the identification of other sites should new opportunities or circumstances arise **[Previously LU 5.3]**.
- ~~6.49.4~~ In Phase 2, engage neighborhood residents and workers within the Station Area to identify critical connections to adjacent open space such as Luther Burbank Park and nearby recreational facilities to ensure access to existing community resources.
- ~~6.59.5~~ In Phase 2, work with property owners to identify additional “opportunity sites” for public open space to ensure that increased residential density is accompanied by open space investment.
- ~~6.69.6~~ Evaluate design standards to ensure private commercial, mixed-use, and residential development contributes accessible outdoor amenity space.

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FIGURE 140 OPEN SPACE – POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY SITES



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## Housing

### GOALS AND POLICIES

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Goal 1:** Costs of development for multifamily housing, including income-restricted affordable housing are minimized in alignment with Housing Goal 2.
- 1.1 In Phase 2, explore affordable housing opportunities on surplus public property in collaboration with community members and the development community.
  - 1.2 In Phase 2, implement the Multifamily tax exemption in the Station Area.
  - 1.3 In Phase 2, implement a 50% reduction in impact fees collected for system improvements of public streets, roads, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities for developments claiming the Multifamily tax exemption in the Station Area.
- Goal 2:** A well-functioning inclusionary zoning program results in abundant affordable housing in new multifamily and mixed-use developments in alignment with the Housing Element.
- 2.1 In Phase 1, establish an inclusionary zoning program within the Town Center calibrated to regional development feasibility and market demand.
  - 2.2 Pair inclusionary zoning requirements with a fee-in-lieu program to provide flexible options for providing affordable housing units.
  - 2.3 In Phase 2, expand the inclusionary zoning program to the full Station Area.
- Goal 3:** New and enhanced affordable housing partnerships enable significant affordable housing development within walking distance of the transit station.
- 3.1 Identify potential land-holding partners interested in developing affordable housing within the Station Area such as nonprofits and religious organizations.
  - 3.2 Explore public-private partnerships to creatively finance and construct affordable housing.
- Goal 4:** Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) is well-preserved and supported within the Station Area.
- 4.1 In alignment with Housing policy 4.1, inventory and protect existing naturally occurring affordable housing.

#### TRANSIT-ORIENTED AND WORKFORCE HOUSING

- Goal 5:** Higher density developments exist within walking distance of the transit station, limiting additional demand for residential parking and road space, while supporting the city's residential growth targets.
- 5.1 Increase allowed densities in Town Center to maximize the number of residents who can walk to existing community businesses and services, and access regional employment centers via transit.
  - 5.2 Increase allowed densities in the Town Center and the adjacent TCMF-6 multifamily district.

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- 5.3 In Phase 2, initiate planning efforts in neighborhoods within the Station Area to balance additional required residential density, and support diverse workforce housing.

### ANTI DISPLACEMENT

**Goal 6:** The City understands displacement risk throughout the Station Area and supports residents' efforts to remain in their neighborhoods.

- 6.1 During Phase 1, establish anti-displacement measures in the areas where development capacity is increased.
- 6.2 During phase 2, inventory deed-restricted and naturally occurring affordable housing units within the Station Area, identifying units at high risk of redevelopment and expiration timelines for affordability covenants.
- 6.3 Work with affordable housing providers to preserve existing affordable housing.
- 6.4 During Phase 2, support community efforts for lower-cost homeownership like limited-equity homeownership models, community land trusts, and rent-to-own programs.

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## Economic Development

### GOALS AND POLICIES

#### Marketing Mercer Island

- Goal 1:** The Town Center commercial area has a cohesive brand established by marketing efforts informed by public input and the policies of this element *[Previously ED 2]*.
- 1.1 Develop and promote a theme and vision to create a unique and appealing identity for the Town Center directed at drawing more residents and visitors to Mercer Island *[Previously ED 2.1]*.
  - 1.2 Develop and implement a cohesive visual brand that reflects the island's natural beauty and upscale yet welcoming character, including a logo, color scheme, and typography *[Previously ED 2.2]*.

#### Business Retention and Attraction

- Goal 2:** Mercer Island's Town Center is a vibrant destination attracting new businesses and supporting the growth of existing businesses *[Previously ED 3]*.
- 2.1 Attract more commercial office employers to the City *[Previously ED 3.1]*.
  - 2.2 Develop strategies to increase the percentage of workers living and working on Mercer Island focused within the Station Area *[Previously ED 3.2]*.
  - 2.3 Attract a diverse mix of businesses that complement existing offerings and fill market gaps, focusing on unique, locally owned establishments *[Previously ED 3.3]*.
  - 2.4 Create a comprehensive "best practices" section on the City website detailing steps for business setup at city, state, and county levels *[Previously ED 3.4]*.
  - 2.5 Streamline and simplify the process for new business setup, making it more intuitive and user-friendly *[Previously ED 3.5]*.
  - 2.6 Support anti-displacement efforts for businesses within the Station Area.
  - 2.7 During Phase 2, update development standards to support small, affordable commercial space in new buildings.













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## Implementation Program









### PHASE 2 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS






Mercer Island City Council will need to set the scope, schedule, and budget for Phase 2. The implementation actions below sketch out key actions for City Leadership to consider in determining the Phase 2 scope, with a focus on RCW 36.70A.8430 compliance, providing multiple community engagement opportunities, and determining future capital facilities and transportation investments. Ultimately, this Station Subarea Plan will be implemented over the 20-year planning horizon and additional actions will be developed and prioritized by City Council after Phase 2.

### PHASE 2 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Enabling Policy	Action Type	Action #	Action Description
LU 1.1, 1.2		1	Create a public engagement plan outlining engagement activities in Phase 2.
LU 1.1		2	Engage Station Area residents to establish Station Area subdistricts.
LU 1.2		3	Engage Station Area residents to develop a Station Area vision, and subdistrict visions.
LU 4.1		4	Conduct a parking study to identify potential safety concerns in the Station Area.
LU 2.2		5	Conduct a capacity analysis for new residential and employment densities across the Station Area.
H 1.1		6	Identify surplus public property for affordable housing development.
LU 2.2 CF		7	Identify utility capacity constraints.
LU 2.2 T		8	Identify transportation capacity constraints.
LU 3.4 ED 2.3		9	Evaluate opportunities for expanded commercial activity beyond Town Center.
LU 6.1, 6.4		10	Update Land Use goals and policies to reflect priorities defined by station visioning.
H 1.1, 5.3, 6.3		11	Update Housing goals and policies to reflect priorities defined by station visioning.
ED 1.1, 2.2		12	Update Economic Development goals and policies to reflect priorities defined by station visioning.

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<b>LU 2.2, 3.4</b>		13	Engage Station Area residents on density distribution and land use mix across subdistricts.
<b>LU 5.4 T</b>		14	Work with Station Area residents and landowners to identify and enhance multimodal connections to adjacent open spaces and community institutions.
<b>LU 9.3, 8.2, 8.3 H 1.1, 3.1, 3.2 ED 1.2, 2.3, 2.7</b>		15	Identify priority community development projects to support anticipated population growth.
<b>LU 2.2, 6.4, 7.4</b>		16	Update development code to regulate using FAR rather than height in conformance with HB 1491. Right size lot coverage, lot size, setbacks and other dimensional standards that influence building mass. Tailor by subdistrict.
<b>LU 4.2, 5.3, 7.1</b>		17	Introduce frontage standards.
<b>H 1.2, 1.3</b>		18	Implement the Multifamily Tax Exemption and associated impact fee reductions for in the Station Area.
<b>LU 2.2, 9.3 CF</b>		19	Update Capital Improvement Plan to reflect increased capacity demands for the Station Area.
<b>LU 2.2, 9.3 T</b>		20	Update Transportation Improvement Plan to reflect increased capacity demands for the Station Area.

	Public Engagement
	Evaluation & Analysis
	Policy Development
	Regulatory Update
	Infrastructure Investment