

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: __Tom Acker_____

Comments on the Executive Summary:

I read the report and feel there is no way to address the issues the report without creating another report. I'd prefer a conversation so I can adequately explain the process. Overall there were issues with:

- The makeup of the committee
- The consultant that was chosen & his lack of interest in incorporating public and stakeholder feedback
- The facilitation
- Lack of follow through when data was requested.
- Inaccurate representations and conclusions made during the workshops.
- Making decisions behind the scenes (i.e. the meeting where they arbitrarily up zoned and downzoned areas)
- The lack of accurately assimilating data and incorporating it into the findings
- No definition of codes or significant public amenities were agreed to and oftentimes seemed minimized.

I appreciate the staff's time working on this project, but it was not well managed and did not represent the communities interests. I'd be happy to give more descriptions of what went right/wrong in an interview with Karen Reed.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements
- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards
- Building Height Limits
- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections
- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

Other comments?

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

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Hi Scott and Alison,
Sorry this is a little late.
Here are some comments that I hope will be helpful.

Vision

I think there is still some confusion in the community about the vision that is trying to be achieved for the Town Center and for the kinds of amenities desired. It would be most helpful if there is a way to clarify the vision. A = simple diagram of the Town Center would be helpful and consistent with earlier such diagrams, i.e. transit at the north, 78th as primary pedestrian spine, Mercerdale as big back yard and community culture.

Streets

The street standards in the report are good. Unless street improvements are a City-funded project you might consider more detailed street designs so that incremental development is done to a desired plan that can be built out over time.

Private Development Standards

There was a lot of discussion about density. In passionate discussions of this kind, it is helpful to peel back what people are concerned about and try to be as factual and rational as possible, so that people can better understand the range of what is actually possible for development in Town Center. I think porosity at the ground level is really important.

A couple of suggestions

In the streetscape, it can be effective to pull landscape out toward the lanes to bring more canopy into the street. For example, every fifth angles parking space could have a street tree. See photo from South Lake Union. This is the build-out of the Terry Avenue North Master Plan which considered "clusters" of street uses (parking, open space, bike racks, etc) rather than the street as a simple extrusion.

<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/TerryAveFinal4-5-05.pdf>

When writing the regulations, pay careful attention to the issue of residential uses at street level. The graphic on page 24 looks like at grade residential with some landscape at the windows. There are lots of ways to do this in a way that offers more at the street and creates good units.

Consider a public realm plan.

Good luck, and thanks for all the hard work you have put into the Town Center. This isn't easy!

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Lesley Bain, FAIA, APA
Principal

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TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: ___Colin Brandt_____

Comments on the Executive Summary:

I think there is a general miss on the “layer cake” language – people want setback for sure, but they DON’T want a layer cake effect – facade modulation in conjunction with setbacks is key.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Looks good to me

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Looks good to me

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

See above note about “layer cake”

It feels like the issue of setbacks is under represented in the report....

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements

These feel like the logical conclusions about where the visioning process got to

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards

These feel like the logical conclusions about where the visioning process got to

- Building Height Limits

I think there was general consensus at the very end of the stakeholder process that the Island Books site be 3 stories and not 4 stories.

I think the diagram about building heights on sloping lots is great and gets right after the stakeholder’s concerns.

- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

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- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

I don't believe the "additional parking" element is quite right. My understanding from the group is that town center parking for day to day use is that much of an issue, especially as development with walk-off parking takes place and street parking is extended. I think the "additional parking" element of the stakeholder discussions was more about commuter parking and where it should go.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

Very helpful

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

It is implied that the traffic study, connections to transit, and retail strategy will take place soon and be tied to the development code update. Is that the intention? I don't think so.....

Other comments?

As a TCLG member, I'd like to see the raw data you get back from the stakeholders. It will help me advocate for them better, and support the credibility of the process with the public going forward.

I think another stakeholder meeting is necessary, to both show them what they have accomplished to date, give them a chance to publically engage one another one more time, and to reset the boundaries of their involvement going forward.

Generally speaking, I think this pretty well captures what came out of the stakeholder discussions. It does move the process forward, which I appreciate, though I think some are going to feel like that is premature – for example, the subject of what is mandatory vs. what is optional for height bonuses was covered as the process was unraveling and people were focused on other things. Not that what is in the report is inaccurate. I'll be curious to see what the stakeholders have to say on that subject.

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

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NAME: Don Cohen

Comments on the Executive Summary:

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements
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TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

Other comments?

There is a great deal of material presented, analyzed, and synthesized in the draft, which I appreciate. My only comment is not on specifics, and is not about what IS contained in the draft, as opposed to what is NOT in it very much.

On page 4, the draft states that the conclusions of the draft report were “generally supported” by the Stakeholder Group. Although this seems accurate, the City may want to consider summarizing a few of the issues upon which there was NOT unanimity of opinion. The draft does this a little on a few points on page 44 in stating that important issues raised by some community members are still to be analyzed, noting a traffic study, connections to transit, and a retail study.

Unless I missed it earlier in the draft, at some point in it, if you feel it is accurate and appropriate, you might consider stating something like the following [no pride of authorship on this.....]: “Although the Report’s conclusions were generally supported by the Stakeholder Group, not all of the views or their underpinnings were unanimous. Thus, for example, there were some stakeholders who expressed the preference not to have any more buildings in the Town Center higher than 2 stories at all, and some who opposed increasing Town Center density to any significant extent, and some who felt that some of the proposals focused more on regional population and issues rather than on Mercer Island itself.”

Whether or not I personally agree with any of these viewpoints, I feel it would more fully present the opinions expressed to provide additional information on some of the key points on which there was not unanimous agreement. Again, though, I do not disagree that the draft presents proposals that were generally supported by the Stakeholder Group.

Thanks for the continuing effort.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

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Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

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NAME: Bart Dawson

Comments on the Executive Summary:

I understand that the purpose of the report is to provide a status report of the planning work accomplished through June 16 (the date of the last public meeting). It is a mistake to use the term “work to date.” Please do not try to mislead people into thinking that more Town Center planning work was accomplished after mid-June.

On page 4 there is a list after the words “seek the following outcomes” that is not reflected in the body of the report. An “executive summary” should only include what is in the body of the report, and not add new information. Just repeat an unembellished the draft vision statement found on page 11. I think the vision statement is significant enough to be included in the Executive Summary, so please just use the vision statement itself.

I am disturbed that there is no mention of the much discussed “affordable retail,” or how the schedule constraints that shaped the planning process.

The list of work to be completed should be statements with bullets (to make the incomplete more visible. My suggestions for remaining work to support code revisions is to include a subset of the significant tasks from the following list (taken from Section 6):

- Drawing(s) and sketches of the physical concepts for Town Center - where the public plazas are envisioned, building massing, streets and pedestrian ways and connectors, and landscaping and trees.
- Strategy to provide “ample parking” as well as code requirements for parking spaces
- Detailed definitions of the elective incentives for additional building height, including how financial “contributions to Town Center improvements” would be established and managed.
- Should the City continue to rely exclusively on market incentives and public-private partnerships to deliver the kind of meaningful civic spaces called for in the original code, or take a more direct, proactive approach to identifying and acquiring property for that purpose?
- Consider for a BID (Business Improvement District) or similar self-funded entity dedicated to promoting and supporting downtown business.
- Recommendations for preferred building heights
- Public plaza design standards
- Street design standards
- Landscaping design standards
- Develop code language
- Prepare illustrations to support the design code
- Technical reports to support updating the Comprehensive Plan
- Design Commission and Planning Commission reviews and approvals
- City Council adoption of updated Town Center Development Code
- How to preserve gasoline stations on Mercer Island.
- How to accommodate short term parking for service deliveries and moving vans.

I do not recall that the Stakeholders were given a document with, or a reference to, the “City Council

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

identified following goals/areas,” or the added “three additional goals/areas.” Who developed the words? When? Where?

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

“The primary purpose of this interim report is to provide Mercer Island residents with a summary of the *status results* of the community engagement process ...”

On page 7 please add a blank line just after the internet hyperlink (...Strategy.pdf.) to signify a slightly new subject.

As mentioned in the discussion of Phase 2 (page 7) I did not find a place on the city website that includes the list of “major objectives identified by the Council were for code revisions to do the following.” Please provide reference to the written list of objectives.

However, the Project Introduction Briefing paper, dated March 11, 2015, prepared for the first Stakeholder meeting does layout a comprehensive list of 15 problems with the current code that should be addressed. I suggest adding the list of problems. Some problems that were not addressed or reviewed by the Stakeholders should be included in the list of remaining work.

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Please delete the words “to Date” from the section title. Isn’t the interim report supposed to document what was completed up through the public meeting in mid-June, and not through mid-August? Or, were the draft code words and illustrations revised afterwards?

The calendar dates in Figure 4 are not readable.

Do not understand the need to repeat the words about “major objectives” in the previous section. Suggest minimizing the words in Section 1 and direct attention to Section 2. (It’s good to have a discussion of the three phases in one place.)

At the bottom of page 9 there is a statement “There are two primary results of this process.” These passive words obscure how the vision statement and proposed code changes were actually drafted, reviewed, and judged ready for public release. Please be more direct and actually state how the vision statement and code changes were prepared and solidified.

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

In general the statement is OK. I would have preferred a more logically grouped collection of vision statements. For instance, the grouping titles could be:

- Attractive small town (what should Town Center look like)
- Convenient and accessible (how does Town Center “work”)
- Center for Mercer Island businesses (to support a more self-sufficient Island)

Specific recommended changes:

Statement 2 - delete “and economically healthy” because Statement 11 says it better

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Statement 3 - change "with tree-lined streetscapes, wide sidewalks" to "with attractive tree-lined streetscapes, comfortable sidewalks"

Statement 6 - change "greenery" to something like "shrubs or trees." Delete "water features" as they are useless

Statement 7 - delete "that reflect the evolution of the Town Center over time" because the words are superfluous as the previous words provide the same meaning

Statement 8 - replace whole statement with "Maintain existing tall buildings on the north end and add two or three story buildings elsewhere"

What is missing

1. The concept of a retail core on 78th Avenue SE (to accommodate potential for the street becoming an outdoor pedestrian mall)
2. Requiring row houses (to create more people scaled buildings and minimize apartments)
3. Something like Mercer Island Center for the Arts (it is such a big deal with a large positive impact on Town Center)
4. Recognize that Town Center must accommodate service vehicles without significant disruption (common sense)
5. Prohibition of large office buildings (that reduce housing availability)
6. No mention of accommodating pedestrians and vehicles accessing the light rail station (common sense)
7. No mention of a pavilion, or other outdoor covered space, accommodating the farmers market, holiday tree sales, arts fairs, etc. (received significant support at last general public meeting)
8. Recognition that the vision statement should cover the whole *Town Center area*. "*Town Center area*" includes more than the Town Center zoning area, the area within the black line where the development code applies. The *Town Center area* also includes the nearby multi-family and single family residences, commercial buildings, parks, open spaces, Mercer Island Center for the Arts (MICA), farmers market, light rail station, park and ride lot, the entrances and exits for I-90, and the street and pedestrian network within the Town Center area that also connects with the rest of Mercer Island.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements

Page 14 – since the general public may not have a working understanding of the precise definition of planning vocabulary, to avoid potential ambiguity please define important words, such as "retail" and "personal service."

I still do not understand if Mercer Island can reasonably be expected to support the amount (linear feet) of retail as shown in Figure 6. Has an economic analysis shown that the amount of retail space is reasonable? Is "affordable retail" required to fill the store fronts?

What happened to Seth's diagram that shows a limited length of retail frontage for a single business? Isn't that diagram part of the result of the planning process? Why was it "edited" out?

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

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- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards

There is an excessive amount of overlap between this section and the previous section. Too many words in a report may breed confusion or cause the public to give up reading.

This is first discussion of the “Starbuck Square Concept” and is thus out of place. Please talk about the Square in Section 3.

I find the table hard to understand and confusing. I suggest a table with two sets of two columns, one set for Current Standards and one for Proposed Revisions. Each set would have columns for Street Frontage Use and Street Improvements.

Before the table, please include a map of Town Center, with the street names clearly legible, to help readers understand the text.

Please change the nomenclature for the proposed street types to letters, to absolutely avoid confusion about what “Type 1 Street” is. The difference between “Type 1 Street” and “Street Type 1” is too subtle for many people to grasp. I suggest something like “Type A Street.” Please change the color of the proposed Street Type 3 to something other than building color (now they are very similar yellow colors).

- Building Height Limits

Please make sure it is very clear that building height limits will be thoroughly reviewed in the future. I personally oppose the “up-zoning” shown in Figure 12.

I find that I miss the characterization of “Focus Areas” within Town Center. For instance, the 1994 plan has a “Gateway” area in Town Center. This area directly links to what is now called the light rail terminal, and contains the gateway monuments defining the main entrances to Town Center. I think that having defined focus areas is a good town planning practice that helps describe how the town is designed to function.

- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

Please define “adequate building setback” in Table 4. Something like a minimum of 10 feet, or (building height)/4, whichever is greater. Also include some amenities: partial canopies, attractive lighting, artwork, way finding signs, landscaping, good drainage

- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

Please define an on-site public plaza. Since the sidewalks are so large, I don’t think additional public plaza space is needed. Public access to internal courtyard is useless.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

I trust what you have here is also listed in the previous sections.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

Please list the next steps in bullet format, so they are easy to comprehend and evaluate. It’s OK if the list is long. Suggestions include:

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Drawing(s) and sketches of the physical concepts for Town Center - where the public plazas are envisioned, building massing, streets and pedestrian ways and connectors, and landscaping and trees.
- Strategy to provide “ample parking” as well as code requirements for parking spaces
- Detailed definitions of the elective incentives for additional building height, including how financial “contributions to Town Center improvements” would be established and managed.
- Should the City continue to rely exclusively on market incentives and public-private partnerships to deliver the kind of meaningful civic spaces called for in the original code, or take a more direct, proactive approach to identifying and acquiring property for that purpose?
- Consider for a BID (Business Improvement District) or similar self-funded entity dedicated to promoting and supporting downtown business.
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- Public plaza design standards
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- Landscaping design standards
- Develop code language
- Prepare illustrations to support the design code
- Technical reports to support updating the Comprehensive Plan
- Design Commission and Planning Commission reviews and approvals
- City Council adoption of updated Town Center Development Code
- How to preserve gasoline stations on Mercer Island.
- How to accommodate short term parking for service deliveries and moving vans.

Please don't try to minimize the work ahead. Describe all work that should be planned and scheduled. I am very concerned that the necessary work will not be completed by December 15, especially since we will have suspended work on the open items for two months.

Other comments?

I am disappointed that the report comes across as something that it is not – the result of a “normal” town planning program. The report does not try to explain the “cart-before-the-horse” planning process. Due to initial time constraints, imposed by the City Council (to support lifting of a four month building moratorium) the planning process was on a fast track to develop revised language for the Town Center development codes, without completing the normal first step.

As written, the report presents a normal planning process: first determine the goal (a vision statement), and then develop the alternate and preferred plans for Town Center, lastly develop the supporting development code to implement the preferred plan. But the draft vision statement was developed in June, after the draft code language was developed in May. The Plan for Town Center was never finalized. So, I have trouble with the “honesty” of the report. For instance, the recommended Street Types shown at the May 5 and June 16 public meetings are different from the street types presented in the interim report. Obviously the time boundaries for the interim report have stretched beyond June 16 and the changes were not reviewed by the Stakeholders, so please do not provide the impression that the Stakeholders reviewed everything.

In spite of some “honesty” concerns, I think the report is mostly well written, and gives a good

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

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representation of a lot of the actual information generated during the visioning process. But, you are presenting a much better planning process than was actually followed.

The report should make clear what constrained the planning:

- The City Council voted on February 2 to impose a four month moratorium halting most major new construction permits in Town Center.
- The Town Center code update process initially scheduled to provide draft code language by June 1, 2015, in time to support lifting the moratorium on June 16, 2015. This short time schedule precluded proceeding in a “normal” planning fashion, starting with the development of the vision statement.
- Work was well underway to start drafting the draft code language by early May. Anticipating an extension of the moratorium, a vision statement was drafted in early June after draft code changes were prepared.
- On June 15, 2015 the City Council extended the moratorium until December 15, 2015.
- On July 6 the City Council decided to engage a new consultant to organize and schedule the planning and public engagement activities. The new work plan and schedule are still under development.
- The interim report was developed by city staff in consultation with the Town Center Liaison Group. The Stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide comments.

I continue to be disappointed that the Town Center planning study boundaries did not include areas and activities adjoining the Town Center zoning area. The areas surrounding Town Center impact Town Center activities and should be considered in planning for potential changes in Town Center.

These areas include:

- Mercerdale Park
- Mercer Island Center for the Arts
- Farmers market
- Pedestrian and vehicle traffic interfacing the light rail station
- Access to I-90 and congestion at I-90 entrances and exits
- Vehicle traffic passing through Town Center going elsewhere
- Nearby multi-family

I am disappointed that the interim report does not mention a central element of the 1994 Town Center planning report. Seven of the of the 33 main document pages explain the Gateway zone and the future Station Square (which has not been realized). As part of understanding the impact and limitations of Town Center planning, the shortcomings of the 1994 plan need explaining.

My personal opinion is that the emphasis on having the “heart” of Town Center at the north part of town (the 1994 Station Square) is now obsolete. Given existing developments and the probable development of the Mercer Island Center for the Arts at Mercerdale Park, and the nearby weekly summer farmers market and the unlikelihood of a plaza on the Walgreen’s site, town planning in 2015 should support developing the “heart” of Town Center at the south part town. I think the existing for lower building heights the south end is appropriate, and similar to people-friendly Madison Park, old Kirkland, Winslow, and the new commercial center of Issaquah Highlands.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

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Thank you for the opportunity to participate. Bart Dawson

P.S. I do find it difficult to put my thoughts in writing, and then “throw them over the fence” hoping someone will else to catch and use them. I prefer a two-way dialog, not only because dialog minimizes misunderstandings, but because dialog maximizes development of better, or win-win, ideas.

From: Jim Eanes [<mailto:jimeanes@seattlebiketours.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2015 8:33 PM
To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>
Subject: RE: Update on Draft Interim Town Center Report

Hi Scott –

I have been through the entire report. While in the last couple of pages I didn't check each and every word I think it is pretty good (I did check every word in the first 30 pages). I was just holding my comments to make sure I discussed what was in the report with as many neighbors as possible to get their feedback.

I just have **two concerns**. The first I have raised at multiple Stakeholder sessions as well as at Input sessions and discussed extensively with residents around the Town Center area that I represent. It has to do with our **loose usage of the word "stories"**. A story is defined as 10' or 4 meters. If you want to check our definition against standards you can use a story to foot calculator, see <http://www.convertunits.com/from/feet/to/story>. What it tells you is that 65' is just over six stories. This is a basic engineering standard. I know since I spent almost 10 years working in architectural engineering. Thus, **what I would recommend is that everywhere you use the wording of stories where it is 3 stories or above that you follow it with the number of feet that you equate to that height.**

As an **example** on page 4 you refer to "not to exceed 5 stories". This should be replaced with "not to exceed 5 stories (65)".

The reason I'm being so strong about this is that when I was promoted by my neighbors to be on the Stakeholders Group the main reason was to try to find out what was behind all the new 6-8 story buildings being built in Town Center. I think that Mercer Island residents will accept that you have assigned different definitions to the height of a basic story but they will not (and should not) accept what appears to be doing it behind their backs. Residents do (and should) want transparency in their government and one of the main goals that we are doing is showing them that we are being totally open with them.

For that same reason, I would on **Page 29** do something to really **highlight** where the recommendation is to move **from 4 to 5 stories** and from **3 to 4 stories** in **Figure 12** and any place it is mentioned in the text if it is. I don't have it highlighted in the text so it may only show up in the diagram. This will show all that read the document that we are trying to insure they see it. Raising height limits automatically means merchants on these blocks will have to pay more for retail space which could easily put them out of business. It is not just me that says this but it was brought up by residents and business owners at the South end and Chamber of Commerce Input Sessions. Since one of the blocks this pertains to is that of the Mercer Island Florist and Island Books, we need to tread very carefully.

You could also highlight where you have lowered the limit on Farmers Insurance but Farmers already has a five story building on their lot so lowering the limit doesn't do anything since we can not tell them to tear it down (I believe they have a 99 year lease on that property). The same is true where you have lowered the limit from 4 to 3 stories since these are condominiums (private homes) and we can't tell home owners that they have to tear down their homes. They are already four stories as is the height limit for all the condominiums on that street. Thus, you are only raising limits but not lowering any. This was pointed out in Stakeholders meetings already numerous times.

In summary, great job! I know you put a lot of work into this document and it is much appreciated.

Thanks,
Jim

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

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NAME: Steffenie Evans

Comments on the Executive Summary:

I agree that these comments represent the majority of the participants in the stakeholder group, though I disagree with several of them. Many of the items listed as desirable are part of the current code and this was never discussed.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

This statement is lovely and reflects what I want Mercer Island to be.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements

I think it is very smart not to require retail on all streets and fully support that. I disagree with the change (and don't understand how it is a change as it was required for our project and the other Mixed-use projects that have been built on the island) to limiting the amount of personal service uses... I get that they do not create the vibrancy we want, but prescribing the uses, like what has been done over the past 5 years, may lead to empty/vacant retail spaces (like what we've seen recently) which I think is worse. Ultimately, when the density and demand is there for "better" retailers, they will come but right now there really isn't a ton of demand for retail on the island.

Also, the limitations on continuous street frontage sound great, but may preclude a tenant like Whole Foods or Bartells from ever coming into the base of a mixed-use building.

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

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I don't understand how what is being proposed is different than what we have currently. Sidewalks in front of the Mercer are really wide – at least 12'. Of all of the examples of neighborhoods that everyone loves (Madison park, Queen Anne, etc), none of these have 15' sidewalks. I personally feel like these create the canyon effect along with massing. Our current street trees are amazing and fully support keeping this type of look on the island. I would add that the caliber of trees planted in new development should be examined – the Mercer has very small trees that don't really help with the feeling at the pedestrian level, whereas the trees near Island market Square are so much larger and better feeling.

I like the idea of more on-street parking.

- Building Height Limits

I think the stakeholder group was very quick to “add” or “subtract” stories from parcels without seriously considering the impact on the property owners. I think the Farmer's lot is so nestled against the hillside that with large set-backs, a downzone would not be necessary.

I think the issue of topography is thoughtfully addressed here. I know there are concerns about the Legacy project and it's massing relative to the various facades and can appreciate that a more integrated approach might be better.

- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

I am a bit surprised at how important this seems to people, but am ok with this as an incentive. I noticed the north/south connection was added in this report and I don't remember ever discussing it in the group.

- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

I think generally these concepts are good, but the challenge will be which ones are required and which are elective.

Previously the mid-block connection was indicated as an incentive (see above) but here it is listed as mandatory – which is it?

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

Like the idea of straightening the street by starbucks, but how does this get funded?
76th and SE 27th: Seems like an odd area to require primary retail.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

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Other comments?

Thanks for your hard work – I know this is a challenging process!

Thank you!

Hi Scott and Alison,

Sorry for the delay!

I did read through the full report. I had a couple of thoughts.

1-For the townhouse idea on South 77th (current Farmers lot) - is the plan to have those be a max of 3 stories in height? For some reason when I was reading through that section I was confused. From my recollection there was consensus to have those 3 stories and I hope that holds true.

2-I don't recall discussing getting rid of the 77th Avenue turn lane - I do think people utilize it but if it is a necessity to get more street side parking I agree. I am a big advocate of the street side parking and think it will enhance the town center.

3-I like the idea of the sharrows versus lanes that are specifically for bikers. I think it would be a waste to have a designated biker lane anywhere through the town center as I do not believe it would dictate a bikers course for 3 or 4 blocks.

4-I think requiring public access to any of the developers internal courtyards is unnecessary and imposing too much access. If I were living in an apartment/condo downtown I would view the internal courtyard as an extension of my home. I think the external courtyards are different and make sense.

5-I like the idea of the cake layer effect on the taller buildings but do want to make sure that they don't end up conforming and all looking the same with just a different color or material. I think the variety of the building structure is key as well.

6-I hope the height restrictions are enforced - I would prefer a lower profile town center to keep a small town feel although I know that isn't what everyone wants and is not necessarily feasible for builders.

Lastly, thank you for your time and effort with this entire process....it can't be easy dealing with all of the various personalities and you've done a fantastic job!

Take care,
Amie Fahey

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: Marc Glasser

Comments on the Executive Summary:

I am fine with “less ambiguous” design guidelines and allowing elected or city employees make the determinations. “Loosely defined” is fine as well as allows for greater diversity – and as in above – allowing elected or city employees make the decision. I see no need for clarify intentions and expectations as the code itself could accomplish this – go beyond this. A less restrictive code would allow for diversity. Full support of the six and last bullet point to improve pedestrian bicycle connectivity for 77th Ave. Allow greater housing units downtown to support more downtown businesses. Town Center should be the heart of Mercer Island. Encourage outdoor spaces. Include mandatory nontenant parking within buildings and building structure – walk off parking not utilizing street space. First floors of all structures over two to stories to be commercial space or donated cities space for a small police station, library extension or community quiet room reading area.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

No comments.

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

No comments.

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

Omit the “Locate taller buildings on the north end and step down through the center to lower heights on the south end, bordering Mercerdale Park.” section text based on the significant cost to acquire land and build, reducing the building height reduces the option to add beyond the required stories to make a project economically viable – meaning Mercer Island will be “stuck” with the Rite Aid strip center because it is not economically viable to acquire the land, tear down the existing structure and build a new modern, beautiful and more purposed development – all because the story height limitation would be too restrictive. Simple economics necessitates five story structures – no matter where located town center when involving land acquisition, demolition and building.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements: Support proposed revisions with the addition of exceptions allowed based on significant contributions made by developers or parties wanting to rent space. Planning commission and/or city council or other approving body to evaluate and determine (accept or deny) exception proposals.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards: Support proposed revisions with the addition of exceptions allowed based on significant contributions made by developers or parties wanting to rent space. Planning commission and/or city council or other approving body to evaluate and determine (accept or deny) exception proposals.
- Building Height Limits: Support proposed revisions with the following correction/modification: Allow a maximum of five stories anywhere in the town center – to make projects economically viable as discussed above. Have an exception process for buildings over five stories as one does not know the future holds.
- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections: Support proposed revisions with the addition of exceptions allowed based on significant contributions made by developers or parties wanting to rent space. Planning commission and/or city council or other approving body to evaluate and determine (accept or deny) exception proposals.
- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components: Support proposed revisions with the following correction/modification: Add an affordable retail/housing category to support entrepreneurial establishments, add tech start up business incentives to include the aforementioned. Other affordable housing priorities, other than just mentioned in the last sentence would be for Mercer Island teachers, police officers, fire service, other city/school district employees - individuals and immediate families – listed in the order of priority as well as largest percent allocation. Of course there would be a limited number of exceptions – through an exception process that will involve public open forums and requiring city council approval. Also would have to have some sort of escalation of rent based on fair market rent value if tenant no longer met any of the criteria.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

Support with the modification of the above incorporated.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

City has enough input. City needs to codify (or not) by city council voting on the revised proposed code. This should all be completed by the end of November 2015 passing of time and input has occurred.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Other comments?

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: Traci Granbois _____

Comments on the Executive Summary:

Page 3, line 2: “The report includes no” change to “The report does not include”

Page 4, last bullet point: “Retain the requirement for “walk-off parking” → only one development project has come forward under the new walk-off parking requirements & this proposed development (Pagliaccia’s) is seeking a variance – is it wise to retain this requirement as is, if it is not working?

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Page 6, full paragraph 2, line 1: “The Subcommittee held a vision conversation with a diverse group of 29 engaged community members” → please insert a foot note or item in the appendix listing all 29 members of this group, just as was done for the TCSG and TCLG

Page 6, full paragraph 4, line 1: “workshop in Mercer” change to “workshop on Mercer”

Line 2: “presentation to the community group” please specify which community group – is it the 29 member group?

Page 6, Figure 3 – I do not believe this figure adds anything to the discussion – Someone without any knowledge of the process would just see scribbles on a block of land

Page 7, full paragraph 1, line 1 – “A result of this community engagement process” – please include a footnote with each meeting (date, time, location) in this process

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Page 7, photo: – I think it is disingenuous to include a picture without anyone from the community at large – a Mercer Island City employee & a member of the TCSG are pictured

Page 7, line 7: – “extended by approximately 6 weeks” is this extension period accurate? It feels like the meetings have been extended for at least 3 months

Page 7, bullet points – are redundant – the exact same bullet points were already state directly above

Page 8, 1) Public Input Meetings, line 1: – “Five city-hosted meetings” please remove “city-hosted” it adds nothing and add a foot note with exact meetings (date, time location)

Page 8, 2) Public Comment, line 2: “via an online comment form...” please include a footnote with the exact number of comments received

Page 9, 4)TCGL, line 4: “the nine-member TCLG ensures...” insert “attempts to” after “TCLG” and before “ensures”, remove “s” from “ensures”

Page 9, 5) Outreach and Publicity, line 4: “NextDoor.com” – I do not believe the City had a ND account during the entire process – It would be best to footnote both Facebook and NextDoor.com with the exact dates notifications were posted

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Page 10, Draft Vision Statement, line 10: “transit users” I do not think “transit user” is necessary – by definition a “transit user” is a pedestrian, bicyclist, or motorist

Page 10, Draft Vision Statement, line 19: remove “cafés, pubs and bakeries” - all of these designations fall under “restaurant” and are too specific for a high-level vision statement

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

Page 11, line 3: “many detailed ideas” remove “detailed”

Page 11, line 4: “This detailed work” remove “detailed”

Page 11, line 4: “a consultant firm” change to “a consulting firm”

Page 11, line 5-6: “brought forward many specific alternatives” insert a footnote citing the exact number of “specific alternatives” brought forward rather than inflate the actual amount of work completed – from the December 2014 report submitted by Harry to the May 2015 report – it is hard to locate any changes

Page 11, paragraph 2, line 4: “proposed by community members.” Insert footnote detailing proposals by community members & identifying community member

Page 11, last paragraph, line 5: “which comparing the City’s” change “comparing” to “compare”

- Retail Frontage Requirements

- The legality of required retail on entire ground floor has not been tested and Harry could only offer one example, Washington DC, where this requirement has been imposed – I question whether Mercer Island wants to be the legal poster child for this proposal
- Page 14, “For example, currently, all of the required retail frontage area along a Type 1 street can be devoted to personal service uses.” This statement may reflect what the current code mandates – however, most of the buildings in the Town Center are bound by different regulations, i.e. the 60/40 rule which arguably has not delivered the intended results. This was a question which was raised in the Stakeholder meetings and NEVER addressed. Please do not attempt to mislead the public and future readers of this report.

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards

- Page 17, line 6: “those streets” add a parenthetical listing streets (77th and 80th)
- Page 17, paragraph 2 – A complete sign of disrespect to place a “city square” on private property without first consulting with property owner, especially at a time when the City has no money to acquire the property – And there was not consensus on the value of the “Starbucks square” concept.
- Page 17, paragraph 2, line 4: “traffic calming in that part of Town Center” – there was no evidence presented that “Starbucks Square” would calm traffic,

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

nor were any tests completed to – this statement is pure conjecture – please remove it.

- Page 17, Table 2, 76th Ave SE: lots South of 27th that abut (on West side) are not required to have Primary Retail –
 - Page 18, Table 2, 77th Ave SE (SE 27th Street to SE 32nd Street), Proposed Revision, line 3: “parallel parking” – I didn’t think there was consensus on what type of parking would be installed: parallel parking, angled parking, or parking pockets. Who is choosing parallel parking?
 - Page 18, Table 2, 78th Ave SE (Sunset Highway to SE 27th Street), Current Standards: there is not a landscaped median here – the landscaped median begins south of 27th Street
 - Page 19, Table 2, 80th Ave SE (SE 27th Street to SE 32nd Street), Proposed Revisions, line 1-2: “parallel parking” – I didn’t think there was consensus on what type of parking would be installed: parallel parking, angled parking, or parking pockets. Who is choosing parallel parking?
 - Page 19, Table 2, SE 27th Street (approximately 75th Avenue SE to 76th Avenue SE), Proposed Revisions, line 1-2: “parallel parking” – I didn’t think there was consensus on what type of parking would be installed: parallel parking, angled parking, or parking pockets. Who is choosing parallel parking?
 - Page 21, Table 2, SE 30th Street (78th Avenue SE to Island Crest Way), Proposed Revisions, line 1-2: “parallel parking” – I didn’t think there was consensus on what type of parking would be installed: parallel parking, angled parking, or parking pockets. Who is choosing parallel parking?
 - Page 23, Figure 8: Street Type 2: The picture depicts ANGLED parking on one side of the street whereas Street Type 2 was earlier described as “parallel parking lane both sides”
- Building Height Limits
 - Page 25, Overview of Proposed Changes: I am still waiting for an answer from Seth Harry regarding rationale as to why some properties were upzoned & others were downzoned. Why is the consultant picking height winners and losers?
 - Page 25, Overview of Proposed Changes, line 4-5: “and more public amenities and better public amenities” change to “and more public amenities better aligned with community values...”

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Page 25, Overview of Proposed Changes, line 5-6: change to “In addition, certain public amenities are required for all Town Center developments, regardless of height.”
- Page 26, Figure 12: I am still waiting for an answer from Seth Harry regarding rationale as to why some properties were upzoned & others were downzoned. Why is the consultant picking height winners and losers?
- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections
 - Page 31, Table 4, Location of Connection, Current Standards, bullet point 2, 3rd line: the brick walkway does not extend the entire length between 77th Ave & 78th Ave
 - Page 32, Figure 14: Placement of mid-block connections are random and were selected by someone who does not live here and has not walked the Town Center – as identified by the TCSG. The most logical mid-block connection is 28th Street (from 78th Ave to 77th Ave), not the two selected.
 - Page 32, Figure 14: The “Multi-function Outdoor Event Space and support facilities” is included in the map even though the Stake Holders expressed no support for this option
- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components
 - Page 33, Overview of Proposed Changes, line 7: after “lens of technical or market” insert “or legal”
 - Page 34, Walk-Off Requirement: In an era of full disclosure I think it should be noted that only one development has been proposed with the walk-off requirement currently in the code & this development is seeking a variance from this walk-off requirement
 - Page 34, Affordable Retail: I have concerns regarding whether a City can legally require a landowner to subsidize a commercial venture. Who is going to draft the regulations for this requirement? Does the property owner decide who can lease the “subsidized rent spaces” or is the city going to choose? Does a commercial venture have to meet certain revenue limits? What if the commercial venture starts to make profit, can it remain in the subsidized space?
 - Page 34, Additional Public Parking: Concerns about the legality of requiring public parking in a private commercial space
 - Page 36, 37, 38, Table 5, Elective: For ease of reader, keep list of Electives in the same order on each height, adding new items to the bottom of the list

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

- Page 39, 76th Avenue SE north of SE 27th Street: The consultant recommended “Starbucks Square” but I do not remember wide-spread support for this option, except from the consultant and the Starbucks architect, especially after the logistics and cost of completion were discussed.
- Page 39, 76th Avenue SE between SE 27th Street and SE 29th Street, line 6: I am still waiting for an answer from Seth Harry regarding rationale as to why this particular property was upzoned.
- Page 40, 77th Avenue SE between SE 27th Street and SE 32nd Street: this is the first time in the document actual property names have been used, i.e., “Tabit Square” – keep notation consistent throughout document, that particular property may not be “Tabit Square” forever – location would be better identifier
- Page 40, 77th Avenue SE between SE 27th Street and SE 32nd Street, Mid-Block Connections: Placement of mid-block connections are random and were selected by someone who does not live here and has not repeatedly walked the Town Center – as identified by the TCSG. The most logical mid-block connection is 28th Street (from 78th Ave to 77th Ave), not the two selected.
- Page 40, 78th Avenue SE between Sunset Highway and SE 32nd Street, Building Heights: I am still waiting for an answer from Seth Harry regarding rationale as to why this particular property was upzoned. This is the second time in the document actual property names/tenants have been used, i.e., “Island Books/Mercer Florist” – keep notation consistent throughout document, that particular property may not be “Island Books/Mercer Florist” forever – location would be better identifier
- Page 50, 80th Ave SE between 27th Street and SE 32nd Street: This is the third time in the document actual property names/tenants have been used, i.e., “Chase Bank” – keep notation consistent throughout document, that particular property may not be “Chase Bank” forever – location would be better identifier
- Page 41, SE 27th Street between approximately 75th Ave and 80th Ave SE: The consultant recommended “Starbucks Square” but I do not remember wide-spread support for this option, except from the consultant and the Starbucks architect, especially after the logistics and cost of completion were discussed.

It is disrespectful to discuss placing a public plaza/open space on PRIVATE property (Walgreens property) without first discussing with the property owner. Private property is not land for the city to “take” for a pet project. This proposal did not find wide-spread support either – again, it is the consultant pushing his agenda rather than taking comments from the community.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Page 41, SE 29th Street between 76th Ave SE and 78th Ave SE: I am still waiting for an answer from Seth Harry regarding rationale as to why this property was downzoned.
- Page 42, SE 30th Street between 78th Ave SE and Island Crest Way: I am still waiting for an answer from Seth Harry regarding rationale as to why this property was upzoned.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

Other comments?

Thank you!

From: Dan Grove [mailto:dan@grove.cx]

Sent: Sunday, August 23, 2015 1:35 PM

To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>; Alison VanGorp <alison.vangorp@mercergov.org>

Subject: Re: Draft Interim Report on the Town Center Vision and Development Code Update

Hi Scott and Alison-

Thanks for making this happen! I know this feedback is late coming, but hopefully you can still take it (I've been travelling a ton lately - this feedback is coming to you from Denmark).

Here are some thoughts:

- 1) There is no mention of transportation/light rail interface. This will have a large impact, especially on the north end of downtown.
- 2) Some pieces of the vision will likely conflict, so it may be useful to prioritize the vision (complicated, I know!) - perhaps just into a few buckets.
- 3) We should be really specific on parking requirements. It appears that some recent buildings have quite limited parking, and we should be pushing hard on those.
- 4) I'm not sure the height restrictions do a good enough job of preventing the canyon feel that many of us dislike. I'd love to see more specificity here.

thanks,
Dan

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: Michael J Hart, MD

Comments on the Executive Summary:

A good summary of the work we as stakeholders undertook and of the general conclusions that the group (in surprising solidarity) endorsed.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Well stated, no comment or change recommended.

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

No comment.

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

The vision statement reflects well, in my opinion, the sentiments of the Stakeholder Group. It is wonderfully idyllic. I hope it is achievable.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements
No additional comments. The proposed changes are well stated and very specific.
- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards
No changes recommended.
- Building Height Limits
The presented material reflects the Stakeholder Group consensus, but it will remain contentious. The overall plan is relatively broad but the details are complex and confusing.
- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections
The devil is in the details of future development.
- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

I agree that this represents the sentiment of the Stakeholder Group. At present it is far too nebulous and will require considerable study and exact articulation to fulfill the vision it represents.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:
Very detailed, a little confusing because of the level of detail.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:
No additional comments.

Other comments?
I would hope that the remainder of the process can be more stream-lined, efficient, and quicker than it has been to date. Having said that, I realize that this is important, detail rich, and will require fine attention to very specific code alterations.

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: Ralph Jorgenson

Comments on the Executive Summary:

“A 42 member citizen committee (“Stakeholder Group”) was convened to provide input over a 4 month period (March – June 2015) ... to ensure that public input was heard and incorporated into the proposals as they were further developed.” I think this misrepresents the citizen committee overall make-up. I’m not aware of the process that was used to select the committee members, however, for better or worse developers/CBD landowners/business owners appeared to be represented in higher proportion than “Island Residents”, as compared to their overall representation/proportion on the Island. Therefore to suggest this body is reflective of “public input” is incorrect. “Public Input” is best captured by a professionally conducted scientific polling process and using the least biased survey questions (perhaps developed and approved by representatives of the public that have a variety and differing opinions on the future development).

Add to the list provided on Page 4: “That the City discontinue the practice of undercharging for Transportation and Parks Impact/SEPA mitigation fees for new development” The vast majority of our surrounding cities and towns current charge significant fees, whereas, currently the City of Mercer Island doesn’t charge such fees – thereby resulting in the dilutions and lowering of the level of service for all Islanders.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- **Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards**

Retail Frontage Requirements Regarding the Code discussions on Page 14 regarding Primary Retail, Secondary Retail and Limited Retail Frontage. I do not believe the proposed text/discussion is reflective of the Stakeholders Meetings or collective viewpoint. The Stakeholder meetings did not discuss this detail. In fact, as I recall, the only discussion regarding these points was lead by former City Manager, Rich Conrad, who thought that the division of Primary and Secondary had always been confusing and difficult to parse and further suggested doing away with this level of categorization.

- **Building Height Limits**

Overall, I believe the verbage regarding the number of stories and heights is biased in favor of larger development. In a number of cases, verbage reflects a maximum number of stories, however, the complex height calculations (e.g. ABE) with respect to lot slope often lead to an additional "sixth story". As such, I would hope that future language be used to help paint a more realistic height impact that a lay person could understand. This is especially important, if the public is going to be surveyed w/r to building height limits.

The reasoning regarding the upzoning of certain properties within the Town Center that is presented on Page 29 with respect to the "Auto-Oriented" property from 3 to 4 stories, the property at the corner of 30th/78th from 3 to 4 stories, and the property along 77th that was upzoned from 4 to 5 stories. As a stakeholder, I never heard the origin for why the City/Consultants decided to up-zone these properties. There was never an entire group discussion or consensus amongst the Stakeholder group regarding specifically upzoning certain properties. As such, I believe presenting these changes as a result of the stakeholder process is a misrepresentation and disingenuous to the process. Furthermore, if the "public" deemed it necessary and believed it needed to upzone parts of the CBD for density purposes, I believe it would be in the best interest to the public and taxpayers if such properties weren't randomly upzoned but rather property owners competed and/or bid for such development upzoning rights in a fair and open market.

- **Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections**

The discussion of Mid-Block connections is not reflective of the Stake Holder Meetings. I recall during the first meeting one specific table presented the idea of an increased number of mid-block connections (e.g. perhaps 6 or more). This table was represented by Colin Brandt and the idea of the increased mid-block connections was referred to as a "ladder". There appeared to be broad consensus within the Stakeholder group that this "ladder" or increased number of mid-block connections was a very good idea and should be explored. As such, this report does not reflect this interest, rather, it essentially keeps the number mid-block connections limited to four.

- **Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components**

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

Other comments?

As a resident of the Island I am grateful and appreciate the efforts of City Staff (Scott Greenberg, Alison VanGorp, Noel Treat and Kirsten Taylor) during this process. They have been very professional and put in long hours during this process.

Unfortunately, I can't be as complimentary regarding the consultants that have been utilized during the stakeholder meetings.

The individual from Seth Harry and Associates, who appears very competent in Urban Planning failed to be responsive to the stakeholder group in a number of ways, including:

- 1) The materials he presented to the stakeholder group rarely reflected a number of inputs from the Stakeholders group.
- 2) The Stakeholder group was redundantly presented the same slides over and over again. In particular I am thinking of the same theoretical street profile views/angles in which were presented at three different meetings.

The individual from 4 Square Blocks did a poor job "facilitating" the meetings. An example of this was that at the very first meeting the consultant was asked by a stakeholder if we could take a moment to introduce everyone in the room. The consultant/facilitator denied the request w/o any valid reason. Only after a second stakeholder requested for a group introduction, did the consultant consent to this request. As a public process facilitator this was significant error and goes against the grain of any type of public process facilitation.

The City should conduct a scientific survey of its residents to find out what "Islanders" would like in terms of added density and growth in the Town Center. This survey and the process of vetting the questions should be performed by an outside professional w/o any residential or political conflicts to Mercer Island with expertise in polling, survey questions and statistics. Furthermore, a diverse committee of pro-development, preservation, residents and business owners should be utilized by the Polling firm to develop a set of "un-biased" questions for the survey.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: _____ Pete Kangas _____ 8.18.15 _____

Comments on the Executive Summary:

P4 - Town Center should retain the small-town feeling that “some” or “many” residents love about the island (see also page 17 comments below)

P4 – Town Center should be pedestrian friendly.... Starbucks Drive thru is not particularly ‘pedestrian friendly’. (See also later comments)

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement: - reorder/rewrite a bit

1. Embody the small-town feeling that “some” or “many” residents love about the Island
2. Be the heart..
3. Be convenient and accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists
 - Be pedestrian-friendly, with tree lined streetscapes, wide sidewalks, storefronts with canopies, and cross-block connections that make it easy to walk around
 - Have ample parking, both on-street and off, and ability to park once and walk to a variety of retail shops clustered along major streets
 - Add a comment about bicyclists...
 - Add a comment about transit users...??
4. Have inviting outdoor spaces...
5. Have a range of building types...
6. Locate taller buildings...
7. Have a diversity of uses including retail shops... lodging, recreational facilities (what are these in the town center??), and a variety of...
8. Offer a variety of housing options...
9. Support public and private investment in existing properties, infrastructure, and marketing (is this appropriate for the City??) to help maintain longstanding businesses...

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Retail Frontage Requirements

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards

P17 I like this language better “...strong public desire...” and “... strong interest...”

P18 I’d prefer an alternate name in lieu of “Starbucks” Square... seems like inadvertent preferential advertising

P 19 first row - Not sure I understand why Street Frontage and Secondary Retail Frontage classifications get intermixed?

- Building Height Limits

- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

P 35 - Affordable Retail... add “... attract ‘and retain’ retail tenants...”

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

P 40 – is it necessary to write into this document that the “Starbucks drive-thru could be retained”?? this is not particularly “pedestrian friendly”... plus it seems preferential?

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

Agree with the retail strategy part.

Other comments?

Thank you!

From: Nate Larson <natesonit@gmail.com>

Date: August 13, 2015 at 4:01:53 PM PDT

To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>

Subject: Re: Update on Draft Interim Town Center Report

Scott,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. I was one of those people who was on vacation from 7/31-8/9, so I appreciate the extra time.

The draft report does an excellent job of capturing the process and outcomes. I have nothing to add, and I have also responded in detail to Karen's survey on the group process.

Nate Larson

From: Nancy R. Lee [<mailto:nancyrlee@msn.com>]

Sent: Monday, August 3, 2015 5:12 PM

To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>

Subject: RE: Draft Interim Report on the Town Center Vision and Development Code Update

Hi Scott,

Looks good to me.

The one big sensitive area I was looking for was the clear specification of height in feet.

Looks like that got added.

Wasn't sure if that "guaranteed" form the lowest level in the case where a building is lower on one side of a street than another but assume it is from its lowest level.

Thanks

Nancy Lee

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: Roberta Lewandowski

Comments on the Executive Summary:

*Good overview of the process, including the Council's role to initiate, the early public committee involvement, as well as the stakeholder work.

*The fourth bullet on page 4 should be stricken, as it is not an accurate portrayal of group discussion. Yes, some people said to limit housing, but others said 'limit density' which seemed to mean cars and building bulk. Stakeholders did not have a specific discussion of whether it is preferable to encourage housing vs. offices. Without a specific discussion focus, at the tables, on this topic, and the show of hands we often had, this anti-housing statement shouldn't be included. Further, the code really allows some flex between the mix of housing and office, so to state that less housing would be a result of proposed changes, when this isn't certain, will be seen as a betrayal later, if developers opt to mostly build housing in the mixed use zones.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

*Good idea to reference historic work, back to 1994.

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

OK

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

Great – short and covers the big ideas.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements

*I think there is still too much area of mandatory retail. It might be better to just keep the 'primary retail' as mandatory, and simply allow, rather than require, retail in the other areas. It might be better to push retail to the core rather than try to get it everywhere.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

*Although the code will likely have more expansive text, it's hard to understand what the requirements are for major stores that want to look like a collection of small stores. A graphic or picture would help.

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards

*Great to keep 12 sidewalks as a minimum, even for two story buildings. This draft says the 12 foot is the current standard, but we sure didn't get it when the Pet/Bike store building was developed. The 12 foot width should be standard, not part of the bonus system.

*NOTE: Figures don't match the text. E.g. Figure 9 seems to show 8 foot sidewalks on one side, rather than the 12 foot standard discussed in the street chart. Also, Figure 9 APPEARS to show 5 story buildings all the way to 32nd, which will cause a major uproar, and is not what the text says. Many stakeholders and other citizens will rely on the pictures, so this is important to clarify.

*Similarly, Figure 8 shows 11 foot sidewalks, while the text says 12 is the standard. If the standard is intended to be an average, that should be clarified.

- Building Height Limits

*I support the changes.

*We didn't really have a full discussion with stakeholders regarding why a 5 story building might allow a tall first story or top story, so it would be helpful to have some notes on the height pictures, e.g. "taller first story invites retail, etc.'" Some stakeholders were fixated on '5 stories = 50 feet, not 65.'" Pictures could clarify well.

- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

Great to clarify and make mandatory.

- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

*Generally ok, except for public access to internal courtyards. These may never be welcoming. Maybe the city should require furniture on the external plaza, or kid attractions (e.g. water) instead.

*The affordable housing incentive is really important.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

*Good idea to include names of businesses in this section, to help readers who don't know streets by number (most of us).

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

Other comments?

*There is not a comment 'box' for the land use changes, but I would like to see more of the TC3 areas changed to TCMF3. The TC already has plenty of room for offices. We will be pressed in the near future to take more housing growth, as it seems most cities east and west of us allow lots of room for jobs, but not enough for the housing that workers need.

*I strongly support the Starbucks Plaza, both as a relatively easy to implement plaza idea, and for ending the speeding along that curve.

Thank you!

Hi there Alison,

This pretty much sums up what we worked on! No big comments on my end.

Aloha,
Tamar

Alison

Thank you for sending the draft proposal, for the town center. As I am reading thought it there are a few things that seem redundant and over stated.

1) Building height, 5 floors or less was a never set or agreed by at least half the group. I believe it is important to list this and make sure that the build right height of 2/3 floors is still an very important issue for many in the community.

2) The statement that Seth Harry brought forward many specific alternatives is incorrect. Seth provided vary little options other than 5 floors and side walk views of building with multi floors. The group was never shown a town center as design with current buildings and any new building 2/3 floors with an open plaza or more community spaces.

3) This seems to be the same view of the town center that was presented by Seth on the first day of the state holders meeting and repeated over and over. It is missing any alternative views of the town center as stated by half (1/2) of the stakeholders group that were not pro density.

Mark J Meinzinger
mmeinzinger@hotmail.com
206-226-7555

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today.

August 17, 2015

To: Alison Van Gorp, Administrative Services Manager, Inclusion.

FAX 206 275 7726

Executive Summary.

I do not recall, nor would I support the concept of no additional housing units in the core. This was a concern voiced by some who wanted additional information on growth targets and current numbers, but it was not, in my recollection, endorsed by the 42-member group. Also, if my understanding can be documented, there are no negative impacts to schools, as was conjectured by a few people.

Background.

It is accurate in my view, change comparing to compare, p. 12
Final paragraph.

Vision Statement.

As stated in a clearly defined milestone, 2035, the exercise that resulted in the vision statement was faulty. Also, the vision statement should have emerged from previous discussions — and instead was posited as a newspaper article. It was very weak.

Development Code Changes.

Question — If full-service medical clinic, which might be considered a critical component, would we deny them 1st and 2nd floor location in this code, may not allow.....

Note — The code is so prescriptive re percentages of uses, that it may be difficult to manage — % of development, % of street, % of zone ???

Note — Concern about bike safety. Showing of street does not take into account accident rates, Shante's experience and separation by bike. Like other issues, this needs feasibility study. (p. 17)

Note — Re page 31 — Mid-block connections without

prohibited building treatments or elevations that face them, will be just that paragraphs. I commented about potential for small-scale retail. Some retail treatments would be better than blank walls.

p. 38 . contribution and what methodology does this
 entail. This too needs to be added to
 technical, financial, legal feasibility list.

- 2 -

affordable retail. As I commented, this is likely not
 suitable, except through the largesse of the developer
 or property owner. This site is very strict and such a
 requirement could be considered a gift of public funds.
 Suggestions of smaller retail space units, especially along
 connectors, some second floor retail opportunities
 might better satisfy this interest - which again, I question
 whether there was consensus about.

public access to interior courtyard - another item requiring
 legal vetting.

Summary of Proposed Changes.

No comment.

Next Steps

No comment.

Alison VanGorp

From: Terry <terry@mercerislandchamberofcommerce.org>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2015 1:18 PM
To: Alison VanGorp
Subject: Re: Intermin Report

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

I have looked at the entire report and I think it is a good representation of what was discussed and presented at Stakeholders Meetings.

Sorry to keep you waiting.

-Terry

Terry Moreman

Executive Director,
206.232.3404



TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: Salim Nice

Comments on the Executive Summary: I would have liked to see more details on the first 29 member Stakeholders group and outcomes. What about that process did/did not work and how did that facilitate the formation of the larger 42-member Stake holder group? I would also have expected to see the chronology of consultant engagements with costs (actuals and proposed/approved) included in the chronology. Essentially a more focused overview of lessons learned and the evolution of the process. The way it is portrayed makes it seem as though it was intentional and my experience has taught me it has not been. It is what it is and I feel this report is an opportunity to lay all the cards on the table and move forward productively.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose: I see now why the ES did not address my point. In this section the outcomes of the 42-member stakeholder group is being mischaracterized as phase 2 of a 3 phase process when this was/is not the case. This history needs to be trued up. If this report cannot be honest about the breakdown in the process it will be another lost opportunity to get productive conversations back on track. The reality is the City's consultant lost credibility because he did not listen to and incorporate feedback. He continued to deliver work product that was not based on the stakeholders feedback; he railroaded the group. I have said many times that the City does not do a good job learning from its failures. What needs to happen is a postmortem style analysis on the process to date, then a reset and under new leadership try again.

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date: There is no mention of the breakdowns that occurred in the public outreach process. There is no mention of the scope of work assigned to the public engagement consultants and their failure to provide deliverables. So much public feedback was lost due to the failure of the consultants that they were subsequently terminated when they proposed a contract extension. I'll remind the drafters of this report that the Council very publicly referred to this as a "firing". Why was this not mentioned?

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement: I'm not sure I understand the last item, "...private investment in existing properties, infrastructure..." What does this mean specifically? For that matter I get that the vision statement is trying to be all encompassing and intentionally vague but it reads a bit too vague to me.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements- We asked for working examples of this and the only one given was in Washington DC and had no resemblance to MI with respect to transportation, density and single-family-residential vs. multi-family mix. The sentiment of the group was that this concept most likely would not work.
- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards – Public comment is needed/missing
- Building Height Limits- Public comment is needed/missing
- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections- More midblock connections were requested than Seth Harry ever recognized. The ladder concept was born from my group and widely recognized by the rest of the stakeholder group as a preferable idea. Many creative concepts were generated after it was first mentioned but the final proposal underwhelmed the group.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components- Dependency on height – needs public feedback/missing

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes: The best part of the report.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps: It is unclear what they are going to be so I question why they are included. I think this is a valuable report and countless hours have gone into the process to get us to this stage. Please consider sticking to the intent and focusing on the facts. Continue to refine it until it is accepted as just that. Next steps can come after that.

Other comments? The report begins, “This report summarizes the work to date in the process to update the vision for Mercer Island Town Center and the related Town Center Development Code. The report includes **no final recommendations, rather, it is intended as a comprehensive statement of work completed to date and is intended to help set the stage for future action on this important subject.**” [bold added] Rather than including next steps why not just try and get consensus on recapping what has occurred to date? It is important to capture all that this process has to teach us as we design a revised process that can deliver a widely supported community vision for the town center.

Twice the report mentions the indebtedness to the 42-member stakeholder group. Usually this is done before thanking them for their time and dismissing them. This really serves no purpose in this report. Why single this group out? I would remove this type of language.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE
Draft Interim Report Comments
Comments due by August 13

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: __ Toni Okada_____

Comments on the Executive Summary: Bullet point – Requiring developers to provide... should read **require** developers...

Bullet point – Change to **There are small scale and varied retail at street level because creative retail requirements are in place.** (Or some other wording – just needs to be a sentence.)

These are just to make the bullet points grammatically consistent.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose: 2nd paragraph – City Council identified a need to analyze...1) ... 2) add **will** meet

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

OK

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement: - There's no statement about sustainability, which I would have preferred. It is included in incentives but the Comp Plan does mention sustainability as a goal. If we don't start paying attention to sustainable practices, there will be no Town Center, no life on this planet as we know it.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes: Paragraph under 5 key areas should be Then (no comma) charts are included which **compare...**

- Retail Frontage Requirements – Are hotel/motel, personal services, public facilities, office space considered non-retail? Might be more clear if you would define it as such. I got confused. Also, it seems both Primary and Secondary actually have equal space for this if you look at a 100 ft space. 40% of 60 feet or 60% of 40 feet. Maybe that's what was intended.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards – I don't think that's a correct definition of "sharrow". I don't think it's where people are supposed to cycle, I think it's a sign to remind cars that they're sharing the road with cyclists. (Ask Cascade Bike Club.)
- Building Height Limits- OK
- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections- OK
- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components- OK

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes: - I didn't read this

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:
OK

Other comments? I missed one meeting, but I think you captured the work we've done.

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE
Draft Interim Report Comments
Comments due by August 13

NAME: __Mark O'Shea_____

Comments on the Executive Summary:

This is fine.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

No comment

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

No comment

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

No comment

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- Retail Frontage Requirements

This is a bad idea. Don't think any of the property owners support this. Bad for the public interest and could deter local businesses from starting up "personal service uses".

- Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards

Not sure if the sidewalk widths should be required for a uniform look on each street. Large sidewalks make people feel uncomfortable walking because they are so empty (see north Bellevue). A mix of trees, light posts, benches, some parts wide and some parts more narrow provides a better sense of atmosphere. Small parking alcoves rather than long stretches of parallel parking where drivers going in and out block traffic (Fig 7. Type 1) or angled parking backing where drivers back out into oncoming traffic (Fig 8 Type 2).

I like Fig 9 Type 3 but it should be mixed between the different figures for where it makes sense to have a stretch of parallel or a stretch of angled. Should not be allocated so each entire street is homogenous.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- Building Height Limits

Mostly fine but the Rite Aid area should be allowed to build higher and more emphasis should be put on making Mercerdale Park a focal point in the TC. Walgreens being rezoned as a hybrid park and mixed use without consent of the owners might raise some concerns. In general there should be more collaboration between property owners and the city rather than the city trying to dictate a rezone.

- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

I agree with the current code and not the proposed change.

- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components

2 story

Table 5. #2. Should be elective and not mandatory

Table 5 #3. Should be elective and not mandatory

Table 5 #4. Should be more specific.

3 story

#2. Same comment as above

#3 Same comment as above

#4 Same comment as above. They should also need to be more “green” as building height increases.

#8. Should be elective and not mandatory

4 story

Same comments as above. Additionally...

#10. Should be elective and not mandatory

#11. Should clearly be elective and not mandatory. What about office buildings? I strongly support affordable housing but creating it as a requirement and not an elective incentive is a mistake.

5 story

Same comments at #4.

In general there should be more focus on green building features as a means to achieve additional height limits.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

There are several properties are subject to potential zoning changes and singling out sites that may fall into a nonconforming use if redeveloped could be problematic for the city and property owners in the future. Perhaps the city could sit down with the property owners and work together to come up with individual proposals that both parties could agree on.

Same section. Retail.

There should not be a Type 1 and Type 2 retail which might restrict future businesses from opening up wherever they choose to go.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

No comment.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE
Draft Interim Report Comments
Comments due by August 13

Other comments?

The current code needs better clarity but does not need to be rewritten.

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: _____ Lisa Richardson _____

Comments on the Executive Summary: **Accurate**

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose: **Accurate**

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date: **This reads as though we have had great community involvement. Although the planned process was adequate, actual community engagement was poorly executed. More community involvement is required before any further action is taken.**

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement: **Good Summary**

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes: **Overall I believe these are still reading as the city would like them too rather than as the stakeholder group and community as a whole would prefer. Surveys of the citizens still need to be taken to ensure this is accurate.**

- **Retail Frontage Requirements: Limited retail frontage as a category should be redefined. As too much retail space exists in the town center I believe we would be better served by requiring what is now defined as “limited retail” to be strictly residential. Possibly home offices could be included within these units but without any retail signage or “storefront” appearance.**
- **Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards: I would prefer the following:**
 - **1. 77th Ave SE (south of SE 29th) should be limited retail frontage.**
 - **2. 78th Ave SE (south of SE 30th) should be limited retail frontage.**
 - **3. SE 29th St. (west of 77th) North side only should be secondary retail. South side should be limited retail.**

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- 4. SE 32nd St. should be **limited retail**
- Building Height Limits: More public input needed. My personal feeling is a 2 story base with provisions for ONE additional story south of SE 29th is best for the Town Center and reflects what I have heard the citizens saying to date. Set back and step back requirements for the area south of 29th should be separately defined in the code. Additionally, the set back and step back requirements as discussed and recommended so far should be mandatory in all development north of 29th.
- Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections: Width and set back requirements should be defined in order to prevent any “alley” effect. If not perceived as welcoming, these connections would not be used by many.
- Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components Accurately reflect stakeholder group input.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes: Accurately summarizes the document as is, but still does not accurately reflect stakeholder group/citizen input.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps: Fine as is

Other comments?

1. In the Town Center Vision statement as well as summary the phrase “diversity of land uses” is used descriptively. Our most recent Town Center development has certainly lacked that diversity. Without proper structure this trend will continue. More than just a vision statement, we need a plan that requires residential and exclusively retail buildings (movies theaters etc.). Mixed use should not be the only development option.
2. Citizens have not been adequately involved in this process. Five poorly attended meetings do not qualify as proper public input. If a city wide survey were taken (perhaps included in a water bill?) at least every household would know they had opportunity to contribute to this process, possibly avoiding future backlash over development decisions.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

Thank you!

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

NAME: Jason Rogers

Comments on the Executive Summary:

- The list of outcomes (page 4) appears to be an output from the Stakeholder Group, but this should be clarified in the text.

Comments on Section 1. Background and Purpose:

- I think this section is fine.
- There was discussion about growth targets and how we're going about meeting those targets. While I think this isn't really germane, I can see where some might think it is a big oversight to not mention this aspect of the discussion.

Comments on Section 2. Community Process to Date:

- It would be nice if a brief summary of public comments received were included, touching on the major themes.
- A more detailed description of the Stakeholders group process as originally envisioned, e.g. each meeting had a slightly different focus and built on the previous meetings.

Comments on Section 3. Town Center Vision Statement:

- Although I think this accurately reflects what has been discussed, the Vision Statement is too long and detailed. It needs to be shorter and more easily understandable. In its current form, you really have to think hard to comprehend everything that's in there.
- I think a better approach would be a shorter, single-sentence vision with accompanying goals which can be more detailed about specific areas of focus.

Comments on Section 4. Proposed Development Code Changes:

- **Retail Frontage Requirements**
 - I have very mixed feelings about required retail. I understand the current development market doesn't like first floor retail too much because of limited demand, so the projects pencil without any income from retail space. This also means we end up with banks and real estate offices filling the space.
 - In that regard, I generally like the approach with use and storefront width restrictions.
 - I question whether this will make any appreciable difference, or simply result in empty street level spaces.
- **Street Frontage Use and Improvement Standards**
 - I don't have any comments on the assignment of street types to the streets in Town Center.
 - In general, I don't believe we should be using our limited public ROW for car storage (parking) when other options exist. To this end, I don't think Street Type 2 is really appropriate, as it provides for 2 extra feet of parking (in angled spaces instead of parallel) at the expense of sidewalk width. This is not a tradeoff I think we should be making.
 - I don't see anything regarding curb bulb-outs at corners and/or midblock to provide shorter crossing widths for pedestrians along with traffic calming effects.
- **Building Height Limits**
 - I've been a proponent of reducing the number of subareas ("focus areas") in Town Center, so I think the general concept here of different height limits in different subareas is sound.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE

Draft Interim Report Comments

Comments due by August 13

- I recognize I'm in the minority on this, but I don't think a 3-story height limit is appropriate anywhere in Town Center. I think the minimum should be 4.
- I care much more about building appearance from the sidewalk/ground level than I do about overall massing.
- Again recognizing I'm probably in the minority on this, I don't have a big problem with the way building heights are currently calculated and the effects this leads to. With that said, I think the example shown for building heights and changing topology is generally too aggressive. I would prefer a setback consistent with one-half of the street width (e.g. a 30-foot setback for a 60-foot ROW width), or even a setback equal to the minimum sidewalk width (curb to building face) provided (e.g. 12 feet on a Type 1 street).

- **Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections**

- I support the changes as shown.

- **Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components**

- Consider requiring a certain number of "points" for various height bonuses, and assign point values to the elements listed. This allows a sliding scale for the various elements; for example providing affordable housing at 50% AMI would be worth more points than at 80% AMI. You'd want to require the use of a certain minimum number of elements, though, to avoid a project focusing on just one or two elements to the exclusion of others. Selecting which elements are mandatory vs. elective also plays into this.
- Setbacks should not necessarily need to be 100% of the building frontage above the base height; modulation should come into play here, but in no case should an element of the building face be allowed to extend from the ground up to the maximum height, avoiding the towering feel.
- Walkoff parking should also have some better wayfinding requirements attached to it; it can be difficult to find parking both for drivers and especially for pedestrians trying to find their way back in. Island Square does the pedestrian side reasonably well, while The Mercer does not.
- We should also entertain a reduction in parking for residential uses in conjunction with proposed increases in retail parking requirements. The current range of 1-3 spaces per unit is crazy, especially with light rail coming. We should reduce this to 0.5 to 2.0 per unit.
- Parking requirements should be use based, and not tied to building height.
- I'd rather not make the green building standards stuff mandatory; it should be elective for height bonuses.
- We should differentiate between site and landscaping features which are otherwise required, versus features over and above requirements which would be elective for bonus purposes.

Comments on Section 5. Summary of Proposed Changes:

- I like the detailed summary by block.
- It would be nice to provide an introductory paragraph which describes the proposed changes at a more high-level view encompassing Town Center as a whole.

Comments on Section 6. Next Steps:

- My impression is that some people would like to continue discussing height, although I don't think there's much to be gained by further discussion of height. Not sure if you want to include that in this section.

Other comments?

- Thanks for all the hard work on this.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE
Draft Interim Report Comments
Comments due by August 13

Thank you!

Town Center Visioning Comments

From Orna Samuelly

August 20, 2015

The report was very detailed, and I will not have comments on the entire report. Rather, I will share with you my general comments and some of the gaps and comments from my perspective.

Vision. First, I think page 11, the Draft Updated Town Center Vision Statement is excellent. I think it captures very well the spirit of the discussion and the focus of the working group over the several sessions. While it may not be any one person's view, it really does reflect the general consensus nicely.

I think the vision is clearer, frankly, than the Executive Summary and the Background sections which sought to step through all the goals and intentions. Even though I was there, those goals listed weren't that clear to me in this document. For example, I don't know what a "regulating plan" is, and I don't recall discussing maximizing on-street parking as an additional goal. That being said, the right spirit came through, and that's the most important.

Here are some general thoughts on other sections:

Building Heights. We did spend a lot of time discussing the heights of buildings. What we discussed is accurately detailed in the document, to the best of my knowledge. However, I feel like we were led down a path on this one, seeing the same Seth Harry's pictures about layer cakes and setbacks, and the fear of "canyons" on our island. I don't know that alternatives were really well explored.

Notwithstanding my personal view, I agree that the group consensus was higher buildings in the north, lower towards the south, and that was nicely articulated in the document. My personal concern here is that I don't know if these tradeoffs for lower heights will compromise our desire to encourage more/better retail in town center. Could well be that the density we need to support it is what we won't have by restricting height/development. I don't think this tradeoff, was well explained or understood. Along these lines, I will point out one specific concern that was discussed and I don't remember seeing it in my review of the document. That is the Farmers Insurance Building. There is concern that with so many levels, it wouldn't pass the current guidelines. That was our concern, and the need to maintain the commerce, jobs and support for local businesses that Farmer's provides. Our discussion/table did want to emphasize the importance of the jobs brought and businesses supported by that business, and make sure that we don't do anything that would jeopardize maintaining a similar structure for business needs.

Parking. While Parking is mentioned here, I don't think it was fully or adequately addressed in the context of the plan. The well-stated vision for ample on and off street parking is clear. Several options were discussed but, a full on plan was never a focus and as a result, it's still a big gap from my perspective. We have walk-off parking here, angled parking there, but not a clear and comprehensive plan. Perhaps it needs as much focus as the "streetscapes" or layercaked buildings. Several folks,

including myself, are concerned with the layout of existing parking today (huge footprint dedicated to parking, but scattered and requires you to move from location to location). Also, with anticipated transit changes, the impact on parking and the future parking impacts on town center were raised a few times, but not fully addressed. So, I think parking is an unresolved issue, and will get worse if not addressed.

Retail. Also, there is mention of encouraging street level retail, which I wholeheartedly endorse, and did come through as a strong message that the group supported. That being said, it is hard to understand how we can achieve this goal. There were a few discussions on this, including some subsidized “affordable retail” concepts, but nothing that could be seen as a plan to encourage this business. Perhaps it’s out of scope. Or, once the rest is built, they will come. I don’t know, but I would have liked to help identify ways to encourage what feels like very limited retail. Perhaps it’s in the document and I missed it. Also, in the early sessions, there seemed to be a lot of enthusiasm about a permanent farmer’s market structure, but then I didn’t hear about it again.

Developer Incentives. This was a major area of discussion and concern, and in my opinion, the solutions provided are not as clear and comprehensive as those set forth for the streets and the building heights. The Town Center Incentive Program section, starting page 34, was a topic of much debate and discussion. I think this is also one of the most critical and sensitive topics we broached. I’m not sure if the guidelines are as prescriptive for this section as they need to be. The ambitions are laid out, and do accurately reflect our discussion, but I don’t know how impactful it will be. Mention of the walk off parking is good, but it’s not a comprehensive town-center parking solution. Mention of affordable retail is great, but how and what and will it work with a larger retail vision. I think this section is important, and perhaps could be addressed in more detail in future sessions.

I hope that these few comments are useful to you in some way. I truly appreciate your allowing me and other Mercer Island citizens to participate in such an important process. While this is not my area of expertise, I hope my perspectives were of value in some way.

Thanks again and warm regards,

Orna Samuelly

From: Scott Shay [<mailto:scott@tsgprop.com>]
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2015 12:25 PM
To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>
Subject: RE: Update on Draft Interim Town Center Report

Hello Scott,

Thank you for the work you have put into this process. At this point I think the draft report looks as we discussed during the meetings. I still believe that in the end the devil will be in the details, especially pertaining to incentives for adding height to the buildings. What does "green" specifically mean? What type and size of public plazas? And parking not only for shopping but more importantly for commuters, and those wishing to use lightrail in the near future. So until those details are specifically put on paper it is difficult to evaluate the process. I am glad to see that it appears that the vocal minority is getting its fair share of time to make its argument but we are not creating a downtown based on their very loud opinions, and basing it more on the opinions of the community as a whole.

Also, though I know economically difficult, I would really like to see a conversation begin in earnest between the city and the owners of the Walgreens property. I think we can try to create a public/private partnership with a public plaza and surrounding shops/restaurants, along with below grade parking. I believe this is essential to a growing downtown.

Thanks again for the work.

Scott Shay
TSG Properties LLC
scott@tsgprop.com
www.tsgprop.com

From: Suzanne Skone [mailto:s.skone@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2015 9:14 AM
To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>
Subject: Town Center intern Report 7/23

Scott,

Well done! Here are my comments written as best possible from the backseat of a car on a road trip.

I would consider adding a table of contents.

And in general repeat that this document is a framework to be fine tuned by professionals like traffic engineers. Also we need input from public that has not been involved to date. I also think we need professionals to look at economic impacts to smaller parcels of mandatory requirements like wider sidewalks (and I question if they add value on both sides of the street on the edges of the TC.)

Also:

Page 8 "additional Goals by community " • mid block connections •on street parking •significant public amenities and/or parks and plazas

Page 9: "vision". I am not happy with the vision statement? I do not think it is focused on land use in the town center but more as all Island. How is "investment in education" reflected in this work? Are we building schools here?

Page 12 "five key areas"
What about public plazas?

Page 18 to 22 we need to fine tune with traffic engineers. 80 north of 28th must keep its heavily used turn lanes in this very short block with several auto related businesses including bank drive thru and large parking garage.

Page 23 to 26. Are the colors in the legends consistent and correct?

Page 33 mid block connections: the width and use of mid block connections should be dictated by number of extra stories/ height, for example 2 story could have basic walkway 12 feet and 5 stories would have 20 feet plus retail store fronts. See U Village for an example of this. This can meet an incentive.

Page 35 Town Center Incentive Program: I believe you are missing a bullet item "On Site Public Plaza/ public courtyard.

I also think we need to mandate that at least part of the retail must be occupied % on annual basis so store front are occupied.

I'll have to wrap it up, soon to loose cell coverage for 3 days. Again I think this document

captures the process very well and is well written and organized.

Regards,
Suzanne Skone

Comments on Town Center Interim Report

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the stakeholder committee and thanks for the opportunity to respond to the interim report.

The question seems to be whether the report accurately sums up “progress” on the charge of revamping the development code. The answer, unfortunately, is yes. It does a good job for the most part of documenting those discussions.

It is hard to discuss the report without talking about the process. There is what I would call a troubling if not fatal flaw in the process. We are sort of working from a 25 year old plan that has very little in common with recent development activity or with our recent discussions. That old plan discussed two story development, surface parking and development concepts for properties that have long since been redeveloped. The old plan did not fly and was eventually replaced with more permissive rules that have been critically reviewed by the city’s planning consultant.

Instead we have what seems to be a jumble, a kind of rethinking the plan but in the context of presumably writing a code. It is as though we were writing specifications for a building without really being sure what we were building. Add to that disagreements over the shape and size of the new “building” and it all gets a bit messy.

I’d be very surprised if many people outside the process used the interim report. (It seems that even people inside the process are reluctant to wade in.) The subject is complex and it is very hard to see what how the words would manifest themselves in something that people want. If people have trouble understanding something they tend to dismiss it, especially if they may feel that past development actions have not always reflected their values.

Why is it so complex? The current code is complex. The new one is even more so. Three different types of streets in an area that has only maybe 10 streets? Multiple zones in a relatively small area? Heights measured in stories and in feet?

It is not even clear if the changes proposed by the consultant meet the ideals that he put forward in terms of street width and building heights.

So in my opinion the report does not meet the needs of a good communication tool. What people need is the ability to compare what we have now with what might be. Here is a picture of a particular development and here is how it would be done if these new ideas were in place. Obviously one can’t take the resources to redesign several buildings, but some illustrative work would be helpful.

I’m not suggesting that the report be rewritten. It does convey much of what has been discussed. It is just that many of those discussions have not been particularly productive and the report, while technically accurate, may not be an effective communications tool.

That said, I know that much work has gone into this process and I’m appreciative of the hours and effort and particularly of how the vision statements have been woven into the document.

The summary of proposed change is good and probably ought to be pushed up in the report as it conveys landmarks people understand. At the end of the day, does the new plan or code change much?

Some nits:

Why the code language about hotels and motels when that was never discussed?

Layer cake versus wedding cake: let's get the cakes straight.

Geoff Spelman

Summary of Stakeholder Comments on the Interim Report to the Community

Response rate

We received responses from 2 of 9 TCLG members as well as 26 of 42 Stakeholders. The list of respondents is below.

- Amie Fahey
- Bart Dawson
- Colin Brandt
- Don Cohen
- Ellen Miller-Wolfe
- Geoff Spelman
- Jim Eanes
- Lisa Richardson
- Mark Glasser*
- Mark Meinzingher
- Mark O'Shea
- Michael J Hart
- Nancy Lee
- Nate Larson
- Orna Samuelly*
- Pete Kangas
- Ralph Jorgenson
- Roberta Lewandowski
- Salim Nice*
- Scott Shay
- Steffenie Evans
- Suzanne Skone
- Tamar Mar
- Terry Moreman
- Tom Acker*
- Toni Okada
- Traci Granbois
- Wendy Weiker

*-Comments received late on August 20, and not incorporated into this document

Support of Interim Report as a Whole

75% of respondents agree or agree with edits to the content of the Interim Report as a whole. Only one person disagreed with the report, stating that it “does not accurately reflect stakeholder input”. This comment seemed to be in reference primarily to stakeholder input on building heights.

agree	agree w edits	don't agree	no opinion
13	5	1	5

Sample comments

- Captures what came from stakeholder discussions pretty well
- Well done! I think this document captures the process very well and is well written and organized.
- Good representation of a lot of the actual information generated during the visioning process
- I think you captured the essence of the discussions and details of the issues really well. I appreciate that you made it very clear where the remaining work on the specifics of zoning and code changes need to occur. The maps, illustrations, and tables made this report much more user friendly than it might have been otherwise.
- A good summary of the work we as stakeholders undertook and of the general conclusions that the group (in surprising solidarity) endorsed.

Support for Vision Statement

54% of respondents agree or agree with edits to the Vision Statement. Two people did not agree with the vision, with one stating that it applied to the whole Island rather than the Town Center specifically and the other feeling that the process to develop the vision was faulty. Another 38% of respondents did not express an opinion on the Vision.

agree	agree w edits	don't agree	no opinion
12	1	2	9

Example comments

- The vision statement reflects well, in my opinion, the sentiments of the Stakeholder Group. It is wonderfully idyllic. I hope it is achievable.
- Vision statement is lovely and reflects what I want Mercer Island to be.

Common areas of disagreement

- **Building height** – details of which parcels have changed and why, as well as overall height limits; some felt the report did not accurately reflect stakeholder opinions on height
- Retail requirements – several people advocated for reduced area of required retail with more area of limited retail or MF, a few opposed the restrictions around personal services
- Access to Courtyards – several people did not support a requirement for access to courtyards
- Mid-block Connections – some want more, some want less, different locations, etc. Some want more details on size and specifications – avoid appearance of narrow alleys
- Sidewalks – a few advocated for uniform setbacks/sidewalk widths and preferred a width that is not overly expansive (12 feet?)
- Process – consultants were ineffective/poor facilitators, consultants were biased and did not bring forward a full range of options, visioning work was done out of order, and discussions were not productive. Some want more public involvement going forward, some hope for a more streamlined process.

Preliminary Staff Recommendation on Revisions to the Interim Report

- A number of grammatical corrections and editorial clarifications
- Clearly identify issues with a diversity of opinions/minority opinions
- Height limits should be expressed in feet and stories throughout the report
- Clarify how “wedding cake” stepbacks mesh with requirements for façade modulation – how do we avoid all buildings looking alike?
- Characterize opportunity sites for public plazas/open space as such (refrain from indicating specific parcels are being rezoned or otherwise designated as open space, clarify need for property acquisition at FMV and that no funds have been identified).
- Rename “Starbucks Square”
- Add sustainability into vision more explicitly
- Clarify areas where more analysis is needed – economic feasibility, legal feasibility, technical feasibility, safety, etc
- Add more detail to next steps to clarify forthcoming staff work and Planning Commission process

From: Wendy Weiker [<mailto:wendyw@live.com>]
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2015 3:26 PM
To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>
Subject: Re: Update on Draft Interim Town Center Report

Hi Scott,

Thank you for the extensive, comprehensive summary of the town center visioning group work.

I think you captured the essence of the discussions and details of the issues really well. I appreciate that you made it very clear where the remaining work on the specifics of zoning and code changes need to occur. The maps, illustrations, and tables made this report much more user friendly than it might have been otherwise.

Now for specifics:

- 1) I agree TC design guidelines/codes need to be more prescriptive so we get consistent look/feel/cohesion through out the business district - future development needs to result in solid sense of place that meets intent of "updated" vision statement.
- 2) The 5 focus areas of Development Code changes make sense for a framework to close on open details. We may want to call out "parking" in one of the 5 areas so it's crystal clear we know this issue is a critical component of the work ahead.
- 3) I like the proposed zoning for building height step down from north to south, including the more detailed public amenities, public plazas, and midblock connections.
- 4) I'd like to understand more about affordable housing and retail as an amenity, and what the cost difference might be in the various electives as building heights increase. It seems a public plaza or contribution to a TC improvement fund would be less expensive or cumbersome to a builder so the "affordables" might not actually ever be utilized.
- 5) Who/how would it be determined what amount of affordable housing & underground parking would be required in the mandatory 4&5 building story buildings?

Thank you and your team for the great summary,

Wendy Weiker
Wendyw@live.com
206-214-6424

Mechem

From: Jennifer Mechem <jenni.mechem@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 31, 2015 8:32 AM
To: Alison VanGorp
Cc: Scott Greenberg
Subject: Re: Reminder: No meeting Aug 6

Alison -

I just realized that I never did get back to you with comments on the draft interim report, despite your text about the deadline extension (thanks again). I understand you are putting out the next version today. It's too late for any substantive feedback, but I want to register my approval of the overall draft; if you are including numbers for stakeholder responses and/or concurrence/dissent, please feel free to add mine to those numbers.

To clarify - is the Town Center Open House and Report to City Council still happening next Tuesday, September 8?

Thanks!

-Jenni Mechem

On Tue, Aug 4, 2015 at 1:44 PM, Alison VanGorp <alison.vangorp@mercergov.org> wrote:
Stakeholders - As a reminder, the August 6th Stakeholder Meeting has been canceled. We look forward to receiving your comments on the Interim Report to the Community by August 13.

Thanks,
Alison

From: Scott Greenberg
Sent: Friday, July 31, 2015 6:32 PM
To: Scott Greenberg <Scott.Greenberg@mercergov.org>
Subject: Draft Interim Report on the Town Center Vision and Development Code Update

Dear Town Center Stakeholders:

Mechem

Attached is the DRAFT Interim Report to the Community on the Town Center Vision and Development Code Update. Thank you again for all your input, ideas and time in helping us get to this point in the process. Together, we have spent a lot of time on this effort and have made a lot of progress. Your feedback has been invaluable.

There are no final recommendations in this report. Rather, it attempts to summarize the many design concepts you have reviewed to help make the Town Center vision a reality. It also includes a proposed DRAFT updated vision statement—consolidating the core ideas expressed.

We welcome your feedback on this report to help us create the final document. To help us collate and assemble your feedback, please send your thoughts back to us by Thursday, August 13 using the attached template (preferably in WORD format) by email to me at scott.greenberg@mercergov.org. We hope to issue the final report by the end of August.

Have a great Seafair weekend!

Scott Greenberg, AICP | Development Services Director
Development Services Group
City of Mercer Island
9611 SE 36th Street | Mercer Island, WA 98040
Direct 206.275.7706
scott.greenberg@mercergov.org

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