Mercer Island Town Center
Community Engagement Process Assessment and Recommendations
September 16, 2015

Prepared by Karen Reed, Karen Reed Consulting LLC

Executive Summary

The consultant was engaged by the City to review the community engagement process for the Mercer Island Town Center vision and development code update and make recommendations for next steps towards completing an update of the Town Center development code and related portions of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Based on reviewing materials developed over the course of the project, input from one-one one-interviews with Councilmembers and members of the Town Center Liaison Group, and surveys of Town Center Stakeholder Group members, it is clear that there have been both challenges and successes in the effort.

The Stakeholder Group has generated a wealth of detailed recommendations and ideas, as reflected in the "Town Center Visioning and Development Code Update Interim Report to the Community" dated August 31, 2015.

The City should move forward building on the stakeholder input received to date. The next phase of work should be assigned to the Planning Commission, convening jointly with the Design Commission. The Interim Report should serve as the starting point and major reference point for the work ahead. The updated draft vision statement should serve as a touchstone and should be broadly communicated to the community this fall with accompanying visuals.

The Planning Commission process should also be adjusted provide an expanded opportunity for public input and community outreach.

The work should be a priority: completed recommendations should be forwarded to City Council as soon as practicable in early 2016.

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The scope of work for this project is to review the community engagement process for the Mercer Island Town Center vision and development code update and make recommendations for next steps towards completing an update of the Town Center development code and related portions of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

This document summarizes stakeholder feedback received, assesses the challenges and successes of the process to date, and makes recommendations to the City as to how to proceed.

The consultant has not been engaged to provide substantive direction or advice on the contents of the Town Center development code.

I.   Consultant Process

The consultant reviewed all materials presented over the course of both Phase 1 of the Town Center visioning and development code update project, and the community engagement process deployed in Phase 2 of the project, together with meeting summaries and other items posted on the City website relative to the project. For those unfamiliar with the process to date, and the various committees involved, a high level summary is provided at **Figure 1**.

The consultant met individually with all members of the Town Center Liaison Group ("TCLG") and the City Council, for approximately one hour each. The interviews took place between July 24 and August 6. All interviewees were asked the same set of general questions (See **Attachment A**), intended to get a sense of how they would evaluate the community engagement process, their view of the draft vision statement for Town Center, and what they see as the options moving ahead. In addition, all Town Center Stakeholder Group ("Stakeholder Group") members were offered an opportunity to complete a short survey including a set of questions similar to those posed to the TCLG and City Council. Twenty-seven (27) of 42 Stakeholder Group Members—64% -- responded. An additional 7 members followed up after the polling period closed, in response to a follow up email sent September 9: three of the 7 completed the survey and their feedback is included (total of 30 responses, or 71% of the Stakeholder Group.)

The consultant reviewed the written input from Stakeholder Group members on the draft "Town Center Visioning and Development Code Update Interim Report to the Community" ("Interim Report"); 32 of 42 Stakeholder Group members offered comments on the draft Interim Report.

The consultant reviewed results of the most recent community poll (April 2014), and spoke with City staff involved with the project. The consultant also spoke with Seth Harry (consultant engaged for Phase 1 and Phase 2). She also participated in a City Council subcommittee meeting to discuss the Interim Report.

Figure 1: Town Center Visioning and Development Code Update –Summary of Process to Date

o The current design guidelines and code requirements for development in Town Center were originally adopted after a year-long community process in 1994. The code was significantly amended in 2002. Amendments were also approved in several other years.

o March 2014: Prompted by the proposed 2023 opening of Sound Transit light rail on the Island and community concern with recent development, the City Council created a Town Center Subcommittee composed of three councilmembers to develop a scope of work for a process to review the current Town Center vision and development code.

o A 29-member community group was convened for a single Town Center visioning discussion on May 21, 2014. The group confirmed the existing vision is appropriate but implementation through the development code is falling short of meeting that vision.

o In September 2014, the City Council authorized hiring of Seth Harry & Associates to review the Town Center development code and identify possible changes. The consultant team conducted a 3-day design workshop and presented the outcomes to the 29-member visioning committee and others in December 2014, and produced a report presented to Council in January 2015. This "Phase 1" report proposed more prescriptive code with a revised incentive structure to deliver desired public amenities in Town Center.

o In February 2015, the City Council approved a 4-month moratorium on new development over two stories in height in the Town Center. The City Council exempted three contiguous parcels known as the "Hines" property from the moratorium. This moratorium was re-adopted in March 2015. In June 2015, the moratorium was renewed for 6 months, and the Hines property exemption was removed.

o February 2015: Council approved a "Phase 2" Community Engagement Process, creating a 42-member "Town Center Stakeholder Group" (Stakeholder Group) tasked with providing input into the development code revision process. Members were selected by staff and the City Council Town Center Subcommittee with input from the "Town Center Liaison Group" (TCLG). The TCLG was composed of the 3-City Councilmembers serving on the Town Center Subcommittee, plus 3 Planning Commission members and 3 Design Commission members. The TCLG, in addition to providing input to the makeup of the Stakeholder Group, was charged with serving as a liaison between the public, the Council, staff and consultants in the process.

o In spring of 2015, the City hosted five community meetings and partner organizations hosted an additional four meetings to secure public input on the project.

o The Stakeholder Group was scheduled to have four meetings from March through May 2015. The work plan was expanded and extended in May for an additional two meetings, the last of which was held on June 10. At that point, the City placed the Stakeholder Group on hiatus and directed staff to compile a report of the work and recommendations from the Stakeholder Group ("Interim Report") as next steps were developed.

o The "Interim Report" of the Stakeholder Group was published August 31, 2015. Thirty-two Stakeholder Group members provided input to the report, as did TCLG members. The report included a *draft updated vision statement for Town Center*, which was supported by a strong majority of the Stakeholder Group.

o On September 9, the City Council preliminarily endorsed the draft vision statement in the Interim Report.

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II. Summary of Feedback Received

This section of the report summarizes stakeholder feedback received from the individual interviews of the TCLG and City Council, and the subsequent survey of Stakeholder Group members. More detail is provided at **Attachment B**. A broad range of opinions was expressed, but also strong consensus on several key points. This document does not catalogue all the individual ideas offered, or all the positive and negative comments expressed. All Stakeholder Group member comments received are posted on the City's website. In the text below, "consensus" is used to mean something less than unanimous agreement, but more than a supermajority of those commenting on the issue.

A. Town Center Vision

The first question the consultant asked of TCLG, City Council and Stakeholder Group members was "What are your interests in the Town Center vision and development code update? Ideally, what outcomes are you most interested in seeing?" It was striking to hear and read the strong consensus expressed in these comments, and observe how closely they reflect the draft updated vision statement. That said, there are definite differences of opinion, and a few people are very opposed to current levels of planned density and other proposals in the Interim Report.

1. TCLG and City Council Input

The City Council gave its preliminary endorsement to the updated draft Town Center vision statement included in the Interim Report on September 8. In the earlier interviews, TCLG and City Council members expressed general support for the updated draft Town Center vision statement included in the draft Interim Report, although several noted that such statements are by nature broad and the language can mask underlying disputes. A few offered edits.

There was consensus that the draft updated vision statement reflects a refinement of the Town Center vision put in place in 1994, and that the core of that original vision remains relevant and on track. Most of those interviewed believe that having a common vision for Town Center is an important foundation to the development code update.

Most of those interviewed agreed that the draft updated vision statement reflects a consensus view of the Stakeholder Group and the broader community, but several acknowledged that there are individuals within each of those groups that disagree with some aspects of the statement.

Several people observed that the phrase "small-town feel" in the Town Center vision statement could be supported by nearly everyone but could be interpreted very differently by those on different sides of height and density issues. Another point of conflict underlying the text relates to whether Town Center should be developed only for "Islanders" versus a place that will attract visitors from "off-Island" -- this conflict was noted as underlying phrases such as "range of building types," "variety of housing options," and "diversity of uses."

There is strong consensus among the TCLG and Councilmembers that the existing Town Center development code is not delivering optimal development and should be strengthened so that the City's vision for the Town Center is more likely to be realized over time.

2. Stakeholder Group Input

Seventy percent of Stakeholder Group members responding generally supported the draft updated vision statement in the Interim Report, while many also offered potential edits they felt would improve the statement.

B. The Phase II Community Stakeholder Process (March – July 2015)

1. TCLG and City Council Input

Among these 13 individuals, there is unanimity that there were a range of problems with the community stakeholder process, but that the Stakeholder Group has put many very helpful ideas on the table that can inform the update of the development code.

All those interviewed were able to identify things that have gone well in the process, as well as things that had not gone well. The concerns and positives identified varied widely. The most commonly mentioned positive was the good public discourse that occurred at the Stakeholder Group: discussion was extensive and all parties had ample opportunity to express their views and explore a wide array of ideas. There was also consensus that the Stakeholder Group composition was appropriate. The most commonly mentioned concern was that the process seemed rushed. Several observed that the project was not well scoped—too broad, too vague, requiring too much detailed input—and that the scope expanded as time went on.

Nearly all those interviewed observed that there is not unanimity within the Stakeholder Group around the issues of height and density in the Town Center. Many observed that a vocal minority of Stakeholder Group members was allowed too much sway over the dialogue at the meetings. Some observed that the Town Center issue has been conflated with a discussion about the appropriate land use density and population growth targets for Mercer Island as a whole and complicated by other intervening events, such as the Sound Transit plans. Some observed that there was strong consensus early on within the Stakeholder Group around the issues of height and density, but this consensus eroded over time.

There was a broad diversity of opinion as to strength of the overall community outreach; some felt it was excellent, others found it to be very unsatisfactory.

2. Stakeholder Group Input

Nearly all Stakeholder Group members responding to the survey identified both positive and negative aspects to the process. Some of the more frequently mentioned positives were the make-up of the stakeholder group and the extensive outreach effort by the City. Concerns mentioned most frequently included the responsiveness of the consultant team, lack of data, and insufficient time to consider issues. (*See* Attachment B for more detail)

A small number of Stakeholder Group members or others felt that the make-up of the Stakeholder Group was flawed—either too many developer interests, or too few. But most members did not point to any flaws in the make-up of the Stakeholder Group, and/or observed it was well and fairly constituted.

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C. Views on Next Steps

1. TCLG and City Council Input

There was consensus that the City should try to move forward in a constructive manner that does not waste the time, effort – and most importantly, the good ideas that have been developed through the community process to date. There is also common desire to have effective communication with the community on the Town Center issues moving forward. Beyond that, however, the group had a wide range of ideas for how to move forward. A few felt the path ahead is very clear—but had broadly divergent ideas for what that path should be. Others were less certain about the next steps.

Seven of 13 TCLG and City Councilmembers thought it would be appropriate to reconvene the Stakeholder Group for at least one meeting, possibly more, but there was no overall agreement as to what such Stakeholder Group meetings should entail. The other 6 members felt the Stakeholder Group should not be reconvened.

There was general agreement that the TCLG should continue to meet for at least as long as the Stakeholder Group remains in existence.

No one expressed support for the idea of having a committee of 42 people draft development code language.

Several of those interviewed expressed a desire to pull together a strong set of visuals to convey the core consensus points of discussion—particularly around the vision statement– and then communicate this with the community.

There was no consensus as to whether it is appropriate or necessary to poll the community on these issues. About half thought polling would be important to confirm community support for the vision statement. Others felt it would be very challenging to craft a poll, or that polling may not be needed. There is consensus that if any polling is done, it should be done professionally to ensure a statistically valid sample and that the questions asked are unbiased.

2. Stakeholder Group Input

Only ten of the 42 Stakeholder Group members (24%) expressed the view that the Stakeholder Group should be reconvened; four of those thought it should be reconvened for one "wrap-up" meeting; the other six thought a more extensive work program would be appropriate. The remainder of those responding said the group should not be reconvened, convened only upon certain contingencies, expressed no opinion, or said they were unsure whether this was a good idea. Overall, this feedback is consistent with the observation of many TCLG members.

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III.   Assessment of Process to Date

No public process is perfect. In this situation, as with other complex public issues, it is not realistic to expect that all participants will be happy with all the outcomes, since it is not always possible to find a "win-win" result on every issue.

Effective public processes require the right combination of *people*, *problem* and *process*. An appropriate set of stakeholders should be convened to address a problem that they can meaningfully tackle, and the process must involve appropriate governance clarity, reasonable timing and effective dialogue opportunities.

Assessment of the process here is based on the information available to the consultant. Some limitations here worth noting: The consultant was hired in July 2015, after the process was conducted.   The meetings of the Stakeholder Group and TCLG were not videotaped or audiotaped, and the meeting notes were very high level. And, 29% of the Stakeholder Group members did not respond to the survey seeking their feedback.

While there were challenges with the community engagement process, it nevertheless allowed for robust discussion among a large and diverse group of community stakeholders and resulted in a wealth of ideas—at both a high policy level, and at a very detailed level. This work, as captured in the Interim Report, can serve as a solid foundation for the next phase of effort. The process helped identify the key areas on which there are differences of opinion, and allowed for ample expression of views and ideas with respect to these areas.

Based on an assessment of the information and feedback provided, the primary weaknesses in the process included:

1. **Scope of Work**: the Stakeholder Group's task/mission was not sufficiently clear. People came to the table with many different expectations – as a result of which, many were frustrated. While the goal may not have been to engage the Stakeholder Group in detailed review and discussion of design options, the scope of work nevertheless expanded to allow this. In the end, the input received is helpful for the work ahead, but generally one would not task a very large group of people with working through a myriad of technical details.

2. **Work Plan**: The work plan as adopted was very different from that recommended by the consultant team. Insufficient time was spent on reviewing and developing consensus on the vision statement early in the process: this decision was made before convening the Stakeholder Group, based on a meeting with a *different* group of stakeholders held in May 2014, from which it was concluded that the Town Center vision remains on track. This conclusion should have been explored again with the Stakeholder Group up front. A longer community charrette at the front end of the Stakeholder Group process would arguably have made this possible and would have helped firm up consensus at a higher level and avoid the need to revisit the vision statement later on.

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The process was also very ambitious as to the amount of ground to be explored and evaluated in a short period of time. The eventual extension of the timeframe was in part a recognition of this challenge—but also placed additional burdens on the citizen volunteers. The late insertion in the work plan of a vision discussion was confusing and frustrating to many, giving the sense that the work to that point had somehow "put the cart before the horse."

3. **Governance**: The key groups involved in oversight of the effort—the Council subcommittee, TCLG, and Town Center Stakeholder Group – were given overly broad and vague missions. The operating rules for the groups were not clearly articulated. The relationship between the groups was not well defined and changed over the course of the project: the TCLG and Council Subcommittee evolved into more of an oversight group controlling input to the Stakeholder Group and this was not transparent to the Stakeholder Group. The lack of a defined leadership group on the Stakeholder Group made effectively working with the Stakeholder Group particularly challenging. The Stakeholder Group was too large to permit a functional dialogue for the group *as a whole*, resulting in a need to rely on smaller group discussion (a very effective alternative, up to a point). Tension between the Council Town Center Subcommittee and consultant and staff team as to how to proceed contributed to confusion for the Stakeholder Group regarding the process, and may also have contributed to frustration by several on the Stakeholder Group with the responsiveness of the consultant and staff team. The facilitation of the process did not effectively capture and build consensus or ensure effective sharing of "air time" between group members.

4. **Communication:** The City was not sufficiently proactive and informative in communicating with the broader community about the process as it proceeded. The meeting summaries posted were generally too cryptic to allow outsiders to remain up to speed.

The fact that the City put the Stakeholder Group on hold in July reflects their recognition that the process was at that point subject to a range of criticisms and needed to be assessed and potentially redirected.

Many public processes can, at some point, reach the point of diminishing returns, where continued discussion simply amplifies division and re-hashes ground already covered, rather than resulting in resolution and forward progress. It appears very likely that the Stakeholder Group has reached this point.

Even if this were not the case, the City is also in the midst of an election involving 5 of 7 city council seats: some Stakeholder Group members observed that the Stakeholder Group meetings had turned into opportunities for highly politicized dialogue and "grandstanding" which they found to be a deterrent to problem solving.

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Additionally, the City and Sound Transit have just launched a two month long "community listening" effort related to the Sound Transit center roadway, light rail and bus system reconfiguration impacts, which could potentially confuse a general public outreach effort around Town Center if one were to continue over this same time.

Thirty-two of the 42 Stakeholder Group members either: (1) expressed a desire to not reconvene; (2) said they were unsure whether reconvening was a good idea or were only conditionally supportive; (3) said they had no opinion; or (4) did not respond to the survey at all. (See **Attachment B** for more detail). Ten members of the Stakeholder Group members (24%) expressed a desire to have the Stakeholder Group meet again: four of the 10 said this should be only for a wrap up session, while six of the 10 thought the group should be reconvened for something more extensive. While the wishes of the Stakeholder Group on this issue are not necessarily definitive, they are an important consideration moving ahead.

Based upon review of the available information and stakeholder feedback, despite flaws in the process, there is no compelling reason to throw out or re-do the work that has been accomplished. The Stakeholder Group has found strong consensus on many issues and has identified a wealth of detailed options on which to base the Town Center development code update. Their ideas and input have been effectively captured in the Interim Report. The challenge is to determine how best move to forward.

IV.   Recommendations

A. Overview

The City should move forward building on the stakeholder input received to date. The next phase of work should be assigned to the Planning Commission. The Interim Report should serve as the starting point for the work.

The Planning Commission process should be adjusted in several respects, to engage the Design Commission in deliberations and provide an expanded opportunity for additional public input and community outreach.

B. Goal

The goal is the timely adoption—by early in 2016 (March or April) -- of the City Comprehensive Plan update, and a Town Center development code update. The updates are intended to provide greater assurance that future development in Town Center reflects the community's vision for Town Center. The basic outlines of that vision are set forth in the Interim Report

C. Values

The work ahead should be guided by the following values:

1. Transparency – good communication, clear policy and process direction
2. Valuing and building on the extensive community input received to date

3. Effective communication with the community throughout the process
4. Effective and efficient City government
5. An end product that is supported by the community

D. Current situation-- *major knowns/unknowns/closely related issues*

It is helpful to acknowledge some of the things that are known, unknown and/or closely related to the work ahead.

Known:
1. The draft updated vision statement as endorsed by the City Council on September 8, is largely consistent with the 1994 Town Center Vision, and includes some important refinements brought forth as a result of the Stakeholder Group work.
2. The City has a moratorium in place on Town Center development greater than 2-stories in height and has an interest in lifting that moratorium sooner rather than later. A central goal of the moratorium was to allow time for an update of the development code before allowing any more such development in Town Center.
3. It will be very challenging, if not impossible, to complete the entire Planning Commission process and adopt both an updated Comprehensive Plan and updated development code before the current moratorium expires in mid-December 2015.
4. This fall, Sound Transit is undertaking a community outreach process on Mercer Island on mitigation for the loss of Islander access to the I-90 center roadway and proposed implementation of a major bus-turnaround on the Island. The dialogue with Sound Transit on the details of, and mitigation for, these projects is likely to continue for several years.

Unknown:
1. Level of broader community awareness about the discussion around updating Town Center vision statement and development codes.
2. What agreement will be reached with Sound Transit on mitigation and how that could impact Town Center.

Key Related Issues:
1. The Comprehensive Plan update must occur before, or at minimum synchronous with, the development code update so that both are consistent.
2. The Council wants an updated Town Center development code in place before it lifts the moratorium.
3. The Sound Transit projects-- I-90 center roadway use and light rail /bus turnaround-- will impact Town Center traffic flow (and other aspects of Town Center and the City) -- but it could be years before the specifics here are known, and mitigation agreed upon/implemented.
4. The Mercer Island Community Arts center, as proposed, if constructed, would be located outside the southern boundary of the Town Center and could have impact on Town Center traffic and parking.

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E. Risks

Some of the main risks relate to timing:

1. Unwarranted delay in lifting moratorium could create problems. If the moratorium is lifted before the development code update is complete, the main hoped-for benefit of the code update process is at risk.
2. Lack of progress towards adopting updated City comprehensive plan risks penalties from the State.
3. There may be different perspectives on these issues between the current sitting City Council and the Council to be convened next January, which could result in further process changes and delays.

F. Proposed Strategic Objectives:

Four basic objectives -- key steps to achieving the goal -- are identified below. Each objective is then discussed in more detail, including specific action recommendations.

Strategic Objectives for Completing Town Center Vision and Development Code Update

1. The City Planning Commission should be tasked by the City Council with the next phase of work on the Town Center development code update and Comprehensive Plan update. The Planning Commission should be directed to engage the Design Commission in this work, with the two groups convening jointly. An enhanced public process should accompany the work. The work should be based on and build from the Interim Report. The work should be a priority: recommendations should be forwarded to City Council as soon as practicable in early 2016.

2. The draft updated Town Center vision statement, as presented in the Interim Report and preliminarily endorsed by the Council, should serve as a touchstone on the next phase of work on the Comprehensive Plan update and Town Center development code changes. This draft vision statement should be broadly communicated to residents and businesses this fall.

3. Throughout the rest of the process, ensure effective communication to the community around Town Center vision and development code update project.

4. The City Council should be able to take up deliberation on both the updated Comprehensive Plan (incorporating updated Town Center vision statement) and Town Center development code update in early 2016.

Strategic Objective 1: **The City Planning Commission should be tasked by the City Council with the next phase of work on the Town Center development code update and Comprehensive Plan update. The Planning Commission should be directed to engage the Design Commission in this work, with the two groups convening jointly. An enhanced public process should accompany the work. The work should be based on and build from the Interim Report. The work should be a priority: recommendations should be forwarded to City Council as soon as practicable in early 2016.**

Recommended Supporting Actions:

1.A Do not reconvene Stakeholder Group. Issue a communication to the group members clearly outlining the next steps and **inviting their attendance and participation at the initial "hand-off" meeting where the Planning and Design Commissions are brought up to speed**.

>   *Rationale*:
>   1. While not all issues are resolved, the Stakeholder Group has provided a wealth of input, both general and highly detailed, on most or all major Town Center Development vision and code update issues. This input is captured in the Interim Report which can and should serve as the basis for the Phase 3 work to finish the Town Center development code update and Comprehensive Plan proposals for Council consideration.
>   2. The Stakeholder Group has already been asked to participate in meetings well beyond the original schedule to which they committed.
>   3. Most Stakeholder Group members did not express a desire to reconvene (33 of 42).
>   4. Some stakeholders noted that dialogue at the Stakeholder Group has become increasingly politicized and unproductive.
>   5. Based on feedback from members and the TCLG, the Stakeholder Group may well have hit the point of diminishing returns in terms of the productivity of continued dialogue.
>   6. A key factor driving disagreement in many areas – whether planned density should be significantly reduced or maintained at long planned levels -- seems unlikely to be resolved through further deliberation, since the differences arise from very different values and beliefs that cannot be easily reconciled. Moving forward, choices need to be made that are otherwise consistent with the draft updated Town Center Vision statement.
>   7. Members who wish to remain engaged can be encouraged to do so through the Planning Commission process.

1.B Direct the Planning Commission to convene jointly with the Design Commission to deliberate on the Town Center development code update and related portions of the Comprehensive Plan. Both Commissions should deliberate together on the issues, with the Design Commission's input being advisory to the Planning Commission. The Design Commission should provide separate advisory votes on issues and their votes should be recorded. The Planning Commission votes should govern the overall process, compliant with City code requirements.

>   *Rationale:* The development code is highly detailed around issues that are uniquely matched to the expertise of those on the Design Commission. TCLG members and City

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Council members were strongly supportive of the idea of including the Design Commission's input as the process proceeds.

1.C A Planning Commission/Design Commission ("Joint Commission") work plan outline should be prepared by staff & consultant team, with input from Planning and Design Commission, to ensure the focus is on building from existing consensus and resolving remaining technical and other issues.   This work plan: (1) should include the elements outlined below; (2) should be reviewed by the TCLG, and then (3) approved by action of the City Council as first step in the hand-off of the work. The work plan should not be a "straightjacket" on the work of the Joint Commission, and the City Council should respect the independence of the Planning Commission in its work.

> *Rationale:* The City has a strong interest in ensuring the work ahead is completed on a timely basis (given the moratorium in place on Town Center development), that the work addresses concerns raised by the Stakeholder Group and includes ample opportunity for public engagement. By endorsing a work plan, the Council can help ensure these things happen. Also, since the proposed work plan elements described below include some changes in the Planning Commission's regular process, Council endorsement of these process changes will be important. That said, it is also important that the Planning Commission (and Joint Commission) be allowed to serve its function as an independent deliberative body.

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Recommended Joint Commission Work Plan Scope and Key Components

(NOTE: These components will need to be further refined by staff, with input from the Planning and Design Commission)

1. ***Scope****:* The Interim Report of the Stakeholder Group should be the foundation for the work of the Joint Commission: the detailed ideas in the report should be the foundational reference from which code language is developed. The Interim Report does not answer all the issues that must be addressed in code, so there will be deviation and evolution of ideas, but it is important to respect the work and ideas of the Stakeholder Group. The draft vision statement for Town Center should serve as a touchstone for the Joint Commission's work: final recommendations should be consistent with the vision statement.

    The Joint Commission work should be limited to proposing development code updates for the Town Center, within its current borders, and the directly related Comprehensive Plan language and Town Center vision statement to be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

    To avoid potentially extensive delay, the Joint Commission work should proceed without waiting for data as yet unknown about the future Sound Transit projects. The

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work plan should also explicitly confirm that a retail strategy is also not part of the work at this time.

Rationale: It is critical to use the Interim Report as the basic reference point for the detailed work ahead. Given the interest in lifting the moratorium sooner rather than later, a reasonably focused scope will increase the likelihood that the Joint Commission will expeditiously complete its work. The Joint Commission work should be focused on Town Center issues, not the entire City Comprehensive Plan. As to the specific issues noted above:
- o   There is no Council or Stakeholder Group consensus for expanding the borders of Town Center-- clarifying this will help limit the number of issues the Joint Commission must address;
- o   Negotiation and resolution of Sound Transit project impacts could be years away and the development code update should not be delayed that long. Also, there is a separate effort underway to map impacts and negotiate a resolution on these matters. Completing the development code update *without* the Sound Transit projects incorporated arguably strengthens the City's hand in being able to clarify impacts of such projects on the City's plans for Town Center. The code can be amended if necessary once the impacts and mitigation responses are known.

2. ***Initial Meeting*:** An initial "hand-off" meeting should be scheduled for bringing the Joint Commission up to speed on the work of the Stakeholder Group, as set forth in the Interim Report. The primary presenters of this information should be staff, with support from the TCLG. Stakeholder Group members should be invited to attend this meeting, and should have an opportunity to offer comments and suggestions to the Joint Commission as its members begin their work.

Rationale: The starting point for the Joint Commission work is the Interim Report. It is important to respect the work of the Stakeholder Group, and give interested Stakeholder Group members an opportunity to share their perspectives with the Joint Commission. The Joint Commission needs to be brought up to speed on the community input to date, including issues where there are competing views.

3. ***Vision Statement*:** After the initial "hand-off" meeting, the Joint Commission should sign off on a communications piece with visuals to help inform the community about the project and the draft updated vision statement (*See S*trategic Objective 2 below). The vision statement should serve as a "touchstone" and guidance throughout the process. At the end of the process, the Joint Commission should revisit the vision statement to confirm that its recommendations overall are consistent with the vision statement, and to suggest wording refinements to clarify the statement for final adoption and inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan.

Rationale: This recommendation relates to Strategic Objective 2. A solid communication piece around the vision statement with supporting visuals is perhaps the best way to easily and effectively communicate the foundation of this discussion to the community. The Council and many Stakeholder Group members acknowledge a need for wordsmithing of the statement: it is best to take up this task at the end of the process after detailed code language is developed.

4. ***Additional studies*:** The work plan should identify the type, funding, and schedule for completing any additional third-party studies/information that the Council wants incorporated. At a minimum, a traffic study is required by regulations. In addition, a panel or other third party review and comment on the efficacy of proposed "incentive program" should be seriously considered.

   Rationale: Since public amenities are key parts of the desired vision, a third party validation of the viability of the incentive concepts could improve confidence in effectiveness of the proposed code provisions.

5. ***Primary Work Topics:*** To the extent practicable, schedule Joint Commission deliberations around the same major topics that the Stakeholder Group Interim Report includes, adding key gap areas. Framing agendas and materials should also clearly connect content to the relevant portions of the draft vision statement:

   a. Retail Frontage Requirements
   b. Street Frontage Use and Improvements Standards
   c. Public Open Spaces
   d. Building Height Limits
   e. Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections
   f. Incentives Program: Proposed Mandatory and Elective Building Components.
   g. Parking Standards (not fully addressed by TCSG)
   h. Traffic standards (not fully addressed by TCSG)

   There may be additional areas needing focus, and the order of discussion should be considered and adjusted as appropriate.

   Rationale: The work of the Joint Commission should clearly build upon the work of the Stakeholder Group. Staging it in a familiar manner will also make it easier for the public to comment on.

6. ***Adjust work schedule:*** The Joint Commission will likely need to meet twice a month in *working sessions* in order to accomplish the scope of work by early next year.

   Rationale: The amount of detailed code language to be reviewed is significant. There is time pressure (given the moratorium) to complete the work.

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7. **Provide expanded public input opportunities, with adjustment to allow the Joint Commission to accomplish its work.**   Normally, the Planning Commission is required to complete a single public hearing on a proposal before it is forwarded to the City Council. Once at the City Council, there are also multiple opportunities for public input. The Joint Commission work plan should expand upon the basic requirements by adding at least one (and preferably two) public hearing(s) by the Joint Commission in 2015, to allow additional input *before* the final proposal is developed. The hearing(s) should be held *after* the vision statement and related visuals have been produced and shared with the community.

   The public hearing(s) should be scheduled at dates *in addition to* the regular Joint Commission work sessions. The regular Joint Commission meetings should be shaped as *work sessions* that are not consumed with oral comment. The City should encourage input through online comments, or other written means. All comments submitted should be compiled weekly and forwarded to the Joint Commission and Council and posted online. Each Joint Commission meeting should include a standing agenda item to discuss comments received. Use outside facilitation resources if necessary to manage various aspects of the public engagement.

   Rationale: Given the visibility of this discussion and breadth of perspectives on the issues, additional public hearings provide a counterbalance to having the Joint Commission meetings held as work sessions. It is important for the Joint Commission to consider input received, and for ample opportunity to receive such comment.

8. **Provide monthly written updates for the City Council on the work of the Joint Commission.** The updates should be prepared by staff and approved by Chairs of the Planning Commission and Design Commission. Staff should present these to Council with the Chairs of the Planning Commission and Design Commission participating as appropriate. Updates should cover status of work, issues preliminarily resolved, issues under discussion, major points of disagreement, whether additional resources are needed, and whether the work is on schedule or any major changes are proposed to the work plan. Updates should be posted online.

   Rationale: This will help identify any significant disconnects early on, so that the process has a better chance of remaining on schedule. Also, it will provide important additional public communication opportunities.

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1.D The City's Planning Development Services Director should manage the project going forward, with support from staff that have been involved to date. Questions about project administration arising over the course of the project should to the extent possible be resolved at the staff level.

> *Rationale:* The next phase of work is largely technical. It is appropriate for staff to take the lead on this. Management and oversight of the Stakeholder Group was unfortunately opaque at times, and clarity as to leadership in the next phase will be important. Mr. Greenberg has been engaged since the beginning of the effort, as has Ms. Van Gorp in a supporting role: for the sake of continuity, they should both continue to staff the project.

1.E The TCLG and Council Subcommittee for the Town Center should be disbanded following the hand-off meeting and review of additional visuals for communicating the Town Center vision statement (*See* item 2.A below).

> *Rationale:* In deference to the independent role of the Planning Commission, the Council should step back and allow that process to proceed. The Planning Commission's recommendation will come back to the Council *as a whole*, as will updates on the Joint Commission progress.

1.F Timeline: The Planning Commission should **target forwarding its final recommendations** on both the Comprehensive Plan and the Town Center development code to the City Council **by March 2016**, barring a compelling need to extend the schedule.

> *Rationale:* Given that development once it occurs is around for the long-term, it is better to get the development code update *right* than to be *fast*. That said, the work should proceed expeditiously to minimize the time before the Town Center development moratorium can be lifted.

Strategic Objective 2: The draft updated Town Center vision statement, as presented in the Interim Report and preliminarily endorsed by the Council, should serve as a touchstone on the next phase of work on the Comprehensive Plan update and Town Center development code changes. This draft vision statement should be broadly communicated to residents and businesses this fall.

Recommended supporting actions:

2.A An effective communications piece on the updated vision statement, incorporating additional visual depictions, should be created and broadly communicated. Seth Harry should continue to be contracted to provide additional visuals that will help communicate the updated vision. The TCLG should be reconvened to review and approve the additional visuals. The Joint Commission should approve the final communications piece. The City should use multiple means to communicate the visual communication piece (See item 3.B below). During the entirety of the Joint Commission deliberation, the visuals should be prominently displayed and posted, and public input and questions encouraged. The City may wish to consider a utility bill insert (or statement) to

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provide a weblink where visuals and accompanying text (draft vision statement, process information) can be reviewed. Overall, the communication should reinforce core messages, help public better understand the nature of the updated Town Center vision – what it is and is not-- and encourage them to engage in the Joint Commission process.

   Rationale.   Several stakeholders observed that there is a lot of misinformation about what is actually under consideration, for example, rumors of much higher buildings being proposed, or increasing density in Town Center. It is important that the community understand what is in fact being considered. Pictures can be particularly helpful here, since words in the draft vision statement can be interpreted differently.

Strategic Objective 3: Throughout the rest of the process, ensure effective communication to the community around Town Center vision and development code update project.

Recommended supporting actions:

3.A From now through adoption of updated Comprehensive Plan and development code update, the City should conduct an **ongoing, multi-faceted communication effort focusing on sharing the Town Center vision** as preliminarily endorsed by the City Council, **as well as updates on progress on updating the Town Center development code, highlighting opportunities for public engagement.**

   o   Audiences for this work should include*:* residents, local business owners, property owners, local developers, and regional partners (in particular, Sound Transit).

   o   Messages: A series of clear, straightforward messages should be developed to encapsulate the overall project and updated vision statement for the community. These should be conveyed with additional visuals to help people understand what is, and is not, under discussion. Sample messages could include:

   1.   The goal is to ensure that future development in Town Center better reflects our community's vision for Town Center and delivers the public amenities our community wants. In other words, the Town Center development code update is intended to make it more likely that our Town Center vision becomes a reality.

   2.   The Town Center vision we are working to achieve remains largely the same that was agreed to in 1994. There is no increase in density proposed. There is no discussion to allow any buildings taller than 5 stories. We want to achieve a mix of retail and residential opportunities, ample parking and attractive streetscapes, with a small-town feel.

   3.   The extensive community engagement process conducted in 2015, including the work of the 42-member Town Center Stakeholder Group, has contributed

important ideas about how to strengthen both the Town Center vision and development code. These ideas have been/will be forwarded to the Planning Commission, which is charged to develop a complete recommendation, working with the City's Design Commission. The City Council will make the final decision early next year after receiving the Planning Commission recommendation.

4. There are multiple opportunities for public input throughout this fall and into next winter for those who would like to weigh in on the Town Center vision and development code update.

Additional messages should be developed as the Joint Commission work proceeds, to communicate progress in the work plan.

- o Sample communication and outreach tactics could include
    - Visuals on Town Center developed and shared (See Recommendation 2.A above)
    - Status box on City website created and updated bi-weekly, more frequently if appropriate due to the turn of events.
    - Develop and post "Q&A" on City website-- focusing on messages, next steps, and the process to date. Update as needed (not less than once a month).
    - Encourage coverage by the Mercer Island Reporter on status, next steps—drive visits to website to review, comment on updated vision statement, Interim Report, and Joint Commission work as it proceeds.
    - Post links on Next Door to the Interim Report, the Q &A, and the draft updated vision statement and associated visuals, etc.
    - Outreach to other community organizations: in addition to scheduled public hearings, reach out to other community organizations and stakeholders to see if they are interested in hearing a presentation at their regularly scheduled meetings.
    - Review vision statement and visuals with Sound Transit as appropriate given other discussions and negotiations.

3.B Polling: Do not conduct polling at this time.

Rationale: Polling would likely have to be at high conceptual level on components of the draft vision statement. It cannot replicate the thorough deliberative process to date. Polling arguably undercuts and disrespects the process of the initial visioning committee, the Stakeholder Group, and the Council in its September action to preliminarily endorse the draft updated vision statement.

3.C Best Practices: To maximize the learning from this public engagement effort, and others, make it a regular practice to have an "after action review" of what went well, and what did not

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go so well. In terms of the current project, this report provides at least one assessment. Assign a staff member responsible for being the "keeper" of this best practices learning.

> *Rationale:* Experience is a great teacher on what works best-- if that knowledge is available to others.

Strategic Objective 4: The City Council should be able to take up deliberation on both the updated Comprehensive Plan (incorporating updated Town Center vision statement) and Town Center development code update in early 2016.

Recommended supporting actions:

4.A Plan to extend the Town Center development moratorium before end of year. A 4-5-month extension is likely the minimum needed.

4.B Particular effort should be made by staff to offer briefings to any new Councilmembers or existing Councilmembers who have not served on the TCLG so that they are fully up to speed on the project and the issues when the Council begin deliberating.

4.C Based on level of community engagement, adjustments to the Council's normal process for deliberating and acting on the proposed development code and Comprehensive Plan updates may or may not be appropriate.

Conclusion

It is important that Town Center development meet the needs and expectations of the community. There will never be unanimous support for all activity and development that occurs in Town Center. That said, the 1994 Town Center vision has been in place for over two decades now, and has been generally confirmed through three different processes in the last year and half: the initial visioning community group meeting in May 2014; strong support from the Stakeholder Group on a draft updated vision statement for Town Center included in the Interim Report; and action by the City Council in September to preliminarily endorse that draft updated vision statement.

Despite frustrations with the process and continuing strong objections by some stakeholders to various aspects of Town Center development, the Stakeholder Group has in fact generated a wealth of detailed recommendations and ideas, as reflected in the Interim Report. The Interim Report can and should serve as a solid foundation for the next phase of work: development of code language, finalizing the wording of the vision statement, and making related updated to the City Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission should be asked to take up this next phase of work. The Design Commission should be engaged fully in this deliberation, given that the expertise of its members closely relates to the subject matter details. An expanded public engagement process should accompany the next phase of effort. It should be a priority to complete the work expeditiously so that the City Council can receive a package of recommendations early in 2016.

Attachment A: Questions posed to TCLG and Councilmember Interviewees

1. What are **your interests** in the Town Center **vision & development code update**? **Ideally**, what outcomes are you most interested in seeing?
2. What would say has gone well with the community outreach process that the Council launched last year to update the Town Center Vision and Development Code?
3. What has not gone well? Why do you think these problems occurred?
4. Are there substantive items –pieces of the vision or development code ideas – that seem to you to be **particularly divisive or unsettled**? Which ones? Why are they unsettled?
5. **How much consensus/understanding/awareness** is there on the terms in the **Draft Vision Statement for Town Center**? If there's not strong consensus for a given group, is it important to do more work to build it? If so, how would you approach that task? • On the Stakeholder Group? • The Liaison Group? • The Council? • The Community as a whole?
6. How would you describe the Stakeholder Group and its role? Do you think it has finished most or all of its work? Do you think it should continue to have an active role? Why or why not?
7. What about the Liaison Group—how would you describe their role in the process to date? Do you think it is important for this group to continue to meet, or should things be forwarded to the Planning and Design Commission for further refinement?
8. How important is it to do polling of the Mercer Island community? What would you want to know from a poll?
9. What suggestions do you have for the process moving ahead, in terms of major tasks, timing, key participants?
10. Anything else you think I should know?

Attachment B: Additional Detail on Input from TCLG, City Council and Stakeholder Group

This attachment provides additional detail on responses to understand where the process stands now and the diverse views on how the City should move forward.

    A.   TCLG and City Council Input

This section of Attachment B summarizes input received from interviews with the 13 individuals comprising the TCLG and City Council. Note that these recommendations occurred between July 24 and August 6, prior to getting input from the Stakeholder Group, prior to completion of the Interim Report, and prior to Council action preliminarily endorsing the draft updated vision statement for Town Center

        1.   Substantive Items that remain divisive/unsettled:

# of mentions	Issue	Sample Comments
10	Height	No one wants more than 5 stories. Some want to cap growth at 2 stories-- part of the "Islander only" vision. Not practical to go backwards on height.
3	Should Town Center be developed for islanders only or to also attract off-islanders	This is a problem for our identity. People don't realize half the folks in the Town Center now are not Island residents. Town Center should be cute and useful for Islanders. If we don't allow off-Islanders, the Town Center retail won't work. Town Center retail will work fine without off-Islanders.
2	Density	This is an issue and it is never mentioned in the Interim Report.
2	Major public plaza in Town Center	There is strong public support for this that the City did not embrace.
2	Parking—how to address	
1	Growth v. no-growth on island	The no growth position is a small minority of folks on the Stakeholder Group and on the Island but they're very vocal
1	Mix of uses	
1	Mix of retail uses	
1	Distrust of developers and whether City will enforce its rules on development	

2. Options for moving ahead expressed in interviews:

# of people identifying this option	Approach for moving ahead
Reconvene Stakeholder Group (SG): 7 in favor	
3	Reconvene SG for 1 more meeting, then forward to Planning Commission, Design Commission, to do the development code work. SG should be asked to comment on stuff at a high level—vision, general drawings--not details. Agreement on accuracy of Interim Report, aspirational goals, identify/acknowledge minority views, bring closure, point out richness of conversation lay out process moving forward. Supplement w/social media outreach.
1	Reconvene to thank SG, wrap up. 1 meeting. Use as opportunity for thanking the SG. Confirm consensus around the Interim Report. Then Council should direct Seth to go flesh out the vision and code pieces and do accompanying pictures. Then have a round of public review of the pictures, involving SG. If folks like the pictures then Council says SG, LG are done. We proceed to code drafting.
1	Two more meetings of SG. With visuals of the facades—how the 2-5 story mix would look. Not just aerial views of street layouts. Do an open house with visuals, and online.
1	They should continue to meet and weigh in on the code as it is developed. We need to move forward and do the code work. Let the vision settle in.
1	Have an evening to argue out the "islander v. "non-island" issue and the other big splits –height. Be sure quantifiables are part of the discussion, identify trade-offs. Videotape it and post it.
Do not reconvene Stakeholder Group (SG): 6 in favor	
2	Do not reconvene SG. Simply wrap up the Interim Report and forward it to the Planning Commission and Design Commission to do their work and draft code.
1	No need to reconvene SG. Extend the moratorium for 6 months on a non-emergency basis on 11/2. Don't take further action until after the election so you have a mandate to move forward rather than risk redoing the process.
1	Do not reconvene SG. Spend money on another charrette, shadow studies, visuals. Keep moving forward between now and election. Send visuals to the community about the design concepts and let them weigh in, tell them about the further studies we'll be doing,
1	Go to the community with 2-3 different vision paths for TC and see what people prefer.
1	Survey on results of work to date. Get the SG & Liaison Group to sign off on vision statement & present it to the Council – find leaders from each group to present it to Council.

Sample Comments:

- Worst result would be to do it over.
- Don't want to have to pass the development code update on a 4-3 vote.

- Delaying action until after the election means the election becomes a mandate on growth and density on the island
- Need to figure out what developers will want to build that we would like to see happen
- Timing here is a big question
- Mini-charette?
- Don't want to redo the process.
- We need a good economic analysis of the proposal
- A long hiatus here will allow things to start over which would be unfortunate.
- Need to apply more resources to be successful (2 mentions)
- SG needs to meet because the work is not fleshed out enough to unveil to the public and just give to the Council. We need visuals to help cement the vision.
- The SG is finished – they're burnt out on the lack of forward progress.

3. Polling: Yes or No? On What?

Yes	No	Maybe
5	7	1

- **If yes, what should be polled:**

2	To get support for general approach, validation of concepts in vision statement.
1	As a vehicle to allow people to have their say.
1	Ask whether they support lower height central shopping corridor in TC. Must poll to give basis for moving forward. Not just 1 or 2 questions.
1	The vision components, height, off island issue. To overcome the vocal minority perception that's out there, so we can move forward with more good will.

- **If no, why:**

1	Would be disrespectful of SG
1	It will be biased. Needs to be accompanied by a lot of detail about costs and benefits of every choice
2	Not needed. We already poll twice a year. Did one very recently—use that data.
2	Too risky. If you ask the wrong question, you could undo a lot of good work.
1	Not needed.

- **If maybe, why:**

1	Only if statistically significant and unbiased and there is something you cannot otherwise resolve w/o polling

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B. Stakeholder Group Input

This section summarizes key feedback from the "Survey Monkey" poll of Stakeholder Group members. The polling opened August 13 and closed August 26. Twenty-seven of 42 Stakeholder Group members – 64% -- responded. *Not all members responded to all questions on the survey*.

In response to a request from Councilmember Cero on September 8, the 15 Stakeholder Group members who did not respond were emailed to ask why they had not completed the survey: seven people responded to this question. Three of the 7 completed the survey (see footnote on p. 28) and their responses are included below, for a combined final tally of input from 30 of 42 Stakeholder Group members (71%).

1. Feedback on Process—what went well, what didn't go well?

Nearly all respondents identified both good and bad aspects to the process.

Process was good, no bad aspects identified	Both good, and bad aspects of process identified	Only bad aspects of process identified	Process is irretrievably broken: Start over	No opinion expressed
2	26	1	1	1

Sample comments with process strengths:

- "The Stakeholder Group were rapidly educated about the specifics of the visioning process and came together surprisingly quickly to a common vision of the town center."
- "The group of stakeholders was well 'rounded.'"
- "The table topics…encouraged residents, developers and businesses to talk with one another about options for future TC regulations. We didn't always agree, but there was movement and better understanding."
- "Everyone's gotten a chance to speak."
- "The public had many opportunities for input."
- "The quality of presentation materials has been excellent."
- "Selecting and assembling the group"
- "I think the most successful thing was improving the bonus process."
- "The request for participation was made through multiple changes and tried to reach as many people as possible."
- "Certain interest groups may have felt as they were not able to sway the group. I personally feel it was a fair process."
- "What went well from my perspective was the openness of the dialogue, and introducing the details of the codes and issues that needed attention."

Sample comments on process challenges/problems:

- For the Stakeholder Group…the number of meetings and the extension of the original time commitment was excessive."
- "Facilitators and the city were not able to provide some of the concrete data we needed…"
- "There has been a dearth of options."
- We didn't have some of the data we could have used…and we could have used more pictures of what things might look like."
- "…moderator often didn't keep control over meetings."
- "There were a few very vocal and assertive people in the group and the facilitators didn't really keep them in control"
- "I don't know that the task can be achieved with such a broad background of interests."
- "The consultants were relatively unresponsive to the stakeholders."
- "Too little time for small groups to address questions posed…"
- "There has been insufficient community feedback and way too little time to discuss options."
- "There definitely should have been some hiatus in run-up to elections. No meetings – too political. Meetings gave people change to grandstand. Not what I signed up for."
- "The Town Center website was boring and stale…The public could not follow what happened at Stakeholders meetings"
- "…some were grandstanding in the group, and finding fault with everything, rather than trying to use the forum as a constructive vehicle…

2. Support for Draft Updated Vision Statement

70% of those responding agreed or agreed with some suggested edits, to the draft updated vision statement.

Agree with Statement	Agree, with Edits offered	Don't Agree	Other / no response
13	8	2 (need more growth in TC) 1 (not sufficiently future looking) 1(doesn't address half the group's wishes) 1 (weak, without foundation of thought)	1 (don't like the question) 1 (no response) 1 (not needed)

3. Should the Stakeholder Group reconvene?

10 respondents thought the Stakeholder Group should be reconvened. Of those, 4 thought it should be only for one wrap up meeting; six thought more detailed work could or should occur.

Yes	No	Maybe, if the group is listened to	Don't know/ no opinion expressed/ not sure it would help
10	12	1	8

4. Unsettled or Divisive Issues Noted by TCSG Members

Note: most respondents mentioned multiple issues. The fact that someone observed a dispute exists on an issue does not indicate what view the respondent has on the issue.

Issue	# of mentions
Building height	22 comments
Building height/ mass	11
Amenity provisions to allow taller heights – what are they, what should they be	5
Regulating height by stories versus feet	1
Some people not seeing bigger picture of what a Town Center is—2 story buildings with off-street surface parking is not it.	1
Height limits on sloping sites	1
Height rezoning	1
Lowered heights as approaching Mercerdale Park	1
Are taller buildings economically necessary	1
Sound Transit Related	10 comments
Sound Transit and how it affects Town Center land use and traffic	2
Sound Transit funding for expanded commuter parking	1
Potential of additional Sound Transit bus Access to light rail station	1
Impact from backed up traffic to and from I-90	1
How to provide parking for light rail station	1
Bus/train integration	1
Parking needs, given the Transit Station is coming	1
Connection to transit	1
Potential location of additional transit-oriented parking	1
Density	10 comments
Density – is more or less desirable?	8

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Whether / how developers should pay for impacts of greater density	1
Issues that will need to be addressed by an increase in Town Center population	1
Retail Issues	9 comments
Does Town Center retail and restaurants require more density or not? If so, how much?	2
Should we try to attract off islands to Town Center	2
How can the Island support businesses	1
How much retail is needed downtown?	1
Can minimal retail only as essential for Islanders be successful / business viability	2
Affordable retail	1
Attitudes about Growth	3 comments
Some people are afraid of change or don't want it, want to go back in time	1
Lack of things to encourage new development, business growth, more active downtown	1
Public opinion around growth in Town Center unknown	1
Other issues	30 comments
Affordable housing	3
Placing a major public plaza at the north end of TC versus elsewhere, or none at all	2
Zoning decisions on certain parcel	2
Choice for mid-block connections	2
Shape of buildings on internal property lines	1
Governmental role in providing ample parking	1
Main pedestrian- oriented retail streets	1
Location of residential only zones	1
Viability of automobile gasoline stations (we need more)	1
Role of City government in promoting, marketing	1
Differences between those living downtown versus those that drive to downtown	1
Parking constraints	1
MICA	1
Farmers market	1
School impacts	1
Street configuration	1
Safe walking/biking routes	1
Future of Walgreens property	1

Nothing is unsettled. There is a group that wants to take advantage of a policy update and circumvent to meet an exclusionary agenda	1
Combining discussion of building codes and visioning	1
Relationship of TC to activities on southern edge (MICA, Farmers market)	1
Need more work on details	1
No clear diagram of the form of development	1
No informed discussion of urban design or development economics	1
Distance to curb	1

Town Center Stakeholder Group Members responding to survey[1]:

Don Cohen	Toni Okada	Wendy Weiker
Lisa Richardson	Kirk Griffin	Rich Conrad
Michael Hart	Jim Eanes	Anthony Perez
Nancy Lee	Salim Nice	Mark Meinzinger
Geoff Spelman	Julie Barrows	Ralph Jorgenson
Roberta Lewandowski	Amie Fahey	Wes Giesbrecht
Nate Larson	Scott Shay	Jennifer Mechem
Terry Moreman	Kay Hirai	Lesley Bain[1]
Traci Granbois	Mark Glasser	Steffenie Evans[1]
Bart Dawson	Dan Grove	Orna Samuelly[1]

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[1] At the request of Councilmember Cero, the 15 members of the Stakeholder Group that did not respond to the survey were individually emailed by staff on September 9 as to why they did not respond. Seven people answered this subsequent communication. One person reiterated his earlier expressed position that it was not possible to adequately respond without meeting personally with the consultant. Three filled out the survey, and their results are included above (Lesley Bain, Steffenie Evans and Orna Samuelly). One expressed great frustration with the process and felt that staff were trying too hard to cater to no-growth advocates. Two others said they had been too busy to respond.

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