



Town Center Visioning Public Hearing #1

Wednesday January 20, 2016

Transcript

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Lisa K. Hutchinson
CART Provider

SCOTT: So, good evening, everybody.

I'm Scott Greenberg, the city's development services group director.

And before I turn it over to Jon Friedman, chair of the Planning Commission, I would like to recognize city staff and councilmembers in the audience.

So, I see Councilmember Grausz over there and Councilmember Wisenteiner is here somewhere.

Any other councilmembers that slipped past me?

I think we're expecting more.

City staff, we have our interim city manager Steve Lancaster and assistant city manager Kirsten Taylor.

For other city staff, Alison VanGorp, administrative services manager and ombudsman in my department.

Shana Restall, our principal planner.

And is Travis here?

Travis Saunders, our senior planner, is behind me.

And then our strategic communications consultant, I guess that's what we're calling her, Karen Reed in the back, as some of you know.

And that's it for introduction.

I'll be back up in a few minutes to do a brief presentation for you, but I'll turn it over to Chair Friedman.

JON: Thank you, Scott.

Good evening and welcome.

My name is Jon Friedman.

I'm the chair of the Mercer Island Planning Commission. I would like to thank you all for coming tonight. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

I'll start with a note about who we are and why we're having this meeting.

This Joint Commission started meetings this past October, at the request of the city council, to tackle the vision and code updates for Town Center.

We are members of either the Planning Commission or Design Commission, all of us appointed by the city council.

We're here tonight hoping to get your feedback on

four issues: A set of Town Center development principles, heights of building in the Town Center, setbacks and size of building, and affordable housing initiatives.

Tonight is the first of three public hearings we'll have over the course of this work.

In addition, we're encouraging everyone to give us as much public comment as possible online.

The Town Center code update has been under discussion in various city charter groups for nearly two years.

The city council felt that after all the work so far, the combined input of both of our commissions would be beneficial to helping drive home this project.

The Planning Commission is required by law to provide its recommendations on the subject before council makes any changes to the land use code.

And it's the Design Commission that reviews most major Town Center projects.

The whole point of this effort is to increase the likelihood of future development in the Town Center better

reflects what we want as a community.

I would like to make three points before turning it over to each of the commissioners to introduce themselves.

First, we're an advisory body.

The council may or may not accept any recommendation that we give them.

Second, we are trying to encourage input from the community.

And we would like as much input as possible and you can email your input as well and that can be sent to:

TownCenter@Mercergov.org

The email address is on the agenda handout.

And thirdly, we haven't made any recommendations yet.

This is a long process and we're really just getting going.

Again, thank you for coming tonight.

We really do look forward to hearing from you.

So, next I would like each commissioner to introduce themselves.

State your name, the commission you're on, and anything else that you feel is important.

SUSANNE F.: I'm Susanne Foster.

I have been on the Design Commission for about

eight years now.

And really love every minute of it.

It is very diverse and it always deals with my hometown here of 30 years.

I am on the Commission for the landscaping.

My background is horticulture.

Thank you.

HUI: My name is Hui Tian.

This is the second term of me on the board.

I'm an architect by training.

I've been living on Mercer Island for 16 years.

COLIN: Colin Brandt. I'm also on the Design Commission, an architect, and sort of that's the primary capacity in which I serve on that commission.

LARA: Lara Sanderson, Design Commission approximately two and a half years.

I like the work mostly because I think there are some opportunities on Mercer Island that haven't been addressed yet, so it's been rewarding to get to know people who are interested in solving those problems.

Thank you.

TAMI: Tami Szerlip. I'm five years on the Design Commission.

I enjoy speaking for you. I am the general member

for the community, and I'm here until the end of March, I believe.

RICHARD W.: I'm not going to stand up.

Richard Weinman, vice chair of the Planning Commission.

I'm a planner attorney by training.

I'm on my second term on the commission. Lived on Mercer Island for 40 years.

JENNI: Hi. I'm Jenni Mechem. I'm on the Planning Commission.

This is my first term, so I've just been on it for about five months or so.

And my background is in accessibility and civil rights, so I'm finding this fascinating learning more about this from a planning perspective and also really enjoying the opportunity to make Mercer Island a better place and to meet so many of you and hear people's opinions.

SUZANNE S.: Hi. I'm Suzanne Skone and I'm a planning commissioner.

This is about the second year of my second term as a planning commissioner.

I was on the commission 25 years ago.

I'm a mechanical engineer by training.

I'm a business owner in Mercer Island Town Center,

and I've been on Mercer Island for about 35 years.

TIFFIN: Hi. My name is Tiffin Goodman. This is my first year on the commission, and my background is in planning, primarily in transportation. And thank you for coming tonight.

DANIEL: I thought my chair tipped over.

Good evening. My name is Dan Hubbell. I'm a marketing and PR by profession, but my minor in college was urban studies and urban planning, which is why I'm on the Design Commission.

And prior to being here on Mercer Island -- I've been here five years. I will claim the fact that my wife grew up here and graduated from (inaudible) high school.

I'll latch on to that.

Prior to coming here, I was chair of the Planning Commission in Newcastle for eight years and served as the deputy mayor for four.

BRYAN: I'm Bryan Cairns.

I have been on -- lived on Mercer Island for 47 years.

I'm a physicist, which has nothing to do with being on the Planning Commission. But the relevance of being there is that I was ten years on the city council: four years deputy mayor and two years mayor, so I've been through

these sort of exercises a number of times.

CRAIG: I'm Craig Olson. I'm on the Planning Commission.

And this is my second tour on Mercer Island. I graduated from high school here many years ago and we've been back for eight years.

I'm a civil engineer and currently work as a public works director of the city in engineering.

JON: Thanks, everyone.

We were hoping to hear comments from you tonight focusing on four areas.

First of all, the Town Center vision: We have developed a working draft of a vision statement that is shorter than one earlier endorsed by the Town Center stakeholder group.

It's a road map for us and we would like your thoughts on that.

Second is building heights.

We are looking at a few different alternatives right now.

Having said that, we are not looking at anything taller than 65 feet or five stories, and much of what we're looking at is smaller.

Third, setbacks and size of buildings: We are

looking at some different ideas here as well.

The goal is to be sure the code gives us human-scale inviting buildings.

What can we require in our code to break up building mass, prevent a canyon feel on streets, and get light, air, and pedestrian access.

Fourth is affordable housing.

There's been a lot of input on this issue and this process, and looking into affordable housing started before this commission got going.

But we want to see what we can do in an intelligent way, whether it's creating incentives or mandates or some mix of both.

But so having said that, we'll start off with a relatively short presentation. Scott Greenberg, the development director, will give you a presentation of these four subject areas and then we'll move directly to public comment after that presentation.

I currently have a sign-in sheet for folks that want to speak.

And if you haven't signed up yet, you still want to speak, there's another one of these in back.

And so please sign up, because we want to make sure we know how many people we're going to have to speak and

sort of work the timing so that we make sure and get everybody through and get everybody through fairly and get out of here when we need to.

So, the Joint Commission, we will not be discussing anything tonight.

Our job really here tonight is to listen and get as much input as possible from all of you.

We also receive written comment and we encourage you to do that if you don't want to, for whatever reason, speak in public or just don't have time. Just please feel free to do that. We do look at it.

I would like to thank Scott and all the team for the work that they do. This is a pretty big project for all of us and staff has really been helpful in getting this going for us.

So, without anything further, Scott Greenberg.

SCOTT: Thank you.

On the sign-up sheets in the back, if you haven't signed in to speak, there's actually two different sign-up sheets.

One says Sign in to Speak at the top and the other just says Sign in, so if you would like to speak, write your name on the one that says to speak.

The other one is if you don't want to speak but you

want to get on our email list and get updates and that sort of thing.

Councilmember Wong also walked in. He's back over there.

So, we had some technical difficulties with the presentation I was going to do, so the presentation basically had a lot of these boards on the presentation that many of you had a chance to walk around and see.

So I'll just sort of talk about the boards and, when I need to, I'll walk over to them.

And after the meeting you're welcome to come look at the boards further.

So, the process started nearly two years ago . . .

(Captioning paused, then resumed.)

SCOTT: . . . short list of vision points here.

And then the Joint Commission sort of whittled that down to more principles.

Be the heart, be accessible, be convenient, be well-designed, be diverse, be local, be home.

There are other words that go with those descriptors, but that's the vision. That's kind of the foundation for everything.

Next topic is subareas and building heights.

Building heights is a big topic.

The subareas are on the drawing over there with the format.

I hope you had a chance to look at that, because you're not going to be able to see it well from here.

The four maps on there, the one on the -- the one on the upper left is Alternative A and that's the proposed building height areas that came from the stakeholder group.

So that would tell you at a glance whether the area would be allowed to go to five stories, four stories, or three stories as maximum height.

The next one over, Alternative B, is an option that the Joint Commission asked to have prepared. We've just mapped it to get some feedback on it.

And then also to be able to do some additional studies on it.

So, let me go back a second.

The Alternative A would have five-story buildings basically north of 29th Street, north of the Shell station.

It would have lower height for Farmers Insurance and the multifamily area along 76th and on 80th.

Taller buildings would be allowed four-story buildings. The shopping center where Island Books is

located could go to four stories. Today it can only go to three.

The KeyBank and Windermere properties south of Tabit Square today can be built to four stories. And this proposal would allow them to be built to five.

Alternative B, the one that the Joint Commission asked us to look at, takes that western multifamily area on 76th, up on the hill there, and brings that back to four stories.

So that height would not change from today's rules.

And then on what I'll call the super block between 77th and 78th, on the east and west and 28th and 29th on the north and south, so basically from Walgreen's down to the King property would go from five stories down to four stories.

Is that correct?

No. I wrote it wrong.

It would go -- yeah, five stories down to four stories. Looking at my sheet here.

So that would be a reduction in height.

And then where height would increase to five stories is along 80th Avenue Southeast, so on the east side of the Town Center adjacent to Island Crest there's a hill there and the Joint Commission wanted to look at that.

And then there's one with a big question mark.

What we would like to hear from you is: What's your idea of the height limits for Town Center?

Next topic is affordable housing, which is this board over here. I won't use the board.

Basically, the stakeholder group recommended having affordable housing be required or incentives for affordable housing in exchange for increased building height.

The Joint Commission's considering that, but also considering whether at some point affordable housing should simply be required, a certain number of affordable housing units, a certain affordability level to go from two stories up to three, four, or five stories.

For context, the current code does have some requirement for affordable housing for taller buildings.

So this is not new. That is something that's currently in place.

The Legacy building Hadley Apartments currently under construction, that's one of the things they had to provide to get the taller building height.

They would have 13 affordable housing units.

AUDIENCE: How many units total?

SCOTT: So, building height, find the right board.

This one behind Chair Friedman here, so, one of the

things that's been talked about with building height is currently for a five-story, the five-story area, building height can go five stories and 65 feet.

What we looked at was the idea that in most buildings being built today, the first floor is 15 feet high. In some cases it's actually 20 feet high. And then the residential floors are 10 feet high.

When you add all that up, it comes up to 55 feet if you have five floors.

Today we're allowing 65 feet.

Joint Commission is talking about reducing that by 5 feet.

I know it's not a lot, but if the 5 feet plus maybe an additional -- so 55 plus an additional 5 feet up to 60, the additional height might be allowed for pitched roofs or parapets or other things to help with the architecture of the building.

It would not necessarily be used for additional cubic footage in units, for example. Or it might be. It's something they're still talking about.

This is the Legacy Hadley building.

What I wanted to show here is the problem that we're trying to solve by routing heights and a couple other things that are being talked about.

This is the base of the facade here where the concrete area is here.

If you measure the face of that facade up to the very top and that's topped out now. This is actually what it would be at 75 feet.

The reason it's 75 feet, it's how we currently measure height in the Town Center.

This is on a sloping site and there's nothing in our code that would require that to be a certain height and go as high as it wants as long as the overall average height of the building doesn't exceed that 65 feet.

So, with Joint Commission's discussion, this line right here is at 60 feet and that's how tall the building could potentially be -- could have been if the rules under consideration were in place when this building was built.

Trying to show you the difference.

It would be 15 foot less in height. They would lose the little mezzanine on top and plus they would lose the top floor.

The other thing we're talking about, just to be clear on that, is not only measuring the average building height which we currently do, but also a rule that would say that any part of any building facade, any face of the building, cannot exceed the height limit.

SCOTT: So in that example, in that five-story area, you could not have more than 60 feet on any facade. And then there would be some different things that would happen on sloping lots to make sure that that also doesn't exceed that 60 feet.

AUDIENCE: Scott --

SCOTT: Another thing that --

AUDIENCE: Scott.

SCOTT: I'm not taking questions.

AUDIENCE: Okay.

SCOTT: Another thing that the group is talking about is step-backs. So, some of the Town Center buildings go straight up from the sidewalk to the very top.

It's a flat facade.

Maybe there's a deck or two or some minor modulation of the facade.

So the problem is the code allows those facades to go straight up.

So the Joint Commission is talking about a couple different options for vertical step-backs. So, one of them is just the very straight -- you get your first two floors going straight up with some modulation so it looks good. The third floor would have to be stepped back 15 feet from the front of the second floor. Then each additional floor

would have to be stepped back 10 feet. It's what's been referred to as the wedding cake approach. It kind of looks like a wedding cake. That will achieve the objective, but it doesn't allow a lot of flexibility for design. And the fear is that the buildings that are built in the future might all tend to look the same. They might have all the exact same profile.

So one option that's being discussed is doing what's called an average daylight plane. The diagonal line could basically be drawn from the sidewalk. It could be drawn from the edge of the first floor. That's something we'll be discussing. But the idea is that the building would have to stay within that line, but there would also be some flexibility where it could go outside of that line for very minor projections if there was more open space provided in the front of the building. We haven't fully developed that concept, but it's something that has been discussed to provide a little bit of flexibility.

I am skipping a few slides. I think my last one is what's called block frontage massing. So if you look at some of the Town Center buildings today from the air, and we had a -- the context board over there that shows the buildings, they are basically doughnuts. And the doughnut hole in the middle is private open space.

The one shown on here, that's actually where Safeway is in downtown Bellevue. It's basically a big doughnut without any openings in it. That's what we're trying to avoid. So the concept here is that when a facade gets to be a certain length, there has to be some major way to break that up into smaller pieces. And some of the things we're talking about is providing some open space. It could be public. It could be private. But this is more about the building design than the use of that space.

The other thing we're talking about is providing some through-block connections through these projects. So, one example, it's probably not a great example, but it gives you an idea of what we're talking about. Island Square where the bagel shop is and Coldwell Banker. That's actually five separate buildings that share a common parking garage.

And the buildings are built to look a little bit different from each other, but they still fit together.

If the open area in between those buildings was open to the public, that's what we're talking about. That's the type of thing that we're talking about. Not sure we could get that required to be open to the public, but that's the idea. That in order to break up the facade, that might be something that could be an incentive or required.

Okay. And that's my presentation. I'm going to turn it back over to Chair Friedman and then we want to hear from all of you.

JON: Scott, before you go, do we have this slide available here?

SCOTT: No.

JON: We have it on the Web site?

SCOTT: Yep. So, on our Web site, on the Town Center page, and I think it's also probably on the Planning Commission's page, is the agenda and the packet for tonight. The packet was the slide presentation we had some difficulties with.

It's actually some bigger things of this. And did we put the boards online?

ALISON: Not yet, but we can do that.

SCOTT: We'll also put all the boards online. They are a pdf file. We'll get that up in the next couple of days.

JON: Thank you, Scott.

I just want to -- I do want to say the staff has been really great in responding to everything we've asked and has been working really hard in getting this stuff taken care of and getting the stuff on the Web site, making sure we have as much outreach and public information on this as

possible as we are working through the process.

Do we have any more in terms of the sign-up sheet? Any more folks that -- okay. So, anybody else that wants to sign up to speak, there is still going to be a sign-up sheet in back.

What we'll go ahead and do now is we'll go ahead and open up our public hearing at this point. We as a commission are here to listen, so we won't be responding to any questions in this format, and there won't be any discussion up here.

In terms of the public comment, any comments that you have to say, obviously we're most interested to hear what you have to say for the four subjects that we're talking about tonight, but obviously anything else related to our work that we're doing is important and we look forward to any information, any feedback that you can give us.

So, the way this is going to go, I have to say that there's a -- just reference a code of conduct. Everybody knows just to be respectful. I don't need to go too much over that, but everybody pretty much knows. I have to mention that.

In addition, based on the sign-ups we have, we'll go ahead and stick with our three-minute limit on public

comment. What I have done, anybody that's gone to our meetings in the past has known I've been pretty liberal in terms of the people speaking and going over the time. In this setting we're going to have to be a little bit -- we're going to have to stick to the three minutes. We need to make sure we're fair to everyone and everybody gets the same amount of time and nobody -- doesn't look like anybody's getting any more time, and so three minutes is where we need to stick.

So, what you'll see is you'll see the yellow light flashing. I think it flashes. Maybe it just is steady. In any event -- it flashes. Then you have 30 seconds, and the red light will go off, and we'll need you to wrap it up.

I think that is about it.

I think we'll call up two people at a time. And forgive me if I trash your name here, but I'll do my best to pronounce everything correctly.

But we'll call up two.

There are two microphones up here.

And we'll just kind of rotate that way so that we make sure we get everybody through.

Anybody else?

So, what we do need from you is state your name and address for the record.

And I think that will be it.

Anybody else have anything to add?

Okay, we'll go ahead and start.

First sign-up, first two are Jon Graves and Ben Anderson.

JON GRAVES: I'm Jon Graves, with Jon Graves Architects & Planners.

My address is 3110 Ruston Way, Suite E, Tacoma, Washington.

I'm here this evening as an architect that is working with James Cassan and Dollar Development on the hotel site that most of us know as the old travel lot site.

Dollar Development is also located with U.S. Bank and in a zone that's similarly considered TC-5 zone.

I'm here to supplement -- my three minutes is here to supplement a letter that I drafted and left you with here this evening.

Just to take full advantage of the small amount of time I have here, I would like to focus on a few things here. The one big advantage for myself and our team actually is that we have been focusing on the hotel design since 2012, and we actually advanced our design to the extent that the subject work that you all are boldly venturing into is overlapping with some of our progress, so

we've actually looked at the drafted regulations as they apply to our progress with our design, and so my comments, and I have stated these in my letter a little bit more articulately than I can this evening, they have to do with the height.

They have to do with some of the formulas that are currently being considered and how they may ultimately undermine some of your efforts.

I do applaud you for the structure of your organized efforts to refine your objectives and meet your objectives. I think we're all on the same page.

Just to put things in perspective, our hotel is proposed as a five-story site.

It's been designed with a 10-foot pedestrian connection. It does have -- utilize mechanisms to diminish the scale of the building by setting it back from the property line, utilizing clauses, actually preserving view corridors with the two-tower consideration and so forth.

To reflect on where you are currently with the drafted regulations, and we took a look carefully at the 12/16 drafted regulations, what we're finding is if we adhere to the full regulations, we would lose 25% of our rooms. This brings a hotel which is represented as a very high-end boutique hotel into a business venture that is

simply not supportable.

The diminished rooms, for purposes of reference, have to do with the step-back requirements that in my position as an architect are actually formulated and would be superimposed in a very actually restrictive manner.

So I guess I'm advocating here that we take a very close look at how we approach these regulations. You may end up actually subverting your intents here.

The other thing that I want to go back to here is that you are actually -- your regulations are focusing on Town Center mixed-use projects. I think there needs to be a real close look at how these regulations may affect a hotel use. We have some different characteristics that, if you -- if you are looking at a hotel use favorably, need to be carefully but contrastingly looked at.

JON: Need you to wrap it up.

JON GRAVES: I will be glad -- our team is absolutely focused on where we are with this, and we're interested in the constructive, positive, end-all to these efforts, and we will continue to stay involved and would be glad to participate further with some of these developments.

Thanks very much. I wish I had more time.

(Applause.)

JON: Steve Hearon and Annie Hearon.

So, just -- sorry. Just a note here to make sure to let everybody know that everything -- the comments are being transcribed and will be part of the record.

And the only other thing I will say that I probably need to think about these days is if everybody could make sure their phones are either off or on vibrate mode so they don't cause a problem for anybody listening or the speaker.

So, again, thank you.

And Ben Anderson.

BEN ANDERSON: My name is Ben Anderson.

You pronounce my name nicely.

8750 North Mercer Way.

I'm a resident.

I work at the University of Washington.

I first want to thank all of you for volunteering your time for this.

I can see that this is a lot of work and I really truly appreciate what you're doing.

I have looked at your vision statement and I think it's very effective and like what you've done. I look at your context photo and think: This is really illustrative of what is a fundamental problem. And that is when you look at those large buildings as you commented, this is -- they are these doughnuts. And the doughnuts have the center

courtways that are sort of anticomunity. It makes an internal rather than external community.

And for those of us that want to be here a long time, we need buildings and living space that looks outward, not inward. I am listening to the comments that are being made here, some of whom are by professionals that are looking to build, and I think they are explaining their concerns very appropriate. However, I am hoping that this is really about listening to the public that lives here, and that that's what drives the decision-making that is happening. And what we're really talking about is how can we get a centralized community where people gravitate to somewhere other than the QFC parking lot for a place where our teenagers could go. And I'm wondering if the rules that you're trying to identify can actually help define that external community feeling.

In my line of work, disclosure and conflict of interest is a routine thing that we talk about. And so I don't want anyone to feel offended by this, but I am wondering: Has everyone here been asked to make a financial statement or some declaration of: "Here are my potential conflicts in participating in this project"? Because I do think that's something that should be available online so that we all feel like this is a trusted group.

So once again, I want to thank you for your participation and look forward to the community that we're going to build together.

Very good.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

So, do we have Steve Hearon and Annie Hearon?

ANNIE HEARON: I'm Annie Hearon. Close.

8019 Southeast 20th Street. Here on the island.

I just wrote down some bullet points about these images.

I would like to see you make sure there is no frontage massing. I work just south of the monster that's shown on the building height. Definitely against the 75-foot height on that. So I definitely agree that there should be nothing greater than 60 foot in the highest area of town.

No flat facades, please.

And it's talked about a five-story, so obviously that's our de facto maximum now. I prefer the simple wedding cake, vertical step-back look. I liked this image because it actually had a picture of a tree. I'm a part-time artist, but I have seen enough, you know, water features, and I think we have a nice representation of other

art. I would like to see us make sure that anyone, not just the five-story buildings, has to include actually landscaping with trees.

And the buildings should not start right at the sidewalk level. I think that would go a long ways to making it feel more like a community, not just a next Bellevue West, as I have heard it called.

And, as I said, I don't think the green space and trees should be a bonus height requirement. It should be required of any building.

That's what I've got.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Robert Thorpe.

STEVE HEARON: I'm Steve Hearon.

JON: I want him to get ready to go.

STEVE HEARON: I'm Annie's husband Steve. Live at 8019 Southeast 20th and have for 35 years.

Moved here a long time ago because I grew up in a small town.

I like small towns.

I know this committee professes to like small towns too, so I'm glad to hear that.

I raised three kids here. Now I'm not raising. My

kids are raising my grandchildren here on Mercer Island because they like small towns too, because they grew up in a small town. So I can't emphasize the small town business too much.

So, with the height of the buildings and the increased density, I have some big concerns about that. My biggest concern is that it appears the city council is encouraging we build a lot of apartments.

People that live in apartments are what I call renters. People that own their homes are what I call homeowners. And renters and homeowners have different mentalities.

Renters can build on property taxes, yet they don't really pay them like homeowners do. Renters are also transient people. They live someplace for six, eight months, and move on down the road. Only owners tend to stay there a long time. And I would rather live in a community of homeowners than I would transients. And I think that's -- I don't want to convert Mercer Island to a bunch of transients.

So if we're going to build downtown housing, I would like to see those downtown housing be condominiums, where they are owned by homeowners as opposed to the renters.

I understand that sometimes the city has to be a little careful what they tell developers they can build and can't build, so if we don't have control over whether they build apartments or condominiums, I would encourage decreasing the number of those so that we don't have this predominance of renters on Mercer Island.

Renters bring a lot of crime. They bring a lot of other bad things that happen. We had a shooting in downtown Mercer Island a couple weeks ago. Thank God all that got shot was a tree. I don't know who that person was, but I bet that person was not a Mercer Island homeowner. So even if that person was a Mercer Island renter, maybe they were a visitor to a Mercer Island renter.

We don't need that type of problem on Mercer Island. We have not had it yet.

It's important that the council and committee plan for a community of homeowners that are responsible. Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you.

So Robert Thorpe is up and then David Hoffman.

ROBERT THORPE: I need a stool for the short people here.

I am Robert Thorpe, and my business address is 2737

Southeast 78th, Mercer Island.

I have the distinct honor of being here to represent virtually all of the large property owners south of McDonald's and including McDonald's, the King property, the Mercer Island Center, Farmers, and several others.

Some of you know me from a history here. I worked on the '69 conference plan, the '73 NEA study, was here to help develop the Design Commission. Some of you have seen me recently working on a landscape plan for New Seasons.

This is one of our early projects, Starbucks, VFW, several of the sports clubs, Mandarin church are ours.

But I come as an urban designer and economist. I'm teaching at the Runstep (phonetic) program next month and doing a case study on what Mercer Island is doing to encourage mixed-use projects.

So the center -- we thought it was important, with all the hard work, the stakeholders and push-back, that we think you've done a great job. Major property owners are here to say we think you're doing a good job and are headed in the right direction.

We have a couple of key points. First is, noted economists and others will speak to and housing experts: You are not going to get new development. We lost four businesses in the last three months or five. That trend can

continue. You need a mix of people living here. People that have condo owners, people that have apartments, that are our teachers, our policemen, our firemen. We need that mix.

You're never going to build up two stories if you don't do underground parking. You are never going to do plazas unless you require the housing, unless you require the plazas have off-street parking. Some can be shared parking. This is critical.

So the key is don't -- require the requirements that will go up.

You are in between two of the major cities.

People want to come here, get off the light rail, and go up.

Every other city in the state of Washington has gone up six, seven, eight stories around light rail.

Look at Rainier Valley, University District, Bellevue. You would be one community going the opposite way. I don't think those populars are going to be excited about that.

I think there's an opportunity here. Let's work together.

If you look at the area between -- and people that saw the New Seasons, you know what the new opening they are

going to do. It's going to be a really exciting store. It will be great. We take that out. McDonald's changes their parking. I have talked to their franchisee and the person doing the permits.

We can make that strip almost 50-feet wide with the King property changed into parking.

That's your parkway. That's your connection between all the way down past QFC to the bank and Island Crest. That's your central park, that park there.

Then we look at the opportunities on the Rite Aid property for plazas there that can be done there and look at what can be done at Farmers and the properties' owners.

Magnuson properties.

We have a real opportunity to do something.

You're not going to get development unless you do the incentives.

We're going to have a dead hand.

Everybody else is going to be building.

We're eight blocks from light rail transit.

Please, please, leave the heights. Require the wedding cake approach. And have the incentives there.

And let development occur, because I think you'll find the vitality you really want.

I think the goals are right. You're headed in the

right direction. A little tweaking and I think you'll have a very good plan that we'll all be proud of in the future.

Thank you.

JON: Thank you.

And then after David Hoffman, Randall Olsen.

DAVID HOFFMAN: Thank you. It's David Hoffman, actually.

Thank you, though.

My name is David Hoffman.

Address is 335 116th Southeast, Bellevue.

I'm representing the Master Builders Association, King and Snohomish Counties.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the critical update of the Town Center, the code.

I will keep my comments brief.

Our entire region is growing. Despite the notable regret we all have about change, our area is being transformed in exactly the way it was designed to.

What I mean is, processes just like this have gone on before here in Mercer Island and we are broadly a regional body like King County and the Puget Sound Regional Council.

The way land use code is written in our region is inclusive just as we want it.

There are in many cases dozens of opportunities for local citizens, business owners, associations, and community leaders to provide input to the process of code writing. These processes and your role as key decision-makers is vital to how this plan will be written and implemented.

Thank you for your service and for hearing all of us here this evening and in the many future meetings to come.

I'm here to speak for housing. We are requesting that you save the housing bonuses in the Town Center plan. In some cases, these housing bonuses may be the deciding factor as to whether a new building is built in Town Center.

As has been said, in the areas where light rail is planned in most cities, Shoreline, Seattle, Federal Way, Burien, Sea-Tac, rather than down-zoning the neighborhoods, most cities are up-zoning around future light rail stations.

Allowing more residents to move into our cities is necessary if our region is going to grow in an environmental, sensible, and sustainable way.

Allowing housing bonuses for providing structured parking can be a win-win for Mercer Island's responsibility to accommodate more growth and the desire to protect single-family neighborhoods.

As promised, that concludes my brief comments. I

very much appreciate your attention and your time this evening. Thank you.

JON: Thank you.

Laura Reymore.

RANDALL OLSEN: My name is Randall Olsen. My address is 524 Second Avenue, Seattle, 98104.

I'm here tonight on behalf -- I'm a land use attorney, full disclosure. Land use attorney at Cairncross & Hempelmann in Seattle. I'm here on behalf of a property owner on South 29th Street and on behalf of a group of -- large group of owners in the Town Center.

One of my roles at the law firm is to be the chair of our transit-oriented development practice group, and I serve on the Puget Sound Regional Council's transit-oriented development advisory board as well. So I'm working around transit and redevelopment around transit all the time.

The commission right now is considering reducing the zoning or keeping it the same for the property south of 29th Street. Across the region and the United States, the trend for development around transit stations is to increase building heights and increase densities.

In 2023 the new station here will open at I-90 there at the north end of the Town Center. And the Town Center itself is really kind of an ideal transit community,

given that there is a perfect almost half-mile distance between the transit station and Mercerdale Park. It's relatively flat.

I can say that in all of my time working in transit-oriented development and in this region and looking at it and studying it across the country, I have not seen an example of a town or a city decreasing the zoning in that half-mile around the transit station.

Generally, these massive investments, and here it's 20-plus billion dollar investment across the region and light rail, is met with enthusiasm, and usually up-zones happen around those stations in order to provide more people that can utilize transit and don't have to utilize cars, which has many benefits, including environmental benefits.

I'm here to urge the commission to resist down-zoning those properties south of 29th Street and instead consider increasing heights and increasing density within the Town Center generally, to take advantage of the investment that our region is making in light rail.

Increased building heights mean a couple of things. One that I think is very positive for the city of Mercer Island in general, one of them being the properties are more likely to redevelop in order to meet the city's vision for the Town Center. That vision requires some changes and

changes require participation by private owners.

Two, more affordable housing can be accommodated if there is density to accommodate it.

Then three, having additional density means there are more people in the Town Center that can utilize the services there, patronize the businesses, and do so without having to utilize cars.

If there are concerns about the additional heights as far as what the look and feel might be, those could be addressed in the design guidelines. And generally, the pedestrian experience is that initial 16- to 30-foot area at the street level. So some of the things that you've considered here with the setbacks I think will address those issues.

Thanks.

JON: Thank you.

LAURA REYMORE: I'm Laura Parris-Reymore, 2558 76th Avenue Southeast. I have been a resident of Mercer Island since 1976, which calculates to 40 years. I can't be that old, really.

We can't do anything about what exists, but we can design the future. And I want it to be different than what exists today in mass, in height, and certainly with scale.

The public spaces in the Town Center are created to

make it a place that people want to gather. At this time we have the small park that is the gathering place, but other than that, it is -- it is a far cry from making it an inviting space for us to gather. We in Mercer Island have been a bit notorious for being challenging for small businesses' survival, which means that we really need to address some of the commercial spaces, and that parking will be an absolutely paramount issue to address, especially if the light rail comes through and the people congregate and park on Mercer Island in order to take advantage of transportation.

The other issue is the impact to our schools of the population that potentially will be apartment dwellers. And we've already seen a huge challenge in our schools with overcrowding and that also is something that needs to be addressed.

So, my prayer is that the Mercer Island Town Center will be a vibrant, welcoming place that we can all enjoy in the future with our children, our grandchildren, and the future generations. Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you. The next two, please, Bruce Lorie, S. Gregory Lipton.

BRUCE LORIE: Thank you. I'm Bruce Laurie, 12

Evergreen Lane, Mercer Island. Nine-year member of the Planning Commission with Suzanne in her first term.

SUZANNE S.: Way back.

BRUCE LORIE: Years and years ago on the commission.

I have two thoughts. One, you can have rules and you can have plans, but the city is not going to carry them out. The city has no ability to implement. The developer community is what implements. They are your partner. You are partners in that effort.

And I think it would be wise for you to have some more input from the development community, whichever way it is.

Second idea is I think you have two what I see as very important goals. One is to have a pedestrian-oriented, very pleasant downtown space. And the other is to have half the downtown zone two and three stories. Those are incompatible because two- and three-story buildings cannot have structured parking, which means that the parking is going to be on grade, which means the village will be far apart, and that means all the shops will be far apart. So it's not what you want.

If you have, on the other hand, if you have five-story buildings, many people don't like five-story

buildings but at least you get the shops together. You get a pleasant downtown area in that way.

And that's a real conflict. And whichever way you go, I'm not talking which way I suggest, but they are two different things, and right now you have half the downtown zoned for urban and half the downtown zoned for suburban, and you wonder whether you really want that. The downtown is not all that big.

Anyway, there's been a tremendous amount of work done by you people on this thing and I compliment you on that. Thank you very much.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

S. GREGORY LIPTON: Greg Lipton, 9301 Southeast 46th Street.

My comments follow nicely on this gentleman's. There are a number of analyses that I didn't see going to be done. There's no analysis mentioned on transportation. There are some people who would like to close streets. What is the impact that's going to be on?

I didn't see an economic analysis for what -- for the retail space. Would there be enough demand for that? I've seen in some cities they have had to shrink their retail space because it wasn't enough demand.

The other thing I hear is we all want these open doughnuts where people can come in and congregate and be a public place. But would you like that in your own neighborhood? What do people want who are going to be in these units? If I have a whole lot of kids coming into the public space in my doughnut, I don't know if I would like that at 10:00 at night. So what does the end user want? Not just what do I want, because if the end user doesn't like it, it's not going to be rented up or sold.

And so I think we have to step-back and say, like this gentleman said, you have -- you want retail space in there? What does the retailer need? You want housing? What does that person who occupies the housing unit need? You want offices? You know, what do they need? And how's it going to affect the transportation?

Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you.

Michelle Goldberg, Deanna Meine.

MICHELLE GOLDBERG: I don't know who to look at.

Hello. My name is Michelle Goldberg and I live at 2212 78th Avenue Southeast.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight to give you my thoughts on Town Center development. I know you

have a daunting task ahead of you, and I appreciate being able to speak on -- I appreciate your trying to determine what the majority of Islanders want for their Town Center.

I also want to thank everyone else who came out tonight to be here to give your feedback, because that's what the Joint Commission needs.

When the crane started looming over the Legacy Hadley sites, that's when I decided I needed to get involved to try to curb the overdevelopment and increased residential density downtown. As you know, I'm not a fan of four- and five-story buildings and I do not want more of them throughout our Town Center.

I would favor Alternative X on the subarea building height map, an area that would have limits of three-story buildings but still have setbacks and step-backs. Perhaps greater height on the perimeter, but with lower height in the center.

Aesthetically, the reason I don't like higher buildings is that aesthetically, I believe that they cut off sunshine and views of the beautiful tree canopy.

But more important, I think the additional people downtown will add to the congestion and contribute to even more overcrowding in our schools.

I would like to maintain the small-town feel of our

city. Don't get me wrong. I'm not anti-change, nor am I anti-development. I would like more retail and restaurants, but not at the expense of our quality of life and schools.

I have heard people say that they want more density because they want more stores and restaurants in the Town Center. Many are under the impression that additional Town Center density is the only way we will get those stores and restaurants here. But that hasn't worked so far. Even with the many five-story buildings on the north end of the Town Center, we still have lots of empty commercial space, and we have not achieved the kind of retail mix many would like. So adding more density doesn't necessarily lead to better retail.

But what we do know with certainty is that adding more apartments will increase traffic, create more congestion, and contribute to more overcrowded schools.

We also know that with the closure of the I-90 center roadway next year the traffic in the Town Center will be increasing dramatically. So why would we want to take that risk? Why jeopardize our quality of life and the excellence of our schools for the gamble of more stores and restaurants?

So, someone said earlier something about an economic analysis, and I would welcome that, because right

now we're saying hypothetically -- some people are saying hypothetically they want more businesses downtown.

I've also heard people say in the region we would be the only community to down-zone near light rail. I say hallelujah if we're that one community.

(Cheers and applause.)

I look at Shoreline and I think: What a cautionary tail. We don't want to be Shoreline. We don't want to be Seattle. We don't want to be Bellevue. We want to keep Mercer Island.

We want some change downtown, but we don't want these tall apartment buildings and impact to the traffic and schools.

So, thank you very much, and I really hope that you all listen to what everyone says tonight. Thank you.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

Next two, please, Dave Fennell (phonetic), Kelly Rider.

DEANNA MEINE: I'm Deanna Meine. I live at 2980 76th Avenue Southeast, right behind Farmers building up on the hill.

I look at that affordable housing advertisement over there (pointing) and it makes me feel very sad for the

people who would have to live there.

When I lived on Ferncroft Road we purchased a house that had a separate garage with a space above it, and I finished it out as an accessory dwelling unit for a bachelor who lived there all the time I owned the house.

He had Juliette balconies with French doors and a fireplace, and it was a lovely space to be, not something like that affordable housing unit. But I can tell you he didn't pay very much rent at all. He was a nice person to live with -- to live next to.

My other comment is about the Town Center. I would like to see open buildings with a variety of heights, with glass roofs over open spaces, and some skylights. The center of this could be open walkways to go through the buildings centering roofs to look down on from the bowl above the town square.

Another idea that I haven't heard talked about before, but it's been on my mind for a while: We have city hall and the JCC down near the East Channel Bridge. We have a number of lovely older homes along there, along the north side of I-90, that could be turned into charming little shops. I think if we took advantage of purchasing some of the property on the north side of the East Channel Bridge and opening that for a hotel or restaurants, it could be on

the water with dock services and beach. That could be very charming.

Thank you for listening.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

DAVE FENNELL: Dave Fennell, 8030 Avalon Place,
Mercer Island.

And I guess I want to begin with trying to adhere to what the commission was asking of us this morning -- this evening, the comments on the vision. I think it's really marvelous of whoever did it to get a vision statement down to less than 10 bullets. So it's a signature achievement in its own right.

But I want to comment a little bit more really on the economics of this. And a couple of the speakers just a moment ago have commented on this, but I want to go a little step further, which is to say that given that when you look at this vision, you understand that there's intensely conflicting goals that are set out in the vision. The question is: How do you go about actually achieving the elements of the vision in some measured way that satisfies each component? Of course at the end of that you're going to find it's an economics puzzle.

And in particular, and this was highlighted by,

fortunately, the first speaker, I think I recall this correctly, that who was talking about the hotel and whether or not it was going to be financially viable for his firm to continue to consider what they're doing. And I don't know if this has been a part of your overall process. I'm sure that you have applied financial tools to your work, but at some point these properties and what will be wrought with them depending on your decision have economic returns that should be modeled because there's going to be negotiation.

Another speaker pointed out that this is a matter between planners, but the people who are going to be doing it are the developers. And I think it's very important that the commission understand what the potential is for the developers to have to achieve as these different vertical step-back, building height, subareas, et cetera, are considered.

Each should be modeled, because at some point the city council will be negotiating or the city planner will be negotiating doing things with the developers, and in any negotiation it's very important to understand what is really of value versus what's being imagined through each one of these alternatives.

So my counsel would be: Good vision statement -- by the way, I also want to make, because it's

in your vision statement, there's -- affordable housing is mentioned in there and it's what's highlighted this evening. And I guess I would make a comment that one way of affording housing to people at an affordable level is through rentals.

Many respectable people live in rental properties. It is part of the spectrum of housing in this nation. And we should have regard for everyone based on their merits, not on where they happen to habitate.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you.

KELLY RIDER: Hi. Good evening. I'm Kelly Rider, policy director for the Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County, or HDC.

On behalf of HDC's 120 members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment tonight on the affordable housing considerations for the Town Center development code. We encourage you to prioritize affordable housing and develop an incentive zoning policy for your final code.

HDC is a nonprofit membership organization that represents nonprofit organizations, private businesses, and public partners who are working to develop affordable homes across King County, and who are dedicated to the vision that all people, regardless of their income, should have a safe,

healthy, and affordable home.

I want to thank you for considering affordable housing as part of the Town Center code update. We've appreciated the work Mercer Island has done previously to support our range of affordable options throughout the city through commitments to the ARCH, the Housing Trust Fund, as well as incentive zoning and Multifamily Property Tax Exemption program.

Affordable housing is a key component of a healthy, thriving community. It promotes access to Mercer Island's strong community resources, but it also helps businesses attract and retain employment and allows local employees the chance to live near their work, reducing congestion.

As you know, despite the city's efforts, an affordable housing shortage remains. Currently 1,175 Mercer Island households, or 12% of your population, are paying more than half of their income for their housing costs.

Nationally, we consider 30% of their income to be what's typically affordable.

Most of these families are low income, placing them in severe risk of homelessness.

As you might have heard, we're currently in a state of emergency. And as a report to the Joint Commission, the December 2 meeting revealed Mercer Island at present falls

far short of the county-wide affordable housing goal that 40% of your local housing stock should be affordable to the households, households earning 80% of area's median income or less. Only 10% of Mercer Island, one quarter of that, is affordable to these households.

I would like to paint a picture of who these households are. As somebody mentioned earlier, they are teachers, hospital workers. These are families earning about \$64,000 a year or less.

As somebody who lives in a household with two master's degrees, working good-paying jobs, my husband's an aerospace engineer, we're currently trying to find a new home to afford across the county.

Currently, Mercer Island's valued home price, median home price, is about a million dollars.

We can't come near that.

These households aren't earning anywhere near what my household is earning. They can't possibly become homeowners in Mercer Island.

The least we can do is try to incorporate some rental affordable housing into your community to make sure these workers in your community, the workers in our region, have a place to call home.

As you continue deliberations on your Town Center

strategy, I urge you to continue exploring the affordable housing component to the Town Center and working closely with ARCH, A Regional Coalition For Housing, to analyze the best incentive systems for your local contacts.

Thank you.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

I just want to take a quick second. Anybody that has shown up just recently and wants to speak? Do we have another sign-up sheet in back?

SCOTT: There's one in back.

JON: Any additional names?

Anybody that wants to speak, put your name on the list in back so we can get you signed up.

Terry Deeny and then Cynthia Winiski.

TERRY DEENY: My name is Terry Deeny. I live at 3261 67th Avenue Southeast.

I have lived on the island for 44 years and I have loved every minute of it.

I don't know anyone that's happier with what has happened to the Town Center. We started by taking the main drag and making it a two-lane road and reduced the parking. And then we started building buildings all over the place so that -- it's -- the cart before the horse and I don't

understand it.

What we want in the Town Center, and everybody I have talked to, and I know a lot of people on the island, I haven't met one person that is happy with what's happened in the last decade. Not one person. I would guess that most of those people are here.

I have heard some developers speak before or people for the developers, and I appreciate their point of view. But they don't live here. We live here. And the Town Center is not the only -- the people that live in houses on Mercer Island are the people that would like to be able to come to the Town Center.

I noticed just recently since The Islander restaurant has opened in this new location, there's no room to park in their public parking spaces to go there for lunch anymore. It's full-up already and there's no place to park. And I don't live close enough to walk, and most of the people don't live close enough to walk to come to the Town Center. And unless you're going to the QFC or something or the bookstore right now, wait for a while, there's no place to park. I think that's extremely important.

I think the vertical step-backs, if I saw more than one or two of those, I would become nauseous. I think they are so ugly, I can't believe it.

(Laughter.)

I don't think there's a good looking building in downtown right now. What I hope to see is a little more creativity in the architecture and a little more approval from you people in the planning and the design to make these people make these buildings a little more attractive.

We've talked about spaces to sit, public spaces, setbacks, low -- I don't think there should be anything in the valley part of the Town Center that should be more than three stories high. That would be the absolute maximum. And again, everybody I have talked to feels exactly the same way I do.

And I want to thank you, all of you, lastly, for all of the hard work. I don't envy your position for all this hard work and I thank you for it.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

CYNTHIA WINISKI: I'm sorry that I have to read a lot of what I'm saying. I wasn't thinking very much ahead of time. But so, first of all, Mercer Island cannot be --

JON: I'm sorry. Name and address.

CYNTHIA WINISKI: Cynthia Winiski, 2750 68th Avenue Southeast.

So first of all, Mercer Island cannot be put in the

same category with any other transit-oriented development because it is an island. Every other TOD is the center of a spiderweb of infrastructure and roads, so density makes sense there.

But Mercer Island is in the middle of a lake, 10 minutes from two major metropolitan areas, and that is a completely unique situation in this country and in fact the world. So this unique situation must be treated with unique solutions.

Next, I believe the commission needs to address the development and infrastructure process equally if not more than the actual code. I have read the city code. The real problem is the execution. Variances and developer incentives were granted so freely that that became the normal code.

An example is that the city reduced parking in Town Center by 140 parking spaces by consistently allowing the variances. It's also the norm for all development projects to be granted SEPA nonsignificance, which eliminates the requirement for proper environmental and traffic studies. So there's a lack of connection to the infrastructure and the development that needs to be put back together.

And as far as affordable housing units, that Hadley, for example, used the incorrect ratios to come up

with its number of affordable housing units and it is not built -- it is not to code, so they have a development agreement that allows it to be built and it's not according to the code it's written to.

There's an MIT thesis on the Internet, that was published after Mercer Island's last charette, which included case studies, and Mercer Island was one of those case studies. And it said that Mercer Island had a very successful code revision, but it failed in that there was -- it didn't implement it very well. And the two of the reasons why: There was no custodian of the vision and that there was a lack of investment for the implementation. And I'm sure that everyone in this room would hate to watch that same thing happen again.

So, I really do thank you all, for the hard work and time the staff and the commission have spent on this has been hours and hours and so many resources, but I'm afraid that if we don't fix the process, it will have been wasted.

And I'm going to close with: A wise man once told me that a goal without a plan is just a wish.

Thank you.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

Randall Olsen and then Leon Cohen.

SPEAKER: Randall already spoke.

JON: So Leon Cohen and then Bob Knox.

LEON COHEN: Good evening. I'm Leon Cohen. My address: 9219 Southeast 33rd Place, Mercer Island.

I came here in 2001 with my family and raised my children here on the island. Went to the schools, through the bad program and all that.

I'm also a developer and contractor. Have been for a couple of generations. Done a lot of projects in the greater area.

I have the property where Freshy's Fish is on the corner there. Almost the corner. And over the last -- let's see. Since 2008, I have presented to the city and worked with staff, various people in the staff, on different parking schemes. Ben Paris (phonetic) was hired a couple of times at least, maybe three times, to do some parking analysis for a big need that everyone knows about. And I came up like first and second on both times. Once was a transit-oriented development. Another one was independent parking. And did different schemes. Spent quite a bit of money with architects and planners and came up first and second in both cases, but neither time they decided to act on it.

In addition, I put together a scheme that has 47

condominiums units, high-end luxury-type units, and that also has mixed use, retail and some office, with views of the lake up above and Lintock (phonetic) Park to the north.

I know that affordable housing can also be integrated in the condominiums, and hearing several people tonight, I think that's something that's very important. People want a sense of ownership, and I think affordable -- some affordable housing can be mixed into it.

I appreciate all your hard work and effort and I know it's a big job ahead of you.

Also, I'm very pleased that the city council has voted on a new parking plan, spending quite a bit of money on a new parking report, and that's going to be instrumental to your efforts, and I'm very supportive of that because parking's a big problem.

So, between what happens with light rail and what happens with the corner property next to mine -- there's a small piece there that the city owns that they are trying to purchase to make this a more of a rectangular development.

And that's kind of it in a nutshell and three minutes, so if I can help you in any way, feel free to call me or contact me any time. I'll do my best.

So, thank you very much.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you. Bob Knox and then John Houlihan.

BOB KNOX: My name is Bob Knox and I'm at 10604 Northeast 38th Place in Kirkland, Washington, 98033. I'm the housing development project manager for Imagine Housing. We own and operate the Ellsworth housing senior property at 2720 76th Avenue Southeast, located in the residential central focus area of the Town Center.

I spoke to the Joint Commission last fall, and I recognize you have a lot of speakers here tonight, so I'm going to keep it brief and I won't repeat the points that I made the last time I spoke.

Imagine has owned and operated the Ellsworth property since 1999, with 100% of the apartments affordable, residents that are at incomes less than 50% of the area median income.

As currently zoned today, Ellsworth is a viable site for additional affordable housing. It's strategically located, its zoning makes it site-ready, and affordable housing can be built as efficiently on this property as anywhere within the Town Center.

Maintaining the current TC-4 zoning standards along 76th Avenue Southeast will be an important step in allowing Ellsworth property to play a role in helping the city achieve its affordable housing goal.

We also feel that the height that the code currently allows is actually a benefit to the city and that allows flexibility in the design of the top of the buildings in these areas without necessarily permitting or allowing another floor to be built. So we would urge the city to maintain the 65-foot maximum height limit.

We thank you for including affordable housing in the Town Center vision and we encourage you to continue your efforts to provide affordable housing incentives in the Town Center. Thank you.

JON: Thank you.

JOHN HOULIHAN: Good evening. My name is John Houlihan. My business address is 100 North 35th Street in Seattle, Washington.

As many of you know, I am a commercial real estate land use attorney. I represent Dollar Development and the Cassan family here on Mercer Island.

You heard from our architect earlier this evening, Jon Graves. We have the desire to bring a significant amenity to Mercer Island and that is a boutique hotel.

Our project has been ready to go to permits since June of this year. It's been precluded by the moratorium.

We've continued to work on the design. It's a really exciting project for us.

The comments that you heard from Mr. Graves earlier, though, really put into question the ability of that project to go forward. The direction of the code is going right now with required setbacks. The step-backs on upper floors has a significant economic impact on the developability of that particular parcel and in particular a hotel use.

I would encourage you, as you go through this, to really take a close look at the actual development impacts of the step-backs, the requirements for midblock connector, because there may be some unintended consequences. You may design a code that really results in no development. I think you have heard that from several commenters this evening.

The other issue that I have noticed in sitting through some of the Joint Commission meetings is perhaps an assumption that all development in the Town Center is going to be a kind of traditional residential-over-retail mixed-use component type development. And that's not the case. And so some of the movements on building heights and floor-to-floor ratios may work in addressing your traditional 3 over 2 residential construction, but actually constrain good development, good design for commercial uses like hotels which have different floor-to-floor ceiling

height requirements and designs. So I would encourage you to think about not just residential uses, but also commercial and office uses in the Town Center.

The other thing to think and to keep in mind as you move through this is there is obviously a strong voice in the community for public open space, but there are constitutional limits on your ability to require public use of private property. There's a really tremendous guidance document from the attorney general -- Rob McKenna was the attorney general -- that has good key issues and flags to look at to see if your regulations are actually overreaching it and creating an unconstitutional take.

The other thing I would like to say is that the property owners and developers in the Town Center are not the amorphous out-of-town evil developers.

Most of the property owners are longtime Mercer Island residents. They are your neighbors. They are the people who have been participating and contributing to this business community for decades. And they are just as excited and invested in an effective, successful, and vibrant Town Center as the rest of the people on Mercer Island and this commission. And they stand ready, willing, and able to contribute to that.

And so I would encourage that you engage with them

now and have a robust discussion with them at the table so you can understand what are the impacts to development, the economics. And is your code that you are writing right now, can they help it be successful. In other words, will you have a code that actually gets built.

Thank you for your time this evening.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Milford Walker and Kevin Chesler.

MILFORD WALKER: Hi. My name is Milford Walker. I live at 6160 93rd Avenue Southeast, Mercer Island, Washington.

I appreciate all your hard work.

I moved here in 1988. I was called the Californicator. I became an Emmett Watson fan.

I lived in Los Angeles. I moved here because I wanted a different lifestyle. My son lives in Seattle. He loves the urban lifestyle. I love him. But he wants something different than I want.

And I picked here to live in a village, a small town. What a blessing to go to a school district that's big enough to have everything, but small enough that almost all the kids are involved in something, and then while your kids are growing up, you know all the parents. You carpool. You

go everywhere.

This weekend I'm going to Carmel for my 35th wedding anniversary. Carmel looks pretty much the same as when I went there 35 years ago, because the people of Carmel value what Carmel looked like.

Whatever decision you make here, let it be because the people of Mercer Island want those things. I think a lot of people moved here because they want the same things I wanted in a community.

We shouldn't be a cog in Puget Sound's wheel or Olympia's wheel or Seattle's wheel. We're our own unique distinct community.

When it comes to affordable housing, I appreciate the sentiment, but I went to school in UCLA and I rented an apartment in Santa Monica.

What happened was they ended up with rent control, and then you would go from sublet to sublet to sublet, and it became a big controversy on whether a person that owned a piece of property could ever collect rents.

I was a teacher. I lived -- I had to commute to where I worked. Things change in life. So, let the free market work.

The other thing that I wanted to say is the zoning in all this down here when I moved here was two stories.

They upped it. They increased the value. Yet when I went to Summer Celebration to talk about why the Legacy building had so much parking, it went all the way to the bottom of your code, gave a variance off the code. It's because they have to dig down one more story. It's expensive. But are we going to give up our community because it's expensive? Or do we get to say what kind of community we want?

They said it didn't pencil out.

Well, there's a fairness to it.

And I don't want to devalue people's property, but you got to remember you've already upped the value of their property.

So, please, let us vote. Let us say what kind of community we want.

I'm a big boy. If the people of Mercer Island have changed their minds, I'll make my decision then, but don't let someone else tell us what we have to have.

Let us decide what we want.

Thank you.

(Cheers and applause.)

KEVIN CHESLER: Hi. My name is Kelvin Chester. I live at 9212 Southeast 46th Street.

I have lived here for 10 years and planning to live here for at least 10 more.

My kids are in the schools, and when we moved here, I think we were right at the front end of where some of the building happened. And I appreciate the Farmers Market and some of the Bennett's and other activities, more retail shops, things that I believe have happened because there's density or more density than there was before.

I want to thank you guys for the work that you're doing. I don't exactly envy your positions. I think you got a tough job.

It's a great opportunity. This is a very unusual place.

I have to say I regret some of the arguments made by some of the people representing the landowners, because I looked around -- not because they were wrong, but because as I looked around the audience when they were saying things like density is good, and the reaction that they got was universally negative in the crowd.

I think renewal is needed. I'm not a developer and I don't know what can be done and what can't be done with city code, but I can say that renewal is needed.

It's hard to argue -- for me it's hard to argue with the statements in the vision, except for the fact they are very abstract. And so what I look for, what I feel like I'm missing in all of this is the tangibility. If

everything that got built that's on some of these -- you know, the subareas and building heights chart, I have no idea how many more people that means for Mercer Island. I have no idea how much -- what that means for taxes. I have no idea what that means for cost. I don't know about the water supply. I don't know about the police force. I don't know about the number of kids in the schools. Maybe it's no big deal, but maybe it is a big deal, and maybe that's something that would help us know what kind of building is appropriate for here, what kind of building is appropriate for the island.

A couple questions I have -- or two more questions I have besides some of the modeling that happens. Maybe some visibility to kind of the underlying issues in this building. I don't know what kind of investments the city can make. It sounds like there's kind of a challenge between what the residents want and what is in the interests of the developers.

What can the city do? I've seen the city do great things investing in various places within the island. I don't know how much freedom, flexibility, power money, the city has to create some spaces in the downtown area. That may not be what the developer would do.

There's been a lot of talk about things people

don't want. People don't want Bellevue. People don't want Ballard. People don't want Shoreline. Sounds like maybe some people want Carmel. And I would look for are there models that we can all gather around and say: Hey, that's a great place. Whatever city it is, it's enough like Mercer Island, and they did a good job and it's a great place to live. Let's try to set that as our model. And then in discussions with developers in the future, that gives everybody something to work towards when trying to decide on exceptions or variances.

The last thing I want to say -- sorry, I'm out of time -- the population is going to continue to grow and pressure is going to continue to go up over time. There's no question about that. And so what might not pencil out today with setbacks, so on and so forth, probably will pencil out one day. And so I would be cautious about not thinking that all the decisions have to be made today, and giving us some time to grow into whatever the future brings.

JON: Thank you.

KEVIN CHESLER: So thanks.

(Applause.)

JON: Linda Bramlage and Tom Acker.

ALISON: Linda Bramlage had to leave.

JON: Tom Acker.

Did you sign up on one of these prior?

TOM ACKER: Yes, I did. It's okay, though.

JON: You know it was on purpose, right?

TOM ACKER: It was a conspiracy theory, you know.

First of all, I do want to thank all of you guys.

We started with Seth Harry. Seth Harry did not represent the community. He represented himself. He repackaged and repurposed things that didn't represent what we wanted as a community, and for the first time ever you're starting to look at renderings and stuff like that that really gives people a baseline to start on an illustrative conversation from. So I really appreciate that.

My primary interest is not in looking out for the financial interests of a few hundred landowners in the Town Center. I like them all. I respect them. But I am worried about the 23,500 other people that live on the island.

And I think that if we have an outcome from this meeting, you're very much seeing that there's a community side that's giving you a perspective and a development and financial interest side, and while when I hear people like Mr. Thorpe talk about how we have to have development, he has a financial interest in it. He's been sharing that about how he's now got the contract with the New Seasons area and stuff like that.

But really what I would like to see, and just going back to what you were looking for, is no more height, if possible. Less, in fact. I'm okay with some of the stair-stepping features.

The midblock connections are a must.

We need better and more controlled building facades.

More open space.

Better parking that's above ground. People don't like going into those tight-filled parking garages.

We want open air and walkability.

And if there's a way to incentivize people, developers, for condominiums versus the apartments, people here want to sell their homes and downsize when their kids grow up, and they don't want to leave their community. They want condominiums. And maybe that's the type of incentives we should look for.

I am very sympathetic to affordable housing. I just don't know how we're ever going to crack that nut. Then you give developers some stories to go up, and then after X number of years, it goes back to them and you lose the rent control. So there are a lot of problems with that.

And I am definitely against the density and massing.

Want more small boutique businesses.

And then just in the spirit of transparency, I would like to ask all of you, and this follows up on Dr. Anderson's comment about financial interests. I would like to know if any of you own property in the Town Center and specifically if any of the up-zones that nobody asked for, if one of you own a property down there. That has been up-zoned in your three primary recommendations. I think it's a fair question. The public needs to know the answer to that.

Also, ironically, I have to apologize to Bart Dawson and one of my -- he is a supporter of Mayor Bassett. He asked me to read a letter, but he also told me he gave you a copy of it. He had a lot of concerns about the modeling, and I share his concerns.

And I think that you should consider the feedback that you've heard tonight. It is sad that it's sort of an us versus them, but we live here. I'm not saying that all the developers are migratory and transient developers, but I do think that we want to use our Town Center and we know what we need for our community perhaps more than they do, and I'm not interested in their profits.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Dee Beaudette and -- go ahead.

DEE BEAUDETTE: Dee Beaudette, 2929 76th Avenue Southeast.

And I first want to thank each one of you for the time and commitment that you're giving. I know that it's just a tremendous value to the Mercer Island community, and you're just appreciated.

There is an unintended consequence when we increase the building height in the Town Center. People have talked a lot about their concerns about density.

I live in the Town Center and one of the things that I would like to ask each of you to do, when you think about the plans for the future, is to remember that, yes, it is the Town Center, but, you know what? It's my neighborhood. And me and all of my neighbors that live in the Town Center are experiencing already unintended consequences, and that is noise pollution.

Think about this very small community area with just, what, five streets (laughter) that you can go on. And you've got UPS, USPS, FedEx, moving vans, garbage pickup, recycling, Macy's delivery truck, all of the other delivery trucks, and they are all running through this tiny area on the island, which is my neighborhood.

So as you think about the future and the vision,

just remember it's not just the Town Center. It's my neighborhood.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you. Forgive me if I mispronounce it. Thellea Levine.

And then Paul Montel.

THELLEA LEVEQUE: Thank you. You are not the first to mispronounce it. It's very difficult.

Thellea Leveque.

My grandfather thinks my husband's last name should have been Levine.

I live at 9323 Southeast 43rd Street.

I'm a physician. I have a public health background. And I am interested in the well-being of all people. I know we all are.

There are a lot of competing interests here. I would say the number one issue, before we talk about changing the building code, is to make sure that we are safe in our community. We need to make sure that we have a good emergency plan for disaster situation. We know that we are an earthquake zone. We have rising sea levels. We do not have an urgent care on the island. And before we increase our density at all, we need to have a very clear plan about

states of emergency and health care issues.

Expanding on this, we also need to make sure that our schools keep -- basically, health care and education are my two main concerns. Not only is a viable school system on Mercer Island important for the education of our young people, but even if you don't have a young person who is being educated, it is a huge draw to our community and to our property values if you need that as an incentive.

So just structural issues. Schools, emergency system, traffic. What is the quality of life that we who live here now have before we start expanding further. We really need to clarify that.

And the next thing after structural would be kind of a cultural sense of what we want. This is kind of the look and feel, you know, if we've -- if we decide that we have the capacity to increase our density on a safety level, how do we want to go about doing that?

I hear a lot of what has been said before, which is if we're going to go up in height, it needs to be on the edges of the community, and keep the center low.

But we need some context. I need to understand -- I think there was another speaker here that I really agreed with. I need to understand how many -- how much will our community grow.

Are we going to, you know, add jobs on Mercer Island? Add people on Mercer Island? Are we going to be more of a commuting type of community?

I need to understand, like I think one of the hotel builders was saying: Is the vision that all of these would be mixed-use residential and commercial? Would lots of them be hotels? Would some businesses move in, you know, like a big -- like a Farmers Insurance type of thing where the whole thing is all offices?

I just need to understand some context before I can make these sorts of informed decisions. So we're not just building buildings. I mean, yes, we care about the look and the feel, but we're filling them with human beings, and we need to understand who we are now, what we need, where our blind spots are, and what are we going to -- how are we going to provide for the individuals who we do add to our community. Are they going to be business owners? Employees? Mercer Island community members? We just need to really get some context, and not just talk about the buildings, but talk about the people who live inside of them.

I just need more information.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you.

PAUL MANNER: Thanks for hearing me. My name is Paul Manner.

Sorry about the writing there. I'm also a physician, so you can't hold it against me.

My address is 2222 70th Avenue Southeast. I've been here about ten years.

And one of the things that's interesting about this is that where you stand on these issues apparently depends a great deal on where you sit. And what I mean by that is that there are -- we've heard from a lawyer from Tacoma, we've heard from a lawyer -- an architect from Tacoma, heard from lawyers from Seattle, lawyers for one person or another, and they are all very agreeable with the idea that we should go for high density. They're all big on the idea that we have to develop because everybody else is developing.

I would say that using Burien and Sea-Tac and Renton is a poor sales technique. These are not places that we want to be.

(Applause.)

Sorry. I'm sure that people that live there are lovely.

But you know what? We're different. We are

unique.

Why? A couple things.

Number one, we are an island. We are a six square mile island. We have nowhere to go. We can't drop back and punt.

It's not like we're Renton or Redmond or Carnation or Burien or Sea-Tac or any of these other places. If we get massive density, we have no place to go. That's it. There's no way for us to use alternate ways of transportation. There's one way on. There's one way off.

We've already had a discussion about the fact that we're going to lose the center lanes very soon. Why? Because we're expecting WSDOT and the various powers that be to put up light rail.

Based on their experience with Big Bertha (laughter), I would say that a 2023 date for light rail is optimistic to the point of delusional (laughter). And when we're making a bet, a very big bet, that that light rail is going to solve all of our problems of transportation, and it's going to solve all the problems of density because everybody's going to be able to get off and on the island, if we're sitting here talking about putting up a massive number of buildings in the next six or seven years, you're making a very big assumption that that light rail is going

to work and that it's going to be available and that it's not going to bring other problems. And I would say it's practically a guarantee that it is not going to work as advertised.

(Applause.)

So, what I would say here is developers, lawyers, you know, architects, they come and go. All right? We had the same issue with the Hines project. They talked about the fact that if we didn't buy their thing right then, the world was going to end.

Well, guess what? Developers are like subways, okay? You miss one, another couple others are going to come by a few days or hours later.

We don't need to sit here and be bamboozled by a bunch of developers.

Let's listen. Let's think about it.

Thanks for your time.

(Cheers and applause.)

JON: Steven Chapman and then Richard Molka.

STEVEN CHAPMAN: My name is Steven Chapman, and I live at 2729 73rd Avenue Southeast.

When I contemplate the broad expanse of purple five-story buildings, I can't get away from the conclusion that the city wants to turn the Town Center into Capitol

Hill. I love Capitol Hill. I love going to Capitol Hill. And then I like coming home from Capitol Hill.

I used to live on Capitol Hill. My husband and I moved here with our children because we wanted a different life than what we could have on Capitol Hill. So, please don't turn the Town Center into Capitol Hill. Let me go there instead.

I'm also concerned that the increased population is going to lead to an increased need for our social services, like Mercer Island Youth and Family Services. More people, more demand.

And does our civil infrastructure, the sewer; water; hmm, the *E. coli* thing again; hmm, the power grid; does our island civil infrastructure have the capacity to handle the sewage from another I don't know how many thousands of people?

And what about the classrooms? Not just a one-year portable, but a permanent classroom increase from this population.

Who is going to pay to increase the capacity on our island?

And I'm going to close with reminding both the council, thank you for your hard work, the commission and the council, that you work for us, the citizens and the

residents of the island. You don't work for the developers. You work for us. We pay you to protect our way of life, not to pave and plunder our island for the profits of a few.

And then on a process note, when I got the postcard in the mail saying "Please give us your feedback," I went to the city Web site. I couldn't find any of these documents. I called. I e-mailed a woman in the development office and she sent me a link to a 60-plus page document that wasn't even the draft of what you all have been working on. And that's when I'm going: Why am I being asked to comment on what's already existing?

Why wasn't there an executive summary for people? Why was it buried in the Web site?

You know, if she hadn't given me the link in the email, I couldn't have found that document.

And then secondly, I would propose that what you're working on, the code, that it include a reflective process, so that at the end of each major development, the city, the commission, reflects on whether or not the code worked the way that you intended it to work. And then you can suggest tweaks and fixes over the next 20 years so that 20 years from now we're not left with a big hoopla of starting over again. By having a reflective and a fixed process built into the code, we have that ability to adapt it as we move

forward into the future.

Thank you.

JON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

RICHARD MOLKA: How you doing? My name is Richard Molka, 4800 East Mercer Way.

Pretty much the last two or three or four guys that just spoke pretty much took the words out of my mouth. My advice would be there's no rush. Go slow. We don't need to have to get caught up in growth, growth, growth, who is going to make the most money, et cetera, et cetera.

We're not going to run out of places to shop, as you can see what's going on in Bellevue Square and all around.

And the problems that are going to occur with the light rail transit and the Big Bertha, that should require some thought also.

The only other thought I had, if you keep stacking the buildings, I see the pictures with the vertical step-backs and doughnut holes. Get them going high enough, and I don't know if it'll look like eastern Europe before the wall came down or whether it's going to look like Elliott Bay with the container ships coming in there.

So, be careful and go slow. And there's no rush.

And don't be driven by the big-buck guys that we have to do this, that, and the other thing.

If I had my way, I would declare the whole area a historical district, let things settle out, and 15 years from now make a fortune selling tickets and have a little bus going around here.

(Laughter and applause.)

JON: Paul Reese and Mike Cero.

PAUL REESE: Hello. My name is Paul Reese, 4334 89th Avenue Southeast.

I think it's been so interesting to listen to all the various points of view tonight, and really the person who most effected me was the -- I think he was an attorney or an architect for a transit-based development group. I think for a law firm. But, you know, he pointed out that Mercer Island is unique. It's the only city he had seen on a transit hub that was downsizing the area around that, rather than upsizing it, increasing the density.

I got thinking: You know, why is that? Everybody here is just people that happen to live here. There's nothing that unique about it. What makes Mercer Island unique and so hard to deal with and so tough for you folks on the commission to work with, you know, it's really what was pointed out by a speaker a couple back, that we're on an

island. We're our own municipality of only 25,000 people. The only way on and off is the interstate highway that we have to share with the other four million people in the state of Washington. And that's all we have.

You have to make a decision when you have this opportunity to redo the code: Is that five-story decision they made in the early '90s the correct and sustainable development for the island? Or is it really what you hear from the community that what we really want, all we can really afford to support, is the small city, is really a suburban downtown.

(Applause.)

We want a strip mall that's nice-looking, somewhere we can get our services.

And I think on your subarea building heights design, in your question mark box there, you should really put something that probably you hate, you know. You're a lot of architects and a lot of people who seem to be trying to fit in the box of what the development is, but I think you should put something that is just two stories, suburban development, give people a visual on that aspect, and then you put that out to a vote of the people on Mercer Island. You would see 80% of the people voting for the suburban option. Two stories all the way through.

We need something that functions for the residents. And it's not because we're special. It's because we're trapped, you know. We're on the island. There's limited resources. You put density here, I mean, the city could bankrupt itself in 20 years trying to deal with all the problems of this increased density that are generated from the island, all this.

It seems like you have two choices. You can just down-zone it to two stories, suburban-type development, and what's left, and then take whatever immediate economic consequences there are from that, dealing with the developers and property owners, or build it big and gamble, you know.

I would go the safe route.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you.

MIKE CERO: Thank you, Chair Friedman and commissioners. Thank you for all the work that you're doing.

A few comments I have. A few of them will be repeated.

Michelle Goldberg, I thought her comments were right on the button. Did a very nice job.

Don't beat yourself up on a couple of issues here.

Don't beat yourself up on retail, developing retail. The reality is you live in between two large metropolitan areas that have wonderful and all the retail restaurants that you can imagine that Mercer Island will not compete with. If you try to get the density to support the retail, that's not going to be good for the island. If you think that retail -- that you need to tweak the codes for retail for destination shoppers, that's not going to happen because of traffic.

Don't beat yourself over housing capacity. And I'll talk a little bit about housing capacity. In the end, what's going to tell me whether you are successful or not for the whole island, not just for the CBD, is the metric of housing capacity.

If after all this planning your before and housing capacity does not change, if your housing capacity does not decrease, that is, down-zoning, then you will not have been successful for the whole island. The whole island in terms of the level of services that we have grown accustomed to and that we expect.

Density is causing issues with the level of services that we're able -- that the government -- that the city is able to provide to our citizens.

For instance, already we are talking about

accepting a level D -- I'm sorry -- yes, level of service D on intersections instead of level of service C. That's not the direction that we want to go. That's the direction we're headed.

Already we've passed \$100 million school bond, and as soon as that fourth elementary which was sold to right-size our elementary schools, as soon as that's open, we'll still have 12 portables spread over the three other elementaries.

Density is not our friend.

We are a car-centric community. You'll have folks in the Town Center that walk in the Town Center, but again, you are here looking after the best interests of the island. And we are a car-centric island community and a single-family residence -- consisting primarily of single-family residences. Don't focus too much on the walkability at the expense of the folks who are carrying their kids and cars to get the things that they need down at the central business district.

The 2023; the 520, over schedule, over budget; Big Bertha, over schedule, over budget; Sequel (phonetic) over schedule, over budget.

The East Link is going to be over budget and it's not going to hit 2023. It might hit 2030. Don't try

to -- don't think that your development needs to hit when that thing opens. Wait until it opens. Then figure it out. And TOD is not our friend. Again, it's an issue of density.

In closing, I want to say housing capacity: That is a critical metric that everyone needs to be aware of, that when you finish with your planning, our housing capacity is less than what it is now.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you.

Jerry Grupp.

Do we have any more signed up there?

Thank you.

JERRY GRUPP: Well, I'm Jerry Grupp. I'm an architect. I was a veteran of the World War II Air Force, which gave me a desire to fly after I got out and not only to be an architect. This gave me a unique view of what was happening to downtown Mercer Island and all of the rest of the island, including the Scalzo Scar. It gave me a realistic idea of what it was.

And I also have my office on Main Street, Bellevue, for 40 years. And you now see what is happening there as far as a straight-up development five stories high. Main Street, Old Main Street, we had hoped would be a very

friendly, lovely place. And you can see what will happen to Mercer Island. All you have to do is go over to Bellevue, which I have done lately.

But all of these places are depending on the residents that live in their houses all around them. You can't have a grocery store or a car dealer or any of these things unless there is a central area that furnishes these essential services. I have been in 41 countries so far and I just got back from my ninth visit in Japan.

You can see what high-density living is. And it works very well with the Japanese because they follow certain rules of conduct. And it's amazing how it all works, and we have to make it do that well.

So thank you very much.

(Applause.)

JON: Thank you. I would like to thank everybody for coming tonight.

We have, let's see, it's two more scheduled currently, two more public hearings scheduled March 9 and March 30.

Is Scott still here?

Scott, what is our next schedule for just regular, our regular meetings?

SCOTT: Next Wednesday.

JON: Next Wednesday? Study session is next Wednesday.

We do appreciate your public comment. We really want to hear as much as we can.

The discussion we hear tonight is a lot of the discussion we're having amongst ourselves, so we appreciate it.

Again, email to the Web site. You can add your public -- your written comment there.

And I'm going to close the public hearing at this point.

And we'll adjourn.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

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Lisa K. Hutchinson

CART Provider