

Prepared for the City of Mercer Island

## Town Center Parking Plan

Adopted November 2023



Study conducted by



**WALKER**  
CONSULTANTS

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# A Project Overview

## Introduction

In 2022, the City of Mercer Island conducted a Town Center parking study to evaluate current parking supply, utilization, and management of Mercer Island's Town Center.

Town Center is Mercer Island's core commercial district, located on the North End of the island and featuring local shops, restaurants, service providers, and multifamily housing. By 2025, Town Center will be served by light rail via Sound Transit's East Link Extension, and the area also connects to the I-90 Trail, a regional bike and pedestrian commuter trail.

Well-planned and sufficient parking is vital to the success of the Town Center economy and the experience of Town Center business owners, patrons, residents, and visitors. Mercer Island City Council identified the following goals for the Town Center parking system:

1. Create a parking program that activates Town Center, supports small businesses, and enhances Town Center visitor experience.
2. Ensure Island residents have priority access to public transportation.
3. Determine if on-site commercial and multi-family residential parking is adequately supplied and utilized. Identify options for increasing and/or regulating its use.

The 2022 study resulted in this Town Center Parking Plan ("Parking Plan"). Recommendations included in the Parking Plan are derived from an assessment of existing Town Center conditions and parking operations; conversations with community members and governing decision makers; and evaluation of the best practices and actionable steps that may best achieve the goals for Town Center parking. The recommendations intend to work together to achieve the City Council's stated goals and to ultimately make parking more functionally available, usable for different users, and supportive of other options for non-driving travel to and around Town Center.

## Summary of Data and Recommendations

Parking utilization counts on Wednesday, June 8, 2022, at the "peak utilization" time of 12 pm show:

- The on-street spaces were 72% occupied, which is a manageable, non-congested overall rate.
- There are some areas of 85% or greater use in the north and southeast areas of Town Center.
- The off-street spaces are only 51% used overall at the peak time, with none exceeding 85% and only a few locations in the 70-84% range.

Additionally, community members provided input about their current travel patterns and opinions about various potential recommendations throughout the project. Methods to collect community feedback included seven focus groups, discussion and mapping inputs provided through the Let's Talk project page, and an online survey available to everyone. Community members supported Town Center parking management approaches that will allow them to "park once" and walk around; preserve parking near the busiest destinations for customers; and improve opportunities for using other forms of transportation such as walking and biking (parking data and community input are further discussed later in this Parking Plan).

Parking data and community input informed the strategies and recommendations summarized in Table Section D elaborates on these strategies, and Section E provides guidance for ongoing monitoring and implementation.

**Table 1 Summary of Town Center Parking Plan Recommendations and Implementation Timelines**

Strategies & Recommendations		Implementation
<b>Strategy #1: Manage the on-street public parking supply.</b>		
1a	Revise on-street parking time limits to be consistent throughout Town Center.	1-3 years
1b	Monitor the North Mercer Restricted Parking District and Town Center Parking permit programs. Modify them as needed to prepare for future parking impacts due to increased commuter traffic and the opening of the East Link Extension.	4-6 years
1c	Create additional 30-minute loading and 3- and 10-minute pickup/drop-off spaces on-street.	1-3 years
1d	Add more ADA parking on-street.	4-6 years
1e	Implement additional enforcement of Town Center’s on-street parking regulations, including education and marketing campaigns.	1-3 years
1f	Consider paid parking in Town Center, and deploy technology to create easier use and enforcement.	7-10 years
<b>Strategy #2: Improve the convenience and efficient supply of parking.</b>		
2a	Improve awareness of and navigation to Town Center’s range of parking options.	1-3 years
2b	Promote agreements for public use of currently underutilized private parking.	4-6 years
<b>Strategy #3: Expand travel mode choices through programs and infrastructure investments.</b>		
3a	Add bicycle parking.	1-3 years
3b	Study options to allow more flexibility related to parking requirements for new businesses.	4-6 years
3c	Implement a proactive Transportation Demand Management Program for new development.	4-6 years
3d	Study options to reconfigure some Town Center streets with considerations for adding parking and loading; improving walking and bicycling facilities; improving wayfinding and access; and ensuring area streets are calm and safe for all users.	7-10 years
3e	Create more community gathering spaces.	7-10 years

**Note:** The Town Center parking study that informs this Parking Plan was conducted in 2022, when Mercer Island, like all communities, was still experiencing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (“pandemic”) on commuter travel, in-person retail demand, community gatherings, and other factors that influence transportation behavior. Though many aspects of society had largely reopened, it is unknown what long-term impacts the pandemic will have on work commuting, school attendance, residential location preferences, office space demand, interest in public gatherings, and other activities. Where relevant, recommendations include actions to continue studying commuter parking needs to inform future improvements to Town Center parking.

# B Parking Inventory and Utilization

This section outlines parking data collected in June 2022. Data featured in this section includes:

- Inventory of on- and off-street parking spaces in Town Center
- Parking utilization (weekday and weekend counts)
- Length of stay analysis
- Observational counts of the North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) and Mercer Island Park-and-Ride (8000 North Mercer Way)

## Methodology

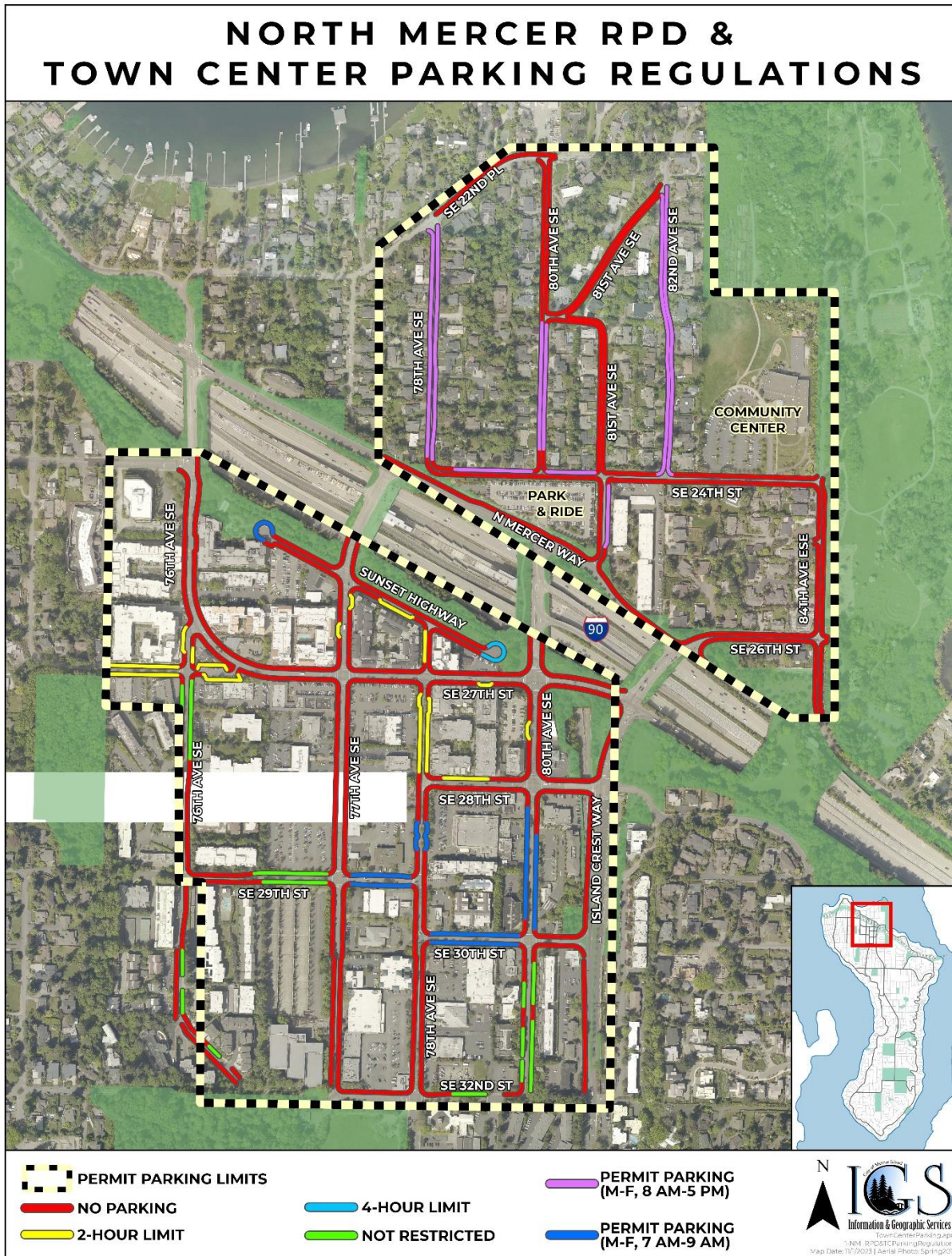
Parking counts were conducted in Town Center on Wednesday, June 8, and Saturday, June 11, 2022. These dates were chosen to capture typical busy conditions in Town Center. Parking occupancy counts (i.e. number of parked cars) were conducted every two hours from 10 am to 8 pm, inclusive, on both days to understand parking demand throughout the day on typical parking conditions. Parking length of stay counts were also conducted at 5 pm and every two hours from 10 am to 8 pm, inclusive, on June 8 to understand how long cars stay parked in on-street spaces.

## Town Center Parking Inventory

Town Center parking inventory has 2,745 parking spaces. This includes 2,492 off-street parking spaces and 253 on-street parking spaces. Several Town Center primary streets, including SE 27th Street, 77th Avenue SE, and 78th Avenue SE, have significant stretches with no on-street parking. Off-street, privately owned parking is plentiful, with nearly every development, business, or commercial center having a parking area. Figure 1 shows the location of on-street parking with various regulations.



Figure 1 Existing On-Street Parking Locations and Regulations



Source: City of Mercer Island.

The following parking space inventories were collected for the various on-street spaces regulated per Figure 1.

- 2-Hour Limit: 88 spaces
- Not Restricted: 90 spaces
- Town Center Parking Permit program: 53 spaces

The 4-hour limit parking spaces located in the east cul-de-sac of Sunset Highway are not striped so they were not inventoried as part of the parking study. However, the City estimates 12 parking spaces in that area. Similarly, the North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) parking spaces are not striped and were not inventoried; the City approximates 71 parking spaces in the RPD.

The City also inventoried ADA, Loading Zone, and 30-minute parking spaces, for the following parking counts:

- ADA: 1 space
- Loading Zone: 16 spaces
- 30-Minute Parking: 2 spaces

## Town Center Parking Utilization

Figure 2 summarizes the weekday parking system demand in the Town Center study area compared to an 85% occupancy threshold. A widely recognized best practice in parking management is to compare actual parking utilization rates with an 85% occupancy threshold. When parking is 85% occupied, spaces are well-used: pricing (if used) is not needlessly deterring people from driving to the area, and it is still possible for drivers to find a space without cruising around waiting for another driver to leave, which results in increased emissions and traffic congestion. As shown in the figure, on-street parking was more highly utilized than off-street parking throughout the day. However, on-street occupancy never exceeded 71% system-wide, which is well below the 85% occupancy threshold. Both the on-street and off-street parking in the study area followed a similar pattern where occupancy peaked at 12 pm and declined throughout the afternoon into the evening.

Figure 2 Weekday Parking Utilization - Wednesday, June 8, 2022

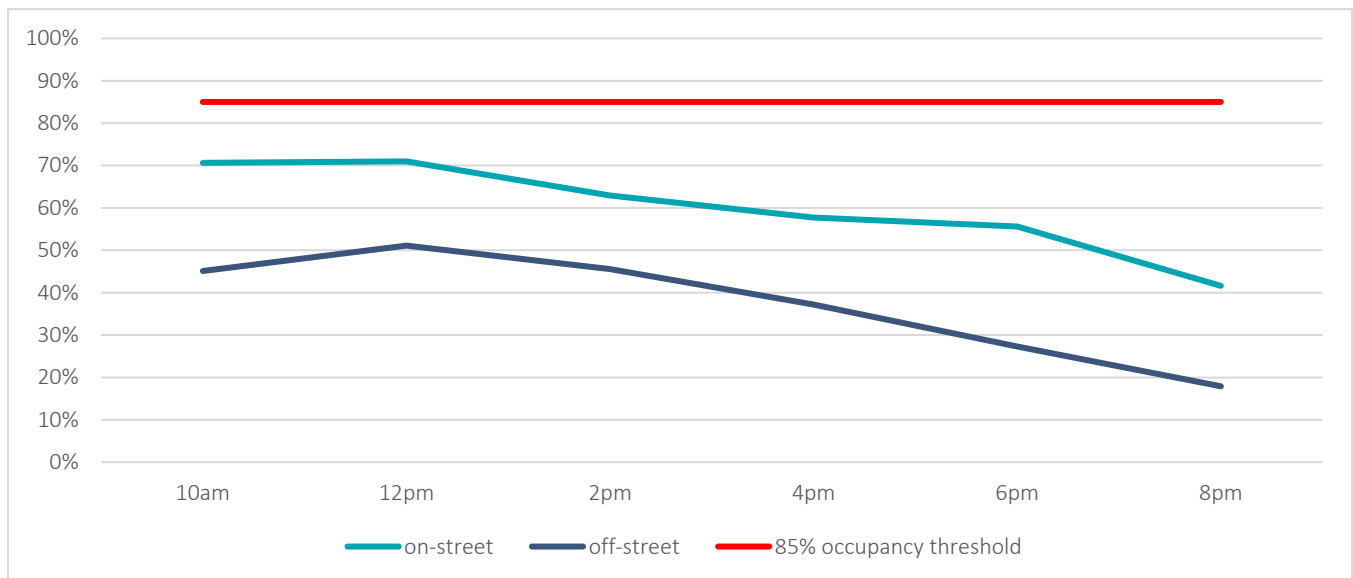
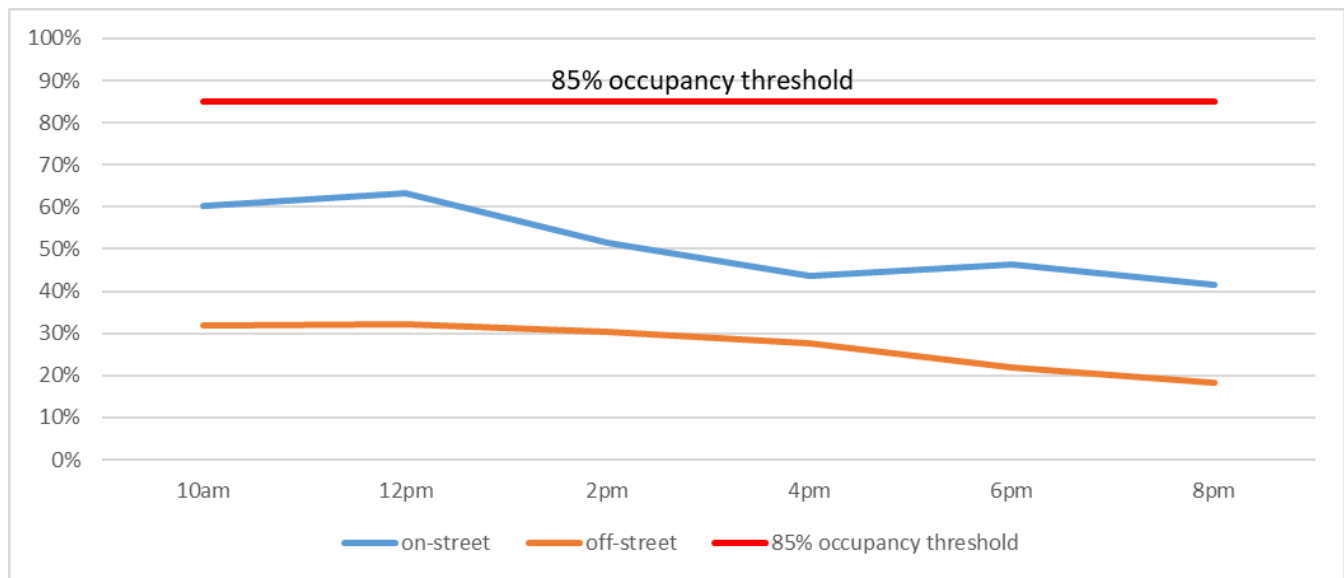


Figure 3 summarizes the weekend parking demand in the Town Center study area. Like the weekday, on-street parking was more highly utilized than off-street parking throughout the day system-wide. However, overall on-street occupancy never exceeded 63%, which is well below the 85% occupancy threshold. Both the on-street and

off-street parking in the study area followed a similar pattern where occupancy peaked at 12 pm and declined throughout the afternoon into the evening.

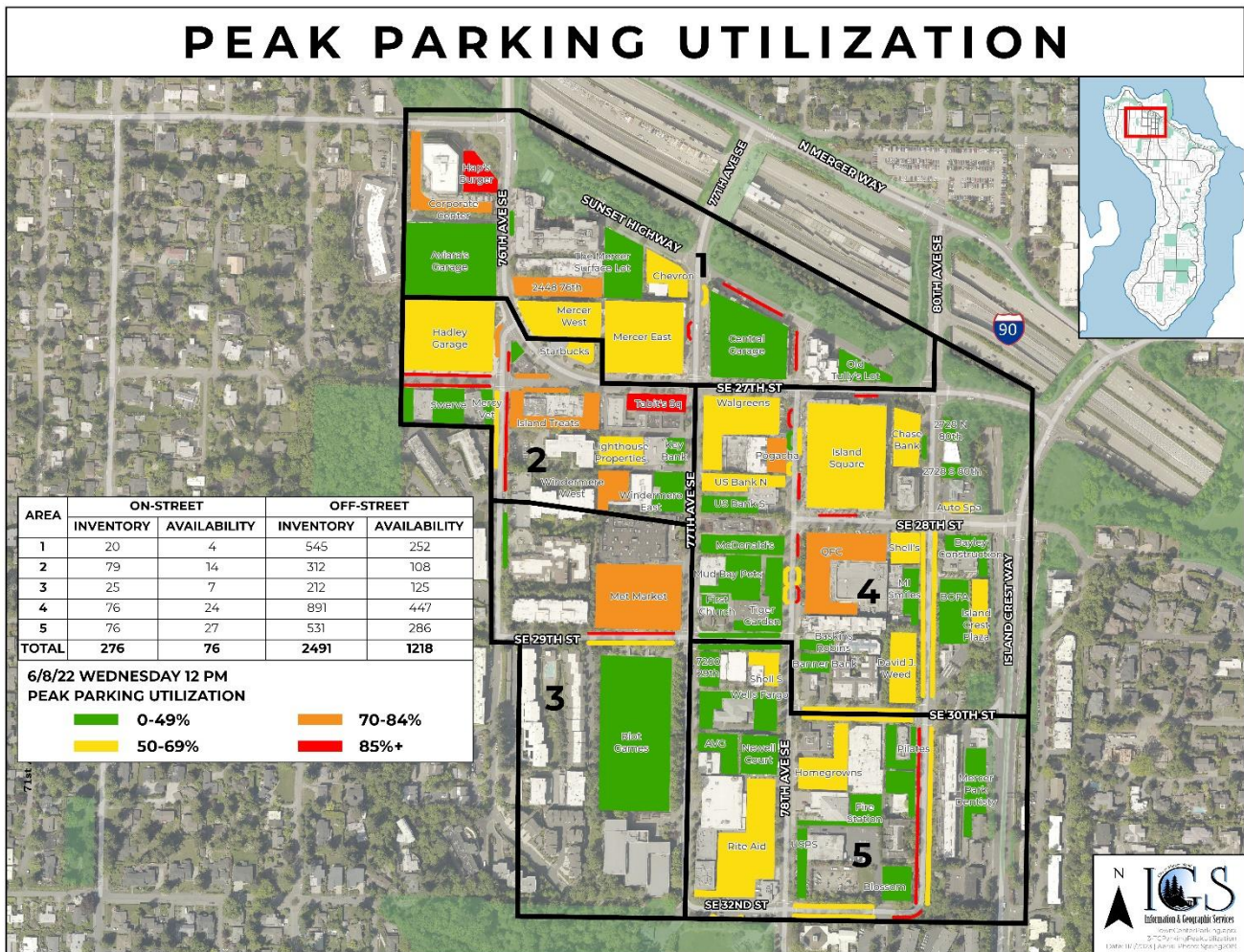
**Figure 3 Weekend Parking Utilization - Saturday, June 11, 2022**



The period of peak parking demand for the study area occurred on Wednesday, June 8, 2022, at 12 pm. This weekday lunchtime peak period is typical of other commercial districts around the country. Figure 4 shows the parking utilization spatially during the weekday period of peak parking demand. Certain block faces and parking facilities exceeded the 85% occupancy threshold, while other block faces and facilities were less than 50% occupied.



Figure 4 Weekday Peak Utilization (Wednesday, June 8, 2022, at 12 pm)



Source: Graphic – City of Mercer Island; Data – Walker Consultants and IDAX Solutions.

Even during the period of peak parking demand, it was found that spaces were available in Town Center:

- 83 on-street spaces were available.
- 1,218 off-street spaces were available.

## Length of Stay Analysis

A length of stay analysis shows how long vehicles occupied on-street parking spaces in Town Center on Wednesday June 8, 2022. This analysis focused on blocks where the parking occupancy was 70% or higher and considered vehicles parked for at least four hours “long-term parkers.” Figure 5 shows the street segments with at least 70% occupancy and segments in which parkers were parked for at least four hours.

The length of stay analysis indicates:

- 117 total cars parked on these busy blocks.
- 56 of 117 (48%) were parked for 4+ hours.
- Of the 56 vehicles parked for 4+ hours, 33 vehicles (59%) were parked in 30-minute or two-hour parking zones.



Figure 5 Length of Stay Analysis



Source: Graphic – City of Mercer Island; Data – Walker Consultants and IDAX Solutions.

## Observational Counts of Peripheral Areas

Mercer Island Park-and-Ride utilization was counted manually<sup>1</sup> on June 29-30 and included the following occupancies:

- Wednesday 6/29/22, 1 pm: 221 of 447 spots occupied (49%)
- Thursday 6/30/22, 10 am: 222 of 447 spots occupied (49%)

The North Mercer Island Restricted Parking District (RPD) was also manually counted on the same days. There are approximately 71 on-street spaces in the RPD, and the City has issued 61 permits for 2022 / 52 permits for 2023.

Occupancy was as follows:

- Wednesday 6/29/22, 1 pm: 26 vehicles parked on-street (37%)
- Thursday 6/30/22, 10 am: 21 vehicles parked on-street (30%)

## Town Center Transportation Observations

Transportation to and around Town Center was observed over a three-day period in June 2022. Cars were the predominate observed way of travel around Town Center. Cars are coming and going from off-Island via I-90, from the south of the Island via Island Crest Way, and from local street connections. There was little evidence of surface street congestion at any point during the observation days. Some minor vehicle backups occurred within busy parking lots such as Islandia Center (3016 78th Ave SE) and Tabit Village Square (7695 SE 27th Street) as well as the angled on-street parking on SE 27th Street (adjacent to the Boyd Building, 7605 SE 27th). Within Town Center, moderate bicycle traffic was also observed throughout the day on June 29 and 30, especially entering and exiting Town Center at SE 32nd Street / 78th Avenue SE and traveling along 77th Avenue SE.

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<sup>1</sup> The Mercer Island Park-and-Ride is owned and operated by Sound Transit. Sound Transit conducted parking counts of the Park-and-Ride in February 2014 and February 2015. The specific day of the week and time of the counts is unknown, but Sound Transit's survey found that the Park-and-Ride was 96% occupied in 2014 and 95% occupied in 2015. The survey maps are included as Appendix D. The City began conducting parking counts of the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride in 2023. That data is included in the parking data update provided as Appendix F.



# C Community Engagement Activities

A range of community engagement activities were conducted during the early investigation for this Parking Plan. Overall, community members said that driving and parking is their predominate way of travel. They drive because it is convenient, it is quicker than other ways of traveling, and it is usually easy to find parking. People generally supported strategies to make parking easier to find and use but offered few specific locations or times during which they experience parking congestion. Community members also responded favorably to making it easier to walk and bike between Town Center destinations, instead of driving from point to point, and were supportive of concepts to use street space for gathering areas and bikeways instead of solely parking.

This section summarizes the community outreach methods, number of participants, and key findings. Appendix B provides detailed community engagement findings.

## Let's Talk Mercer Island

The City created a Town Center Parking Study project page on Let's Talk (<https://letstalk.mercergov.org/tc-parking-study>) explaining the project objectives and encouraging community members to share their experiences and ideas to help shape project recommendations. The page included a brief survey, mapping activities, and space to provide open-ended comments. The page received 1,100 total visits as of March 2, 2023.

Community members also submitted 17 general comments on Let's Talk, including encouraging shared parking; promoting walkability; considering paid parking; widening sidewalks; adding street lighting; and using signage to direct people to parking. Comments also expressed concerns that the East Link Extension of the light rail will cause parking congestion and statements that parking doesn't create vitality (see Appendix B for all comments).

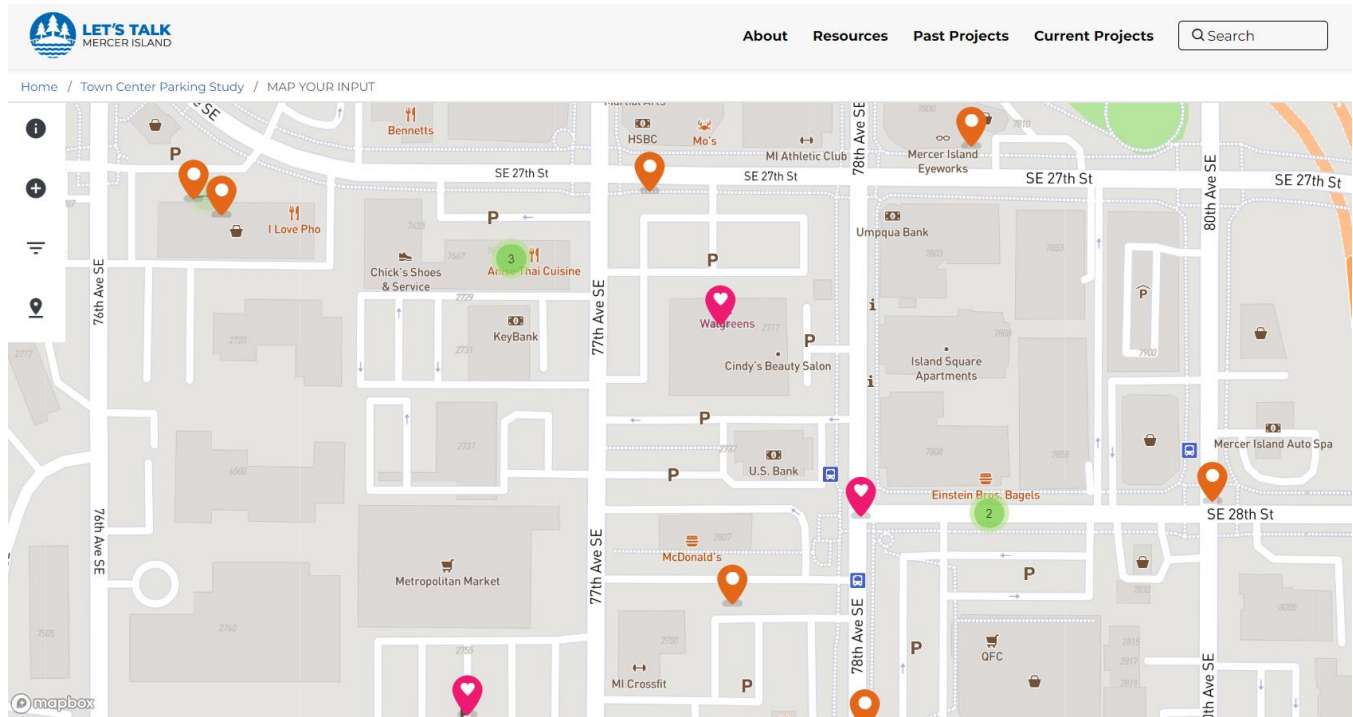
## Online Survey Responses

A brief online survey asked questions about travel behavior, decision-making, parking management goals, and right-of-way priorities. The survey was open on Let's Talk July-September 2022, and received 232 total responses. Key findings from the online survey include the following:

- **Travel modes:** 85% of survey respondents use a personal vehicle as their primary travel mode around Town Center. Respondents cited the needs of their "schedule/obligations that day," "reliability/convenience of the travel choice," and "travel time" as the top three factors influencing their travel mode choices. This implies that most respondents see driving as the quickest, most convenient, and most reliable mode of transportation.
- **Parking goals:** When asked what their most important parking management goal is, survey respondents said: "making it easier to find parking" (47%), "prioritizing parking for certain groups, such as customers in the business district" (24%), and "making it easier and more pleasant to use other forms of travel, like walking and biking" (23%).
- **On-street parking:** Slightly less than half of total respondents (Strongly agree – 27%, Agree – 19%) support the statement that, "On-street public parking should be prioritized over other potential uses of the right-of-way in the busiest locations and/or at the busiest times."

## Map Your Input Exercise on Let's Talk

Figure 6 Screenshot of Map Your Input Activity



Community members also participated in a mapping exercise that was open on Let's Talk from July-September 2022. Participants offered 32 unique comments on the map (Figure 6), covering two major themes:

- **Walkability and biking:** Many comments related to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and the parking supply surplus or constraints. Respondents specifically requested better walking connections from Town Center to the neighborhoods east of Island Crest Way; more bicycle racks at Mercerdale Park; and bicycle routes including paths and on-street facilities on 77th Avenue SE, SE 27th Street, SE 80th Street, and other locations.
- **Parking:** Respondents noted usually being able to find parking at Rite Aid (Mercer Island Shopping Center, 3023 78th Avenue SE), Metropolitan Market (2755 77th Avenue SE), Walgreens (7707 SE 27th Street), and the south end of Town Center. The Mercer Island Park-and-Ride was the only place someone commented as having unavailable parking. (See Appendix B for all comments.)

## Focus Groups

Four one-hour focus groups with representatives from Neighbors in Motion, the Mercer Island Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Mercer Island Climate Action Network were conducted<sup>2</sup> as well as two general focus groups with Mercer Island community members and business owners. Attendees listened to a presentation on the goals of the parking study and findings from parking data collection before participating in a polling exercise using Mentimeter, a digital engagement platform.

<sup>2</sup> A fifth focus group with the Mercer Island Rotary Club was scheduled but no participants attended.

Figure shows aggregated polling results for participants' agreement with various transportation statements. (See Appendix B for complete poll results.)

**Figure 7 Polling Results on Strategy Levels of Agreement**

Statement	Average level of agreement (5 = strongest agreement)
It makes sense for all parking facilities in the Town Center to be shared among multiple uses if they can be.	4.2
The most convenient parking in Town Center should be prioritized for visitors and customers.	3.8
It makes sense to create more community gathering spaces in Town Center, even if parking has to be moved to do so.	3.7
I'd support paid parking if it benefited the community in tangible ways, like making it easier to get places and supporting community initiatives.	3.6
It makes sense for parking to cost more in areas where demand for parking is highest.	3.1
On-street parking should be prioritized over other potential mobility uses for the right-of-way, like bike lanes and wider sidewalks.	2.5
On-street parking should be prioritized over community uses for the right-of-way, like parklets and outdoor dining areas.	1.9

## Economic Development Vision Survey

As part of the 2022-2024 periodic update to the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, the City is developing its first Economic Development Element. The City conducted an Economic Development Vision Survey in summer 2022, and responses from that survey also informed recommendations included in this parking plan. In total, 644 responses were received for the vision survey, and 463 responses (72%) included comments about parking, outdoor space, walkability, business vitality, transit access, and other topics related to this parking plan.

Many respondents' visions for the future of Mercer Island's commercial areas include features that make these areas more of a destination: more variety of restaurants, shops, and amenities; street design and parking that enable residents to "park once" to shop and run errands rather than driving from place to place; and a cohesive identity that makes a commercial area feel like a destination.

Other relevant input includes:

- Providing good bike lanes to help businesses be more environmentally friendly.
- Improving parking to make business more viable.

See Appendix C for complete summary.

# D Strategies and Recommendations

This section outlines three strategies for achieving the stated goals for the Town Center parking system. It includes recommendations and specific actions to take for each. An implementation matrix for all strategies is included in Section E of this report.

## Strategy #1: Manage the on-street public parking supply.

On-street parking spaces are unevenly used across Town Center. Some areas are occupied over 85% for most of the day, time limit regulations are irregular throughout Town Center, and spaces with time limits are not consistently enforced. Cars overstay the parking limits, making on-street spaces unavailable for customers.

Recommendations for managing the on-street public parking supply are included in Table 2. These recommendations seek to make parking:

- Easier to find for each user type – visitors, employees, commuters, delivery operators, and others.
- Consistently regulated throughout Town Center.
- Better enforced to help increase availability.
- More conducive to “parking once” and being able to walk to multiple destinations.

Table 2 Recommendations to Manage the On-Street Public Parking Supply

Recommendations	
1a	Revise on-street parking time limits to be consistent throughout Town Center.
1b	Monitor the North Mercer Restricted Parking District and Town Center Parking permit programs. Modify them as needed to prepare for future parking impacts due to increased commuter traffic and the opening of the East Link Extension.
1c	Create additional 30-minute loading and 3- and 10-minute pickup/drop-off spaces on-street.
1d	Add more ADA parking on-street.
1e	Implement additional enforcement of Town Center’s on-street parking regulations, including education and marketing campaigns.
1f	Consider paid parking in Town Center and deploy technology to create easier use and enforcement.



## 1a. Revise on-street parking time limits to be consistent throughout Town Center.

### Current Conditions

- Town Center on-street parking is regulated through a mix of two-hour, four-hour, unrestricted, ADA, loading, and three-minute zones<sup>3</sup>. No on-street parking requires payment to park unless parking in a space allocated for the Town Center Parking permit program, which requires a permit to park from 7 am to 9 am Monday-Friday. (Recommendation 1b. addresses the Town Center Parking permit program and begins on page 18.)
- While peak occupancy<sup>4</sup> showed an overall acceptable 72% utilization rate in Town Center, that utilization was not evenly distributed. Certain blocks, both regulated and unrestricted, showed 85% or greater use, while other blocks were below 50% use.
- Many Town Center streets do not provide on-street parking due to the current street configurations.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Convert all on-street parking in Town Center to two-hour limits, excluding ADA and loading zones. Conversion would include all current spaces regulated as two-hour, four-hour, unrestricted, and Town Center Parking Permit.	Two-hour limit on-street parking is suitable to serve most customer and visitor needs in a business district, allowing enough time to complete errands, dining, and visits, while being short enough to promote turnover of spaces. This change also brings more consistency and ease of use to on-street parking regulations in Town Center.
After new two-hour limit regulations are in place, conduct periodic parking turnover counts and collect observations from Town Center businesses, patrons, residents, and other visitors.	Will help identify how consistently the new parking regulations are being followed and inform future changes

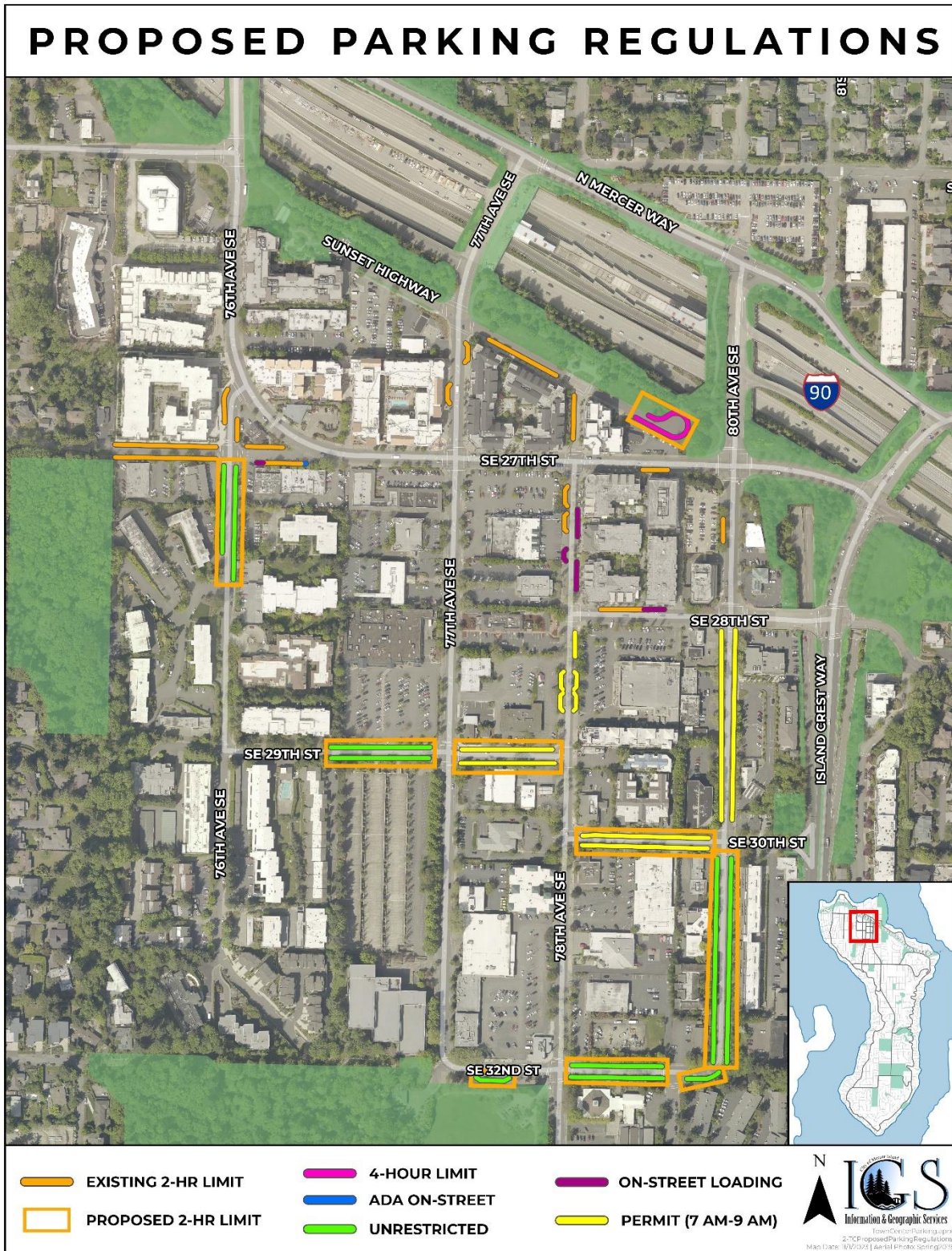
A map of proposed parking limit regulation changes is provided in Figure 8.

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to Figure 1 on page 6 of this report.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Figure 4 on page 9 of this report.

Figure 8 Map of Proposed Parking Time Limit Regulations for Town Center



## 1b. Monitor the North Mercer Restricted Parking District and the Town Center Parking permit programs. Modify them as needed to prepare for future parking impacts due to increased commuter traffic and the opening of the East Link Extension.

### Current Conditions

The **North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) Permit Program** was created in 2003 to prevent spillover of commuter users of the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride onto neighborhood streets when the Park-and-Ride is full. Permits cost \$5/year for each vehicle legally registered to a resident in the RPD. Permit holders may apply for up to two guest passes, and temporary contractor permits are also available. Guest permits cost \$10 per permit. The permit also grants the same privileges of the Town Center Parking permit.

- **Parking Locations:** Portions of 78th Ave SE, 80th Ave SE, 81st Ave SE, 82nd Ave SE, and SE 24th Street, North of I-90 / North Mercer Way
- **Number of Spaces:** 71 on-street spaces
- **Permit Numbers:** The City has not set a maximum number of available permits.
  - 2022: 61 regular permits, 33 guest permits
  - 2023: 52 regular permits, 16 guest permits<sup>5</sup>
- **Utilization:**
  - June 29, 2022: 26 vehicles parked
  - June 30, 2022: 21 vehicles parked<sup>6</sup>

The **Town Center Parking Permit Program** was created in 2001 to eliminate parking for non-Mercer Island commuters from City streets. Permits are available for Mercer Island residents as well as a limited number of Mercer Island businesses grandfathered into the permit program for \$5/year. The permit grants priority access to designated on-street spaces from 7 am to 9 am on weekdays. The penalty for parking in the permit area without a valid and visible placard is \$35.

- **Parking Locations:** Portions of 78th Ave SE, 80th Ave SE, SE 29th Street, SE 30th Street, and Sunset Highway in the Town Center zone
- **Number of Spaces:** 53 on-street spaces
- **Permit Numbers:** The City has not set a maximum number of available permits.
  - 2022: 337 permits
  - 2023: 233 permits
- **Utilization:** During the peak parking time of 12 pm on Wednesday, June 8, 2022, the Town Center Parking permit areas were primarily less than 70% utilized, with a small segment of spaces at 85% or higher utilization.

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<sup>5</sup> 2023 permit numbers as of February 1, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> On-street parking use in the North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) has typically been observed as lightly used since the pandemic began in early 2020 and commuter patterns changed substantially. Anecdotal evidence is that the RPD area experienced more non-permitted parking use pre-pandemic. The City began conducting parking counts of the RPD in 2023. That data is included in Appendix F.



## North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) Permit Program

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Conduct parking demand/use counts during typical peak conditions (e.g. after weekday morning rush hour) at the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride.	Parking counts conducted in June 2022 demonstrated less than 50% occupancy of the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride. However, parking utilization data for the facility pre-pandemic is lacking, and it is still unknown how commuter parking demand may increase as the pandemic ends and the East Link Extension opens. Gathering more data is necessary to inform future decisions for the RPD and Town Center Parking permit programs.
Conduct semi-regular parking counts in the RPD.	Parking counts conducted in June 2022 demonstrated only 30%-40% occupancy of the RPD. However, spillover impacts from the adjacent Mercer Island Park-and-Ride may occur in the future as commuter parking demand increases due to the end of the pandemic and the opening of the East Link Extension. More data is necessary to inform potential changes to the RPD permit program.
Increase the fees for the RPD permit program to cover the costs of administering the program.	Permit fees do not currently cover the costs of administering the program, which could make the long-term viability of the program unsustainable.
Revise the RPD permit program if parking counts demonstrate significant congestion.	The RPD system was created over two decades ago in response to transit commuter parking spillover. Those conditions are less persistent in the current pandemic-influenced commuting environment, in which many Mercer Island residents work partially or fully from home and do not leave the Island for jobs. This condition may continue for years, but the City can begin preparing now for future impacts.



## Town Center Parking Permit Program

Actions	Primary Reasoning
<p>Conduct parking demand/use counts during typical peak conditions (e.g. after weekday morning rush hour, weekday lunch hour) in Town Center permit-regulated parking spaces.</p>	<p>Like with the RPD permit program, more demand/use data is necessary before making permanent changes to the Town Center Parking permit program. Continuing to monitor commuter parking demand post-pandemic will inform future decisions for both permit programs.</p>
<p>Survey current Town Center Parking permit holders to better understand their parking needs and habits.</p>	<p>The Town Center Parking permit program has existed for more than two decades, and use of the program remained relatively steady prior to change in commuter patterns caused by the pandemic. Qualitative data from permit users will supplement the quantitative data collected in parking counts and help inform future decision making.</p>
<p>Increase the fees for the Town Center Parking permit program and parking citations.</p>	<p>Enforcement rates in Town Center are low, which may cause some non-permitted users to take their chances in the permit area and risk the small citation fine.</p>
<p>If the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride continues to demonstrate less than 75% occupancy, shift Town Center Parking permit holders to the Park-and-Ride and suspend the current Town Center Parking permit program.</p>	<p>Preserves valuable on-street parking for customers and other Town Center visitors to park throughout the day.</p>

## 1c. Create additional 30-minute loading and three- and ten-minute pickup/drop-off spaces on-street.

### Current Conditions

- On-street loading is currently designated along three blocks – several three-minute spaces on SE 27th Street (adjacent to the Boyd Building, 7605 SE 27th Street); 30-minute spaces on 78th Avenue SE north of SE 28th Street; and 30-minute spaces on SE 28th Street east of 78th Avenue SE. Collectively, these constitute 16 loading spaces.
- Loading, delivery, and pickup/drop-off demand was observed throughout Town Center, especially near multi-family residences and by businesses that lack their own loading docks or dedicated parking spaces.
- A considerable amount of loading and pickup/drop-off activity occurs from the standard curbside (either two-hour or unrestricted spaces) or from vehicles parked in the center turn lane of certain streets.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Add 30-minute on-street loading spaces for commercial delivery during specific days and hours.	Providing formally designated loading space for businesses and residents can help reduce informal double-parking, center-lane loading, and other pickup and loading behavior that is both unsafe and causes street congestion.
Create new on-street, 3- and/or 10-minute loading zones for short-term pickup and drop-off.	Pickup and loading zones can be especially useful at buildings that have underground parking, off-street lots that are too small to fit tall delivery trucks, and in front of businesses that serve takeout or online sales.
Monitor new loading and pickup/drop-off zones for utilization, safety, and convenience.	Will help assess compliance with the regulations and inform decisions to expand, contract, relocate, or regulate spaces.

## 1d. Add more ADA parking on-street.

### Current Conditions

- Existing ADA on-street parking includes one space on SE 27th Street east of 76th Avenue SE.
- The quantity of off-street ADA parking spaces was not collected during the study of Town Center parking. The City of Mercer Island ADA Transition Plan, adopted in 2022, describes off-street ADA design standards<sup>7</sup>.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Study the need for additional ADA parking in Town Center.	The City’s ADA Transition Plan does not specifically identify the need to add ADA parking spaces to Town Center. However, ADA spaces are one method the City may use to ensure access for people with mobility challenges in Town Center.
Identify high-demand locations to designate additional ADA spaces if further study reveals a need for more.	While on-street ADA quantity requirements are vague and depend on the land use and street context, it is considered best practice to provide roughly 2% of on-street spaces as ADA. With 276 on-street spaces in Town Center, this equals 5-6 ADA spaces. There is currently only one ADA space.

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<sup>7</sup> Mercer Island ADA Transition Plan. See document page 74 for off-street standards guidance.  
[https://www.mercerisland.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/public\\_works/page/29654/final\\_-\\_ada\\_transition\\_plan\\_-\\_city\\_of\\_mercer\\_island\\_-\\_accessible\\_version.pdf](https://www.mercerisland.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/public_works/page/29654/final_-_ada_transition_plan_-_city_of_mercer_island_-_accessible_version.pdf)

# 1e. Implement additional enforcement of Town Center’s on-street parking regulations, including enhanced marketing and education.

## Current Conditions

- Awareness of parking regulations in Town Center is largely provided on-site through the regulatory signage displayed on the street. Information about citation amounts and processing is available on the City’s website.
- Parking enforcement is conducted by the Mercer Island Police Department (MIPD). Three police vehicles are equipped with automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) systems. The City operates one parking enforcement vehicle with ALPR, which, in addition to permit tracking, can track parking duration.
- Currently, one officer is assigned to enforce Town Center parking. That position is also responsible for other duties, and enforcement of time limits/citing infractions has been irregular.
- Per MICC 10.18.080 Parking offenses – Payment and processing, parking citation rates are typically set by resolution by the City Council. In 2022, the rates reset to \$20 following an audit by the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).
- With low enforcement rates currently, many drivers likely take their chances with time limit and permit infractions.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Provide education and awareness campaigns to inform users about parking time limits, the City’s enforcement approach, and other parking options.	Promotes an education-first approach to help people understand and/or adjust to parking regulations.
Equip additional ALPR vehicles with the City’s parking duration tracking software.	Provides additional enforcement capacity to monitor for time limit infractions.
Conduct targeted enforcement during known busy periods in the highest congestion areas.	Alleviates parking infractions that are most common during the busy times such as morning commuter parking and lunch-hour parking.
Provide a non-fee warning notice to first-time offenders, then institute paid tickets for later offenses.	Provides an education-first approach to improve parking enforcement compliance.
Increase parking citation rates.	Increase to the parking citation rate could improve parking compliance.



# 1f. Consider paid parking in Town Center and deploy technology to create easier use and enforcement.

## Current Conditions

- All on-street parking in Town Center has no daily rate cost, though a small number of spaces are available only to Town Center parking permit holders during some hours of the day.
- Existing time-regulated spaces (such as two-hour parking) are manually enforced.
- The existing North Mercer Residential Parking District (RPD) and Town Center Parking permit programs require a small annual fee to park on-street in certain areas.
- The Island Square garage (2758 78th Avenue SE) provides the first two hours parking free and then charges money for subsequent hours. Users are required to register using the ParkMobile app for the first two free hours as well as the following paid hours.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Conduct regular counts of Town Center parking utilization.	This parking plan recommends several actions to take first to redirect cars into the most suitable parking spaces for a driver’s intended visit. Continuing to monitor Town Center parking utilization before and after these other actions are implemented will help inform whether to try additional solutions such as implementing paid parking.
If areas show unsatisfactory operations, consider paid parking.	Requiring payment for on-street parking can help encourage turnover of spaces because people won’t park longer than needed to avoid paying additional fees.
Use lower-capital technology systems such as shared payment meters and app-based payment to keep initiation costs lower and provide flexibility in assigning the geography, time, and fees for paid parking.	Using technology-based payment can aid enforcement of parking time limits.

# Strategy #2: Improve the convenience and efficiency of parking.

This strategy seeks to make parking more convenient by improving wayfinding and connections as well as maximizing underutilized parking supply. Implementing the following recommendations could improve parking to be:

- More available, accessible, and apparent to all users in both on- and off-street locations.
- Navigable to and from parking and to destinations.

Table 3 outlines Strategy #2 recommendations.

**Table 3 Recommendations to Improve the Convenience and Efficiency of Parking**

Recommendations	
2a	Improve awareness of and navigation to Town Center’s range of parking options.
2b	Promote agreements for public use of currently underutilized private parking.

## 2a. Improve awareness of and navigation to Town Center’s range of parking options.

### Current Conditions

- Several garages with current shared parking options for public users all display signs describing the locations of public parking spaces and time limits.
- Many other off-street, privately owned parking lots post signs that say, “For Customer Use Only” and other private regulations and towing enforcement policies. Generally, these lots are free and available for the adjacent businesses but do not permit “walk-off parking.”
- Parking counts and turnover observations conducted in June 2022 show considerable time limit infractions at the 30-minute and two-hour regulated on-street parking spaces. This, combined with evidence gathered in the survey and through conversations with Town Center business owners and employees, indicates that many employees and area visitors are using on-street spaces all day.
- The lack of consistent parking enforcement makes it easy to get away with exceeding time limits, and drivers may be unaware of other parking options in Town Center.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Update wayfinding and regulatory signage to describe parking permissions in garages and lots.	Highly visible and consistent signage helps advertise parking space availability and locations. Town Center visitors can find convenient parking near their destinations, which reduces cruising and needless circulation, improving the efficiency of parking use.
Provide simple and easy-to-find information on the City website about parking maps, time-limit location details, enforcement hours, shared parking options, and other parking regulations.	Like with on-site signage, consistent messaging, maps, and other tools on the City website will aid visitors in planning their trips and knowing where to find parking when in Town Center.
Add highly visible and consistent signage at and near shared-use lots and garages to help drivers find available public parking at privately owned facilities.	MICC 19.11.130(B)(2) requires the placement of on-site parking information signage for any parking locations available to the public; this strategy goes further to recommend that off-site directional signage be considered.
Consider a comprehensive wayfinding evaluation for Town Center and neighboring areas. Future wayfinding solutions could include apps that direct drivers to available on- and off-street public parking spaces and automatic occupancy signs that display Available, Full, etc., at parking garages and lots.	The City and parking garage/lot owners/operators all use different signage for wayfinding and parking options in and around Town Center. This inconsistency impacts visitors’ ability to navigate Town Center efficiently.

## 2b. Promote agreements for public use of currently underutilized private parking.

### Current Conditions

- During peak parking utilization observed at 12 pm on Wednesday, June 8, 2022, 1,218 off-street spaces in privately owned parking lots were unused. At the same time, some nearby on-street public parking locations were at or beyond 85% utilization.
- MICC 19.11.130(B)(5) requires that all commercial retail parking built in new development of three stories or higher shall be made available for free public parking. Property owners may require that drivers patronize at least one business in the development but cannot prohibit them from leaving the premises, and the parking must be available for no less than two hours. No new development in Town Center has come online since these regulations were adopted in 2016.
- The City has established several Public-Use agreements in privately owned parking garages (see Appendix C for additional details about locations and number of spaces). Some of these agreements were negotiated as development conditions of new construction projects, while others were arranged to provide public parking in existing private lots and garages as a condition of granting a change of use or other development addition. All the parking under these agreements is free for two or three hours depending on the garage.
- The availability of public parking in these garages is not widely advertised; typically, a user must read the fine-print regulatory signs posted inside each garage. The exact rules and time limits for each shared garage vary, making it even more confusing for users to know about availability.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Establish criteria and a process for implementing new Public-Use agreements to use underutilized parking in privately owned parking lots and garages, including identifying a funding mechanism for compensating private property owners for use of parking spaces.	Public-Use agreements would give the City flexibility to seek publicly available parking where it is most needed and an opportunity to give property owners opportunity to monetize a valuable but underutilized asset.
Identify preferred locations for establishing Public-Use agreements for parking. Consider locations where public parking use exceeds a threshold of 85% and nearby off-street private lots show consistent availability first.	Valuable on-street parking is the most visible and accessible parking option when entering Town Center and should be preserved for customer and short-term use. Pursuing options for long-term, off-street parking agreements can accommodate employee and commuter parking needs for eight or more hours per day. This will help free up valuable on-street parking for customer and short-term visitor use.
Work with property owners to implement new Public-Use agreements for Town Center patrons, employees, and other visitors to use underutilized, off-street public parking.	Helps balance available supply to meet parking demands in heavily congested areas without any party needing to invest in costly new parking lots and garages.
If new Public-Use agreements are implemented, conduct parking use/demand counts of those off-street lots during peak hours (e.g. after morning rush hour).	Will help the City evaluate the use and effectiveness of this parking program and inform future changes.



# Strategy #3: Expand travel mode choices through programs and infrastructure investments.

These recommendations will help put Town Center on course to achieve a sustainable parking supply that both meets the needs of drivers and actively and safely supports other modes of travel, such as walking, biking, e-biking, and riding transit. Strategies seek to improve Town Center mobility to be:

- More convenient and safer for people traveling by any mode.
- Supportive of active, mixed uses, including more businesses and housing options, that can easily be reached by walking, biking, and other mobility devices.
- Balanced so that streets and parking are less physically intrusive and do not dominate.
- Connected to regional trail networks for pedestrian and bike/wheeled users.

Table 4 outlines Strategy #3 recommendations.

**Table 4 Recommendations to Expand Travel Mode Choices through Programs and Infrastructure Investments**

Recommendations	
3a	Add bicycle parking.
3b	Study options to allow more flexibility related to parking requirements for new businesses.
3c	Implement a proactive Transportation Demand Management Program for new development.
3d	Study options to reconfigure some Town Center streets with considerations for adding parking and loading; improving walking and bicycling facilities; improving wayfinding and access; and ensuring area streets are calm and safe for all users.
3e	Create more community gathering spaces.

### 3a. Add bicycle parking.

#### Current Condition

- Bicycle parking exists throughout Town Center, including racks along SE 27th Street and 78th Avenue SE; secure lockers and racks at the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride; racks at the corner of 78th Ave SE and SE 32nd Street to serve Mercerdale Park; and racks provided by businesses in parking lots or near entry doors. Other streets, such as 77th Avenue SE, which is a designated bikeway, have no or very little bicycle parking.
- As part of new station construction for the incoming East Link Extension light rail service, Sound Transit built a secure bicycle cage for 32 bikes at the west end of the rail station as well as added secure bicycle lockers and bicycle racks. These are expected to be usable once rail service begins.
- Though current bicycle parking supply in total may be sufficient, it is poorly distributed and often lacking near key destinations such as busy commercial and residential areas.
- MICC 10.71 Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Plan identifies adding bicycle parking as a supporting strategy to reduce vehicle miles traveled and drive-alone trips.
- MICC 19.11 Town Center Development and Design Standards describes discretionary review processes in which bicycle parking may be made a required approval condition.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
<p>Explore different methods to install more public bicycle parking in Town Center for pedal bikes and e-bikes. Distribute bicycle parking around Town Center so that it is available and findable adjacent to all destinations. Consider future infrastructure needs such as e-bike charging when evaluating locations and installation needs.</p>	<p>Just as vehicle parkers want available, proximate, safe, findable parking, so too do bicycle parkers. Installing bicycle parking throughout Town Center represents an investment in and commitment to this mode of travel. People are more likely to choose bicycling if there are high-quality bike parking facilities at their destinations.</p>
<p>Identify locations that may be suitable for parking bikeshare program bicycles.</p>	<p>The City may implement bike sharing in the future. Docks frequently are installed in place of on-street vehicle parking or in the sidewalk zone, which requires planning by the City to balance bicycle parking with pedestrian and parking needs.</p>
<p>Consider updating bicycle parking requirements in City code to ensure more bicycle racks and storage spaces are included in future projects.</p>	<p>Requiring more racks, storage spaces, and other bike infrastructure in future developments signals a commitment to this mode of travel and an investment in diversifying modes of transportation to, from, and around Town Center.</p>
<p>Monitor bicycle parking usage to inform future relocations and installations.</p>	<p>As with earlier recommendations, additional and ongoing data collection is necessary to monitor the effectiveness of bicycle parking usage and to evaluate future changes to the program.</p>

### 3b. Study options to allow more flexibility related to parking requirements for new businesses.

#### Current Conditions

- MICC 19.11.130 requires lower quantities of parking in Town Center than required in other Mercer Island zones.
- Up to 50% of required parking may be supplied through a Shared Parking Agreement between two or more establishments. A traffic study must be conducted by a professional traffic engineer, and shared parking locations must be in proximity of each use (within 1,320 feet). The agreement must be executed by all impacted parties and recorded as a covenant or contract with King County.
- MICC 19.11.130 currently identifies the following ranges for number of parking stalls for specific uses in Town Center:
  - Residential: 1.0-1.4 parking spaces per unit
  - General retail: 2-3 parking spaces per 1,000 sf
  - Restaurant: 5-10 parking spaces per 1,000 sf
- In recent legislative sessions, the Washington State Legislature introduced bills that would modify and/or restrict local governments' authority related to minimum parking requirements for new development. Although some bills did not pass during the 2023 State Legislative Session, they are likely to return. The City will need to be mindful of the potential for State law changes that could impact parking-related policy work.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
<p>Study options to modify the parking requirements for new Town Center development. Consider the types of development that may have a reduced requirement and how that parking demand could be accommodated in nearby facilities.</p>	<p>Requiring a building or land use to provide all its own parking on-site may lead to an oversupply of private parking in Town Center that sits empty and unavailable for public use when not in use by private businesses.</p>
<p>Study options to increase the permissible amount of required parking to be provided via a shared parking agreement from 50% to 100%.</p>	<p>In small-town environments like Town Center, requiring all parking to be provided on-site is typically incompatible with other downtown goals like walkability and encouraging non-auto ways of travel. Sharing parking allows for more efficient, flexible, and cost-conscious parking supply. It avoids mandating excess parking construction when nearby existing spaces are available, thus reducing the cost and physical impact of providing superfluous parking.</p>

### 3c. Implement a proactive Transportation Demand Management Program for new development.

#### Current Conditions

- The Transportation Element of the 2016 Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan encourages use of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) tactics including carpools, alternative work hours, bicycle parking, transit pass subsidy, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements, and providing educational materials about transportation.
- However, TDM as described in the Comprehensive Pan is a voluntary undertaking. TDM is only required in MICC 19.20.050(C)2 as a mitigation method if a development project fails transportation concurrency, which is a measure of the impact to congestion and performance of net new trips at a development on adjacent and nearby roadway infrastructure.

#### What is Transportation Demand Management – An Explainer

- TDM programs provide and seek to build user uptake of broader transportation options and encourage/incentivize people to shift to non-drive-alone travel. TDM may include trip shifting tactics to switch people to biking, walking, and riding transit and may also include trip reduction tactics such as telework and compressed work weeks.
- TDM is also a principle used to guide long-term decisions about how to build communities. This includes factoring in transportation demand reductions that are potentially achievable through more transit- and walking-oriented development, complete street designs, and integrated corridor management.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Explore options and impacts for allowing and encouraging development project applicants to submit a proactive TDM plan outlining steps to reduce vehicle trips and subsequent parking demand and/or spread those trips across larger time frames as a means of reducing peak roadway demands.	The City already has a provision for accepting TDM programs as a mitigation method if a development project fails transportation concurrency. This recommendation goes farther to encourage proactive TDM planning that could help the City achieve overall goals for improving mobility in Town Center.
If new TDM plans are implemented, collaborate with TDM sponsors to conduct two-year observation period to evaluate whether trip reduction is achieved.	Will inform whether future TDM programs and other transportation facility investments are needed



### 3d. Study options to reconfigure some Town Center streets with considerations for adding parking and loading; improving walking and bicycling facilities; improving wayfinding and access; and making area streets calmer and safer for all users.

**Current Conditions**

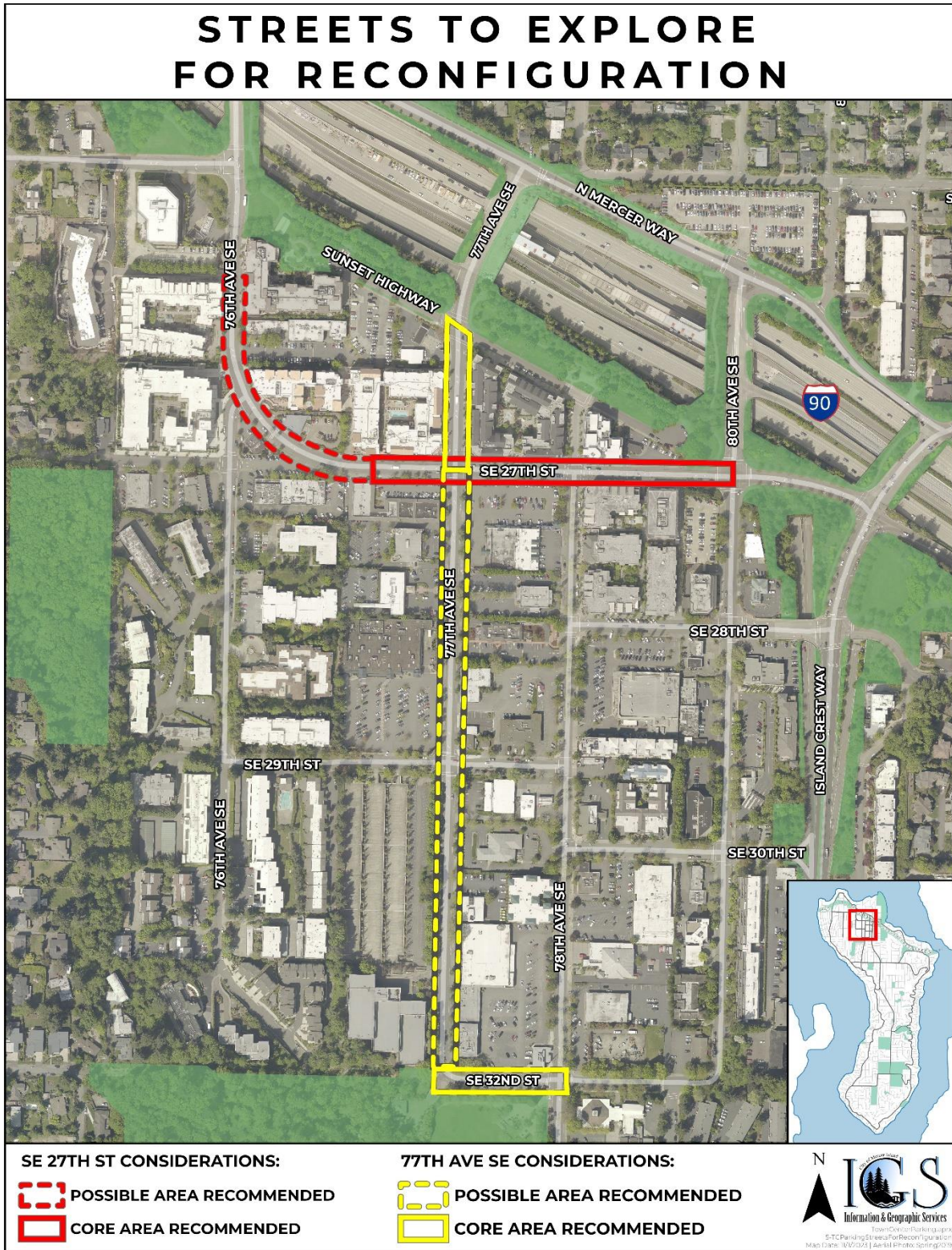
Two Town Center streets emerged as candidates to consider for reconfiguration, potentially with the impact of adding on-street parking, bicycle lanes, loading zones, and/or other facilities: 77th Avenue SE and SE 27th Street.

- **77th Avenue SE** is a key north-south street providing access from North Mercer Way to Mercerdale Park with three travel lanes, including a center turn lane. While there are unprotected bike lanes, there are no on-street parking spaces. Deliveries and loading are often performed from vehicles parked in the center turn lane. Community members provided input that the street experiences high-speed traffic that imperils safe bicycle riding and makes walking nearby often unpleasant. Capital project to consider: Channelization Upgrades from SE 32nd Street to North Mercer Way (2026)
- **SE 27th Street** is a secondary arterial east-west connection street at the north end of Town Center with three travel lanes, including a center turn lane. There are no on-street parking spaces nor bike lanes. Deliveries and loading are often performed from vehicles parked in the center turn lane. Community members provided input that the street experiences high-speed traffic and unsafe pedestrian conditions that are unsuitable for a “main street” in the Town Center core. Capital project to consider: Overlay from 76th Avenue SE to 80th Avenue SE (2024) and SE 27th Street Realignment Study.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
On 77th Avenue SE, study options to remove the center turn lane fully or partially and add on-street parking in the northbound direction.	Reconfiguring 77th Avenue SE would increase the on-street parking supply and promote greater access to those who walk and bike by providing safe infrastructure and street calming, as a new lane of parked cars can help narrow the remaining vehicle travel lanes and reduce driving speeds. Adding street parking to 77th Avenue SE would also support local businesses by increasing the parking supply in a commercial growth area.
On SE 27th Street, study options to fully or partially remove the center turn lane and add on-street parking, loading zones, ADA parking, bicycle corrals, and other curbside uses as appropriate.	SE 27th Street could evolve to provide more of a “main street” feeling that includes parking and business & residential access.

A map of proposed street sections to explore for reconfiguration is provided in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Map of Proposed Streets to Explore for Reconfiguration



### 3e. Create more community gathering spaces.

#### Current Conditions

- Town Center contains both formal and informal gathering spaces, such as sidewalk dining areas, parking spaces converted to “street seats,” and expanded sidewalk zones.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City created flexibility to allow businesses to expand outdoor dining into public parking and right-of-way, which has been successful and revealed interest in exploring other opportunities to create outdoor gathering in these types of areas where appropriate.
- Previous streetscape redesigns, such as 78th Avenue SE with new wider sidewalks, on-street parking pockets, curb extensions, and improved median landscaping, have created plaza-like spaces in some areas of Town Center.

Actions	Primary Reasoning
Study opportunities to convert some parking stalls into quick-to-implement street seats and other uses.	Outdoor gathering spaces are centrally important to creating destinations and social connections as well as improving walkability in Town Center. They may also improve street safety by reducing lane widths and other road engineering features that typically promote high speeds.
Consider opportunities for more formal, constructed gathering spaces.	Signals that cars are not the primary focus everywhere in Town Center; rather, other modes of travel and prioritization of community connection are more important for select areas.
Consider a future, more ambitious approach to fully or partially close certain streets to vehicle access and turn them over to walking, biking, seating, vending, and other public space uses.	Operationally, street closures can help simplify circulation networks, directing cars onto vehicle-oriented streets and reducing traffic delay caused by searching for parking in high-congestion locations.

# E Implementation

The recommendations outlined in this Parking Plan are intended to work together to achieve the goals of the Town Center parking system. This section includes an implementation matrix with timing, general resource requirements, and other considerations for each recommendation. Implementation should be coordinated across City departments and integrated into future work plans/coordinated with other study, design, and construction projects in the Town Center when possible. Additionally, the City may consider the following activities to monitor the ongoing success of programs:

- Conduct traffic counts before and after implementing recommendations of this parking study. Consider including counts of pedestrians and bicycles to observe travel mode choices over time.
- Incorporate questions about parking availability, travel practices, feelings about recommendations that have been implemented, parking fees (if applicable), etc., in future community-wide surveys to collect regular feedback from Mercer Island residents.



## Implementation Matrix for Town Center Parking Strategies & Recommendations

Strategy	Recommendation	Anticipated Investment	Timing	Implementation Considerations	
Manage the on-street public parking supply.	1a	Revise on-street parking time limits to be consistent throughout Town Center.	\$\$	1-3 years	<b>Coordinate efforts</b> – This action requires resources to educate the public about new parking regulations, evaluate their effectiveness, and monitor impacts such as displacement of daylong parkers or spill over into other parking areas. These efforts could be coordinated with other actions for efficient implementation.
	1b	Monitor the North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) and Town Center Parking permit programs. Modify them as needed to prepare for future parking impacts caused by increases in commuter traffic and the opening of the East Link Extension.	\$\$	1-3 years	<b>Coordinate efforts</b> – Permit holders who regularly park in the on-street parking spaces designated for these permit programs may need to adjust their parking behavior, including potentially finding other locations to park and changing their arrival time. Communications about program changes could be coordinated with other marketing and outreach related to Town Center parking (e.g. messaging about changes to parking time limits) as appropriate.
	1c	Create additional 30-minute loading and 3- and 10-minute pickup/drop-off spaces on-street.	\$	1-3 years	<b>Coordinate efforts</b> – Short-term loading zones require consistent enforcement to ensure time-limit compliance and use only by those actively performing deliveries, loading, etc. This enforcement could be coordinated with other proposed enforcement activities.
	1d	Add more ADA parking on-street	\$\$\$	4-6 years	<b>As-needed</b> – Installing new ADA spaces may reduce the number of non-ADA, on-street parking spaces and will require repurposing some portions of sidewalk for clearance zones and ramps. There are no national or local standards for quantity of on-street ADA parking spaces, so consider input from potential ADA parking users, residential building managers, business owners, and commercial property owners/managers before adding new supply.
	1e	Implement additional enforcement of Town Center’s on-street parking regulations, including education and marketing campaigns.	\$\$\$	1-3 years	<b>Enhance existing programs</b> – The Mercer Island Police Department (MIPD) currently operates three patrol vehicles equipped with automatic license plate reader (ALPR) technology. One patrol vehicle’s ALPR system links to the City’s parking enforcement technology. Linking the other two vehicles to this enforcement system could effectively triple MIPD’s capacity to enforce Town Center parking more regularly.
	1f	Consider paid parking in Town Center, and deploy technology to create easier use and enforcement.	\$\$	7-10 years	<b>As-needed</b> – Supply management actions are intended to build upon each other, and earlier actions may alleviate the need to take more drastic measures, such as implementing paid parking. However, this is a proven solution in changing parking user behavior.
Improve the convenience and efficient supply of parking.	2a	Improve awareness of and navigation to Town Center’s range of parking options.	\$\$	1-3 years	<b>Enhance existing programs</b> – The City partially implemented a signage strategy using Port of Seattle funding in 2018/2019 and could build upon this existing work to improve wayfinding in and around Town Center.
	2b	Promote agreements for public use of currently underutilized private parking.	\$\$\$	4-6 years	<b>As-needed</b> – Parking agreements can be time-consuming to negotiate, and private parking owners understandably have concerns about liability, compensation, enforcement, and ensuring parking supply for their direct customer base. These agreements will also require some financial compensation for use of shared spaces, but the cost of doing so is typically significantly lower than the cost to construct and maintain new parking spaces.
Expand travel mode choices through programs and infrastructure investments.	3a	Add bicycle parking.	\$	1-3 years	<b>Pilot program opportunity</b> – The City has unused bicycle racks that can be quickly deployed in various locations and monitored for use to inform future permanent infrastructure decisions.
	3b	Study options to allow more flexibility related to parking requirements for new businesses.	\$	4-6 years	<b>Code update required</b> – This likely requires a labor-intensive, time-consuming code update as well as other analysis, such as conducting a development pipeline parking study and monitoring state legislation that may prohibit imposing parking minimums in the future.
	3c	Implement a proactive Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program for new development.	\$\$	4-6 years	<b>As-needed</b> – TDM programs require staff time to review, administer, and monitor, and Town Center may not have a critical mass of larger employers with whom significant impacts can be made through a TDM program.
	3d	Study options to reconfigure some Town Center streets with considerations for adding parking and loading; improving walking and bicycling facilities; improving wayfinding and access; and ensuring area streets are calm and safe for all users.	\$\$\$	7-10 years	<b>Coordinate efforts</b> – This work could integrate into other studies and/or capital projects planned for Town Center.
	3e	Create more community gathering spaces.	\$\$	7-10 years	<b>Pilot program opportunity</b> – The City saw success with temporary outdoor dining and other informal gathering spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic and could build on those pilot efforts to gather additional data to inform decisions to build formal gathering spaces.

\$ = Action will require minimal new investment beyond existing staff, programs, technology capabilities, etc.  
 \$\$ = Action will require moderate new investment beyond existing staff, programs, technology capabilities, etc.  
 \$\$\$ = Action will require significant new investment beyond existing staff, programs, technology capabilities, etc.



# Appendices

- A. Community Engagement Plan
- B. Detailed Community Engagement Findings
- C. Background Studies and Current Programs Review
- D. Mercer Island Park-and-Ride Usage Data
- E. Town Center Parking Observations
- F. 2023 Parking Inventory and Utilization

# Appendix A: Community Engagement Plan

Community engagement—and more specifically, community collaboration—is tantamount to our work on an effective, equitable, and implementable City of Mercer Island Town Center Parking Study. The purpose of this Engagement Plan is to detail the specifics of this collaboration effort, including:

- The framework and guiding principles for our engagement strategy
- How decisions made as part of this work will affect the Mercer Island community
- How our engagement strategy will coordinate with other engagement efforts undertaken by the City
- How our engagement strategy will seek to equitably include and collaborate with typically underrepresented groups
- Key collaboration partners, their roles for the project, and how each will be engaged
- How we will measure the success of our engagement strategy

## Engagement Strategy Framework

The Engagement Strategy will focus on the following key tenets:

- **Building Understanding and Awareness:** Craft a singular message about the project scope, purpose, and objectives, and sharing that message broadly and transparently with the public.
- **Creating a Shared Vision of Success:** Work with City staff and key stakeholders—such as decision-making bodies, the business community, and residents—to create a collective vision of what success for this project will look like and feel like.
- **Leveraging Existing Community Engagement Successes:** Build upon existing mediums where the Mercer Island community is comfortable sharing input—such as the Let’s Talk Mercer Island project page (“Let’s Talk”)—and closely coordinate with concurrent and ongoing community engagement efforts.
- **Offering Layered Options:** Acknowledge that different members of the Mercer Island community have different levels of interest, time, and ability to participate in the engagement process. Offer layered and multi-faceted opportunities so that everyone can have an equitable voice in project outcomes.

## Community Impact

Changes to parking, access, and the curb in Town Center will impact the entire Mercer Island community to varying degrees in the following ways:

- Impacts on the ability of Mercer Island community members, including residents, customers, business and property owners, and employees, to access their destinations using their desired mode of transportation.
- Impacts on the ability of Mercer Island community members, including residents, customers, business and property owners, and employees, to use the curb for their needs, such as conducting business, making or receiving a delivery, traveling from place to place, or recreating.
- The short-term and long-term identity, economic health, and vibrancy of Town Center.
- Environmental impacts and opportunities created by, or influenced by, decisions about the parking and mobility system and how options are priced and treated in the right-of-way.

Beyond these community-wide impacts, we anticipate that the following groups will be most significantly impacted by the decisions, recommendations, and actions included in the Town Center Parking Study:

- **Employers and Commercial Space Owners/Operators:** Employers and commercial space owners/operators may have a significant interest in how parking, access, and curb management will influence the transportation decisions of their employees and tenants, and the convenience of the community in the eyes of potential hires and tenants.
- **Service Business Owners and Operators:** Retail and restaurant business owners and operators may have a significant interest in how parking, access, and curb management will influence the transportation

decisions of their customers, and how their customers may view the convenience and affordability of the Mercer Island community as a service destination.

- **Town Center Residents:** Residents of Town Center may have a significant interest in how parking, access, and curb management will influence their transportation options and how they access their homes.

## Relationship with other Ongoing Engagement Efforts

Planning efforts concurrently undertaken by the City with public engagement efforts that are related to and/or have bearing on the Town Center Parking Study include the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2022, and the Climate Action Plan.

- **Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update:** The approved public participation plan for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update focuses public input on economic development and housing impacts and vision. Possible links to the Town Center Parking Study might include identified parking, access, and mobility elements to, in, around, or through Town Center that impact economic vitality or housing affordability and availability.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2022:** Public participation during the 2022 TIP focuses on comments and ideas on possible transportation infrastructure improvements. Possible links to the Town Center Parking Study might include comments on parking, connectivity, and overall access to, in, around, or through Town Center.
- **Climate Action Plan:** Future community collaboration on the Climate Action Plan will focus on feedback and support of possible strategies to meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. Possible links to the Town Center Parking Study might include climate action steps that focus on transportation demand management and reduction of emissions from single-occupancy vehicles. Of note, much of the comments from community members in the initial Community Kickoff Event (held in December 2021) focused on transportation options.
- Specific action steps to align engagement related to the Town Center Parking Study with these concurrent and related planning efforts include:
- **Links on Let's Talk Mercer Island Project Page:** Work with City staff and project leaders to connect the Town Center Parking Study project page with related project pages through live links, quick polls, and other activities/integrations as appropriate.
- **Engagement Modules:** Work with City staff and project leaders to deploy Town Center Parking Study engagement modules at community meetings dedicated to these interrelated projects as appropriate.

## Key Engagement Partners

We have developed a unique engagement strategy for each collaboration partner, outlined below.

### City Staff

#### *ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS*

City staff representing multiple departments will serve as the primary technical advisors for information-gathering, strategy development, alternatives analysis, and ultimate alternative selection. Primarily, their insight and feedback will:

- Ensure that appropriate and meaningful data is collected and assessed.
- Assist in crafting appropriate, focused, and contextual messaging to other collaboration partners.
- Spearhead coordination and alignment with other key City projects.
- Help the project team understand the comprehensive impacts of decisions across all City departments and staff levels.

#### *MEMBERSHIP*

The core City staff team includes the following members (subject to change based on staff turnover or changes to project scope and direction):

- Jessi Bon, City Manager
- Sarah Blugas, Economic Development Coordinator

- Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations
- Jeff Thomas, Interim Director, Community Planning and Development
- Matt Mornick, Director, Finance
- Mike Seifert, Operations Commander, Police Department

#### *MEETINGS AND METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT*

Targeted web-based meetings are the primary method of engagement for this constituency. Meetings will be scheduled over the course of the project to discuss findings, recommendations, and next steps at each critical juncture.

### Heavily Impacted Community Groups and Members

#### *ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS*

The voices of community groups and individual members most significantly impacted by the study’s outcomes—such as the Town Center business community, resident groups, transportation and mobility advocacy and policy groups, and others—will be elevated through targeted outreach. The goals of this targeted outreach are to:

- A. Create opportunity for the voices of organizations and constituencies with a close relationship to Town Center to be heard and centered.
- B. Help to expand the reach of the engagement process by engaging with their constituents and contacts.
- C. Evaluate the prospective acceptance of various strategies and decisions.
- D. Build champions of the project and help to create broad support.

#### *MEMBERSHIP*

Membership in this group is not exclusive; however, outreach will be targeted as described above.

#### *MEETINGS AND METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT*

We will build three e-mail/social media blasts at key project milestones, summarizing progress and ways to share input on Let’s Talk. Let’s Talk content will be updated at these three intervals:

- Project Announcement: Project one-pager, description of goals and objectives, and information-building and vision-building polling questions, idea generation, and mapping activity on Let’s Talk.
- Direction-Building: Update on project progress with new direction-building activities on Let’s Talk.
- Consensus-Building: Update on project progress and announcement about project adoption and how to show support, as well as consensus-building and excitement-building polls and ideas generation on Let’s Talk.

Additionally, two virtual “focus group”-style meetings will be held in Summer 2022 with an open invitation but targeted towards heavily impacted community groups and members. Meeting content will include a project overview and several activities to provide direction-building feedback.

### Community-At-Large

#### *ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS*

The community-at-large will be our guiding voice throughout the project, offering diverse and multiple perspectives on their experience with the parking and mobility system and its programs, their acceptance of various strategies and opportunities, and their predictions for how certain changes would influence their own transportation choices. Primarily, their insight and feedback will:

- Build a broad understanding of system challenges, opportunities, and likely outcomes.
- Share their personal acceptance of and reactions to various strategies and decisions.
- Help to generate increased engagement and collaboration through social media, word of mouth, and other organic methods.

## MEMBERSHIP

For the purposes of this project, the definition of “community-at-large” is inclusive of any person who engages with the Town Center parking and mobility system in any way, even indirectly.

## METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Our engagement plan for this collaboration partner includes multiple opportunities to learn about the project/parking and mobility in general and provide feedback, including both ongoing 24/7 options and scheduled events.

- **Project Awareness:** Development and issuance of a Project One-Pager with a clear and concise description of project scope, objectives, impacts, and opportunities for collaboration through City website, Let’s Talk, social media channels, and other mediums as appropriate, such as at City Hall, the Mercer Island Library, and Town Center businesses.
- **Let’s Talk Engagement:** Quick polls, comment threads, and mapping activities on Let’s Talk.
- **Engagement Modules:** A series of simple, interactive 15- and 30-minute virtual engagement modules using our Mural and Mentimeter platforms to gather feedback from integral community groups as determined by the City, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Neighbors in Motion, and others. We will create training materials on these modules for City staff, and present at up to three (3) meetings or sessions.

## City Leadership

### ROLE AND FEEDBACK FOCUS

The role of City leadership is to make decisions at key milestone points over the duration of the project, using the technical analysis of the project team and the input of our core collaboration partners to guide them. Their insight, feedback, and direction will also:

- Align project outcomes with broader community goals, objectives, policies, and constraints.
- Represent the broad, future-forward interests of the Mercer Island community.

## MEMBERSHIP

The Mercer Island City Council will serve as the primary decision-making body involved in the project. Other bodies, such as the Planning Commission and Design Commission, may be included at various intervals over the project’s duration.

## MEETINGS AND METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Targeted web-based meetings/work sessions are the primary method of engagement for this constituency. The following meetings are scheduled over the duration of the project (where dates are tentative, only the month is listed):

- **July 2022:** City Council work session to discuss key findings from to-date analysis and community engagement, and workshop initial recommendations.
- **October 2022:** Presentation to City Council focused on final recommendations and discussion of implementation and action steps.

## Measuring Success

A successful engagement plan is essential to effective, community-supported, and sustainable strategies for parking, access, and mobility in Town Center. Throughout the project duration, we must be able to draw a clear line between the input we collect from our collaboration partners and the strategies developed/decisions made. Our engagement efforts will be evaluated on an ongoing basis in the following ways:

- **Alignment of feedback with stated purpose of engagement:** We will compare contributions from our collaboration partners with the stated purpose of engagement for each constituency. If a lack of alignment is noted, we will add new engagement methods, reach out to new collaborators, or offer different prompts for participants to generate additional feedback and input. For example, if the community is heavily focused on traffic and congestion, we will tailor prompts to focus more on permit



parking experiences, paid parking experiences, or mobility experiences using modes outside of the single-occupancy vehicle.

- **Analytics:** Walker Consultants will work with City staff to evaluate both volume and demographics of participants in online opportunities for engagement monthly and develop recommendations for improving participation intensity and equity if needed.

Evaluations in these areas will be regularly discussed with the project management team, comprising both consultant staff and core City staff.

## Project Closeout

When the project is finished, collaborators must have a clear understanding of how their efforts shaped outcomes. They should also have time and space to reflect on the process and help improve and tailor future engagement processes. We will conduct the following actions at and as part of project closeout:

- **Final Report Language:** The final report will not only include a section summarizing public input but also include callouts throughout the document drawing the connections between recommendations and strategies chosen and the input supporting those recommendations and strategies. In this way, readers who participated in the process can visualize the impact of their voices on the final decisions.
- **Post-Project Thank you and Survey:** We will reach out to collaborators to thank them for their time and energy. We will also develop a short (3-5 question) survey asking participants to share their opinion of the engagement process and offer suggestions for improvement.

# Appendix B: Detailed Community Engagement Findings

## Introduction

This appendix provides a detailed compilation of feedback from the community in response to engagement efforts for the Town Center Parking Study. It documents all comments provided on the Let's Talk Mercer Island ("Let's Talk") project page, mapping activity inputs, and parking survey responses, as well as aggregated responses from questions posed to focus group participants during the virtual engagement modules. It also includes relevant responses from the Economic Development Vision Survey conducted by the City of Mercer Island ("City") in July of 2022.

Several outreach channels were used to garner participation in these community engagement activities, including:

- MI Weekly e-newsletter (2,400+ subscribers)
- Mercer Island Businesses e-mail list (850+ contacts)
- Via partner channels (Mercer Island Chamber of Commerce, Mercer Island Rotary Club, etc.)
- Targeted outreach to Town Center business owners, property owners/managers, residents, parking permit holders, and others

## Community Engagement on Let's Talk

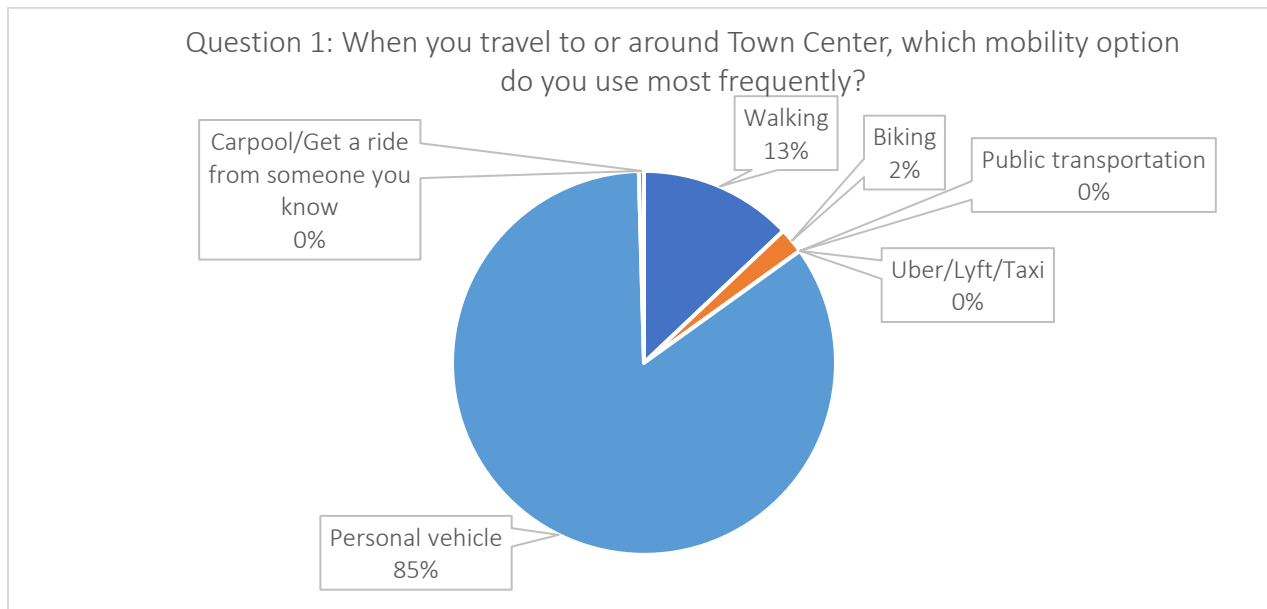
The City created a Town Center Parking Study project page explaining the project objectives and encouraging community members to share their experiences and ideas to help shape project recommendations. The page included a brief survey, mapping activities, and space to provide open-ended comments.

## Online Survey Responses

The online survey asked questions about travel behavior, decision-making, parking management goals, and right-of-way priorities. There were 232 responses in total.

When asked which mobility option they used most frequently, 85% of respondents indicated that they most frequently travel by personal vehicle (see Figure B-1). The second most common answers were walking and biking, with 13% and 2% of responses, respectively.

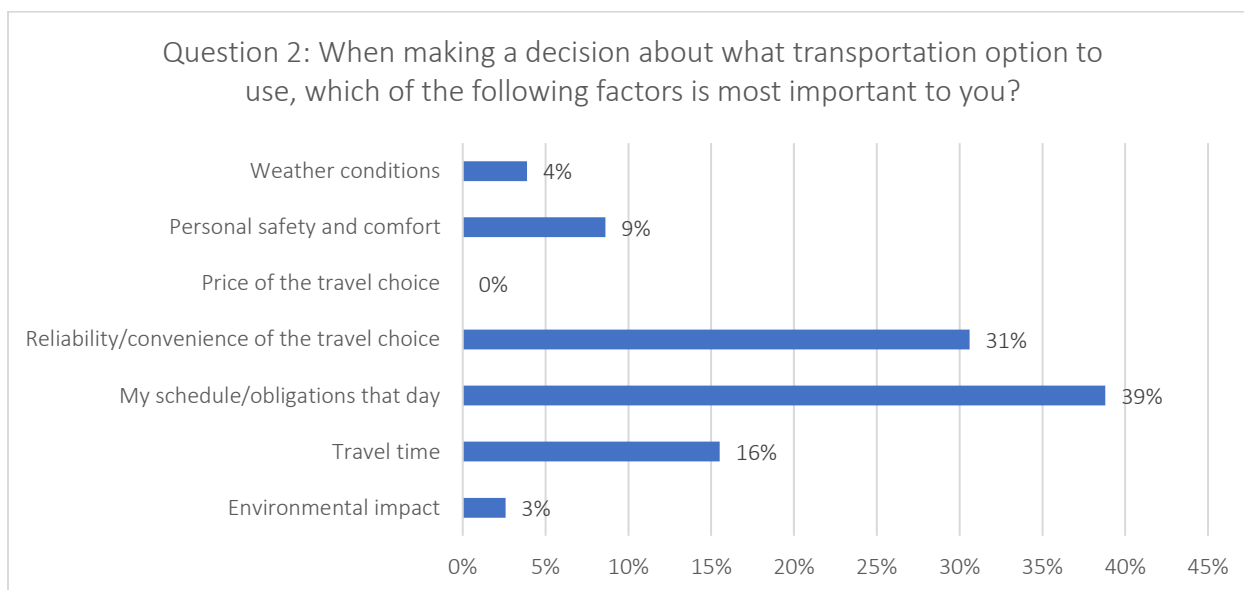
**Figure B-1 Mobility Options Used Most Frequently**



When asked about which factor most influenced their transportation choices, the most common response was “my schedule/obligations that day,” which was selected by 39% of respondents. Closely related were the second and third most popular answers, “reliability/convenience of the travel choice” and “travel time” with 31% and 16% of responses, respectively (see Figure B-2).

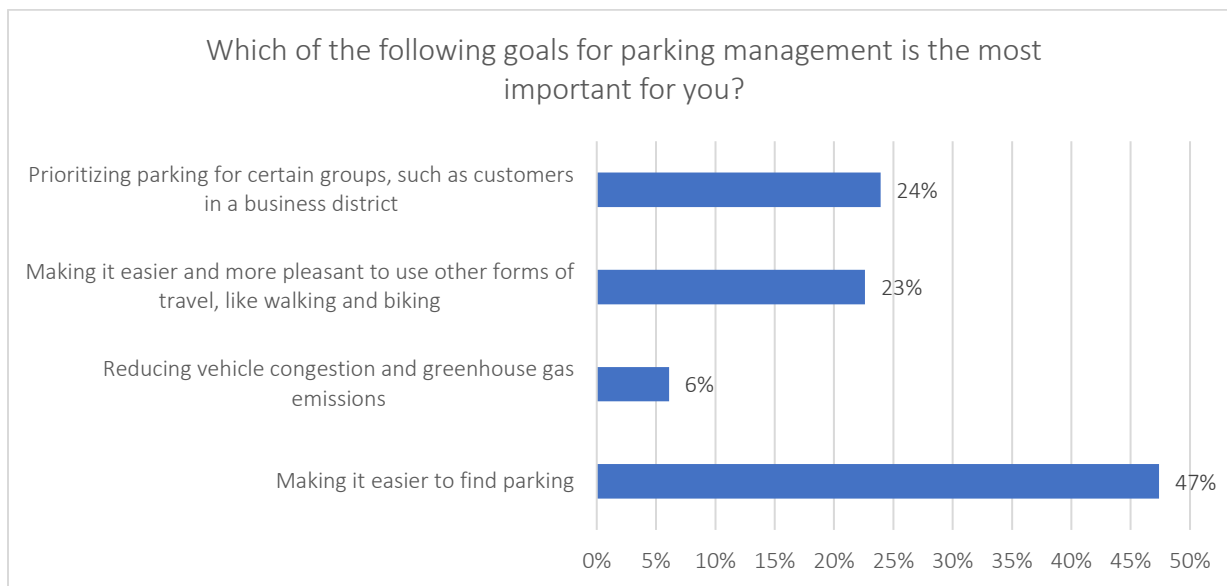
Combining these results with the responses to the previous question suggests that most respondents currently see driving a personal vehicle to be the most reliable or fastest way to travel on Mercer Island.

**Figure B-2 Factors Influencing Transportation Choices**



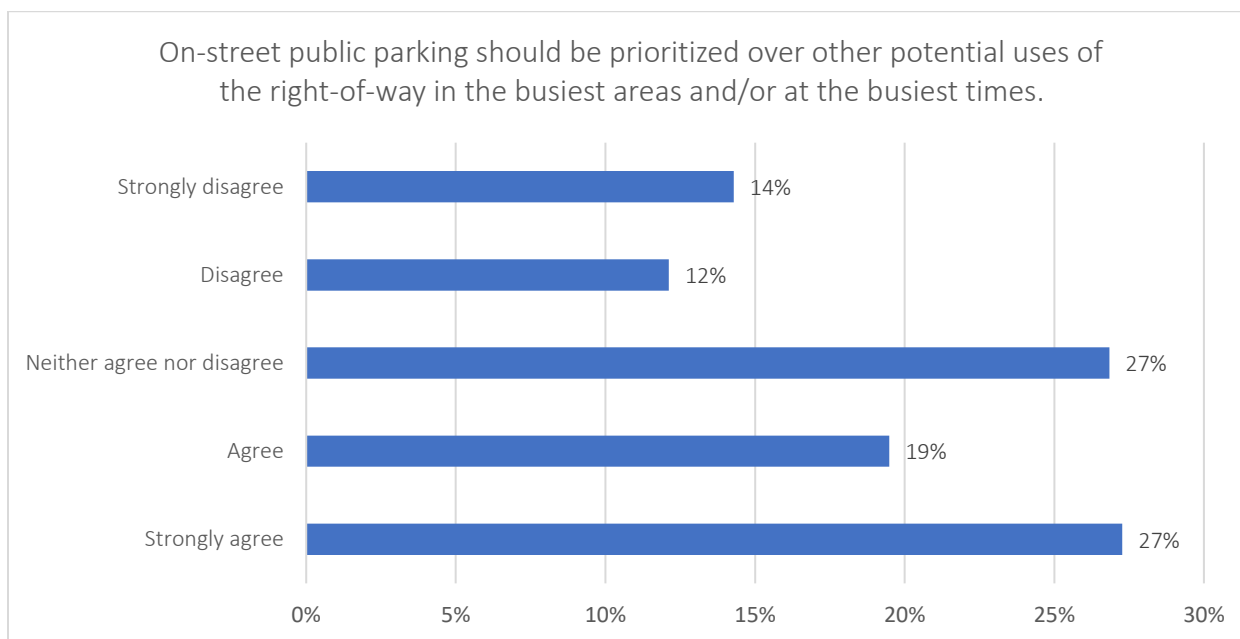
Next, respondents were asked which goal for parking management was most important to them. The most common response was “making it easier to find parking” with 47% of respondents selecting this choice (see Figure B-3). 24% of respondents were interested in prioritizing parking for certain groups, 23% were interested in supporting other modes of travel, and 6% prioritized reducing vehicle congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

**Figure B-3 Parking Management Priorities**



The final question asked participants to consider whether on-street parking should be prioritized over other potential uses of the right-of-way in the busiest areas and/or the busiest times. Participants were divided in their responses, with 27% strongly agreeing, 19% agreeing, 27% neither agreeing or disagreeing, 12% disagreeing, and 14% strongly disagreeing (see Figure B-4).

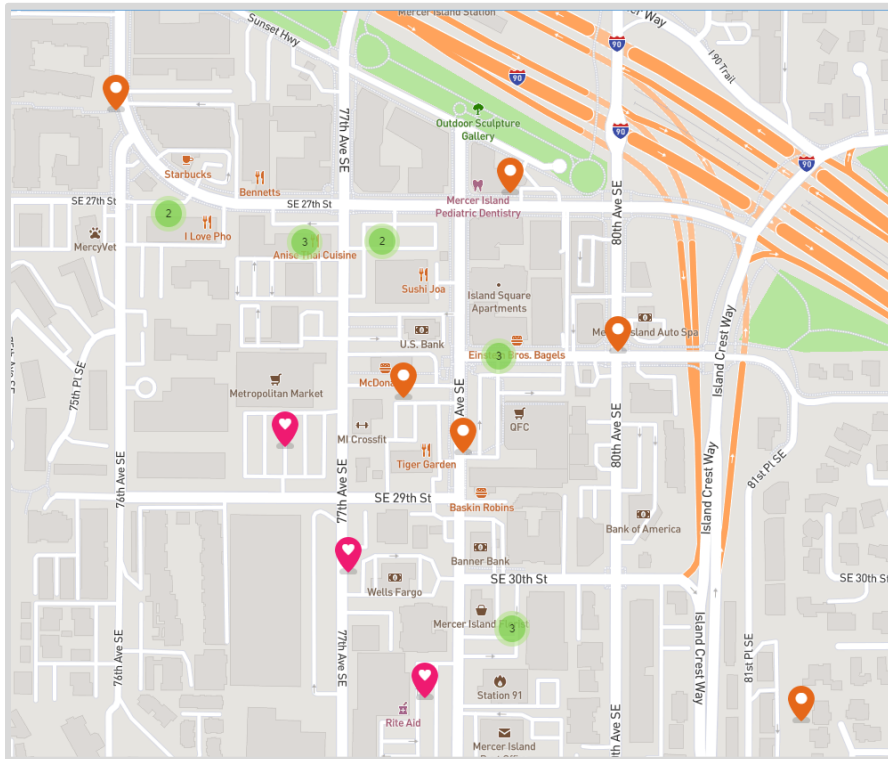
**Figure B-4 Opinions on Prioritizing Parking in the Right-of-Way**



## Mapping Activity Inputs

The mapping activity on Let’s Talk allowed community members to provide comments on specific streets or areas of Mercer Island. Participants could explain what was working well, indicate areas in need of improvement, and suggest new ideas. Community members provided 32 unique notations related to access and parking. Figure 5 on the next page shows some of the mapping input locations, each of which also included a comment providing additional detail.

Figure B-5 Mapping Activity Input Locations



Many of the comments addressed the need for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including:

- Pedestrian infrastructure
  - Between Town Center and North End neighborhoods east of Island Crest Way
  - To connect 77th and 78th Avenues SE
- Designated bike lanes
  - Island Crest Way/78th Avenue SE needs “Bike lanes, walking paths, and streetlights are needed from here all the way to the town center. Think of paths like a ‘Sunriver vibe’ ... bike to dinner, bike to the farmers market, bike to concerts, etc. E-Bike from this location to the park and ride and take the train to work. We need safe travel paths and street lighting from the south end to the north.”
  - Safe bike lanes needed on multiple streets, including Island Crest Way/ SE 42nd Street, SE 40th Street, 78th Avenue SE, and SE 27th Street
  - 80th Avenue SE and SE 28th Street need lanes to connect N/S bike route with Town Center/Light Rail
  - Existing bike lanes on 77th Avenue SE “are important, as they enable cyclists/commuters to safely move N/S through the City and to access the new Light Rail station”
- Bike racks at Mercedale Park “to promote biking to the Farmers Market and keeping your bike safe”

Other commenters addressed the parking supply, noting areas with plentiful parking, areas with insufficient parking, and areas where parking spaces were considered too narrow.

- Plentiful parking noted at Rite Aid (3023 78th Avenue SE), Metropolitan Market (2755 77th Avenue SE), Einstein Bagels<sup>1</sup> (7808 SE 28th Street), Walgreens (7707 SE 27th Street), and the South End shopping center (8415 SE 68th Street)
- Insufficient parking noted at Mercer Island Park & Ride (8000 N Mercer Way) – Add more spaces/make resident permits

<sup>1</sup> One commenter noted parking at this location is convenient while another noted that not enough parking is available at this location.



- Existing parking spaces considered too narrow noted at former Convivial Café/now L’Experience Paris (Islandia Center, 3028 78th Avenue SE), Mercer Island Eyeworks (Garage parking at 7800 Plaza, 7800 SE 27th Street), Starbucks/UPS/Subway (Tabit Village Square, 7695 SE 27th Street), Mioposto/Mud Bay/Vivienne’s Bistro (Garage parking at The Hadley, 2601 76th Avenue SE, and Aviara Apartments, 2441 76th Avenue SE)

## Public Comments

Let’s Talk also included space for open-ended comments viewable by the public. Visitors left a total of 17 comments expressing their concerns and suggesting strategies to better manage parking and provide multimodal access in Mercer Island. The comments reflected a wide diversity of opinions, but several ideas were expressed in multiple comments, including:

- Existing parking is not well used, should be shared and public
- People should be able to park once and walk around Town Center
- Paid parking could be a solution for areas of high demand
- New developments could provide public parking underground
- Major streets should have wide sidewalks and streetlights
- More parking won’t create vitality
- New light rail could cause parking issues
- Maps or signage should make it clear where parking is available

The public comments are documented in full in Table B-1 below.

**Table B-1 Public Comments from Let’s Talk Project Page**

1	<p>Please require more parking in new apartment buildings.  Please police our downtown street parking hours.  Extend the two hour to 8 pm to help shops and restaurants.  Require “P” signs outside of new apartments to show where public, walkoff parking is available.</p>
2	<p>I understand this is a complex issue and appreciate the council has taken it up, and imagine it will be part of the economic development plan, and perhaps new parking requirements for mixed-use development.</p> <p>Implementing and enforcing a parking management plan is not cheap. Ideally the new license plate cameras can be used, but that takes staff time, and the plan will have to distinguish between retail parking which we want to encourage and employee/overflow residential parking we want to discourage.</p> <p>However, I do think there is a good and reasonably inexpensive idea in the meantime.</p> <p>PROHIBIT PARKING ON TOWN CENTER STREETS FROM MIDNIGHT TO 5 AM.</p> <p>Instead town center parking regulations do almost the opposite, by removing any parking restrictions at most areas after 5 or 7 pm.</p> <p>A citizen named John Hall once noted that there should not be cars parked on town center streets at 6 am with frosted up windshields, because obviously those cars were parked there overnight, and the town center closes well before midnight.</p> <p>It would be easy to warn or ticket cars parked on the town center streets between midnight and 5 am. Obviously those would not be retail patrons parked there at those hours. I think for little money the city could begin to message to those using town center streets for non-retail parking they will have to find alternatives. This would not affect work commuters because there is plenty of space in the park and ride today.</p>
3	<p>Town center is not working at this stage. There aren't enough interesting restaurants and there's no entertainment options. We need to create a more attractive destination, similar to downtown Kirkland and downtown Bellevue, but on a smaller scale. This requires a better and larger mix of retail and better parking. I think we should try to route thru traffic to North Mercer Way and re-design the town center streets to accommodate public parking and pedestrian access. I think that means eliminating the left-hand turn lanes and creating parking spaces along all our town center streets. We also need codes that encourage the conversion of private surface parking to a combination of public spaces and retail when properties are re-developed. Ideally, rather than having developers provide private retail parking they would contribute to a fund that would build/purchase public parking. That way people could park and then walk off the property to visit multiple retail establishments.</p> <p>I'm also disappointed that we haven't figured out a way to build a performing arts center near downtown. I think that would drive a lot of traffic to retail businesses.</p>
4	<p>I could say a lot but will limit my input to just one area. What is special about Mercer Island that makes it different from other communities?</p> <p>First and foremost, Mercer Island is a suburban community and one without easy access to its Town Center. What that means is that its residents are reliant on cars to get to its retail core and transit hub. The other thing that is unusual about our community is that it is an island</p>

	<p>which limits its ability to expand out to provide for services (retail core), its commuting and its high density residential housing. In other words, everyone is reliant on the same assets for shopping, commuting and living.</p> <p>What this says is that our community is reliant on driving and reliant on just a several block area for a sustainable community in terms of goods, transit to and from work, and high density housing. It means our community has to have a way to share. Otherwise, residents only have one choice, that is to continue driving to the next community for work, goods, dining out and entertainment. They have no other choice.</p> <p>It is this dilemma that is causing most Mercer Island residents not to shop locally. It is this reason for our Town Center not having a proper retail mix, because "retail always follows customers." It is this reason that we don't even have a large off island customer base because "if your own residents won't shop in your retail core then neither will anyone else".</p> <p>This more than any other reasoning is why Mercer Island doesn't have a standard parking problem but a retail core design problem. It needs to redesign its retail core to allow residents to shop locally. It needs to redesign its retail core to allow sharing of a very limited resource, parking. It needs to understand parking's role in a walkable retail core and not only redesign available parking to make Town Center walkable but to allow us to migrate from a Strip Mall Town Center to a traditional Town Center that can become the vibrant Third Place residents want.</p> <p>This all seems a little daunting and it is. At the same time many communities across the country have faced this challenge and succeeded.</p> <p>The first step is to realize this is not a standard parking problem but a retail core design problem. Next it is important to understand that this is a problem of not having too little parking, but too little of the correct type of parking for a successful retail core and for use by all that are reliant on it. Finally, it is important to understand that it is a problem of not just stopping the building of bad parking and starting the building of correct parking, but changing both our Design Standards and Strip Mall minimum parking codes to allow this evolution to happen.</p> <p>First residents have to be able to shop locally. Next residents have to want to shop locally.</p>
5	<p>Here are some facts about Mercer Island that form the basis for a comprehensive conversation about parking:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Mercer Island is a suburban small town, dominated by single-family neighborhoods.</li> <li>2) Mercer Island is NOT well-served by Metro Transit.</li> <li>3) Mercer Island is NOT well-served by Metro Transit.</li> <li>4) Mercer Island's location, geographic length in miles, and socio-demographic make-up suggest personal transportation is required, and personal transportation CANNOT be substituted by public transportation.</li> <li>5) Zoning codes (housing &amp; parking) have failed to recognize and plan for elements 1-4, above. Changes to Mercer Island's zoning codes have been driven by pressure from housing industry lobbyists and off-island special interest groups.</li> </ol> <p>The one-size-fits-all regional housing &amp; parking code in Town Center (driven by TOD development theories) is a failure on Mercer Island, and the reason we are faced with INCREASING parking problems in 2022.</p>
6	<p>Street parking is the solution. We need more people walking on streets in downtown. Parking garages are all different and can be confusing. Having easy to understand street parking is a great solution. Timing it/charging for it will ensure people stay only the amount of time necessary to shop downtown--so that they're not parking all day for their office or residential use. Adding a requirement for more parking in new buildings, or associated with a change of use, is going to add to the cost of doing business in MI. If we want new restaurants and retail to locate here, ensuring that adequate parking isn't stopping them from locating is extremely key. Changes of use to retail/restaurant should be fully exempt from the parking requirements to incentivize new retail/restaurant uses to located in town center. It makes a huge difference!!!!</p>
7	<p>Our park &amp; ride is too small and if I arrived before 7:05 AM I had to park in Town Center. The parking volume is ticking up again post pandemic as people return to in-office work whether by choice or by force. Please don't take away our overflow parking spots.</p>
8	<p>+Town Center needs maps of available public parking, so people can find it. Good example is Bainbridge town center.</p> <p>+Continue to require short term walk off parking in all new developments.</p> <p>+establish parking fees in the park and ride for 6am to 10 am parkers, to free up space for alternative shift users and encourage out of peak travel.</p>
9	<p>I would like to see a consistent paid parking program in the Town Center. Putting a price on parking establishes the correct incentives, whereas free parking makes it a free-for-all with people circling the block and giving up.</p>
10	<p>Would love to be able to park legally in any parking lot and visit multiple retail areas.</p>
11	<p>Legal spots to park while visiting multiple retail locations</p>
12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Parking isn't the solution to retail vitality. We've had plenty of businesses with perfect parking fold.</li> <li>2) Central parking for walkable shopping from a single point won't work. Our residents are not walking more than a block and our shopping is too dispersed.</li> <li>3) 77th is perfect the way it is. Re-configuring it for parking will destroy our main North-South bike corridor. Plus, see #2.</li> <li>4) My suggestion: create paid 1 hour parking meters in several areas throughout Town Center. Enforce existing parking.</li> </ol> <p>Any hope of Town Center retail vitality disappeared decades ago. Parking certainly won't fix it. I have much better choices for almost everything off-island and now that Light Rail is around the corner it will all be conveniently a few minutes away. On foot.</p>
13	<p>There is already abundant parking in downtown Mercer Island. The problem is that businesses, churches and office buildings are allowed to restrict parking access even when they're not operating. This causes chaos by pushing people further away from public spaces with limited parking options such as Mercedale or the farmers market. Businesses in the area are likely benefitting from the increased traffic, and should not be allowed to restrict legal parking. If they can demonstrate they're not benefiting, the city should incentivize them to encourage opening up their lots to the public for the good of making the island more accessible and welcoming.</p>
14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There should be wide bike and walking paths (plus street lights) all the way from south to north Island Crest Way to encourage more citizens to use alternatives to car transportation. Add more bike racks in front of businesses. More citizens are using ebikes and kids use e-scooters- but we need safe space to travel -away from car lanes and racks to lock them up.</li> <li>2. We need a much larger park and ride since it will fill up so fast when light rail arrives. Commuters from all over the Eastside will take up retail parking spots if there is no space at the park and ride- which will be frustrating for MI shoppers. Add lots of bike racks by light rail- with good</li> </ol>

	<p>security &amp; cameras to deter theft and so bikes stay safe. Add parking limits to the town center parking to avoid commuters going to Seattle on light rail and taking up retail space.</p> <p>3. I really don't like to park in underground garages on the island -the spots are tight, have concrete poles that are easy to hit and not convenient for quick errands. I prefer above ground parking spots right next to shops, but realize space on a small island has its limits. Future underground parking must be built better and easy to use for shoppers or we will just go off island to shop.</p> <p>4. I want to park in one spot and walk to several stores (example- Hardware store, then to UPS store across the street) but there are warning signs everywhere not to park and walk off to other retail. Frustrating.</p>
15	<p>Hi, I haven't completed the survey because the questions were overbroad. For example, I currently need to drive to the north end but I walk between different locations within MI downtown. I strongly advocate a very frequent shuttle service around the island which would significantly reduce the number of car journeys on the island and the need for parking at the north end. It would also reduce our dependence on the Sound Transit parking lot/Park and Ride. As for current parking, I have never found a shortage of parking in MI downtown. Thanks</p>
16	<p>Underground, free 2-hr walk-off parking in new mixed use developments is the best way to densify downtown while increasing parking. Surface angle parking such as that at Tabit Village is woefully inadequate for the number of people using those shops, yet the Walgreens lot across the street is empty. Similarly, Rite Aid no longer allows parking for the farmer's market. Both drug stores in no way need all their available parking to serve the number of customers inside. Do we have a zoning problem? We also need sidewalks and street lights, full stop, on all major streets: ICW, WMW, EMW, NMW, 40th/ Mercerwood, Merrimount, others? I would LOVE to see a plan to increase safe walking.</p>
17	<p>What I would like to see for the downtown: A walkable core pedestrian friendly area with decent density of shops, cafes, and restaurants. People drive to a central location, park, then walk around. Ideally certain streets or areas of a street are pedestrian only during certain hours to encourage people and families to congregate. For example, the 76th AVE curve near Starbucks. Why isn't that whole area pedestrian only? There are actually a good number of restaurants in that corridor. We should encourage people who eat at those cafes to stay and mingle in that area to drive traffic to the stores. Instead you get cars pulling in and out of parking lots, cars zipping around the curve as kids run nearby, etc. Instead create a park-like atmosphere that encourages Islanders to meet, eat, walk, and buy things. Look how many families the Mercedale park draws on weeknights. Why isn't there a green, pedestrian friendly area that encourages families to meet further north? Outdoor seating, car-free areas, green space.</p> <p>I see a lot of comments about a parking garage and yes that would provide a central location to park and then walk. But by itself a parking garage does not solve this. The problem with the downtown is a lack of density - the downtown is so spread out with small clusters of shops. We need more density to create critical mass to shift shoppers parking habits. There's very little incentive to have people park somewhere central and then walk around if they need to walk all over town to go to three shops. So they drive to the hardware store then drive to Starbucks then drive to the Rite Aid. Is this a zoning problem? Why is the downtown so spread out with so few shops in any one area? There are so many dead areas that add huge walking distances, or make it inconvenient to get from point A to B. Why are there so many random banks on the island? Who goes into banks anymore? There are large swaths of the downtown where there is zero reason to congregate. Give people a reason to spend several hours downtown and then they will utilize that parking garage.</p>

## Findings from Virtual Modules

The project team developed 60-minute modules and held virtual engagement sessions for community members and organizations. The team presented initial study findings and asked participants questions about their concerns, right-of-way priorities, opinions on parking management strategies, resource allocation preferences, and visions of success. Two virtual engagement sessions were held with Mercer Island community members and four sessions were held with specific groups, including Neighbors in Motion, the Mercer Island Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Mercer Island Climate Action Network.<sup>2</sup> For larger groups, some questions were posed via the Mentimeter live polling platform. For smaller groups, the same questions were posed to participants verbally and responses were documented by the project team.

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with seven statements, with a “1” indicating strong disagreement and a “5” indicating strong agreement. The total scores from participants across all seven focus groups were summed, and the averages are displayed in Table B-2 below.

On average, participants supported the idea of shared parking facilities in the Town Center, prioritizing convenient parking for visitors and customers, creating more community gathering spaces even at the expense of parking, implementing paid parking for the benefit of the community, and charging more for parking in areas of high demand. On average, participants disagreed with the idea of prioritizing on-street parking over other uses, such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, parklets, and outdoor dining areas.

<sup>2</sup> A fifth focus session with the Mercer Island Rotary Club was scheduled but no participants attended.

**Table B-2 Focus Group Participant Opinions**

Statement	Average level of agreement
It makes sense for parking to cost more in areas where demand for parking is highest.	3.1
The most convenient parking in Town Center should be prioritized for visitors and customers.	3.8
On-street parking should be prioritized over other potential mobility uses for the right-of-way, like bike lanes and wider sidewalks.	2.5
On-street parking should be prioritized over community uses for the right-of-way, like parklets and outdoor dining areas.	1.9
It makes sense to create more community gathering spaces in Town Center, even if parking has to be moved to do so.	3.7
It makes sense for all parking facilities in the Town Center to be shared among multiple uses if they can be.	4.2
I'd support paid parking if it benefited the community in tangible ways, like making it easier to get places and supporting community initiatives.	3.6

Session participants were also given the opportunity to participate in a hypothetical budgeting exercise, choosing how much of the City's resources should be allocated to each of five strategies for improving Town Center (see Table B-3). On average, participants chose to allocate the greatest share toward creating better infrastructure in the right-of-way for pedestrians and cyclists and creating more community-oriented spaces in the right-of-way, like parklets and outdoor dining areas. Several participants noted that some of the other strategies, while still important, may need fewer resources to implement, and they believed that parking enforcement might eventually pay for itself through paid parking or ticket revenue.

**Table B-3 Focus Group Budget Exercise Results**

Strategy	Average share of spending allocated
Creating better infrastructure in the right-of-way for pedestrians and cyclists	39%
Creating more community-oriented spaces in the right-of-way, like parklets and outdoor dining areas	24%
Improving signage and wayfinding	15%
Dedicating administrative/staff time to building a shared parking program for Town Center	14%
More resources (like staffing and technology) to enforce parking rules and regulations	8%

Finally, participants were asked to describe what their visions of success would look like, as well as potentially concerning outcomes. Answers were documented and grouped into categories by theme, as shown on the next pages in Table B-4 and Table B-5. The most common themes among participants' visions for success were improvements to bike-ability and safety and the availability of more shared parking. Participants also frequently expressed their desires that more convenient parking be made available near destinations, for wayfinding and signage to highlight available parking, and for visitors to be able to park once and walk. Concerns mentioned multiple times included that parking solutions might not meet the needs of businesses, that there might not be good options for multimodal access, that the status quo might be maintained, that Mercer Island might be

unwelcoming to visitors, and that creating too much parking might remove the incentive for people to walk to and around Town Center.

**Table B-4 Focus Group Visions of Success for Town Center Parking**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of mentions</b>
Bike-ability and safety	9
Shared parking/higher parking utilization	9
Parking within one minute of destination/more convenient access	6
Wayfinding/clarity for available parking	5
Park once	5
Prevent off-island commuters from filling all TC parking lots	5
Gathering spaces	5
Walkability	4
Reduce the prevalence/amount of unappealing surface parking lots	4
Enforcement of regulations	4
Transit/shuttles	3
Variety of parking options regarding time limits	3
Bike parking	2
Scooter accessibility and safety	2
Pricing/demand-responsive pricing	2
Greater density	1
State money for active transportation infrastructure	1
EV charging facilities incentivize off-street parking	1
Employees parking off-street	1
Loading spaces for deliveries	1
Requiring new developments to provide more off-street parking	1
More parking availability on-street	1
Encourage visitors to come to TC	1



**Table B-5 Focus Group Potentially Concerning Outcomes for Town Center Parking**

Theme	Number of mentions
Parking solutions don't meet the needs of TC businesses	2
The Town Center does not provide good options for multimodal access	2
Maintaining the status quo	2
Mercer Island is unwelcoming to visitors	2
Creating too much parking and losing incentive to walk	2
Reducing the existing supply of parking	1
Out-of-towners park in the Town Center just to use transit	1
Seeing more inaccessible private lots	1
Failing to meet climate goals	1

Other feedback provided in the focus groups included that the City should attempt to monitor and measure the impact of any changes made, that improving access would increase Town Center real estate values, that some apartment renters park in private lots because they lack parking spaces, and that the City should work with King County Metro in the future to keep pricing consistent between their lot and the parking available in the Town Center.

## Relevant Responses from Economic Development Vision Survey

In summer 2022, the City of Mercer Island conducted an Economic Development Vision Survey as part of the 2022-2024 Comprehensive Plan Update. The survey garnered 644 responses. Key themes of relevance to the parking study emerged, and Mercer Island staff shared the results with the Town Center Parking Study project team. In describing their vision for an appealing downtown, many survey participants indicated the importance of planning for walkability, community gathering spaces, and convenient parking.

Many respondents' visions for the future of Mercer Island's commercial areas include features that make these areas more of a destination: a larger variety of restaurants, shops, and amenities; street design and parking that enable residents to shop and do errands in a connected trip rather than driving from place to place; and a cohesive identity that makes a commercial area feel like a destination.

Good bike lanes were mentioned as assistance that would help respondents' businesses be more environmentally friendly. Parking improvements were a prominent theme in what would make business more viable. Most respondents (64%) currently commute to work by driving alone. Alternate modes including transit, walking, or biking were selected by 17%, carpool by 2%, and "other" by 17%.

Other relevant responses included comments related to long-term vision, parking, outdoor space, desired changes to Town Center, and the appeal of other downtowns. A range of comments are provided below.

- 20-year vision:
  - Many respondents described a quaint but vibrant walkable commercial core with diverse businesses to meet residents' needs. They imagined a downtown with sidewalk space for outdoor dining and a pedestrian-friendly environment.
  - "Pedestrian friendly with sidewalk space for outdoor dining [...] Decisions should be made with thoughtful planning for walkability, accessibility and encouragement of small business."
- Parking (more parking, shared parking, parking limitations):
  - "What the commercial area 'should' look like is dense retail with central parking so you can dump your car and wander around the shops and restaurants.... Today each business has its own parking with signs threatening to tow your car if you walk off."

- “I hope that there will be ample parking that will allow one to park in one place and walk to multiple businesses.”
- “Just eliminating and enforcing no parking on town center streets from midnight to 6 am would be a good start to remove overflow residential parking from the mixed-use developments, and not allowing those buildings to charge for onsite parking.”
- Outdoor space
  - “More outdoor seating and gathering spaces”
  - “We need a central park or town square with the shops around the square to give people a reason to linger downtown.”
- Common themes when respondents were asked one thing they would change about downtown:
  - Parking (centralized shared parking, park once and walk)
  - Walkability (pedestrian oriented, parking lots behind stores or centrally located)
- Common themes when asked about the appeal of other downtowns:
  - Walkable and connected streets, with convenient parking
  - Many favorite spaces focus on a central main street, offer enough things to do to make it feel like a destination, and have a cohesive sense of identity or “vibe”
  - Biking paths and pedestrian-oriented street design

# Appendix C: Background Studies and Current Programs Review

A review of background plans, studies, and documents was conducted to inform the context for the Town Center Parking Study. Material reviewed includes:

- Previous parking studies
- Recent surveys of Mercer Island businesses
- The Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan
- The parking permit programs on Mercer Island
- Reviews of past parking and other mobility pilot studies
- Current parking agreements
- Mercer Island City Code (MICC) pertaining to parking regulations

## Previous Parking Studies

The City of Mercer Island has completed two (2) parking studies in the last 10 years, one study completed in 2015 by BP Squared and one completed in 2016 by BERK Consulting.

### 2015 Park and Ride Survey

The City of Mercer Island completed a Park and Ride Survey in 2015 (prepared by BP Squared). The survey was prepared to quantify the feasibility of developing a commuter parking facility within Town Center. The purpose of the commuter parking facility would be to accommodate increased demand resulting from: 1) the temporary closure of the Bellevue Way Park and Ride during the Sound Transit East Link Extension construction, and 2) the opening of the East Link Extension. The survey analyzed 15 properties as potential locations for a park and ride facility. Each property was evaluated based on a variety of criteria including location, quantity of new parking spaces that could be accommodated at the site, cost of construction, timing of development, and site availability.

As a result of the analysis, three properties surveyed met each of the evaluation criteria:

- 2411 76th Avenue SE (former Freshy's location)
- Former King Property located between 77th and 78th Avenues SE, north of SE 29th Street
- The Mercer Island Community and Event Center, 8236 SE 24th Street (no further study of this site was conducted due to resident concerns)

### 2016 Town Center Parking Study

The City of Mercer Island completed a Town Center Parking Study in 2016 (prepared by BERK Consulting) to analyze on-street and off-street parking inventory and demand in connection with the City's Town Center visioning efforts.

### Parking Challenges

The 2016 Study highlighted several parking challenges to be addressed, including:

- Not enough parking
- Inconvenient parking locations
- Confusion over where parking is located, especially for shared stalls and in garages
- Poorly designed parking in garages, which creates hazards for vehicles and constrains the navigability of parking structures
- Confusion over parking permits

- Lack of parking for employees working in the Town Center
- Low parking turnover rates
- Bus commuters using Town Center parking
- Lack of enforcement of parking restrictions
- A lack of walkability in some areas

## Parking Supply and Demand

The study identified approximately 3,308 off-street non-residential parking spaces and 258 on-street public spaces. Data was collected on February 2-3, 2016. The peak parking utilization rate observed for off-street parking spaces was 45%. On-street parking peak utilization was 60%. The study concluded that the Town Center has sufficient on- and off-street parking to meet non-residential parking demand.

The study found that the built supply ratio was 3.9 spaces/1,000 square feet, while the highest observed utilization ratio was 1.7 spaces/1,000 square feet.

## Parking Regulations

The study included the following key findings regarding parking regulations:

- The City's non-residential off-street parking requirements in the Town Center appear to be significantly higher than observed parking demand.
- The Town Center parking regulations provide limited reductions for shared parking (up to 20%) for residential and non-residential uses.
- The City's residential parking requirements of 1-3 spaces per unit may lead to parking being overbuilt for residential uses, particularly if shared parking is not incorporated into the project.
- The City's required parking stall width and drive aisle widths are lower than those recommended by WSDOT and compared to the City of Redmond requirements.

## Recommendations

The study included the following recommendations:

- Reduce off-street parking requirements.
- Modify the 20% limit on shared parking.
- Maintain existing on-street parking management.
- Revise parking lot design standards.
- Increase on-street parking supply.
- Increase shared off-street public parking.
- Continue to monitor parking in the Town Center.

## Progress on 2016 Study Recommendations

Since the 2016 study was completed, the City has implemented the following recommendations:

- Reduced off-street parking requirements.
  - Retail/office/mixed-use (including restaurants) – 2-3 spaces/1,000 square feet
  - Standalone restaurant – 5-10 spaces/1,000 square feet
  - Residential – 1-1.4 spaces per unit. Allow site specific deviations for parking less than 1 space/unit based on detailed parking analysis and with approval of the Code official.
- Modified the 20% limit on shared parking to allow up to 50% of the requirement to be accommodated through shared parking.
- Revised parking lot design standards.
  - Increased aisle widths to 24' for two-way traffic for parking angled at 45° or above.

- Increased aisle widths to 18' for one-way traffic for parking angled at 60° or above.
- Increased the standard parking space size to 9' by 18' and allowed spaces at 8.5' width for compact and long-term use (turnover of 1-2 vehicles/day).

## Surveys of Local Businesses

In 2020 and 2021, the City contracted with Hardwick Research to survey Mercer Island businesses about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to sharing information about pandemic impacts, businesses also provided input about the overall business climate and needs to increase business viability on Mercer Island through these surveys.

### 2020 COVID-19 Business Survey

The 2020 survey included the following key goals:

- Gather information regarding issues facing the Mercer Island business community with the goal of understanding COVID-19 impacts.
- Obtain baseline data for long-range economic and community development efforts.

Businesses were invited by e-mail and direct mail to complete an online survey. A total of 269 survey responses were gathered and included key findings related to parking.

- For long-term program options, about a quarter of businesses want assistance with parking in the north and south end business districts (e.g., amount of parking, policing illegal parking).
- Businesses want information regarding the City's approach to economic development/new business development plans (including zoning and codes, as well as parking).
- Businesses commented on the need to address walkability/parking issues in business districts.
- Some of the open-ended parking-related comments included:
  - "Continue to communicate updates relative to COVID-19 and progress on other issues that are being evaluated (i.e., the concern of parking)."
  - "Information on any issues affecting Mercer Island businesses (zoning, code changes, taxes, parking, development in Town Center and south-end shopping center)."

### 2021 COVID-19 Business Survey

The 2021 survey built on the 2020 findings and was conducted to determine:

- What has changed since 2020, if anything.
- Challenges Mercer Island business are still facing.
- Types of aid/support Mercer Island businesses still need.
- New needs that have arisen.
- Ways the City can support the local business community.

Like the 2020 survey, the 2021 survey was conducted online, and a total of 188 survey responses were received from Mercer Island businesses. The survey included the following key findings related to parking:

- When asked about the important actions that the City could take to help their businesses, "improving parking" was one of the top three responses.
- Respondents indicated a desire to see 3-minute pick-up parking spots or curbside zones and parking (lack of parking is an issue in some areas and not others).
- Some of the open-ended parking-related comments included:
  - "Keep street parking free for as long as possible but enforce time limits, especially once light rail comes."
  - "Provide more public parking."
  - "The City could and should have a plan for parking. Putting public parking [spaces] in buildings like the Hadley mostly go unused by the people who frequent the businesses located on the first

- floor. The new buildings that go up should have outdoor parking (not indoor or underground) available for people to park when using retail.”
- “Parking!! Town Center will be overwhelmed by the continuing development of condominiums and apartments with parking policies that force the owner/tenant to park on the street. Better, larger signage that lets Islanders know that they can park in the public parking areas of existing and future Town Center buildings.”

## Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan

The following summarizes key components of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan<sup>3</sup> as it relates to the Town Center vision and goals as well as existing transportation policies.

### Introduction

- Community values include residential community, quality municipal services, fiscal responsibility, education is the key, livability is paramount, cherish the environment, and sustainable community.
- The Comprehensive Plan outlines goals for the Town Center:
  - Mixed-use developments that include residential units are encouraged.
  - Businesses should continue to develop at a scale compatible with other community values and should provide a range of retail, office, and residential opportunities.
  - The community-scaled business district will primarily cater to the needs and desires of Mercer Island residents and employees.
  - Ongoing attention to urban design principles, pedestrian needs, traffic considerations, and green spaces is essential.
- Local land use policies will be coordinated with transportation plans to provide safe, functional surfaces for vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians while avoiding local “gridlock.” Local transportation planning will continue to emphasize a semi-rural setting for various arterial and collector streets. Pedestrian walks linking activities will continue to be a high community priority.

### Land Use Element<sup>4</sup>

1. Between 2006 and 2035, the City’s growth target is 2,320 new housing units and 1,160 new jobs to be generated on Mercer Island.
2. About the Town Center
  - a. The Town Center is a 76-acre area that includes residential, retail, commercial, mixed-use, and office-oriented businesses. Historically, convenience businesses — groceries, drugstores, service stations, dry cleaners, and banks — have dominated the commercial land uses, many of them belonging to larger regional or national chains.
  - b. Retailers and other commercial services are scattered throughout the Town Center and are not concentrated in any area. With a diffused development pattern, the Town Center is not conducive to “browsing,” making movement around the downtown difficult and inconvenient for pedestrians, physically disadvantaged persons, and bicyclists.
  - c. Mercer Island’s downtown is located three (3) miles from Seattle and one (1) mile from Bellevue via I-90. I-90 currently provides critical vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access to the Town Center as well as the rest of Mercer Island. Regional transportation plans anticipate future development of a high-capacity transit system in the I-90 corridor. Considering recent and potential future public transportation investments in the I-90 corridor and in keeping with the region’s emerging growth philosophy, redevelopment, and moderate concentration of future

<sup>3</sup> As of the publication of this report in early 2023, the City was revising the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan as part of the 2022-2024 periodic update. This update includes adding a new Economic Development Element.

<sup>4</sup> “Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, 2. Land Use Element.” City of Mercer Island, accessed December 19, 2022.

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- growth into Mercer Island’s Town Center represents the wisest and most efficient use of the transportation infrastructure.
- d. The Town Center land designated for commercial, retail, service, and office uses is much larger than the local population can support. This has contributed to a historical pattern of relatively low private investment in downtown properties. Consequently, the Town Center consists of many one-story strip centers, surrounded by vast parking lots.
  - e. In 1994, the City made significant street improvements in the Town Center, which have resulted in a more pedestrian-friendly environment. However, more needs to be done on the private development side to design buildings with attractive streetscapes so that people will have more incentive to park their car and walk between shopping areas.
  - f. The Town Center is poorly identified. The major entrance points to the downtown are not treated in any special way that invites people into the business district.
  - g. According to the Town Center Vision<sup>5</sup>, which is a component of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town Center should be:
    - i. The heart of Mercer Island and embody a small-town character, where residents want to shop, eat, play, and relax together.
    - ii. Accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
    - iii. Convenient to enter, explore, and leave with a variety of transportation modes.
    - iv. Well designed with public spaces that offer attractive settings for entertainment, relaxation, and recreation.
    - v. Diverse with a range of uses, building types, and styles that acknowledge both the history and future of the island.
    - vi. Local providing businesses and services that meet every day needs on the island.
    - vii. Home to a variety of housing options for families, singles, and seniors.
  - h. The Land Use Element includes the following key goals for the Town Center related to parking and transportation:
    - i. Create a mixed-use Town Center with pedestrian scale and connections. A walkable mixed-use core should be located adjacent to a regional transit facility and be of sufficient size and intensity to create a focus for Mercer Island.
    - ii. Be convenient and accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists.
    - iii. Town Center streets should be viewed as multiple-use facilities.
      1. All Town Center streets should provide for safe and convenient multi-modal access to existing and future development in the Town Center.
      2. Design streets using universal design principles to allow older adults and individuals with disabilities to “stroll or roll” and cross streets safely.
      3. 78th Avenue SE should be the primary pedestrian corridor in the Town Center, with ample sidewalks, landscaping, and amenities.
      4. 77th Avenue SE should serve as the primary bicycle corridor connecting the regional bicycle network along I-90 and the planned light rail station with Mercerdale Park and the rest of the Island south of the Town Center.
    - iv. Be pedestrian-friendly, with amenities, tree-lined streetscapes, wide sidewalks, storefronts with canopies, and cross-block connections that make it easy to walk around.
      1. Provide opportunities to walk throughout Town Center.
      2. Create safe pedestrian routes that break up larger City blocks.
    - v. Have ample parking, both on- and off-street, and the ability to park once and walk to a variety of retail shops.

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<sup>5</sup> “Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, 2. Land Use Element, V. Land Use Policies, Town Center Vision.” City of Mercer Island, accessed December 19, 2022.

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1. Reduce the land area devoted to parking by encouraging structured and underground parking. If open-air, parking lots should be behind buildings.
  2. Encourage improved access to transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and shared parking facilities to reduce trip generation and provide transportation alternatives, particularly for secondary trips once users reach the Town Center.
  3. Consider a range of regulatory and incentive approaches that can increase the supply of public parking in conjunction with development proposals.
  4. On- and off-street parking should be well-lit, convenient, and well-signed so that drivers can easily find and use parking.
  5. Develop long-range plans for the development of additional commuter parking to serve Mercer Island residents.
  6. Prioritize parking for Mercer Island residents within the Town Center.
- vi. Prioritize Town Center transportation investments that promote multi-modal access to regional transit facilities.
  - vii. Promote the development of pedestrian linkages between public and private development and transit in and adjacent to the Town Center.

## Transportation Element<sup>6</sup>

- Current travel patterns in Mercer Island:
  - Mercer Island has relatively high levels of vehicle ownership and personal mobility. Approximately 70% of the households on Mercer Island have two or more vehicles, while less than 5% of households have no vehicle at all. Comparing the 2016 American Community Survey (US Census) data with the 2000 US Census data, several changes were observed:
    - The percent of Mercer Island residents who commute to work by driving alone has dropped from 76% to 72%, those who take a bus or carpool to work decreased from 17% to 14%, and those who work at home increased from 7% to 10%. The average travel time to work for Mercer Island residents is 25 minutes, which is below the regional average of 32 minutes.
  - A November 2013 WSDOT Mercer Island Travel Survey found that 55% of commute trips originating on the Island traveled west towards Seattle and 45% traveled east towards Bellevue.
- Current parking conditions:
  - Most parking in the City is provided by off-street parking lots, along residential access streets, or by on-street spaces in select areas of the Town Center.
  - In 2001, the City implemented a permit parking program for on-street parking in the Town Center in response to overflow conditions at the Mercer Island Park and Ride lot. This program preserves selected public on-street parking spaces for Mercer Island resident use, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., Monday through Friday. All Mercer Island residents are eligible for a Town Center District permit, which allows them to park on Town Center streets during the specified hours.
  - An additional permit parking program was developed for residential streets north of the Park & Ride lot on North Mercer Way. This program only allows residents of the area to park on City streets between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., weekdays.
- Current bicycle and pedestrian facilities (shown in Figure 6):
  - In 1996, the City developed a Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan (“PBF Plan”).
  - A 2010 update to the plan included vision and guiding principles, goals and policies, an existing and future network, a list of completed projects, revised facility design standards, and a prioritized list of projects. The plan emphasizes further development of safe routes to schools, completion of missing connections, and application of design guidelines.

<sup>6</sup> “Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, 4. Transportation Element.” City of Mercer Island, accessed December 19, 2022. [https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer\\_island/codes/comprehensive\\_plan?nodeId=SUHITA\\_4TREL](https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer_island/codes/comprehensive_plan?nodeId=SUHITA_4TREL)

- A regional trail runs across the north end of the Island along the I-90 corridor providing a convenient connection to Seattle and Bellevue for pedestrians and bicyclists. Most streets in the Town Center includes sidewalks. In addition, there are sidewalks near schools and select streets and some paved and unpaved shoulders and multiuse trails that provide for pedestrian mobility.
- The bicycle network is made up of designated bicycle facilities including bicycle lanes and sharrows, and shared non-motorized facilities including shared use pathways, off-road trails, and paved shoulder areas.

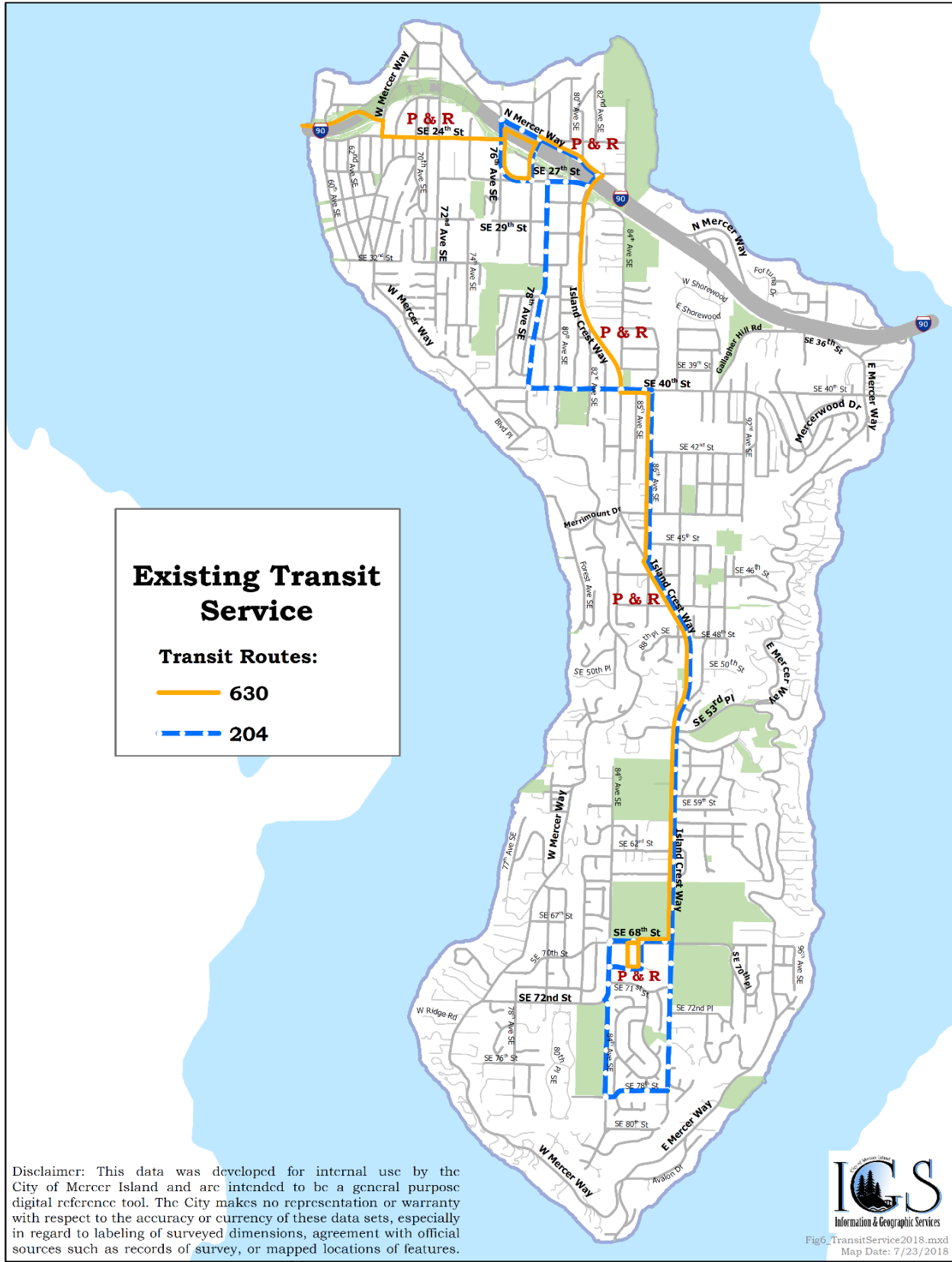
Figure 6 Mercer Island Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities (As of 2016)



Source: City of Mercer Island

- Current public transportation conditions (shown in Figure 7):
  - The King County Department of Metropolitan Services (Metro) and the regional transit agency Sound Transit provide public transportation services for Mercer Island and throughout King County. There are four major types of service offered on the Island: local fixed route service, regional express service, custom bus service, and access service.
  - Local fixed route service operates on the arterial roadway system and provides public transit service connecting residential and activity areas. On request, some routes can deviate to a broader “flexible service area” under Metro’s DART program.
  - Regional express service, which also operates on fixed routes, is oriented toward peak hour commuter trips between the Mercer Island Park and Ride and major employment and activity centers off the Island. Sound Transit and Metro provide express service west and east along I-90 into Seattle and Bellevue.
  - Custom bus service includes specially designed routes to serve specific travel markets, such as major employers, private schools, or other special destinations. These services are typically provided during peak commute hours and operate on fixed routes with limited stops. Custom bus service is currently provided between the Mercer Island Park and Ride and Lakeside School and University Prep in Seattle (Routes 981 and 989).
  - Access service provides door-to-door transportation to elderly and special needs populations who have limited ability to use public transit. Access covers trips within the King County Metro transit service area.
  - On Mercer Island, there are two routes that circulate throughout the City (Metro routes 204 and 630). At the Mercer Island Park and Ride, Sound Transit regional express routes 550 and 554 connect Mercer Island to Seattle, Bellevue, and Issaquah; and Metro regional express route 216 provides service to Redmond and Seattle. These three regional routes will be modified significantly upon the opening of East Link light rail.
  - Route 204 provides service between the Mercer Island Park and Ride lot and the Mercer Village Center, with a DART loop around the Island’s southern tip (using WMW & EMW), and a DART loop to Covenant Shores. This route travels on 78th Avenue SE, SE 40th Street, 86th Avenue SE, Island Crest Way, and SE 68th Street to the Mercer Village Shopping Center (i.e. South End business district). The route operates every 60 minutes from approximately 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 9:00am to 6:00pm on Saturdays; there is no Sunday service.
  - Route 630 is a community shuttle, which provides rush-hour weekday service between downtown Seattle and the Mercer Village Center. It provides four trips toward downtown Seattle in the morning and four trips toward Mercer Village in the evening. The route also offers a limited flexible service area centered around the Mercer Island Library.

Figure 7 Mercer Island Existing Transit Service (As of 2016)



Source: City of Mercer Island



- Current Park & Ride facilities and utilization:
  - The Mercer Island Park and Ride is located north of I-90 on N Mercer Way near Mercer Island's Town Center. The Park and Ride has 447 spaces and is served by Metro and Sound Transit buses.
  - According to the Fourth Quarter 2017 Park and Ride Utilization Report prepared by King County, the Mercer Island lot is typically fully occupied during weekdays. Several of the users of this lot do not reside in Mercer Island.
  - To supplement park and ride capacity on Mercer Island, Metro used to lease four private parking lots for use as park and ride lots, located at the Mercer Island Presbyterian Church, Mercer Island United Methodist Church, Congregational Church of Mercer Island and at the Mercer Village Center. The 2017 Utilization study indicated the following utilization rates for the additional park and ride lots:
    - Mercer Island Presbyterian Church – 93%
    - United Methodist Church – 96%
    - Mercer Village Center – 32%
    - Congregational Church of Mercer Island – 11%
  - Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro downsized its leases to just one remaining park and ride lot at Mercer Village Center.
- Future travel demand, calculated pre-pandemic:
  - More than 70% of new households and 76% of new jobs are forecasted to occur within the Town Center.
  - The analysis assumes the opening of the East Link light rail line in 2023<sup>7</sup>, which will result in an additional travel option between the Town Center and regional destinations.
  - Town Center traffic growth reflects the higher potential for pedestrian and transit trips. Overall, the traffic growth in the Town Center is forecasted<sup>8</sup> to increase by 28% between 2018-2035, an annual growth rate of 1.5%. For areas outside the Town Center, traffic growth is expected to be lower with approximately 10% growth between 2018-2035, an annual growth rate of 0.5%. The resulting forecasted traffic volumes directly reflect the anticipated land use, housing, and employment growth assumptions for the Island.
- Key Transportation Element goals and policies relevant to the Town Center Parking Study:
  - Encourage the most efficient use of the transportation system through effective management of transportation demand and the transportation system.
    - Encourage measures to reduce vehicular trips using transportation demand management strategies such as preferential parking for carpools/vanpools, alternative work hours, bicycle parking, and distribution of information and promotion of non-motorized travel, transit, and ridesharing options.
    - Encourage businesses and residential areas to explore opportunities for shared parking and other parking management strategies.
    - Employ transportation system management (TSM) techniques to improve the efficient operation of the transportation system including, but not limited to, traffic through and turn lanes, management of street parking, signals, and other traffic control measures.
  - Balance the maintenance of quality Mercer Island neighborhoods with the needs of Mercer Island's transportation system.
    - Strive to minimize traffic impacts to neighborhoods and foster a "pedestrian-friendly" environment.
    - Address parking overflow impacts on neighborhoods caused by major traffic generators such as schools, businesses, parks, and multifamily developments.

<sup>7</sup> As of spring 2023, the East Link light rail station is now projected to open in 2025.

<sup>8</sup> "Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan, 4. Transportation Element, IV. Transportation System – Future Needs, Future Travel Demand". City of Mercer Island, accessed December 19, 2022.

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- Provide facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists designed in keeping with individual neighborhood characteristics.
    - Work with King County Metro to provide public transit vehicles and services that are more in scale with the City’s neighborhoods and its local road network.
    - Maintain comprehensive street design guidelines and standards that determine the appropriate function, capacity, and improvement needs for each street/roadway, while minimizing construction and neighborhood impacts.
  - Ensure parking standards support the land use policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
    - Continue to implement flexible parking requirements for Town Center development based on the type and intensity of the proposed development; site characteristics; likelihood for parking impacts to adjacent uses; opportunities for transit, carpooling, and shared parking; and potential for enhancements to the pedestrian environment.
    - Maintain the current minimum parking requirements of three (3) off-street spaces for single family residences but may consider future code amendments that allow for the reduction of one (1) of the spaces, provided that the quality of the environment and the single-family neighborhood is maintained.
    - Support business development in the downtown area by prioritizing on-street parking spaces in the Town Center for short-term parking and encouraging the development of off-street shared parking facilities for long-term parking in the Town Center.
  - Promote bicycle and pedestrian networks that safely access and link commercial areas, residential areas, schools, and parks within the City.
    - Maximize the safety and functionality of the bicycle system by enhancing road shoulders, which are to be distinguished from designated bicycle lanes.
    - Implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Plan to meet existing and anticipated needs for nonmotorized transportation. This Plan should be coordinated with other transportation planning efforts and periodically updated. The Plan includes improvements to a few bicycle gaps in Town Center, including on SE 77<sup>th</sup> from SE 27<sup>th</sup> to Mercer Way; however, this is a segment being addressed currently via [Sound Transit] light rail area improvements.
    - Study opportunities for use of innovative methods for pedestrians crossing streets, including use of colored and textured pavements within the City.
    - Strive to build community through the in-person interactions facilitated by active transportation at community connection points (schools, library, community centers, bikeshare hubs, etc.).
    - Prioritize areas near schools and commercial areas for a higher level of service for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.
- Key Transportation Element implementation strategies relevant to the Town Center Parking Study:
  - Develop a neighborhood parking program to address parking overflow impacts from schools, businesses, parks, and multi-family housing.
  - Continue to involve the public in transportation planning and decisions.
  - Create “transit friendly” design guidelines for new development projects in the Town Center.
  - Implement the City’s adopted Commute Trip Reduction program.
  - Work with Metro to reinstate and improve transit services. Explore alternative methods of providing service, such as developing a demand response service.
  - Work with Sound Transit to site, design, and construct high-capacity transit and parking facilities consistent with Land Use and Transportation Policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan that will be available for use by Mercer Island residents.

## Existing Parking Permit Programs

In the early 2000s, the City Council made policy decisions about how to reduce Park & Ride overflow impacts on the north end neighborhood and the Town Center. The overriding objective was to eliminate parking for non-Mercer Island commuters from City streets. The City of Mercer Island has two (2) parking permit programs, the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit and the North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD). The locations of the permit areas are shown in Figure 8.

Residents can obtain permits at the City Hall Utility Counter or residents can mail in an application. The following information must be provided to obtain a permit:

- Vehicle license plate number and year
- Make and model of the automobile
- A copy of the vehicle registration

For residents with vehicles registered to an address not on Mercer Island, other proof of residence/vehicle ID is required.

For residents driving a vehicle not registered to their home address (e.g., company car), a letter on company stationery stating the following is required:

- That the applicant is a company employee and has sole use of a company vehicle.
- The plate number of that vehicle.
- That the vehicle is normally parked at the applicant's Mercer Island home address before and after work.
- The company's Washington State Unified Business Number.

Permits are mailed to applicants and are provided in the form of stickers (blue permit with horizontal orientation for the Town Center Commuter Parking program and red permit with vertical orientation for the North Mercer RPD program). Stickers must be placed on the inside of the rear windshield in the lower corner of the driver's side of the vehicle. Permits are valid for a two (2)-year cycle, and all permits expire December 31 of the second year. Permits are not transferable to other vehicles.

Service vehicles, including City vehicles and utility companies providing emergency repairs, are exempt from posted parking restrictions.





## Town Center Commuter Parking Permit

Created in 2001, the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit program preserves selected public on-street parking spaces for Mercer Island resident use, between the hours of 7 am and 9 am, Monday through Friday. All Mercer Island residents are eligible for a Town Center Commuter Parking Permit, which costs \$5/year. The permit is useful for residents who wish to leave their car, walk to the Park & Ride, and catch a bus to off-Island destinations.

### Permit Program Locations

The Town Center Permit parking program applies to the following streets (shown in Figure 8 on previous page):

- 78th Avenue SE: Parking on both sides between SE 28th Street to SE 29th Street
- SE 29th Street: Parking on both sides between 77th Avenue SE and 78th Avenue SE
- 80th Avenue SE: Parking on both sides between SE 28th Street and SE 30th Street
- SE 30th Street: Parking on both sides between 78th Avenue SE and 80th Avenue SE

### Enforcement

Mercer Island Police Officers enforce parking without a permit in the restricted zone of the Town Center. Enforcement occurs between 7 am and 9 am on weekdays only. At other times, posted parking regulations apply.

The penalties for violation of the Town Center parking permits are:

- \$20 for parking in a permit-restricted area
- \$250 for unauthorized use of a parking permit

### Number of Permits Issued

The City provided Walker Consultants with historical Town Center parking permit data. Typically, the City issues permits in two-year cycles. Current permits, however, are being issued solely for 2023 pending the outcome of the Town Center Parking Study, which will inform the permit process and potential rate change in 2024.

- 2014/2015: 578 permits issued
- 2016/2017: 690 permits issued
- 2018/2019: 799 permits issued
- 2020/2021: 544 permits issued
- 2022/2023: 212 permits issued to-date

## North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD)

In 2003, the City created a restricted parking district in the North Mercer neighborhood to prevent Park & Ride overflow parking. The permits are available for Mercer Island residents whose home address is within the boundaries of the North Mercer RPD. North Mercer RPD permit holders receive the same privileges of a Town Center parking permit. North Mercer RPD permits, guest permits, and temporary contractor permits are \$5/permit each year.

### Permit Program Locations

The North Mercer RPD is located north of I-90 and is roughly bounded by SE 22nd Street, 78th Avenue SE, N Mercer Way, SE 26th Street, 84th Avenue SE, and 82nd Avenue SE. (See Figure 8 on previous page)

### Enforcement

The parking restrictions are enforced every weekday. Parking restrictions are not enforced after 5pm.



## Additional Permits

Residents within the North Mercer RPD can also apply for up to two (2) guest parking permits and a permit for a temporary contractor who needs on-street parking for more than two (2) consecutive days.

## Number of Permits Issued

The City provided Walker Consultants with historical North Mercer RPD parking permit data.

- 2014/2015: 161 permits issued
- 2016/2017: 84 permits issued
- 2018/2019: 105 permits issued
- 2020/2021: 79 permits issued
- 2022/2023: 49 permits issues to-date

## Bikeshare Pilot Program

From July 16, 2018, to October 17, 2018, the City of Mercer Island launched a 3-month free-floating bikeshare pilot program intended to provide new mobility options for residents commuting to and from the Mercer Island Park & Ride (8000 N Mercer Way), as well as other users who may wish to conduct errands or travel around the Island car-free, as a supplement to local public transit options.

For three months, the City and bikeshare provider LimeBike offered a fleet of 25 electric-assist rental bicycles available to any rider. This program was offered in addition to the City's rideshare pilot program (with Lyft and Uber) as another way to help reduce Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) usage, decrease congestion, and improve mobility options. The costs of the bikeshare program were \$1 to unlock and \$0.15/minute to ride.

Although this pilot has now ended, LimeBike continues to operate on the Island with City permission.

## Ride Share Pilot Program

From April 23, 2018, to October 31, 2018, the City launched a 6-month ride share pilot program through Uber and Lyft to help commuters access the Mercer Island Park & Ride (8000 N Mercer Way) without the need for a personal vehicle. The program was designed to alleviate parking demand at the park and ride facility.

The ride share program only covered travel in Mercer Island and was available Monday through Friday, 24 hours/day. All rides were required to originate or terminate at the park and ride. Fares to ride were discounted and were as follows:

- Phase 1 (April 23, 2018-July 21, 2018): \$2 per person, per ride
- Phase 2 (August 1, 2018-October 31, 2018): \$2 per shared ride, \$5 per solo rider

## Current Parking Enforcement Policies

Walker Consultants conducted phone conversations with City staff to better understand current parking enforcement practices in the City. Below are key findings from these discussions:

- Currently, there is one (1) staff member conducting parking enforcement as part of their job duties.
- Three (3) to four (4) patrol officers are typically patrolling the island at one time. They have authorization to conduct parking enforcement but typically focus on moving violations.
- Due to the limited staff allocated to parking enforcement, the officer can never spend a full day conducting parking enforcement.
- Historically, there have been issues with spillover of parking from the park and ride. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the decrease in commuter travel, there have been fewer issues with parking spillover from the park and ride recently.



- Typically, enforcement is concentrated in the “problem areas” such as near certain multifamily developments.
- Enforcement is conducted in the two (2) hour zones, but, due to the limited enforcement staff available, it is difficult to identify the 2-4-hour violations.
- The most frequent types of violations being issued are expired tags, parking over the 72-hour limit, or parking in no parking zones.
- There are issues with employees and residents parking in commercial parking spaces all day.
- The City uses automated license plate readers (ALPR) to conduct parking enforcement.
- There currently is not a graduated citation fine schedule to address those who conduct repeat parking violations.

## Town Center Parking Agreements

The City has established several Public-Use agreements in privately owned parking garages to provide public parking in Town Center. Some of these agreements were negotiated as development conditions of new construction projects, while others were arranged to provide public parking in existing private lots and garages as a condition of granting a change of use or other development addition. All the parking under these agreements is free for two or three hours depending on the garage.

The City provided Walker Consultants with copies of the following parking agreements for properties in the Town Center:

- 7800 Plaza (7800 SE 27th Street): 35 shared spaces available to the public
- Aviara Apartments (2441 76th Avenue SE): 20 shared spaces available to the public
- The Mercer Apartment Homes (7650 SE 27th Street) 35 shared spaces available to the public
- The Hadley (2601 76th Avenue SE) 58 shared spaces available to the public

A summary of these agreements is provided below. Public-Use parking agreements are also in place for the following Town Center properties, but copies of the agreements were not available to review:

- 77 Central (2630 77th Avenue SE): 16 shared spaces available to the public
- Island Square (2758 78th Avenue SE): 48 shared spaces available to the public

### 7800 Plaza (7800 SE 27th Street)

7800 Plaza is a mixed-use commercial/residential development located in Town Center. In 2013, a parking agreement was established between the Owner and the City of Mercer Island. Per City of Mercer Island Municipal Code (MICC), because the Owner wished to convert a portion of the building to office space, which decreased the percentage of required retail/restaurant/personal services on the ground floor below 60%, public parking must be provided. Per the agreement, a total of 35 spaces were made available to the public. The following requirements are placed on these public spaces:

- The public must have 24-hour access to the spaces on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Each public space must be clearly marked with signage, which is subject to City approval.
- The Owner may establish a maximum parking time limit no less than two (2) hours.
- The Owner may designate one (1) or more public spaces exclusively for electric vehicle charging for use by the public or an operator of a car sharing service that makes vehicles available for public use.
- The Owner can require that the motorist parking in the public space patronize at least one business in the development, but the motorist is entitled to leave the development without moving their vehicle.
- The Owner cannot charge for parking in the public parking spaces unless the Owner demonstrates (and gets City approval) that parking fees are necessary to achieve parity because most of the short-term public parking in the Town has become fee parking.

## Aviara Apartments (2441 76th Avenue SE)

Aviara Apartments is a mixed-use commercial/residential development located in Town Center. The developer requested to replace 20 standard parking spaces with 10 tandem spaces. Based on materials provided to the City, the City agreed that there would be sufficient parking with the proposed change (per the projected parking demand for the building and per the City's minimum parking requirements). As consideration for allowing the changes to the number of standard parking spaces, the City and the Owner entered into an agreement in which the Owner was required to set aside 20 parking spaces for public use (not allocated to a particular tenant). The following requirements are placed on these public spaces:

- The public spaces must be made available to the public on a first come, first-served basis.
- The public space must be clearly marked stating "unreserved parking stalls – general public use."
- The Owner may establish a maximum parking time limit no less than three (3) hours.
- The spaces must be open no later than 8 am and close no earlier than 9 pm or until all businesses in the building have closed, whichever is later.
- The Owner cannot charge for parking in the public parking spaces unless the Owner demonstrates (and gets City approval) that parking fees are necessary to achieve parity because most of the short-term public parking in the Town has become fee parking.

## The Mercer Apartment Homes (7650 SE 27th Street)

In 2005, the applicant proposed to build approximately 235 market-rate units, 18,000 square feet of retail/restaurant/office/live-work and/or service space, and 398 parking spaces. The applicant proposed to construct the Project in two phases, the first phase denoted as "Building A" and the second phase denoted as "Building B." A perpetual parking easement agreement was established in 2005 to address any shortfall of parking for Building A created during the construction of Building B. The agreement is established between the two building owners and allows for 35 parking spaces to be accommodated on the Building B portion of the property. This shared agreement is unique in Town Center in that it explicitly prohibits walk-off parking.

## The Hadley (2601 76th Avenue SE)

The Hadley is a mixed-use retail/residential development located in Town Center. The applicant proposed a mixed-use building with approximately 209 apartment units, 11,000 square feet of retail and commercial space, and 214-267 parking spaces. Per the development agreement between the applicant and the City, a minimum of 58 parking spaces shall be made available for public parking. The following requirements are placed on the public parking spaces:

- The Owner may establish a maximum parking time limit no less than two (2) hours.
- The Owner can require the motorist patronize at least one business in the development but otherwise will be entitled to leave the development without moving their vehicle.
- The City shall require a greater number of parking spaces be available for public parking during periods when residential use of parking is expected to be less than the parking supply, considering the shared parking concept.

## Review of Mercer Island Municipal Code Regulations

Mercer Island City Code (MICC) Chapter 19.11 establishes Town Center Development and Design Standards, including standards for parking, vehicular, and pedestrian circulation<sup>9</sup>. The following key objectives apply for parking, vehicular, and pedestrian circulation, as relevant to the Town Center Parking Study:

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<sup>9</sup> "MICC 19.11.130 Town Center Design and Development Standards – Parking, vehicular and pedestrian circulation." City of Mercer Island, accessed December 19, 2022.

[https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer\\_island/codes/city\\_code?nodeId=CICOOOR\\_TIT19UNLADECO\\_CH19.11TOCEDEDEST\\_19.11.130PAVEPECI](https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer_island/codes/city_code?nodeId=CICOOOR_TIT19UNLADECO_CH19.11TOCEDEDEST_19.11.130PAVEPECI)

- The Town Center should be accessible for vehicles but have an emphasis toward the needs of pedestrians.
- Development should maintain mobility and maximize opportunities for alternative modes of transportation.
- The harmonious integration of pedestrian and transit user circulation should be considered in every aspect of site design.
- Development shall provide adequate parking with safe and convenient pedestrian access.
- Parking stalls shall be located within a structure, underground, or behind buildings.
- Parking structures should not dominate the street frontage and must blend with the building’s architectural theme.
- Creatively designed, clean, and functional pedestrian connections are encouraged to provide access through-blocks, between properties, and/or to and from the public right-of-way.

Table 6 summarizes the current parking requirements in the Mercer Island Town Center. These requirements apply to new development and remodels greater than 10% of the existing gross floor area (GFA).

**Table 6 Mercer Island Town Center Parking Requirements By Use<sup>10</sup>**

Use	Requirement	Metric
Retail		
<i>General Retail</i>	2-3 stalls	Per 1,000sf GFA
<i>Restaurant/Deli/Bakery/Food</i>	5-10 stalls	Per 1,000sf GFA
<i>Hotel</i>	See Metric column	1 per guest room + 2/3 per employee on shift + 5 per 1,000sf of Retail/Office
Office		
<i>Financial Services</i>	3-5 stalls	Per 1,000 sf GFA
<i>Health/Barber/Beauty</i>	4-5 stalls	Per 1,000 sf GFA
<i>Other Professional Services</i>	3-5 stalls	Per 1,000 sf GFA
Residential		
<i>Non-Senior</i>	1-1.4 stalls**	Per Unit
<i>Senior</i>	.3-1 stalls	Per Unit
Libraries/Museums/Public Buildings	3-5 stalls	Per 1,000sf GFA
Assembly or Meeting Spaces	See Metric column	1 per 3 seats to 1 per 5 seats + 2 per 3 employees
Other Uses – Non-Specified	See Metric column	As determined by code official

\*For mixed-use or residential projects, if an applicant provides more parking than 1.25 spaces/dwelling unit for any part of a project consisting of residential units or 2.5 spaces/1,000sf for any part of a project that is not used for residential units, such additional parking shall either be underground or on the second or higher story of structured parking.

\*\*Site-specific deviations to allow less than 1 stall per unit may be allowed based on a detailed parking analysis and with approval of the code official.

<sup>10</sup> “MICC 19.11.130(B)1(a) Town Center Design and Development Standards – Parking, vehicular and pedestrian circulation: Minimum number of parking stalls required.” City of Mercer Island, accessed December 19, 2022. [https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer\\_island/codes/city\\_code?nodeId=CIC00R\\_TIT19UNLADECO\\_CH19.11TOCEDEDEST\\_19.11.130PAVEPECI](https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer_island/codes/city_code?nodeId=CIC00R_TIT19UNLADECO_CH19.11TOCEDEDEST_19.11.130PAVEPECI)

Most of the land uses listed in the table above have a range of parking requirements. The code official has the final authority to determine the number of parking stalls required within the ranges to accommodate typical daily peak parking demand based upon the applicant's submittal of a completed site plan and detailed parking analysis.

Parking stall and aisle dimensions<sup>11</sup> are as follows:

- Standard stall: 9' by 18.5'
- Compact stall: 8.5' by 16'
- One-way traffic aisles
  - 18' width for parking angled at 45° or higher
  - 12' width for parallel parking

No more than 50% of the required spaces for office and residential uses can be designed to accommodate compact vehicles, and no more than 25% of the required spaces for all other uses can be designed for compact vehicles.

## Shared Parking in Town Center

The Town Center Development and Design Standards also outline stipulations for shared parking, which is a parking supply mechanism in which a development meets parking requirements by demonstrating that overall demand for parking at a development can be met by shared parking spaces. When shared off-street parking facilities for two or more uses are proposed, the City allows for parking reductions of up to 50% due to shared parking. The code also requires a parking demand study prepared by a professional traffic engineer that demonstrates:

- All land uses will not significantly overlap, and
- Uses will be served by adequate parking if shared parking reductions are authorized.

Shared parking applies to both single on-site common parking facilities and off-site facilities. If off-site facilities are used, all facilities must be connected to improved pedestrian facilities, and no building or use should be more than 1,320 feet walking distance from the most removed shared parking facility. For shared parking owned by one or more different property owners, a covenant or other contract for shared parking is required.

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<sup>11</sup> "MICC Title 19 Unified Land Development Appendix A – Parking Lot Dimensions." City of Mercer Island, accessed December 19, 2022.

[https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer\\_island/codes/city\\_code?nodeId=CICOOOR\\_TIT19UNLADECO\\_UNLADEAP\\_APXAPALODI](https://library.municode.com/wa/mercer_island/codes/city_code?nodeId=CICOOOR_TIT19UNLADECO_UNLADEAP_APXAPALODI)

# Appendix D: Mercer Island Park-and-Ride Usage Data

Sound Transit conducted parking counts of the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride in February 2014 and February 2015. The specific day of the week and time of the counts is unknown, but the survey found that the Park-and-Ride was 96% occupied in 2014 and 95% occupied in 2015. The survey maps are included as Figures D-1 and D-2 on the following pages.



Figure D-1 Mercer Island Park-and-Ride License Plate Survey (February 2014)

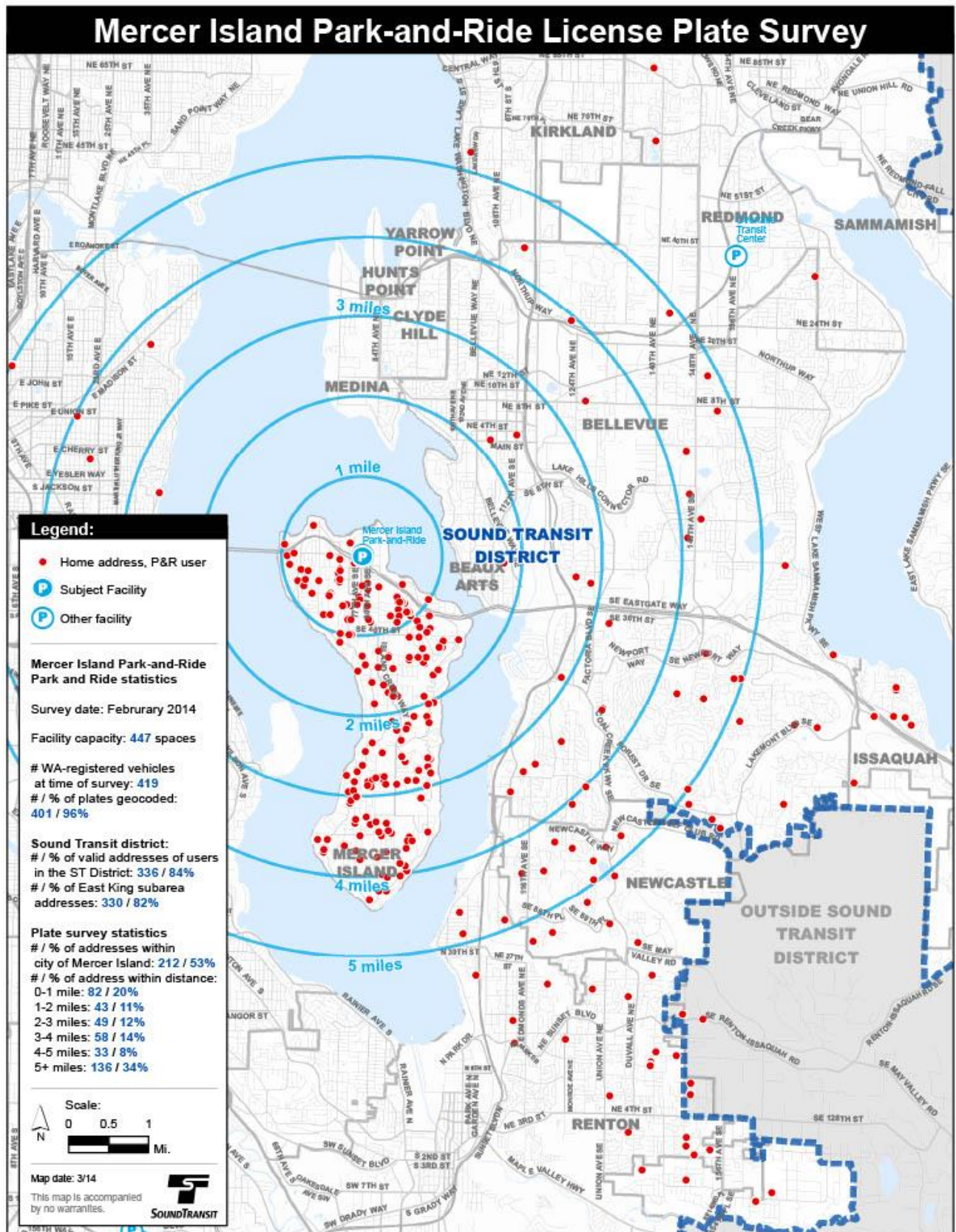
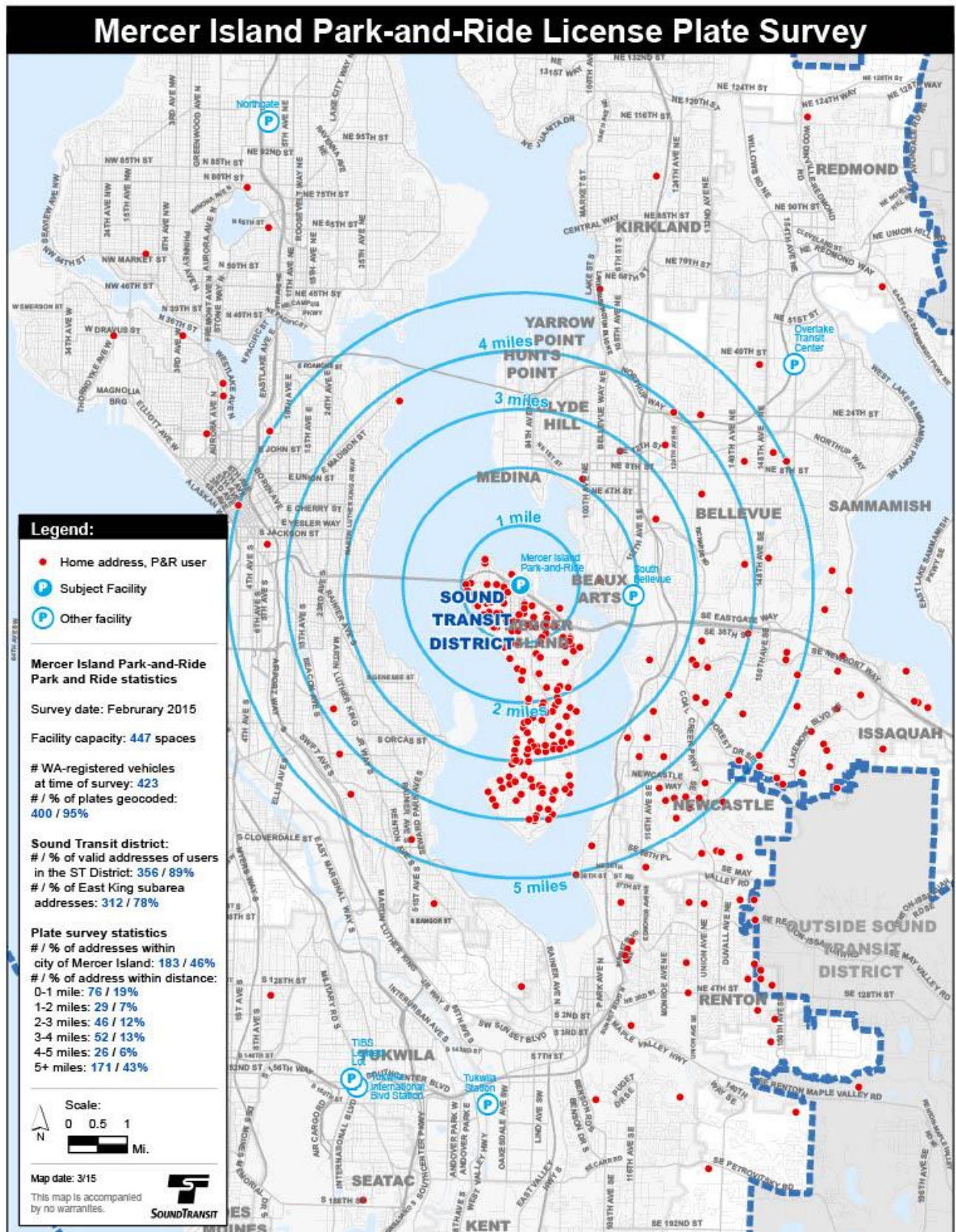




Figure D-2 Mercer Island Park-and-Ride License Plate Survey (February 2015)



# Appendix E: Town Center Parking Observations

The following evidential images document existing conditions in Town Center related to parking. They were captured in June 2022 during site visits completed by the consultant team from Walker Consultants.

## Parking Lots and Garages

Image E-1 Former Tully's Site (7810 SE 27th Street)



Image E-2 QFC (7823 SE 28th Street)





Image E-3 Tabit Village Square (7633 SE 27th Street)



Image E-4 Islandia Center (3016 78th Avenue SE)



Image E-5 Boyd Building (7605 SE 27th Street)



Image E-6 Riot Games (3003 78th Avenue SE)





Image E-7 The Hadley (2601 76th Avenue SE)



Image E-8 Aviara Apartments (2441 76th Avenue SE)



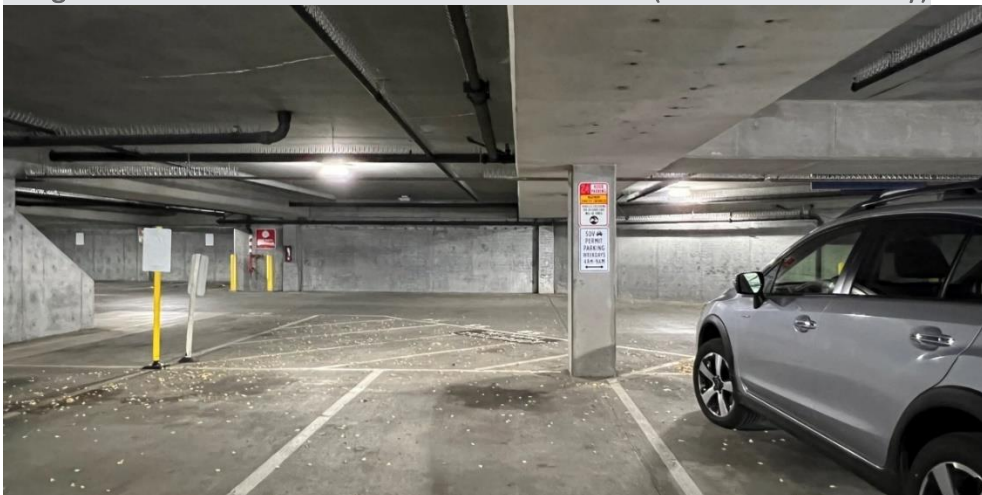
Image E-9 North Mercer Restricted Parking District



Image D-10 Sound Transit Park & Ride Upper Deck (8000 N Mercer Way)



Image E-11 Sound Transit Park & Ride Lower Deck (8000 N Mercer Way)





# Loading and Short-Term Parking

Image E-12 Illegal Use of Center Turn Lane for Loading Zone (77th Avenue SE)



Image E-13 10-Minute Parking at Tabit Village Square (7633 SE 27th Street)



# Bicycle Traffic and Infrastructure

Image E-14 Bike Lane Use on SE 32nd Street



Image E-15 Bike Lane Use on SE 27th Street





# Streetscapes and Wayfinding

Image E-16 77th Avenue SE Streetscape (between SE 27th and SE 28th Streets)



Image E-17 77th Avenue Streetscape (between Sunset Highway and SE 27th Street)



Image E-18 Town Center Wayfinding Signage



# Appendix F: 2023 Town Center Parking Inventory and Utilization

In 2023, the City contracted with IDAX Data Solutions, a multimodal data collection firm, to update the parking data collected in 2022. The following appendix provides an overview of the methodology and findings from this effort.

## Methodology

Parking counts were conducted on Thursday, June 8, and Saturday, June 10, 2023, to mirror the timing of the 2022 data collection. Parking occupancy counts (i.e. number of parked cars) were conducted every two hours from 10 am to 8 pm, inclusive, on both days to understand parking demand throughout the day on typical parking conditions. Parking length of stay counts were also conducted at 5 pm and every two hours from 10 am to 8 pm, inclusive, on June 8 to understand how long cars stay parked in on-street spaces. For this update, inventories and counts of the North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) and Mercer Island Park-and-Ride were also included.

## Parking Inventory Updates

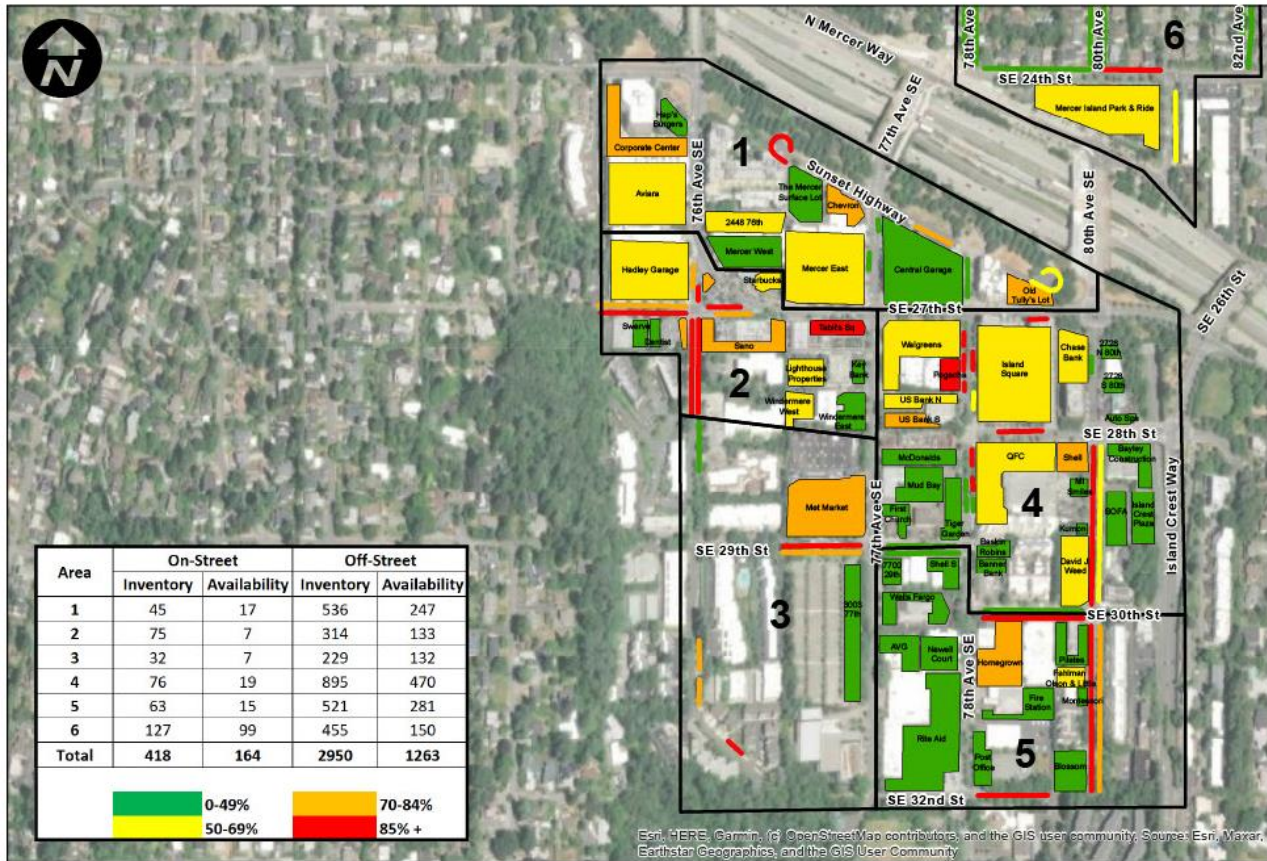
Town Center data collection used the 2022 inventory (also collected by IDAX), with some changes depending on factors such as spacing between cars parked in unstriped spaces, stalls blocked off in private lots, etc., for delta of +15 on-street spaces and +4 off-street spaces. Inventories of the RPD and Park-and-Ride showed 127 and 455 spaces, respectively.

## Parking Utilization

The 2023 counts continue with the parking management assumption that the ideal occupancy threshold is 85%. When parking is 85% occupied, spaces are well-used: pricing (if used) is not needlessly deterring people from driving to the area, and it is still possible for drivers to find a space without cruising around waiting for another driver to leave, which results in increased emissions and traffic congestion. Figure F-1 on the next page shows weekday parking utilization at the peak time of 12 pm. As in 2022, certain block faces and parking facilities exceeded the 85% occupancy threshold, while other block faces and facilities were less than 50% occupied.



Figure F-1 Weekday Peak Utilization (Thursday, June 8, 2023, at 12pm)



Source: IDAX Data Solutions.

Even at peak weekday parking demand, spaces in Town Center were available:

- 65 on-street spaces were available.
- 1,113 off-street spaces were available.

Weekday utilization in the Town Center zone was down slightly compared to 2022 and still below 50% occupied.

The Park-and-Ride showed peak utilization of 67% at 12pm and RPD utilization only reached 22% overall.<sup>12</sup>

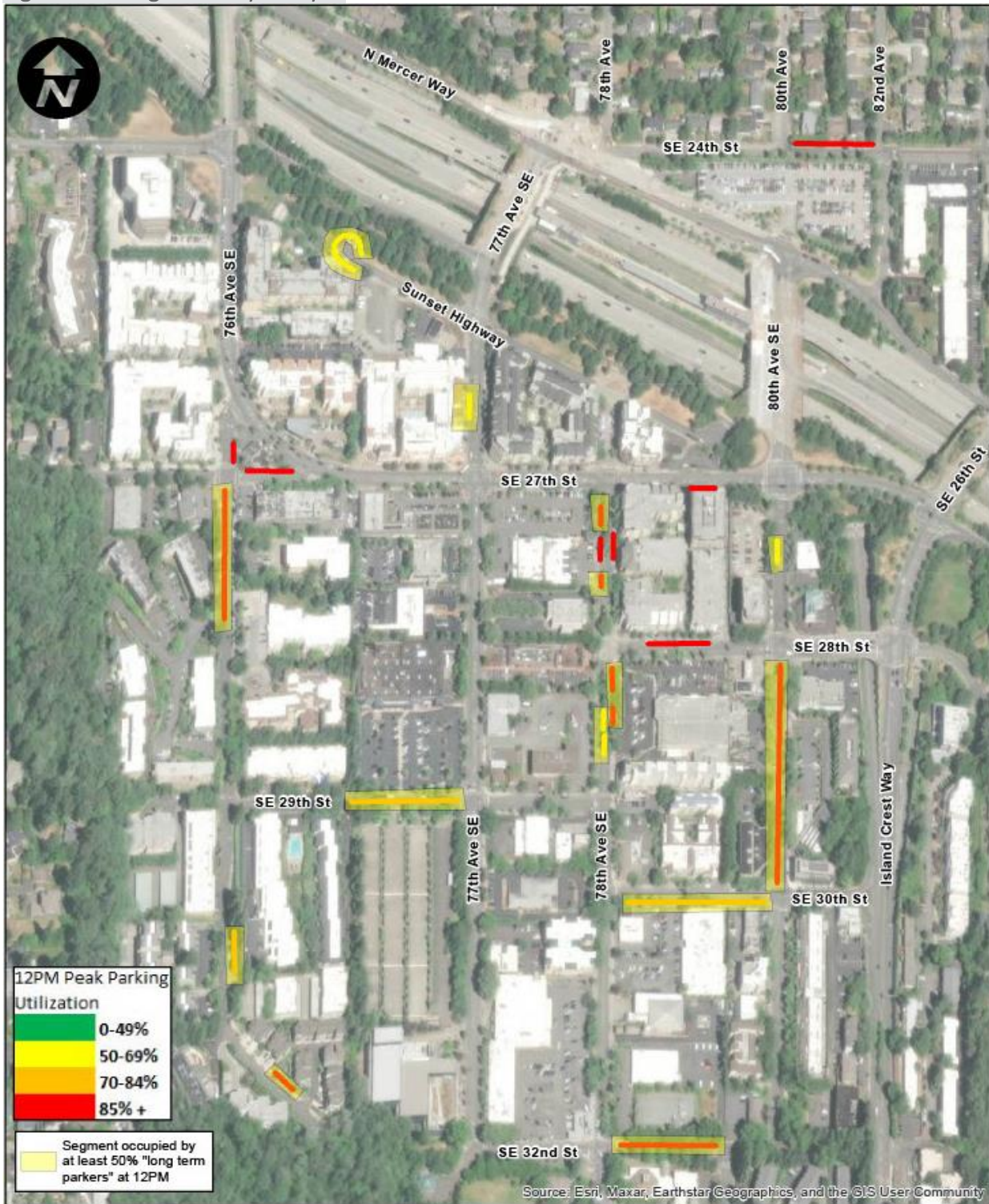
### Length of Stay Analysis

A length of stay analysis shows how long vehicles occupied on-street parking spaces in Town Center on Thursday, June 8, 2023. This analysis focused on blocks where the parking occupancy was 70% or higher and considered vehicles parked for at least four hours “long-term parkers.” Figure F-2 on the next page shows the street segments with at least 70% occupancy and segments in which parkers were parked for at least four hours.

<sup>12</sup> In June 2023, sections of the RPD were closed or limited due to construction work by King County. At the time of data collection, the contractor was primarily working in the area north of the Mercer Island Park-and-Ride, primarily on 81<sup>st</sup> Avenue SE. Construction likely did not significantly change parking patterns since the RPD is used by residents, but some parking spaces were closed during construction.



Figure F-2 Length of Stay Analysis



Source: IDAX Data Solutions.

The duration data for these busy blocks showed that:

- 458 total cars parked on these streets over the course of the count period.
- 186 of 458 (40%) were parked for 4 or more hours.
- Of the 186 vehicles parked for 4+ hours, 80 vehicles (43%) were parked in 3-minute, 30-minute, or two-hour parking zones.