



Town Center Visioning Public Hearing #2

Wednesday March 9, 2016

Transcript

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Lisa K. Hutchinson
CART Provider

RICHARD W.: We're going to get started now, folks.
Could the commissioners take their seats, please.
Good evening, everyone, and welcome.

My name is Richard Weinman. I'm the vice chair of the Mercer Island Planning Commission sitting in tonight for the chair.

Thank you for coming to hear more about the Joint Commission's work and to share your thoughts about the future of the Town Center.

Tonight's agenda includes a presentation by Scott Greenberg, the city's development services director, on a number of code topics we've been considering, after which I

will formally open the public hearing for your comments.

There are sign-up sheets on the back table if you would like to speak or if you would just like to receive information about what's going on in the Town Center. If you don't want to sign in, you do not have to.

I would like to start just by describing who the people sitting up here with me are and why we're having this hearing.

We are all members of either the city's Planning Commission or the Design Commission, and all of us were appointed to these roles by the city council.

We're all island residents and volunteer our time because we're interested in and usually have some experience or expertise in land use and design issues.

We're all very committed to the community and have been investing a lot of time in this process.

The city council convened the Joint Commission this past October to deal with the updates of the vision, Comprehensive Plan, and the land use code for the Town Center.

The code update has been under consideration in various city-initiated groups for nearly two years.

The city council felt that a lot of work had been accomplished so far, and that both commissions could help

pull things together.

I think this was a good idea. More brains are obviously better. And the input of the Design Commission has really been invaluable to the Planning Commission members.

And the whole point of this effort is to increase the likelihood that future development in the Town Center will better reflect what we as a community want to see there.

Our work has been very intense. The Joint Commission has been meeting weekly for the past month and several subcommittees have been meeting concurrently as well. We will continue this schedule until we finish the project, which is expected to be by the end of April.

And just a shout-out to Scott and his staff and all the hard work that they've done to keep the process moving, keep us on track, and to feed us information.

They also feed us as well (laughter).

Tonight is a second of three public hearings we will have over the course of this work. But we are encouraging public input at any time, either online or in writing. All commission members read and consider every comment that is submitted.

I would like to make a couple of additional points

before I ask each of the commissioners to introduce him or herself.

First, we are an advisory body to the city council.

By law, the Planning Commission is required to provide its recommendation on proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to the city council before they take official action.

The council can accept our recommendation or they can modify it or go their own way.

The Design Commission has a somewhat different role. They review and approve or deny most development projects that are proposed in the Town Center.

They are the ones, along with city staff and property owners, who will be using the new development rules that will be developed.

Second, we are trying to provide as much information as we can to residents and to encourage your input throughout this process. If your friends and neighbors aren't already involved, I would encourage you to ask them to tell us what they think. They can do it by email. The email address is on the agenda handout. In case you don't have that, it's TownCenter@mercergov.org.

Third, understand that we have not made any decisions or recommendations yet. We're still gathering and

viewing information, including public comments, and discussing options and potential direction.

We hope to get your feedback tonight on a number of topics, including the following, and these are fairly specific:

Upper-story building step-backs.

Modulation of building facade.

The design of through-block pedestrian connections.

The type and location of landscaping associated with Town Center development.

The location and size of retail spaces.

And the location of public open spaces.

Scott will summarize where things are with these shortly.

Again, thank you for coming to share your thoughts.

Now I would like to ask the commissioners to introduce themselves. If you would please state your name, identify which commission you're on, how long you've lived on the island, and then any other additional information that you think might be relevant too.

Why don't we start.

CRAIG: I'm Craig Olson. I've been a resident about nine years now, but I graduated from high school here a long time ago. I'm on the Planning Commission and I'm a

professional civil engineer. I'm a public works director and city engineer of a city on the Eastside.

DANIEL: My name is Daniel Hubbell and I work at Microsoft. I'm in marketing for our group that does technology for people with disabilities. I have an interest in city planning. My wife originally grew up here on Mercer Island and graduated from Mercer Island High School. And like all good Mercer Islanders, the track of beam (???) sucks them back. We've been back here a few years.

BRYAN: I'm Bryan Cairns. I came to the island in 1968. I'm a physicist, so I'm not an architect and I'm not a lawyer like many of the other people here, but I have been involved with city affairs. I've been on the council for 10 years, deputy mayor, and mayor, and more recently with the library, so I have interacted over the years with many people on the island.

TIFFIN: Hi. I'm Tiffin Goodman, and this is my first year on the commission. I've been on the island for two years. And I have loved the community since we got here, and I wanted to get involved with what was happening in the Town Center, and more broadly in the island, and my background is in planning, mostly transportation and long-range planning.

JENNI: Hi. I'm Jennifer Mechem and I'm on the

Planning Commission. I have lived on the island for almost 12 years, although my family actually goes back on the island to 1918, when my uncle was born in a house near where the Roanoke is.

Professionally, I've worked in federal, state, and city government, and I currently work for the City of Bellevue doing ADA and civil rights implementation and enforcement.

I'm really interested in making the Town Center a place for all of us, and really thank you for being here.

RICHARD W.: I'm Richard Weinman. I've lived on Mercer Island for 40 years. I'm a lawyer, planner, focusing on land use and development issues.

I am vice chair of the Planning Commission, in my second term. Since I have lived here, I have been a member -- actually, chair of the Design Commission in the '90s. I was one of the founders of the Mercer Island School Foundation and have over the years been involved in various issues that have popped up.

HUI: Hi. My name is Hui Tian. I'm serving the second term on the Design Commission board. I have been living on Mercer Island for 15 years. I'm an architect.

LARA: Hi. I'm Lara Sanderson. I'm on my first term on the Design Commission. My husband and I currently

own an alternative investment and venture company locally.

The reason I am here is I had a long stint doing surface planning with public institutions with an architect, so I decided to get back involved with the community that way.

COLIN: I'm Colin Brandt. I'm the vice chair of the Design Commission. I'm in my second term. I think I term out in 2018, just about when this process will end, I think (laughter).

And I have lived on the island since 2008. Moved here with my wife who was born and raised here on the island.

TAMI: Tami Szerlip. I'm with the Design Commission. I've lived here since 1984.

I think my main position on the Design Commission is representing the people on the island here as general public. And I have a fine arts degree.

SUSANNE F.: Last, but not least, Susanne Foster. I have lived on the island about 30 years.

Got for the first time really involved in volunteer work being on the arts council in the '90s, and I'm now finishing my second term here on the Design Commission.

And my background is horticulture, so I look at the plants and, you know, requirements for plantings. Thank you

for being here tonight.

RICHARD W.: Scott do we need to call the role?

SCOTT: I think you just did it.

RICHARD W.: Just a reminder that we really want to hear your comments tonight focused on the issues that I mentioned that are reflected in the boards and that Scott will summarize for us.

So, next, Scott is going to share our initial thought, the Joint Commission's initial thoughts or direction on these six or seven different substantive areas.

His presentation will take about 15 minutes and then we'll move directly to the public comment portion of the meeting.

Just a reminder that we're here tonight only to listen to what you have to say. We're not going to be discussing anything further tonight.

As I noted, we've not made any decisions. We are here to listen and we'll consider all of the public comments we have received and will receive before we make any decisions.

After Scott's presentation, I'll review the ground rules for the public hearing.

Scott.

SCOTT: All right, thank you Vice Chair Weinman.

I'm Scott Greenberg, development services group director.

Normally I would face the commission when doing a presentation, but the way that the room is set up, I'll face the audience here.

First of all, I would like to recognize some folks in the audience.

We have Mayor Bruce Bassett, deputy mayor Debbie Bertlin over there.

And councilmembers Dan Grausz back in the corner, Wendy Weiker, Dave Wisenteiner.

Any other councilmembers I missed, I didn't see come in?

Okay. For city staff, Travis Saunders who is here in the back, with Alison VanGorp in the back. Shana Restall is your timekeeper tonight. She controls the lights. And Kirsten Taylor who is in the back there too.

All right. So, on to the presentation.

So, this is the process.

If I stand here, can everybody see good?

Okay. This is the process that we're following.

As you can see from the process, the little arrow, it says "We are here."

You see how long the -- this is how long the

process has gone on. It has been nearly two years.

There will be other opportunities for public involvement in the coming weeks and months.

AUDIENCE: Is there a focus on that?

AUDIENCE: It doesn't focus?

SCOTT: It's an automatic focus.

Isn't technology wonderful?

Now I can use the mouse.

So, as Mr. Weinman noted, this is the second public hearing in a series of three. The next public hearing will focus primarily on the actual draft code, the regulations and design guidelines that will be the outcome of this process, as well as Comprehensive Plan policy specifically related to Town Center.

Some of the areas that we are not prepared to propose anything yet. The details on the bonus height requirements, we have some general concepts, but we'll have details for the third hearing.

More information on sustainability and green building features, as well as the always hot topic of parking will be part of that hearing.

Some of you are aware that the Joint Commission set a few meetings ago had proposed looking at a taller height proposal other than what came out of the stakeholder group,

so just to walk you through this quickly, the current code is here on the left. The dark purple is where five-story buildings would be allowed. And then the medium purple is four-story buildings and the other purple is three stories.

The stakeholder group modified that somewhat and came up with this area (pointing) here roughly for five stories.

The Joint Commission wanted to study what might happen if the area along 80th also was allowed to be five stories tall, but then a couple meetings ago they said let's take that one off the table, and that's based on some of your input that they've heard from you.

And they now just for study -- this is for study purposes and it's an alternative that they're looking at, would keep five-story buildings north of Southeast 27th Street and three stories in the rest of the Town Center. So that's an alternative that's on the table that they're considering.

There was some talk about upper-floor step-backs. This is a similar graphic to what we showed at the last public hearing.

Basically, the concept is that for any story above -- for the third, fourth, and fifth stories, if that's the height limit that's adopted, buildings would have to

step back based on a 45-degree angle, so all five stories, for example can't be out to the street. If that was a strict requirement, we would end up with a number of Mayan temple-looking buildings or somebody called them Devo hats, if you remember the group from the '80s, all over the Town Center.

There is some desire for some flexibility with that requirement. So the trade-off is allowing portions of buildings to come closer to the streets to sort of violate the 45-degree angle, but in exchange, the designer would have to design in some open space or some public area on the ground floor, so there is a trade-off there for the public.

Again, the details haven't been written. We're getting close. We're working with a consultant on writing those. But that's the concept behind that.

Another major element in our design guidelines talks about the building facade. What do the buildings look like? Working with the Commission, the direction that they've given to look at is major facade modulation and minor facade modulation. These concepts are already in our code, but in slightly different ways. So, for major facade modulation, the provision would say something like: On a block face, okay, so you might have three or four properties facing a particular block. So, say it's where QFC is

located, so maybe it's the east side of 78th between 28th and 30th, for example.

So you would look at that block face on 78th and about every 120 feet there would have to be this major facade modulation, so a break in the building facade.

And the idea there is to break up the buildings into smaller building components.

Again, the details still need to be written, but that way we don't get these boxy blocky buildings that have very, very long building facade.

So that's one concept.

And then for each building, there would have to also be minor facade modulation, which is called fenestration in the current code. And every 50 feet there would have to be some sort of change in what the building looked and felt like. So it might be a change in color, material. It might be part of the building moving back a foot, part of the building coming out a foot, just something to give it some visual variety. That's really designed for the pedestrian. It makes a much more friendly pedestrian environment.

Facade details are also important. Again, this is really more for the pedestrian. Our current code has a number of items an applicant can pick from. It's a laundry

list of items.

The applicant has to pick seven of them and the Design Commission has some flexibility and the proposal is to basically maintain that same system, maybe change some of the details.

And it's hard to see on this drawing, but that shows some example details from other cities.

Building materials and color are also important in what a building looks and feels like. What's important here is something that would be added would be the fourth bullet under Building Materials which would be and we're calling special limitations on use of stucco which is called EIFS [ee-fuss] or EIFS [eye-fuss]. Rather than prohibiting those as building materials, it may be appropriate to use those in smaller proportions than what they have been used on some Town Center buildings where the majority of the building might be stucco. We're looking for more of a Northwest regional kind of look to the buildings in the Town Center. Regardless of what the heights are.

And EIFS [ee-fuss] or EIFS [eye-fuss], in case you didn't know, is exterior insulation finishing system. So it's a very valuable type of finishing for a building. It's waterproof. It can be precolored. And it can be a very commonly used building material, but what we're trying to do

is limit the use of that.

Through-block connections is something that our current code requires and the stakeholder group wanted to call out a few different locations for them.

So where the yellow arrows are, that's with the through-block pedestrian connections would be required as part of development.

And I mentioned before, if somebody averaged the daylight plane, that 45-degree angle, then one of the things that we are considering requiring is providing some sort of through-block connection in that particular project, some sort of opening to be available to the public.

And the photographs here, just examples from other communities of the kinds of things that we could legislate through our code. We'll get the Design Commission authority to require things that look like this, generally very pleasant types of connections, as opposed to a feeling like an alley between two buildings without any landscaping or any softening.

Some of the things we're looking at in terms of sustainability in landscaping are things like some rain gardens, green walls, green roofs, some of the typical things that you've heard of. We are considering simply requiring those for new construction in the Town Center and

we will be working on those standards here fairly soon.

Retail use has been a topic of decision over the past few weeks.

Last week the Joint Commission heard a presentation from the city's consultant who is looking at the bonus height provisions and the proposed retail use on the map where we have the different frontages for retail use.

This is something where the commission may make some changes to what the current code requires, and maybe soften up a little bit on how much retail might be required throughout the Town Center, based on our consultant's work indicating that we might not be able to support the level of retail that this proposed scheme would bring to the island.

That being said, another piece of retail frontage is how big should the retail spaces be.

And it's not so much how big they are in the building. It's how much frontage do they take up. So, do we want one retail user to have the entire, you know, 200-foot frontage of a building, for example, or do we want the frontages broken up into smaller pieces?

And that's where the graphic on the upper right is trying to show, where you could potentially have a large use surrounding smaller uses. That's just an example of where that might be done where you have smaller maybe affordable

uses for smaller retailers to maybe get started here on Mercer Island.

And then as they grow, as uses get larger, can afford more rent, then they could grow into some larger spaces or move into some larger spaces.

The idea is to have variety.

One of the standards that we're talking about for secondary retail frontages is a maximum width on the street of 60 feet for retail use. That's about what Einstein Bagels is today, just to give you an idea. I don't know whether it's a little above or a little below that, but it's right around 60 feet. That's the kind of thing we would be talking about.

Open space was also a big topic with the stakeholder group. A couple concepts came on that group and this is just a map showing it a little different way. There are three potential sites that have been identified for larger public open space.

So one would be what has been referred to in the past as Starbucks Square. And that would include the Starbucks property, the curb (???) right of way of 76th where -- or 27th where it goes into 76th, and the small triangular piece of property just north where the Chamber of Commerce is located.

The city recognizes that we would have to purchase that property. We're not talking about condemning the property or requiring that that owner give it to the city for public use. That would have to be a purchase. But this will be -- this is a proposal in the Comprehensive Plan, actually, it won't be in the code, to provide some guidance and some policy so the city can plan for purchasing property, should the council wish to fund that.

A couple other areas talked about for public space.

The city and WSDOT own 78th Avenue and Sunset Highway here.

That's already been used as an open space for Arden Court and other events.

So the plan is to maybe try to make heavier use of that for public events.

And then the stakeholder group said, you know, the property where Walgreen's is is really for a large public plaza.

The Joint Commission said? Why should we stop there? Let's designate that entire super block between 27th and 29th, 77th and 78th, as an opportunity area. So if the Walgreen's site doesn't redevelop in the near future, but McDonald's does, for example, then the city might be able to work with McDonald's to get some larger public open space.

That's kind of a small property, but if a group of properties got together, a city might say, you know, this is -- just recognizing opportunities.

And then furthermore, a policy saying if opportunities come up anywhere else in the Town Center, the city might want to take advantage of that.

So let's say QFC redevelops. Maybe the council at that point decides that, you know, that's our best opportunity to get some public open spaces to work with that developer.

Skip that one.

And then I think the last slide I have is on streetscapes.

Haven't had a lot of discussion about this, but what it boils down to is sort of refining the city street standards.

Much of this is similar to what exists today on some of these streets.

So, 78th Avenue Southeast, that's a strong here, this is a section, would continue to have wide sidewalks with parking pockets, one lane of traffic in each direction, and a median, very similar to what's there today.

77th Avenue is where the major change would be. And that would be wider sidewalks, parallel parking lanes on

each side of the street, where that was appropriate and feasible engineering-wise, and then two travel lanes.

There would also be sharrows painted on that street to show that it was a shared route for both vehicles and bicycles.

And then finally, all of the rest of the Town Center streets would still have wider sidewalks, and this is showing two travel lanes.

And this is just showing one angled parking -- one angle parking area per street, one on either side of the street. A lot of that depends, again, on where the driveways are and sight distance, but that's a concept.

It wouldn't mean there would be angled parking on every street and every square inch of every street.

So, with that, I will turn the microphone back to Vice Chair Weinman.

RICHARD W.: Thank you, Scott.

So, before we turn the hearing over to you, I would just like to review a few ground rules for public hearings that are probably familiar to anyone who has attended or spoken at a city hearing previously.

First, this meeting -- this meeting is being recorded, so please step to the podium when it is your turn

to speak.

Speak into the microphone.

State your name and address for the record.

And limit your comments to three minutes.

Comments are being timed by Shana and an orange light will come on when you have 30 seconds left. And red light when your time is up.

To help keep things moving along, I'll call speakers in groups of three.

Please address your comments to the entire commission, not to individual commissioners, to staff members, or to members of the audience.

Please try to address the subjects -- the topics that are the subjects of tonight's hearing.

You are, of course, free to address any topic that you like relevant to the Town Center.

Please refrain from applauding or any show of disapproval of individual speaker comments.

Please turn off all cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices.

And please limit conversations in the audience seating area.

And note also that verbal comments do not receive any greater or different weight than written comments. You

can submit written comments at any time during the Town Center process.

If your comments tonight are essentially the same as a previous speaker's, you can refer to those comments.

And, remember, this will not be your last opportunity to provide input on these topics. When there is a formal proposal and decisions on these topics that are recommended by the Planning Commission, there will be another public hearing.

I will now open the public hearing and call the first group of speakers.

You know what? Since there are relatively few, I have 15 speakers signed up, just a reminder if anyone else wants to speak has not signed in yet, you may do so.

So, I think we'll just call you one at a time.

First is Beth Brennen.

BETH BRENNEN: Thank you very much.

Mercer Island is a suburban oasis, enveloped by great natural beauty.

We should not develop our Town Center with high-rise buildings such as the Aviara and the 9th story building under construction beside it.

We also need to avoid bright garish colors as seen in the Mercer and the Aviara.

We need a plan, a theme, more open space, and we need to respect our natural beauty. If we do that, we'll make our Town Center more inviting to businesses and pedestrians.

At present, our Town Center is not an attractive or welcoming place.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Next is -- not sure if it's Mike or Mickey McMullan, followed by Tom Acker.

MIKE McMULLAN: My name is Mike McMullan, address 3015 67th Avenue Southeast, Mercer Island.

I would like to address the 60/40 rule specifically. I think that it's not working for the city of Mercer Island. I think one of the reasons is because it doesn't reflect the current purchasing trends of America.

Most of our activity is done online and I think it's a disservice to the island residents to try to force retail into an island that cannot support it.

I also believe that the council should reconsider what it considers an office. It does not make sense to me that a dental office or a physician's office should be in the same category as an insurance office or as a typing studio. One provides a service that generates a huge amount

of foot traffic and one provides a service that provides very little foot traffic.

There are several unintended consequences of the 60/40 rule and I think the most important one is that the rule is designed, as best I understand, to get large developments to consider how they are going to occupy the retail spaces.

But in certain building, such as the one that we own, we own the building. And our competitor, not the city and not the city residents, determines what goes into our rental space.

Our competitor who is next to us, he has some people in his office space, and therefore we cannot put an orthodontist in our office space. But if he's ever unlucky enough to have his renter leave, then we can occupy our space and he will no longer be able to occupy his space. To me, that is a restriction of trade. It does not make sense that my competitor who I work against every day to make a living can determine what I put into my rental space.

And I think those are the most important things I would like to say. Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Tom Acker followed by Randall Olsen.

TOM ACKER: Hello. Good progress. I like where

we're going.

It's kind of getting back to the spirit of the Town Center vision.

I'll give my comments in the box back there.

But what I wanted to say is I did some analytics on the properties downtown and this is related to the growth and density, and I hope we get an update on the growth management targets and where we are on them pretty soon, because I think we're pretty close.

If you take the eight buildings downtown and look at the parcels of land they were on in 2005 before the mass development occurred, and look at where we are now, the 2005 taxable amount was 19,777, 000.

What is it today? \$412 million.

The valuations of the properties that have been developed have essentially gone up \$392 million. And what has the community gotten from that development? I would submit nothing. Literally, nothing.

We have additional housing, but the schools, if this development continues, are going to be at risk.

And the retail that everybody keeps saying is going to come with density has left and has been curtailed.

The economic advisor that spoke recently in front of you all confirmed that with density, better retail is not

coming.

Look at Island Market Square.

In 2005 the parcel number went from a valuation of \$3.137 million to a value of 119 million now.

What has that brought us?

You would think a lot of taxes are coming into the city. But when you look at what's coming into the city fund, \$149,000 a year.

That's it. \$149,000 a year for that density, that loss of parking, and that loss of retail.

What used to be there on Island Market Square before was Starbucks, Cucina Presto, the Mexican restaurant Mi Pueblo, gift shops. I owned a sports memorabilia store there in the 1990s. Tanning, Chinese restaurant, KeyBank, clothing store, and some other retail.

What do we have now? We have an out-of-business Emerald Smoothie. We have two real estate agencies, Coldwell Banker and I think John L. -- I can't remember the other one.

There's a leasing center, Dawn Bova dental, a residence club that's private, Umpqua Bank, Yogabliss, and Ultimate Self-Defense Studios, a nail salon, and Einstein Bagel. There might be a Great Clips for Hair there.

The retail we were promised with density doesn't

come.

So, please, stick to the model, I think it's option C, which says three stories or less south of 27th is preferred. And anything that goes above two stories, north of that, make there be a solid return on the investment back into the community, because we haven't gotten any benefit as a community with the density and the height that's come today.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Mr. Acker, do you have your analysis in writing, by chance?

TOM ACKER: Right here. And I ran the numbers by Chip Corder who is the CFO for -- you might know him. He's Mercer Island CFO for the city. Do you want it?

JENNI: We would love to see it. If you've written it up or if you have the database, we would love to see it.

You don't have to give it to us right now, but we would love to see it. We can take it now.

RICHARD W.: Okay, Randall Olsen followed by Robert W. Thorpe.

RANDALL OLSEN: Thank you. My name is Randall Olsen. My address is a 524 Second Avenue, Seattle, 98104. I'm an attorney at Cairncross & Hempelmann.

I'm here on behalf of a group of properties at the south end of the Town Center.

Thank you for your hard work trying to come up with a great plan for the Town Center.

Today I would like to quickly emphasize the Joint Commission's important role in assuring that the City of Mercer Island meets two goals: One, its mandatory planning obligation under the state law, particularly the Growth Management Act, to accommodate a portion of the county's growing population and, two, its goal of creating a great Town Center that serves the needs of the city's citizens now and into the future.

Under state law, the Planning Commission's role is evaluate and develop coordinated planning for the physical development of the city and recommend those plans to the city council for adoption.

The Design Commission's role is to evaluate and approve the aesthetic features of proposed projects and to propose bonus provisions through this process and other design regulations.

So together the two commissions, the Joint Commission, if you will, help the city grow responsibly.

Growing responsibly includes making sure the city meets its obligations under the state law, which include the

requirement that the city provides efficient development capacity to accommodate its fair share of the King County's Housing and Employment Growth.

The county's growth targets were adopted in 2009 and the city's current zoning capacity meets those targets barely and accommodates the city's portion of the county's projected growth.

In 2019, those county's growth targets will be updated and you can be sure - and we know the region is growing and it's been growing at a pretty fast pace, nationwide fast pace.

You can be assured in 2019 that Mercer Island's new growth targets will be higher than they are, they were in 2009.

So the question is: Where can the city accommodate its state mandated share of the region's growing population? Well, it can be done in the single-family neighborhoods. I don't think any significant zoning changes have been made in the city since 1960, but the single-family neighborhoods can be zoned, can be more townhouses and smaller lots out there.

Or the city can be concentrated in the Town Center, where access to grocery stores, public parks, and mass transit, particularly the light rail station which should be on line in 2023, can accommodate the new people while

minimizing the addition of cars and traffic and the environmental and health negative impacts that are along that.

So, this Town Center planning process is the perfect opportunity to achieve two major goals. First, the city can meet the mandatory obligation under the GMA to accommodate the share of growth.

Second, the county can create a visionary plan for the Town Center that emphasizes the current small-town feel while encouraging redevelopment that can create a better Town Center for the future generations.

So, in closing, I urge you to reject the idea of down-zoning any portion of the Town Center and instead adopt a plan that provides sufficient building heights and depths to achieve both of these important goals.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Robert Thorpe followed by Bill Lowe.

ROBERT THORPE: Good evening.

I have seen a lot of you. I can't believe the time and energy you put in the last weeks' five and a half marathon. I think you ought to get all public service medals for that. Maybe the mayor and council can figure that out.

Thank you. You're making a lot of progress.

I'm here on behalf of the Town Center coalition. It does represent virtually every undeveloped property, large office buildings by Magnuson, McDonald's, and we've been doing the landscape architecture for New Seasons, and Farmers, Rite Aid, the King properties and others.

So I think your developers the other night were very spot on in some information. They had some good ideas. I would like to build on that.

And what Mr. Olson said about the Growth Management Act, I was here '69 conference plan, '74 Design Commission adoption, '75 design guidelines which was constrained by Anderson versus Issaquah about telling people what color they can build their buildings, and worked on three of the Town Center things.

I come as a planner, and designer, economist. I've been teaching real estate economics in the Runstep (phonetic) program at Western University for six years.

I look at the design.

I hope your plan -- I think you're headed the right direction. It can't just be good well-meaning goals and graphics.

As Mr. Olsen said, the RCWs require you to look at density provisions. Our residential areas are 2.5. The

goal is 4 to 8.

We're protecting our parks, our schools, our recreational areas, and our single-family homes.

So that leaves the Town Center. So I think there's a lot of opportunities.

I think there's some opportunity to come to the middle.

I think future development should protect the single family and provide a mix of retail office or residential.

So, what am I talking about here?

In the urban growth area you have this density, so if you're going to take that from the single-family residence and keep those and preserve the park areas, you need within an 8- or 10-block walking distance reasonable areas.

So, you heard from the developers last week I think that was spot on.

If you decide to down-zone, those properties south of McDonald's, I can tell you it will be virtually impossible to do anything. You're not going to have anybody -- Bruce Lord specified this. You're not going to have anybody build structured parking or not have reciprocal parking, and we're working on a reciprocal plan. All the

property owners together are talking about how we serve the things like summer events, MICA, and other things.

This coalition is not just looking at protecting the rights. They're thinking about the future.

So, in closing, I think there are a couple of recommendations.

Don't down-zone.

Keep the building heights.

If you go above two stories, you have to do at least two, you have to do affordable housing. ARCH and people have come to tell you how important. We need places for teachers and people working in shops and our fires place to go.

And require plazas.

I've shown you a picture of how we can get in between McDonald's and the other property.

And do require affordable housing and off-street parking.

If you require those, and not down-zone, you will get development. You'll get those things.

Without those, a down-zone, you'll put a dead hand on this property for years to come, so I think you should allow more construction permitted above two stories only with bonuses.

And one thing I made a mistake about. The wedding cake thing really doesn't work.

It's the facade modulation. You heard that last week.

The pipes don't line up and you can't do your elevators. Think about that.

Have a mix of modulation and facade.

Thank you. I think you're making great progress. Appreciate your effort.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Bill Lowe followed by Sue Stewart.

BILL LOWE: Mind if I raise this up? Don't mean to be rude about Mr. Thorpe.

Sorry.

Hi. I'm Bill Lowe. (Laughter.)

I am the real estate person for company that owns the Rite Aid center and I have a long career in commercial real estate. Before I worked for Gull, I was the director of real estate for QFC stores and worked on all of their development and many of their mixed use projects that have happened in the Seattle area.

But I'm here again representing the company I work for.

You have a very, very difficult process ahead of

you. I know that there are many in the community who would -- who want to reduce what can happen in the Town Center and I can appreciate their concerns. The reality, though, as the attorney mentioned, is there are requirements under the Washington code -- Washington law that requires certain densities be met.

And so as has been mentioned, reducing those heights will only stagnate development.

As an example, in 2008 the City of Seattle down-zoned the SoDo neighborhood, which is the area south of the stadiums, and the area that is industrial there that -- not industrial commercial, but true industrial, they reduced the amount of retail and office that could be constructed or put in that zone and, as a result, there has not been a single new construction in that area in those zones that got down-zoned. And we are now in the middle of one of the most robust development construction cycles we've seen in years, and you would think any area that would see some growth and development you would think would be SoDo, but it's not, because they killed it.

And you can see the difference between SoDo and the South Lake Union area. It's stark. The South Lake Union you see these significant amount of development. I'm not suggesting Mercer Island's Town Center should look like

South Lake Union, but I'm saying that if you do this, if you down-zone these properties, you're going to create -- you'll create an area where nothing's going to happen. You'll have the same buildings.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Looks like Sue Stewart with a question mark.

SUE STEWART: Yes, I am definitely a question mark.

Sue Stewart. (Laughter.) 3205 84th Avenue Southeast.

I came tonight to see the status of where things are. I think some of these ideas are very exciting. I think it can make the Town Center work better than it has with some of the buildings that have been built so far. So I congratulate you and urge you to move on with what you're doing.

But I do think that if people want to develop here on Mercer Island, that if they are really interested in allowing senior affordable housing or affordable housing, they should be given the opportunity to build their buildings taller. And so in listening -- I'm -- I was a broadcast producer and I produced some documentaries at KCTS 9 talking about conversations about the future. What do we want for our future? And I do think the Town Center should absorb density and we should keep our neighborhoods as green

as possible.

So, and affordable housing is important. Many of us live here. We are thinking of downsizing. And we don't want to leave the island. So, if you could consider that. Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Dick Winslow followed by Bart Dawson.

DICK WINSLOW: Dick Winslow, 3761 77th Avenue Southeast. I've lived here for 30 years.

The four most important words I've heard tonight were spoken by Vice Chair Mr. Weinman. Those four words were: Mercer Island city council.

You were quite candid. You and all of your hard working peers on both sides of the middle here are getting a huge amount of public input, public speakers, stakeholder group, the public comment sessions that you've had here, and yet all of this is really going to the Mercer Island city council who are, after all, our elected representatives. You all have worked so hard, and I hope that some of your work will pay off.

But to be honest, I'm kind of discouraged.

I looked at that poster over there that shows that nothing so far seems to be planned for just two stories high. I live quite close to the Town Center, and the idea

of two-story buildings where there's more light and air and less traffic is very appealing. And if that means that certain areas have to be significantly downsized, I really appreciate that.

So, in the coming months, however long it will be before the city council gets your recommendations, I plan to keep in mind firmly the four words that you said tonight: Mercer Island city council. And I hope that my neighbors and friends here tonight will remember those four words as well. Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Bart Dawson followed by Nancy Spaeth.

BART DAWSON: Yes, I'm Bart Dawson, 8812 Southeast 77th Place.

Some good words.

I look at all these charts behind me and I'm impressed.

Thank you very much. I think you're doing a great job. I really do.

Of course my comments are: How can you make changes that I would appreciate? And I think the draft words in the Comprehensive Plan should include "small-town feel." I think that's important.

I was in Old Bellevue and the only thing old in Old

Bellevue is the old sign. I would really love to get back to Mercer Island. It's a refuge.

If you think about growth targets, just take a look at Medina and see what their growth targets are. And are we similar to Medina or not?

I support alternative C, although, I have already submitted to you what I call plan B, which includes higher buildings and I would be willing to have higher buildings than in plan C. But I support the concept of plan C.

I'm curious about what provisions will be in the Comp Plan and in the design code that will ensure we have at least two gasoline stations on the north end of Mercer Island. We want to allow those kind of businesses that support the island to be on the island. So please, please consider that.

I'm concerned that the plan encourages a wide dispersal of retail businesses which also discourages pedestrians from visiting several shops at one time. I would suggest that there be a concentration of retail in smaller areas rather than everywhere.

There is still a lot of work to be done.

You guys will pull off a miracle, if you can get it done by April.

I think you'll have to have two draft revisions,

draft, revise, draft, revise, before you get something that you're going to be proud of.

But keep up the good work.

I really like your charts.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

Nancy Spaeth followed by Leon Cohen.

NANCY SPAETH: Hello, my name is Nancy Hewitt Spaeth. 8320 Southeast 34th Street.

I've been here over 40 years.

I bought undeveloped property and built my own house.

I come from a family of developers who started here in this state in 1890, so I have grown up with development.

I prefer and the reason I moved here was I loved Mercer Island as a village. I want to maintain it as a village. I want to be able to see the sky. I don't want to walk in shadows. I can go to Bellevue or Seattle to do that. I want to be able to see the sky. I want beautiful plazas where the dog and I can stop for a bit and sit down. I don't want any buildings over three stories because then I won't be able to see the sky.

I know that that is a consideration and I appreciate all the progress that you've made.

I am very happy to see it and was happy to hear what was said tonight.

I want to stay here. And I do like the comments regarding some affordable housing for the retired people who want to live here and downsize, and for the teachers and people who work on the island who don't make that much money.

So, that's my input.

And thank you for everything that you're doing and the progress that you've made.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Leon Cohen followed by Michelle Goldberg.

LEON COHEN: Good evening.

I'm Leon Cohen, resident here on Mercer Island since the year 2000. Raised my children here in the Mercer Island school district, and we came for the schools and the nice parks and the fine community that we live in.

I have been in the construction and development industry for three generations over the years.

I have seen many city boards, commissions, councils operate, and I must say that our community is very fortunate to have such a diverse well-rounded Joint Commission together with the top building and planning department. Thank you very much for all that you do.

2411 is the owner and name of the proposed project that I will be speaking of. I request the City of Mercer Island consider designating Town Center zoning to the small detached city parcel of surplus right of way that was part of the I-90 right-of-way acquisitions.

We will provide the city, as it studies the Town Center visioning, with our Comprehensive Plan and rezoning analysis of this parcel.

I have sent the analysis over to Alison and she will distribute it for use in the next meetings to come, including March 30.

A main purpose of the gateway project called 2411 would be to support the broader community. Some of the benefits and a little bit about the project.

There's 14,000 feet of retail space.

10,000 feet of second-floor office space, with a walk-up outdoor plaza.

47 luxury residential units, including its own separate elevator lobby, internal library, conference media area, affordable units, bicycle racks, storage, and hybrid recharging stations and transportation kiosks, all underground parking, a large artistic sustainable water feature wall, and pool.

Visually, this parcel appears to be part of the

adjacent old gas station now, currently the fish market, Freshy's.

It is completely separate by 24th Street from Lintock Park.

Placing Town Center zoning on this little parcel could facilitate future development of combined parcels and could replace the old gas station structure with a new aesthetically pleasing building at this prominent northwest gateway to Town Center, and development of the two sites would include removal of contaminated soils on both parcels.

2411 would be consistent with the current and likely future Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan and would advance many of its goals and policies for Town Center.

The new development on the combined parcels could offer public amenities that would benefit not only Town Center, but all residents of Mercer Island. Some possibilities include a small movie theater and possibly a historic museum for Islanders.

The combined parcel could provide privately owned commuter parking available exclusively for Mercer Island residents. In addition, it would help our scarce parking problem and would allow for walk-off parking.

It would place the city parcel back on the property tax rolls that would benefit the city general fund and

Mercer Island School District.

I look forward to working with the Joint Commissions, the city and staff, on the Town Center visioning and code update, and I'll be showing the openness and transparency and willingness to work with the city and staff to make the gateway project a success for the entire Mercer Island community.

Thank you very much.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Michelle Goldberg followed by John Houlihan.

MICHELLE GOLDBERG: Hi, I'm Michelle Goldberg. I live at 2212 78th Avenue Southeast on Mercer Island.

I want to thank you again for all your hard work. I know that it is a thankless task and you have a daunting task ahead of you.

I'm relieved to hear you have not made any decisions yet. And I'm especially grateful to see that you have changed the subarea map or the regulating plan -- I can't remember what the current name is -- to add alternative C which features three-story buildings south of 27th.

I think that given all the public input you've received, I hope that you realize, I think you do realize, that alternative C is the plan that is most in line with

what most Mercer Islanders want.

They really want to preserve the small-town feel for Mercer Island, and so I am happy that you're considering it and you're looking at it and will look at all the options.

I just want to say briefly about the Growth Management Act, I don't -- I'm not an expert on it, but I do know that when the numbers are coming up for -- the new target numbers will come up, the city will have an opportunity to negotiate to have the numbers adjusted, and I think given Mercer Island's unique geographic characteristics and the fact that we have no additional land upon which to build schools, that there's a good argument to be said that we cannot accommodate the kind of growth that King County would want to put on Mercer Island. So when I hear that there should be either density in the Town Center or in the single-family neighborhoods, and there's kind of a threat to the single-family owners that if you don't allow density in the Town Center, we're going to have a townhome going up in your neighborhood, I think that's a false dichotomy. And I don't think we should be cowed by those statements because I don't think they're accurate. So I would appreciate your looking into that.

Another thing that I wanted to bring up was that in

the next several years we're -- going to be several possible tax consequences for people. There might be a levy lid. There might be increased school levies to build -- to replace the elementary schools. And that will have huge tax consequences on people who live on the island currently, some of whom are barely able to afford their homes. So, I think that the priority should be for doing things that help the people who currently live here make sure they can continue to live here, rather than focusing on making housing affordable for people who unfortunately can't afford to live here.

I empathize with their plight, but I think as a community, we need to focus more on the people who are currently part of our community.

One final thing is micro-housing, because I don't think you've discussed that. I would not like to see micro-apartments in our Town Center, and I don't know if it's something that has been discussed, so I'm throwing it out there.

Thank you very much for your work.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

John Houlihan.

Mr. Houlihan is the last person who signed in, signed up to speak, so if anyone else would like to, please

sign up.

JOHN HOULIHAN: Good evening. John Houlihan speaking for Dollar Development located at 2737 78th Southeast on Mercer Island.

As you know, I've been before you at the last public meeting and also attended most of your Joint Commission meetings, and I would just like to echo the thanks from many of the speakers tonight of the job you're doing. It's difficult. It's time-consuming. And it's a volunteer basis. So, thank you very much for your dedication and the hard work that you're doing.

We voiced our concerns about the code and how it applies to the Mercer project.

It's a hotel on the north end, as you know. It is basically permit-ready now under the existing code and we can't apply because of the moratorium.

I appreciate you looking at the code not just from the single-lens perspective of mixed-use residential, but also thinking about other uses in the Town Center and how the code change may affect it.

I thought this evening we would show you what we're looking at the code, how it's developing and how it may affect the Mercer project, to give a ground view. Our architect could not be here tonight because of an illness in

the family.

Bear with me as we go through the slides.

The first slide you're looking at is the Mercer designed under the current code.

153 units.

It's got two wings connected by a glass atrium.

It includes a 12-foot north-south mid-block pedestrian pathway.

That is permit-ready and we would apply today if moratorium wasn't in place.

Looking at upper-floor setbacks, here is our buildable existing envelope, and the areas in red are the portions of the building that get reduced because of upper floor setbacks.

In addition, it shows a much wider scale because people were talking about a 20-foot pedestrian corridor.

What that does is basically eliminates on one of those double-loaded wings you walk down a long hallway and there are doors on each side for the rooms.

We have to move one of the sides over and we lose an entire double-loaded side.

So, the basic bottom line impact from the changes that we can see right now is we would go from 135 rooms to approximately 100.

We lose 25% of our rentable rooms.

We lose banquet space, and lose meeting space, and we lose parking space.

On this slide are each of the floor plates for the development.

Every place you see an asterisk is a loss to our development.

So the impacts of the changes in the envelope are significant.

And please keep in mind that a broad-brushed approach may not apply to particularized uses like a hotel or office that have different design parameters.

If I could, I just have a couple more comments.

One of the things that we heard from the other developers is flexibility and placemaking. And design is a key component of that.

If you look at all of the upper-floor setbacks, the light, what the town feels like, you can accomplish most of that with a robust planning and Design Commission -- excuse me, a Design Commission role and a code that is form-based and gives people really a good idea of what it's supposed to feel like and look like.

I encourage you to regulate that and look at heights and stories. I think above 27th you should look at

making this simple so that you drive a development that's going to actually deliver the public amenities that you're trying to provide.

So instead of making it complex, make it simple.

Instead of having it two-story based, just create zones with a five, a four, a three, and a two base.

And each one of those zones you can get an incentive floor or maybe an incentive two floors to provide additional public amenities. And what you heard the developers say is the incremental cost to go up another floor, to go from four to five or three to four is significantly less.

And so if the opportunity is to increase rentable floor space, and incentives are attached to that, they'll do that. And they'll make those changes and you'll get those public amenities.

So, simplicity, flexibility, and a design place -- a design-focused approach to create the place of the new Mercer Island Town Center for now and the future.

RICHARD W.: Please wrap up.

JOHN HOULIHAN: I am done and thank you.

Appreciate it.

RICHARD W.: Okay, Lucia Pirzio Biroli, followed by Thomas Imrich.

LUCIA PIRZIO BIROLI: Hello. My name is Lucia Pirzio Biroli. 4212 West Mercer Way.

I'm an architect and I served on the Design Commission for 8 years.

And I appreciate what you're doing and I know it's a really difficult thing and I wouldn't want this job. It's exciting as well.

First of all, I haven't been actively engaged in this process and so some of what I might say might be a little bit repetitive, but there are a couple things I would like to touch on.

First of all, canopies, you know, along the blocks. We live in a rainy, rainy region, and we want a walkable downtown. If we can't provide a walkable downtown under all weather circumstances, we're not going to have a walkable downtown (laughter).

Secondly, during my time on the Design Commission, I found that the design standards as a prescriptive base were so utterly frustrating because they tied the hands of good designers and architects and completely created a muck-up of those who couldn't design their way out of a brown paper bag.

So, design standards are really a difficult thing to develop and difficult touchy way to find your way through

that rabbit hole.

But what I'm thinking is that if you can provide form-based standards and at the same time not give too much, you know -- I mean, telling people they should be using colors and that they should be using these modulations can lead to really deadly spaces and buildings that look a little bit like clowns.

On the other hand, there are examples all over the world that are really, really beautiful, and they've been around for centuries (laughter). And there's no -- nobody has ever said that you couldn't develop a form-based standard and then have, you know, a book or a manual that shows all of these examples, that can give people who really don't understand what they're doing kind of a, you know, a nudge in a good direction, because as a design commissioner, we're not allowed to hold their hand and guide their way through the Design Commission phase.

The other thing is the parking. The biggest problem for me with the design standards is that right in the beginning of the design standards it says our objective is to make Mercer Island a walkable downtown. However, we don't have walk-off parking. So, therefore, you have to get in your car, theoretically, and drive from each block, which obviates the opportunity for a walkable downtown. So I

understand you're not talking about parking. However, walk-off parking helps everyone. And I don't see it -- I mean, I understand there are leases and there are this and that, but I don't see it as a way to -- I see it as a way to help every business downtown.

Anyway, thank you very much.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Thomas Imrich followed by Ira Appelman.

THOMAS IMRICH: Tom Imrich, 6231 Island Crest Way.

The plan for the Town Center still is just awful.

The principles in the plan outlined and the information provided to residents is completely wrong and inappropriate.

And the plan doesn't recognize key priorities and needs of the community, and the principles that are specified, for example, in the brochure that was sent out, are virtually meaningless.

Instead, the principles and the plan should first assure Mercer Island citizens safety.

Two, assure that Mercer Island citizens have reliability and timely transportation both on and off the island for POV mobility, and then off-island POV mobility and access, especially for medical emergency responses.

Three, we have to assure that Mercer Island

citizens have access to adequate on-island services for food, water, emergency medical support and sustaining services, particularly in the times of disasters or problems or storms.

The primary purpose of the Town Center isn't this walking baloney.

It should be to support 95% of The Islanders that live on this island for needed services and functions with SOV/POV friendly roads, street, and parking systems, all the important services noted and the material that I sent you many times now repeatedly, that virtually went into file 13 with both of these groups.

You need to look at that material again and see what we really need to have on this island.

Next, don't screw up our streets any more than they already have, the way you did by QFC and the streets where you can't park anymore.

Many Islanders even stopped going to places. You can't park there or get into Tabit Square anymore, and sometimes you can't park there across the street to get to places like Qdoba.

We need better parking. Ban the microscopic parking spaces that are unsuitable even for a skateboard. The columns ding a VW bug and the side of our cars when

trying to park in places like going to Mo's, while trying to go to Mo's.

Next thing is yes, we need affordable housing.

Keep the tax under control and you don't chase the seniors off this island.

Next, there are limits to growth, period. We don't need to grow on Mercer Island. There are limits to growth plan-wise.

If you understand energy, energy balance, carbon footprint and everything else, you would understand that this idea of turning this into a transit-oriented density location is absolutely absurd.

In conclusion, you've apparently completely disregarded the pages of comments that I have sent and many others on the island have sent to you earlier. My suggestion is reread those comments.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Ira Appelman.

IRA APPELMAN: Ira Appelman.

I'm a 53-year resident of Mercer Island.

I have attended every city council meeting but one for the last 19 years since 1997.

I have attended all your meetings and videotaped

them and audiotaped them.

The only -- you can see many people here last time aren't here now, but given the public, as well as the public participation, as well as the written comments, the reason why we're here is because of height and bulk. Not -- and some extent parking, but mainly height and bulk.

The city in the summer of 2014 had already concluded this process, and because the Hines project's massing study was published in *The Reporter*, that's what led directly to this process.

Islanders are overwhelmingly against the height and bulk in the Town Center.

The only group really that's for it are developers and people who are going to make money from development, and owners.

Otherwise, most Islanders, overwhelming amount of Islanders, are against it.

I am not against the three floors south of 27th and five floors north of 27th if it's truly five floors and not six floors or more.

But I disagree -- I've been at all the meetings and I disagree that the decisions have not been made.

I think it's -- the C is a charade that you guys are not considering that. You are -- it's there for you to

reject down the road.

The decision has been made and you're not going to go with that. It's true no votes have been taken.

We don't have to accept the growth by the Growth Management Act. It doesn't require us to accept it. We've had testimony from Senator Horn. That's not what the Growth Management Act does.

We do have to accept what we decide what we're going to do, but we don't have to do that.

The speaker said that Seattle had down-zoned. Well, wait a second. If Seattle -- if we're required not to down-zone, then how did Seattle down-zone? Well, what was the disadvantage? The disadvantage was they claimed there wasn't any development.

Mercer Islanders did not move here for a vibrant community. There are lots of other vibrant communities that you can go to if you want to.

What we've done in the past is we have given away the store. We've started from give them as much as they want, and then we've got the disaster that we have down there.

Why not start from the other end and say: What's the disadvantage of not -- of having lower stories if all the bad things they say are going to happen, that we won't

get any development. Well, that's fine.

Let's wait five or ten years, and then if it doesn't work to have lower zoning, then we can change, but let's not start at the high end and go low. Let's start at the low end and go high.

I'm not exactly a "thank you for your service" type of citizen. If you do a good job, then I will thank you. But just because you spent some time. I have spent more time than you have at these meetings, not these particular ones, but I have spent more time, and I don't see I'm being thanked by anybody just for being there.

Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you (laughter), I think.

Anyone else care to speak?

Yes, sir. What is your name?

GEOFF SPELMAN: My name is Geoff Spelman. I'm at 4250 90th Avenue Southeast.

I want to thank you. Sorry, I know you've been at lots of meetings and I know they have been terribly exciting. I've been to some of them.

You could sell tickets, I'm sure, at a massive price to listen to streetscape discussions.

I'm going to write my comments for most of the

small points.

I just want to make maybe two points.

I wish that all of your effort was tied to something that was a motivating issue. You have been at this for a year and a half. I was at it for nine months. There was another group at it for a year or more. There's no motivating issue here. There are people for density or for less density, for height, less height. But we're lacking the exciting thing, and it's too bad, because planning, fundamentally, is either about avoiding problems and trying to deal with problems or it's trying to take benefits and make them better. And we're not doing either one of those, which is not unusual, because planners are scared and they don't want to deal with different opinions. They would rather talk about cross sections of streets.

So, I wish there was something that would be more motivating than just angst.

In terms of public participation, this would be a stronger process if you put out the materials three or four days in advance and you tied them to choices. It's not adequate to have it the day of the meeting to put out information or have me go back and look at what your materials were two weeks ago to decide what you were going to be talking about tonight. You really need -- I know

you've been super busy. I know you're understaffed. I know you don't have the time. You've been in tremendous numbers of meetings. But if you want to get effective public participation, you have to spend some time and structure that.

You have to tell people that there are six issues you want input on and the choices are A or B. A or B or C. And people can come in and they can do their homework and they can look at those things. But just to give people 20 pages isn't that effective.

I thank you for doing this. I know it's a thankless task.

Maybe for your last meeting you could think a little bit about structuring the public participation so that people can be as effective if possible. But thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Would anyone else like to speak?

SARAH FLETCHER: Hello. My name is Sarah Fletcher.

And I have an environmental question which I don't know if I can ask.

But does anyone know if you have parking on the east side -- on the street, on the east side, and then if you have got building, does anyone know from an environmental perspective how wide -- what the distance

should be between the street and the building so that, let's say, a car stops, you're not going to get the fumes in your face (laughter) if a building's too close to the sidewalk?

And why I'm asking is, where I live at the Mercer Isle condos, people have been warming up their car and the fumes are now going into the condos because the carbon monoxide detectors are going off, and we never had those kind of detectors before, and now they are going off, which means there's an environmental problem. And it's not on the ground floor where they have got a fence in front of their property and a yard and a driveway, but it's hitting the level above. So if you're going to add more heights, there has to be a limit, and the size of the building, so that the fumes aren't going into the buildings. (Laughter.)

And I like your open space diagrams back there.

And also the mitigations, if you don't allow mitigations, they need to show diagrams of what the maximum -- what it will look like. But I would prefer no mitigations.

And two stories, three stories at the most.

Thanks.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

RALPH JORGENSEN: Hi. My name is Ralph Jorgensen.

I live at 8048 84th Avenue Southeast.

And first of all, really appreciate all the volunteer time that you've given and that you will be giving.

So, thank you.

Our community is lucky to have your work on this and your expertise.

I just wanted to share just one small personal thought and a suggestion, a small little thing.

I think Scott Greenberg suggested maybe three plazas of opportunities in the Town Center to consider, one of which was the area in front of the drive-in Starbucks where there's a curved road and then there's a small building that's kind of in the island of that intersection.

I think the suggestion was to make that -- condemn that street and make a plaza by that building and make that a large plaza.

Given the state of the city funds and limited funds always, I would like you to just consider the opportunity to condemning that street, creating a plaza there, and just embracing the business -- I'm not at all affiliated with the tenants or the owner of that business, but embracing them, and I betcha they might eventually turn into an outdoor cafe there, and having that building there provides a buffer to

that street next door and so I think that could be kind of a win-win for everyone.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Anyone else?

Going once.

Going twice.

Yes, sir?

DAN WINBERG: My name is Dan Winberg. I live at 8206 Southeast 41st.

Just a minor point.

One of the topics was -- what do we call them? Cross-connections or through-building connections, that sort of thing.

My thought stems from disappointment at what happened with I guess it's Island Market Square where there are supposedly through-block connections which, to the best of my knowledge, from day one were in fact fraught with locked gates.

Now, neither I nor probably anyone else really would care to walk up a flight of stairs in order to cross one block and walk down another flight.

But -- and obviously that was in competition with the parking which was -- is provided on the first floor, and

I think the parking is far more valuable to the average citizen.

By the way, I've lived here 50 years and I have no particular interest in financial or in any respect with what goes on in the Town Center, but consider myself perhaps to be a typical user of the Town Center.

So I think parking is in that case was the right choice that dominates and may continue to be.

But that was an example of through-connections which I don't know if points were -- credit was awarded to the developer for providing that sort of thing, but it didn't really pan out.

I kind of blame the city for not enforcing it as an open pathway. And I would -- so I would suggest not giving much credit to that sort of thing. Get more credit to usable parking. That is a case where there was an obvious conflict between those two goals. And while parking's not a topic tonight, it's a topic of next week, why I would vote for less credit given for cross-connections if in fact it interferes with economically viable parking.

Thank you.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Final call.

SALIM NEES: Thanks. Salim Nees.

Salim Nees, 5619 89th Avenue Southeast.

I wanted to make a quick clarifying comment on the GMA.

When we were on the stakeholder group, Scott Greenberg and his staff assembled GMA housing targets and planned to date allocations through the end of 2014.

We had asked for an update in the fall of last year and an update was forthcoming at 12-31-15.

I know there was a point made by developers and the argument was that Town Center density is going to forego density in single-family residential neighborhoods, but the reality is we have not really seen that on the island.

We've seen density going to Town Center, but the 2007 plan called for 200, 300 rough units. We've had 1300 built, which left us at the end of 2014 with 999.

There's a year and a quarter since that number's been updated.

I would just advise you that if you're going to listen to the developers talking about GMA and Town Center density saving single-family residential neighborhoods, that you ask for DSG to update that number and see where we are as of 2014.

We know, based on DSG numbers mid-last year, that 22 and a half new single-family residential properties are

built on average per year.

There are 20 more years through the allocation of the remains.

Those thousand units.

We have 20 years to get to that.

Remember, that's a zoning requirement. It's not a building requirement.

So I would just say as you press on and you try to assemble all the data that you can, as you near making your final recommendation to the council, make sure you have your hands around those numbers, and understand in 2017 as we start to negotiate the next round of allocations, that we're not going to be the only big city, only city in the 26 cities that are within our growth management area saying that we're built out.

We're probably going to be the first ones to say we have a very good case to make that we cannot absorb any further density, being an island, being surrounded by water, having limited ingress and egress, having mass transit coming onto I-90 and reduction in lanes, and concerns about emergency services reaching the island, having landslides we're already seeing.

All of those things are critical, but to have the developer come up here and say that Town Center density is

going to solve single-family residential density is false.

We're seeing it all over First Hill with short plats.

We've had two long plats just in front of the council this week.

Those to me are empty threats and those are things that as a citizen I don't appreciate.

I know that the council is going to turn a serious eye to single-family residential zoning this year and I think that's important, but I think as you consider what's going on in the Town Center, you don't need to worry about the current allocation. We're going to hit that number. It's going happen.

What you need to worry about is what the citizens want, how the Town Center serves them, what as an island we're going to suffer through potentially a decade of transit construction on I-90 and what services we're going to need during that period.

Remember what happened when I-90 went through construction and Town Center, how important that was for our citizens.

Thank you for your work. Appreciate it.

I'm sure you're going to get the job done and I hope the council acts on your ultimate recommendations.

RICHARD W.: Thank you.

Anyone else like to speak?

Okay. I will close the public hearing.

And thank you all very much for attending and for your -- for comments.

Next public hearing is -- remember the date? March 30.

I think it's at Lakeridge? Island Park, right. So -- island park. Lakeridge.

For anyone who did not testify or if anyone who did, there's always an opportunity to submit written comments by letter or email and we do read them and consider them.

Thank you very much for attending.

(Applause.)

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Lisa K. Hutchinson

CART Provider