

2044 Comprehensive Plan Update

# Public Participation Plan

City of Mercer Island, WA



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## Public Participation Plan

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to update its Comprehensive Plan on or before June 30, 2024 (RCW 36.70A.130(5)(a)). This update will extend the Comprehensive Plan planning horizon to the year 2044. The 2044 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review and Update (Comprehensive Plan update) will satisfy this requirement. Public participation is a vital aspect of the Comprehensive Plan update process. Public participation improves the planning process by gathering the shared knowledge and experience of the community and fostering public confidence in the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments. This document details the goals, tasks, phases, and schedule for public participation during the Comprehensive Plan update.

The Comprehensive Plan update will primarily be a targeted “surgical” update. The focus of the majority of the work will be technical updates to the growth projections and associated infrastructure needs detailed in the Comprehensive Plan. As such, most of the work in the Comprehensive Plan update will not require extensive public outreach. There are two aspects of the Comprehensive Plan update that will have a broader scope than the technical updates, creating more opportunities for public participation. These two aspects are adopting an Economic Development Element and updating housing goals and policies to respond to the findings in the Housing Needs Assessment. These two components of the Comprehensive Plan update will require more goal and policy work than the remainder of the project.

The drafting and adoption of an Economic Development Element will include extensive opportunities for the public to provide input. The Economic Development Element goals and policies will define how the City chooses to grow its economy. This will require additional public outreach to ensure that the Economic Development Element aligns with the public’s vision for economic development through the planning horizon. The public participation plan for the Economic Development Element reflects the broader nature of this part of the project.

The City will prepare a *Housing Needs Assessment* as part of updating the growth projections in the Comprehensive Plan. The *Housing Needs Assessment* is a technical document that defines housing need based on the projected growth. Policy responses during the Comprehensive Plan update may be required to address housing needs. If policy amendments are needed to address the findings in the *Housing Needs Assessment*, those amendments would require a broader public participation. As such, the public participation planned for the Housing Element update allows additional room for community input. Updates to Housing Element goals and policies will give stakeholders several opportunities to provide input during the Comprehensive Plan update.

### **Roles**

The Comprehensive Plan update will engage various groups. These groups have unique roles in the process, summarized below.

#### City Council

The Mercer Island City Council are the elected officials endowed with the legislative authority to adopt Comprehensive Plan amendments. The City Council also directs Planning Commission and staff work programs. The City Council will review the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments throughout the Comprehensive Plan update. Ultimately, the City Council will adopt the Comprehensive Plan update after considering the Planning Commission, staff recommendations and public input.

1 Planning Commission

2 The Planning Commission is a volunteer advisory committee made up of island residents. The commission  
3 was established to review and make recommendations to the City Council on amendments to the  
4 Comprehensive Plan. They provide the City Council with the lay perspective on planning issues. The  
5 Planning Commission review of the Comprehensive Plan update will include the majority of the public  
6 participation, including a public hearing prior to making their recommendation to the City Council.

7  
8 Housing Work Group

9 A Housing Work Group will work on drafting updated Housing Element goals and policies. The Housing  
10 Work Group will be made up of two Planning Commission members and two City Council members. The  
11 Housing Work Group will meet with stakeholders and subject matter experts during the Comprehensive  
12 Plan update to get input on housing goal and policy amendments to address housing needs.

13  
14 Economic Development Work Group

15 An Economic Development Work Group (EDWG) will work on drafting new goals and policies for the  
16 Economic Development Element. The Economic Development Work Group will be composed of two  
17 Planning Commission members and two City Council members. The work group will meet with  
18 stakeholders and subject matter experts during the Comprehensive Plan update to refine the draft  
19 Economic Development Element.

20  
21 City Staff

22 City staff provides professional and technical recommendations to the Planning Commission and City  
23 Council. Staff will prepare drafts and make recommendations throughout the Comprehensive Plan  
24 update.

25  
26 Subject Matter Experts

27 Subject matter experts (SME) are professionals that work in a Comprehensive Plan related field (i.e.  
28 affordable housing nonprofit staff, King County Economic Development Council, etc.). SMEs can provide  
29 the City with their professional and technical expertise during the Comprehensive Plan update.

30  
31 Stakeholders

32 Stakeholders are groups and individuals that have an interest in the outcome of the Comprehensive Plan  
33 update. Stakeholders are diverse and can have numerous and conflicting concerns. The Comprehensive  
34 Plan update will benefit from engaging these groups and individuals to gather varied perspectives and  
35 build consensus on the proposed updates. Engaging stakeholders with diverse viewpoints will help the  
36 Planning Commission and City Council understand the plurality of public opinions on goals and policies in  
37 the Comprehensive Plan. Some of the Comprehensive Plan update stakeholders are listed below.

- 38  
39
- 40     ▪ Local business owners;
  - 41     ▪ Housing providers;
  - 42     ▪ Developers;
  - 43     ▪ Builders and contractors;
  - 44     ▪ Local and regional policy advocacy organizations;
  - 45     ▪ Homeowners and Renters; and
  - The general public.

## Public Participation Goals and Tasks

Public participation is central to planning under GMA. Public participation is one of the statewide planning goals established in RCW 36.70A.020(11), which states:

“Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.”

In pursuit of this statewide planning goal, this public participation plan details the public participation goals and tasks the City will use throughout the Comprehensive Plan update.

### **Goal 1 – Inform the Public Throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update**

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Keeping the public informed throughout the Comprehensive Plan update will help ensure stakeholders know what to comment on, when comments will be effective, and how to provide their perspective to decision makers.

#### Tasks

- 1.1** Maintain a project webpage on the City website. The project webpage will list working drafts, project timeline, and public comments.
- 1.2** Publish notice of special public meetings such as community workshops in *The Mercer Island Reporter* and on the City website.
- 1.3** Maintain a mailing list of interested parties. Interested parties will be notified of public meetings.
- 1.4** Invite multi-family housing property managers to share meeting notices regarding the plan, particularly the housing and economic development elements of the plan.

### **Goal 2 – Gather Input on Economic Development Element Goals and Policies**

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Drafting a new Economic Development Element will require extensive public input on proposed vision, goals, and policies. Stakeholders and subject matter experts (SME) should be engaged throughout the refinement of proposed Economic Development Element goals and policies.

#### Tasks

- 2.1** City staff will conduct SME and key stakeholder interviews to establish a list of priority policy issues to address in the Economic Development Element. Key stakeholders are those with specific interest in economic development in the City. After the interviews, staff will prepare a list of important economic development issues to get more information on during the workshop and survey (Tasks 2.2 and 2.3).
- 2.2** City staff will hold an Economic Development Vision Community Workshop to get public input on a vision for economic development and identify priority policy topics to be addressed in the Economic Development Element.
- 2.3** City staff will conduct a survey to gather public input on the vision for economic development and identify priority policy topics to be addressed in the Economic Development Element.

- 1 **2.4** The Economic Development Work Group will meet with economic development SMEs to refine  
2 the preliminary draft of economic development goals and policies to address the priority policy  
3 issues identified in tasks 2.1 through 2.3. This meeting will result in a first draft of the Economic  
4 Development Element.
- 5 **2.5** The Economic Development Work Group will meet with a stakeholder panel to get input on and  
6 refine the first draft of the Economic Development Element.
- 7 **2.6** The Planning Commission considers the Economic Development Work Group and stakeholder  
8 input during its first touch of the Economic Development Element.
- 9 **2.7** The Planning Commission considers the Economic Development Work Group and stakeholder  
10 input during its second touch of the Economic Development Element.
- 11 **2.8** The City will hold a community workshop to get feedback on and refine the third draft of the  
12 Economic Development Element.
- 13 **2.9** The Planning Commission considers the public input from the community workshop during its  
14 third touch of the Economic Development Element.  
15

16 **Goal 3 – Gather Input on updates to the housing goals and policies**

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17 Housing goals and policies might need to be updated after the City has prepared a *Housing Needs*  
18 *Assessment* (HNA). Any necessary changes are expected to be minor refinements of the existing housing  
19 policies to account for the findings in the HNA. Input from housing stakeholders and SMEs will be sought  
20 to ensure that the goals and policies adequately address the findings in the HNA.  
21

22 Tasks

- 23
- 24 **3.1** Housing Work Group prepares an initial list of housing policy responses based on the HNA  
25 findings.
- 26 **3.2** The Housing Work Group will partner with multi-family property managers to host a Renters  
27 Forum to share findings of the HNA and directly listen to the needs and hear ideas from the rental  
28 community.
- 29 **3.3** The Housing Work Group will meet with SMEs to refine the initial list of policy responses to be  
30 incorporated into the first draft of amendments to housing goals and policies.
- 31 **3.4** Planning Commission first two touches on the draft housing goal and policy amendments.
- 32 **3.5** Planning Commission third touch on the draft housing goal and policy amendments, resulting in  
33 a public hearing draft.
- 34 **3.6** The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan update (Task 4.2,  
35 below), which will include the amendments to the Housing Element.  
36

37 **Goal 4 – Gather Public Input on the Overall Comprehensive Plan Update**

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38 Gathering public input on the overall Comprehensive Plan update will be vital to ensure the update  
39 satisfies the statewide planning goal for public participation. This will increase community support for the  
40 update.  
41  
42

1 Tasks

2

3 **4.1** Create a dedicated Comprehensive Plan update public comment email inbox.

4 **4.2** Planning Commission refines draft amendments and responds to public comments during public  
5 meetings.

6 **4.3** Hold a community workshop on the Comprehensive Plan update after the Planning Commission  
7 has prepared a pre-hearing draft of the overall Comprehensive Plan update. The community  
8 workshop will precede a Planning Commission public hearing.

9 **4.4** The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and deliberations before making a  
10 recommendation to the City Council on the Comprehensive Plan update.

11 **4.5** The City Council will hold a public hearing and deliberations before adopting the Comprehensive  
12 Plan update by ordinance.

13 **Engagement Phases**

14 Public participation for the Comprehensive Plan update will be divided into four distinct phases. Each  
15 phase will be composed of outreach tasks to achieve the public participation goals outlined above. The  
16 four phases are:

17

18 **Phase I – Ongoing Notices**

19 **Phase II – Identify Policy Responses**

20 **Phase III – Refine Drafts**

21 **Phase IV – Build Consensus**

22

23 **Phase I: Ongoing Notices**

24 The purpose of Phase I is to ensure that the public stays up to date on the Comprehensive Plan update  
25 project throughout its duration. By providing public notice throughout the Comprehensive Plan update,  
26 the City will keep the public informed of the status of the project and how to provide comments. Phase I  
27 will take place through the duration of the Comprehensive Plan update. The tasks undertaken during  
28 Phase I are related to public participation goals 1 and 4.

29

30 **Phase II: Identify Policy Responses**

31 The purpose of Phase II is to engage the general public, stakeholders, and SMEs to set the agenda for  
32 making goal and policy updates. The focus of this phase will be amendments to the Housing Element and  
33 drafting the new Economic Development Element. Phase II will take place early in the drafting process  
34 for these two elements. The input gathered in this phase will highlight priority goal and policy  
35 amendments needed to address the housing and economic development issues the community is  
36 concerned about. The tasks undertaken during Phase II are related to public participation goals 2 and 3.

37

38 **Phase III: Refine Drafts**

39 The purpose of Phase III is to gather input on the draft Comprehensive Plan Elements in advance of public  
40 hearings. Phase III will center on engaging the broader public and gathering input on proposed goal and  
41 policy updates. Refining drafts will take place through the middle of the Comprehensive Plan update  
42 process, in advance of the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings. The tasks undertaken  
43 during Phase III are related to public participation goals 2, 3, and 4.

44

1 **Phase IV: Build Consensus**

2 The purpose of Phase IV is to build public buy in on the drafts refined during Phase III by engaging the  
3 public in the fine-tuning of the Comprehensive Plan update in advance of its adoption. Phase IV will take  
4 place during the last stages of the Comprehensive Plan update. The tasks undertaken during Phase IV are  
5 related to public participation goals 2, 3, and 4.

6  
7 Table 1 lists the four public participation phases, information flow, and public participation tasks  
8 undertaken during each phase.



1 **Table 1. Public Participation Phases, Information Flow, and Tasks.**

Phase	Information Flow	Public Participation Tasks
<b>Phase I Ongoing Notices</b>	City ↓ Public	1.1 Maintain a project webpage on the City website. The project webpage will list working drafts, project timeline, and public comments.
		1.2 Publish notice of special public meetings in The Mercer Island Reporter and on the City website.
		1.3 Maintain a mailing list interested parties. Interested parties will be notified of public meetings.
		1.4 Outreach to multifamily property managers and residents.
		4.1 Create a dedicated Comprehensive Plan update public comment email inbox.
<b>Phase II Identify Policy Responses</b>	General Public, Stakeholders and SMEs ↓ City	2.1 Economic development SME and key stakeholder interviews to identify policy priorities.
		2.2 Economic Development Vision Community Workshop.
		2.3 Economic Development Vision Survey.
		2.4 Economic Development Work Group meeting with stakeholders and SMEs.
		3.1 Housing Work Group prepares initial list of housing policy responses.
		3.2 The Housing Work Group renter’s forum.
		3.3 Housing Work Group meeting with SMEs to refine a draft of housing goal and policy amendments.
<b>Phase III Refine Drafts</b>	General Public, Stakeholders, and SMEs ↓ City	2.5 Economic Development Work Group meeting with stakeholders to refine the draft Economic Development Element.
		2.6 Planning Commission first touch on the draft Economic Development Element
		2.7 Planning Commission second touch on the draft Economic Development Element
		2.8 Economic Development Element community workshop
		2.9 Planning Commission third touch on the draft Economic Development Element
		3.4 Planning Commission first and second touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments.
		3.5 Planning Commission third touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments.
		4.2 Planning Commission refines draft Comprehensive Plan amendments and responds to public comments.
		4.3 Hold a community workshop on the Comprehensive Plan update.
		3.6 Planning Commission public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan update (Task 4.4, below), which will include the amendments to the Housing Element.
<b>Phase IV Build Consensus</b>	General Public ↻ City	4.4 Planning Commission will hold a public hearing before making a recommendation to the City Council on the Comprehensive Plan update.
		4.5 City Council public hearing before adopting the Comprehensive Plan update.

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Public Participation Schedule

Table 2. Public Participation Schedule.

Phase	Public Participation Task	2022												2023												2024						
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
I	1.1 Project website	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	1.2 Publish notices	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	1.3 Maintain mailing list	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	1.4 Outreach to multifamily property managers and residents.	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	4.1 Dedicated public comment email	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
II	2.1 Staff interviews Economic Development SMEs and stakeholders	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.2 Economic Development Vision Community Workshop	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.3 Economic Development Vision Survey	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.4 Economic Development Work Group meeting with stakeholders and SMEs	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.1 Housing Work Group prepares initial list of housing policy responses	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.2 Housing Work Group renter’s forum.	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.3 Housing Work Group meeting with SMEs to refine a draft of housing goal and policy amendments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
III	2.5 Economic Development Work Group meeting with stakeholders to refine the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.4 Planning Commission first and second touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	3.5 Planning Commission third touch on draft housing goal and policy amendments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.6 Planning Commission first touch on the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.7 Planning Commission second touch on the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.8 Economic Development Element community workshop	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	2.9 Planning Commission third touch on the draft Economic Development Element	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	4.2 Planning Commission refines draft amendments and responds to public comments	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
4.3 Hold a community workshop on the Comprehensive Plan update	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	
IV	3.6 & 4.4 Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan update public hearing, deliberations, and recommendation	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
	4.5 City Council Comprehensive Plan update public hearings, deliberations, and adoption	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J