GMHB EXHIBIT 259

PCB 24-17

Public Hearing: Recommendation on Open Space Zone Code Amendment

Planning Commission Meeting

September 25, 2024



Agenda

- Background
- Overview of the proposed Open Space Zone code amendment
- Next Steps
- Discussion

Background

- The scope of work for the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2022, included creation of a new Parks Zone.
- The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) provided a recommendation to separate the work into two zones: Parks and Open Space.
- The PRC and Open Space Conservancy Trust (OSCT) Board worked with staff to develop the draft Open Space Zone and presented a joint recommendation to the PC on May 8, 2024.
- The PC proposed revisions to the draft on May 15, 2024 and approved a recommendation regarding inclusion of the Open Space Zone in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

Background

- Establishment of the Open Space Zone requires amendments to both the Comprehensive Plan (Land Use Map) and Mercer Island City Code (development regulations and Zoning Map).
- The PC completed the legislative review process related to the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and provided a recommendation to the City Council on June 12, 2024.
- The PC still needs to provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding the amendment to the MICC to establish the Open Space Zone development regulations (Exhibit 1) and Zoning Map (Exhibit 2).

Open Space Zone



Overview of Proposed Open Space Zone

- The Open Space Zone is a proposed new zone that will establish land use regulations for City-owned and managed Open Space Lands and ensure the land is managed in a manner appropriate for such properties, consistent with the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan, City code, master plans, forest management plans, and similar documents.
- The proposed Open Space Zone development regulations are provided in Exhibit 1.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Open Space Zone is to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance Open Space Lands, which provide habitat for native plants and animals and ecological services including stormwater management and carbon sequestration. Open Space Lands provide access to nature for passive recreation and relaxation and educational and stewardship opportunities.



Designation Requirements

In addition to the requirements established in Section 19.15.240 MICC, Open Space Lands must be owned, leased, or managed by the City of Mercer Island and fulfill the purpose provided in subsection (A) above to qualify for classification as Open Space Zone.



Uses Permitted

- Trails.
- Passive recreational uses.
- Passive recreational amenities.
- Habitat restoration and enhancement.
- Temporary uses compatible with the purpose of the Open Space Zone, as authorized by the City Manager or designee.
- Wireless communications facilities. (Only if otherwise permitted by MICC 19.06.040 – Wireless Communications and/or MICC 19.06.070 – Small wireless facilities deployment and as subject to design and concealment standards as otherwise provided in the MICC).
- Utilities, only where necessary for public safety or protection of the natural environment and no reasonable alternative location exists. Utilities should be underground, if feasible.

Development Standards

Setbacks

- Zero (0) feet if adjacent property is zoned PI, TC, PBZ, CO, or B.
- Twenty (20) feet if adjacent property is zoned R-8.4, R-9.6, R-12, R-15, MF-2L, MF-2, or MF-3.
- Exemptions: fences, gates, culverts, trails, landscaping, and furnishings.

Restrooms

- Restrooms are only permitted on properties larger than 100 acres and are limited to 300 square feet.





Development Standards

Signs and Kiosks

- Signs are governed by MICC 19.12.080, except as follows:
  - Interior signs are limited to three square feet and entrance signs are limited to ten square feet of surface area.
  - Exterior lighted signs are prohibited.
  - Natural colors are required unless necessary for public health, safety, or maintenance.
- Kiosks are limited to 15 square feet of surface area and ten feet in height.
- On Open Space Land larger than 100 acres, kiosks are limited to 22 square feet of surface area and ten feet in height.





Trail Standards

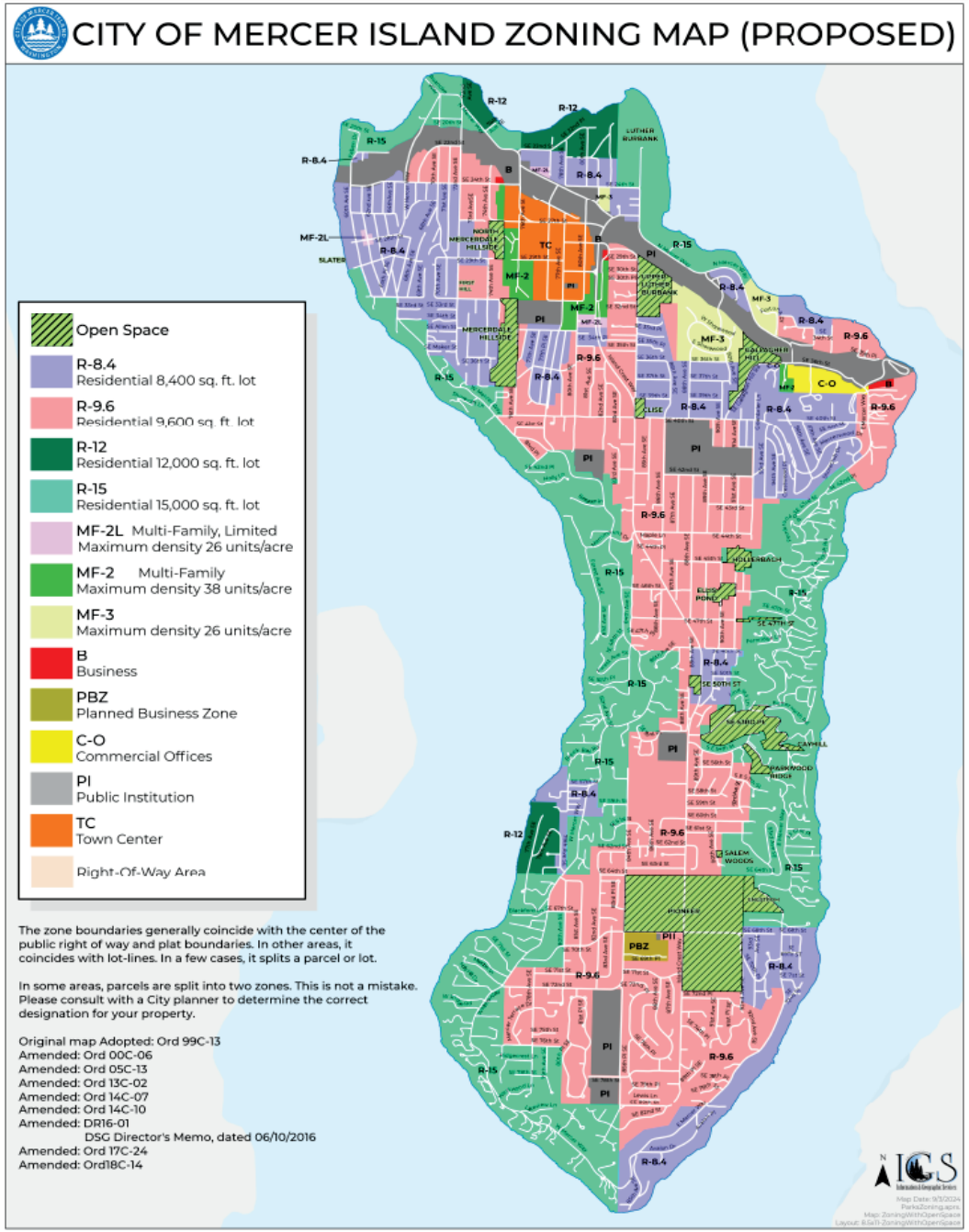
- Trails are limited to eight feet in width.

Definitions

- *Kiosk.* A small structure in a public area used for providing information.
- *Natural Colors.* Muted colors that are consistent with the natural landscape of Open Space lands.
- *Open Space Land(s).* A parcel of land that is largely undeveloped and is suitable as a natural habitat.
- *Passive Recreational Amenities.* Structures, furnishings, or developments that are specifically provided for passive recreational uses, such as signs, trails, restrooms, kiosks, benches, bike racks, etc.
- *Passive Recreational Uses.* Passive recreational uses have a low impact on the facilities used, and include activities such as hiking, wildlife viewing, walking, jogging, or picnicking. Passive recreational uses place minimal stress on a site's resources; as a result, passive recreational uses are highly compatible with natural resource protection.
- *Temporary Structures, Uses, and Activities.* A land use, structure, or activity that will only be in place for a limited period of time not to exceed 180 days in duration.
- *Trail.* An off-street path for passive recreational uses.

Zoning Map

- The proposed Zoning Map (Exhibit 2) will replace the Zoning Map in the MICC, if approved by the City Council.



Next Steps



Recommendation and Next Steps

- After the public hearing, the PC should approve a recommendation to the City Council regarding the amendment to the MICC to establish the Open Space Zone development regulations (Exhibit 1) and Zoning Map (Exhibit 2).

- The PC recommendation is anticipated to be reviewed by the City Council in Q4 2024.

Discussion

