

Molly McGuire

From: PAUL BURSTEIN <burstein62@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2026 10:40 AM
To: Council
Subject: September 1 City Council meeting consideration of SJCC's Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Rezone request

I recently submitted an email to the Mercer Island Planning Commission, asking that it approve amending the Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of the Stroum Jewish Community Center property from single family to commercial.

I am extremely pleased that the Mercer Island Planning Commission voted unanimously, 3-0, to do so, recommending approval of the SJCC's Comprehensive Plan Amendment. I hope that the Mercer Island City Council will do so as well.

My wife Florence and I joined the JCC 40 years ago, immediately after moving to the Seattle area from Nashville. Our three children attended preschool there, as well as the SJCC's after-school programs and summer camp. The programs were wonderful for our children, and for us as well--they enabled us to make friends with other young families, and helped us greatly as we became part of the Mercer Island community. Beyond the SJCC's programs for children, we have participated in cultural programs, worked out at the fitness center, enjoyed holiday celebrations, and engaged with friends in the very real community provided by the SJCC. We have been delighted to see the SJCC expand its cultural offerings in recent years, offering music, lectures, and well-known authors discussing their recent books. The SJCC is home to the Seattle Jewish Film Festival, which, together with the Seattle Polish, Nordic, Ukrainian, and other film festivals, enriches the cultural life of the entire Seattle area. The many non-Jews who are SJCC members and participants in its programs show that it is not just Jews who find the SJCC a major community resource.

Unfortunately, the SJCC facility is aging. The addition of the fitness center years ago, and the more recent upgrade of the preschool facility have enhanced the quality of the SJCC, but the entire facility needs major upgrades if it is to continue to fulfill its purpose as a center of community life. Mercer Island's central business district is not what it was 55 years ago--it is much more developed, more vibrant, a real 21st century center of community life. Mercer Island would not be what it is today if the central business district had been forced to remain what it was 55 years ago. Yet without a change in zoning, that would be the fate of the SJCC--forced to remain virtually what it was physically 55 years ago, and therefore limited in its ability to update its programming to meet contemporary needs.

Please allow the SJCC to formally be what it has always been in practice--a community center rather than the mythical location of single family homes that have never existed. I urge you to change the designation of the SJCC property from single family to commercial, and by so doing enhance the quality of life on Mercer Island.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Paul Burstein
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