

Molly McGuire

From: Alan Waldbaum <alanwaldbaum@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 2:18 PM
To: Planning Commission; Alison Van Gorp; Deb Estrada; Council
Cc: Kim Waldbaum
Subject: Please Support Rezoning the SJCC Property to Reflect its Longstanding Community Role

Dear Mercer Island Planning Commission and City Council Members,

We are writing to urge your support for amending the Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of the Stroum Jewish Community Center (SJCC) property from single-family residential to commercial.

The SJCC has been serving the Mercer Island community as a community center for more than 55 years. We respectfully ask that the Comprehensive Plan and land use maps be updated to reflect that longstanding reality and to ensure that the J can continue to serve our community and thrive on Mercer Island for the next 55 years.

Our family's connection to the SJCC spans generations and has shaped some of the most important experiences of our lives. We have grandparents who were members, both sets of our parents were members, and now our family of five are members.

Between the two of us, we attended preschool at "the J" (as we affectionately refer to the SJCC), took swim lessons and gymnastics classes there as children, participated in youth groups as teenagers, and worked out at the J through our young adulthood.

As adults, we met each other while working out at the J's fitness center and began dating soon afterward. We played softball and basketball through the J's sports leagues, and after we married, we settled in Bellevue, where we have lived for the past 25 years.

Even though we do not live on Mercer Island, the SJCC continues to draw us to the Island on an almost daily basis. We regularly use the fitness center, pool, and gym. Our children attended preschool there, took swimming lessons there, participated in youth groups and sports programs there, and now use the fitness facilities themselves.

Our story also highlights something important about the SJCC's impact beyond its campus. Families like ours who live off-island make frequent trips to Mercer Island because of the J. Before and after our visits, we regularly shop at Mercer Island grocery stores and pharmacies, buy books, purchase gas, dine at local restaurants and cafés, and use local businesses and services. The SJCC is an economic driver that brings thousands of visitors and customers to Mercer Island businesses every year.

The reality is that the J has operated as a community center for decades and has become an integral part of the social, recreational, educational, and economic fabric of Mercer Island. The facility is also in need of significant modernization and reinvestment to continue serving current and future generations. If the zoning designation is not updated to support the J's long-term viability and redevelopment needs, Mercer Island risks losing not only a cherished community institution, but also the economic activity generated by families like ours who choose Mercer Island because of the SJCC.

We strongly encourage you to approve the Comprehensive Plan amendment and redesignate the SJCC property from single-family residential to commercial. Doing so will align the City's planning documents with the property's actual use, recognize the J's more than half-century of service to the community, and help ensure that this invaluable institution can continue to benefit Mercer Island residents and visitors alike for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alan Waldbaum
Kim Muscatel Waldbaum