

Molly McGuire

From: Hendelman, Aaron <ahendelman@wsgr.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 10:32 AM
To: Planning Commission; Alison Van Gorp; Deb Estrada; Council
Cc: christina Hendelman
Subject: Support for JCC Comprehensive Plan Amendment

To the Mercer Island Planning Commission and City Council,

We are writing in strong support of the Comprehensive Plan amendment that would allow the Stroum Jewish Community Center to move forward with its long-needed remodel.

We are Christina and Aaron Hendelman. We moved to Mercer Island in 2005 with three small children, not knowing a single person on the island. From nearly the first week, the J became our home away from home. Our kids went through J preschool, took their swim lessons there, and spent their summers at J camp. Looking back, the JCC helped raise our children as much as any other institution.

The J's role in this community goes far beyond our own family. It's likely the largest employer of Mercer Island teenagers outside the school district itself, hiring them for camps, the front desk, and the gym. Our (non-Jewish) neighbor spent last summer working as a J counselor. For Mercer Island's teenagers and college students home for the summer, the J is often their first job and their default workout spot.

Twenty years later, we're still there every week. We work out at the gym, take fitness classes, and catch up with friends. We come for the speaker series and film nights. We are still making new friends there today, and many of the people we met through preschool drop-off two decades ago remain our closest friends now. Our amazing friendships with Noreen (of Irish descent) and Lisa (who is Australian) started and blossomed at the J and have nothing to do with religion. That's the point: the J is no more "Jewish" than Providence Hospital is Christian. It's a community institution that happens to have Jewish roots, and it draws in and serves everyone on this island, regardless of background.

That's exactly why this amendment matters. The current building is more than 60 years old. Anyone who has spent time there has seen the maintenance issues and the lack of space for the classes and programs that serve so many of us. A remodel means the J can keep doing what it's done for our family and thousands of others for the next 60 years and can serve even more of our neighbors in the process.

We urge the Planning Commission and City Council to approve this amendment. Mercer Island is a better, more connected place because of the J, and this vote will decide whether it can keep serving us the way it always has. We're asking nothing more and the community deserves nothing less.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,
Christina and Aaron Hendelman
Mercer Island, WA



Aaron Hendelman | Partner

701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 5100 | Seattle, WA 98104-7036 | direct: 206.883.2514

ahendelman@wsgr.com

This email and any attachments thereto may contain private, confidential, and privileged material for the sole use of the intended recipient. Any review, copying, or distribution of this email (or any attachments thereto) by others is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender immediately and permanently delete the original and any copies of this email and any attachments thereto.