

Molly McGuire

From: Jessica Tabakin <mamadoulallc@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 30, 2026 3:56 PM
To: Planning Commission; Alison Van Gorp; Deb Estrada; Council
Subject: Keeping this treasured institution, Draft 2

Hello, important people making an important decision,

I'm writing to urge your support to amend the Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of the SJCC property from single-family to commercial.

I have been a member of the SJCC for several years, am an annual volunteer for the Jewish Film Festival, and sent my daughter to summer camp there when she was younger.

Since October 7th, 2023, the JCC has been my haven. It is difficult to express the visceral feeling of entering a building that flies an Israeli and American flag out front. I almost keep my membership for that alone!

Where I live in South Seattle, we generally see Palestinian Flags hung in public spaces; local cafes keep small flags by the checkout or paint them on entire walls. Homes display the Palestinian flags out their front windows, and there is a general feeling of disdain for Israel, its policies since Hamas began the war. Anti-Zionism is the new form of Antisemitism, unfortunately, and I combat it emotionally every time I leave my home.

At the J, I swim and take saunas or do the occasional exercise class, which gets me through the dreary part of the year. Our family enjoys the J's community events, such as concerts, lectures, comedians, and chefs. I joke that the Jewish Film Festival, hosted partly within the walls of the SJCC, is my favorite Jewish Holiday! You could say the place is like a Cheers; I come to work out, and stay for the community.

The SJCC is a place I go to feel safe, because it supports and protects my worldview and beliefs. I could have a shorter commute to swim at a Seattle city pool or the YMCA, but I make the drive and keep my membership because the next closest thing is a religious institution which doesn't offer all of the above.

My daughter attends Puget Sound's only Jewish High School, NW Yeshiva High School, and our family is far from Orthodox. We transferred her from Garfield High School in 2024, after her freshman year ('23-'24) had five school shootings. If I could afford to move to Mercer Island, I would!

The J has been serving the Mercer Island community – as a community center – for over 55 years. Please align the comprehensive plan and land use maps to reflect that reality and ensure the J can continue to serve our community and thrive on Mercer Island for the next 55 years.

Thank you kindly,

Jessica Tabakin

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SPTA, Physical Therapy Assistant Student

“At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel.”
— Maya Angelou