

Molly McGuire

From: Paul Amato <pra717@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2026 7:14 AM
To: Alison Van Gorp; Planning Commission; Deb Estrada; Council
Subject: Mercer Island SJCC

Dear Members of the Mercer Island Planning Commission and City Council,

My name is Paul Amato. As a 51-year-old resident and a parent of three children, I am writing to share my strong support for the Stroum Jewish Community Center and its future on our island. My family and I use the SJCC regularly, whether for fitness, youth programs, or gathering with friends, and I am proud to count myself among the thousands of community members whose daily lives are enriched by what the J offers.

Over the decades, the SJCC has served as far more than just a facility. It is a vital anchor for Mercer Island—a place where children grow up learning, playing, and making lifelong friendships, where adults stay active and connected, and where community members of all backgrounds find a welcoming home for reflection, celebration, and connection. The value the J provides to our island is immeasurable, offering accessible health and wellness, educational programs, and cultural enrichment that strengthen the social fabric of our entire city.

I am here to urge your support in amending the Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of the SJCC property from single family to commercial. The J has been serving the Mercer Island community — as a community center — for over 55 years. My hope is it will be here for another 55. I am not a land-use expert, but I know for certain the J has always served the community as a gathering space, an activity center, a school, and as a place for reflection and community — it has never been in single family use. As such, the city should align the comprehensive plan and land use maps with the longstanding use of this property. More importantly, it will allow the J to continue to serve the Mercer Island community without hindrance.

For over half a century, the SJCC has proven itself to be a deeply committed and caring neighbor, continuously adapting to meet the evolving needs of our growing population. Updating the land-use designation simply recognizes the reality of what this site has been since 1969, giving this indispensable institution the regulatory clarity it needs to update its aging facilities and continue its mission for generations to come.

I strongly recommend approval of this comprehensive plan amendment. Thank you for your time, your service to our city, and your thoughtful consideration of Mercer Island's future.

Sincerely,

Paul Amato

