

Molly McGuire

From: PAUL BURSTEIN <burstein62@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 9:55 AM
To: Planning Commission; Alison Van Gorp; Deb Estrada; Council
Subject: Planning Commission meeting August 5 on Stroum JCC

This is Paul Burstein writing in favor of amending the Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of the Stroum Jewish Community Center property from single family to commercial.

My wife Florence and I have been members of the Stroum JCC for 40 years. When we moved from Nashville, Tennessee, to the Seattle area in 1985, and to Mercer Island in early 1986, we knew we wanted to join the SJCC. Our children were 3-1/2 and 1-1/2, and we had heard that the SJCC preschool was a great place for young children, and for their families. Our children spent many years at the SJCC--in the preschool, after-school programs, holiday programs, and summer camp. They were soon joined by our third child. The SJCC programs for children served not only our children, but ourselves as well. It was there that we made friends--some of whom are friends to this day--and were introduced not only to the Jewish community, but to the general Mercer Island community as well. 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. It is a critical part of life on Mercer Island. One of our daughters and her family live in Seattle, but they enjoy their membership as well.

The SJCC facility is aging. The addition of the fitness center years ago, and the more recent upgrade of the preschool facility have added greatly to 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, and it is just not reasonable to force the SJCC to remain what it was so many years ago.

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
8367 SE 30th Street, Mercer Island